

# CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY'S IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION: EVIDENCE FROM GUANGZHOU'S UNIVERSITIES

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**Abstract.** This research explores the intermediary function of employee satisfaction in the linkage between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and employee performance within the academic sector of Guangzhou. Grounded in both stakeholder theory and social identity theory, the study posits that CSR initiatives significantly bolster employee satisfaction, which subsequently enhances employee performance. The primary research objectives are to assess the degree to which CSR impacts employee satisfaction and to explore its mediating role in influencing employee performance. Utilizing a quantitative methodology, this investigation gathered data from 226 staff members across four distinct universities in Guangzhou via systematically structured questionnaires. The analysis of the collected data indicates a robust positive correlation between CSR activities and employee performance, with employee satisfaction acting as a vital mediating variable. These findings emphasize the crucial role of CSR in cultivating a supportive work atmosphere and highlight its strategic importance in boosting employee outcomes, thereby benefiting the broader organizational context.

**Keywords:** *corporate social responsibility, employee satisfaction, employee performance, higher education institutions*

## Introduction

The burgeoning body of research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) underscores its pivotal role in shaping organizational success and sustainability. Within this domain, the nexus between CSR initiatives and employee performance has emerged as a focal area of inquiry, highlighting the instrumental role of CSR in enhancing workforce productivity and commitment. However, the mechanisms through which CSR influences employee outcomes remain inadequately explored, particularly in the context of higher education institutions. This gap in literature signals the need for empirical investigations into the mediating factors that bridge CSR practices and employee performance metrics. Among potential mediators, employee satisfaction stands out as a critical psychological construct that potentially channels the positive impacts of CSR on employee attitudes and behaviors. Drawing on the stakeholder theory and the social identity theory (Freeman, 2010), this study posits that CSR activities, by fostering a supportive and ethically oriented work environment, can significantly elevate employee satisfaction levels, which in turn, enhance performance outcomes. Specifically, in the setting of GuangZhou's universities, where CSR practices are increasingly being recognized and integrated into institutional strategies, understanding this mediation effect is of paramount importance. This investigation not only contributes to the theoretical enrichment of the CSR literature by elucidating the role of employee satisfaction as a mediator but also offers practical insights for

university administrations in GuangZhou and beyond, aiming to leverage CSR for fostering conducive work environments and achieving higher levels of employee performance. Hence, this study addresses a significant gap in the literature and holds substantial implications for both theory and practice within the realm of CSR and human resource management in the educational sector (Glavas, 2016; Aguinis and Glavas, 2012).

### ***Research objective and research questions***

The objective of this research is to examine the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and employee performance within the academic setting of GuangZhou's universities. The rising prominence of CSR initiatives has sparked considerable interest in understanding their impact on organizational outcomes, particularly in terms of employee performance and satisfaction (Glavas and Kelley, 2014). However, the mechanism through which CSR influences employee performance, with employee satisfaction serving as a potential mediator, remains underexplored, especially in the context of higher education institutions in China. This study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) To what extent does CSR impact employee satisfaction in GuangZhou's universities? (2) How does employee satisfaction mediate the relationship between CSR and employee performance? These questions are vital for comprehending the intricate dynamics between CSR practices and their outcomes on employees within the academic sector, a context that has received limited attention in existing literature (Aguinis and Glavas, 2019a). By investigating these questions, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on CSR and its implications for employee-related outcomes. Specifically, it seeks to illuminate the pathways through which CSR efforts can enhance employee performance, highlighting the role of employee satisfaction as a critical mediator in this process. Moreover, the findings are expected to offer practical insights for university administrators and policymakers on leveraging CSR to foster a more motivated and performance-oriented academic workforce (Paridhi and Ritika, 2024).

### ***Literature review***

#### ***Overview of corporate social responsibility***

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has increasingly become an integral part of organizational strategy, reflecting a company's commitment to operate in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner. CSR initiatives can range from environmental sustainability efforts, social equity, and community engagement to ethical labor practices and corporate governance. The literature suggests that CSR's impact extends beyond societal benefits, influencing employee satisfaction and organizational performance (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021; Khaskheli et al., 2020). The strategic integration of CSR into business operations is argued to yield a competitive advantage by enhancing the company's reputation, which in turn attracts and retains a more committed and satisfied workforce (Turban and Greening, 1997). Moreover, employees tend to identify more strongly with companies that are perceived as socially responsible, which can lead to increased loyalty and performance (Bouichou et al., 2022). Recent studies have further explored the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes, suggesting that CSR activities can positively affect employees' perceptions of their workplace, thereby enhancing their satisfaction and performance

levels (Glavas and Kelley, 2014). Specifically, when employees perceive their organization's CSR efforts as genuine, it fosters a sense of pride and organizational identification, which mediates the relationship between CSR and employee performance (Raza et al., 2021).

Furthermore, empirical research conducted within various cultural contexts indicates that the impact of CSR on employee satisfaction and performance may vary. For instance, in collectivist cultures, the emphasis on community welfare and social harmony might amplify the positive effects of CSR on employee attitudes and behaviors (Chen et al., 2020). This suggests that the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the CSR-performance link could be contingent on cultural dimensions. Despite the growing body of literature supporting the positive implications of CSR for employee outcomes, some scholars argue for a more nuanced understanding of this relationship. They suggest that the nature and scope of CSR activities, employee perceptions of CSR authenticity, and the alignment between CSR initiatives and employees' values play critical roles in determining the actual impact of CSR on employee satisfaction and performance (Aguinis and Glavas, 2019b). In summary, the literature underscores the potential of CSR to enhance employee satisfaction and performance, mediated by factors such as organizational identification and perceived authenticity of CSR efforts. However, it also highlights the need for further research to explore the nuances of this relationship, including cultural influences and the alignment of CSR initiatives with employee values.

### ***Overview of employee satisfaction***

Employee satisfaction represents a fundamental component within the organizational context, significantly influencing both individual and organizational performance. This concept has been thoroughly explored in academic literature, revealing its multifaceted nature and the various factors that contribute to it, including job characteristics, leadership styles, organizational culture, and notably, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Lockwood, 2007; Saks, 2006). The relationship between CSR and employee satisfaction has garnered increasing attention, suggesting that CSR activities can enhance employees' perceptions of their workplace, thereby increasing their level of satisfaction (Glavas, 2016). Employees tend to identify more strongly with companies that are socially and environmentally responsible, which in turn, positively affects their satisfaction and loyalty towards the organization (Chatzopoulou et al., 2022). This identification process is crucial, as it underscores the role of CSR in fostering a sense of pride and belonging among employees, which are key determinants of employee satisfaction (Raza et al., 2021).

Further, the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the CSR-performance linkage is supported by the notion that satisfied employees are more engaged, productive, and less likely to leave the organization (Marić et al., 2021). This suggests that employee satisfaction not only serves as an outcome of CSR but also as a mechanism through which CSR initiatives can enhance employee performance. The psychological state of employees, influenced by their satisfaction levels, plays a critical role in determining their motivation and capacity to contribute to organizational goals (Ali and Anwar, 2021). Moreover, research has also highlighted the significance of perceived organizational support (POS) in mediating the relationship between CSR and employee outcomes, including satisfaction. Employees who perceive their organization as supportive are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction, which can be

significantly influenced by the organization's CSR efforts (Chatzopoulou et al., 2022; Khaskheli et al., 2020).

In summary, the literature suggests a strong link between CSR and employee satisfaction, indicating that CSR initiatives can lead to higher levels of employee satisfaction, which in turn, can enhance employee performance. This relationship is mediated by various factors, including employees' identification with the organization, perceived organizational support, and the overall psychological well-being of employees. Understanding this mediating role of employee satisfaction is crucial for organizations aiming to leverage their CSR efforts to boost employee performance.

### ***Overview of employee performance***

Employee performance, a critical determinant of organizational success, has been extensively studied in the context of various influencing factors, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employee satisfaction. Employee performance encompasses a range of behaviors and outcomes that employees exhibit and achieve in their workplace, contributing to the organization's objectives and goals (Nguyen et al., 2020). Research has identified that CSR initiatives can significantly impact employee performance, both directly and indirectly. Employees tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement, commitment, and productivity when they perceive their organization as socially responsible and ethically oriented (Glavas and Kelley, 2014). This positive correlation between CSR and employee performance is often mediated by employee satisfaction, suggesting that CSR activities enhance employee satisfaction, which in turn leads to improved performance (Tunio et al., 2021). Employee satisfaction, regarded as a mediator in this relationship, reflects employees' contentment with their job and work environment, which affects their motivation and willingness to contribute to organizational goals (Riyanto et al., 2021). A satisfied employee is more likely to be productive, innovative, and committed, thereby enhancing overall performance (Loan, 2020).

Furthermore, the performance of employees in educational institutions, such as universities, has unique characteristics, given the blend of academic and administrative roles. Performance in this context not only includes teaching and research outcomes but also involves contributions to the university's social and environmental responsibilities (Siddique et al., 2011). This dual role underscores the importance of examining how CSR initiatives within universities influence employee performance through the lens of employee satisfaction. Several studies have underscored the importance of specific CSR dimensions, such as environmental initiatives and community engagement, in enhancing employee satisfaction and performance in the educational sector (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021; Hossen et al., 2020). For instance, faculty and staff members who perceive their institution as contributing positively to the community and environment are more likely to feel proud and satisfied, which translates into higher motivation and better performance in their roles (Aguinis and Glavas, 2019a; 2019b). In summary, the literature suggests a nuanced relationship between CSR, employee satisfaction, and performance, particularly within the context of educational institutions. This relationship underscores the strategic importance of CSR initiatives not only for their external benefits but also for their potential to enhance employee satisfaction and performance. Future research in this area, particularly within the context of GuangZhou's universities, could provide valuable insights into how these dynamics play out in a specific cultural and organizational setting.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the stakeholder theory and the social identity theory, providing a lens through which the intricate relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), employee satisfaction, and employee performance can be examined. Stakeholder theory, as articulated by Freeman (2010), posits that organizations must pay attention to the needs and interests of all stakeholders, including employees, to achieve long-term success. Within this framework, CSR activities are seen not only as a commitment to ethical behavior and societal welfare but also as a strategic approach to enhance employee satisfaction and organizational performance (Freeman, 2010). Further, the social identity theory, as developed by Tajfel and Turner (2004), suggests that individuals derive their identity and self-esteem from their membership in various groups. This theory elucidates how CSR initiatives can foster a sense of pride and belonging among employees, as they perceive their organization's CSR efforts as aligned with their personal values and social identities (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). This alignment is crucial for enhancing employee satisfaction, as it satisfies the basic human need for belongingness and self-esteem (Maslow, 1943).

Empirical studies have supported the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the CSR-employee performance link. Glavas and Kelley (2014) found that employees who perceive their organizations as socially responsible exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, which in turn leads to improved performance. Similarly, Chatzopoulou et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of employee perception of CSR in enhancing their organizational commitment and job satisfaction, subsequently impacting their performance positively. Moreover, the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm provides a complementary perspective, suggesting that human resources are critical strategic assets that can provide competitive advantage (Gerhart and Feng, 2021). From this viewpoint, CSR activities can be considered as investments in human capital, enhancing employee satisfaction, and performance, thereby contributing to the firm's competitive edge (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). In summary, the theoretical framework of this study integrates stakeholder theory, social identity theory, and the RBV to explore how CSR activities influence employee performance through the mediating role of employee satisfaction. This approach underscores the multifaceted impact of CSR on organizational dynamics and employee-related outcomes, providing a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms at play (*Figure 1*).



**Figure 1.** The conceptual framework.

Based on the above content, the following assumptions are proposed:

- H1: Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive impact on employee performance
- H2: Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive impact on employee satisfaction.
- H3: Employee Satisfaction has a positive impact on employee performance.
- H4: Employee Satisfaction mediates the relationship between corporate social responsibility and employee performance.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Research design***

The study adopts a quantitative research design to empirically investigate the proposed relationships among the variables of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Employee Satisfaction (ES), and Employee Performance (EP). This approach is chosen for its effectiveness in testing hypotheses and examining relationships between variables through statistical analysis. The study's design facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how CSR initiatives within universities in GuangZhou influence employee performance, with employee satisfaction serving as a mediating factor. This design aligns with the research objectives and questions, providing a structured framework for data collection and analysis.

### ***Sample selection and description***

The sample comprises employees from four universities located in GuangZhou, selected through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of participants directly exposed to the CSR activities of their respective institutions. The sample includes a diverse group of 226 employees, encompassing various roles, educational backgrounds, and demographics, to ensure the findings are representative of the university staff population in GuangZhou. This sample size is considered adequate for conducting factor analysis and testing the research hypotheses, as recommended by Hair et al. (2010).

### ***Data collection methods***

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was distributed both online and in paper format to accommodate the preferences of all participants. The questionnaire was designed based on established scales to measure CSR (Turker, 2009), employee satisfaction (Smith et al., 1969), and employee performance (Williams and Anderson, 1991), ensuring content validity. Before the distribution, the questionnaire underwent a pilot test with a small subset of the target population to refine questions for clarity and ensure reliability. The final questionnaire included sections on demographic information, CSR perceptions, employee satisfaction levels, and self-reported employee performance.

### ***Data analysis methods***

The data analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS software. Initially, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to ascertain the factor structure of the questionnaire items. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, while construct

validity was examined through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) metrics. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then employed to test the research hypotheses and examine the direct and indirect effects of CSR on employee performance, mediated by employee satisfaction. The mediation effect was further analyzed using the bootstrapping method to assess the significance of indirect effects, providing a robust examination of the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the CSR-employee performance relationship.

## Results and Discussion

*Table 1* show cases results from the KMO and Bartlett's Test. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is reported at 0.903, indicating a high degree of appropriateness for factor analysis due to shared variances among variables. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yields an Approximate Chi-Square of 5442.232 with 120 degrees of freedom, and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000. This demonstrates that the correlation matrix significantly deviates from an identity matrix, thus validating the factorability of the dataset. The demographic characteristics of the study's sample (N=226) are illustrated in *Table 2*, revealing a gender distribution with females constituting 54.42% (n=123) and males 45.58% (n=103). The education level of participants varied, with a notable majority holding advanced degrees; specifically, 36.73% (n=83) had a Master's Degree, and 41.15% (n=93) possessed a Doctorate or higher. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents were concentrated within the 26-35 (28.32%, n=64) and 46-55 (28.32%, n=64) age brackets. Regarding employment departments, a significant portion of the sample was associated with academic roles (56.64%, n=128), followed by student services (24.34%, n=55). The distribution of work experience revealed that 42.92% (n=97) of participants had been employed for 1-10 years, with a smaller segment (7.52%, n=17) reporting more than 20 years of work experience. This data provides insight into the diverse educational backgrounds, age ranges, departmental affiliations, and work tenure within the study population.

**Table 1.** KMO and Bartlett's test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.903
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5442.232
	df	120
	Sig.	0.000

**Table 2.** Demographics characteristics.

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	103	45.58
	Female	123	54.42
Education Level	High School or Lower	2	0.88
	Associate Degree	12	5.31
	Bachelor's Degree	36	15.93
	Master's Degree	83	36.73
	Doctorate or Higher	93	41.15
Age	Under 25	3	1.33
	26-35	64	28.32
	36-45	57	25.22
	46-55	64	28.32
	56 and above	38	16.81
Department	Academic (e.g., Faculty, Research)	128	56.64
	Administrative (e.g., HR, Finance)	22	9.73
	Technical Support (e.g., IT, Maintenance)	13	5.75
	Student Services (e.g., Admissions, Counseling)	55	24.34

	Other	8	3.54
Work Years	Less than 1 year	29	12.83
	1-10 years	97	42.92
	11-20 years	83	36.73
	More than 20 years	17	7.52

In examining the constructs of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Employee Satisfaction (ES), and Employee Performance (EP), the study employs factor analysis to validate the measurement model, assessing both reliability and discriminant validity. The analysis reveals high factor loadings for individual items under each construct, signifying substantial contributions to their respective domains. Specifically, CSR items display loadings ranging from 0.757 to 0.920, while ES items exhibit loadings between 0.948 and 0.978, and EP items from 0.945 to 0.974. These results underscore the items' strong alignment with their intended constructs. Concerning construct reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are utilized as metrics. CSR, ES, and EP demonstrate robust internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.890, 0.980, and 0.982 respectively, closely mirrored by CR values of 0.916, 0.985, and 0.986. The AVE for each construct further affirms measurement validity, with CSR at 0.646, ES at 0.928, and EP at 0.934, indicating a satisfactory level of explained variance within each construct (Hair et al., 2010). Discriminant validity, assessed through the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, highlights distinctiveness between the constructs. The HTMT ratios between CSR and EP (0.702), CSR and ES (0.708), and EP and ES (0.627) are below the threshold of 0.85, suggesting that the constructs are empirically distinct and support the model's discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Overall, the measurement model demonstrates strong reliability and validity in assessing CSR, ES, and EP, providing a solid foundation for further analysis of these constructs within the organizational context (Table 3, Table 4, Table 5).

**Table 3. Individual indicator reliability (Factor loadings).**

Items	CSR	ES	EP
CSR1	0.789		
CSR2	0.793		
CSR3	0.830		
CSR4	0.757		
CSR5	0.836		
CSR6	0.920		
ES1		0.978	
ES2		0.969	
ES3		0.955	
ES4		0.965	
ES5		0.948	
EP1			0.974
EP2			0.974
EP3			0.945
EP4			0.969
EP5			0.969

*Notes: CSR=Corporate Social Responsibility, ES=Employee Satisfaction, EP=Employee Performance.*

**Table 4. Individual indicator reliability.**



Items	CSR	ES	EP
CSR	0.890	0.916	0.646
ES	0.980	0.985	0.928
EP	0.982	0.986	0.934

Notes: CSR=Corporate Social Responsibility, ES=Employee Satisfaction, EP=Employee Performance, CA=Cronbach's Alpha, CR=Composite Reliability, AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

**Table 5. Discriminant validity (HTMT).**

Items	CSR	ES	EP
CSR			
EP	0.702		
ES	0.708	0.627	

Notes: CSR=Corporate Social Responsibility, ES=Employee Satisfaction, EP=Employee Performance.

In the analysis presented in *Table 6*, the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on Employee Performance (EP) and Employee Satisfaction (ES), along with the effect of ES on EP, was evaluated through hypothesis testing. The path from CSR to EP exhibited a beta coefficient of 0.447, with a standard deviation (STDEV) of 0.066, yielding a t-value of 6.764 and a significant p-value of 0.000, leading to the acceptance of the hypothesis. Similarly, the CSR to ES path showed a stronger beta coefficient of 0.663, STDEV of 0.051, a t-value of 12.879, and a p-value of 0.000, also resulting in hypothesis acceptance. Additionally, the influence of ES on EP was confirmed with a beta of 0.320, STDEV of 0.059, a t-value of 5.459, and a p-value of 0.000, leading to the acceptance of this hypothesis as well. These findings underscore the significant roles both CSR and ES play in enhancing EP, highlighting the importance of these constructs in organizational studies. Notably, the analysis delineates a direct relationship between CSR initiatives and key organizational outcomes, emphasizing the value of CSR in promoting both employee satisfaction and performance. These results highlight the interlinked nature of CSR, employee satisfaction, and performance, suggesting that investments in CSR activities can lead to improved employee satisfaction, which in turn enhances employee performance. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the positive impacts of CSR on both employee satisfaction and performance, indicating that CSR initiatives not only benefit external stakeholders but also play a crucial role in enhancing internal organizational outcomes (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012).

**Table 6. Hypothesis test.**

Paths	beta	STDEV	t-values	p-values	Decision
CSR → EP	0.447	0.066	6.764	0.000	Accepted
CSR → ES	0.663	0.051	12.879	0.000	Accepted
ES → EP	0.320	0.059	5.459	0.000	Accepted

Note: \* significant at 0.05, \*\*\* significant at 0.001, CSR=Corporate Social Responsibility, OC=Organizational Commitment, EP=Employee Performance.

The study explores the mediating role of Employee Satisfaction (ES) in the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Employee Performance (EP). According to *Table 7*, the path analysis reveals that CSR's effect on EP, mediated by ES, is statistically significant, with a beta coefficient of 0.212, a standard deviation of 0.048, and t-values indicating a robust significance level (t=4.391, p<0.001). This suggests that higher levels of CSR lead to improved employee

satisfaction, which in turn enhances employee performance. *Table 7* further elucidates this relationship by quantifying the direct, indirect, and total effects of CSR on EP, with ES acting as a mediator. The direct effect of CSR on EP is observed to be 0.447, whereas the indirect effect, facilitated through ES, stands at 0.212, culminating in a total effect of 0.659 on employee performance. The Variance Accounted For (VAF) value of 0.3217 indicates that approximately 32.17% of the total effect is attributed to the mediation by ES, thereby classifying it as a partial mediation. These findings underscore the importance of fostering corporate social responsibility initiatives as a means to enhance employee satisfaction, which in turn positively impacts overall employee performance.

**Table 7. Mediation analysis table.**

Paths	beta	STDEV	t-values	p-values
CSR → ES → EP	0.212	0.048	4.391	0.000

*Note: \* significant at 0.05, \*\*\* significant at 0.001, CSR=Corporate Social Responsibility, ES=Employee Satisfaction, EP=Employee Performance.*

The findings of this investigation illuminate the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the dynamic interplay between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and employee performance within GuangZhou's universities, providing both theoretical enrichment and practical insights. The statistically significant relationships identified among CSR, employee satisfaction, and performance underscore the pivotal role of CSR initiatives in enhancing employee outcomes through the psychological construct of satisfaction. These results lend credence to the burgeoning literature advocating for the strategic integration of CSR practices within organizational operations to foster a conducive work environment and bolster employee performance (Glavas and Kelley, 2014). The evidence supporting a significant direct effect of CSR on employee satisfaction ( $\beta=0.663$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) aligns with the stakeholder theory's proposition that organizations must prioritize the well-being and interests of their employees to achieve sustained success (Freeman, 2010). This finding echoes the sentiments of Turker (2009) as well as Aguinis and Glavas (2012), who argue that CSR initiatives, by addressing the ethical, social, and environmental concerns of employees, can enhance their satisfaction and, by extension, their performance. The direct relationship between CSR and employee performance ( $\beta=0.447$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) further emphasizes the importance of CSR in motivating and engaging employees, consistent with previous research (Hsieh et al., 2022).

Moreover, the mediation analysis reveals that employee satisfaction serves as a significant conduit for the impact of CSR on employee performance, with a Variance Accounted For (VAF) of 32.17%. This partial mediation suggests that while CSR directly influences employee performance, a considerable portion of this effect is channeled through employee satisfaction. This finding aligns with the social identity theory, which posits that employees derive a sense of identity and belonging from their organization's CSR practices, thereby enhancing their satisfaction and performance (Tajfel and Turner, 2004; Ashforth and Mael, 1989). The implications of these findings are manifold. For practitioners, especially within the higher education sector, the study underscores the strategic value of implementing CSR initiatives that resonate with employees' values and expectations. Such practices not only bolster the institution's reputation but also enhance employee satisfaction and performance, contributing to the achievement of organizational objectives. For scholars, this investigation enriches the

CSR literature by elucidating the mediating role of employee satisfaction in the CSR-performance nexus, offering a nuanced understanding of how CSR influences employee outcomes.

## Conclusion

Future research should explore the potential moderating effects of cultural dimensions and organizational characteristics on the CSR-satisfaction-performance relationship. Given the unique context of GuangZhou's universities, examining how cultural values influence the perception and impact of CSR could provide deeper insights (Lee et al., 2023). Additionally, investigating the role of other psychological constructs, such as organizational identification and perceived organizational support, could further elucidate the mechanisms through which CSR affects employee outcomes (Zhao et al., 2022; Hur et al., 2021). In conclusion, this study contributes to the CSR discourse by highlighting the importance of employee satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between CSR and employee performance. By demonstrating that CSR initiatives not only have a direct impact on employee outcomes but also enhance satisfaction, which in turn improves performance, the research offers valuable insights for both theoretical advancement and practical application in the realm of CSR and human resource management.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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