

EMPLOYEE-CENTRIC CSR AND WORKFORCE COMMITMENT IN PHILIPPINE SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is increasingly assessed through its treatment of employees as internal stakeholders. This narrative literature review examines how employee-centric CSR relates to workforce commitment in Philippine service organizations. Scholarly sources identified through Google Scholar and ResearchGate were reviewed using relevance, methodological clarity, and contribution to the two focal constructs as selection criteria. The literature was synthesized thematically around employee-oriented CSR practices, dimensions of workforce commitment, mechanisms connecting CSR with commitment, and contextual implications for service organizations. The synthesis indicates that employee-centric CSR is most consistently associated with stronger commitment when initiatives are perceived as authentic, inclusive, and supportive of wellbeing, development, participation, and fair treatment. Social exchange and social identity mechanisms help explain why such practices can strengthen attachment, reciprocity, and intention to remain. However, Philippine-specific empirical evidence remains limited, and local cultural assumptions are often asserted rather than directly tested. The review concludes that employee-centric CSR is a potentially relevant workforce strategy, but its effectiveness depends on credible implementation and contextual fit.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, employee-centric CSR, organizational commitment, Philippine service organizations, workforce commitment

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1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has moved beyond a predominantly external orientation toward communities, consumers, and the environment. Increasingly, organizations are expected to consider employees as salient internal stakeholders whose wellbeing, inclusion, development, and participation are integral to responsible business practice. This shift is consistent with broader attempts to connect sustainability with people-centered management and employee wellbeing (Abdelhay, 2025; Ganu, 2024; Suswaram & Satpathy, 2025). Employee-centric organizational approaches similarly emphasize that employees should not be treated only as resources for execution, but as stakeholders whose experience influences organizational resilience and long-term performance (Lyngnes, 2019, 2024).

The employee-centered turn in CSR is particularly relevant for service organizations. Service delivery depends heavily on employees' interactions, discretionary effort, emotional labor, and willingness to maintain consistent service standards. Accordingly, responsible employment practices may influence not only individual wellbeing but also the quality and continuity of service operations. Employee-centric CSR can include fair treatment, inclusive workplace practices, health and wellbeing support, work-life balance, professional development, employee voice, and participation in socially meaningful initiatives (El Akremi et al., 2018; Kocollari et al., 2024; Nkansah-Dwamena, 2024). These practices overlap with, but are not identical to, human resource management because their underlying rationale explicitly positions employees within the organization's broader social responsibility obligations.

Within the Philippine service context, employee engagement, inclusion, and workforce stability remain important managerial concerns. Practitioner-oriented sources have emphasized the need for stronger employee engagement in Philippine workplaces (Rohadisantoso, 2024), while the concepts of *bayanihan* and *pakikipagkapwa* are often invoked to describe collective responsibility and relational orientation. However, the reviewed literature provides limited direct empirical testing of whether these cultural values amplify the effect of employee-centric CSR on workforce commitment. This distinction is important: contextual relevance should be demonstrated rather than assumed.

Existing research generally suggests that employee-oriented CSR can improve favorable employee outcomes, yet the strength and mechanisms of these relationships vary. Meta-analytic and empirical work indicates that internal and external CSR can affect organizational identification, satisfaction, commitment, and retention through different pathways (Aggarwal & Singh, 2022; Farooq et al., 2017). Other studies report that internal CSR does not always have a significant direct relationship with employee outcomes, implying that perceived authenticity, job satisfaction, organizational support, or contextual conditions may shape the effect (Chatzopoulou et al., 2022; Nejati & Shafaei, 2023). This inconsistency creates a useful basis for a context-sensitive review.

Therefore, this article reviews the relationship between employee-centric CSR and workforce commitment with particular attention to Philippine service organizations. It seeks to clarify the relevant concepts, synthesize the mechanisms identified in prior research, assess the extent to which existing evidence can be transferred to the Philippine service context, and identify priorities for future empirical research. The review is guided by two questions: (1) how is employee-centric CSR associated with workforce commitment, and (2) through which organizational and psychological mechanisms is this relationship most plausibly explained?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee-centric corporate social responsibility

Employee-centric CSR refers to responsible organizational practices directed toward employees as internal stakeholders. Whereas traditional CSR is frequently associated with philanthropy, community development, environmental initiatives, or customer-facing responsibility, employee-centric CSR directs attention to the conditions under which employees work and participate in organizational life. El Akremi et al. (2018) demonstrate that employees evaluate corporate responsibility across multiple stakeholder domains, supporting the view that responsibility toward employees is a distinct and meaningful component of overall CSR.

More recent research has refined the employee-centric perspective. Kocollari et al. (2024) identify five employee-centered elements—envisioning, equity, empowerment, experimentation, and empathy—that connect responsible organizational practice with employees' workplace experience. These elements emphasize shared values, fair treatment, professional growth, innovative participation, and supportive relationships. Ganu (2024) likewise frames CSR as organizational care for employee wellbeing, while Nkansah-Dwamena (2024) highlights inclusion, equity, and employee empowerment as important components of sustainable workplaces. The emphasis is therefore broader than employee participation in volunteering alone; it encompasses the quality of the employment relationship itself.

This broader interpretation is consistent with sustainable business practice. Wolniak and Grebski (2023) argue that sustainable organizations integrate social considerations with economic and environmental responsibilities rather than treating social responsibility as a peripheral activity. Gomes and Ribeiro (2024) similarly emphasize people-centric and inclusive organizational approaches. In this sense, employee-centric CSR can be understood as an internal social responsibility architecture that aligns organizational values with employee wellbeing, inclusion, voice, and development.

Workforce commitment

Workforce commitment refers to the strength of employees' attachment to, identification with, and willingness to remain in an organization. The construct is closely related to organizational commitment, which is commonly understood through affective, continuance, and normative dimensions (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment reflects emotional attachment, continuance commitment reflects perceived costs associated with leaving, and normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation to remain. For a literature review focused on sustainable employee relationships, affective and normative commitment are especially relevant because they capture relational and value-based attachment rather than retention based solely on economic necessity.

Commitment is strengthened when employees perceive that the organization provides meaningful support, fair treatment, development opportunities, recognition, and a credible future within the organization. Pa'wan and Said (2020) show that talent management practices can strengthen organizational commitment, illustrating the broader principle that employees respond to organizational investment in their development. This logic also appears in contemporary CSR research, in which internal social responsibility practices are linked to job satisfaction, engagement, normative commitment, and employee retention (Ramdhan et al., 2022; Van et al., 2024).

Workforce commitment should not be conflated with employee engagement. Engagement concerns the degree to which employees invest cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy in their work or organizational roles, whereas commitment concerns the durability of the employee-organization relationship. The constructs are related, but not interchangeable. In service organizations, both matter: engagement influences service delivery in the present, while commitment supports continuity, retention, and accumulated organizational knowledge over time.

Theoretical relationship between employee-centric CSR and workforce commitment

Two complementary perspectives are particularly useful for explaining why employee-centric CSR may strengthen workforce commitment: social exchange theory and social identity theory. Social exchange theory proposes that favorable treatment creates a norm of reciprocity; employees who perceive genuine organizational investment in their wellbeing, development, fairness, and participation may reciprocate with stronger loyalty and commitment (Blau, 1964). Evidence from service employees supports this logic, showing that internal social responsibility can strengthen job satisfaction and organizational engagement (Van et al., 2024), while research in banking indicates positive relationships between internal CSR practices and multiple dimensions of organizational commitment (Chapagain et al., 2025).

Social identity theory adds an identity-based explanation. Employees are more likely to identify with organizations they perceive as respectable, values-consistent, and socially responsible (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Farooq et al. (2017) show that internal CSR aimed at employee welfare can increase perceived respect and organizational identification. This mechanism is important because commitment may emerge not only from reciprocal exchange but also from the extent to which organizational membership supports employees' sense of identity and self-worth.

The relationship is nevertheless contingent on credibility. CSR that is perceived as symbolic, inconsistent, or disconnected from actual employment practices can weaken rather than strengthen employee responses. Nejati and Shafaei (2023) found that substantive CSR was associated with affective commitment through meaningfulness, whereas symbolic CSR did not produce the same effect. Similarly, Chatzopoulou et al. (2022) report that internal CSR does not always have a direct significant effect on employee outcomes, reinforcing the need to examine mediating mechanisms and contextual conditions rather than assuming a universal relationship.

3. METHODS

This study employed a narrative literature review to examine employee-centric CSR, workforce commitment, and the relationship between the two constructs in the context of service organizations. A narrative approach was retained because the original study was designed to synthesize concepts, empirical patterns, and contextual explanations rather than estimate a pooled statistical effect. The review therefore does not claim the protocol completeness required for a systematic review or meta-analysis.

Relevant literature was identified through Google Scholar and ResearchGate using combinations of the terms corporate social responsibility, CSR, employee-centric CSR, internal CSR, workforce commitment, organizational commitment, employee engagement, and service organizations. Peer-reviewed journal articles were prioritized, while selected scholarly reports, books, and practitioner sources already contained in the original manuscript were retained to preserve the study's contextual foundation. Sources were considered when they directly addressed one or both focal constructs, offered a clear theoretical or empirical contribution, or provided contextual insight relevant to employee-oriented responsibility and commitment.

The selected literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis. Evidence was organized into four analytical themes: the scope of employee-centric CSR, the nature of workforce commitment, mechanisms linking CSR to employee commitment, and implications for Philippine service organizations. Because the unit of analysis is published literature rather than respondent-level observations, statistical procedures such as multiple linear regression, multiple correlation, F-tests, t-tests, coefficient of determination, research instrument validation, and classical assumption tests are not applicable to this review design.

Table 1. Narrative Review Protocol

Component	Application in this review
Review design	Narrative literature review with thematic synthesis.
Information sources	Google Scholar and ResearchGate, supplemented by sources retained from the original manuscript.
Core search terms	Corporate social responsibility; CSR; employee-centric CSR; internal CSR; workforce commitment; organizational commitment; employee engagement; service organizations.
Selection emphasis	Direct relevance to the focal constructs, methodological clarity, theoretical or empirical contribution, and contextual usefulness.
Evidence priority	Peer-reviewed journal articles were prioritized; selected books, reports, and practitioner materials were retained for contextual support.
Synthesis domains	Employee-centric CSR; workforce commitment; linking mechanisms; service-sector and Philippine contextual implications.
Analytical boundary	No respondent-level statistical analysis, instrument validation, or classical assumption testing was conducted.

Source: Authors' synthesis (2026).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employee-centric CSR as an internal stakeholder strategy

The literature synthesis shows that employee-centric CSR is best understood as an internal stakeholder strategy rather than a narrow set of volunteer activities. Across the reviewed literature, recurring dimensions include employee wellbeing, fairness, inclusion, voice, development, supportive relationships, work-life balance, and participation in socially meaningful activity. This pattern is consistent with the multidimensional stakeholder responsibility perspective of El Akremi et al. (2018) and with the employee-centric framework developed by Kocollari et al. (2024). It also aligns with the emphasis on organizational care and inclusive workplaces in Ganu (2024) and Nkansah-Dwamena (2024).

This finding sharpens the original article's concept of employee-centric CSR. Employee participation in community initiatives can contribute to purpose and belonging, but commitment is unlikely to be sustained if internal employment practices are inconsistent with the organization's external social claims. The strategic value of employee-centric CSR therefore rests on coherence: employees should experience responsibility in daily organizational processes, not only observe CSR as an outward-facing communication activity.

Mechanisms linking employee-centric CSR to commitment

The second theme concerns the mechanisms through which employee-centric CSR can strengthen commitment. The strongest explanation is relational. When employees perceive fair treatment, support, development opportunities, and concern for wellbeing, these practices communicate that the organization values them. Under social exchange logic, employees may reciprocate through loyalty, discretionary contribution, and intention to remain. Van et al. (2024) show that internal social responsibility is associated with service employees' job satisfaction and organizational engagement, while Ramdhan et al. (2022) identify internal CSR as a predictor of normative commitment. Evidence from Serbian service companies also supports a positive association between internal social responsibility and organizational commitment (Damjanović et al., 2024).

Identity-based mechanisms provide a complementary explanation. Responsible treatment of employees can enhance perceived organizational respect and strengthen identification with the organization. Farooq et al. (2017) demonstrate that internal CSR directed toward employee welfare influences organizational identification through perceived respect. Ahsan and Khalid (2024) further show that CSR orientations can influence organizational commitment through employee job satisfaction. Collectively, these findings suggest that commitment is not produced by CSR labels themselves, but by employees' interpretations of what the practices imply about organizational values, respect, and the quality of the employment relationship.

The evidence also cautions against deterministic claims. Chatzopoulou et al. (2022) found that internal CSR did not necessarily have a significant direct association with employee attitudes and behaviors in isolation, while Nejati and Shafaei (2023) distinguish substantive CSR from symbolic CSR and show that authenticity matters for affective commitment. The implication is that employee-centric CSR should be assessed in terms of credibility, consistency, and employee experience rather than simply the existence of formal programs.

Service-sector relevance and the Philippine context

The service sector makes these mechanisms particularly consequential because employees are central to the creation and delivery of customer value. Research on internal social responsibility among service employees indicates that employee-oriented practices can strengthen satisfaction and organizational engagement (Van et al., 2024). Chapagain et al. (2025) similarly report that internal CSR practices are positively related to affective, continuance, and normative commitment in a service-intensive banking context. Although these studies were conducted outside the Philippines, they provide relevant comparative evidence for service organizations in Southeast Asian and collectivist settings.

For Philippine service organizations, the original manuscript appropriately highlights inclusion, community orientation, and values such as bayanihan. However, the literature base reviewed here does not yet justify treating these cultural values as empirically established moderators of the CSR-commitment relationship. Sources such as Rohadisantoso (2024) provide useful practitioner context regarding employee engagement in the Philippines, while Lyngnes (2019, 2024) and Gomes and Ribeiro (2024) support the broader move toward employee-centric and people-centric organizations. The stronger academic conclusion is therefore that the Philippine context is theoretically relevant but still empirically underdeveloped.

This gap is especially important for Kabankalan City and comparable local service markets. The original article describes employee participation in community outreach and inclusive workplace initiatives, yet it does not provide organization-level primary data that can verify the prevalence or effectiveness of these practices. Future empirical research should therefore test the proposed relationship directly among service employees and distinguish between perceived employee-centric CSR, actual program availability, and employee participation.

Integrated synthesis and managerial implications

The integrated evidence suggests that employee-centric CSR can strengthen workforce commitment when four conditions are present. First, responsibility must be experienced internally through fair and supportive employment practices. Second, initiatives should offer employees meaningful participation rather than symbolic visibility. Third, CSR should be consistent with organizational values and everyday managerial behavior. Fourth, practices should be sensitive to sectoral and cultural context. These conditions explain why the same CSR label may generate different employee responses across organizations.

For service managers, the practical implication is not to create more CSR programs indiscriminately, but to align CSR with the employee experience. Priorities may include credible wellbeing support, equitable treatment, inclusive decision-making, development opportunities, recognition, work-life support, and mechanisms for employee-led social initiatives. This interpretation is consistent with purpose-driven workplace arguments (Suswaram & Satpathy, 2025), people-centric organizational approaches (Gomes & Ribeiro, 2024), and sustainable business practices that integrate social responsibility into core operations (Wolniak & Grebski, 2023).

The evidence also suggests a measurement implication. Future studies should avoid using a single undifferentiated CSR construct when the research question concerns employee commitment. Employee-centric or internal CSR should be measured explicitly, and commitment should be differentiated into affective, normative, and continuance dimensions where appropriate. This would allow Philippine studies to identify which specific practices are associated with which forms of commitment and whether job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, organizational identification, or perceived CSR authenticity operate as mediating mechanisms.

Table 2. Thematic Synthesis of the Reviewed Evidence

Theme	Consistent evidence pattern	Implication for workforce commitment	Representative sources
Employee as an internal stakeholder	CSR increasingly includes wellbeing, equity, empowerment, inclusion, and employee participation.	Commitment is more plausible when responsibility is embedded in the employment relationship.	El Akremi et al. (2018); Kocollari et al. (2024); Ganu (2024)
Reciprocity and support	Employee-oriented practices signal care, investment, and fair treatment.	Employees may reciprocate with loyalty, engagement, and intention to remain.	Ramdhan et al. (2022); Van et al. (2024); Chapagain et al. (2025)
Identification and respect	Internal CSR can enhance perceived respect and organizational identification.	Value congruence and identification can strengthen affective attachment.	Farooq et al. (2017); Ahsan & Khalid (2024)
Authenticity and consistency	Substantive CSR produces stronger employee responses than symbolic	Credibility and perceived authenticity condition the CSR-commitment	Chatzopoulou et al. (2022); Nejati & Shafaei (2023)

	CSR; direct effects are not always uniform.	relationship.	
Service-sector relevance	Employee attitudes are especially consequential where service quality depends on employee-customer interaction.	Internal CSR may support continuity, engagement, and service reliability through stronger employee attachment.	Van et al. (2024); Damnjanović et al. (2024)
Philippine evidence gap	Contextual arguments are plausible, but direct Philippine empirical evidence remains limited in the reviewed material.	Local culture and service conditions should be tested as contextual variables rather than assumed.	Rohadisantoso (2024); Lyngnes (2024); authors' synthesis

Source: Authors' synthesis of the reviewed literature (2026).

Research gaps and future agenda

Three research gaps emerge from the synthesis. First, Philippine-specific evidence remains limited. Much of the empirical evidence on internal CSR and employee commitment comes from other national contexts, including Vietnam, Serbia, Nepal, Australia, Italy, and South Asia. Cross-context transfer is informative but cannot substitute for direct evidence from Philippine service organizations.

Second, the field requires greater conceptual precision. Employee-centric CSR, internal CSR, employee engagement, wellbeing, and organizational commitment are related but distinct constructs. Future studies should define these constructs explicitly and avoid treating engagement, satisfaction, and commitment as interchangeable outcomes. Third, the authenticity of CSR deserves direct measurement. The contrast between substantive and symbolic responsibility suggests that employees evaluate not only what organizations claim to do, but whether the practices are consistent with daily treatment and organizational values (Nejati & Shafaei, 2023).

A useful future design would therefore test a model in which perceived employee-centric CSR predicts affective and normative commitment through job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, or organizational identification, while CSR authenticity and culturally relevant relational values are examined as potential boundary conditions. Longitudinal or multi-source designs would be particularly valuable because they could distinguish short-term favorable attitudes from sustained workforce commitment over time.

5. CONCLUSION

This review indicates that employee-centric CSR is more than an extension of external philanthropy; it represents the organization's responsibility toward employees as internal stakeholders. Across the literature, practices related to wellbeing, fairness, inclusion, development, participation, and supportive relationships are associated with stronger employee attachment when they are experienced as credible and consistent. Social exchange and social identity perspectives explain the relationship through reciprocity, perceived respect, and organizational identification, while recent evidence shows that authenticity and contextual conditions can strengthen or weaken these effects. For Philippine service organizations, employee-centric CSR offers a relevant framework for workforce stability and commitment, but the current evidence base remains insufficient for strong context-specific claims. Future research should therefore test the relationship directly in Philippine service settings, distinguish the dimensions of both CSR and commitment, and examine mediating and contextual mechanisms. Managerially, the priority is not the number of CSR initiatives but the consistency between stated social values and employees' everyday organizational experience.

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