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# Study on the Links between Organizational Models of Social Responsibility and Employee Social Identification. Case Studies of Organizations in Eastern Canada

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## **Abstract**

*Currently, organizations are being called upon to adapt to numerous crises, which hinder their development and even their survival. Among these crises there are significant upheavals in the job market. In this context of uncertainty, companies are trying to find tools to better retain and build employee loyalty. One of these tools would be the understanding of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its links with employees' perception of identification with the organization. Despite the existence of some studies on CSR and human resources management (HRM), several facets of the subject remain to be explored. Based on a cross-sectional qualitative research using a comparative case study of two organizations in Eastern Canada, we wanted to study potential links between the fields of CSR and HRM. The first objective was to create an integrative model based on a literature review of the founding texts of CSR and to test it with managers and employees. Next, we aimed to study employees' perceptions of their social identification and the links they perceived between CSR and their social identification. Finally, we made comparisons between the two organizations in relation to the subjects under study. Our research results demonstrated the relevance of the CSR management model we designed. We also observed a strong general connection between employees and their organization. Although further research will be necessary to validate this result, our research demonstrates the existence of a link between participants' perception of social identification and social responsibility management models. Thus, according to employees, sharing the same values as their organization could increase the identification link. However, it was the model as a whole that was appreciated by employees and not specific social responsibility measures. In short, one of the important and novel contributions of this study is the analysis of the connection between two different fields, namely the field of strategic management and that of organizational behavior while also achieving significant results.*

**Keywords:** Organizational social responsibility; social identification; Canada; strategic management; organizational behaviour.

**JEL Classification:** M14

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.24818/ejis.2026.05>

## **1. Introduction**

We are currently experiencing major upheavals in the world of work, including labour shortages and the difficulty of attracting and retaining employees. Obviously, these changes can affect services to citizens, whether through reduced opening hours or a lack of product or service offerings (Canadian Federation of Independent Business [CFIB], 2022). Recruitment and

retention of the workforce are therefore becoming major issues for today's organizations. It's in their interest to look for sustainable, effective solutions to this problem.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) could play a key role in responding to these upheavals in the world of work. Despite numerous scientific studies on the subject, it is a little-known concept among employees and even employers. The difficulty of agreeing on a common definition of the concept gives an idea of the extent of the divergences surrounding it (Baba, 2018, Pereira, 2014). One of the definitions most often cited in the literature is that of Carroll (1979), who argues that CSR encompasses a society's economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations of organizations at a given point in time. CSR could then be seen as, for example, an organization's commitment that goes beyond simply satisfying the interests of shareholders, by focusing instead on all its stakeholders. The organization's stakeholders could include employees, consumers, suppliers and other groups with whom it has a relationship.

A more detailed presentation of the main definitions we have retained from the literature will be made later in the dissertation, but we can retain the fact that CSR can be seen as a means of better orienting personnel management, and conversely, human resources management can be an important lever for implementing CSR. Conversely, human resources management can be an important lever for implementing CSR (Barthes and Belabbes, 2016). In fact, CSR could be a lever for attracting labour through the positive image it conveys (Leyuan, 2024).

For their part, Igalens et al (2011) carried out a qualitative study that sought to understand the meaning employees attribute to corporate social responsibility. The authors investigate the link between perceptions of CSR and perceptions of the organization. The results of the study suggest that companies can strengthen their power of attraction and influence social identification through their CSR actions. This is the same conclusion that Bernadino (2025) and Sun and al. (2021) came to. We'd like to pursue this line of thought by looking at the role that corporate social responsibility management models can play in relation to the social identification of the employees who make up the company. This represents an innovative research idea, which we approach in an exploratory way.

We have chosen to study the concept of social identification, since social identity theory can refer to the feeling of self-esteem and the sense of belonging to a group in self-concept (Tajfel, 1982). We'd like to know what links might exist between the CSR business model and social identification. We also want to know whether the importance attached to the measures, the temporality and the social pressure exerted could influence employees' perception of social identification. We will then present our integrative model, based on the literature, which includes all these characteristics.

Thus, the first research question is as follows: Can we establish an integrative model of CSR, based on the founding texts of CSR in the literature? So, the first objective of this research is to create an integrative model based on a literature review of the foundation texts of CSR.

Despite CSR management efforts, CSR may be perceived differently by employees, both individually and collectively. The link between social identity and CSR is little studied in the literature, and could provide clues as to the possibility of using CSR in a context of social identification with the organization. We hypothesize that employees would have a favorable perception of the group with which they identify when CSR measures are applied in the workplace. We therefore wish to answer the following second research question: What are the links between the corporate social responsibility management model and employee social identification? Using a cross-sectional qualitative approach based on a comparative case study of two organizations, we wanted to establish the following objectives for this second research question:

- Describe participants' perceptions of the components of their organization's integrative model of social responsibility.
- Expose employees' perceptions of their social identification.
- Detail the links reported by employees between CSR and social identification.

In what follows, the literature review and the research model will be presented, followed by the research framework, results and finally, the conclusion.

## 2. Literature review

To answer the research questions, the literature review on CSR and social identity theory will be presented. As already mentioned, the research is based on founding texts of these two fields of study.

### 2.1 Corporate social responsibility

The proliferation of CSR measures today, moreover, allows us to question the very definition of CSR (Gond & Igalens, 2018). Several authors in the scientific literature offer definitions of the concept.

Carroll's (1979) definition is certainly the most cited in the literature consulted. According to this author, CSR encompasses a society's economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations of organizations at a given point in time.

More current definitions of CSR are more akin to that proposed by ISO 26 000 (Pereira, 2014), which states that:

“[...] an organization's responsibility towards the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment is reflected in transparent and ethical behavior that: contributes to sustainable development, including the health and well-being of society; takes into account the expectations of stakeholders; respects applicable laws while being consistent with international standards of behavior; is integrated throughout the organization and implemented in its relationships”. (p. 61)

For its part, the European Commission's Green Paper defines CSR as the voluntary integration of social and environmental concerns in their companies' business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders (Gond & Igalens, 2018).

Similarities in definitions are represented by the voluntary nature of CSR and the inclusion of stakeholders. That's why we wanted to define CSR models in our comparative study. Since they are interpreted and applied at the discretion of each organization, the measures will be implemented differently from one organization to another.

### Models of CSR

For the purposes of this research, we have decided to adopt three established CSR models and to propose our own research model, which we call the integrative model. This will enable us to define models of social responsibility specific to the organizations participating in our research.

#### *Carroll's model*

Carroll (1979, 2016) suggests that the following three distinct aspects need to be defined and interrelated, namely: a basic definition of social responsibility, an enumeration of the issues for

which social responsibility exists and, finally, a specification of the philosophy of response. The model also proposes four levels of responsibility that society expects of companies. The four levels are part of the very definition of CSR: economic, legal, ethical and discretionary (Carroll, 1979, p.500).

### *Pasquero's model*

Pasquero (Turcotte, 2018) proposes to develop an open model that could evolve over time, while addressing the history of the CSR concept. All the dimensions currently covered in the various concepts or definitions of CSR are present in this model, i.e. efficient management, philanthropy, concern, harm limitation, social responsiveness, ethics, accountability and proactive civic engagement. Also, it's important to point out that for Pasquero, the model must be conjunctive, i.e. all the elements included in the model must be minimally satisfied.

### *ISO 26000 standard*

The ISO 26000 model, published in 2010, aims to establish two fundamental practices of social responsibility. First, the organization must identify its social responsibility and the stakeholders in its environment. Second, the standard goes on to propose seven core CSR issues, including human rights, labor relations and working conditions, respect for the environment and ethics, local development and the integration of CSR into all organizational governance practices.

The integrative model who will be presented below is an adaptation of the various models described earlier, to which the features we consider important was added. These three models of CSR were chosen because they are recognized in the scientific literature and we believe they are complementary.

## **2.2 Social identity**

Social identity theory could explain the positive effect of CSR on employees, as they are able to identify positively with the organization. Indeed, previous research points to a link between social identification and employee engagement, as well as a positive link with job satisfaction (Schill et al., 2018).

Henri Tajfel, who developed the theory of social identity in the 1970s, considers two types of identity: personal and social. According to this author, social identity represents the part of the "self-concept" that stems from the individual's awareness of belonging to a social group. It's also about the value and meaning they attribute to this membership (Tajfel, 1972). The "self-concept" is therefore influenced by membership of social organizations, including the one for which an individual works (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). According to Tajfel's model, employees will have a more positive self-concept, and perhaps higher self-esteem, if they work for an organization with a good reputation (Tajfel, 1972).

Organizational identification is a concept derived from social identity theory. Organizational identification refers more precisely to the level at which an employee identifies himself using the same values and attributes as the organization he works for (Dutton et al., 1994, cited by Schill et al., 2018). From this perspective, the organization one works for is necessarily an important part of an individual's identity construction and often considered the most important social group of which he or she is a part. Organizational identification therefore represents a major aspect of an employee's social identity (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Schill et al., 2018).

Tajfel (1972) defined three components of social identity theory: cognitive, evaluative and affective. The cognitive dimension is the dimension in which individuals naturally tend to classify themselves into groups. The second, the evaluative dimension, refers to collective self-

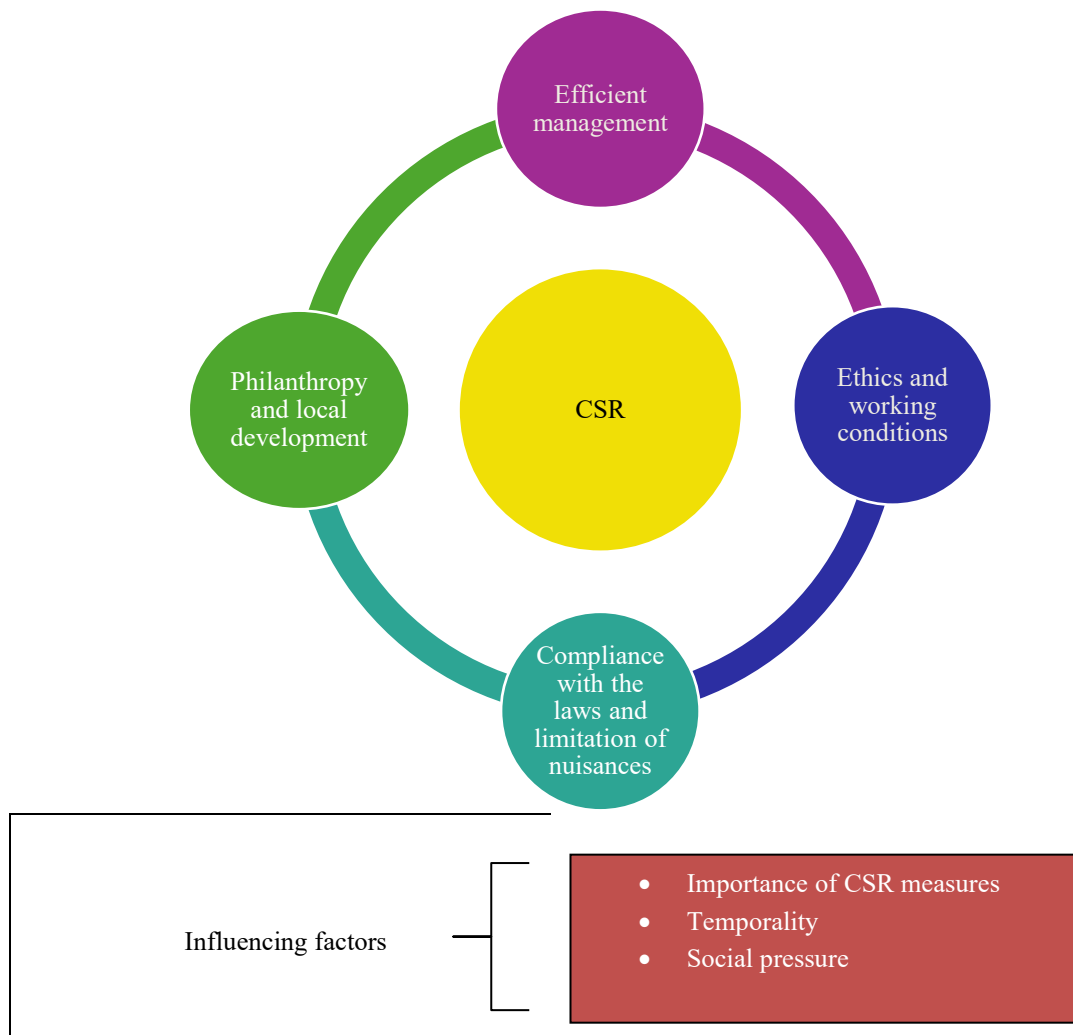
esteem. The third and final dimension is emotional. This dimension explains why individuals like or dislike the reference group with which they identify.

For their part, Ashforth and Mael (1989) propose four factors that most likely increase the tendency to identify with groups: group distinctiveness, prestige, salience of comparable groups and intergroup competition.

As part of our research, we decided to ask employees about Tajfel’s (1972) three components of social identity, the factors that can increase the tendency to identify with the group according to Ashforth and Mael (1989), and the link they establish or not between social identification and CSR.

Our review of the literature on social identity suggests that an individual with a positive perception of his or her organization feels identified with it. Indeed, if the employee defines himself/herself in part through their organization, and if this link gives them a boost to their self-esteem, we might wonder about the role of CSR in this sense of identification.

**Figure 1. Synthesized integrative CSR model**



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### **2.3 The research model**

Following the literature review, we designed an integrative management model of CSR. Indeed, in our research, we compared CSR management models and linked them to employee social identification. The companies we met in order to participate in our research propose CSR measures within the organization, but on the other hand, had no CSR management model. We went back and forth between theory and practice to define a model for each organization. In fact, the following characteristics were taken into account when designing the CSR management model: i) the content of CSR measures, ii) the level of importance of CSR components, iii) temporality and iv) social pressure. The first feature comes from the literature review. The other three characterized represent our addition to the already existing literature on the subject. Figure 1 shows the synthesized integrative model, including the new factors we wish to incorporate.

Schill et al. (2018) argue that “according to psychological distance theory, the CSR is spatially and temporally close to the employee. Indeed, through the actions, relationships and relations developed with stakeholders, the notion of CSR refers to a concrete concept that is part of the employee’s daily life” (paragraph 5). CSR measures would therefore be easier for employees to perceive than other, more abstract actions.

Based on the assumption that an individual wants to share the same values as the company he or she works for, and that a bond can improve self-esteem, we hypothesized that social responsibility measures could create a sense of social identification among employees.

## **3. Methodology**

We carried out a comparative cross-sectional study between two organizations to determine the link between CSR management models and the social identification felt by workers. The integrative model served as a framework for identifying CSR measures.

### **3.1 Methodological approach**

Qualitative research generates highly detailed information, with a view to describe a precise situation (Gavard-Perret et al., 2012).

The research approach chosen is the comparative case study. The case study is an empirical research approach that consists of investigating a phenomenon, an event, a group or a set of individuals, selected in a non-random way, in order to draw an accurate description and an interpretation that exceeds its limits. Case studies are already widely recognized by the scientific community for their contribution to understanding factors that are difficult to measure (Roy, 2009). As the elements of our research are mainly based on perceptions evoked by employees, the case study is therefore an appropriate way to conduct this research.

### **3.2 Data collection method**

In order to compare CSR management models, two organizations in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, in the province of Quebec in eastern Canada, that had implemented socially responsible measures were targeted. The research took place in winter-fall 2022.

Given the high risk of the organizations participating in our study being recognized, we limit ourselves to saying that the first organization is a public institution, while the second operates

in the mining sector, a highly developed industry in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. An initial sample of management personnel in each company enabled us to define the organization's preferred CSR management model. Within each organization, these meetings have enabled us to build the CSR management model in place. Using a purposive sampling approach, we interviewed one manager from each organization. The executives we met were managers who work directly with social responsibility management.

A second sampling of employees was carried out. A voluntary sampling method was used. As we received many requests to take part in the study, we then proceeded with simple random sampling among the volunteers. Sampling criteria were age group, gender, position and seniority. Our sample of employees included nine people from organization A and eight people from organization B, for a total of 17.

### **3.3 Data collection tools and procedures**

Two types of data were used in this study. The first consisted in consulting the literature that helped us identify the integrating model of CSR management in the organization. We consulted human resources management policies, organizational strategic plans and sustainability reports. The second type of data is interview verbatims. The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted by the researcher. We conducted a total of 19 interviews. We used theoretical saturation, which suggests that we stop interviewing when it doesn't provide any new information, when the data collected is saturated (Flick, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually, on the Zoom platform, and were recorded for analysis.

### **3.4 Data analysis method**

Following each meeting, we produced the verbatim, the coding and carried out a preliminary thematic analysis. The documentation was then indexed to facilitate theme searches.

As far as coding was concerned, the first step was to define the breakdown rules. Emergent coding was established around the themes and, of course, the thematic analysis steps were carried out by the researcher (Gavart-Perret, 2012). To assist us in our analysis, we used NVIVO software throughout the process. This software enabled us to store sentence-by-sentence extracts from our interviews and build coding around the themes addressed.

Finally, we made sure that we respected the criteria for scientific research. Thus, we ensured the credibility of our study by clearly defining the objectives of our research and paying attention to consistency with our data collected in the field. Transparency also means that results can be corroborated or not by other researchers. To ensure research reliability, triangulation is a useful strategy. We have triangulated information sources to ensure greater transparency. In fact, we consulted the documentation, spoke to a manager in each organization and consulted employees to identify the CSR management model.

## **4. Analysis & Results interpretation**

### **4.1 Management models for corporate social responsibility**

In order to determine the social responsibility management model used by each of the organizations in our study, we conducted an interview with a manager from each organization. As discussed earlier, we used the integrative model of our research to classify the various measures proposed by the organizations. The identified measures have all been categorized into

one or the other of the four categories selected: efficient management, ethics and working conditions, compliance with the law and limitation of nuisance, or philanthropy and local development.

### **Corporate social responsibility management model of Organization A**

In the *Efficient Management* category, Organization A had a number of features that are typical of a public-sector institution. Indeed, the intelligent use of resources remains a major challenge for the organization, even if it is not profit-driven. As examples, we noted in the manager's speech elements referring to a culture of efficient management, the importance of good stewardship of public funds, and the Lean and collaborative approach. All these elements had to work in harmony with the organization's mission and values.

For example, with regard to the culture of efficient management, the manager of organization A told us that "For me, money is a means of achieving our mission". For this public organization, efficient management does not refer to making profits, but rather to the intelligent use of resources.

As for the *Ethics and working conditions* component, elements such as compliance with laws and standards, the renewal of the code of ethics for employees, the existence of advantageous collective agreements, the adoption of the civility policy and the overall health policy emerged among others from the interview with the manager of this organization.

Compliance with the law (as a component of ethics), seems essential to the long-term survival of organization A. Indeed, the manager placed a great deal of emphasis on this issue.

*"I see myself at (name of organization) being a public institution, with an even greater responsibility not to deviate from the laws. [...] I see this role as even more important, to respect all legislation, both provincial and federal". (Manager of Organization A).*

The *Compliance with the law and limitation of nuisance* category refers to respect for environmental laws and the reduction of environmental nuisance. In connection with this topic, elements linked to the implementation of an eco-responsibility plan, obtaining LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for a building, maintaining a balance between the institution's development and the availability of resources were mentioned by this manager.

The framework about the respect for the environment now seems to be establishing itself as a course of action for Organization A.

*"[...] So there was an individual will on the part of several individuals, but it was never written into the development plan. For the first time, we've put it in place, and we're in the process of drawing up an action plan" (Manager, Organization A).*

*Philanthropy and local development* are a key component for Organization A. Local development is at the heart of its mission, and philanthropy is essential to its smooth operation. The use of philanthropy to fund special projects or award scholarships, the company's role as a regional development agent, its presence in the cultural arena and its aboriginal involvement are all elements identified in connection with this component of Organization A's social responsibility.

With regard to the part of the integrative model dealing with the importance of CSR components, certain components are deemed more important by the manager, such as ethics, values, legal compliance and community involvement.

In terms of timing, it seems that the implementation of social responsibility measures is closely linked to the importance attached to certain components. Social responsibility for Organization A is an ongoing process.

Finally, on the subject of social pressure, the manager mentions that the shortage of manpower and social pressure related to the environment have made it possible to encourage the implementation of the employer brand and to support environmental actions.

To conclude, considering what is important for Organization A and the measures proposed in the organization's social responsibility model, we were able to note that ethics and the close bond with its community were at the base of the existence and functioning of Organization A, which led us to call its CSR model: **Ethical and good citizen model**.

### **Corporate social responsibility management model of Organization B**

Organization B is a mining company in the private sector. During our interview with a manager of this organization, and by consulting the organization's documentation, we were also able to list various social responsibility measures.

For Organization B, *efficient management* is just as important then for Organization A. The manager we spoke to believes that efficient management is key to the smooth running of his organization. A number of measures proposed by this company emerged from the interview, for example, the effective use of resources, knowledge and skill promote efficiency, being at the cutting edge of technology and the influence of the company founder, who instills a culture of benevolence and efficiency from the outset. With regard to the latter, the manager stated during the interview that:

*“At (name of organization) it's a question of culture, it goes back to the influence of its founder (name of founder), who created this company, so he had a benevolent personality. And the way he interacted with others, with employees, with business partners, with suppliers and with communities, still rubs off on the organization today, 30 years after his death. It's really special”.*

With regard to *ethics and working conditions*, a series of measures have been taken within Organization B. These include the concern to maintain ethical credibility and to have policies and measures evaluated by external auditors, the attention paid to health and safety as the most important aspects of human resources management, the concern to maintain ethical credibility and have policies and measures assessed by external auditors, the highly attractive total compensation package, and the hiring and promotion of employees on the basis of merit.

The manager we spoke to told us that *complying with the law and limiting nuisance* was a key issue for the organization today. Elements related to this category include: understanding the risk of climate change such as cyclones, forest fires and heavy rainfall, implementing measures to reduce emissions to air, water and soil and minimize the environmental footprint, including deforestation, integrating biodiversity conservation and land-use planning aspects into all stages of operations, restoring mining sites to ensure long-term stability, etc.

We were able to see that the environmental measures were numerous. The mining industry has a strong environmental impact, and the organization is committed to minimizing the effects of its activities on the environment.

When it comes to *philanthropy and local development*, since Company B is a private-sector organization, it is more likely to be asked to donate to philanthropic foundations than to use funds that may come from philanthropy. As for local development, it is at the heart of our strategy to ensure that our activities are acceptable to communities. In this area, the company

is making significant gestures: significant donations to the community, involvement and collaboration with aboriginal peoples, support for local communities and contribution to their sustainability through the implementation of measures such as development programs, programs for the local purchase of goods and services, and programs for the hiring of local workers.

Regarding *the temporality of the measures*, the manager told us that social responsibility in the organization was established from the outset, through the benevolent nature of their founder. With regard to *the social pressures* that may be felt within the organization, we can conclude that it is listening to its community and stakeholders.

To conclude, we could say that Organization B wishes to continue to be involved in its community and to ensure that it remains caring, just like the company's founder. For these reasons, we have named Organization B's CSR model: **Caring and corporate citizenship model.**

#### 4.2 Social identification

In what follows, we present the results of our research in relation to the social identification of study participants. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we conducted a total of 17 interviews with employees from both organizations. For each organization, we first present the results in relation to the three dimensions of social identity: cognitive, evaluative and affective. Through the different dimensions, we also present the results of the interviews in relation to the four factors that can influence the tendency to identify with the group.

##### Social identification of the Organization A

The cognitive dimension is the dimension in which individuals naturally tend to classify themselves into groups. Participants from Organization A all mentioned feeling part of a group at work. Although most of the employees we interviewed felt they belonged to the organization as a whole, the majority said they felt more involved with their department.

Several employees mention the link with their colleagues, the similarity and complementarity of their tasks with those of their colleagues, which could foster identification with the group.

*"We're really good friends, we work together [...] we even have a group on social networks called (name of group), we give each other news on that. [...] you could say that we're united as a group. [...] we work together all the time, we help each other, there's always mutual support... That's why I say yes, we really are a group, and that's important to me" (Employee 2, Organization A).*

The second dimension of social identification, known as evaluative, refers to collective self-esteem. We were able to see from the various testimonials that employees at Organization A were able to compare themselves with other organizations. Also, all employees stated that, in their perception, people in general respect the organization they work for.

The third dimension of social identification is affective. With the exception of one participant, all were proud to work for this organization.

*"I can't hide the fact that I've always aspired to work here after my studies. Thus I've had a different career path, but I'm very proud to be where I am today" (Employee A9).*

Without being in a position to comment on the sense of social identification as a whole, we can nonetheless conclude that during the interviews, participants from Organization A mentioned their group bond, their pride in working for their organization, and the emotional involvement

they feel towards their organization. Prestige was more ambiguous for the participants we spoke to.

### **Social identification of the Organization B**

As far as the cognitive dimension is concerned, all participants from Organization B mentioned feeling part of a group at work. The feeling of group recognition was named more in relation to the department to which participants belong than for the organization as a whole: *“I feel really proud to be part of the (name of organization) family” (Employee B4).*

As regards the evaluative dimension, i.e. assigning a value to the group, all respondents named other organizations in the same industry when we asked if they knew of any companies similar to their own. The positioning of this aspect seemed much clearer for the employees of this organization.

In terms of the affective dimension, we talked to employees about pride, prestige and emotional involvement. When asked about their pride in working for Company B in particular, employees said they were proud to be part of the organization.

*“Yes, we are recognized. The company recognizes what we do. By bonuses, by gifts... often by remarks from the bosses” (Employee B2).*

All the participants in Organization B think it’s prestigious to work for the company. Perceived prestige is often linked to brand image and working conditions. Because of their high salaries, or at least the way they are perceived by the general public, employees feel a sense of prestige associated with their organization.

We can therefore see that the participants in the study for Organization B rate their work group positively, in terms of the pride they feel and the prestige they accord the organization. We also noted that the sense of pride of employees in Organization B is more closely linked to the organization as a whole, unlike group recognition, which is more closely linked to the department and the proximity of colleagues.

### **4.3. Links between corporate social responsibility and social identification**

We asked employees of both organizations whether they felt there was a link between the social identification and social responsibility management measures they had been presented with. Most of the employees we spoke to saw a link between the two.

*“It takes all this in the background, globally to precisely create a link.... Because otherwise, if my employer doesn’t care about the environment, doesn’t care about finance... I wouldn’t feel so attached. [...] My attachment is there”. (Employee A1)*

According to some employees of Organization A and B, the link between the organization and the employee is pride in working for the organization. For some employees, identification has more to do with day-to-day activities and getting on well with colleagues.

We found that there were many similarities between the employees of Organizations A and B in terms of the link they could make between social identification and CSR measures. None of the participants could identify a single measure to explain the link. Rather, it’s a question of all measures, or at least actions, being taken in the four areas of efficient management, ethics and working conditions, compliance with the law and limitation of nuisance, and philanthropy and local development.

Shared values between the individual and his or her organization also seem to be important in creating a bond of identification. Indeed, according to the employees taking part in the study,

sharing the same values as one's organization could provide and increase the bond of identification. Pride was also cited as a reason for workers' identification.

## **5. Conclusion**

The most important contribution of our research is represented by the exploratory pooling of two fields of study: strategic management, represented in our study by CSR, and organizational behavior, represented by social identification. This bridge between the two fields of research is all the more important nowadays, given the evolution of society in general and the perceived transformations in the world of work. The choice of subject is original in itself. It differs from previous studies that focus on the links between CSR and human resource management. This topic is widely explored in the literature on the field.

### **5.1 Theoretical contributions**

Our first objective being to create an integrative model of CSR based on the founding texts, we began the research project by establishing an integrative model of social responsibility management, which we presented earlier. We've called it an "integrative", since it was built from an exhaustive literature review to identify the classic writings on the subject. Thus, we used the models of Carroll (2016), Pasquero (2018) and ISO 26 000 (2010) to build our model, using a term iteration approach. We then added three factors that we felt could enrich discussions with participants about their perceptions of CSR: the importance of measures, temporality and social pressures.

The integrative model is an important theoretical contribution to our study project. Indeed, the pooling of three literature models on social responsibility and the addition of original factors has enabled us to propose an original and relevant research model.

Another theoretical contribution is based on the identification, from interviews and documentation, of original concrete models of CSR management by the participating organizations. The integrative model was an important tool in helping us structure the interviews with participants and highlight the originality of each model.

With regard to the second research question, we posed the following question: What are the links between the corporate social responsibility management model and employee social identification? We wanted to analyze employees' perceptions of their social identification and use the CSR management models identified earlier to identify potential links between CSR and social identification, and then compare the results obtained between the two organizations.

We observed a strong bond between employees and their organization: all the employees we met said they felt part of a group at work. Group identification, the tendency to naturally identify oneself as part of a group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), was widely shared by participants. Our results suggest that the majority of participants tend to identify with the group in their department, or at least with the people with whom they work in close proximity. This supports the writings of Ashforth and Mael (1989), who suggest that even within the organization, individuals tend to categorize themselves into subgroups, according to department, job class or gender for example (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

One dimension of social identification also concerns the individual's evaluation of his or her group. Generally speaking, the employees we met perceive their organization as being highly respected in the community. Many said they felt proud to be part of the organization. This pride

supports the writings of Jourdan and Herman (2005), who assert that individuals are constantly in search of a positive vision of themselves, and that this quest includes a sense of belonging to a social group that is positively recognized.

This result is in the same line of thought as that of Bernadino (2025), who states that employees want to work for organizations where they have things to learn and where they feel engaged. They also want to find meaning in their organizational involvement and could make a difference regarding various social and environmental issues in the workplace. The same researcher also notes a change in the attitudes of current employees compared to those of previous years when looking for a job. They seek more information on company's CSR before applying, and after being hired they notice CSR initiatives and want to get involved.

In short, although further research will be needed to validate this result, our research demonstrates the existence of a link between participants' perception of social identification and social responsibility management models. Thus, according to employees, sharing the same values as their organization could increase the bond of identification. This supports Ashforth and Mael's (1989) assertion that individuals tend to support organizations that embody their own identity. So, rather than identifying a specific CSR measure that could affect their identification, participants felt that it was the whole range of CSR measures that fostered a sense of pride and identification with the organization.

These results align with those obtained by Koukoumpliakos (2021). In a study conducted on a sample of 220 employees in the Greek service sector, Koukoumpliakos investigated the correlation between social responsibility and two aspects of human resource management: employees' organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The results demonstrate a positive and significant correlation between all components of CSR and organizational commitment. In general, CSR is linked to job satisfaction, but only two of its dimensions demonstrate a significant statistical link with all components of job satisfaction. These are corporate social responsibility towards social and non-social stakeholders and towards employees.

Finally, another theoretical contribution relates to qualitative research methodology. Indeed, the richness of the results obtained demonstrates the relevance of using this method to study complex concepts, which are difficult to measure using quantitative measurement scales. This approach may run counter to the CSR research of recent years, which has been keen to measure CSR concepts quantitatively, such as Igalens et al. (2011) and Closon (2010).

## **5.2 Practical contributions**

One practical contribution of our study project is the creation of an original model for analyzing the management of social responsibility. Indeed, managers and human resources management professionals could use our model to undertake CSR initiatives. The use of the three factors could also be used to question the importance of the measures for the organization, to ensure that the proposed measures are up to date and that they evolve over time.

During our interviews, we observed that employees and even managers seemed surprised by the extent of their organization's involvement in the field of CSR. Some measures are more important than others in the eyes of employees, and it's to managers' advantage to make these measures known. Efforts could then be made by companies to better communicate their CSR achievements and enrich their contribution to certain CSR components in order to increase their employees' sense of social identification.

In short, the integrative model designed for this research could be added to the toolbox of organizations, enabling them not only to draw up a portrait of their CSR commitment, but also

to better communicate and manage it in order to meet the expectations of the organization's stakeholders, starting with their employees.

### 5.3 Limitations and avenues for future research

One of the limitations we can identify is that of our sample size. Our research sample is based on two companies in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region of eastern Canada. We chose a public organization and a private company.

Another limitation of the research concerns the sampling method. Indeed, as participants were chosen on a voluntary and random basis, they represent a small proportion of the employees of both organizations. A larger sample would have enabled us to achieve greater representativeness of all employees.

Future research could explore the possibility of designing quantitative research to measure the CSR components of the integrative model. In fact, measurement scales already exist for CSR. Igalens and Tahri (2012) have indeed built and validated a scale for measuring employees' perception of CSR, but it might be interesting to develop one more specific to our model, including factors that can influence CSR perception.

As our sample is limited, a multi-company study that could be located elsewhere in the world could also be an interesting avenue of research.

On the other hand, as our study is cross-sectional, it would have been interesting to propose a longitudinal study to observe the link between the CSR management model and employees as changes in social responsibility measures take place. A multi-year study would also have enriched the data we have collected.

In conclusion, our study project is a promising subject, which has led to rich and important findings. We can emphasize the importance for today's organizations of addressing the current values that drive human resources, including diversified measures of organizational social responsibility.

Our research is in line with the belief that the more we study CSR, the more we'll be able to identify tools to better understand it, continue its evolution and, ultimately, better manage it.

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