

ISSN Online: 2164-5175 ISSN Print: 2164-5167

Corporate Social Responsibilities of Tourism Enterprises and Its Effects on Frontline Employees

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How to cite this paper: Wang, M. S. (2021). Corporate Social Responsibilities of Tourism Enterprises and Its Effects on Frontline Employees. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management, 11,* 536-549. https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2021.115034

Received: April 30, 2021 **Accepted:** May 23, 2021 **Published:** May 26, 2021

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Abstract

As one of the micro-level contents of sustainable development, corporate social responsibility is the most effective method for tourism enterprises to support sustainable tourism. Studying the impact of tourism corporate social responsibility on the service behavior of frontline employees will help maintain the stability of the frontline employee of tourism enterprises and improve the competitiveness of tourism enterprises. This study builds a research model, proposes research hypotheses, and uses 405 valid data to conduct empirical research on the issue. The results show that tourism corporate social responsibility has a positive impact on the pro-social motivation and tourism service improvisation of frontline employees, and pro-social motivation also has a positive impact on tourism service improvisation. In addition, pro-social motivation plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between corporate social responsibility and tourism service improvisation. Finally, this study provides a reference and a new theoretical perspective for the management and research of tourism enterprises in the context of the epidemic.

Keywords

Corporate Social Responsibility, Pro-Social Motivation, Tourism Service Improvisation, Self-Determination Theory, Tourism Enterprises

1. Introduction

In the tourism industry, sustainable tourism is closely related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Li & Fu, 2014). In recent years, with the rise of green tourism, more and more attention has been paid to the protection of natural heritage and cultural heritage protection. A large number of tourism companies have formulated their own sustainable tourism strategies and conducted extensive pub-

licity (Diamantis, 1999; Stabler, 1997). A United Nations report on sustainable tourism defines 12 sustainable programs, such as economic viability, local prosperity, employment quality, social equity, etc. (UNEP, 2005). The basic principles of sustainable development have many things in common with CSR, and many related clauses are interchangeable (Li & Fu, 2014). Tourism enterprises integrate CSR and sustainable development concepts, and the pursuit of sustainable tourism is fulfilling their social responsibilities (Henderson, 2007). As one of the micro-level contents of sustainable development, CSR is the most effective way for tourism companies to support sustainable tourism (Li & Fu, 2014).

Sustainable development is a long-term, equal, and macroscopic human social problem, and it is a problem that the entire tourism industry needs to pay attention to (Andereck et al., 2005). However, CSR is relatively short-term, biased, and microscopic social organization problem (He, 2018). As the tourism industry has a serious dependence on the human natural environment and the human environment, sustainable development is particularly important to the tourism industry, and it has become the industry development direction that the tourism industry has always advocated. Focusing on the industry level, the tourism industry has more urgent requirements for sustainable development than other industries (Kasim, 2006). At the level of individual enterprises, the most effective way to implement sustainable tourism is to fulfill its social responsibilities, especially ethical, charitable and environmental responsibilities (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2007). Compared with other types of enterprises, tourism enterprises are more necessary to perform social responsibilities.

In addition, tourism companies involve more stakeholders, which not only means that tourism companies will be influenced by more stakeholders, but also responsible for more stakeholders. The outbreak of COVID-19 has made a huge difference around the world (Sobieralski, 2020). The changes of tourism mode, social communication mode, working mode, learning mode, eating habit and so on have brought great pressure to tourism enterprises, but also brought great opportunities to tourism enterprises (Lu et al., 2020). In order to control the spread of the epidemic, the governments of many countries have successively issued tourism bans to restrict the movement of people from home and abroad. It is the reduction of these movements that has caused more tourism enterprises to be affected (Sobieralski, 2020). Since the ban was issued by the national government to control the epidemic, many individuals' tourism was affected, and the corresponding high-speed rail, airline, hotel reservations had to be cancelled. For example, due to flight cancellations and capacity drops, air tourism continues to shrink, the transportation industry has been hit particularly hard, and the capacity of major airlines has dropped by about 60% - 80% (Sobieralski, 2020). During the epidemic period, the decrease of customer flow led to many catering enterprises has to choose to suspend business. During the suspension of business, the Chinese hot pot giant Haidilao had to pay high employee salaries and shop rents every day, and the average daily loss was as high as 80 million RMB.

The uncertainty brought by COVID-19 has not only increased the survival

crisis of tourism enterprises, but also caused serious management crisis, personnel crisis, service crisis and so on. For the tourism industry, service is its fundamental. However, the increase of social distance and psychological fear caused by COVID-19 will bring obstacles to the services of frontline employees, thus affecting the sustainable development of tourism enterprises. Yu et al. (2018) pointed out that frontline employees are the bridge between tourism companies and customers, which are the key to the sustainable development of tourism companies. Frontline employees are faced with a variety of customers every day. Due to the uncertainty of customer needs and the urgency of service time, frontline employees will be under great pressure every day, which leads to psychological and spiritual problems (Lei & Xue, 2016). Through a psychological stress survey of frontline employees, Li (2018) found that about 50% of employees believed that their work is under pressure, and about 30% of employees pointed out that the enterprises did not give employees enough spiritual care.

Therefore, based on the background of COVID-19 and from the perspective of sustainable development of tourism enterprises, this study explores the influence mechanism of the performance of tourism enterprises' CSR on the psychological state and behavioral orientation of frontline employees.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Self-Determination Theory

In the 1980s, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was first proposed by Ryan and Deci to explore the relationship between individual mental state and behavior motivation (Nazir et al., 2020). SDT points out that an individual's decision and behavior are not only an individual's ability, but also a basic need of the individual's inner psychological (Ryan & Deci, 2000). And this basic inner psychological need is the core of SDT. SDT further divides this basic psychological need into three types, namely, autonomy, self-ability, and self-belonging. Among them, the need for autonomy refers to a need for individuals can arrange and choose their own behavior. The need for self-ability refers to a need that individuals can recognize whether they have the ability to complete and be competent for a certain task. The need for self-belonging refers to a need for individuals to be able to integrate into the environment, and obtain the support and care of others from the environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

SDT points out that employees' certain behaviors stem from a certain inner need, and the need for self-belonging is also one of the characteristics of tourism enterprise employees (Yu et al., 2018). The fulfillment of CSR increases employees' recognition and loyalty to the company from both internal and external aspects, resulting in a strong sense of belonging, which in turn stimulates employees' intrinsic motivation and organizational citizenship behavior, such as tourism service improvisation (TSI). In addition, according to SDT, employees with a strong need for self-belonging tend to care more about the relationship with colleagues and are more willing to help colleagues and create a harmonious

and safe atmosphere, which means that they tend to have strong pro-social motivation (PSM) (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

2.2. CSR and TSI

Since the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was put forward, it has attracted widespread attention from the theoretical and academic circles (Tian & Ye, 2017). CSR to employees is actually the company directly invests resources in employees, expecting employees to have a willingness to give back to the company, and express it in the form of emotion, attitude or behavior (He, 2018). When employees perceive that the company has invested resources to fulfill their social responsibilities and can bring benefits to them, they will seek to maintain a mutually beneficial exchange relationship with the company through active work (He & Zhang, 2020).

As a member of the company, employees can enjoy high social status, respect from others, and high praise due to the organization they belong to. In return for these honors, employees will put more energy and resources (material, emotional) into their work with a more positive attitude and higher standards, thereby creating more value for the company (He, 2018). For example, Peng & Wang (2010) pointed out that the fulfillment of CSR was conducive to improving employees' satisfaction, which in turn encouraged them to engage in employee improvisation. He (2018) also found that the fulfillment of CSR has a direct role in promoting employees' organizational citizenship behavior.

Tourism service improvisation (TSI) refers to the service innovation behavior in which the frontline employee of a tourism enterprise deviates from the established tourism service standard and process and uses the available resources at hand (such as their own service experience, colleague relationship resources, etc.) to make immediate response to unforeseen emergencies and customer service demands (Secchi, 2012). TSI of frontline employees is an organizational citizenship behavior that is beneficial to tourism enterprises. The reason why frontline employees engage in TSI is because frontline employees perceive the fulfillment of CSR and obtain corresponding benefits (economic and spiritual benefits) from tourism enterprises, which means CSR is an external factor that has an important impact on frontline employees (Peng & Wang, 2010). Frost et al. (2007) also found that the perception of CSR had a positive impact on service improvisation. Glavas and Kelley (2014) empirically studied the impact of CSR performance on employees, and found that corporate social responsibility perception positively affected employees' service improvisation. Wang et al. (2016) pointed out that employees of enterprises with good social responsibility performance usually had fewer absenteeism in behavior, lower turnover rate and better performance. The employees were more willing to take the initiative to share and pay for the enterprise, so as to enhance TSI.

Hypothesis 1. CSR has a significant positive impact on TSI of frontline employees.

2.3. CSR and PSM

Pro-social motivation (PSM) refers to the individual's willingness to help others when they perceive that they need help (Batson, 1987). According to SDT, the organizational atmosphere of a tourism enterprise has an important impact on the mental state and behavior of employees (Bandura, 1986). The fulfillment of tourism CSR will create a good environment for employees from both internal and external aspects.

The performance of external CSR of tourism enterprises, first of all, is conducive to the establishment of a good social image and a high reputation for tourism enterprises, which makes their employees have a strong sense of pride, recognition and other positive emotions, in turn encouraging employees to have PSM. Secondly, according to the SDT, employees as part of a tourism enterprise will observe and study the behavior of the company. When the tourism enterprise actively performs its external CSR, the employees will also imitate the behavior of the company and generate PSM.

The fulfillment of internal CSR in tourism enterprises will create a good cultural atmosphere inside the enterprise, such as organizational fairness atmosphere and organizational innovation atmosphere, which is an encouragement mechanism for employees (Batson, 1994). Employees believe that their efforts and dedication will get corresponding benefits, which motivates them to help others and help the company. Perlow & Weeks (2002) pointed out that a good corporate cultural atmosphere would encourage employees to be willing to help others and dare to help others. They would think that helping others means helping themselves, so they would actively engage in pro-social behaviors. In addition, the fulfillment of internal CSR in tourism enterprises will give employees more attention and care, and enhance their recognition and loyalty to the enterprise. Employees with high recognition and loyalty will be more passionate about their positions and their enterprises, and more willing to help colleagues (Bear & Hwang, 2015).

In addition, according to SDT, PSM is an important part of intrinsic motivation (Grant, 2008), and employees' pro-social behavior is not to complete the tasks of tourism enterprises or obtain certain incentives or rewards from the enterprises, but to meet their inner basic needs and moral orientation (Wang et al., 2017). The fulfillment of CSR of tourism enterprises will make employees feel the responsibility of tourism enterprises to society, environment, employees, etc. Employees will have a strong sense of belonging to tourism enterprises, and the need for self-belonging is one of the basic psychological needs of individuals, which will motivate employees intrinsic motivation, and then produce pro-social behaviors (Grant, 2008).

Hypothesis 2. CSR has a significant positive impact on PSM of frontline employees.

2.4. PSM and TSI

The interaction between employees and customers is an important feature of

tourism service. The reason why employees engage in TSI is that customers' service demand exceeds the original service process and standard of employees, which is a service behavior outside the role of employees. According to the concept of PSM, employees with higher PSM will take the initiative to provide help and service when they perceive that customers have corresponding service needs (Batson, 1987). Batson et al. (2011) pointed out that pro-social motivation was altruistic, and employees with higher pro-social motivations would be easier to find customer service needs and do their best to satisfy them. They meet the needs of customers not out of duty, but because helping others is an act of employees sticking to their own moral character (Batson et al., 2011). Aguinis and Glavas (2012) pointed out that the research on CSR should focus on employees' psychological factors, such as feelings, thoughts, cognition, etc., and believed that the psychological dynamics of employees' social responsibility behaviors would have an impact on subsequent cognition, attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, a higher perception of CSR will promote employees' psychological and cognitive associations of altruism, which will generate PSM, and finally stimulate the improvisation of service. Zhu and Wang (2014) also showed that PSM could promote employees' helping behavior towards customers, which is often a behavior that deviated from the employee's code of conduct.

Hypothesis 3. PSM has a significant positive impact on TSI of frontline employees.

2.5. Mediating Role of PSM

Many scholars have explored the mediating role of PSM. For example, Zhu and Wang (2014) used empirical research to verify the partial mediating effect of employees' PSM on leadership styles and employees' work results. Lu et al. (2017) explored the mediating role of employees' PSM on organizational climate and employees' organizational citizenship behavior based on the theory of self-determination. Wang et al. (2017) found that employees' PSM partially mediated the relationship between CSR perception and counterproductive behavior, and pointed out that the stronger the employees' PSM, the more their CSR perception could stimulate employees' extra-role behaviors, such as TSI. Through an empirical study on 970 college students, Li et al. (2018) found that college students' PSM played a partial mediating role between their neighborhood relationship and altruistic behavior.

In summary, the mediating role of PSM of employees in the influence path of the external environment on employee behavior has been extensively verified. CSR is a special environmental variable (Wang et al., 2017). The fulfillment of CSR can increase employees' positive emotions, such as recognition of the company and sense of belonging, from both internal and external aspects, thereby prompting employees to strengthen their concern and attention of the surrounding environment, colleagues and the company. Employees with higher PSM are more likely to discover the needs of customers, and are more willing to help customers, satisfy customers, and then perform TSI (Grant & Berg, 2012).

Hypothesis 4. PSM plays mediating role between CSR and TSI of frontline employees.

To sum up, the following theoretical model is constructed as Figure 1.

3. Method

3.1. Data Gathering

By using an online survey system, this study collected data from frontline employees of tourism enterprises in Guangzhou, and total of 405 valid questionnaires were collected. The features of the respondents are described in **Table 1**.

In the survey sample, there are 168 male and 237 female. The age is mainly concentrated between 20 and 25 years old, with 187 people, accounting for 46.1%. The working years is mainly concentrated in 1 - 3 years, with 188 people, accounting for 46.3%. There were 157 people with junior college education and 163 people with junior college education, accounting for 38.7% and 40.3%, respectively. The gender distribution, age distribution, working years distribution and education level distribution of the research samples are all in line with the industry status quo of tourism enterprises (Yu et al., 2018), so this research samples are representative and scientific.

3.2. Measures

The scales are designed according to research objectives and existing research literature. To measure CSR, this study used five items of the corporate social responsibility scale of Chua et al. (2021). To measure PSM, this study used four items of the self-efficacy scale of Grant and Sumanth (2009). To measure TSI, this study used eleven items of the tourism service improvisation scale of Secchi (2012). A total of 20 items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



Figure 1. Research framework. Note: CSR = corporate social responsibility; TSI = tourism service improvisation; PSM = pro-social motivation.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Latent variable	Mean	S.D.	CSR	PSM	TSI
CSR	3.710	0.580	0.716		
PSM	3.556	0.660	0.261**	0.776	
TSI	3.299	0.638	0.426**	0.358**	0.833

Note: CSR = corporate social responsibility; PSM= pro-social motivation; TSI = tourism service improvisation; ** = p < 0.01.

3.3. Data Analysis

The associations among the variables were evaluated by a Pearson correlation analysis (n = 405). As suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step approach that consists of the measurement and the structural model were applied. For checking the validity of the measurement model, the study performed a CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) for our research variables. Then the study performed a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis by building a mediation model to test our structural model. The study used the maximum likelihood (ML) estimator to perform the SEM. Moreover, to evaluate our mediation hypothesis, the study performed a bootstrapping procedure by using the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) to evaluate the mean indirect mediation. If the CI does exclude 0, it is interpreted that the indirect effect was statistically significant with a 0.05 level. To test if the model fit were adequate, the study used a variety of goodness-of-fit indices including the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Extant studies reported that an adequate fit is indicated by CFI and TLI values bigger than 0.90 and an RMSEA value of smaller than or equal to 0.06 (Kelloway, 1998). Lastly, a bootstrapping analysis was performed to check if the indirect effect were significant (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The result of correlation analysis is described in **Table 1**. The study variables mainly including CSR, PSM, and TSI. As shown in **Table 2**, the correlation coefficients among CSR, PSM, and TSI are 0.261, 0.426, and 0.358 respectively. In addition, the value of p is less than 0.01, which means that there is a significant correlation between CSR, PSM, and TSI (Brace et al., 2003).

4.2. Measurement Model

4.2.1. Fitness Test

The study performed confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) for all 20 items to examine the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model. In this study, Amos 24 software was used to perform CFA on the survey data. The results showed that $\chi^2 = 706.174$, p < 0.001, $\chi^2/df = 1.945$, RMSEA = 0.048, CFI = 0.942, TLI = 0.935, IFI = 0.942, RMR = 0.034, indicating that the measurement model and the actual data have a good degree of fitness (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

4.2.2. Reliability and Validity

According to the research of Wu (2010) and Sun (2014), the reliability and validity test of the measurement model is mainly verified from four aspects, including Cronbach's α , individual reliability, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). When each index meets the test standard, it indicates that the measurement model has good reliability and validity.

Table 2. Path parameters.

Hypothesis Relationship	Path Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (t)	P	β
H1	CSR→TSI	0.314	0.063	4.984	***	0.285
H2	CSR → PSM	0.351	0.067	5.275	***	0.314
Н3	PSM → TSI	0.178	0.049	3.602	***	0.180

Note: CSR = corporate social responsibility; TSI = tourism service improvisation; PSM = pro-social motivation; *** = p < 0.001.

According to the research of Wu (2010) and Sun (2014), we can find that the test standards are as follows: 1) When Cronbach's α is greater than 0.8, it indicates that the scales have very good reliability. 2) When R^2 is greater than 0.2, it indicates that each measurement item has a good individual reliability. 3) When CR is greater than 0.6, it indicates that the scales have good composite reliability. 4) When the standardized factor loading value of each measurement item is greater than 0.5, and the AVE value is also greater than 0.5, it indicates that the scales have good convergent validity.

The results show that 1) The Cronbach's α values of CSR, PSM, and TSI in this study are all greater than 0.8, which are 0.820, 0854, 0.909, respectively. 2) The R² value of each measurement item of CSR, PSM, and TSI is greater than 0.2. 3) The CR values of CSR, PSM and TSI are all greater than 0.6, which are 0.8385, 0.8564, and 0.8721 respectively. 4) The AVE values of CSR, PSM and TSI are all greater than 0.5, which are 0.512, 0.6024, and 0.6945 respectively. In summary, the measurement model of this study has good reliability and validity (Wu, 2010).

4.3. Structural Model

It can be seen from **Table 2** that CSR has a significant positive impact on TSI (β = 0.285, p < 0.001) and PSM (β = 0.314, p < 0.001), which means that H1 and H2 are accepted. In addition, PSM has a significant positive impact on TSI (β = 0.180, p < 0.001), so hypothesis H3 is also supported (Xu, 2017).

4.4. Mediation Test

Bootstrapping analyses were conducted by using a sample of 10,000 (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) to test Hypothesis 4. Indirect mediation effects are significant at the 5% level if the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) for the mean indirect mediation effects does not include zero (42). The results show that the bias-corrected CI for the mean indirect effects on the paths did not include zero (95% CI = [0.02, 0.07]). Thus, this study can conclude that Hypotheses 3 is supported.

5. Discussion

5.1. CSR, PSM and TSI

The research results show that the CSR of tourism enterprises has a significant

positive impact on TSI of frontline employees (β = 0.285, p < 0.001), indicating that the higher the CSR of tourism enterprises, the stronger the TSI of frontline employees. The CSR of tourism enterprises has a significant positive impact on the PSM of frontline employees (β = 0.314, p < 0.001), indicating that the higher the CSR of tourism enterprises, the stronger the PSM of frontline employees. The PSM of frontline employees has a significant positive impact on TSI (β = 0.18, p < 0.001), indicating that the stronger the PSM of frontline employees, the stronger the TSI of frontline employees.

In the context of the COVID-19 epidemic, due to the particularity of tourism services, customers and employees are required to communicate and interact face to face, which puts great pressure on both customers and employees. For example, a hotel receptionist pointed out, "When the epidemic situation has not stabilized, customers must keep a distance of 1 meter. Many of them will not listen to the arrangements. Moreover, we need to conduct various epidemic prevention tests, which brings me a lot of pressure". Some customers also said, "The hotel receives so many people every day, can they do a good job of comprehensive disinfection? I am really worried. If it is not for business needs, I really don't want to leave home." It can be seen that under special circumstances, both frontline employees and customers have their own worries and anxieties. The fulfillment of CSR of tourism enterprises is of great significance to employees and customers (Li & Fu, 2014).

In addition, one employee pointed out, "I'd love to provide better service to our customers, but our company don't have enough employee. I have to work 10-hour days and I just don't have the energy to provide better service." Therefore, tourism companies should actively fulfill their CSR to protect the physical and mental safety of internal employees. At the same time, corresponding incentive measures will be given in special periods, which will promote employees to have strong organizational citizenship behavior and actively engage in TSI. The CSR of tourism enterprises has an important influence on the mental state and behavior of frontline employees (Peng & Wang, 2010). The higher the CSR of tourism enterprises perceived by frontline employees, the stronger their PSM (Wang et al., 2017), and the higher the possibility of TSI (Frost et al., 2007).

5.2. Mediating Role of PSM

The results show that the pro-social motivation of frontline employees plays a partially mediating role in the impact of CSR on TSI ($\beta = 0.30$, P < 0.001), indicating that the CSR of frontline employees not only has a positive impact on TSI, but also has an indirect impact on the TSI through the mediating variable of PSM. In other words, the CSR of frontline employees in tourism first positively promotes PSM (47), and then the PSM promotes the TSI of frontline employees, which is consistent with (Zhu & Wang, 2014). Based on the interaction theory of creativity, Yang et al. (2019) discussed the mediating role of employees' PSM, and found that employees' PSM partly mediated the relationship between em-

ployees' workplace status and creativity.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Theoretical Contribution

First of all, this study focuses on the individual level of employees, enriching the scope of improvisation research. Based on the background of the uncertainty of COVID-19, this study takes high-interaction and high-touch frontline employees of tourism companies as the research object, introduces the CSR of tourism companies, and expands the research on the factors affecting TSI.

Secondly, the self-determination theory is used as the theoretical basis to construct the research framework, and the theoretical perspective of the formation mechanism of employee improvisation is expanded. This study selects PSM as a mediating variable to explore the impact of CSR on TSI, enriching the research on the relationship between organizational climate and employee behavior. This study completes the research on the influence of organizational climate on employees' personal psychological state, and also discovers new antecedent variables of improvisation behavior, and further deepens the study of antecedent variables of improvisation behavior.

6.2. Practical Implications

How to improve the service performance of frontline employees has always been the focus of attention of tourism enterprise managers. In the context of COVID-19, frontline employees are facing greater pressure. Tourism companies should actively fulfill their CSR to promote pro-social behavior and TSI of frontline employees, thereby ensuring the sustainable development of tourism companies.

First of all, tourism enterprises should actively protect the physical safety of their employees by providing them with enough masks, disinfectant, hand sanitizer, etc., and providing them with regular free physical examinations to ensure their health. Secondly, in the post-epidemic era, the widening of customers' social distance and the inability to see each other's facial expressions caused by masks have brought great challenges to the service of frontline employee. Tourism companies should increase the training and psychological counseling of employees, hold regular employee communication meetings and provide advance training and service requirements for various unexpected situations and service needs, in order to reduce the uncertainty faced by frontline employees in service. Third, tourism companies should formulate corresponding training strategies and incentive strategies for different employees. For example, frontline employees are more creative and autonomous, so they should be given greater authorization and corresponding organizational support.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study starts from the individual level, and all the variables and data are from the individual level of employees, without considering the influencing factors of the team and the organization level, and without aggregating the variables at the individual level to the team or the organization level for research. Existing studies have shown that the same variable will produce different results when measured and tested at different levels. Therefore, further research can carry out cross-level analysis to explore the impact of CSR on improvisation behavior from the team or organizational level. It can also explore whether different types of CSR can also lead to improvisation behaviors of employees.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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