

The impact of perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives on employees' organizational identification, job satisfaction, job engagement and turnover intentions, and the mediating role of organizational identification: proposition of a research model

L'impact de la RSE interne perçue à travers les initiatives sportives de loisir sur l'identification organisationnelle, la satisfaction au travail, l'engagement au travail, l'intention de rotation des employés, et le rôle médiateur de l'identification organisationnelle : proposition d'un modèle de recherche

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Abstract

By reviewing the existent literature and mobilizing the relevant theories, the current work aims at proposing a research model concerning the impact of perceived internal corporate social responsibility (PICSR) through leisure sport-based initiatives on behavioral and attitudinal employees' outcomes such as organizational identification, job satisfaction, job engagement, and turnover intention. We will also highlight the potential mediating role that the organizational identification construct could play between perceived internal corporate social responsibility through leisure sport-based initiatives and employees' job satisfaction, job engagement, and turnover intention. The results of this theoretical research will be further supported empirically by adopting a quantitative approach through the administration of a questionnaire among employees of companies that have been labeled "Sport Company" due to the fact that those companies have already started implementing wellness programs through the initiation of leisure sport-based initiatives to promote physical activity among their employees.

Keywords: PICSR-employees-organizational identification-satisfaction-engagement-turnover.

Résumé

En passant en revue la littérature existante et en mobilisant les théories pertinentes, le présent travail vise à proposer un modèle de recherche concernant l'impact de la responsabilité sociale interne perçue (RSIP) à travers des initiatives sportives de loisir sur les comportements et attitudes des employés, tels que l'identification organisationnelle, la satisfaction au travail, l'engagement professionnel et l'intention de turnover. Nous estimons mettre également en évidence le rôle médiateur potentiel que pourrait jouer le concept d'identification organisationnelle entre la responsabilité sociale interne perçue à travers des initiatives sportives de loisir et la satisfaction professionnelle, l'engagement professionnel et l'intention de turnover des employés. Les résultats de cette recherche théorique seront testés après empiriquement en adoptant une approche quantitative, grâce à l'administration d'un questionnaire auprès des employés d'entreprises ayant obtenu le label « Entreprise sportive », car ces entreprises ont déjà commencé à mettre en œuvre des programmes de bien-être par le biais d'initiatives sportives de loisir qui visent à promouvoir l'activité physique auprès de leurs employés.

Mots clés : RSIP- employés-identification organisationnelle-satisfaction -engagement-turnover.

Introduction

Internal corporate social responsibility (ICSR) is gradually trending in organizational studies that often aim to understand the success of an organization and help attract and retain employees (Obrad & Gherheș, 2018) and has been linked to numerous work outcomes, including job performance, engagement, organizational commitment, organizational justice, organizational satisfaction, and citizenship behavior (Barakat, et al., 2016; Brammer, et al., 2007; Chatzopoulou, et al., 2021), internal CSR is also increasingly being understood and recognized in emerging economies (Al Shbail, et al., 2025), especially in the field of human capital management with the purpose of encouraging positive employee's attitudes and behaviors.

While prior studies have established the positive effects and impacts of perceived internal CSR on employee outcomes, gaps still exist, especially in organizational research, (Al Shbail, et al., 2025). In most research, internal CSR which operates in a micro-level has been studied within a broad perspective in different studies (Al Shbail, et al., 2025; Chang, et al., 2021; Hameed, et al., 2016) by asking employees (respondents) general questions (items) without being focused on a specific tangible practice, which may confuse employees' perceptions, thus questioning the findings concerning actual attitudes and behaviors. Empirical studies should be more focused towards a specific practice that could be implemented by a certain company as an internal CSR strategy, such as Ngoc, et al., 2019 and Obeidat, et al., 2018 studies which focused on training as internal CSR practice, but internal CSR that prioritizes employee well-being (Tang, et al., 2025) could be expanded to other practices, ranging from employees' empowerment (e.g., training) to securing employees' work-life balance (Cavazotte & Chang, 2016), thus we propose the leisure sport-based initiatives as an internal CSR policy that targets both employees' well-being and work-life balance (Turker, 2009), fosters employees' engagement, allows flexible working arrangements, encompasses healthy working practices (Kim, et al., 2024), and can improve the physical environment, such as a workplace that is free from health issues (Hossen, et al., 2020) as it is recognized that sport activities have numerous physical and psychological health benefits for human being (Penedo, 2005).

The literature presents inconsistent findings regarding the effects of internal CSR on employees' outcomes. In their study, Cheah & Lim, 2024 evidenced that internal CSR geared towards employees significantly drives a greater sense of belonging (organizational identification); otherwise, Hameed, et al., 2016 showed that internal CSR does not have a

direct significant effect on organizational identification. Despite the growing interest in internal CSR, research on its impact on job satisfaction remains scarce (Tang, et al., 2025), some empirical studies have indicated insignificant correlations between internal CSR and job satisfaction (Chatzopoulou, et al., 2022), but other studies have reported significant links between internal CSR and job satisfaction (Farid, et al., 2019). Esmaeelinezhad, et al., 2015 revealed that internal corporate social responsibility practices are not significantly related to employees' engagement; however, the study of Farid, et al., 2019 indicated that internal CSR and employees' engagement are actually significantly linked. Al Shbail, et al., 2025 have noted that there is a notable lack of research exploring how perceived internal CSR practices affect turnover intention; this suggests that more research is required and that various factors may explain discrepancies between findings, such as the kind of practices being implemented by various companies as internal CSR policies. Since employees are more responsive to CSR than other stakeholders (Tang, et al., 2025), companies should take into consideration employees' preferences in the formulation and implementation of CSR initiatives aimed at addressing their social, health, safety, self-actualization, knowledge, and economic needs (George, et al., 2020; Kim, et al., 2018; Tang, et al., 2024). Some employees may perceive leisure sport-based initiatives implemented by their companies as more interesting and appealing in comparison to training, for instance; thus companies to serve different tastes could implement leisure sport-based initiatives to promote physical activity among their employees by adopting effective wellness programs within their internal CSR policies, which may lead to positive outcomes, such as organizing or sponsoring leisure sport events for employees and their families, building leisure sport infrastructures inside the workplace, and paying fees to have access to outdoor recreational leisure sport facilities, to ensure that the different needs and physiological well-being of the employees are met (Saleh & Baroudi, 2022).

The benefits that could withdraw companies in the Moroccan context through the implementation of such initiatives remain underexplored, even if the label "Sport Company" has been launched since 2024. "Sport Company" is a distinction for companies that try to integrate wellness programs in their workplace culture by promoting physical activity for the sake of employees' well-being, companies are evaluated on the basis of a certain number of criteria, such as the organization of sporting events for employees, development or provision of leisure sport infrastructure, initiation of internal awareness campaigns about the benefits of

sport activities, and contribution to the financing of access rights to sports facilities by employees...

The enthusiasm surrounding the “Sports Company” label implies that leisure sport for employees is gaining ground among Moroccan business leaders who are realizing that physical activity in the workplace has become an essential component of responsible management (CSR), so we will explore throughout our study the direct impact of leisure sport-based initiatives as a perceived internal CSR policy on different attitudinal and behavioral employees outcomes, such as organizational identification, job engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover intention, and check the potential mediating role that organizational identification could play through the lens of organizational support theory and social identity theory. We should note that even perceived internal CSR and perceived organizational support are conceptually two distinct variables; the most widely used scale to measure perceived internal CSR geared towards employees, proposed by Turker, 2009 already comprises items that could capture perceptions of organizational support, thus to avoid potential redundancy and overlap, we will use only organizational support theory to contribute to the justification of our research framework without including the perceived organizational support variable as a direct construct in this study. We should also mention that work-life balance one of the preoccupations of internal CSR, is a nebulous concept (wood & kim, 2020) that comprises many aspects, so we will direct our study towards work-leisure balance and work-family balance as main aspects of work-life balance to avoid any confusion, because sport-based initiatives can be perceived as serving and supporting both (work-family balance and work-life balance), as companies usually encourage employees to bring their families with them during organized sporting events, thus benefiting from physical activity (work-leisure balance) and family gathering (work-family balance). Internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives can foster work-leisure balance by actively facilitating employees’ access to meaningful and restorative leisure opportunities within or alongside the work context. By providing resources such as company-sponsored sport events, on-site fitness facilities, subsidized gym memberships, or flexible scheduling to accommodate physical activity, organizations reduce structural barriers (e.g., time, cost, accessibility) that often limit leisure engagement. These initiatives signal organizational support for employees’ well-being (Eisenberger, et al., 1986), legitimizing the use of leisure time and encouraging consistent participation. Over time, this organizational endorsement helps employees integrate leisure sport activities into their routines, thereby achieving a work-leisure balance; the latter, in turn,

serves not only as a personal recovery (e.g., reduced stress, better mood, and higher energy levels) but also spills over into the family domain, as leisure sport activities can restore personal resources that enhance family role performance and reduce work-family conflict. Research findings of the Bhatti & Alnehabi (2023) study indicated that there was a significant correlation between employees' improved work-family balance and active participation in leisure sport activities.

Sports and well-being programs in organizations can be positioned either within a CSR logic or an instrumental HR logic, depending on their purpose, scope, and strategic framing. When aligned with CSR, such programs aim to foster ethical commitment, long-term employee well-being, and broader societal impact, often extending benefits to families or the community and emphasizing values beyond immediate performance. In contrast, programs grounded in an instrumental HR logic primarily target productivity, and absenteeism reduction, focusing on measurable medium-term outcomes. In practice, many initiatives including leisure sport activities lie on a continuum between these two approaches, with their classification determined by whether the emphasis is on societal and ethical engagement or on internal performance metrics. This research approaches sport and well-being initiatives as a strategic expression of internal CSR, prioritizing ethical commitment and long-term employee well-being rather than short-term performance benefits (instrumental HR logic). By focusing on perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives, the study emphasizes the role of organizational value and ethical responsibility in shaping employees' identification, satisfaction, and engagement which is consistent with a CSR perspective rather than a purely HR-driven approach. So, within this standpoint by mobilizing the theories cited above and reviewing previous studies that relate to our study, we will try to draw a research model in relation to the following research questions:

RQ1: Does perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives impact employees' organizational identification, job satisfaction, job engagement, and turnover intentions?

RQ2: Does organizational identification link (mediate) internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives to employees' job satisfaction, job engagement, and turnover intention?

To achieve the aims of our study, the remainder of this work is organized as follows. First, the theoretical foundations of internal CSR, leisure sport-based initiatives, and their connection to

employees' organizational identification, job satisfaction, job engagement, and turnover intention, and the mediating role of organizational identification are outlined. Next, the proposed research model is developed by integrating theoretical perspectives and identifying the hypothesized relationships. Finally, we will conclude by highlighting the expected contributions of the leisure sport-based initiatives as a specific lever, distinct from other forms of internal CSR, to organizational practice.

1. Literature review

Organizational support theory (Eisenberger, et al., 1986) posits that employees form beliefs about the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. This perception of organizational support influences various aspects of employee attitudes and behaviors within the workplace, including organizational identification, which refers to a psychological tie between the individual and the organization (Edwards & Peccei, 2010), such a psychological link is further supported by arguments associated specifically with organizational support theory (Eisenberger, et al., 1986), which suggests that employees who perceive that the organization is concerned for their well-being are likely to reciprocate by investing psychologically in the company and developing a stronger sense of organizational identification (Eisenberger, et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 699). Additionally, organizational support can help to achieve important socio-emotional needs for positive self-esteem, approval, and affiliation (Lee & Peccei, 2007). The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) gives explanations about why employees value CSR initiatives developed by companies. First, CSR activities help an organization portray a “*positive and distinctive image*” (Sen & Bhattacharya 2001, p. 228). Second, employees are likely to identify with socially responsible companies, especially when the company's values match employees' self-identity. For example, employees who value their health will feel their self-esteem enhanced when they perceive that their employers also value well-being through implementing wellness programs, for instance (Yu, et al., 2024). Dailey & Zhu, 2017 demonstrated that employees who define themselves in terms of their health are more likely to participate in workplace wellness programs, which, in turn, increases their organizational identification.

2. Theoretical background, and hypotheses development:

When organizations engage in CSR practices aligned with employees' values, particularly those that focus on internal welfare (e.g., leisure sport-based initiatives), employees are more

likely to develop a strong organizational identification (Closon, et al., 2015). In their study Lacanienta, et al., 2018 showed that leisure at work (e.g., recreational sport activities such as Ping-Pong, foosball tables, yoga studios, rock-climbing walls, and sports tournaments) facilitated organizational identification. Based on justifications advanced above, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H1: Perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives is positively related to employees' organizational identification.

Perceived organizational support is a critical aspect of organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) which refers to employees' beliefs about the extent to which their organizations value and support them. We posit that in the Moroccan context, this support can be demonstrated through implementing wellness programs (e.g., leisure sport-based initiatives) to allow a work-life balance for employees, mitigate stress levels, foster well-being, cultivate job satisfaction (Alzadjali & Ahmad, 2024), achieve job engagement (Yadav, et al., 2022), and reduce turnover intention (Chanan & Sangeeta, 2021).

When comprised in crucial company decisions, employees feel supported, valued, and appreciated. Moreover, companies prioritizing their employees' work-life balance through internal CSR practices such as flexible work arrangements (e.g., allowing more breaks and free time for employees to do some leisure sport-based activities inside and outside the workplace) and companies that prioritize internal CSR initiatives that promote employees' health, are likely to have satisfied employees (Ahsan & Khalid, 2024), practices such as leisure sport-based initiatives help employees manage their personal and professional responsibilities by improving work-life balance, reducing stress, and increasing job satisfaction (Hajiali, et al., 2022). Previous studies have primarily examined the effect of internal CSR on job satisfaction (Chou, et al., 2021; Golob, et al., 2021; Kim & Kim, 2021), and many studies found that there is a significant and positive relationship between internal CSR practices and employee job satisfaction (Obeidat, et al., 2018; Low, et al., 2017; Ahsan & Khalid, 2024; Golob & Podnar, 2021; Song, et al., 2015). The adoption of wellness incentives is regarded as corporate social responsibility centered on employees (Porter & Kramer, 2006). In their study Peña, et al., 2024 showed that employees perceived greater organizational support when their organization had implemented wellness programs (e.g., organization of sporting events, paying reduced fees in fitness centers...), which positively influenced job satisfaction, so we posit the following hypothesis:

H2: Perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives is positively related to employees' job satisfaction.

Work engagement is a psychological state wherein employees find meaningfulness, security, and practical value from their work and are, therefore, more willing to fully invest in it to meet the company's aims (Kahn, 1990). Perceived internal CSR has demonstrated various workplace outcomes, including strengthening employees' engagement (Hossen, al., 2020). Through the implementation of supportive practices that target employees' empowerment (training) and work-family balance, Ahmed, et al., 2024, showed that companies can foster positive perceptions, which positively impacted employees' engagement. Leisure sport-based initiatives as a supportive policy of employees' well-being can have the same effect. In their study, Yu, et al., 2024 argued that wellness programs (e.g., leisure sport-based initiatives), when perceived positively as CSR policy by hotel employees, significantly influenced their engagement, so grounded on the arguments above we posit the following hypothesis:

H3: Perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives is positively related to employees' engagement.

Literature has shown that internal CSR practices could potentially counteract employees' turnover (Du, et al., 2015; Nejati, et al., 2021; Stewart, et al., 2011). Organizations that engage in employee-centered CSR practices are viewed as more attractive and trustworthy, which increases the probability that employees will remain within them (Al Shbail, et al., 2025). Wellness programs have been attributed to many positive outcomes for employees and organizations. Based on a quantitative study, Varga, et al., 2021 found a significant negative relationship between employees' perceptions of wellness programs (e.g., leisure sport-based initiatives) and employees' turnover intention, so we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives is negatively related to employees' turnover intention.

Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which describes how the company's positive and pleasant social image cultivates employees' organizational identification and develops greater workplace fulfillment (Cheah & Lim, 2024). Within the social identity theory framework, CSR practices can boost employees' perceived self-worth and ability to develop a greater sense of belonging to a reputable organization (Zhou, et al., 2018) that cares about its employees' well-being, subsequently providing greater job satisfaction (Karanika-Murray, et al., 2015). Furthermore, as guided by social exchange

theory, the intangible social prestige and pride that construct employees' organizational identification are anticipated to foster employees' job satisfaction (Kim, et al., 2020). In their study Cheah & Lim, 2024 showed that organizational identification mediated the relationship between perceived internal CSR practices and job satisfaction, so we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Organizational identification mediates the relationship between perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives and employees' job satisfaction.

The stronger the organizational identification, the more strongly the individual will engage with the company's vision, mission, aims, and expectations (Dutton, et al., 1994); solid psychological ties between individuals and companies can enhance the individual's willingness to engage more at work (Karanika-Murray, et al., 2015). In their study, Chang, et al., 2021 showed that the organizational identification variable mediated the relationship between supportive internal CSR practices and employees' job engagement, so we propose the following hypothesis:

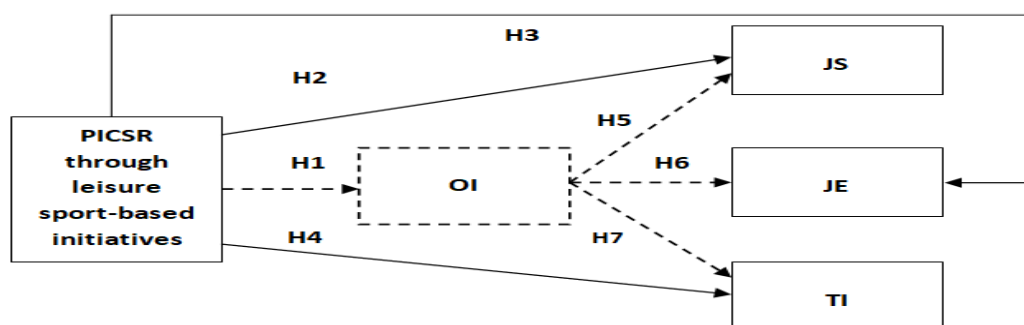
H6: Organizational identification mediates the relationship between perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives and employees' job engagement.

Internal CSR efforts deployed by companies (e.g., leisure sport-based initiatives geared toward employees to make an equilibrium between work and life) are viewed as strategic tools to foster employees' sense of belonging (organizational identification), which in turn lowers turnover intention (Brammer, et al., 2012; Hossen, et al., 2020; Turker, 2009); therefore we propose the following hypothesis:

H7: Organizational identification mediates the relationship between perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives and employees' turnover intention.

The following figure summarizes our proposed research model:

Figure N°1: research model



Source: Authors

PICSR: perceived internal CSR, JS: job satisfaction, JE: job engagement

OI: organizational identification, TI: turnover intention

Conclusion:

The present study relates to the Organizational Support Theory, which was introduced by Eisenberger et al. (1986). Organizational Support Theory is embedded in the notion of social exchange and reciprocity; where employees perceive their relationship with the organization as an exchange of resources, they tend to reciprocate the support they receive. Consequently, when employees feel supported and valued by their organization through work–life balance practices such as implementing leisure sport-based initiatives, they are more likely to reciprocate by demonstrating potential positive attitudes and behaviors, such as increased organizational identification, job engagement, job satisfaction, and decreased intention to quit the current workplace. Thus, we have employed Organizational Support Theory (OST) to draw our research model since it aligns with internal CSR principles and provides a valuable framework for understanding how employees' perceptions of organizational support impact different employees' outcomes. Employees who highly value voluntary endorsements from the organization may perceive it as supportive simply because it offers a wellness program, which may signal that it cares (Zhu & Dailey, 2019). This idea was already supported by Dailey et al., 2018 study about employees' perceptions of workplace health promotion, where workers believed that by offering a wellness program, their organization showed how caring it is. The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) assumes a positive relationship between employees and the favorable reputation of the organization they work for because that association helps to enhance the self-esteem of individuals (Kim et al., 2021), thus fostering a great sense of organizational identification, which could mediate perceived internal CSR through leisure sport-based initiatives and employees' attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

Leisure sport initiatives represent a distinct lever within internal CSR due to their unique capacity to combine physical, psychological, and social benefits in a single experiential format. Unlike other CSR actions such as training programs, diversity policies, or flexible working arrangements—which primarily address cognitive, organizational, or social dimensions—leisure sport activities have a direct and measurable impact on employees' health, stress reduction, mood, and vitality. Their experiential and recreational nature fosters conviviality, enjoyment, and spontaneous engagement beyond professional obligations, while encouraging cross-departmental and cross-hierarchical interactions that could strengthen social bonds, and organizational identification. Moreover, these initiatives can create a natural bridge between professional and personal spheres, contributing to work-leisure balance and work-family balance, aspects often overlooked by other internal CSR practices. When

designed inclusively, they remain accessible to all employees regardless of age, gender, position, or sporting ability, thus serving as a transversal, non-discriminatory engagement driver. Finally, by enhancing pride of belonging and projecting a positive, unifying image of the organization both internally and externally, leisure sport initiatives can also generate reputational benefits beside attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

The results of this theoretical research will be further supported by empirical evidence to confirm or reject hypotheses that we raised by adopting a quantitative approach through the administration of a questionnaire among employees of companies that have been labeled “Sport Company” due to the fact that those companies, within their CSR duties, have already started implementing wellness programs through the initiation of leisure sport-based initiatives to promote physical activity among their employees.

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