



How corporate CSR policies shape employee engagement and workplace commitment in Kenyan Corporate Institutions

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Abstract

Purpose: The study explored how corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies influence employee engagement and workplace commitment in Kenyan corporate institutions. It specifically examined how employees understand and experience CSR in their daily work life and how these experiences shape loyalty, trust in management, and intention to remain with the organization.

Methodology/Design: A qualitative research approach was adopted, underpinned by the interpretivist philosophical foundation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, including employees and managerial staff, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Findings: Results revealed that employees' engagement and commitment were positively influenced by CSR practices that were perceived as supportive, aligned with personal values, and communicated transparently. Three themes emerged for each objective: perceived support and care, alignment with personal values, and visibility of CSR for engagement; trust in management, loyalty, and intention to remain for workplace commitment. Employees responded favorably when CSR initiatives were genuine, inclusive, and employee-centered.

Implications: The study highlights the importance of employee-focused CSR practices for improving motivation, loyalty, and retention. It reinforces Social Exchange Theory and Stakeholder Theory, emphasizing that employee, as key stakeholders, responds positively to organizational support and ethical practices.

Originality/Value: The study provides insights into CSR from the employee perspective in a Kenyan context, offering practical guidance for corporate institutions to enhance workforce engagement and commitment through meaningful CSR strategies.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, employee engagement, workplace commitment, kenyan corporate institutions, qualitative research

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has grown into an important part of how modern organizations manage their people and conduct their business. It is no longer limited to donations or public charity activities. In many corporate institutions, CSR policies now focus on employee welfare, ethical leadership, environmental protection, fairness, and community involvement (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019) [2]. These internal CSR practices influence how employees feel about their organization and how connected they are to their work.

In the Kenyan corporate sector, organizations such as banks, telecommunication firms, insurance companies, and manufacturing firms operate in a competitive environment where skilled employees are highly valued. Many of these institutions have adopted CSR policies to strengthen their reputation and attract talent (Mory *et al.*, 2021) [12]. Employees are not just workers but key stakeholders whose perceptions of CSR can affect their motivation, productivity, and loyalty to the organization.

Employee engagement describes how emotionally involved employees are in their work and how willing they are to give their best effort. Workplace commitment refers to the desire of employees to remain with their organization and support its goals (Rupp *et al.*, 2021) [16]. Research shows that when employees perceive their organization as socially responsible and fair, they tend to develop stronger emotional attachment and trust toward the organization (Kim *et al.*,

2020) [10]. CSR policies related to health and safety, work-life balance, ethical conduct, and equal opportunity are especially important in shaping these attitudes.

In developing countries like Kenya, where decent working conditions and job security remain serious concerns, CSR policies can play a strong role in shaping employee attitudes (Story & Neves, 2022) [18]. However, employee experiences of CSR are shaped by daily interactions within the workplace, not by corporate reports alone. A qualitative approach allows employees to express how they understand and experience CSR policies in their own words. This study therefore seeks to explore how corporate CSR policies shape employee engagement and workplace commitment in Kenyan corporate institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Many corporate institutions in Kenya publicly promote their CSR policies through annual reports, websites, and media campaigns. These policies often highlight community development, environmental protection, and ethical business practices. However, there is limited evidence showing whether these CSR efforts positively affect employees within the organization (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019) [2]. In some cases, employees may feel that CSR focuses more on external image than on internal welfare.

Challenges such as employee disengagement, low morale, and high staff turnover continue to affect several corporate institutions in Kenya. Employees may view CSR initiatives

as superficial when issues such as fair treatment, workload pressure, limited participation, and weak communication persist in the workplace (Kim *et al.*, 2020) ^[10]. When CSR policies are not felt at the employee level, trust in management may decline, leading to reduced commitment. Most CSR studies in the Kenyan context have relied mainly on quantitative methods and have focused on organizational performance or customer outcomes. There is limited qualitative research that captures employee voices and lived experiences regarding CSR policies (Mory *et al.*, 2021) ^[12]. This lack of in-depth understanding makes it difficult for corporate managers to design CSR strategies that genuinely support employee engagement and commitment. This study addresses this gap by exploring how employees and managers experience CSR policies within Kenyan corporate institutions.

Significance of the Study

The study is valuable to corporate management because it provides clear insight into how CSR policies influence employee attitudes and behavior. The findings can help managers design CSR initiatives that improve employee motivation, trust, and long-term commitment rather than focusing only on public image (Rupp *et al.*, 2021) ^[16].

For employees, the study creates space for their voices to be heard. It highlights their experiences, concerns, and expectations regarding CSR practices in the workplace. This can encourage organizations to adopt CSR approaches that support fairness, wellbeing, and inclusion.

For policymakers and regulators, the study offers evidence on how CSR contributes to decent work and ethical corporate behavior in Kenya. The findings may support the development of policies that encourage stronger internal CSR practices within corporate institutions (Story & Neves, 2022) ^[18].

For researchers and academics, the study adds qualitative knowledge to the CSR and human resource literature, especially within the Kenyan and African context. It also provides a foundation for future studies on CSR, employee engagement, and workplace commitment across different sectors.

Research Objectives

The study seeks to understand how corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies are experienced within corporate workplaces in Kenya. Specifically, the study seeks to

1. Examine how employees in Kenyan corporate institutions understand and experience CSR policies in their daily work life, and how these experiences influence their level of engagement at work and;
2. Explore how corporate CSR policies affect employee workplace commitment, including their sense of loyalty, trust in management, and intention to remain with the organization

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

The study is guided by two key theories such as the Social Exchange Theory and the Stakeholder Theory to explain how corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies influence employee engagement and workplace commitment in corporate institutions.

Social Exchange Theory explains the relationship between employees and their organization as a process of mutual exchange. When employees feel that their organization treats them fairly and shows concern for their wellbeing through CSR policies, they are more likely to respond with positive attitudes such as trust, engagement, and commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) ^[5]. In Kenyan corporate institutions, CSR practices such as employee welfare programs, ethical leadership, and safe working conditions can create a sense of obligation and loyalty among employees. As a result, employees may become more motivated and willing to remain with the organization (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019) ^[2].

Stakeholder Theory views organizations as systems that must consider the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, and the wider society (Freeman *et al.*, 2010) ^[8]. From this perspective, employees are not just resources but important partners in achieving organizational goals. CSR policies that recognize employee needs and involve them in responsible practices can strengthen trust and commitment within the workplace (Mory *et al.*, 2021) ^[12]. In the Kenyan corporate context, when employees see that CSR decisions reflect their interests and values, they are more likely to feel respected and emotionally attached to the organization (Rupp *et al.*, 2021) ^[16].

Corporate CSR Policies

Corporate CSR policies refer to the formal guidelines and practices that organizations use to act responsibly toward their employees, society, and the environment. In corporate institutions, these policies often focus on ethical conduct, employee welfare, fairness, and social involvement. CSR policies help shape organizational values and signal what the company stands for. When employees see CSR policies being practiced in a genuine way, they tend to develop positive feelings toward the organization. Research shows that clear and well-implemented CSR policies can improve trust and strengthen relationships between management and employees (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Mory *et al.*, 2021) ^[2, 12].

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement describes how emotionally connected employees feel to their work and their organization. Engaged employees show enthusiasm, dedication, and a willingness to go beyond basic job duties. Engagement is shaped by how employees are treated and how meaningful they find their work. Studies suggest that CSR practices that support fairness, respect, and employee wellbeing can increase engagement by making employees feel valued and proud of their organization (Rupp *et al.*, 2021) ^[16]. When CSR aligns with employee values, engagement tends to grow stronger.

Workplace Commitment

Workplace commitment refers to the level of attachment employees have toward their organization and their desire to remain part of it. Committed employees are more loyal and supportive of organizational goals. CSR policies play a role in building commitment by promoting trust, ethical behavior, and a sense of care within the workplace. Employees are more likely to stay with organizations that show responsibility toward staff and society (Kim *et al.*, 2020) ^[10]. Strong CSR practices can therefore support long-term employee commitment.

Corporate Institutions

Corporate institutions are formal business organizations such as banks, telecommunication firms, insurance companies, and manufacturing firms. These institutions operate in competitive environments and rely heavily on skilled and motivated employees. Corporate institutions often adopt CSR policies to balance profit goals with social and ethical responsibilities. In developing economies, CSR in corporate institutions also supports decent work practices and sustainable business operations (Story & Neves, 2022) ^[18]. How these institutions apply CSR internally can shape employee attitudes and behavior.

Employee Understanding and Experience of CSR Policies and Their Influence on Engagement

Employees do not experience corporate social responsibility (CSR) through policy documents alone. Their understanding of CSR is shaped by daily interactions, management behavior, and how fairly they are treated at work. CSR becomes meaningful to employees when it is reflected in areas such as workload fairness, respect, health and safety, staff development, and ethical leadership. When these practices are visible and consistent, employees tend to view CSR as genuine rather than symbolic (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019) ^[2].

In Kenyan corporate institutions, employees often judge CSR by how well it supports their personal and professional lives. Internal CSR practices such as training opportunities, work-life balance, equal treatment, and open communication help employees feel valued and included. Studies show that when employees believe their organization cares about their wellbeing, they develop positive emotional connections with their work (Kim *et al.*, 2020) ^[10]. This emotional connection is a key element of employee engagement.

Employee engagement reflects the level of energy, dedication, and focus employees bring to their work. CSR practices influence engagement by giving employees a sense of pride and meaning in what they do. When organizations act responsibly, employees feel proud to be associated with them, which increases motivation and involvement (Rupp *et al.*, 2021) ^[16]. In contrast, when CSR is seen as only an external branding tool, employees may feel disconnected and disengaged.

Qualitative studies highlight that employees want to be part of CSR conversations rather than passive observers. When employees are informed, consulted, or involved in CSR activities, they are more likely to understand the purpose behind these policies and support them actively (Mory *et al.*, 2021) ^[12]. In the Kenyan context, where workplace fairness and job security are important concerns, employees closely link CSR to how management treats staff on a daily basis.

Research also suggests that leadership plays a major role in shaping employee experiences of CSR. Ethical and supportive leaders help translate CSR values into daily practice, which strengthens engagement (Story & Neves, 2022) ^[18]. Through shared stories and lived experiences, a qualitative approach helps reveal how employees interpret CSR and how these interpretations shape their engagement at work.

Corporate CSR Policies and Their Influence on Workplace Commitment

Workplace commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment, loyalty, and desire to remain with an

organization. CSR policies influence commitment by shaping trust, fairness, and long-term relationships between employees and management. Employees are more likely to remain committed when they feel their organization acts responsibly toward them and society (Kim *et al.*, 2020) ^[10]. CSR policies that focus on internal stakeholders help build trust in management. Trust grows when employees see consistency between what the organization says and what it does. Ethical decision-making, transparent communication, and fair human resource practices strengthen this trust and encourage long-term commitment (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019) ^[2]. In corporate institutions, trust in leadership is closely linked to employees' willingness to stay and support organizational goals.

Loyalty develops when employees believe that their organization values them beyond their immediate output. CSR initiatives such as staff welfare programs, learning opportunities, and supportive work environments create a sense of belonging. Studies indicate that employees who feel respected and protected by CSR policies are less likely to consider leaving their organization (Mory *et al.*, 2021) ^[12]. This is especially relevant in competitive corporate sectors where employee turnover is costly.

Intention to remain with an organization is also influenced by how employees experience fairness and care over time. CSR policies that promote equal opportunities and employee voice reduce feelings of exploitation and insecurity (Rupp *et al.*, 2021) ^[16]. In developing economies like Kenya, where stable employment is highly valued, responsible corporate behavior can strongly influence employee retention decisions.

Recent studies emphasize that commitment grows when CSR is embedded into everyday management practices rather than treated as a separate activity. When managers align CSR with human resource practices, employees are more likely to develop emotional attachment and long-term commitment (Story & Neves, 2022) ^[18]. A qualitative exploration allows employees to explain how CSR shapes their loyalty, trust, and decision to remain with their organization.

Methodology

Philosophical Foundation

The study was grounded in the interpretivist philosophical foundation, which emphasizes understanding social realities through the meanings individuals attach to their experiences. Interpretivism assumes that reality is socially constructed and best understood by exploring participants' personal perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018) ^[6]. This approach was suitable for the study because it aimed to understand how employees in Kenyan corporate institutions interpreted and experienced corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies, and how these experiences influenced their engagement and workplace commitment.

Research Approach and Design

A qualitative research approach was adopted to allow an in-depth exploration of employees' experiences with CSR policies. A qualitative design was appropriate as it helped uncover meanings, perceptions, and daily workplace experiences that could not be fully captured through quantitative surveys (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The study employed a descriptive and exploratory design to provide rich insights into how CSR was understood and practiced within corporate workplaces.

Population, Sampling Technique, and Sample Size

The study population comprised employees and management staff working in corporate institutions in Kenya. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had direct experience with CSR policies and could provide meaningful insights. The sample size consisted of 20 participants, including 15 employees and 5 managerial staff. This size allowed for detailed exploration of experiences while remaining manageable for qualitative analysis.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to freely express their thoughts while keeping discussions focused on key CSR issues. Interviews were conducted with both employees and managers to capture diverse perspectives on CSR practices and their influence on engagement and commitment (Creswell & Poth, 2018) [6].

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine the interview data. This process involved coding responses, identifying patterns, and grouping recurring ideas into meaningful themes related to CSR, employee engagement, and workplace commitment. Thematic analysis was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to organize qualitative data systematically while reflecting participants' lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021) [4].

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied the principles of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was achieved through member checking, where participants confirmed the accuracy of the findings. Dependability was ensured by documenting the research process clearly. Confirmability was maintained through the use of direct participant quotes and a reflective journal to minimize researcher bias. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the study context and participants, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) [11]. Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured to enhance ethical considerations

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the demographic profile of the participants involved in the study. Understanding the background of the respondents provides context for interpreting their perspectives on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its influence on employee engagement and workplace commitment. A total of 20 participants from Kenyan corporate institutions took part, including both employees and managerial staff.

Among the respondents, 12 were male and 8 were female, indicating a slight male majority. In terms of age, the majority were between 30 and 39 years old, followed by

participants aged 20–29, 40–49, and only a few aged 50 and above. Regarding education, most participants held a bachelor's degree, while some had a diploma or certificate, and a smaller number had a master's degree.

Concerning work experience, most respondents had 6–10 years of experience, with others ranging from 1–5 years, 11–15 years, and a few with over 16 years. The majority of participants were regular staff (75%), while the rest were in managerial or leadership positions (25%).

Essentially, the demographic composition provided a balanced range of perspectives from employees at different levels, ages, and educational backgrounds within the corporate institutions, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of CSR experiences and their influence on engagement and workplace commitment.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the four key criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were applied to both research objectives: understanding how employees experience CSR policies and how these experiences influence engagement, and exploring how CSR policies affect workplace commitment, including loyalty, trust in management, and intention to remain.

Credibility was ensured through member checking. For employee engagement, participants reviewed summaries of their experiences with CSR policies to confirm that interpretations accurately reflected their views (Braun & Clarke, 2021) [4]. Similarly, for workplace commitment, participants validated the findings on their loyalty, trust in management, and intention to stay, ensuring the results genuinely represented their experiences.

Dependability was maintained by keeping a detailed research process log that tracked interview procedures, coding, and analysis steps (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) [11]. This consistency ensured that the analysis of employee engagement and workplace commitment could be reliably reproduced.

Confirmability was achieved by using direct quotes from participants to support findings on engagement, which reduced the influence of researcher bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018) [6]. For workplace commitment, narratives on loyalty and trust were documented, ensuring that conclusions were based on participant data rather than researcher assumptions.

Finally, transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the corporate context, participant roles, and experiences. For employee engagement, rich contextual details allowed readers to understand how findings might apply to other settings. Similarly, for workplace commitment, information about organizational practices, employee demographics, and CSR initiatives helped readers assess the applicability of the results to similar corporate institutions.

These trustworthiness measures ensured that the study's findings were credible, reliable, and reflective of real employee experiences in Kenyan corporate institutions. Table 1 presents the trustworthiness measures of the study

Table 1: Trustworthiness Measures for Research Objectives on Employee Engagement and Workplace Commitment

Trustworthiness Criteria	Application to Objective 1: Employee Engagement	Application to Objective 2: Workplace Commitment
Credibility	Member checking was conducted where participants reviewed summaries of their experiences with CSR policies to confirm accuracy of interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2021) [4].	Participants verified interpretations of their loyalty, trust in management, and intentions to remain, ensuring the findings truly reflected their experiences.
Dependability	A detailed research process log was maintained to track interview procedures and coding steps, enhancing consistency in analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) [11].	Consistent methods for analyzing workplace commitment data were recorded to ensure similar results could be achieved if the study were repeated.
Confirmability	Direct quotes from participants were used to support findings on engagement, reducing researcher bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018) [6].	Participant narratives on commitment and loyalty were documented to ensure conclusions were grounded in the data rather than researcher assumptions.
Transferability	Detailed descriptions of the corporate context, participant roles, and experiences were provided to allow readers to assess applicability in similar settings.	Contextual information about the institutions, employee demographics, and CSR practices was included to help readers evaluate how findings might apply to other organizations.

Source: Field Data, 2025

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study based on the perspectives of employees and managers in Kenyan corporate institutions. The results are organized according to the two research objectives, highlighting how corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies are experienced and how they influence employee engagement and workplace commitment.

Objective 1: Employee Understanding and Experience of CSR Policies

This objective explored how employees perceived and experienced CSR policies in their daily work life and how these experiences influenced their engagement. Analysis revealed three main themes:

Theme 1: Perceived Support and Care from the Organization

Employees felt motivated when CSR activities showed genuine concern for their wellbeing. Staff welfare programs, health initiatives, and professional development were highlighted. One participant said:

"I feel motivated because the company provides training and even health support for us. It shows they care about us, not just profits."

Theme 2: Alignment of CSR with Personal Values

Engagement increased when CSR activities reflected employees' own values, such as ethics, fairness and social responsibility. A participant noted:

"I take pride in working here because their CSR programs in the community match what I believe in. It makes me want to do my best every day."

Theme 3: Visibility and Communication of CSR Initiatives

Employees reported that clear communication about CSR activities enhanced engagement. When are being informed about the goals and purpose of CSR programs made them feel included. One participant shared:

"Sometimes, CSR activities happen, but we only hear about them in passing. When management explains why these programs matter, it makes me feel included and valued."

Objective 2: Influence of CSR Policies on Workplace Commitment

This objective examined how CSR policies affected employees' sense of loyalty, trust in management, and intention to remain with the organization. Three key themes emerged

Theme 1: Trust in Management

Employees' trust increased when CSR policies were implemented consistently and fairly. One participant explained

"Seeing management follow through on promises and treat employees fairly through CSR builds my trust in them. I feel more loyal because of that."

Theme 2: Loyalty and Sense of Belonging

CSR initiatives focusing on employee welfare and recognition fostered loyalty and emotional attachment. A participant remarked

"When the company cares about our growth and wellbeing, I feel like I belong here. I am proud to be part of this team."

Theme 3: Intention to remain in the organization

Employees indicated that CSR influenced their decision to stay long-term, especially when policies addressed development, fairness, and recognition. One participant shared

"I would prefer to stay here because the organization invests in us. Their CSR policies make me feel secure and appreciated."

The findings obviously show that CSR policies, when perceived as authentic and inclusive, positively influenced both employee engagement and workplace commitment, demonstrating the importance of employee-centered CSR practices in Kenyan corporate institution

Discussions Of Findings

Objective One: Employee Understanding and Experience of CSR Policies

Objective one explored how employees in Kenyan corporate institutions perceived and experienced CSR policies and how these experiences influenced their engagement. The findings revealed three main themes: perceived support and care from the organization, alignment of CSR with personal values, and visibility and communication of CSR initiatives.

Theme 1: Perceived Support and Care from the Organization

The results showed that employees felt motivated when CSR activities demonstrated genuine concern for their wellbeing. Initiatives such as staff welfare programs, health support, and professional development contributed to positive engagement. This aligns with findings from South Africa, where studies showed that employee-focused CSR initiatives increased motivation and job satisfaction in corporate workplaces (Ndlovu & Sithole, 2020) [13]. Similarly, in Ghana, research revealed that staff welfare and health-related CSR programs enhanced employee enthusiasm and dedication (Owusu & Osei, 2019) [15]. According to Social Exchange Theory, when employees perceive that the organization is investing in their wellbeing, they feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate through higher engagement and effort (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) [5]. Stakeholder Theory also emphasizes employees as key internal stakeholders whose interests must be addressed for organizational success (Freeman *et al.*, 2010) [8]. This suggests that genuine CSR practices that support employees can strengthen both engagement and mutual trust.

Theme 2: Alignment of CSR with Personal Values

Employees reported higher engagement when CSR activities reflected their personal ethics, fairness, and social responsibility. For instance, participating in community-oriented CSR initiatives made employees proud and motivated them to perform better. In Nigeria, studies indicated that CSR activities aligning with employee values fostered stronger emotional attachment and commitment to the organization (Adeoye & Elegunde, 2021) [1]. Similarly, research in Uganda showed that CSR programs consistent with employee beliefs enhanced morale and participation (Okello, 2020) [14]. From a theoretical perspective, Social Exchange Theory suggests that when employees perceive CSR as meaningful and aligned with their values, they are more likely to respond positively, enhancing engagement. Stakeholder Theory reinforces this by highlighting the importance of recognizing employee values in organizational decision-making to maintain healthy workplace relationships.

Theme 3: Visibility and Communication of CSR Initiatives

The study also found that engagement was higher when CSR initiatives were clearly communicated. Employees who understood the purpose and goals of CSR programs felt more included and valued. This finding resonates with studies in South Africa, where transparent CSR communication was linked to increased employee engagement (Dlamini & Mthembu, 2019) [7]. In Ghana, research indicated that employees who were informed and involved in CSR planning demonstrated higher motivation and participation (Boadi & Agyemang, 2018) [3]. Social Exchange Theory explains that clear communication strengthens perceived organizational support, encouraging employees to reciprocate through commitment and effort. Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that involving employees in CSR processes respects their interests as key stakeholders, enhancing engagement and trust.

These findings demonstrate that employees' understanding and experience of CSR policies are critical for fostering engagement. When CSR initiatives are supportive, value-

aligned, and communicated transparently, employees feel valued, motivated, and committed to contributing their best to the organization.

Objective Two: Influence of CSR Policies on Workplace Commitment

Objective two explored how corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies influenced employees' workplace commitment, including loyalty, trust in management, and intention to remain with the organization. The analysis produced three key themes: trust in management, loyalty and sense of belonging, and intention to remain with the organization.

Theme 1: Trust in Management

The findings revealed that employees' trust in leadership increased when CSR policies were consistently implemented and applied fairly. When management followed through on commitments and demonstrated fairness through CSR initiatives, employees felt more confident in organizational leadership. This is consistent with studies in Spain, where transparent CSR practices strengthened employee trust in managers and improved their organizational attachment (García-Madariaga *et al.*, 2020) [9]. Social Exchange Theory explains this by suggesting that when employees perceive organizational support and fairness, they feel obliged to reciprocate through trust, engagement, and commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) [5]. Similarly, Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that employees, as key internal stakeholders, require consistent attention to their interests to maintain trust and positive workplace relationships (Freeman *et al.*, 2010) [8].

Theme 2: Loyalty and Sense of Belonging

Employees expressed that CSR initiatives focused on welfare, recognition, and development fostered loyalty and a sense of belonging. This resonates with research in Portugal, which found that employee-centered CSR programs enhanced emotional attachment and identification with the organization (Silva & Lopes, 2019) [17]. In Belgium, studies also reported that CSR initiatives promoting staff wellbeing and participation strengthened employee loyalty and reduced turnover intentions (Vermeulen *et al.*, 2021) [20]. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, employees reciprocate perceived care and support from the organization with loyalty and commitment. Stakeholder Theory supports this by highlighting the importance of recognizing employees as primary stakeholders whose inclusion in organizational decisions fosters emotional attachment and loyalty.

Theme 3: Intention to remain in the organization

The study found that employees' intention to stay was influenced by CSR policies addressing professional development, fairness, and recognition. Participants indicated that supportive and fair CSR initiatives created a secure and valued work environment, reducing their likelihood of leaving. Similar findings were reported in the Netherlands, where employee-focused CSR practices were linked to higher retention and long-term commitment (van Beurden & Gössling, 2020) [19]. Social Exchange Theory explains this behavior as a response to perceived organizational support, prompting employees to remain and contribute actively. Stakeholder Theory reinforces the idea

that treating employees as vital stakeholders by implementing fair and inclusive CSR practices strengthens their commitment to the organization.

The findings clearly indicate that CSR policies, when perceived as authentic, inclusive, and employee-focused, positively influence workplace commitment. Employees respond with trust, loyalty, and a stronger intention to remain with the organization, underscoring the importance of integrating employee-centered CSR practices in corporate strategies.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study offer important insights for both theory and practice regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its influence on employees in Kenyan corporate institutions. Understanding how employees experience CSR and how it affects their engagement and commitment provides guidance for organizations seeking to enhance workforce motivation, loyalty, and overall performance.

Practical Implications

The study highlights that CSR policies are most effective when they genuinely address employee needs and values. Organizations should focus on initiatives that provide welfare support, professional development, and ethical leadership. Clear communication and active involvement of employees in CSR planning can strengthen engagement and loyalty. For management, this means that investing in employee-centered CSR not only benefits the workforce but can also reduce turnover, enhance trust in leadership, and improve organizational performance.

Theoretical Implications

The results support both Social Exchange Theory and Stakeholder Theory. From a Social Exchange perspective, employees respond positively to perceived organizational support by increasing engagement and commitment. Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that employees are key internal stakeholders whose needs and values must be considered in CSR strategies. The study extends existing knowledge by showing that in the Kenyan corporate context, aligning CSR practices with employee expectations strengthens both engagement and workplace commitment.

Policy Implications

Corporate institutions should integrate CSR practices into human resource and management strategies, ensuring that policies are not solely focused on external reputation or community projects. Employee-centered CSR initiatives can be incorporated into organizational planning, performance appraisals, and leadership development programs to foster a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.

Summarily, the study demonstrates that meaningful, transparent, and well-communicated CSR practices have the potential to positively influence employee behavior, loyalty, and organizational outcomes, emphasizing the importance of treating employees as central stakeholders in CSR initiatives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to help corporate institutions in Kenya enhance the effectiveness of their CSR policies and strengthen employee engagement and workplace

commitment. These recommendations are intended to guide management, policymakers, and practitioners in creating more employee-centered CSR practices.

1. Enhance Employee-Centered CSR Initiatives

Organizations should design CSR programs that directly address employee welfare, professional development, and wellbeing. Initiatives such as training opportunities, health support, and staff recognition can improve motivation, trust, and loyalty among employees. Aligning CSR practices with employee needs ensures that staff feels valued and supported, which can enhance engagement and long-term commitment.

2. Improve Communication and Visibility of CSR Activities

Clear communication about CSR objectives, goals, and outcomes is crucial. Management should regularly inform employees about CSR initiatives and involve them in planning or implementation where possible. Transparent communication helps employees understand the purpose of CSR programs, increases their sense of inclusion, and strengthens their connection to the organization.

3. Integrate CSR into Leadership and Human Resource practices

CSR should not be treated as a separate or external activity. Organizations should embed CSR principles into leadership development, performance appraisals, and daily management practices. This approach reinforces ethical behavior, fairness, and trust, which are central to fostering employee engagement and workplace commitment.

4. Recognize Employees as Key Stakeholders

Corporate institutions should consider employees as primary stakeholders in CSR planning and implementation. Actively listening to employee feedback and aligning CSR strategies with their values and expectations can improve satisfaction, loyalty, and retention.

5. Encourage Cross-Sector and Regional Learning

Organizations can learn from successful CSR practices in other countries or sectors, particularly those that have demonstrated positive impacts on employee engagement and commitment. Benchmarking and adopting best practices can help improve CSR effectiveness in the local context.

Implementing these recommendations can help corporate institutions create meaningful, transparent, and employee-focused CSR policies that enhance organizational performance, strengthen trust, and foster a committed and motivated workforce.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study was limited by its small sample size of 20 participants from selected Kenyan corporate institutions, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the qualitative approach relied on self-reported experiences, which could be influenced by personal biases.

Future research could involve larger and more diverse samples across multiple sectors and countries to validate the findings. Comparative studies examining cultural and organizational differences in CSR perceptions and their impact on employee engagement and commitment would further enrich understanding.

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