

CSR and Employee Empowerment: Scale Development and Validation

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ABSTRACT

This study develops a measurement scale to assess the contribution of companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes on employees' empowerment. Data from a self-administered questionnaire completed by 45 respondents were tested using exploratory factor analysis and reliability for scale validation. The results show two constructs, namely authority and ability, consisting of ten items, were found to be reliable and valid in assessing the CSR-Empowerment attributes. The developed scale could be used by companies as an instrument to assess CSR programmes, thereby assisting interested parties (regulators, researchers and companies) in evaluating the impact of the CSR programmes in empowering employees.

Keywords: *CSR, Empowerment, Employees, Equitable society, Measurement*

INTRODUCTION

A large body of literature has examined the effects of CSR programmes on employees' performance. For instance, research documented that CSR programmes could have positive impacts on employees' emotions, attitudes and performance (Onkila, 2015; Temminck et al., 2015). Companies proactively involved in CSR activities may gain support and trust from their employees. The positive effects of CSR on employees' job satisfaction and commitment to organisational goals, values and overall company's achievement have also been documented (Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Kehoe and Wright, 2013). In like manner, CSR programmes related to rewards and recognition are an important factor in enhancing employees' job satisfaction and work performance (Reynolds, 2019). According to Manzoor (2012), employees of any organisations are assets 'that lead companies' to success. Besides, employees are the key element for building a good corporate image and promote the reputation of an organisation (Simmons, 2009). Mozes et al. (2011) stated that employees' affection correlates with the prestige of the organisation. More importantly, CSR is regarded as an important tool for motivating companies' employees that could facilitate employees' attachment and performance as well as companies' performance, while at the same time creating long term value for companies (Galbreath and Shum, 2012; Alafi and Hasonah, 2012).

CSR has been increasingly recognised as an empowerment mechanism in enhancing the social and economic development of society (Bowen, 2013; Jatana and Crowther, 2007). Empowerment programmes such as education and skills training, infrastructure and employment opportunities could empower employees by providing them with self-efficacy and competency, thereby improving their socio-economic conditions. These would effectively reduce unequal opportunities in education, income disparity and increase training opportunities among employees. However, there has been little research concerning the underlying mechanisms linking CSR with its intended outcomes (Lamond et al., 2010; Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). Specifically, while the existing literature has provided some understanding on the effects of CSR programmes on employees, limited literature exists concerning understanding the effect of CSR on the societal conditions of employees. Research on the effect of CSR in empowering the social and economic development of employees is scarce. Skouloudis et al. (2015) and Onkila (2015) contend that the impact of CSR for a critical group of internal stakeholders – namely, employees, and its underlying mechanisms are sparse in the CSR literature. Thus, a measurement is needed to assess the effects of CSR programmes on employees' empowerment. The purpose of this study is to fill the gap in the literature by establishing a scale to measure how CSR contributes to empowering employees in the workplace.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature related to the study. Section 3 outlines the research methodology adopted to establish the scale. Section four describes scale validation for empowerment through CSR programmes. The study's conclusion and recommendations are presented in the last section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CSR Agenda for Employees

The multifaceted concept of CSR and various ways of its measurements have been documented. Bowen (1953) defines CSR as the obligations of companies to pursue business policies and actions that are desirable to the objectives and values of society. While Harjoto and Jo (2011) describe CSR as companies managing their business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society. In this context, CSR serves broader purposes that are not limited to the legal and financial aspects of a company but encompassing of serving people, communities, and the environment. Carroll (1979) proposes four key dimensions of the CSR model, namely economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic. Later, in the year 2003, the model was refined with three dimensions: economic, social and legal (Schwartz and Carroll, 2003). Wood (1991) also discussed a measure of CSR. He proposed three dimensions of CSR, known as responsibilities, actions and outcomes. Responsibilities are concerned with companies' responsibilities at three different levels: institutional, organisational and individual. This dimension is associated with three related principles: legitimacy, public responsibility and managerial discretion. While actions are related to actions or conduct of companies. It focuses on the issue of 'process of social responsiveness' that cover management aspects in three areas: stakeholder, issues management and environmental scanning. The third dimension analyses the outcomes of companies' actions from three social perspectives, namely policies, programmes and impacts.

Social, economic and environmental themes underlying the CSR of companies integrate company's practices with its various stakeholders (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braight, 2004; Bihari & Pradhan, 2011). According to Krisnawati et al. (2018), the heart of CSR is the concept of stakeholder management which refers to efforts by a company in aligning its values with stakeholders' needs that go beyond profit maximisation. Thus, it can be concluded that CSR refers to business practices that take into account the

impact of a company's operations on economics, social and environmental aspects (Nwaneri, 2015). In a similar line of thought, Lantu et al. (2017) stressed that companies have the responsibility to contribute to the sustainable economic development of society that would enhance people's quality of life. Increasingly, discussions of CSR have embraced the role of CSR in social and economic development (Utting, 2007; Ismail, 2009; Mena et al., 2010 and Amran et al., 2013). Utting (2007), for example, suggests that CSR programmes could contribute towards achieving equality and equity in society through redistribution, social protection, empowerment, and rights. Utting's model of CSR has identified the important role of empowerment in reducing social and economic issues such as minimising disparities that promote social and economic equity and equality, improving coarse imbalances in the distribution of income, wealth and power and eventually social justice. Empowerment is regarded as a tool in assisting society to attain a better economic and social status by claiming their fundamental rights (Mena et al., 2010). Equally, Hayes and Hannold (2007) argue the important role of companies in improving disparity in the society and economy.

Scholars have examined topics in CSR from various theoretical standpoints. For examples, from the perspective of social contract theory, companies have a social agreement with the society. Hence, companies should discharge duties to fulfil the rights of society (Amran et al., 2013). The fundamental position of this theory is that society is considered a legitimate stakeholder. Thus, the actions or behaviour of companies should be morally obligated to serve legitimate stakeholders, such as employees. Similarly, stakeholder theory explains that companies should create values not only for its shareholders but also for all the stakeholders. Based on this theory, there is an interconnection between the actions of a company and its stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997). In this respect, companies are socially responsible towards its key stakeholders, including employees, and thus should be considered in strategies and practices of the companies. In effect, companies are responsible for having proper programmes to empower employees. As such, companies should ensure the fundamental rights of employees to basic needs such as health services, skill development, earnings and education (International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, 2002; Çakar and Ertürk, 2010). Conceptually, companies' empowerment programmes could be used as a tool for creating social and economic change for employees. It directs attention towards employees' health, adaptation to work environment and competencies (Zimmerman, 1995). Socially responsible companies, via their CSR-empowerment programmes, enable employees to be trained, well informed, and aware of their rights which could lead to better social and economic conditions.

Employee Empowerment

Empowerment has been conceptualised through various perspectives such as economic, social, political and cultural. Luttrell et al. (2009) define economic empowerment as the individual right to have access to appropriate skills, resources, sustainable incomes and livelihoods. Social empowerment is defined as the ability of an individual to obtain a sense of autonomy and self-confidence in work performance or to have control over their lives (Page and Czuba, 1999; Combaz and McLoughlin, 2014). Accordingly, social empowerment will generate power in society in that people can decide to act appropriately on issues that are considered important. Piron & Watkins (2004) define cultural empowerment as redefining of rules and norms with the recreating of cultural and symbolic practices in society. In contrast, political empowerment is defined as collective action by society for citizens to claim their rights and entitlements.

Employee empowerment can be categorised into motivational (psychological) empowerment and relational (structural) empowerment approach. According to Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment is related to four principles: meaning (employees feel that the job task is fit with his/her beliefs, values and actions), competence (employees feel that he/she able to perform well with the task given), self-determination (employees feel he/she has control over his/her work) and impact (employee feel he/she can

affect the work outcomes positively). Conger and Kanungo (1988) opine that motivational empowerment is a process of developing employees' feeling of self-efficacy on job performance that influence their skills and abilities. Menon (2001) and Dimitriadis and Maroudas (2007) suggest motivational empowerment as a psychological state of employees in perceived control (employees have a sense of control on job tasks), perceptions of competence (employees have the required skills to perform the job tasks), and goals internalisation (employees feel motivated to perform the job tasks). Relational empowerment refers to the act of superiors giving power to subordinates in the organisation (Menon and Hartmann, 2002). Within the context of an organisation, power is about giving formal authority or control over organisational resources to employees (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Jay et al., 2003). Employees will be able to take responsibility for their decisions and ideas if they can get access to organisational resources (Spreitzer, 1995; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Bowen and Lawler, 1992). An example of resources includes the budget allocation, work materials, space and time and platforms for acquiring knowledge (Kanter, 1983; Spreitzer, 1995; Voegtlin et al., 2015). Overall, both the motivational and relational empowerment is important. This is because, there is a need for companies to emphasise employees' participation and autonomy in the companies' policies and practices so that the feeling of empowerment can become real and effective only when individuals embrace these policies and translate them into practices (Bowen and Lawler, 1995).

In this study, we propose a definition of employees' empowerment as a set of programmes, policies or activities that are established by companies which can potentially provide opportunities and resources for employees to gain knowledge and skills, authority and motivation that would enhance employees' ability to improve their competence, confidence, self-efficacy to succeed and advance economically. In summary, the concept of empowerment can be measured through authority and ability. It focuses on management practices or activities that are designed to empower employees through access to information and resources and enhance autonomy and responsibility. This study defines employees' empowerment as a set of programmes, practices or activities that are carried out by companies that provide opportunities and resources to allow employees in gaining knowledge and skills (such as, technical/specialist, interpersonal and management skills), motivation and authority. These activities are expected to enhance the ability of employees to improve their competence, confidence and self-efficacy to succeed and advance economically and socially.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Measuring the Concept of Employees' Empowerment Through CSR Programmes

The aim of this paper is to establish an instrument to measure employees' empowerment resulting from companies' CSR programmes. The proposed working definition and items to measure employees' empowerment are established through a systematic literature search similar to Ranjan and Read (2016). We reviewed prior literature that relates to employees' empowerment, using keyword search on "CSR and empowerment; CSR and employees' empowerment" in databases such as ABI/INFORMS, Proquest, Business Source Complete and Google Scholar to gather relevant studies for review. Based on the attributes of empowerment and employees' empowerment obtained from the literature, items were constructed and refined to form a scale to measure employees' empowerment. A panel of experts made of academics and practitioners validated the items. Therefore, this study proposed two main constructs (authority and ability) to appropriately measure employees' empowerment. These two constructs are expected to enable a clear understanding of how companies' CSR programmes contribute to empowering employees. The initial items consisted of 14 items that may be relevant to measure empowerment within the context of an employee perspective. A careful analysis based on comments from the expert review resulted in 11 items established

for the purpose of this study (see Table 1). The resulting items were then refined into a self-administered questionnaire, distributed to and completed by 45 respondents using convenient sampling for the purpose of validating the developed scale. Item reduction is performed using exploratory factor analysis, and items were validated through a reliability test.^[1]_{SEP}

Table I Proposed Items for Employees' Empowerment

Constructs	Items
<p>Ability is defined as efforts taken in providing access to resources and the opportunities to enable employees to enhance their self-efficacy. An employee with an empowered ability experiences feelings of perceived competence that reflects role mastery, in addition to the successful completion of assigned tasks.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing relevant training and programmes to assist employees in achieving technical and interpersonal skills and abilities to perform the assigned tasks effectively. 2. Conducting awareness programmes to improve employees' knowledge on companies' products or services. 3. Providing educational sponsorship or funding to employees to further their studies to improve employees' competencies and self-esteem. 4. Providing community-related volunteerism programmes established by companies or other organisations to boost employees' motivation and social skills. 5. Providing learning and development programmes via internships to ensure that employees are able to improve their competency level. 6. Establishing mentorship programmes to nurture employees' professional talents and personal development to assist employees in handling challenges at the workplace.
<p>Authority is described as conditions that allow employees experience feelings of control over how the job shall be performed; awareness of the context in which the work is performed; accountability for personal work output; shared responsibility for unit and organisational performance, and equity in the rewards based on individual and collective performance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allowing employees to give feedback for the management's consideration in companies' decision-making process through a proper mode of communication (e.g. direct engagement, proxy voting and social reporting) 2. Allowing employees to engage in problem-solving and decision-making in matters which involve their jobs and their job condition. 3. Allowing employees to set their own performance standards for their job and task. 4. Establishing a promotion scheme based on merit to enhance employees' performance. 5. Providing a performance-based reward system to recognise employees' performance.

Pre-test for the Employees' Empowerment Scale

The instrument was pre-tested to establish the content validity of the measurement. This was achieved through the review of items by experts consisting of eight senior academics and industry's practitioners. They were requested to provide comments on the constructs and items on a scale of (1) very weak estimate to (5) very strong estimate. The majority of the experts provided positive remarks on the appropriateness of the constructs and items. Some minor adjustments (such as the construction of sentences) were made to improve the clarity of items. The pre-tested constructs and items are shown in Table II and consisted of ten items. One item (providing learning and development programmes via internships to ensure that employees are able to improve their competency level) was dropped based on the comments and suggestions made by the expert panel. A five-point Likert scale anchored by (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree used in the questionnaire.

Table 2 The Finalised Constructs and Attributes for The Employee Empowerment Scale

Constructs	Items
Ability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relevant training programmes to improve the technical and interpersonal skills of employees. 2. Awareness programmes to improve employees' knowledge on companies' products or services. 3. Career advancement scheme. 4. Involvement of employees in community-related volunteerism programmes. 5. Mentorship programmes to nurture employees' professional talents and personal development.
Authority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A platform to provide feedback on companies' policies and action. 2. A platform to voice out ideas and opinions. 3. Flexibilities to negotiate the performance measures within a given set of performance standards. 4. Promotion schemes based on merit. 5. Performance-based reward system (e.g. bonus).

Sample and Pilot Test of the Scale

The pilot test was conducted on an established scale to identify the structure of the relationship between items or variables. One hundred respondents were selected to participate in the pilot study. The main criteria of the respondents are individuals who are working with listed companies in Malaysia that have CSR programmes. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal axis factoring extraction and varimax rotation was performed to extract factors that can predict employees' empowerment within the CSR perspective. A total of 45 completed and useable responses were used to measure the psychometric validity of the scale. According to Hertzog (2008), a sample size between 10 to 40 respondents for the pilot study is acceptable and appropriate. In addition, a reliability test was performed by assessing the Cronbach's alpha score (Nunnally, 1978).

FINDINGS

Exploratory Factor Analysis

As shown in Table III, the two factors adequately explained 82.7% of the variation in terms of CSR and employee empowerment. Factor 1 represents Ability (5 items), and Factor 2 represents Authority (5 items). Factor 1 (Ability) explained the largest total variance, i.e. 43.7%, and Factor 2 (Authority) explained 39% of the total variance. Further, the factor loadings of all ten items are in the range of 0.505 and 0.891. In addition, all two factors have eigenvalues greater than one, thereby reflecting the adequacy of the model.

The results of the exploratory factor analysis suggest two relevant constructs in measuring employee empowerment within the CSR perspective. Thus, this study aims to address the gap in prior research on CSR research from the context of employee empowerment. The implication of the results suggests the need for companies to evaluate their CSR activities to empower the social and economic conditions of employees. CSR instruments and institutions could be used to defend and enhance the interests of workers (Utting, 2007). The respondents in this study perceived the items from the two factors could be used to assess the CSR activities of companies in empowering employees and enhance their economic and social conditions.

Table III Exploratory Factor Analysis

Items	Factor loading	Eigen-value	% of variance
Factor 1: Ability		4.368	43.676
1. Relevant training programmes to improve technical and interpersonal skills of employees.	0.802		
2. Awareness programmes to improve employees' knowledge on companies' products or services.	0.655		
3. Career advancement scheme.	0.891		
4. Involvement of employees in community related volunteerism programmes.	0.707		
5. Mentorship programmes to nurture employees' professional talents and personal development.	0.740		
Factor 2: Authority		3.898	38.978
1. A platform to provide feedback on companies' policies and action.	0.859		
2. A platform to voice out ideas and opinions.	0.839		
3. Flexibilities to negotiate the performance measures within a given set of performance standards.	0.615		
4. Promotion schemes based on merit.	0.855		
5. Performance-based reward system (eg. bonus).	0.813		

They suggested that employee conditions could be improved through CSR activities such as training, awareness and mentorship programmes. These would empower the ability of the employee to his/her skills and competency. In like manner, the CSR activities such as promotion schemes based on merit and performance-based reward system could enhance the authority of the employee in his/her tasks performance. It would help improve the economic and social conditions of the employee. More specifically, the CSR activities would give rights and equal opportunities for the employee to receive adequate resources and exercise relevant power.

Reliability, Discriminant Validity and Convergent Validity

All items are examined for reliability, and discriminant and convergent validity. Scholars suggest that an adequate and acceptable level for individual item reliability is to be greater than 0.50 (Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips, 1991). The results demonstrate adequate internal consistency and reliability scores for the two factors (Authority and Ability). Correspondingly, the convergent validity of the measure items was assessed using three criteria: (1) the item factor loadings should be significant and exceed 0.50; (2) composite reliability for each construct should be greater than 0.70; and (3) average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct should exceed the variance attributable to measurement error (i.e., $AVE \geq 0.50$) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE values (see Table IV) signify that all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold value of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, the AVE values exhibit adequate convergent validity for two constructs.

Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the average variance extracted (AVEs) with the square of the correlation between the construct and each of the other constructs. AVEs for each construct were greater than the square of the correlation for all three factors. As in Table IV, all shaded numbers on the leading diagonals are the square roots of AVEs while the off-diagonal elements are the correlations among

the two constructs. The correlation between two pair of the constructs in the lower left of the off-diagonal element of the matrix was 0.856, while the lowest square root of AVE was 0.763, and the highest was 0.802. This assessment indicates satisfactory discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In general, the results of the final measurement model confirmed two essential factors of employee empowerment. Table IV shows the two factors: (1) Ability and (2) Authority, with acceptable reliabilities and convergent and discriminant validities.

Table IV Reliability, CR, AVE, SQRT AVE and Correlations

Factor	α	CR	AVE	C1	C2
Ability	0.948	0.899	0.642	0.802	
Authority	0.936	0.873	0.583	0.856	0.763

α =reliability, Cronbach's alpha; CR=composite reliability; AVE=average variance extracted; Perpendicular bold readings=square root of AVE; other readings=correlations between components

Table V presents the mean score and standard deviations of the construct of employee empowerment. Among the two factors, the mean score of the authority construct ranked the highest (M = 20.889, SD = 3.5), indicating employee's empowerment from the CSR perspective should be designed to enhance the authority and motivations of employees such as promotion schemes, performance rewards and an appropriate platform for employees to provide feedback on company policies and actions (Mean = 20.8, Std. Dev. = 3.55).

Table V Elements of Employees Empowerment

Items	Mean	Standard deviation
Factor 1: Ability	20.889	3.505
1. Relevant training programmes to improve the technical and interpersonal skills of employees.	4.27	0.751
2. Awareness programmes to improve employees' knowledge of companies' products or services.	4.31	0.763
3. Career advancement scheme.	4.22	0.823
4. Involvement of employees in community-related volunteerism programmes.	3.98	0.783
5. Mentorship programmes to nurture employees' professional talents and personal development.	4.11	0.804
Factor 2: Authority	20.800	3.552
1. A platform to provide feedback on companies' policies and action.	4.13	0.757
2. A platform to voice out ideas and opinions.	4.18	0.777
3. Flexibilities to negotiate the performance measures within a given set of performance standards.	4.13	0.842
4. Promotion schemes based on merit.	4.13	0.757
5. Performance-based reward system (e.g. bonus).	4.22	0.765

CONCLUSION

This paper developed and validated empowerment within the CSR domain by critically examining the definitions, concepts and measures of empowerment as relevant for the CSR agenda. The results of the study show that companies' CSR activities are able to empower the employee through two approaches. First is by enhancing the ability or competencies and skills of the employees. In this context, employees

can be empowered through training programmes, awareness programmes, career advancement schemes and mentoring programmes that would enhance the skills and knowledge of the employee. Second is by giving the employee greater authority on their job performance or tasks. In this context, the CSR activities of companies would empower employees to gain authority by providing various platforms for the employees to provide feedback, ideas and opinions. They are also being rewarded fairly through performance-based reward systems and enjoy flexibility in negotiating the performance standard. This study suggests ten items to be appropriately applied in measuring the CSR activities of companies in empowering employees.

The implications of this study can be categorised into two. First, the results of this study suggest the theoretical construct of empowerment within the CSR perspective. The results of this study may contribute towards emerging discussion and investigation of the effect of CSR of companies on the economic and social conditions of the employee. Specifically, one under-researched area is related to the effect of CSR of companies in improving economic and social conditions of the employees via empowerment programme. In the future, empirical data could be collected through questionnaires in order to test the validity of the instruments. Second, the managerial impact of this study is related to enhancing the awareness and understanding of the management of companies on the positive effects of CSR activities in enhancing employee empowerment and consequently their economic and social conditions.

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