

# HOW CSR AFFECTS EMPLOYEES' INTRINSIC MOTIVATION ACROSS THREE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This research explores whether an employee's intrinsic motivation is significantly affected by five different types of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – Environment-related CSR, Human Rights and Labor-related CSR, Product Responsibility-related CSR, Community Engagement-related-CSR, and Corporate Governance-related CSR. In addition, this study examines whether this impact varies across employee generations. Samples were obtained from 546 respondents spanning three generations – Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z. A regression analysis was conducted for each generation. Empirical evidence shows that CSR significantly increases employees' intrinsic motivation, and this impact is moderated by employee generation. Specifically, only environmental CSR was significantly related to intrinsic motivation for Gen X; environmental, product responsibility, and community engagement CSR were significant for Gen Y; environmental CSR and human rights and labor-related CSR were significant for Gen X employees.

## INTRODUCTION

Fostering employees' intrinsic motivation is one of the critical elements for a successful business. Employees who are more intrinsically motivated use self-leadership strategies more effectively to improve their job performance than their counterparts who are not intrinsically motivated (Steinbauer et al., 2018). A link exists between CSR and brand reputation, which has become increasingly important in attracting, motivating, and retaining a workforce from younger generations (Hedger, 2006). An employee's feeling of pride through CSR activities is well observed in empirical studies (Kim & Scullion, 2013).

Much research has investigated CSR's positive impacts on employee work motivation. Prior studies suggest that generational differences moderate the influence of factors affecting employee motivation. Potocan et al. (2013) found that demographic variables, including age, significantly impact employee intrinsic motivation. For instance, Rank and Contreras (2021) proposed that older

generations place more emphasis on environmental impacts. Ruiz and Davis (2017) found that the younger generations are more likely to leave their workplace because of poor work conditions than the older generations. Torsello (2019) discovered that Gen Y's intrinsic motivation was heavily swayed by organizational culture, task clarity, work-life balance, and human resource management. Considering that there is a generational difference in employee motivation, examining how it would moderate the impact of CSR on employee motivation is meaningful. It will help us understand complex mechanisms among employee generation, CSR, and employee motivation. Recent research hints that age or generation influences employees' acceptance of their companies' CSR activities. For example, Reavis et al. (2017) found that GOV-CSR positively impacts only millennials' intrinsic motivation. McGlone et al. (2011) found that millennial employees who valued CSR were more likely to volunteer than non-millennials who also valued CSR. Tan et al. (2019) discovered that eco-friendly labeling more significantly impacts the younger generation as they are more responsive to green products. However, few studies provided a holistic picture of generational differences in the impact of CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation. In addition, no study examined how all five different types of CSR – Environment-related CSR (ENT-CSR), Human Rights and Labor-related CSR (HRL-CSR), Product Responsibility-related CSR (PR-CSR), Community Engagement-related CSR (CE-CSR), and Corporate Governance-related (GOV-CSR) would affect employee motivation and how this impact would vary depending on employee generation. Therefore, this research explores whether the impact of CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation can be different among three employee generations in the workplace. Specifically, it examines three generations, such as Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z employees, to see the impact of (1) ENV-CSR, (2) HRL-CSR, (3) PR-CSR, (4) CE-CSR, and (5) GOV-CSR, on employees' intrinsic motivation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We collected data for this research through an online Amazon Mechanical Turk survey. This research will fill the gap between the CSR and employee motivation literature by adding a moderating role of employee generation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Environment-related CSR and Intrinsic Motivation**

Employees may find their work more meaningful and fulfilling and become more motivated when they feel that their affiliated organization takes care of environmental issues (Rank & Contreras, 2021), such as water, energy, and material use, minimizes pollutants during the production of products and services, and makes a significant investment to protect the environment. Graafland and Gerlagh (2019) investigated how management's perception of corporate environmental practices led to increased motivation. Bartik et al. (2013) also found that a firm's environmental protection and CSR activity positively impact employee intrinsic motivation. Cho (2015) found that intrinsically motivated employees tend to be conscious of environmental issues leading to more support for adequate sustainability package labeling for consumers' awareness. Venger and Pomirleanu (2017) found that companies can enhance brand image through social issues and environmental CSR messaging campaigns, thereby improving employee morale and motivation.

Singh et al. (2010) reported that environmental CSR increased employee productivity. Therefore, we propose a research hypothesis as follows:

**Hypothesis 1a:** Environment-related CSR is positively related to employees' intrinsic motivation.

### **Environment-related CSR, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Generation**

Demographic variables, including age, significantly impact employee perception of environmentally-focused CSR (Dokadia et al., 2015). Younger generations tend to be more concerned about the environment; they support eco-labeling and recycling waste information and are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products (Tan et al., 2019). Potocan et al. (2013) found that demographic variables, such as age and gender, partially affect the relationship between employees' ethical behavior and their attitudes toward environmental concerns and concern for society. Dokadia et al. (2015) found significant differences among four groups (Baby Boomers, Silent Generation, Gen X, and Gen Y) in the impact of ENV-CSR on employee motivation. Extending this study, we posit that the impact of ENV-CSR on employee motivation would be stronger for the younger generation. It is because, compared to older generations, the younger generation tends to emphasize extrinsic rewards such as financial compensation more than environmental issues (Potocan et al., 2013; Rank & Contreras, 2021). Therefore, the above arguments make us expect the following:

**Hypothesis 1b:** Generations moderate the effects of ENV-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace, such that ENV-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of the older generations.

### **Human Rights and Labor-related CSR and Intrinsic Motivation**

Employees are strongly motivated by an organization's active engagement in supporting human rights and labor-related activities, such as protecting employee rights in their workplace, allowing for freedom of organized labor, protecting against discrimination, and supporting healthcare benefits for employees (Fasterling, 2016; Heinemann et al., 2013; O'Connor et al., 2016). O'Connor et al. (2016) found that employees fused ethical responsibilities to develop a perception of their employer's labor-related CSR activity during the labor dispute (O'Connor et al., 2016). This finding indicates that there might be a relationship between labor-related CSR and employee intrinsic motivation. Conchie (2013) discovered a positive association between an organization's active engagement in creating a safe working environment and employee intrinsic motivation. Employee intrinsic motivation can be boosted by the degree to which organizations actively maintain safety protocols to make a workplace safe. Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 2a:** Human Rights and Labor-related CSR positively affects employees' intrinsic motivation.

## **Human Rights and Labor-related CSR, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Generation**

Younger generations are more interested in human rights and labor-related activities such as working conditions, employee rights, and work-life balance than older generations (Cyfert et al., 2021; Ruiz & Davis, 2017; Spivack & Milosevic, 2018). Specifically, prior studies have consistently shown that the younger generation's intrinsic motivation is influenced by an employer's support for organizational culture, task clarity, and work-life balance to a greater level than the older generation (Torsello, 2019). Younger generations tend to value a workplace where job enrichment activities motivate employees and create favorable work conditions (Ruiz & Davis, 2017). They are more likely to be intrinsically motivated by their affiliated organization's active engagement in labor and human-rights activity. Ruiz and Davis (2017) reported that Gen Y showed a stronger urge to leave the firm than older generations when it does not support these labor-related activities. Cyfert et al. (2021) report that Gen Z employees show significantly lower intrinsic motivation when their employers actively implement layoffs and outsourcing. These findings suggest that younger generation employees are less likely to be intrinsically motivated when employers do not support labor- and employee-right activity. Therefore, we propose a hypothesis as follows:

**Hypothesis 2b:** Generations moderate the effects of HRL-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace, such that HRL-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of younger generations.

## **Product Responsibility-related CSR and Intrinsic Motivation**

Consumers generally prefer more, rather than less, effective sustainability claims in product packaging, enabling them to make informed decisions that conserve natural resources and attenuate the environmental impact (Cho, 2015). A firm's emphasis on product sustainability, such as clearly labeling product information, explaining products/services for customers, and taking care of customer complaints, increases consumers' positive perception of the firm. Venger and Pomirleanu (2017) found that a company's active engagement in PR-CSR positively influences the company's brand evaluations and brand image. In line with these research findings, we argue that a company's PR-CSR initiatives can also enhance employee intrinsic motivation. It is because employees are more likely to be intrinsically motivated by accounting for ethical responsibility. Employees may be strongly satisfied that they work for the 'right thing' by taking care of ethical responsibility. For instance, employees working at medical device firms that take care of their patients and allow their patients to speak directly to healthcare professionals show higher intrinsic motivation (Lee et al., 2014). Venger and Pomirleanu (2017) also found that companies can enhance their brand image through ethically responsible product-related CSR messaging, improving employee morale and intrinsic motivation. So we propose:

**Hypothesis 3a:** Product Responsibility-related CSR positively relates to employees' intrinsic motivation.

## **Product Responsibility-related CSR, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Generation**

Younger generations tend to seriously consider product responsibility, like customer privacy (Barraies et al., 2015). For example, customer privacy is essential in developing trust in a company amongst Gen Y (Barraies et al., 2015). Young consumers between 18 and 25 were highly motivated, showing superior buying decisions for green products, mainly depending on situational attributes such as eco-labeling (Zhao & Lee, 2018). Younger generation employees seem more likely to be intrinsically motivated when an organization actively implements PR-CSR activities. That is, they put much emphasis on the product responsibility-related value as customers as well as employees. Besides, younger generation employees feel guilty when their firms provide products that do not align with their values (Tan et al., 2019). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 3b:** Generations moderate the effects of PR-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace, such that PR-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of younger generations.

## **Community Engagement-related CSR and Intrinsic Motivation**

Van Schie et al. (2019) found that if employees can self-select the cause for which they are intrinsically motivated to participate in corporate volunteer work, they are more likely to develop a volunteer identity. Campione (2016) found that volunteer work can provide needed intrinsic motivation, which enhances employees' on-the-job behavior that is then absorbed in their work and engagement in positive citizenship. Santos and Fernandez (2017) concluded that corporate volunteering could increase job satisfaction, learning, motivation, productivity, and leadership. Alhassan et al. (2016) discovered a positive relationship between employee intrinsic motivation with healthcare workers who participated in community engagement. Talò (2017) found that individuals intrinsically motivated to engage the community on social or political levels will have a keen sense of community and social well-being. Based on these findings, we hypothesize as follows:

**Hypothesis 4a:** Community Engagement-related CSR is positively related to employees' intrinsic motivation.

## **Community Engagement-related CSR, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Generation**

Younger generations tend to emphasize the "help others" value more than older generations. According to McDougale et al. (2011), younger generations show stronger support for volunteerism across all three volunteerism categories (egoistic, altruistic, biospheric) than older generations. For instance, Ertas (2016) showed millennials are more likely to participate in community engagement-related activities than baby boomers. Zhao and Lee (2018) found that younger consumers are more likely to favor products from businesses that promote a "help others" CSR

message in their advertising campaigns, while older consumers are more likely to favor products that are associated with “help self.” Campione (2016) found that volunteer work enhances millennials’ intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction because engaging in corporate volunteer activities stimulates younger generations to feel meaningful in their work and to build additional psychological, personal, and social resources. These findings support the idea that CE-CSR, such as corporate volunteer activities, provides stronger intrinsic motivation among the younger generation than previous generations (Ertas, 2016). Furthermore, McGlone et al. (2011) discovered that incorporating CE-CSR into an organization’s strategic plan would effectively recruit and retain millennials and young generation employees. Therefore, we predict the following:

**Hypothesis 4b:** Generations moderate the effects of CE-CSR on employees’ intrinsic motivation in the workplace, such that CE-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of younger generations.

### **Corporate Governance-related CSR and Intrinsic Motivation**

Employees are one of the primary stakeholders in modern organizations. Thus, executing GOV-CSR, such as avoiding corruption in business and providing a company’s financial information to the public, tends to characterize a value-based organization, which provides its employees with a vocational alignment with the company’s identity and mission (Bruni & Smerilli, 2009). Value-based organizations tend to look for intrinsically motivated employees to hire (Bruni & Smerilli, 2009), so employees are likely to have a high intrinsic motivation when the organization implements vigorous GOV-CSR activities. Chakraborty et al. (2018) found a solid and positive relationship between a firm’s intense GOV-CSR activities and employees’ intrinsic motivation. Javed et al. (2017) also found that GOV-CSR is essential for employees’ benefiting from organizational success, which suggests that GOV-CSR plays a crucial role in affecting employees’ higher intrinsic motivation. Therefore, we predict the following:

**Hypothesis 5a:** Corporate Governance-related CSR is positively related to employees’ intrinsic motivation.

### **Corporate Governance-related CSR, Intrinsic Motivation, and Employee Generation**

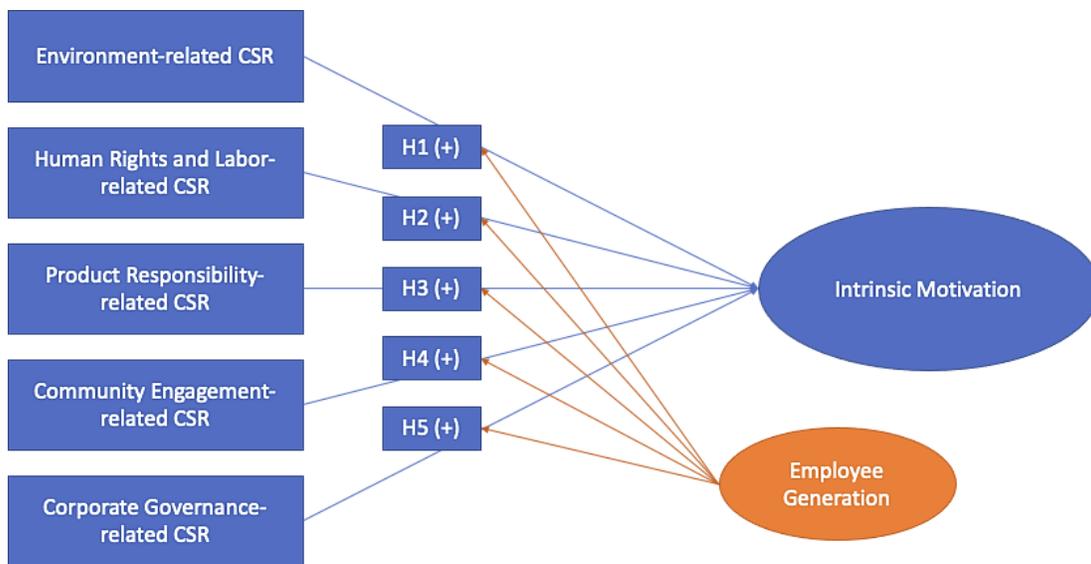
As employees get old, their mindset is likely to shift from value-based to profit-based, suggesting younger-generation employees tend to emphasize the value of the organization rather than profit, compared to older-generation employees (Godkin, 2014; Reavis et al., 2017). For instance, GOV-CSR is likely to affect younger-generation employees more than older-generation employees (Reavis et al., 2017). Godkin (2014) found that a firm’s active implementation of corporate governance strengthens younger employees’ engagement and ethical voice more than older employees’. Fahad and Rahman (2020) found that the disclosure of financial statements is likely to increase younger generation employee motivation more than older generation employee motivation. Furthermore, Duller (2013) found that corporate governance could instead negatively

impact older-generation employees because they tend to have a passive perspective in managing firms. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 5b:** Generations moderate the effects of GOV-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace, such that GOV-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of younger generations.

## METHOD

### Conceptual Model



**FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

### Sample and Data Collection

We collected the survey data using Amazon Mechanical Turk. We ran the survey for a week in the third week of April 2020 (N = 220) and the fourth week of August 2020 (N = 350). In addition, we collected 39 surveys from senior students and MBA students in a public university in the New England region. In sum, we collected 609 valid responses. We deleted nine repeated responses and 24 responses with multiple missing values, which resulted in 576. Out of the 576 responses, we excluded the 42 inadequate responses of poor response quality. We used six items with reverse codes to identify the wrong responses. We ended up with 534 sample cases for this research. Many of our participants were Gen Y, followed by Gen Z, then Gen X, and lastly, Boomers. The sample data includes 133 responses from Gen Z (24.9%), 304 responses from Gen Y (56.9%), 84 responses from Gen X (15.7%), and 13 responses from Boomers (2.4%).

## **Dependent Variable - Intrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation served as the dependent variable for this study. Grant (2008) examined three dimensions of employee motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and prosocial motivation). The article defined intrinsic motivation as the desire to expend effort based on interest in and enjoyment of the work. We chose three items from Grant (2008) to measure employee intrinsic motivation at the workplace, using a seven-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagreed, 7 being strongly agreed): Why are you motivated to do your work? (1) Because I enjoy the work itself, (2) Because it's fun, (3) Because I find the work engaging.

## **Environment-related CSR Variable (ENV-CSR)**

ENV-CSR served as an independent variable for this study's first hypothesis. Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (2012) proposed multiple items to measure ENV-CSR, which was used by Woo and Jin (2012). To measure ENV-CSR variable, we adopted Woo (2013) which chose three items from GRI (2012) and Woo and Jin (2013): I think the company I work for tries to (1) Take care of water, energy, and material uses, (2) Minimize pollution when produce products/services, (3) Invest to protect environments.

## **Human Rights and Labor-related CSR Variable (HRL-CSR)**

HRL-CSR was independent variable for the second hypothesis. According to Woo and Jin (2012), HRL-CSR practices may include non-discrimination, collective bargaining rights, child labor laws, security practices, and the rights of indigenous peoples. Using GRI (2012) and Woo and Jin (2012), Woo (2013) developed the HRL-CSR variable with three items: I think the company I work for tries to (1) Protect human rights at workplaces, (2) Allow the freedom of labor union and forbid discrimination, (3) Clarify health care benefits for employees.

## **Product Responsibility-related CSR Variable (PR-CSR)**

PR-CSR was an independent variable for the third hypothesis. Using GRI (2012) and Woo and Jin (2013), Woo (2013) developed the PR-CSR variable with two items: I think the company I work for tries to (1) Clearly label/explain products/services for customers, (2) Take care of customer complaints.

### **Community Engagement-related CSR Variable (CE-CSR)**

CE-CSR was an independent variable for the fourth hypothesis. Woo (2013) developed the CSR variable with five dimensions, including social and economic dimensions. This study picked one item from the social dimension and another item from the economic dimension to measure this CE-CSR variable: I think the company I work for tries to (1) Invest to develop local community welfare, (2) Consider the indirect impacts of the marketing programs on society.

### **Corporate Governance-related CSR Variable (GOV-CSR)**

GOV-CSR (GOV-CSR) was an independent variable for the fifth hypothesis. Like the CE-CSR variable, we picked one item from the social dimension and another item from the economic dimension from Woo (2013) to measure the GOV-CSR: I think the company I work for tries to (1) Avoid corruption in business, (2) Provide the company financial information to the public.

### **Moderating Variable – Employee Generation**

Dhopade (2016) defined Gen Z as employees born from 1993 to 2011. Other studies described Gen Z as people born after 1994 (Bateh, 2019), born between 1995 and 2015 (Kasasa, 2020), born from 1996 to 2010 (Brown et al., 2019), or born from 1997 to 2013 (Schroth, 2019). In short, most of the literature suggested Gen Z employees were born anytime between 1993 to 1997. Using a median value from 1993 to 1997 for the beginning of Gen Z birth year appeared fair. Accordingly, this research used the median value of 1995. Thus, employees were categorized into three generations in this study as of April 2020: (1) Gen Z: 18 to 24, (2) Gen Y: 25 to 39 (3) Gen X: 40 to 55 years old.

### **Regression Model**

This study proposed three regression models to test the research hypotheses. When developing the models, we used a subsample analysis instead of a two-way interaction design to examine the moderating effects of employee generation as we hypothesized. This method allowed us to compare the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable among different employee generations. The subsample approach reduces the possibility of noise entering the regression models (Stone-Romero & Anderson, 1994). A general regression model was expressed:

$$Y_j = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5$$

where  $Y_j$  = Intrinsic Motivation [ $j = 1$  (Gen X),  $2$  (Gen Y),  $3$  (Gen Z)]

$X_1$  = ENV-CSR

X<sub>2</sub> = HRL-CSR  
 X<sub>3</sub> = PR-CSR  
 X<sub>4</sub> = CE-CSR  
 X<sub>5</sub> = GOV-CSR

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

Table 1 shows 534 participants and descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of each variable and Pearson correlations. The intrinsic motivation variable was significantly correlated with ENV-CSR ( $p < .001$ ), HRL-CSR, PR-CSR, CE-CSR, and GOV-CSR ( $p < .01$ ).

**TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS**

	Mean	SD	N	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<b>(1) Intrinsic Motivation</b>	4.7924	1.6912	534	1					
<b>(2) ENV-CSR</b>	4.5354	1.5850	534	.435***	1				
<b>(3) HRL-CSR</b>	5.3346	1.3247	534	.384**	.540**	1			
<b>(4) PR-CSR</b>	5.6648	1.1395	534	.255**	.263**	.533**	1		
<b>(5) CE-CSR</b>	4.8077	1.5384	534	.406**	.644**	.665**	.366**	1	
<b>(6) GOV-CSR</b>	5.0824	1.3582	534	.320**	.487**	.623**	.449**	.666**	1

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Regression Analysis Results for All Generations

According to Table 2, the regression model for all data (Model 1, N=534) was statistically significant ( $R^2 = .233$ ,  $p < .001$ ). ENV-CSR and CE-CSR were significantly related to Intrinsic Motivation ( $p < .05$ ), while GOV-CSR showed no statistical significance. HRL-CSR and PR-CSR showed marginal significance. According to the standardized regression coefficient BETA, ENV-CSR (.271) was the most related to Intrinsic Motivation, followed by CE-CSR (.132), HRL-CSR (.111), and PR-CSR (.077). No serious multicollinearity was present in the regression model because all variance inflation factors (VIFs) were less than 10 (Vittinghoff et al., 2012), and the condition index (C.I.) was less than 30 (Kennedy, 2003).

### Regression Analysis Results for Gen X Employees

The Gen X regression model (Model 2 in Table 2) was statistically significant ( $R^2 = .297$ ,  $p < .001$ ). ENV-CSR was significantly related to Intrinsic Motivation ( $p < .05$ ), while the HRL-CSR, PR-CSR, CE-CSR, and GOV-CSR showed no statistical significance. According to the

standardized regression coefficient BETA, Intrinsic Motivation was impacted the most by the ENV-CSR (.458), followed by HRL-CSR (.130), PR-CSR (.126), CE-CSR (.093), and GOV-CSR (-.225). No serious multicollinearity was present in the regression model [VIFs < 10 and C.I. < 30].

### Regression Analysis Results for Gen Y Employees

According to Table 2, the regression model for Gen Y employees (Model 2) was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.210$ ,  $p < .001$ ). ENV-CSR and CE-CSR were significantly related to Intrinsic Motivation ( $p < .01$ ). PR-CSR was marginally significant ( $p = 0.076$ ), while HRL-CSR and GOV-CSR showed no statistical significance. According to the standardized regression coefficient BETA, Intrinsic Motivation was impacted the most by the employee ENV-CSR (.234), followed by CE-CSR (.187), PR-CSR (.116), GOV-CSR (.027), and HRL-CSR (.001). No serious multicollinearity was present in the regression model [VIFs < 10 and C.I. < 30].

### Regression Analysis Results for Gen Z Employees

The regression model for Gen Z employees (Model 4 in Table 2) was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.378$ ,  $p < .001$ ). ENV-CSR and HRL-CSR were significantly related to intrinsic motivation ( $p < .01$ ). PR-CSR, CE-CSR, and GOV-CSR showed no statistical significance. According to the standardized regression coefficient BETA, Intrinsic Motivation was impacted the most by the HRL-CSR (.448), followed by ENV-CSR (.276), GOV-CSR (.060), CE-CSR (-.041), and PR-CSR (-.070). No serious multicollinearity was present in the regression model [VIFs < 10 and C.I. < 30].

**TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF REGRESSION MODEL RESULTS**

Model	1	2	3	4
Data	All Data	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
ENV-CSR	.271***	.458***	.234**	.276**
HRL-CSR	.111#	.130	.001	.448***
PR-CSR	.077#	.126	.116#	-.070
CE-CSR	.132*	.093	.187*	-.041
GOV-CSR	-.004	-.225	.027	.060
R <sup>2</sup>	.233	.297	.210	.378
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>	.226	.253	.197	.354
F	32.76***	6.829***	15.979***	15.769***
C.I.	18.646	22.361	19.310	16.100
N	534	84	304	133

Note: # $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; Standardized regression coefficient BETA are reported; DV = Dependent Variable; C.I. = Condition Index

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Hypothesis 1a**

Evidence supported Hypothesis 1a - ENV-CSR is positively related to employees' intrinsic motivation. The results showed that ENV-CSR was significantly related to intrinsic motivation ( $p < .001$ ). The results were consistent with the literature, which supported the claim that ENV-CSR positively impacted intrinsic motivation (Bartik et al., 2013; Ginder et al., 2019; Graafland & Gerlagh, 2019; Singh et al., 2010). ENV-CSR remains vital as employees are more consciously concerned with the future of the planet. Knowing this, employers may influence employees' intrinsic motivation by engaging in more ENV-CSR activities.

### **Hypothesis 1b**

Evidence shows weak support for Hypothesis 1b - generations moderate the effects of ENV-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace, such that ENV-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of the older generations. The results show that ENV-CSR was significant among all generations in the regression models. However, data showed slightly more significance in older generations, Gen X and Gen Y ( $p < .001$ ), than in the younger generation, Gen Z ( $p < .01$ ). The results were inconsistent with prior studies (Dokadia et al., 2015; Kim & Austin, 2019; Potocan et al., 2013; Rank & Contreras, 2021). They reported that younger generations show declining importance attributed to intrinsic value as an extrinsic value was more highly rated on their goals than the older generation. The differences may be attributed to the increasing technological and social awareness from brands for environmental and sustainability efforts to be more relevant and attractive to consumers. With the influx of messages/advertisements about the impacts of sustainability on the environment, all generations are likely to be concerned about ENV-CSR and thus can positively relate to the intrinsic motivation of all generations.

### **Hypothesis 2a**

Evidence shows weak support for Hypothesis 2a - HRL-CSR is positively related to employees' intrinsic motivation. The results showed that HRL-CSR was marginally significant in relation to intrinsic motivation ( $p = .056$ ). The results were consistent with prior studies that supported the claim that HRL-CSR positively impacted intrinsic motivation (Conchie, 2013; Fasterling, 2016; Heinemann et al., 2013; O'Connor et al., 2016). The differences may be attributed to the pandemic resulting in more employees working from home, reducing the number of complaints and problems that would otherwise arise in an office setting.

## **Hypothesis 2b**

Evidence marginally supports Hypothesis 2b - generations moderate the effects of HRL-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace such that HRL-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of younger generations. The results show that HRL-CSR was significant for only Gen Z ( $p < .001$ ). The results were inconsistent with prior studies (Cyfert et al., 2021; Ruiz & Davis, 2017; Spivack & Milosevic, 2018; Torsello, 2019). They reported that younger generations show declining importance attributed to intrinsic value, as extrinsic values were negatively correlated. The differences may be attributed to different economic conditions amongst each generation. The importance of human rights and labor laws has drastically changed, which affects how each generation views the impact of intrinsic motivation.

## **Hypothesis 3a**

Evidence showed marginal support for Hypothesis 3a - PR-CSR is positively related to employees' intrinsic motivation. The results showed that PR-CSR was marginally significant in relation to intrinsic motivation ( $p = .089$ ). The results are consistent with prior studies (Cho, 2015; Feldman & Vasquez-Parraga, 2013; Lee et al., 2014; Venger & Pomirleanu, 2017). The differences may be attributed to the societal impact on consumers. Over the years, the focus on bringing the best products forward to consumers from corporations has increased. Now, consumers can get quality products from employees who enjoy being customer-centric.

## **Hypothesis 3b**

Evidence supported Hypothesis 3b - Generations moderate the effects of PR-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace such that PR-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of younger generations. The results show that PR-CSR was significant only among the Gen Y regression model ( $p < .05$ ). The results were consistent with prior studies (Barraies et al., 2015; Janssen et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2019; Zhao & Lee, 2018). They reported that younger generations have shown themselves to be easily influenced by guilt when purchasing non-ecofriendly products. The differences can be attributed to being selfless versus selfish. Older generations have shown themselves intrinsically motivated by products to help themselves. Younger generations have shown themselves intrinsically motivated by products to help others.

## **Hypothesis 4a**

Evidence supported Hypothesis 4a expecting that CE-CSR was significantly related to intrinsic motivation ( $p < .05$ ) for all generations. The results are consistent with prior studies (Alhassan et al., 2016; Santos & Fernandez, 2017; van Schie et al., 2019; Talò, 2017). These studies found that

community engagement, in general, positively affected employees. For example, volunteer work increased job satisfaction, learning, motivation, productivity, and leadership. These studies also showed that employers benefit from CSR strategies incorporating community engagement into the employee curriculum as these employers gain an improved image, reputation, and notoriety. We attribute the differences to increased societal emphasis on the importance of outreach and engagement efforts for organizations and individuals. The age of social media has made these efforts highly visible, and engagement efforts are often praised on social media platforms. When people or organizations are applauded for their community engagement work, they will likely be more motivated as employees.

### **Hypothesis 4b**

Evidence showed weak support for Hypothesis 4b - generations moderate the effects of CE-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace such that CE-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of younger generations. CE-CSR showed statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ) for Gen Y only but not statistically significant for Gen Z or Gen X. The results confirmed prior studies which reported that millennials (Gen Y) have higher intrinsic motivation in the workplace when participating in community-related activities than other generations (Campione, 2016; Ertas, 2016; McGlone, 2011). The difference could be attributed to Gen Y employees being more comfortable in their careers and less focused on advancing their career paths. In contrast, Gen Z employees may focus more on proving themselves in the workplace. Gen X, the oldest employee demographic, is nearing retirement age and may be less likely to engage directly with the community. These employees may be more focused on leisure activities in their free time.

### **Hypothesis 5a**

Evidence was inconclusive for hypothesis 5a expecting that GOV-CSR was insignificant to intrinsic motivation ( $p = .937$ ). These results were inconclusive with prior studies (Bruni & Smerilli, 2009; Chakraborty et al., 2018; Javed et al., 2017; Markus & Swift, 2020). These studies found a positive relationship between GOV-CSR and employee intrinsic motivation. For example, Markus & Swift (2020) discovered that more robust corporate governance erodes the inventor's productivity and intrinsic motivation, while Chakraborty et al. (2018) concluded that companies with strong corporate governance had higher intrinsic motivation rates. The differences can be attributed to employees' belief systems in whether corporate governance supports their work or provides rules and strips employees of creative autonomy. In addition, there are many different components to corporate governance. Lack of support in corporate governance and increased intrinsic motivation could have looked at performance management and controls, while the positive relationship between corporate governance and intrinsic motivation could have been focused on corporate culture and transparency.

## **Hypothesis 5b**

Evidence was inconclusive for hypothesis 5b - generations moderate the effects of GOV-CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace such that GOV-CSR is more positively related to the intrinsic motivation of younger generations. The results showed that GOV-CSR was not statistically significant for Gen X ( $p = .400$ ), Gen Y ( $p = .696$ ), or Gen Z ( $p = .594$ ). It may be because employees are not directly involved in company procedures and policies and are more focused on their everyday experiences. While hierarchy and board committees are not components employees can control, they may shift their focus to other categories that they can control to increase intrinsic motivation.

## **Managerial Implications**

The results have shown important implications for firms using CSR activities to boost their employees' intrinsic motivation. Based on the findings of this study, ENV-CSR, HRL-CSR, PR-CSR, and CE-CSR should significantly affect employees' intrinsic motivation in the workplace. Therefore, business organizations should actively implement the five types of CSR activities as their priority in planning CSR strategy. Our results also propose that a firm's CSR strategy differs depending on employee generation. Specifically, only ENV-CSR was significantly related to intrinsic motivation for Gen X, while ENV-CSR, PR-CSR, and CE-CSR were significant for Gen Y. For Gen Z employees, ENV-CSR and HRL-CSR were significantly related to their intrinsic motivation.

Our research findings suggest that firms increase their employees' intrinsic motivation by actively engaging in ENV-CSR, HRL-CSR, PR-CSR, and CE-CSR. Organizations can increase employees' intrinsic motivation by launching more CSR initiatives and activities, offering a fun and challenging atmosphere that entails inherent satisfaction in the workplace. However, managerial decisions surrounding CSR practices should consider employees' age demographics to maximize intrinsic motivation in the workplace. Our study provides meaningful implications to business organizations regarding CSR initiatives and their impact on employee motivations because managers can learn how to create an ideal workplace environment to maximize employee productivity while ensuring employee satisfaction.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study examined the impact of a firm's different types of CSR on employees' intrinsic motivation in their workplace and how this impact varies depending on employee generation, such as Gen X, Y, and Z. In doing so, this research contributes to the existing literature on employee motivation and CSR. This study could be improved in several ways. Further studies may investigate intrinsic motivation in specific career roles. Different careers may have different motivating factors. For instance, what may motivate one profession may not necessarily motivate

another. The samples could be separated by salary, indicating the importance of what factors motivate employees most. In addition, for better accuracy, sample sizes could be more extensive and equal amongst each generation, and samples could have been taken from different companies' sectors, fulfilling the professional diversity concern. Another way to improve this study would be to have sample sizes from diverse types of locations, such as urban versus rural communities as well as samples from higher and lower socioeconomic populations.

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