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The experiences of employees participating in organisational corporate social responsibility initiatives

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Orientation: This article is about the experiences of employees who actively participate in organisational corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Research purpose: The general aim of this study was to explore the experiences of employees who participate in CSR initiatives within an organisation where a well-developed framework exists.

Motivation for the study: Whilst an emergent number of studies have considered the various dimensions of CSR initiatives, the focus appears to be on stakeholders such as the recipients of CSR, organisations, consumers and shareholders but not the perspective of the employees who actively participate in CSR initiatives.

Research design, approach and method: A qualitative research approach was employed with the intent of exploring the experiences of employees participating in organisational CSR initiatives. Data were collected and analysed from a purposive sample of 12 employees, by means of interactive qualitative analysis.

Main findings: The study revealed that the primary driver that motivates employees to participate in CSR is love. Love sparks a sense of compassion. Compassion, coupled with an enabling environment, stimulates generosity. By being generous, a feeling of hope and inspiration is induced in both the givers and receivers of generosity. A secondary outcome of generosity and hope and inspiration is bringing about change to others, and whilst going through this journey and making a difference in the lives of others, participants experience a progressive change within themselves. This change evokes a feeling of fulfilment, and ultimately a feeling of complete joy.

Contributions or value-add: This research complements existing CSR literature by focussing and reporting on the experiences of the employee as an important stakeholder.

Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a popular theme in contemporary debate and occupies a prominent place in the everyday business agenda. New social trends and theories support the emergence of more ethically and morally balanced organisations that devote substantial resources to CSR initiatives. In South Africa in particular, with its rich history of discrimination, poverty, poor socio-economic conditions and a high degree of unemployment, CSR has become a means for organisations to play a role in social change and transformation. Corporate social responsibility initiatives provide a platform for not only the organisation, but also for employees to become engaged in giving back. An underlying assumption is that the commercial imperative is not the single motivator of CSR decision-making, but that the formal adoption and implementation of CSR by organisations could be associated with the changing personal values of individual managers and employees (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004).

It could be argued that the motivation for engaging in CSR is always driven by some kind of self-interest, regardless of whether the activity is strategically driven for commercial purposes alone, or whether it is also partly driven by what appears as altruistic concerns (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). A large body of research has focussed on the corporate motives behind CSR practices, and the common threads for engaging in CSR arise from one or more of the four aspects of CSR: economic, legal, ethical or philanthropic (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). The economic and legal responsibilities speak to the obligations of a company to generate profit for shareholders and abide by established laws and regulations. The ethical and philanthropic responsibilities encompass the commitment of company resources towards initiatives to better a community (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). One of the ways companies may demonstrate their social responsibility

is by encouraging and supporting employee involvement in community programmes (Pajo & Lee, 2010). However, organisations have yet to develop an understanding of the individual values, motives and habits that will inspire long-term and sustained community involvement as opposed to a single act of service (Clary & Snyder, 2002).

Research purpose

A number of studies on employees' perceptions of their organisation's CSR practices have found that actively participating in CSR efforts is related to higher employee engagement levels and more favourable views of senior management (Gross, 2011). Despite this, there is limited evidence to suggest that research has been conducted to understand what drives participation in CSR initiatives. In a study conducted by IBM Global Business Services, through the IBM Institute for Business Value, the authors of the report found that, whilst developing and implementing a CSR strategy, only 31% of businesses engaged their employees in the company's CSR objectives and initiatives (Gross, 2011). A growing body of academic research has investigated the link between CSR initiatives and strategic benefits (Vellios, 2011). Employee-company (E-C) identification, in particular, has been highlighted as an outcome of CSR initiatives and a determinant factor that enhances business performance (Vellios, 2011). These studies all highlight the benefits to the organisation; yet few studies have explored the benefits to the individual. This study takes an employee-driven perspective and explores the personal experiences of employees participating in CSR. What drives them to participate, and what is the outcome of their participation on an individual level?

Trends from research literature

History of corporate social responsibility

Over the decades, the concept of CSR has continued to grow in importance and significance. It has been the subject of considerable debate, commentary, theory-building and research. The idea that business enterprises have some responsibilities to society beyond that of making profits for the shareholders has been around for centuries and can be traced back to 1919 when Henry Ford, president and principal shareholder of the Ford Motor Company, articulated his intention to reinvest the company's accumulated profits on plant expansion, stating that the purpose of his company was to serve society (Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011).

Although scholarly interest in CSR from a management perspective can be traced back at least as far as the 1930s (Bauman & Skitka, 2012), for all practical purposes, however, it is largely a post-World War II phenomenon and actually did not surge in importance until the 1960s (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). The CSR literature expanded significantly during the 1960s and focussed on the question of what social responsibility actually means and its importance to business and society (Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011). The CSR concept captures the most important concerns regarding the relationship between business and society and has been modified significantly in the last 60–70 years. Scholars are still revising and adapting existing definitions of CSR, and it is almost sure that new definitions will come up in the CSR literature in coming years (Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011).

TABLE 1: Dahlsrud's five dimensions of corporate social responsibility.

Dimensions	What element of CSR does the dimension refer to?	Example phrases
Environmental	The natural environment	• 'a cleaner environment' • 'environmental stewardship'
Social	The relationship between business and society	• 'contribute to a better society' • 'integrate social concerns in their business operations'
Economic	Socio-economic or financial aspects	• 'contribute towards economic development' • 'preserving profitability'
Stakeholder	Stakeholders or stakeholder groups	• 'interaction with their stakeholders' • 'how organisations interact with their employees, suppliers, customers and communities'
Voluntariness	Actions not prescribed by law	• 'based on ethical values' • 'beyond legal obligations'

Source: Adapted from Dahlsrud, A. (2008). How corporate social responsibility is defined: An analysis of 37 definitions. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, 15*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.132

CSR, corporate social responsibility.

Defining corporate social responsibility

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) defines CSR as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development whilst improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large (Flaherty, 1998). The first comprehensive approach to modern era social responsibility was introduced by Howard R. Bowen in 1953 with the publication of his book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*. Bowen felt that public responsibility, social obligations and business morality were synonyms for CSR (Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011).

Dahlsrud's (2008) research on how CSR is defined identified 37 definitions of CSR; however, this figure underestimates the true number because many academically derived definitional constructs were not included owing to the methodology for identifying them. Dahlsrud (2008) concluded that the confusion about the definition of CSR is not so much about how CSR is defined, but more about how CSR is socially constructed in a specific context. His paper found that CSR is viewed as a social construction, and as such it is not possible to develop an unbiased definition. He, however, studied the similarities and differences between the various definitions and found that they consistently refer to five dimensions, as illustrated in Table 1 (Carroll & Shabana, 2010).

Key drivers of corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility drivers refer to those incentives or pressures directed at businesses to improve their socially responsible practices (Kloppers, 2014). Carroll and Shabana (2010) note that a company's key drivers for engaging in CSR arise from one or more of the four aspects of CSR: economic, legal, ethical or philanthropic. Along with the rising interest

in CSR itself, the academic world has directed much of its attention to researching links between the implementation of CSR and corporate financial performance (CFP). The majority of previous CSR research advocates that investment in implementing CSR practices can also be profitable for companies in the long term (Toppinen, Hanninen, & Lahtinen, 2015).

From a legal point of view, existing laws govern regular business procedures and prescribe some human resource and environmental practices, whilst more contemporary legislation relates specifically to certain aspects of sustainability and environmental or social stewardship. There is also an emerging set of local laws and regulations driving the transformation agenda and the redistribution of wealth (Freemantle & Rockey, 2004). One such piece of legislation is the *Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act*. Motivated by the imperatives to redress the imbalances caused by economic exclusion, the South African government has taken remedial measures and established a framework aimed at empowering black South Africans. The government's commitment to empowering previously disadvantaged South Africans and achieving socio-economic transformation is underlined by its enactment of the B-BBEE legislation that is aimed at advancing social and economic justice (Kloppers, 2014). The B-BBEE framework has raised awareness about corporate social obligations and established a platform from which business can launch their CSR initiatives and contribute to sustainable development (Kloppers, 2014).

There seems to have been a change in mindset regarding the reasons for engaging in CSR. An increasing majority of companies report the use of CSR programmes as important to a company's financial performance. Company strategic competitiveness arises from its ability to differentiate itself and establishing a positive image in the minds of customers can ensure purchase loyalty, new product adoption and word-of-mouth promotion. The impact of CSR activities does not necessarily have to be measured on the financial level, but more by assessing intermediate performance indicators such as brand loyalty, employee satisfaction or operational efficiency (McCallum, Schmid, & Price, 2013; Toppinen et al., 2015). Ethical reasons for incorporating CSR into business are primarily related to the expectations of society that all companies will do the right thing. This demonstrates a company's commitment to responsible corporate citizenship, improved stakeholder responsibility and accountability and improved corporate transparency (Ackers, 2015).

Employee participation in corporate social responsibility

Employee volunteerism appears to be on the rise as more organisations realise benefits such as increased morale and productivity from this form of philanthropic initiative. At Timberland, where 95% of the staff participate in volunteer programmes, employees cite having the opportunity to engage in community service through the workplace as a primary reason for choosing to work there (Peloza & Hassay, 2006). Corporate social responsibility programmes that enable employees to volunteer in the local community with active support and encouragement of the company through formal and informal policies and programmes allow employees to meet their intrinsic psychological needs (Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010; Pajo & Lee, 2010). As one of the key ideas of CSR is that people, business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities, companies face pressures from multi-level actors to participate in CSR initiatives (Samy, Ogiri, & Bampton, 2015). To satisfy the increasing expectation of CSR, companies have embraced employee volunteering. On average, nine out of 10 US firms have incorporated employee volunteerism programmes (EVPs) into their business practices. EVPs are defined as planned, managed efforts that seek to motivate and enable employees to effectively volunteer under the sponsorship and leadership of the employer, and are specifically designed to promote behaviours that seek to improve the social conditions of the communities in which a firm operates and have become one of the tools to promote CSR and form part of a broader agenda to encourage businesses to act as good corporate citizens (Kim & Kim, 2016; McCallum et al., 2013).

The potential value-add of the study

The main argument of this study is that insufficient attention has been given to the experiences of employees who participate in CSR initiatives. The success of CSR initiatives, in particular those aimed at community outreach programmes, often relies heavily on employee participation and involvement. Organisations, therefore, frequently employ various strategies to encourage the active participation of their employees (Clary & Snyder, 2002). This is, however, performed without fully understanding what motivates employees to voluntarily participate. Research shows that the decision to volunteer and participate in CSR activities is a complex one, driven by a diversity of individual motivations (Peloza & Hassay, 2006). If employees feel obligated to participate and start sensing that participation is mandatory, their intrinsic motivation to participate may diminish (Clary & Snyder, 2002).

On the basis of this line of reasoning, this article argues that organisations are more likely to be successful in eliciting employee participation in CSR if they have an understanding of what motivates employees to become involved and if they can develop an appreciation of the positive outcomes of participation on such employees and the organisation.

What will follow is a discussion on the research design, the findings of the study and a discussion thereof.

Ethical consideration

Ethical clearance was approved by the research committee of a tertiary institution. The researchers did at all times bear cognisance of the ethical principles and guidelines as established by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) as well as University of South Africa's 'Policy on research ethics'. Written approval and clearance was obtained

from the organisation prior to approaching participants for the focus group. All focus group participants were briefed on the principles of informed consent, and all participants voluntarily contributed to the study.

Research design

Research approach

A case study was undertaken, using interactive qualitative analysis (IQA) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Interactive qualitative analysis is a qualitative research methodology that attempts to provide a systemic, rigorous and accountable framework for qualitative inquiry. It is regarded as a suitable design when researchers wish to examine how phenomena are socially constructed and if they wish to develop a theory of the research phenomenon that demonstrates a systemic understanding of the phenomenon (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). As a social constructionist approach, participants are encouraged through various IQA protocols to generate, collect and analyse their own data. Interactive qualitative analysis thus provides an audit trail of transparent and traceable procedures where the participants, and not the researcher as expert, do the analysis and interpretation of their data. The analysis of the data is, as far as possible, free from researcher bias as the researcher is merely a facilitator of the process (Bargate, 2014).

Research strategy

The strategy chosen for this research was a focus group followed by individual semi-structured interviews. The focus group stimulated the concurrent collection and analysis of data, and the content of the individual interviews was determined by the themes (called affinities) developed by the focus group. Interviews were used as a means to validate focus group findings (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) and as they added depth and individual experience to the group-level processes, it was one method that facilitated data saturation within this qualitative study (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Research method

Research setting

The study was conducted in an integrated forests products company with a well-developed and supported CSR framework that allows for and encourages the voluntary participation of its employees. The division where the research was conducted is situated in a region characterised by poor socio-economic conditions epitomised by a high unemployment rate and an elevated prevalence in the number of child-run households. Because of the nature of its business, the organisation has a direct impact on the surrounding community, and their CSR programme aims to play a positive role in this community by supporting a wide variety of social and community upliftment programmes.

Entrée and establishing roles

In assessing the suitability of this particular setting, the inimitable role played by the employees within the community was considered. The researchers were not directly associated with the organisation, and permission to conduct the research was obtained from the management of the organisation, and the ethical parameters were clarified with both management and participants.

Sampling

A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants. The participants in an IQA study are chosen as representatives of a constituency, meaning that they are regarded as the authority on the phenomenon under study by virtue of their membership to a particular group (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

All members of the CSR Brand Ambassador team within the region were identified and contacted to participate in the study by the organisation's communications department. A total of 12 employees agreed to participate in the focus group and individual interviews. The participants were all female, they were reasonably evenly split in terms of age, race and position, and many were long-serving employees with considerable tenure within the organisation.

Data collection methods

The data were collected in two phases in accordance with IQA protocols (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The first phase involved a focus group and the production of a visual representation that was then used in the second phase for individual semi-structured interviews. To operationalise the research question, the following issue statement was posed to the group to engage with and to interrogate: 'When you think of Corporate Social Responsibility, what comes to mind?' Constituents' individual thoughts, feelings and reflections were then written down on separate index cards and stuck to a wall. Constituents were asked to write down one thought or reflection per card and were not limited to the number of thoughts they could generate.

The focus group and the individual interviews were recorded by means of an electronic voice recorder and the interviews were also substantiated with field notes. In addition, the index cards generated by the focus group were displayed on a wall for the whole group to see. The purpose of putting the responses on the wall and reading them out loud for the entire group to consider was to arrive at a socially constructed, shared meaning of each response among members of the group and also to reduce any vagueness or ambiguity associated with the meaning of the words or phrases on the cards. In terms of the IQA data analysis method, an audit trail was created where each step and decision in the analysis was accounted for and recorded (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Data analysis

Upon completion of the clarification of meaning, the constituents were invited to recognise themes (affinities) within their many responses. The purpose of this analysis was to cluster or categorise the cards via 'as-yet-unarticulated,

but nevertheless meaningful criteria' (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, pp. 97–98), a process known as inductive coding.

Through group discussion, affinities were described, refined and narrowed until each participant agreed that the definition accurately reflected the meaning of the affinity. The group then generated titles that correctly defined the meaning of each affinity, a process known as deductive coding. Gathered from the cards and affinities produced, a short paragraph description representing the general content and meaning of each affinity as collectively described by the group was recorded (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

The focus group generated nine affinities which are highlighted and described in Table 2.

Theoretical coding: Interactive qualitative analysis is designed to determine the causal relationship between the affinities through theoretical coding where participants ascertain the perceived cause-and-effect relationship (influences) among all the affinities in a system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 149).

To determine which relationships to analyse from a pool of possible causal relationships, the Pareto principle was used in the data analysis (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The Pareto principle states that 20% of the variables in the system will account for 80% of the total variation in outcome (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 157). In this study, the selected relationships reflected all those relationships up to 83.2%. Furthermore, a conflict analysis was conducted to identify conflicting relationships. No conflicting relationships were found in this study.

Constructs were then sorted to identify the relative drivers (causes) and outcomes (effects) in the system (Human-Vogel & van Petegem, 2008). The primary driver (a significant cause) affects many other affinities, but is not affected by others. The secondary driver is a relative cause or influence on affinities in the system. The circulators or pivots occur when there are equal numbers of influences by and on other affinities. The primary outcome (a significant effect) is caused by many affinities, but does not affect others, whilst the secondary outcomes reveal a relative effect (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The tentative assignments given to the affinities are depicted in Table 3.

Systems influence diagram: In the final phase of the focus group data analysis, a system influence diagram (SID) was constructed as a visual representation of the entire system of the affinities and the relationships among them (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Because the SID is often too complex to be meaningful, a simpler representation was sought by identifying and eliminating redundant links. This process, which is known as 'rationalisation' according to Northcutt & McCoy (2004, p. 37), 'is undertaken to describe the comprehensiveness, complexity, parsimony, or simplicity and visual interpretability'. This resulted in a cleaner representation of the relationship between affinities, the uncluttered SID. The uncluttered SID represents a mind map, containing only the minimum numbers of links required to completely represent the underlying logic of the IRD (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The uncluttered SID was adapted to be represented in a more linear style, which was used for phase 2 of the IQA process, the individual semi-structured interviews.

TABLE 2: Affinities generated by the focus group.

Number	Affinity names	Meaning of each affinity
1	Generosity (G)	The need to give to others, to be able to make a difference by giving something back to society. Being willing to help, to donate time and resources to see others' needs are met. Giving without expecting something in return.
2	Hope and inspiration (HI)	Feeling that one can do and achieve more in the future. Seeing hope and joy in the faces of those receiving good will, and feeling enthused and motivated by this to do even more. No matter how dire the circumstances in a particular setting, there is always hope, and one always walks away feeling inspired to make a difference.
3	Love (L)	A love for others, the passion and caring to see others prosper. It is a feeling of caring and empathy that comes from deep within a person.
4	Fulfilment (F)	Feeling completely satisfied and privileged to have the opportunity to work in the community and make a difference. Feeling thankful for what you have and fortunate to be in a giving position. It is a feeling of satisfaction and completeness.
5	Joy (J)	Feeling happy, content, and totally at peace. A feeling of warmth from the inside that is difficult to explain, but it just feels good.
6	Compassion (C)	A sincere sense of caring for others, the desire to be able to give something to those less fortunate, being able to do things such as improving living conditions, providing educational opportunities, etc. It may not even always be material, it can be as simple as spending time with the elderly, or reading to toddlers.
7	Bringing change to others (CtO)	The ability to make a difference in the lives of others and bringing change in attitudes and circumstances. Being able to improve the surrounding community, whether it be by building a school, providing running water or simply giving someone hope for a better future.
8	Change to self (CtS)	Feeling a sense of accomplishment, having a changed belief and value system and seeing the world through someone else's eyes and experiences. Learning new things, becoming more creative and being more accepting of oneself and of others.

Reporting

The main findings are described in detail in the next section. Verbatim extracts from the focus group and individual interviews were used, and numbers have been allocated to the research participants (RP1, RP2, etc.) to ensure anonymity. It should be noted that the quotations provided by Afrikaans-speaking participants were translated into English to achieve a central point of communication.

TABLE 3: Tentative assignments.

Number	Affinities in descending order of delta	Tentative SID assignments
1	Love (L)	Primary driver
2	Compassion (C)	Secondary driver
3	Enabling climate (EC)	Secondary driver
4	Generosity (G)	Secondary driver
5	Hope and inspiration (HI)	Circulator
6	Bringing change to others (CtO)	Secondary outcome
7	Change to self (CtS)	Secondary outcome
8	Fulfilment (F)	Secondary outcome
9	Joy (J)	Primary outcome

SID, Systems influence diagram.

Findings

Focus group

The focus group generated nine affinities that constituents used to generate a theory through inductive and deductive processes. The affinities were assigned a relative position within the system by arranging them in descending order of delta, and subsequently facilitating the identification of drivers (causes) and outcomes (effects) within the system. An audit trail of the analytical process was provided to indicate each step in the analysis of the data. The resulting visual presentation (SID) that was created is a representation of the generated theory of the group (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) and is provided as the uncluttered linear SID in Figure 1.

Primary driver: Love

The visual representation (Figure 1) generated by the group provides an indication of what drives employees to participate in CSR. Identified as the primary driver, 'Love' is considered as the 'fundamental cause' or 'source of influence' in the system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 32). As a significant cause, love affects many other affinities, but is not effected by others. Constituents emphasised that love and caring for all people is an essential component of participation in CSR. As RP3 put it:

> '… you have to feel love for other people and want to really help other people if you are going to engage in CSR activities, if you don't have love in your heart why would you want to help others.' [RP3, Female, management position, approximately 45 years of age.]

This correlates with Lee and Jeong's (2015, p. 357) argument that describes the affective dimension of public service motivation as a 'love of people' in communities, and explains this dimension as an emotional response and an individual's identification with a group or the underprivileged, which results in empathy and compassion.

Secondary drivers: Compassion, enabling climate and generosity

Affinities identified as secondary drivers were 'compassion', 'enabling climate' and 'generosity'.

Compassion

In the literature, there appears to be a broad consensus that compassion involves feeling for a person who is suffering and being motivated to act to help them (Strauss et al., 2016). This view was reinforced during the discussion on compassion in the focus group with constituents making statements such as 'I just want to help people' (RP4, female, clerical position, late 50s); 'I get so emotional to see or discover other people's living conditions and I always feel the need to help those in need' (RP9, female, professional, early 30s). Compassion is frequently linked to kindness, defined by the Oxford Dictionary as 'the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate' (Strauss et al., 2016).

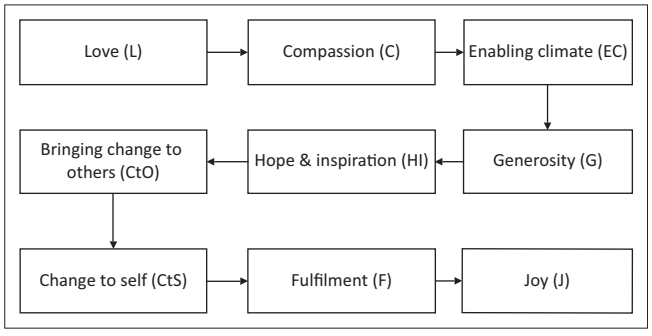

FIGURE 1: Uncluttered linear systems influence diagram.

Enabling climate

The meaning and interpretation of this affinity sparked a lively debate among the constituents, ultimately leading to two sub-themes emerging from this affinity, namely organisational enabling climate, and creating an enabling climate.

Organisational enabling climate

One cannot underestimate the philanthropic motivations of employees as a CSR driver (Rangan, Chase, & Karim, 2012), and individual employees who have a desire to be engaged in their local communities or charities often carry such causes to work. Given the enormous tug towards CSR, without the accompanying resources to execute action, employees often find themselves unable to be involved without company support such as request for time off, and/or corporate funding of initiatives. What stood out most sharply during the focus group was the organisation's commitment towards CSR, especially in the local community, and the fact that employee participation is not only encouraged, but is also supported. RP7 stated, 'The company gives us the time to do stuff we need. Most companies give money but ask questions if you need time off to do good things'. This statement was confirmed by RP4:

> 'To me that means that internally in the company we give people a platform so that they can do CSR work. They understand that what they do is supported by the company.' [RP4, Female, clerical position, late 50s]

Creating an enabling climate

As indicated by RP11:

> 'Poor people also have pride … we often feel so excited about giving to those less fortunate that we forget to ask them what they really need'. [RP11]

The constituents described how they created a vegetable garden at a nearby old-age home, and how by doing this, they enabled the residents of the home to grow their own vegetables. Although the constituents provided the seeds and equipment, the residents were able to contribute towards this initiative, thus instilling a sense of pride and ownership in the project and enabling them to improve their own circumstances.

The constituents stated how love for others sparks a sense of compassion, and how compassion coupled with an

environment that enables and encourages people to participate in CSR stimulates generosity.

Generosity

Although often mistaken as the act of giving money, generosity extends well beyond financial donations. Someone showing generosity is happy to give time, money, food or kindness and, as described by RP1:

> '… a generous person is willing to help and to donate such things as clothes, money, and even their own personal time'.

From the discussion that ensued around generosity, it became evident that none of the participants expected anything in return for their generosity. No mention was made of any particular financial or other rewards gained from participation, and is clearly not a motivator to engage in any of the community CSR projects facilitated by the organisation.

Circulator: Hope and inspiration

As a circulator, 'hope and inspiration' is as much of a cause as an effect on other affinities. The experience of helping those in need is often described as depressing, and very frequently people are left feeling disheartened when faced by the harsh realities of poor living conditions, poverty, etc. The constituents, however, described how helping others make them feel blessed and how it inspires them to want to do more. RP5 stated:

> 'I remember how I cried when I first got involved at the school. I couldn't understand at first why the little orphans were smiling and singing while I was crying. It only made sense to me later that I had made a difference to them and that I had given them something which I was used to, yet it was new to them. They were so happy. To see the joy on their faces made me want to go back and do more, even though I was feeling sad.' [Female, management position, late 40s]

RP5 described how they encounter new possibilities and opportunities to improve living conditions every time they go back:

> '… every time I go there I just want to give more and more, even though it makes me sad sometimes, I always look forward to the experience and realise how I can do more in future.' [Female, management position, late 40s]

Hope and inspiration are also fostered among the recipients of CSR in that the former gives them hope for a better future, and the latter inspires them to lead a better life. An example was cited by RP6 of how a programme aimed at helping teenage girls to overcome the shame of not being able to attend school during a menstrual cycle because of lack of sanitary pads, and by providing such resources, gave the girls the hope and inspiration that they can successfully complete their school careers without the heavy burden of missing important school days and/or tests and exams. Another example is the one of the vegetable garden cited earlier, which provides the residents of the old-age home with the ability to sustain their own needs, which also instils a sense of pride and inspiration.

Secondary outcomes: Bringing change to others, change to self and fulfilment

The secondary outcome affinities in the system were indicated as 'bringing change to others', 'change to self' and 'fulfilment'. A secondary outcome reveals a relative effect.

Bringing change to others

Probably best described by the participants as, 'by giving back and being generous we are improving the conditions of our community'. At the heart of CSR, participation is the desire to bring about positive change. By being compassionate and generous, participants describe how they bring about change to those around them. Change is described as both changes in circumstances as well as emotional changes. For example, relating how the vegetable garden made the residents at the old-age home feel useful and valuable again, or how teaching the young girls about basic hygiene changed their attitudes about self-worth and confidence.

Change to self

Constituents described the positive changes within themselves as ranging from becoming more content, increased creativity, and even a changed belief system, as RP3 stated 'I used to believe that I was better than poor people, by giving and becoming involved in the community, I have realised how wrong that belief was'. RP7 described how involvement changed her family:

> 'It has influenced my values as a mother, my daughter that is scared of poverty is now part of our system by giving clothes and time and supporting the community and she is studying hard to be able to beat her fear.' [Female, professional position, late 30s]

Other comments comprised:

> 'I have learnt to see the world through the eyes of other people' [RP11]
>
> 'It has taught me to be creative' [RP6], and
>
> 'I feel good about myself' [RP1].

As RP3 put it:

> 'I wasn't raised like this. Helping others has changed my whole personality I became more myself. I was always very judgemental and I never had compassion for people who had less than I did and I was very materialistic. I am not materialistic anymore.' [Female, management position, late 40s]

Fulfilment

The words 'blessed' and 'satisfied' were the most frequently used words during the first phase of the study when constituents were asked to record their thoughts on the index cards. During the inductive coding process, these words were categorised under the heading 'fulfilment'. Constituents described the outcome of participation as:

> '… feeling so blessed and happy' [RP5]
>
> '… it makes me feel so good, and afterwards I feel like a million dollars' [RP8]
>
> 'I feel privileged that I come from a warm home and that I am loved' [RP11]

Primary outcome: Joy

The primary outcome is a significant effect that is caused by many of the affinities, but does not affect others (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The affinity identified as the primary outcome in this system was 'Joy'. Constituents described how happy they felt because of their involvement in the CSR activities, and how much joy it gave them:

> '… by doing this, I feel so at home and so happy and complete'. [RP 8]

Individual interviews

It is important to note that the individual interviews in IQA serve to provide analytical and interpretive depth to the SIDs. The interviews do not represent a new phase of data collection but provide opportunity for the constituents to further reflect on the individual meaning the phenomenon has for them (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The uncluttered linear SID was presented during the interviews and was used as a point of departure for discussion.

All the constituents who were interviewed were astounded by the outcome of the SID, and were in full agreement with the assumption that had been inferred by the SID. As RP3 stated 'That is so cool it is exactly how I would have drawn it'.

When probed about their thoughts on the arrangement of affinities on the SID, RP5 said, 'That feeling of love leads to a sense of compassion, if you really have love in your heart you will have compassion'. RP8 confirmed the conclusion of the SID by saying:

> 'When it comes to CSR love plays a big role because it comes with compassion as well. If you don't love something, if you don't have love you won't have the push to continue doing good. If you love something that will motivate you to do something and at the end of the day you get satisfaction out of it.' [Female, clerical/administrative position, early 50s]

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore CSR from the view of employees who actively participate in organisational CSR initiatives within an established CSR framework. The study aimed to look at not only what drives employees to participate in CSR, but also to develop an understanding of the experiences of the employees who do participate and to appreciate what it means to employees to be part of an organisation's efforts to improve the lives and circumstances of others less fortunate than themselves. This study aimed to contribute to CSR literature by adding more perspicuous insight into the element of employee participation and by providing an additional dimension for organisations to consider when planning and implementing their CSR objectives. Although there is no shortfall of international and local research on the various dimensions of CSR, relatively few studies have considered the impact of CSR on employees, and whilst research often addresses the impact of CSR on stakeholder groups such as the consumer, investors, shareholders and the recipients of CSR, it tends to neglect employees (Bauman & Skitka, 2012; Tyrker, 2009).

The study concluded that love is the primary driver of employee participation in CSR. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke about three kinds of love: eros (romantic love), philia (friendship love) and agape which he described as an understanding, redeeming goodwill for all; an overflowing love that is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, creative and seeking to preserve and create community (cited in Tucker, 2014). Rightly understood, love is the value that underpins our most noble human values. Love activates, empowers and encourages the growth of our other core values. Love is the ideal touchstone and the ultimate facilitator (Tucker, 2014). Values influence people in their CSR perceptions, interpretations of situations, activities and hence direct people in their decisions to participate (Gandal, Roccas, Sagiv, & Wrzesniewski, 2005). Accordingly, CSR perceptions and CSR participation are influenced by personal values (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004).

Love brings about a sense of compassion and the need to help those less fortunate. Of notable relevance to mental health, compassion is not only a process that builds positive relationships with others; it is also a vital path to releasing the human mind from the effects of harmful negative emotions. A converging body of literature suggests that various forms of compassionate behaviours have immediate and long-term psychological health benefits for the individuals who exhibit them, including positive mood states, reduced depressive symptoms and increased self-esteem (Mongrain, Chin, & Shapira, 2011).

An enabling climate, especially within an organisational setting, allows employees to be part of a system of giving back. The current research suggests that employees are more likely to participate in CSR within an organisation where a well-established and supported CSR framework exists. Furthermore, there is mounting evidence demonstrating an association between psychological gains and prolonged helping behaviours performed within institutional settings, namely volunteering. For example, in a correlational study by Thoits and Hewitt (as cited in Mongrain et al., 2011), number of hours of volunteer work was found to predict positive changes in well-being, happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, mastery, depression and physical health over the subsequent 3 years.

Two notable affinities that emerged during the study were 'bringing change to others', and 'change to self'. A converging body of literature suggests that compassion and acts of kindness can build trust and acceptance between people, encourage social bonds, provide givers and receivers with the benefits of positive social interaction and enable helpers to use and develop personal skills and thus themselves.

With regard to the outcome of CSR on individuals, cynics may argue that even apparently idealistic personal values as drivers

of CSR participation could be construed as self-interest in the form of psychological egoism. This can be contrasted with naked self-interest where, for example, people follow a grasping, materialistic path in the organisation's political jungle (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). That being said, according to modern theories of self-esteem, life is only genuinely satisfying if we discover value within ourselves. Yet, one of the best ways of discovering this value is by nourishing our unique strengths in contributing to the happiness of our fellow humans, and by conducting activities that include committing acts of kindness, expressing gratitude or optimism and savouring joyful life events, all of which represent the most promising route to sustaining enhanced happiness (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2005; Seligman, 2002).

Practical or managerial implications

This study extends the existing research on the experiences of employees who participate in CSR. To maximise the positive impact of their CSR initiatives, companies must attempt to develop coherent CSR strategies that not only focus on external stakeholders but also appreciate the impact on the employees who participate in CSR. Generating a framework of what motivates employees to participate in CSR, and developing an understanding of what their experiences are, may assist organisations and CSR managers to implement different strategies within their organisations not only to elicit participation in CSR but also to appreciate the spillover of a positive CSR experience into the workplace.

Whilst most companies have the necessary financial means and resources to elicit positive change in their surrounding communities, it is often the employees who are actively engaged in the process. We have seen how giving back and engaging in the 'greater good' can boost employee morale and by understanding the drivers of employee behaviour and participation in CSR.

Authors have described how acts of kindness and organisational citizenship behaviours are internally motivated (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014), which correlates with the findings of this research that suggest the primary driver of participation in CSR is love. Constituents described how they are driven by love for others to give back to society. The study revealed how the motivation to participate in CSR comes from within each individual, and is not driven by external factors such as organisational rewards or recognition. This relates strongly with previous research that suggests that employee volunteerism is discretionary by nature and often not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal rewards system (Peloza & Hassay, 2006).

Research elucidates that contributing to the happiness of our fellow humans is one of the best ways to discover true happiness and a sense of fulfilment (Seligman, 2002). In addition, it has been illustrated that committing acts of kindness represents the most promising route to sustained happiness (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2005). This study supported this theory by concluding that participation in CSR leads to fulfilment and ultimately to a feeling of joy.

Corporate social responsibility is a reality of business in modern-day South Africa, and we are confronted with poor socio-economic conditions on our doorstep on a daily basis. Whilst this may sound gloomy and disheartening, this study revealed how feeling love for others and showing compassion in an enabling environment allow employees to make a difference in the lives of others, and more importantly how in doing so, this brings about positive change within the lives of the volunteers and the recipients of CSR, and ultimately leads to fulfilment and joy.

Limitations

Notwithstanding the contributions of this study to help understand the experiences and motivations of employees participating in CSR, some important limitations are worth mentioning. One of the likely criticisms against this study may be that the sample consisted of female participants only. Whilst it emerged that the female employees appear to be the drivers of the CSR initiatives in this particular setting, one cannot discount the contribution made by their male counterparts in the execution of CSR activities. Another limitation is that the study was conducted in a setting where the organisation has a close connection with the surrounding community, and the factors recognised and explored in this study could possibly only be representative of a rural setting as opposed to an urban setting where socio-economic concerns may not be as ubiquitous.

Recommendations for future research

It is recommended that similar studies should be carried out in different businesses and in several geographical areas to facilitate generalisation. It would be interesting to explore the experiences of employees participating in CSR who work in a more developed region where poverty and social issues are not on their doorstep, and where direct community engagement is not the focus of their organisation's CSR activities.

This study has illustrated personal growth, joy and happiness that employees experience when they actively participate in CSR. Future studies along this path should include comparisons between groups who do not participate and those who do, where CSR is seen as an independent variable, in order to find its influence on variables such as happiness at work, personal growth and organisational citizenship behaviours.

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Authors' contributions

G.C. did the research and D.J.G. supervised the research.

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