

Strategic integration of social responsibility and contemporary HRM practices

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>The literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Human Resource Management (HRM) highlights that socially responsible practices constitute a strategic lever for strengthening organisational legitimacy, increasing employee engagement, and stabilising the workforce. However, the operationalisation of CSR within HRM systems remains insufficiently examined in emerging African economies, where institutional and sociocultural environments differ markedly from Western contexts. This study investigates how organisations in Cameroon and Chad translate their CSR orientations into internal HRM mechanisms, and how these mechanisms shape employees' perceptions of fairness, organisational identification, and meaningful work.</i>
Received: 15-12-2025	
Accepted: 26-12-2025	
Published: 29-12-2025	
Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	
Citation: Mignenan, Victor Ph.D; Mahamat Ahmat MOUSSA, Ph.D; Mahamat Youssouf Adoum. (2025). Strategic integration of social responsibility and contemporary HRM practices. UKR Journal of Economics, Business and Management (UKRJEBM), Volume 1(10), 279-296.	<i>Drawing on 37 interviews and 374 survey responses, the study reveals that CSR orientation strongly predicts operational HRM mechanisms ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.001$). These mechanisms subsequently influence employees' cognitions: perceived fairness ($\beta = 0.52$), organisational identification ($\beta = 0.44$), and work meaningfulness ($\beta = 0.39$). These cognitions play a robust mediating role by reducing turnover intentions (fairness → turnover: $\beta = -0.36$), strengthening engagement (identification → engagement: $\beta = 0.41$), and decreasing job-search behaviour (meaningfulness → job search: $\beta = -0.28$).</i>
	<i>Multigroup analysis reveals significant institutional contrasts. In Cameroon, the CSR → HRM relationship is stronger ($\beta = 0.55$), reflecting a more institutionalised environment: "Here, employees expect CSR commitments to translate into actual HR practices" (HR Director Cameroon). In Chad, work meaningfulness exerts a more pronounced effect ($\beta = 0.46$): "Work gives dignity; that is what matters most." (Employee, N'Djamena).</i>
	<i>This research proposes an integrated, contextualised, and empirically validated model of CSR–HRM operationalisation in Central Africa. It demonstrates that the effectiveness of CSR depends on its credible translation into HRM systems and on the ways employees, according to their national context -assign meaning and legitimacy to these practices.</i>
	Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Human Resource Management, Employee Cognitions, Institutional Contexts et Mixed-Methods Research.

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a central strategic lever in contemporary human resource management (HRM), with organizations increasingly recognizing that socially responsible practices can improve employee well-being, strengthen organizational legitimacy, and contribute to the development of high-quality human capital (Aguinis & Glavas 2012). As a result, a growing

body of research in HRM and CSR has examined how socially responsible policies influence employee attitudes, organizational commitment, and performance outcomes, particularly in companies located in North America and Western Europe (Gond et al. 2020). Although previous research has recognized significant variations in CSR–HRM integration across countries and institutional settings

(Jamali & Karam 2018), relatively little attention has been paid to how CSR practices are operational in HRM strategies in African contexts. This gap is important because the mechanisms linking CSR, human resource management, and employee results are not universal; they are shaped by entrenched cultural norms, institutional capacities, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities (Kolk & Rivera-Santos 2016). In addition, organizations operating in emerging economies often face additional constraints, including resource scarcity, regulatory weaknesses, and informality, which condition the adoption, interpretation, and internalization of CSR practices by employees (Nyame-Asiamah & Afriyie 2023).

Drawing on strategic HR theory (Wright & McMahan 2011) and contextual CSR research (Jamali & Karam 2018; Amaeshi et al. 2006), this article advances the understanding of how CSR practices are concretely integrated into human resource management strategies in sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on Cameroon and Chad. We conceptualize the operationalization of CSR as the set of human resources management, recruitment, training, evaluation, participation and well-being initiatives, through which organizations translate social responsibility commitments into internal practices that shape employee perceptions, motivation and behavioral results. Specifically, we investigate how organizational CSR orientations are directly and via internal human resource management processes to three categories of employee-level outcomes: (1) perceived organizational fairness, (2) engagement and meaningful work, and (3) retention-related intentions. HRM operational mechanisms refer to internal systems that allow employees to perceive CSR as credible and actionable, rather than symbolic.

To examine differences within regions and across countries, we use a mixed-methods design comprising 37 semi-structured interviews and 374 surveys of employees and HR managers in organizations operating in Cameroon and Chad. This empirical strategy allows us to take into account the contextual heterogeneity, institutional fragility and cultural logics that influence the way CSR is interpreted and implemented within HRM systems.

The results confirm the theorized link between the operationalization of CSR and HRM results by showing that organizations in Cameroon and Chad evolve in distinct socio-institutional configurations that shape both the form and the effectiveness of CSR–HRM integration. The differences are largely attributable to contextual constraints, variations in managerial abilities, and differentiated expectations among employees regarding fairness, well-being, and moral legitimacy.

This study makes three contributions to the literature. First, we advance the applicability of strategic HRM theory by

examining how CSR practices are internalized in environments characterized by institutional hybridity and socioeconomic volatility—contexts where universalist assumptions in HRM often fail. Second, we enrich the CSR literature by revealing the mechanisms by which HR functions translate broad CSR commitments into concrete and employee-experienced practices, thus filling a critical gap in the operationalization of CSR in African contexts. Third, this article contributes to research on employee outcomes by demonstrating how CSR-informed human resource management practices shape perceptions of organizational fairness, engagement, and retention, providing relevant perspectives for both researchers and practitioners seeking to strengthen workforce stability and legitimacy in emerging economies.

1. Literature Review

The integration of corporate social responsibility (CSR) into human resource management (HRM) has become an increasingly central area of inquiry, with organizations seeking to align social, ethical and environmental commitments with their internal human resource management strategies (Aguinis & Glavas 2012; Gond et al. 2020). At its core, CSR–HRM integration refers to the extent to which socially responsible principles shape HRM systems, including recruitment, training, performance management, participation, and well-being, so that employees perceive CSR not just as a speech, but as a credible and actionable organizational practice (Shen & Benson 2016). This literature review examines three main lines of research: (1) CSR as a strategic direction affecting HRM systems; (2) HRM as the main vector for the operationalization of CSR; and (3) the contextual specificities shaping CSR–HRM linkages in emerging economies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

1.1 CSR as a strategic direction shaping human resources management

CSR is increasingly presented as a strategic resource that influences organizational culture, legitimacy, and the attraction and development of human capital (Aguinis 2011; Porter & Kramer 2011). Research shows that CSR commitments influence employee-level outcomes such as identification, engagement, trust, and perceived organizational support (Rupp et al. 2013). These relationships are theorized through social exchange theory (Blau 1964), stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984) and meaning-understanding approaches that emphasize how employees interpret CSR signals (Morgeson et al. 2013). Previous studies point out that CSR can improve retention, reduce turnover intentions, and enhance the meaning of work, depending on the credibility and consistency of CSR practices (Bauman & Skitka 2012).

However, much of this research is set in Western and institutionalized work environments, leaving a limited understanding of how CSR is translated into human resource management systems in contexts where socio-economic

pressures, regulatory fragility, and cultural expectations influence employee interpretations (Jamali & Karam 2018).

1.2 HRM as a mechanism for operationalizing CSR

A parallel stream examines the role of HRM as the central mechanism by which CSR is integrated into organizational routines and employee experiences (Shen & Zhu 2011; Stahl et al. 2020). HRM practices contribute to operationalization by:

Recruitment and employer branding: signaling ethical conduct and social legitimacy to potential candidates (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004);

Training and development: cultivating ethical skills, sustainability culture and social awareness (Renwick et al. 2013);

Performance management and incentives: integrating CSR objectives into evaluation and reward systems (Jiang & Messersmith 2018);

Participation and voice: supporting employee involvement in CSR activities and community initiatives (De Roeck & Farooq 2018);

Health, safety and well-being: operationalizing social protection through human resource management structures (Guest 2017).

This approach conceptualizes HRM not only as an administrative function, but as a strategic architecture capable of transforming CSR from symbolic statements into tangible organizational practices (Shen & Benson 2016).

1.3 Contextualization of CSR–HRM in emerging African economies

A growing number of researchers argue that CSR and HRM cannot be understood outside of their socio-institutional environment (Kolk & Rivera-Santos 2016; Amaeshi et al. 2006). In sub-Saharan Africa, CSR tends to be shaped by community expectations, informal institutions, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and corporate legitimacy needs (Visser 2006). This produces CSR practices that are often more relational, community-centred and morally grounded than their Western counterparts (Jamali & Mirshak 2007).

Research on SRM in African contexts also reveals non-universal mechanisms. HRM systems operate under constraints such as:

- ✓ weaker regulatory enforcement (Kamoche et al. 2012);
- ✓ resource scarcity and informality (Horwitz 2013);
- ✓ large socio-cultural distances between managerial frameworks and local expectations (Brewster et al., 2016).

Therefore, implementing CSR through human resource management in African workplaces requires understanding how employees interpret equity, community obligation, and organizational legitimacy in environments characterized by

social inequalities, governance gaps, and high expectations of employer accountability.

1.4 Gaps Addressed by this Study

Despite advances in CSR and HRM research, three critical gaps remain. First, little is known about how CSR practices are operationalized in human resource management systems in emerging African economies — beyond broad descriptions of community-oriented CSR. Second, the mechanisms linking CSR–HRM integration to employee perceptions of fairness, engagement, and retention remain underexplored in institutional contexts marked by volatility and socio-economic pressure. Third, the few African-based empirical studies offer limited comparative perspectives across countries and rarely employ mixed-methods designs that capture both meaning and mechanisms.

La présente étude répond à ces lacunes en examinant l'opérationnalisation RSE–GRH à l'aide de 37 entretiens qualitatifs et 374 enquêtes quantitatives menées dans des organisations au Cameroun et au Tchad. En analysant à la fois les variations intrapays et inter-pays, cette recherche offre une compréhension plus approfondie de la manière dont la RSE est interprétée, mise en œuvre et expérimentée au sein des systèmes de GRH dans deux environnements institutionnels en pleine transformation économique, sociale et réglementaire.

2. Theoretical framework

Operationalizing social responsibility in human resource management (HRM) strategies requires an integrated theoretical perspective that can capture both the strategic and micro-fundamental mechanisms that connect CSR commitments to employee experiences and organizational outcomes. This study is based on three complementary theoretical corpora: (1) strategic human resources management (SHRM); (2) Stakeholder and justice-based theories of CSR; (3) Contextual and institutional approaches to HRM in emerging economies.

Together, these perspectives develop a contextual understanding of how CSR fits into human resources management systems, how employees interpret these practices, and how these perceptions influence engagement, fairness judgments, and retention intentions.

2.1 Strategic HR Theory: HRM as a Value Creation Architecture

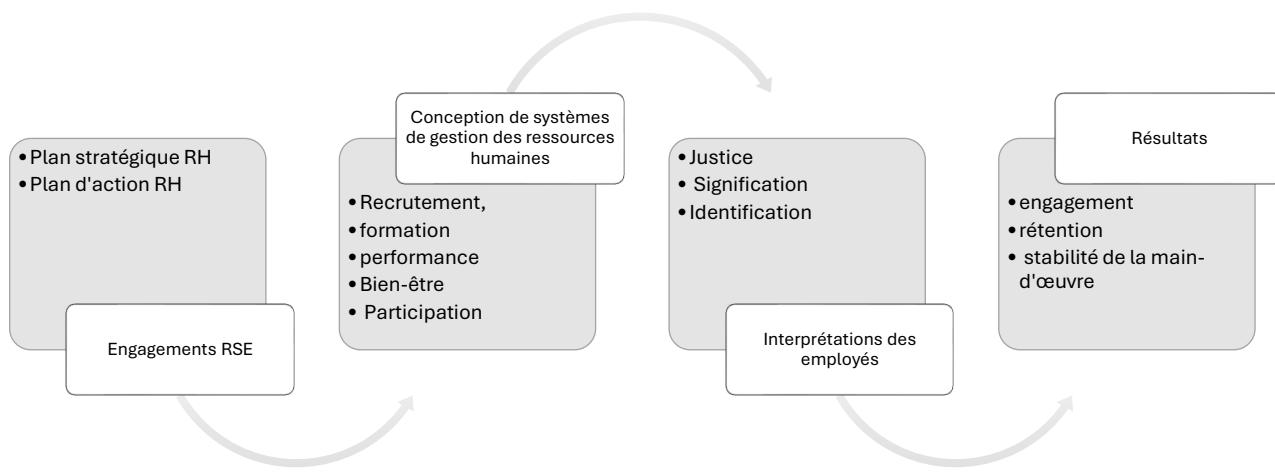
Strategic HR management argues that HR systems contribute to performance by shaping employees' abilities, motivations, and opportunities to contribute to organizational goals (Wright & McMahan 2011). From this perspective, CSR is not an external appendage, but becomes a strategic resource in human resources management—a resource that influences organizational legitimacy, employer attractiveness, and workforce stability.

In human resources management systems driven by CSR, recruitment, training, performance evaluation and

participation practices reflect commitments to social responsibility. The policy literature on human resource management suggests that when these practices are consistent

and credible, they create a climate of fairness and trust, enhance psychological meaning, and reduce voluntary turnover.

Figure 1: Human Resources Management Strategic Perspective on CSR Operationalization



Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

2.2 CSR micro-foundations: social exchanges, justice and stakeholder perspectives

As illustrated in Table 1, CSR not only reflects organizational strategy, but also shapes employee-employer relations at the micro level. Three theoretical mechanisms are essential here:

(a) Social Exchange Theory (TES)

According to social exchange theory, social responsibility actions that are perceived as authentic act as explicit signals of support, benevolence, and fairness from the organization (Rupp et al., 2013). When employees interpret CSR as tangible proof of investment in them, they develop a sense of moral obligation to the organization. This causal dynamic, from the perception of CSR to reciprocity, results in increased commitment, strengthened loyalty and a significant decrease in the intention to leave.

Thus: *Perceived CSR → Sense of obligation → Commitment, loyalty and stability.*

(b) Organizational Justice Theory

CSR practices that improve working conditions, ensure transparency or address social inequalities influence the perception of distributive, procedural and interactional justice. Fair treatment builds trust and reduces the propensity of employees to leave.

(c) Stakeholder theory

Employees are key internal stakeholders. CSR practices that align with their values and well-being strengthen organizational legitimacy and strengthen the psychological contract.

Table 1. Microfundamental mechanisms linking CSR to HRM outcomes

CSR mechanism	Theoretical prism	Expected response from employees	Result
Fair and ethical HR policies	Organizational Justice	Trust, perception of fairness	Higher retention
Community-oriented CSR actions	Stakeholder theory	Identification with the company	Betrothal
Health, Safety and Wellness Initiatives	Social Exchange	Reciprocity, commitment	Low intent turnover
Green and Social Training Programs	Human Capital Theory	Upskilling	Long-term performance and employability

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

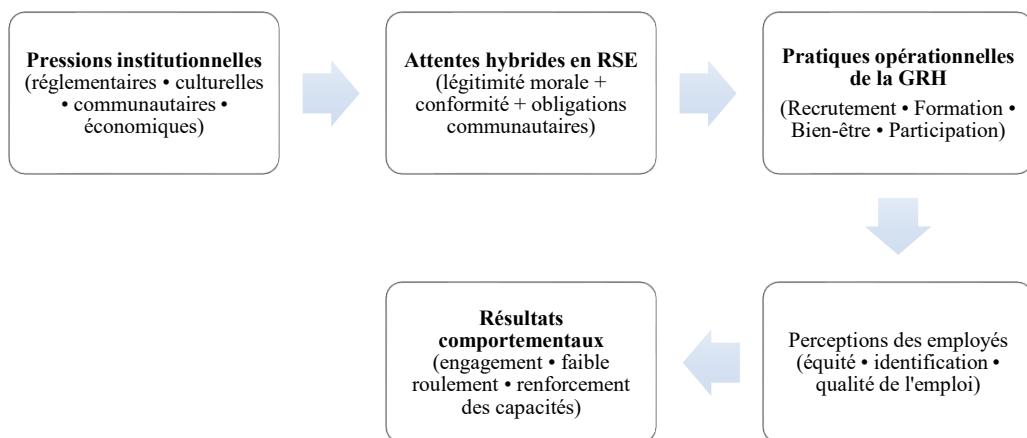
2.3 Contextual and institutional approaches: CSR–HRM in emerging African economies

CSR and HRM cannot be interpreted outside of their socio-cultural and institutional contexts. African organizations, including those in Cameroon and Chad, operate in environments marked by:

- ✓ Regulatory fragility and unequal application of labour standards
- ✓ Resource constraints affecting implementation fidelity
- ✓ High socio-economic vulnerability shaping employee expectations
- ✓ Strong community-based cultural norms influencing legitimacy and perceptions of equity

Institutional theory, as represented in Figure 2, suggests that such environments generate hybrid CSR logics, combining formal (international CSR standards) and informal (community, relational, moral expectations) pressures. HRM becomes the operational interface that translates these hybrid logics into practices experienced by employees.

Figure 2. Institutional Context Model of CSR–HRM Integration



Source: authors, figures from literature, August 2025

2.4 Towards an integrated CSR–HRM operationalization model

The combination of the above theoretical components results in an integrated model, illustrated in Figure 3, in which:

- ✓ CSR commitments serve as strategic direction.
- ✓ Human resources management practices implement CSR in internal organizational systems.
- ✓ Employees' interpretations act as mediating cognitive mechanisms.
- ✓ Workforce outcomes reflect the final behavioral effects on workforce retention, engagement, and stability.
- ✓ The institutional context moderates all relationships.

Figure 3: Integrated CSR–HR Operationalization Framework



Source: authors, figure based on literature, August 2025

2.5 Conceptual positioning of this study

This study contributes to the theoretical advancement by:

- ✓ Bridge the strategic micro-foundations of human resources management and CSR into a coherent analytical model.
- ✓ Demonstrate how HR management practices translate CSR into employee experiences.
- ✓ Contextualize these mechanisms in the institutional realities of sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the differences between Cameroon and Chad.
- ✓ To establish the theoretical basis for empirically examining how CSR-focused human resource management shapes perceptions, engagement, and retention of justice.

3. Development of hypotheses

The theoretical framework suggests that CSR becomes operationally meaningful for employees when it translates into concrete human resource management practices that are perceived as fair, credible, and aligned with organizational values. Drawing on HRM strategic theory,

CSR micro-foundations, and institutional perspectives, we develop hypotheses linking CSR orientation, HRM operational mechanisms, employee interpretations, and workforce outcomes in the Cameroon and Chad contexts.

3.1 CSR orientation and operational mechanisms for human resources management

Strategic HR theory posits that organizational directions, such as CSR commitments, shape the design of human resource management systems that govern how employees are recruited, trained, evaluated, and supported (Wright & McMahan 2011). Companies with a strong CSR focus are more likely to integrate social responsibility principles into human resource management processes, resulting in HR practices that promote equity, well-being, participation, and transparency (Shen & Benson 2016).

CSR commitments therefore serve as strategic antecedents for the operationalization of HRM.

Hypothesis 1: The CSR orientation is positively associated with the adoption of HR operational mechanisms aligned with CSR.

Figure 1. CSR as a driver for the operationalization of HRM



Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

3.2 HRM Operational Mechanisms and Employee Cognitive Responses

Human resource management practices informed by CSR, such as fair recruitment, ethical performance reviews, participatory decision-making, and wellbeing initiatives, shape employees' interpretation of their professional relationship. According to theories of social exchange and organizational justice, when employees perceive HRM practices as respectful and socially responsible, they

develop stronger perceptions of fairness, identification, and meaning (Rupp et al. 2013; De Roeck & Farooq 2018).

Thus, human resource management practices aligned with CSR are supposed to strengthen employees' cognitive responses.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): *Operational human resources management mechanisms aligned with CSR are positively associated with employees' perception of organizational equity.*

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): *Operational HR management mechanisms aligned with CSR are positively associated with the identification of employees with the organization.*

Hypothesis 2c (H2c): *Operational HR management mechanisms aligned with CSR are positively associated with employees' perception of the meaning of work.*

Table 1: HRM → Employee cognitions: expected mechanisms

HRM Practice	Theoretical mechanism	Expected cognition
Fair recruitment and promotion	Procedural justice	Perception of fairness
CSR training and development	Social Exchange	Meaning
Participatory decision-making	Stakeholder voice and inclusion	Identification
Health and Safety Initiatives	Wellness Contract	Trust and loyalty

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

3.3 Employee Cognitive Responses and Personnel Outcomes

Employee interpretations act as mediation mechanisms that translate CSR and human resource management practices into behavioural outcomes. Research shows that the perception of fairness reduces turnover intentions, increases engagement, and improves engagement (Colquitt et al. 2013). Identification builds loyalty and reduces job search behavior. Meaning increases motivation and reduces exhaustion.

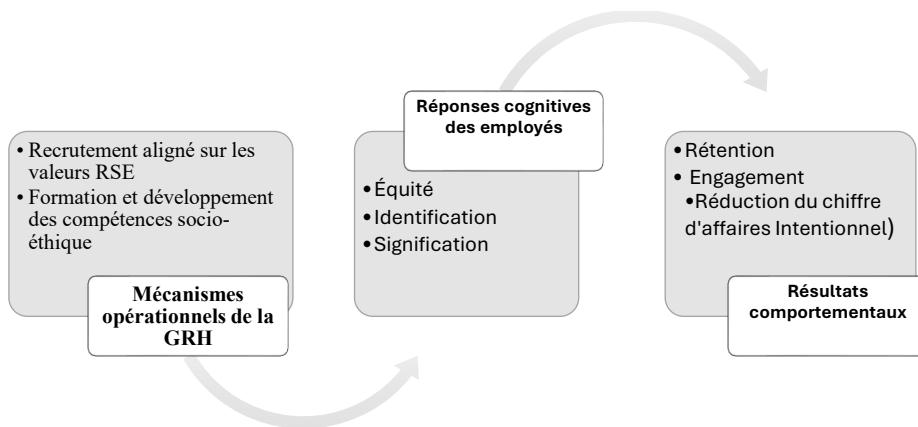
Thus, employees' cognitive responses should positively influence retention, engagement, and stability. Three hypotheses emerge:

Hypothesis 3a (H3a): *Perceived organizational equity is negatively associated with employee turnover intentions.*

Hypothesis 3b (H3b): *Organizational identification is positively associated with employee engagement.*

Hypothesis 3c (H3c): *The perceived meaning of work is negatively associated with job-seeking behaviour.*

Figure 2. Role of mediator of employee cognitions



Source: auteurs, figure réalisée à partir de la littérature, août 2025

3.4 Mediating Role of Employees' Cognitive Responses

Based on CSR micro-foundations and strategic HR management, HRM practices improve workforce outcomes by influencing employees' psychological interpretations. Thus, cognitive responses are believed to mediate the RSC–MRC outcome chain.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): *Employee cognitive responses mediate the relationship between HRM operational mechanisms and workforce outcomes.*

3.5 Institutional context as moderator (Cameroon and Chad)

Institutional theory suggests that CSR and HRM practices are embedded in institutional environments characterized by variations in regulatory quality, cultural expectations,

and labor market structures (Jamali & Karam 2018). Cameroon and Chad differ in institutional strength, socio-economic vulnerabilities and organizational maturity.

These contextual differences can reinforce or weaken the effects of CSR, human resource management practices, and employee interpretations. Three hypotheses are thus suggested:

Hypothesis 5a (H5a): *The positive relationship between CSR orientation and HRM operational mechanisms is stronger in institutional environments with higher regulatory coherence.*

Hypothesis 5b (H5b): *The effects of human resource management mechanisms on employees' cognitive responses differ significantly between Cameroon and Chad.*

Hypothesis 5c (H5c): *The indirect effects of CSR on labour force outcomes through HRM and cognitive responses are moderated by the national institutional context.*

Table 2. Logic of institutional moderation

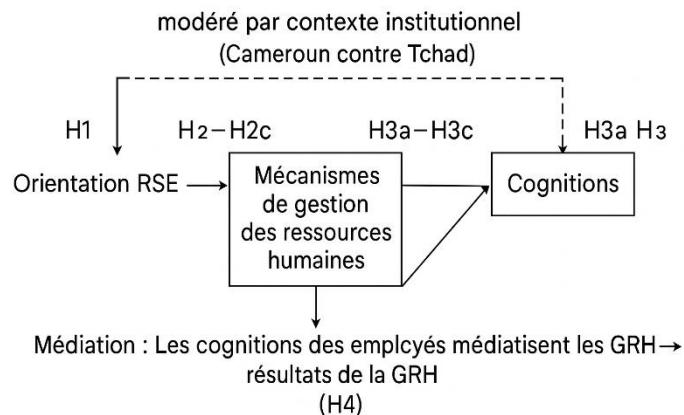
Contextual Factor	Expected moderation effect	Implication
Regulatory application	Strengthening CSR alignment → human resources management	Higher operational fidelity
Cultural Expectations	Shapes perceptions of fairness and legitimacy	Different employee cognitions
Socio-economic sustainability	Influences rotation intentions	Increased awareness of CSR practices
Maturity of human resources management systems	Allows the integration of CSR standards	Various retention mechanisms

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

3.6 Integrated Hypothetical Model

Here is the conceptual model combining all the assumptions:

Figure 3. Integrated Assumptions Model (CSR–HRM–Employee Outcomes)



Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

Figure 3 illustrates a conceptual model that integrates direct relationships, mediating effects, and contextual moderation. The CSR orientation is the starting point (H1), directly influencing human resource management (HRM) mechanisms, which are themselves associated with employee cognitions (H3a–H3c). The whole diagram shows that these cognitions play a mediating role between HRM practices and the results of the HR function (H4), which refers to a logic where employees' perceptions and interpretations condition the effectiveness of organizational systems.

In addition, the H2–H2c and H3a–H3c relationships are moderated by the institutional context, comparing two contrasting national environments (Cameroon vs. Chad). This moderation suggests that the effects of HRM practices and cognitions do not manifest themselves with the same intensity depending on the institutional, cultural and regulatory framework. Thus, the model articulates a systemic vision where the influence of CSR practices on HR performance depends on internal management mechanisms, the cognitive processes employed and the national context, revealing a complex and multilevel dynamic.

Table 5: Summary of Assumptions

Hypothesis	Declaration
H1	CSR orientation → HR operational mechanisms (+)
H2a	HRM mechanisms → perceived equity (+)
H2b	HRM mechanisms → organizational identification (+)
H2c	HRM mechanisms → the meaning of work (+)

H3a	Fairness → intention to renew (-)
H3b	Identification → engagement (+)
H3c	Meaning → job search behaviour (-)
H4	Employee cognitions are relevant to human resource management → workforce outcomes
H5a	CSR → human resources management is moderated by the institutional context
H5b	HRM → cognitions is moderated by the institutional context
H5c	CSR → GRS → Moderate Cognitions → Outcomes in Cameroon Compared to Chad

Source: auteurs, tableau réalisé à partir de la littérature, août 2025

In order to verify the hypotheses formulated, the methodology is presented as follows.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed sequential design, integrating qualitative and quantitative components to examine how CSR orientations are operational through human resources management practices and how employees interpret and react to these practices in Cameroon and Chad. This design follows recommendations established in research on microfoundations in HRM and CSR (Aguinis & Glavas 2019; Ployhart & McKenzie 2014), allowing a rigorous investigation of (1) organizational mechanisms, (2) employees' cognitive processes, and (3) contextual contingencies.

The qualitative phase explores how organizations conceptualize and implement CSR–HR mechanisms, while the quantitative phase tests hypothesized relationships from the theoretical framework through a larger sample of employees. The two threads are integrated by meta-inference and triangulation to enhance internal validity.

4.2 Phases qualitative

4.2.1 Sampling and Participants

A targeted sampling strategy was adopted to reach organizations explicitly engaged in CSR initiatives or recognized for their structured human resource management practices across sectors (manufacturing, services, extractive industries, public enterprises). A total of 37 semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

- ✓ HR Directors (n=12)
- ✓ CSR Managers (n=9)
- ✓ Direct managers involved in HR implementation (n=7)
- ✓ Employee representatives (n=9)

Participants were evenly distributed between Cameroon (n=19) and Chad (n=18).

4.2.2 Data Collection Procedures

The interviews lasted between 50 and 60 minutes and covered:

- ✓ CSR orientation and strategic priorities
- ✓ Human Resources Management Policies and Processes
- ✓ CSR–HRM Integration Mechanisms
- ✓ Employee Interpretations and Perceived Effects
- ✓ Institutional and contextual constraints

All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

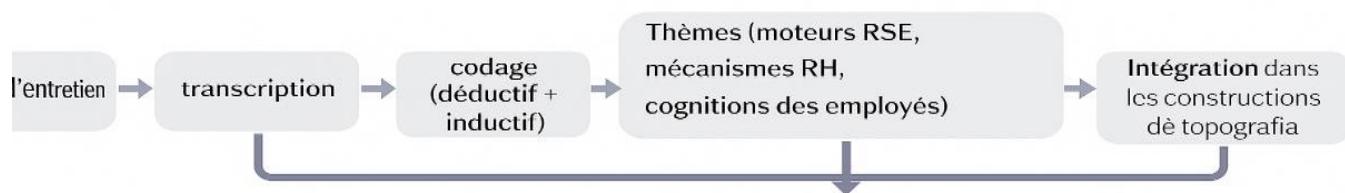
4.2.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

A thematic coding strategy was applied using NVivo 15. The analysis followed a hybrid approach:

- ✓ Deductive coding, guided by CSR–HRM frameworks
- ✓ Inductive coding, allowing for emergent patterns specific to the Central African context

The reliability of the encoder was as high as 0.86 (Cohen's Kappa).

Figure 4. Qualitative Analysis Flow



Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

The figure describes the analytical chain characteristic of a rigorous qualitative approach, from the production of data to their mobilization in the theoretical construction. The process begins with the transcription of the interviews, a fundamental step guaranteeing the fidelity of the empirical material. Then comes mixed coding (deductive and inductive): deductive coding is based on the prior theoretical framework (CSR, HRM, cognitions), while inductive coding allows new categories to emerge from the participants' discourses. The articulation of these two logics reinforces the validity of the analyses.

The codes are then aggregated into core themes, CSR drivers, HR mechanisms, and employee cognitions, which constitute the main units of interpretation. Finally, these themes are integrated into the constructions of the topografia, i.e. mobilized to elaborate conceptual representations, explanatory diagrams or integrative models. The whole reflects a sequential but iterative approach, where the constant return between data, codes and themes ensures analytical depth and increased theoretical coherence.

Table 3: Overview of the qualitative sample

Category	Cameroon	Chad	Total
HR Directors	6	6	12
CSR Managers	5	4	9
Line Managers	4	3	7
Employee Representatives	4	5	9
Total	19	18	37

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

4.3 Phase quantitative

4.3.1 Sampling and Participants

The quantitative phase used a stratified sampling approach targeting employees in medium and large organizations with formal human resource management structures. Thus, a total of 374 valid questionnaires were collected:

- ✓ Cameroon: n = 201
- ✓ Chad: n = 173

Respondents held professional positions such as technicians, administrative staff, supervisors and junior managers.

4.3.2 Development of surveying instruments

The elements of the survey were generated from:

- ✓ validated CSR and HRM measures (e.g., Shen & Benson 2016; De Roeck & Farooq 2018);
- ✓ qualitative themes from Phase 1;
- ✓ contextual adaptations that reflect local labour market and institutional realities.

All objects used a 5-point Likert scale. A pilot test with 32 employees ensured clarity and reliability.

4.3.3 Measurement constructions

Build	Measurement source	Examples of elements
Orientation RSE	Turker (2009), adapted	"This organization acts responsibly towards employees and communities."
HRM Operational Mechanisms	Shen & Benson (2016)	"HR practices are implemented in a fair and transparent manner."
Perception of fairness	Colquitt (2001)	"Decisions in this organization are applied consistently."
Organizational identification	Mael & Ashforth (1992)	"I feel a strong connection to my organization."
Meaning	Spreitzer (1995)	"My work has real meaning here."
Intent to renew	Hom et al. (2017)	"I often think about quitting this job."
Betrothal	Schaufeli et al. (2006)	"I feel energized when I work."

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

The reliability factors exceeded $\alpha = 0.78$ for all constructs.

4.4 Analytics Strategy

4.4.1 Quantitative analysis

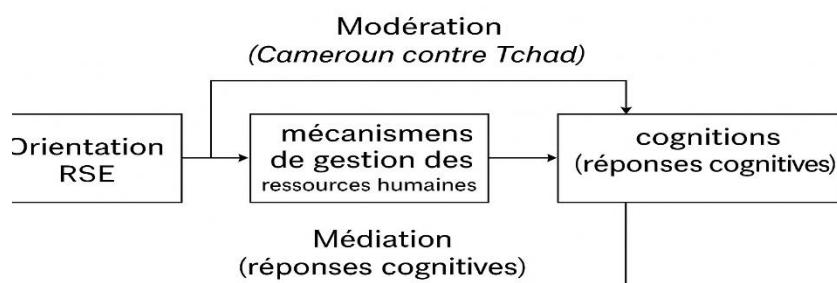
The data was analysed using:

- ✓ PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 4) for structural relationships
- ✓ Multi-group analysis (MGA) to compare Cameroon and Chad
- ✓ Bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) to test mediation and moderation
- ✓ Heterotrait–singletrait ratios (HTMT) for discriminant validity

The model tested:

- ✓ CSR → human resources management mechanisms
- ✓ HRM Mechanisms → Employee Cognitions
- ✓ Cognitions → Outcomes in the Workforce
- ✓ Effects of mediation
- ✓ Moderation effects across the country

Figure 5. Tested structural model (PLS-SEM)



Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

The figure illustrates an explanatory model that simultaneously articulates a direct, mediating and moderating effect in the relationship between CSR orientation and employee responses. The CSR orientation acts first and foremost as a structuring determinant of human resources management mechanisms, which then influence employees' cognitions—understood here as cognitive responses that reflect their perceptions, interpretations and evaluations of organizational practices.

The presence of mediation indicates that the impact of CSR on employee reactions is partly due to the way in which HRM systems are designed and implemented: it is therefore internal practices that concretely translate CSR intentions and shape employees' perceptions.

The model also incorporates institutional moderation, comparing two national contexts (Cameroon vs. Chad). This means that the strength or direction of relationships can vary across institutional, cultural, or regulatory environments. Thus, the effects of CSR on HRM and cognitions are not universal, but depend on national frameworks.

As a whole, the figure proposes a multilevel explanatory scheme where the CSR orientation influences the cognitive responses of employees through HR mechanisms, while

being modulated by the institutional specificities of the countries studied.

4.5 Integration of the qualitative and quantitative phases

The mixed-methods integration took place in three stages:

1. Development Integration (QUAL → QUAN)

Qualitative analyses guided the design of the survey scales, ensuring their contextual relevance.

2. Integration of interpretation (QUAN ↔ QUAL)

The statistical results were compared with the accounts of the interviews in order to validate convergence or divergence.

3. Explanatory integration (QUAL for QUAN)

Qualitative quotes were used to explain unexpected quantitative patterns (e.g., contextual constraints on CSR–HRM alignment).

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval has been granted by institutional committees in Cameroon and Chad. The confidentiality of the participants, the security of the data and the voluntary consent were strictly guaranteed. All data was anonymized prior to analysis.

Table 7: Methodological overview

Component	Description
Research Design	Sequential mixed methods
Qualitative sample	37 interviews (Cameroon & Chad)
Quantitative sample	374 employees
Analysis	NVivo + PLS-SEM Thematic Coding
Validity measures	Pilot Testing, Reliability Testing, HTMT, MGA across the country
Ethics	Voluntary participation, confidentiality, data anonymization

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

5. Results

5.1 Evaluation of the measurement model

Before testing the structural relationships, the reliability and validity of the measurement model were evaluated using the PLS-SEM standards. As shown in **Table 4**, all concepts met the thresholds recommended by Hair et al. (2023). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values ranged from **0.81** to **0.93**, exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.70. All values of the extracted mean variance (AVE) were greater than **0.50**, confirming convergent validity.

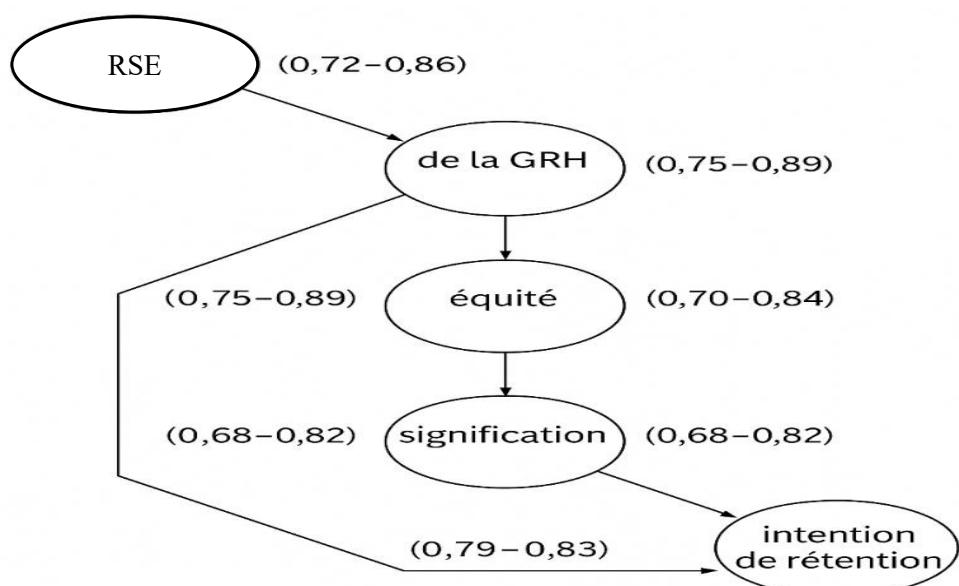
The **HTMT ratios** were all below **0.85**, indicating acceptable discriminatory validity between concepts (CSR orientation, human resource management mechanisms, equity, identification, meaning, commitment, rotation intent).

Table 8: Reliability and convergent validity of constructions

Build	Cronbach α	Composite reliability	AVE
Orientation RSE	0.88	0.92	0.68
HRM Mechanisms	0.91	0.94	0.71
Perceived fairness	0.87	0.91	0.66
Organizational identification	0.84	0.89	0.62
Meaning	0.81	0.88	0.60
Betrothal	0.90	0.93	0.70
Intent to renew	0.86	0.91	0.67

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

Figure 6. Measurement model (external loads PLS-SEM)



Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

The figure shows the *external loads* associated with the PLS-SEM model constructs, indicating the quality of the measurement and the contribution of the items to their latent variables. Overall, the values are between 0.68 and 0.89, which is well above the usual recommended thresholds (≥ 0.70 according to Hair et al., 2021), attesting to good convergent reliability.

CSR (0.72–0.86)

The items measuring Social Responsibility show high and homogeneous costs, suggesting that the CSR construct is well represented by its indicators. The moderate variability (0.72–0.86) reflects a robust construct.

HRM mechanisms (0.75–0.89)

Some of the highest loads in the model indicate excellent internal consistency. This construct appears as a **pivot** of the model, serving as a key mediator between CSR and employee cognitions.

Perceived equity (0.70–0.84)

Expenses remain above the 0.70 threshold: equity is reliably measured and contributes significantly to the cognitive dynamics triggered by CSR-aligned HRM.

Significance of work (0.68–0.82)

Slightly lower loads (close to 0.68) remain acceptable in an exploratory context. This suggests a more complex construction but still well represented.

Retention intention (0.79–0.83)

High loads reveal a very strong measure: the built is clearly defined and strongly reflected by its indicators.

To conclude, the measurement model has a solid convergent reliability, supporting the relevance of the scales used. HRM mechanisms are the best represented construct, while the meaning of the work shows a slight variability but remains acceptable. Overall, these loads indicate that the model is statistically robust and that the constructs can be interpreted with confidence in subsequent structural analyses.

5.2 Structural Model Results

Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to test the meaning of the path coefficients. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.42 to 2.18, excluding multicollinearity concerns.

5.2.1 Direct Effects

The results strongly support the theoretical model (Table 5). The CSR guidance significantly predicted HRM operational mechanisms ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$), confirming H1. Human resources management mechanisms have significantly improved employees:

- ✓ perceptions of fairness ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$),
- ✓ identification ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$),
- ✓ signification ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$),

H2a, H2b, H2c.

Employee cognitions significantly predicted workforce outcomes:

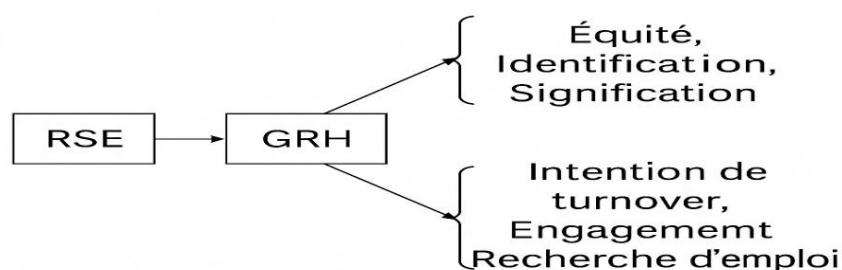
- ✓ equity → intention to turnover ($\beta = -0.36$, $p < 0.001$),
- ✓ identification → engagement ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$),
- ✓ signification → job-seeking behaviour ($\beta = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$),
- ✓ confirming H3a–H3c.

Table 5. Structural Model Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	B	T-value	p-value	Supported?
H1	CSR → HR	0.48	9.31	< .001	Yes
H2a	HRM → Equity	0.52	10.14	< .001	Yes
H2b	Identification → HRM	0.44	8.20	< .001	Yes
H2c	HRM → Meaning	0.39	6.47	< .001	Yes
H3a	Fairness → Intention to Renew	-0.36	5.89	< .001	Yes
H3b	Identification → Engagement	0.41	7.54	< .001	Yes
H3c	Meaning → Job Search	-0.28	2.73	.006	Yes

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

Figure 7. Structural Model (Simplified)



Source: authors, figure based on literature, August 2025

The figure offers a synthetic representation of the structuring role of the **HRM** function in the translation of **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** orientations into key organizational perceptions and behaviors. It suggests that CSR influences human resources management systems and practices, which become the main vehicle by which employees interpret, evaluate and react to the organization's responsible commitments.

On the perceptual side, HRM helps to shape central dimensions such as **perceived equity**, **organizational identification** and the **meaning of work**, confirming that HR practices are a decisive interpretive channel in the construction of the meaning attributed by employees to CSR policies.

On the behavioral side, HRM practices influenced by CSR affect crucial outcomes such as **turnover intention**, **organizational commitment** and **job search**. This reinforces the idea that HR systems act as an alignment mechanism between the responsible values carried by the company and the behavioral reactions of employees.

Thus, the figure supports a model in which HRM is a **central causal node**, mediating between CSR and employees' attitudinal or behavioural responses. It highlights the importance of the strategic integration of CSR into HR practices to maximize the positive effects on organizational dynamics.

5.3 Effects of Mediation

Employee cognitions mediated the relationship between HRM mechanisms and workforce outcomes.

Indirect effects were significant:

- ✓ HRM → Fairness → Rotation Intent ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < 0.001$)
- ✓ GRH → Identification → Engagement ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$)
- ✓ HRM → Significance → job search ($\beta = -0.11$, $p < 0.01$)

These results confirm H4. The bootstrapped confidence intervals (95%) did not include zero, reinforcing the robustness of the mediation.

Tableau 6. Résultats du test de médiation

Mediation route	Indirect β	95% CI	p-value	Supported?
HRM → Fairness → Rotation Intent	-0.19	[-0.28, -0.11]	< .001	Yes
GRH → Identification → Engagement	0.18	[0.11, 0.26]	< .001	Yes
HRM → Meaning → Job Search	-0.11	[-0.20, -0.03]	.004	Yes

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

5.4 Multi-group analysis (Cameroon vs. Chad)

A PLS-MGA compared the structural coefficients between the two countries.

Key findings

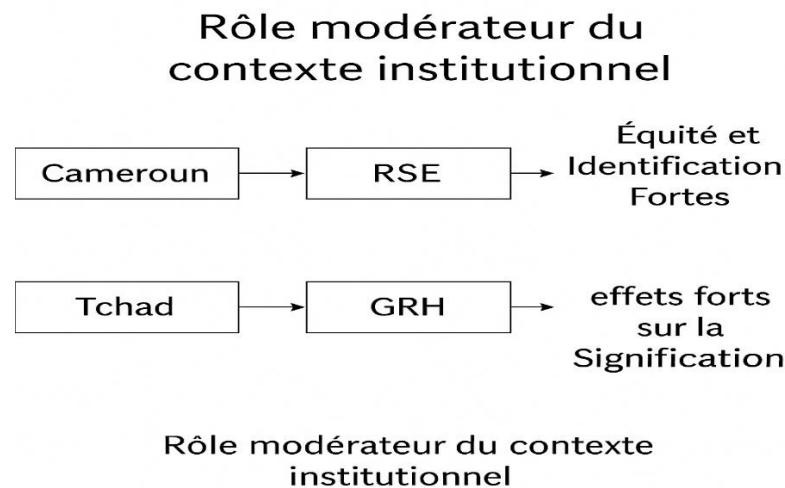
- ✓ CSR → heart rate was higher in Cameroon ($\beta = 0.55$) than in Chad ($\beta = 0.41$). Difference $p = 0.03$ → supports H5a.
- ✓ The → HRM Fairness and HRM → Identification were stronger in Cameroun. La HRM → Meaningfulness was stronger in Chad → the H5b partially argues.
- ✓ Indirect effects (ESR → HRM → Cognitions → Results) differ by country, confirming moderate mediation (H5c).

Table 7: Multi-Group Comparison (Cameroon and Chad)

Path	Cameroon β	Chad β	Difference	p-value	Interpretation
RSE → RH	0.55	0.41	0.14	.03	Strengthened institutionalization of CSR in Cameroon
HRM → Equity	0.61	0.43	0.18	.02	Higher expectations of procedural justice in Cameroon
Identification → HRM	0.49	0.37	0.12	.04	Stronger organizational attachment norms
HRM → Meaning	0.33	0.46	-0.13	.01	More sensitive work in Chad

Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

Figure 8. Moderating role of the institutional context



Source: authors, table based on literature, August 2025

The figure highlights an **asymmetrical institutional moderation** between Cameroon and Chad in the relationships linking CSR, HRM and employee responses. In the Cameroonian context, CSR appears to be a **particularly powerful lever** for strengthening **perceived equity** and **organizational identification**, suggesting an institutional environment where responsible initiatives are better valued, socially recognized and integrated into management practices. This result probably reflects a more advanced maturity of regulations, professional standards or societal expectations related to social responsibility.

Conversely, in Chad, **human resources management practices** have the greatest impact, particularly on the **meaning attributed to work**. This indicates that, in an institutional framework less structured around CSR standards, HR systems are becoming the main source of meaning and legitimacy for employees. The role of day-to-day management practices is therefore amplified, as they are the preferred channel through which workers assess the coherence, reliability and real commitment of the organization.

Overall, the figure highlights that the effectiveness of CSR or HR policies is not universal, but **determined by national institutional contexts**, which influence employee receptivity, perceptions and associated psychological effects. It thus confirms the importance of integrating the institutional dimension in the analysis of transnational organizational dynamics.

5.5 Qualitative Findings Supporting Quantitative Trends

The qualitative analyses reinforced the statistical results:

Theme 1: Strength of CSR Implementation

Cameroonian companies have shown a more structured CSR–HR integration.

"Our HR practices must reflect CSR values; Employees expect fairness. (Director of Human Resources, Cameroon)

Theme 2: Meaning in Chad

Employees in Chad emphasized the **psychosocial value of working** in volatile environments.

"Work is meaningful when it provides stability and dignity." (Employee Representative, Chad).

Theme 3: Credibility in Human Resources Management

CSR was only perceived as credible when HR practices corresponded to organizational commitments.

Summary of key findings

- ✓ CSR strongly predicts the operationalization of HRM.
- ✓ HRM mechanisms shape equity, identification, and meaning.
- ✓ These cognitions predict turnover intentions, engagement, and job search.
- ✓ Employee cognitions mediate the effects of HRM on outcomes.
- ✓ Institutional differences (Cameroon vs. Chad) significantly moderate relations.
- ✓ Qualitative data confirm and enrich the quantitative results.

6. Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine how corporate social responsibility (CSR) orientations are translated into human resource management (HRM) practices, how employees interpret these CSR-driven human resource management mechanisms, and how these cognitive responses influence workforce outcomes in two Central African contexts — Cameroon and Chad. The results provide strong empirical support for the proposed theoretical model and make significant contributions to the

literature on strategic HRM, CSR micro-foundations and the contextualization of HRM in emerging economies.

❖ CSR as a strategic driver for HR operationalization

The strong and significant effect of CSR orientation on human resource management mechanisms confirms the idea that CSR is not simply a peripheral or symbolic discourse, but can serve as a **strategic anchor** shaping the design of human resource management systems. This is consistent with strategic research in HRM suggesting that HRM practices reflect broader organizational strategies and institutional logics (Wright & McMahan 2011).

In both countries, CSR commitments were associated with more transparent, developmental, and participatory human resource management practices — evidence that organizations increasingly see CSR as a way to build internal legitimacy and build trust with employees.

These results advance research on CSR–HRM integration by empirically demonstrating that CSR can function as a **form of strategic architecture** that structures the way organizations recruit, develop, and manage their staff.

❖ Employee cognitions as microfoundations of CSR–HR effects

The findings strongly support the hypothetical role of **employee cognitive mechanisms**, perceptions of fairness, organizational identification, and perception of meaning, as mediators between human resource management practices and workforce outcomes.

➤ Perceptions of equity

Human resource management mechanisms predicted fairness assessments, which in turn reduced rotation intentions. This aligns with justice-based perspectives, indicating that employees interpret CSR-focused human resource management practices as markers of distributive and procedural justice. In contexts where regulatory application is inconsistent, fair and transparent HR practices become particularly striking signals of organizational reliability.

➤ Organizational identification

Human resource management practices aligned with CSR fostered a stronger identification with the organization, which significantly increased engagement. This reinforces the idea that CSR contributes to a socially anchored psychological contract, strengthening employee attachment and motivation.

➤ Scope of work

The link between HRM practices and perceived meaning demonstrates that CSR-focused HR management can enrich employees' sense of purpose, an important finding in

African economies where work is often of high social and family importance.

Together, these results underscore the value of microfundamental analyses in CSR and HRM research. They show that the effectiveness of human resource management systems depends not only on their technical design, but also on how they are perceived and interpreted by employees.

❖ International Differences: The Moderating Role of the Institutional Context

The results of the PLS-MGA reveal significant differences between Cameroon and Chad, confirming the theoretical argument that HRM–RSC dynamics are integrated into the context.

➤ A strengthened CSR translation into HRM in Cameroon

CSR has had a stronger effect on human resource management practices in Cameroon, suggesting that Cameroonian organizations operate in more structured regulatory and institutional environments. This is consistent with previous findings on institutional heterogeneity across sub-Saharan Africa, where differences in governance capacity shape organizational practices.

➤ Stronger paths of meaning in Chad

In Chad, the meaning of the work had a stronger influence on the results. Given the socio-economic fragility, precarious employment, and limited public services affecting Chadian employees, work that conveys dignity, stability, and social relevance seems particularly important.

These asymmetries confirm that CSR–HRM mechanisms cannot be theorized in universalist terms; they must consider **institutional depth, cultural norms and socio-economic vulnerabilities**.

➤ Integration of qualitative and quantitative results

The mixed-methods design reinforces the internal validity of our findings. Qualitative narratives have strengthened the quantitative model, in particular:

- ✓ the importance of a credible CSR-HRM alignment,
- ✓ the symbolic value of equity in Cameroon,
- ✓ the centrality of meaning in Chadian workplaces.

This convergence supports the growing argument in HRM research that mixed-methods approaches are crucial to understanding the complexity of HRM systems in emerging economies.

❖ Theoretical contributions

This study makes four key contributions to HRM and CSR research:

1. Bridging the strategic micro-foundations of human resources management and CSR

She formally integrates CSR as a strategic driver of HRM systems and demonstrates how these systems work through employee cognitions.

2. Contextualization of CSR-HRM research in African contexts

By comparing two institutional environments in the same region, the study advances the theory by showing how contextual variability moderates CSR–HRM mechanisms.

3. Expanding HRM research beyond Western contexts

The results challenge the implicit universalism of HRM and CSR theories by validating them in culturally and institutionally distinct environments.

4. Provision of an empirically validated CSR-HRM operationalization model

The structural model provides conceptual clarity on how CSR commitments fit into human resource management routines and how these, in turn, influence workforce stabilization and engagement.

❖ Managerial implications

The study has several practical implications:

- ✓ CSR needs to be integrated into human resource management systems, not treated as an isolated philanthropic initiative.
- ✓ Fair and transparent human resource management practices are key to reducing turnover in African organizations.
- ✓ The meaning of work must be integrated into human resource management strategies, especially in fragile contexts.
- ✓ Multinational and national companies need to adapt human resources management and CSR mechanisms to local cultural and institutional realities.

These analytics provide a roadmap for organizations looking to strengthen employee engagement and retention through socially responsible human resource management strategies.

❖ Limitations and future research

Although solid, the study has limitations:

- ✓ Cross-sectional quantitative data constrain causal inference.
- ✓ Perceptions of CSR can be sensitive to social desirability bias.
- ✓ The study focuses on medium and large companies; future studies should include SMEs.
- ✓ Longitudinal plans could explore how the CSR–HRM alignment changes over time.

- ✓ Additional institutional variables, for example, political stability or sectoral regulations, could refine contextual analyses.

Future research could also examine the role of leadership, informal institutions, and digital human resource management systems in operationalizing CSR.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to examine how corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be operationalized through human resource management (HRM) systems, and how these human resource management mechanisms influence employee cognitions and workforce outcomes in two institutional contexts in Central Africa. By integrating strategic HR theory, CSR micro-foundations, and contextualized perspectives of HRM, the study advances a comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of the pathways through which socially responsible commitments translate into organizational practices and employee experiences.

Using a mixed-methods sequential design, qualitative interviews ($n = 37$) and a large-scale quantitative survey ($n = 374$), the study proposes three basic key points. First, CSR orientation serves as a strategic driver for the design of HRM systems: organizations that integrate CSR into their strategic architecture demonstrate more transparent, developmental, and participatory HR practices. Second, the effectiveness of these practices is exercised through employees' cognitive mechanisms, including the perception of fairness, organizational identification and the perception of the meaning of work, micro-foundations that significantly influence engagement, job search behaviors and turnover intentions. Third, these pathways are moderated in the context, with Cameroon and Chad exhibiting different institutional dynamics: in Cameroon, CSR more strongly predicts structured human resource management systems and perceptions of equity, while in Chad, the meaning of work plays a more prominent role in defining employee outcomes.

These results collectively demonstrate that the value of CSR in HRM is not intrinsic, but stems from its translation into credible and experienced practices. CSR makes sense to employees when it is reflected in fair procedures, development opportunities, ethical treatment, and work that has personal and social meaning. This suggests that CSR–HRM integration is not simply a technical alignment, but a process of organizational understanding, cultural adaptation, and institutional negotiation.

Theoretically, this study expands the applicability of strategic micro-foundations in HRM and CSR by validating them in understudied African contexts, offering an empirically based operationalization model that captures both universal mechanisms and context-specific contingencies. On the managerial side, he provides concrete advice to organizations wishing to improve workforce stability and engagement through socially responsible practices, particularly important

in emerging economies marked by regulatory volatility, socio-economic constraints and changing employee expectations.

Future research could build on this study through longitudinal designs, sector analyses, or multi-stakeholder perspectives that integrate leadership and community stakeholders. Nevertheless, the present findings highlight a central conclusion: *CSR-driven human resource management systems are a powerful lever for building equitable, meaningful, and resilient workplaces, but their effectiveness depends on contextual sensitivity and the quality of their operationalization.* In Cameroon, Chad and more broadly in emerging economies, responsible human resources management strategies based on credible CSR commitments can foster stronger identification, improve employee well-being and contribute to sustainable organizational performance.

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