
The Perception of Corporate Social Responsibility by Employees of International IT Corporations

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to research the employees' understanding of the CSR concept in IT corporations, the actions taken by the employees, and to find out their opinions on whether these actions are effective.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research method was a diagnostic survey with the use of a research tool – a questionnaire. The basic source of data presented in this article is data collected from the survey carried out in January 6th-30th 2020. In the process of preparing this publication, literature analysis of the discussed issue and questionnaire research were used. The article presents in detail the diversity of perception of CSR due to gender with regards to inequalities concerning wage differences and professional development between men and women.

Findings: The conclusions from the study indicate that, it can be considered that CSR activities undertaken by companies are perceived by employees as bringing positive results. It is recommended for employees to know and be involved in creating a company strategy, including CSR records. Companies should eliminate all kinds of inequality and discrimination. The knowledge obtained can be used both for practical purposes and for further theoretical considerations.

Practical Implications: One of the manifestations of CSR is to ensure equal opportunities and opportunities for development, expansion of qualifications, but also salaries. The lack of consistency between the stipulations of the company's strategy and the actual principles causes employees to perceive CSR as serving only to improve the image and good reputation. Thanks to this knowledge multinational corporations from the IT sector can change their procedures in terms of real equal opportunities for employees.

Originality/Value: This article presents the results of a study on the implementation of the CSR concept in IT companies operating in Poland with different capital. To date, there has been no research among employees of multinational corporations in the IT industry.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, employees, IT corporations.

JEL codes: A13, D26, M51, M54.

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1. Introduction

Human capital is becoming an increasingly important source of advantages for companies, their pillar and value (according to some of the opinions, according to the knowledge-based organization - the greatest value) (Bonikowska, 2015). International organizations which measure and compare the accumulation of human capital on an international scale define it as the skills, competences, knowledge that are important in business activity (HCI, 1998). Human resources have a strategic character in organizations operating on international markets, this results from the key role they play in the process of creating and implementing the whole strategy of the corporation (Pocztowski, 2002). In this perspective, a multinational corporation can gain, maintain and develop its competitive position by treating people as a valuable, rare, unique, and irreplaceable resource.

As a result, we are dealing with strategic international human resources management, which refers to a set of decisions and actions related to people, which in the long run guide human resources practices, are oriented towards achieving the goals of the international organization and the needs of its are fundamental and far-reaching for the success of the organization (Listwan and Stor, 2008). It is believed that the most important resource in corporations in the next 20 years will be human capital, defined as talented, intelligent and sophisticated businesspeople who know modern technologies, are versatile and operational (Seleim and Ashour, 2007).

There are many definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Hawken, 1993; Gossling and Vocht, 2007; Lawrence and Weber, 2008; Miles, Munilla, and Darroch, 2008; Gallego-Alvares, Prado-Lorenzo, and Garcia-Sanchez, 2011; Bijlmakers, 2019), but they draw attention to the extended responsibility of economic operators through the broad sphere of their influence on the environment, not only economic, ethical, ecological, but also social. Corporate responsibility is considered in the context of different stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Gasparski, 2003; Nakonieczna, 2008; Gruszecki, 2002; Marcinkowska, 2005; Mendel, 2002). Similarly, Bartol and Martin (1994) listed six stakeholder groups, shareholders, employees, customers, local community, regional and national community, and international community. Employees are without doubt one of the most important stakeholders.

A socially responsible enterprise should take into account the impact of management practices on the physical and psychological well-being (Fotaki, Islam, and Antoni, 2019) of the employee (Pfeffer, 2010). An important element of well-being is employee health. J. Pfeffer's considerations focus on this issue, namely, he draws attention to (Pfeffer, 2010):

- the health benefits offered to workers,
- the health consequences of the redundancies for the redundant workers themselves,

- the number of working hours and their impact on health and difficulties in reconciling work and family,
- the design of the workplace, so as to increase the employee's motivation and well-being,
- wage inequalities in the organization, the problem of shaping the work climate and the phenomenon of violence.

The question arises as to how employees from the surveyed entities in the IT industry assess the actions taken by companies in terms of equalizing opportunities for development in the workplace, whether they perceive the existence of inequalities, and if so, whether these differences relate to opportunities for development and remuneration for their work. This study made it possible to answer these questions, as well as to compare the results with surveys conducted 4 years earlier.

2. Social Responsibility towards Employees

Listwan emphasizes that currently people in the organization are perceived as strategic resources, creating opportunities to gain and maintain competitive advantage. This is possible mainly due to their skills, qualifications and creativity and flexibility in the way they act. It is people who create added value, while other resources are only the rationale for creating it. People are the basic component of a company, also in the sense of their unreliability, as a result of which they become a critical element in the functioning of the organization (Listwan, 2010). Treating people, their characteristics and qualities as capital helps to shape the career and develop the qualifications of employees in a manner consistent with the needs and objectives of the company (Bylok and Słocinska, 2011).

The social responsibility of the company towards its employees manifests itself in taking care of safety equipment, applying an appropriate health policy, making it possible to reconcile work and family life, ensuring the development of employees without discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic group, sex, age or appearance, fulfilling all obligations both regulating statutory work, but also respecting all internal standards and procedures. It is important for employees to be paid on time, at a satisfactory level, for their work, but also for other benefits resulting from their work and enabling them to work and perform their tasks. Apart from the financial aspects of employment, the sense of fulfillment at work, the feeling of satisfaction, good relations between people, based on trust and honesty, clear criteria of employee evaluation, motivation and the ability for personal development - broadening knowledge, qualifications and skills - are of great importance.

A review of the literature on corporate social responsibility indicates that a large part of the research is conducted at the level of entire organizations and their impact on various stakeholders. CSR has often been considered in the context of its profitability for entities, generating financial results over time (Friedman, 1970;

The Economist, 2005; Pelozo, 2009; Wood, 2010). Considerations in the field of social responsibility in the context of employees concerned the relationship between CSR and organizational commitment (Peterson, 2004), civic behavior of the organization, which consists of altruism, courtesy, civic virtue, conscientiousness, 'sportsmanship' (Abdullah and Rashid, 1991; 2012), identification with the entity as a result of improving the organization's reputation (Jones, 2010), relations between employees (Glavas and Piderit, 2009).

Researchers indicate that there are still gaps in research on the relationship between CSR and employees to understand how CSR affects employees (Glavas, 2016). Positive relations between social responsibility and employee engagement and creativity were pointed out (Glavas and Piderit, 2009), loyalty, willingness to share knowledge, development, sense of fulfillment. It is worth noting, however, that each employee is different, differently shaped, individually oriented to work, results, motivating factors, unique in their psychological reactions, and thus the reactions of employees to CSR will differ. It is interesting how employees perceive CSR in the context of their own benefits related, for example, to specific benefits for employees, better working conditions. Cropanzano and Rupp (2008) indicated that organizations with high levels of CSR invest more in the employees (Glavas, 2016).

The relationship between corporate social responsibility and the attractiveness of the company for future employees seems particularly important. It was found that CSR signals the organization's values, such as fair treatment. Socially responsible entities are more attractive for potential employees and can thus recruit staff from larger groups of job applicants. It also turns out that the recruited employees are more committed because they identify themselves with and take pride in working for reputable organizations (Peterson, 2004).

In the IT industry, it is particularly important to take care of the interests of employees, due to the fierce competition for experienced IT specialists on the labor market. At the same time, employers take a number of measures to attract the best candidates and retain specialists and programmers.

The use of specific tools and ways of influencing employees - IT specialists by IT employers are aimed at (Sellinger, 2008):

- working out the success in the "struggle for talent" - a struggle directed outside the organization, the aim of which is to "attract" the desired (current and future) candidates to work, as well as to liberate in them the desire to be employed in a given organization,
- preventing the outflow of key employees from the company and increasing their satisfaction with being a member of the organization.

Empirical research (conducted by N. Selinger) shows how IT employers influence the retention of employees in the company, but also their effective acquisition. In larger IT companies this is manifested in particular through: intensive investment in employee development, ensuring a relatively high level of income for employees, developing social and economic activities, offering attractive working conditions (e.g., employment contract of indefinite duration-open term employment).

Work-life balance programs, the so-called Work-Life Balance (Markiewicz and Wawel, 2005), are also important. They are based mainly on the promotion of a healthy and harmonious lifestyle, the impression of programs promoting respect for differences between employees, eliminating any forms of discrimination, as well as integrating employees also outside the workplace, providing medical and insurance packages or care for the elderly or sick. Creating a worker-friendly environment by ensuring work-life balance is increasingly an argument that ensures employee loyalty (Bass and Beecham, 2018).

3. Research Methodology

The research method was a diagnostic survey with the use of a research tool - a questionnaire survey. This method makes it possible to check whether the phenomenon selected for study exists and allows the level of its intensity to be determined. It is used in research on attitudes, respondents' motives, as well as their knowledge about the studied phenomenon or process (Krajewski, 2006). The objectives of the survey were to examine: employees' understanding of the CSR concept, actions undertaken by employers to implement this concept and whether the actions taken are producing the expected results.

The authors of the survey decided to carry out a snowball survey. They asked employees to fill in the survey directly and asked them to pass the request on to the next persons. The survey was conducted from 6 to 30 January 2020. The survey was attended by 51 people, 17 women (33%) and 34 men (66%). Regarding the age of the respondents, women were between 29 and 55 years old, while men were between 26 and 61 years old. The respondents work in companies with different dominant capital, American 45%, French 18%, Polish 10%, German 8% or another where Norwegian, Danish, British and Swedish were indicated.

45% of the respondents held a specialist position, while 55% were managers or directors (persons responsible for directing people).

Statistical analysis was performed using Statistica TIBCO13. In all questions, the null hypothesis of no dependence between groups (including divisions according to the metric) was set against the alternative hypothesis that such a dependence exists. The correlation between the answers given by the respondents and (respectively) their gender, level of education, place of residence, age group or average income per

person was tested using the χ^2 test. Spearman's rank coefficient was used to determine the correlation. In addition, the relationship between the answers to the questions in 2016 and the same questions in 2020 was investigated. The significant level of the test was chosen $\alpha=0.05$.

4. Results

The following analyses were conducted to investigate research problem P1 "whether there are differences in career opportunities and skills between male and female groups." The individual responses given to the question "whether, in your opinion, the corporation cares about the working atmosphere and the relationship between the employees" were counted and statistically analyzed. In order to solve the research problem P2 "whether there are differences in the remuneration of the work of men and women", the analysis of the answers to the survey question was conducted as, "in your opinion, does the corporation care about the work atmosphere and the relationship between the employees?"

The p-value in the chi-quadrant test was 0.0001. So, we can reject the zero-value hypothesis about the independence of the answer to the question of encouraging skills development and long-term career planning at different times. We observe a shift in the number of indications from -1 (rather not) to 1 (rather yes) - Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of respondents' answers to the question whether they are encouraged to develop skills and long-term career planning without a breakdown by gender, in the group of women and men.

	without a breakdown by gender			in the group of women			in the group of men		
	2016	2020	Total	2016	2020	Total	2016	2020	Total
No	0	3	3	0	1	1	0	2	2
Rather no	37	19	56	14	8	22	23	11	34
I don't know	6	7	13	3	2	5	3	5	8
Rather yes	0	14	14	0	4	4	0	10	10
Yes	10	11	21	2	4	6	8	7	15

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The value of p-value in the chi-quadrant test was $p=0.01$ so its value is at the limit of the test's materiality, which means that we reject the zero hypothesis about the independence of studies conducted in 2016 and 2020 for this question. We observe a shift of positive answers (yes, rather yes) towards negative answers (no, rather no). In the analysis by gender, we obtain the following answers in the group of women.

Question “whether the corporation cares about the working atmosphere and the relationship between the employees” concerning the corporation's care for the working atmosphere and relations between employees (Table 2). The value of the p-value statistic comes to the limit of $p=0.05$, so it can be expected that an increase in the number of respondents is likely to reject the hypothesis of independence. The result is therefore not statistically significant for women as in the case of the effect without division into groups, but the direction of response displacement is similar to that in the case of no division.

For women, there are no significant differences in this question on how the corporation cares about the working atmosphere and relations between employees. The results of p-value $p=0.38$ indicate that there are no grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis of independent distribution.

Table 2. Comparison of respondents' answers to the question whether the corporation cares about the working atmosphere and the relationship between the employees without any gender breakdown, in the group of women and men.

	without a breakdown by gender			in the group of women			in the group of men		
	2016	2020	Total	2016	2020	Total	2016	2020	Total
No	3	7	10	1	3	4	2	4	6
Rather no	4	16	20	3	6	9	1	10	11
I don't know	8	3	11	1	0	1	7	3	10
Rather yes	23	17	40	9	6	15	14	11	25
Yes	15	11	26	5	4	9	10	7	17

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The analysis of the responses in the male group showed that the p-value is $p=0,00025$, which is more important than the division for women.

For this question about the p-value comparison was 0.02, so the result is statistically significant, but at the limit of materiality. A shift in values towards negative values is observed, which means that most men see the corporation moving away from its focus on skills development.

5. Discussion

The relationship between the perception of CSR by employees and organizational involvement in the model based on the social identity theory was also studied. Allen and Meyer (1990) distinguished between three forms of organizational engagement: affective engagement, which means "emotional attachment,

identification and engagement with the organization", a commitment to follow-up, which reflects "perceived costs associated with leaving the organization" and a normative commitment "reflecting a perceived obligation to remain in the organization". (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Each of these forms of engagement involves the rotation of the workforce and intentions to leave the organization. A link has been noted between affective engagement and employee performance, which includes: presence, productivity, stress, health and occupational conflict. Since CSR is an integral part of an employee's professional experience, a company's perception of ethics, values and social responsibilities can play a significant role in shaping affective engagement (Brammer and Milington, 2007).

Most CSR research is conducted in North America and Western Europe. There is a lack of research on foreign capital entities employing employees in Central and Eastern Europe. Work in corporations, especially in the fast-growing IT industry, is characterized by variability and focus on generating high financial benefits.

The simple analysis of the dependent variables of the 2020 survey indicates that for most employees working in IT corporations, the primary benefit of implementing CSR is 'good company reputation, image improvement'. Table 3 presents the results of the answer to the question What benefits do you see from implementing CSR? The highest percentage of people 82.4% indicated answer: Good company reputation, image improvement. Employees clearly see the introduction of CSR as a reputation benefit for the company and the improvement of its image. 62.8% of the respondents emphasized Greater chances of company success in the long run. Employees more often indicated the benefits for the company from introducing CSR rather than benefits to the environment or to themselves.

Table 3. Results of the answer to the question What benefits do you see from implementing CSR?

What benefits do you see from implementing CSR?	Answers [%]
Customer loyalty	39,2
Good company reputation, image improvement	82,4
Solidarity / cooperation with the local community	45,1
Sustainable regional/country development	39,2
Environmental protection	45,1
Greater chance of success in the long term	62,8
None of these	7,8
Others, please:	0,0

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

The survey found that when asked, are there any inequalities in your company? 31.4% of the respondents answered that Rather yes or yes. Twice as many as 60.8% of employees do not or rather do not experience inequalities in their company. Confirmatively on the question about inequalities in the company was

answered by 9.8% of employees, which means that on average the tenth answered the question about the existence of inequality in the company.

Table 4 presents inequalities in the company which concern Salary differences between men and women. The respondents answered what inequalities exist in the companies they work for. 29.4% of women answered that salary differences do not or rather not concern them. In the meantime, 64.7% of men indicated that this particular inequality does not concern them. Men do not see this problem as clearly as women do. The respondents answered whether there is equality regarding professional development between men and women. None of the women who filled out the questionnaire answered, that this inequality didn't concern them. 47% of women indicated the answer that there is rather no difference in the professional development between man and women.

Table 4. *Inequalities in company concern salary and Professional Development between men and women*

		Salary differences between men and women [%]			Professional development between men and women [%]		
		Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
1	No	5,9	23,5	17,7	0,0	32,3	21,6
2	Rather no	23,5	41,2	35,2	47,0	41,2	43,1
3	I don't know	23,5	20,6	21,6	5,9	17,7	13,7
4	Rather yes	35,3	11,8	19,6	17,7	8,8	11,8
5	Yes	11,8	2,9	5,9	29,4	0,0	9,8

Source: Own study based on conducted research.

This shows the differences in the perceptions of the presence or absence of this phenomenon among men and women employed in IT corporations.

6. Conclusions

The article presents the results of a study on the implementation of the CSR concept in IT companies operating in Poland with different capital. Employees were invited to participate in the study and the next invitations were given by snowball method. 17 women and 34 men took part in the survey, which indirectly corresponds to the proportion of man and women employed in the IT sector.

The introduction of CSR activities, according to the respondents, serves the company itself, improving its reputation and image, and may affect the success of the company in the long run. The majority of employees do not know whether CSR activities are written in the company's strategy, from which it can be concluded that they do not know the company's strategy, but consider that CSR activities should be written in it. The respondents admitted that farther development of companies' CSR activities is necessary. The survey included questions to check how the CSR

principles are implemented in practice. When asked whether there are inequalities in the company, the vast majority of employees (60.8%) replied that rather no or no. Nevertheless, 30.4% of employees said that yes or rather yes. To the specific question of whether inequalities are related to Salary differences between men and women the answers of men and women are different.

Men are unlikely to notice the differences, rather yes or yes replied 64.7%, for women this percentage was 29.4%. 47.1% of women indicated the existence of Salary differences, in the case of men 14.7%. This result indicates a clearly different perception of Salary differences between men and women in the surveyed companies. The study also showed differences in the perception of opportunities in Professional Development for men and women. 47.1% of women indicated the existence of differences, in the case of men 8.8% indicated the choice of rather yes. Taking into account the literature review on CSR and the results obtained in the survey, it can be considered that CSR activities undertaken by companies are perceived by employees as bringing positive results. It is recommended for employees to know and be involved in creating a company strategy, including CSR records. Companies should eliminate all kinds of inequality and discrimination.

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