Unveiling the heartbeat of employee engagement and social responsibility: the mediating role of affective commitment in Ghanaian Universities

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A B S T R A C T

In the current higher education environment in Ghana, universities have directed their attention towards fulfilling their social obligations, which are referred to as University Social Responsibility (USR), to both their internal and external stakeholders. This study, driven by the Stakeholders Theory, examines the premise that affective commitment serves as a positive and substantial mediator in the relationship between USR and employee engagement. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of both internal and external corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on the emotional commitment and level of involvement of employees in Ghanaian institutions. This study utilized the research onion framework to guide its methodology. It employed a cross-sectional survey design, based on the positivism paradigm and supported by the hypothetico-deductive model. The purpose was to test hypotheses and measure the relationships between user satisfaction and staff engagement, with affective commitment acting as a mediator. The study was conducted within the context of Ghanaian universities. A two-stage stratified sampling method was utilized to choose 412 participants for the survey. The data collected via a 5-point Likert scale empirically validated questionnaire with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (α) > 0.70 was adapted for the survey. The data collected were configured and subjected to Structural Equation Modelling for analysis at a significance level of p<0.05 using the SMART pls software. This survey found that affective commitment is a statistically significant factor that directly explains and predicts the mediation effect of internal CSR on employee engagement (beta=0.217; t>1.96; p<0.000: p<0.05), and external CSR on employee engagement (beta=0.065; t>1.96; p<0.000: p<0.05) in Ghanaian universities enrolled in the survey. This study recommends that public and private universities in Ghana should foster a strong sense of commitment and loyalty among employees towards the organisation and its CSR efforts.

Introduction

In Ghana's current higher education scene, universities have adopted a more corporate brand. They prioritise their social duty by addressing both external stakeholders in society and internal stakeholders, such as personnel or employees, through engagement efforts. This highlights the concept of university social responsibility (USR), which is an additional aspect of corporate social responsibility. USR is commonly defined as the organization's capacity to utilise and disseminate strategies in four key domains: raising awareness about social issues, accessing information sources, providing essential education, and offering help to the local community (Gomez, 2014).

The charitable aspect of USR (Gomez, 2014) includes hosting community seminars to share research findings and innovations that can benefit community members, donating to younger universities, organising community awareness events, and awarding scholarships to economically disadvantaged students who demonstrate talent and qualify for university education. Universities
contribute to their local communities through the promotion of “civic engagement,” which includes initiating community service projects to assist individuals impacted by hunger, floods, wildfires, and other disasters (Manock et al., 2013).

Furthermore, universities actively participate in acts of philanthropy, such as granting local communities unrestricted entry to campus recreational facilities, organising complimentary visits and tours for students from primary and secondary schools, and offering opportunities for advancement and progress to individuals who may be disadvantaged (Ddungu & Edopu, 2017). Moreover, universities actively encourage student engagement in extracurricular activities that foster learning and community interaction, such as volunteering, service learning, and the establishment of fundraising clubs for the underprivileged. These activities aim to increase students’ awareness of the social needs and issues in their local communities (Olberding et al., 2022). The implementation of these social responsibility initiatives at Ghanaian institutions aligns with the incorporation of corporate social responsibility in higher education worldwide (Ramos-Monge et al., 2017). University social responsibility is founded upon the principles of seeking knowledge and truth, fostering civic awareness, and promoting the long-term progress of society (Huang et al., 2022). Currently, USR goes beyond conventional limits and becomes a significant catalyst for improving employee involvement and overall organisational success.

Ghanaian universities have a diverse range of stakeholders, which encompass students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, benefactors, government agencies, and the local community. Ghanaian universities have the opportunity to get advantages from the progress of social responsibility towards their internal and external stakeholders. The impact of university social responsibility on career outcomes, such as affective commitment and professional engagement, has been demonstrated (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). Affective commitment refers to the emotional bond that an employee develops with their organisation. Nevertheless, the specific processes that connect social responsibility and increased employee involvement have not been thoroughly investigated, especially the intermediary function of emotional commitment.

This research primarily aims to analyse the correlation between social responsibility and professional engagement in the academic context, with a specific focus on how affective commitment acts as a mediator in this relationship. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of both internal and external corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on the emotional attachment and dedication of employees in private and public institutions in Ghana.

**Literature Review**

This paper presents the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical reviews on the intricate dynamics of social responsibility and staff engagement within the context of Ghanaian higher education. The reviews cover social responsibility and employee work engagement as the independent and dependent variables, respectively. Furthermore, affective commitment is considered as the mediating variable. This discourse looks at how the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical frameworks guide hypotheses development and testing of the constructs and variables of interest in this discourse.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

The university is a network of interconnected interests where different stakeholders (people and institutions) act altruistically and engage in self and community creation in tandem. For this reason, this study is guided by the Stakeholder Theory.

The theory aligns with the concept of social responsibility. It provides a framework for understanding the importance of engaging with employees as stakeholders in addition to customers and community members. By considering the interests and needs of all stakeholders, including employees, organisations can promote a culture of social responsibility that goes beyond traditional CSR initiatives. These stakeholders include everyone who has a vested interest in the success of the university and stands to lose or gain from its goals (Freeman, 2015). Thus, universities are considered as a web of related interests where people, that is employees, work together to build their selves and communities.

Stakeholder Theory emphasizes the importance of effective stakeholder management. In the context of this paper, this means that universities should engage with their stakeholders, both internally and externally, in a meaningful and transparent manner to build trust and manage expectations. This aligns with the study’s focus on how affective commitment mediates the relationship between USR and employee work engagement. Effective stakeholder management, as emphasized by Stakeholder Theory, can influence how employees perceive their organization's commitment to social responsibility and how this, in turn, affects their work engagement.

Moreover, Stakeholder Theory acknowledges the potential for conflicting stakeholder interests, which is particularly relevant in the university setting. As mentioned earlier, stakeholders may have competing goals and interests, such as disagreements over academic policies or resource allocation. By considering Stakeholder Theory, the study recognizes the need to balance these interests and understand how they may impact employee work engagement. The role of affective commitment becomes crucial in mediating these conflicts and aligning employees with the university’s social responsibility goals.

Additionally, Stakeholder Theory recognizes power dynamics among stakeholders. Some stakeholders may have more influence than others, based on factors such as financial resources or social status. This is relevant to the study's focus on the role of affective commitment in the relationship between USR and employee work engagement. Employees may be influenced by the perceived power and influence of different stakeholder groups, and Stakeholder Theory helps highlight the importance of considering these dynamics.
The utilization of Stakeholder Theory in the study is justified because it provides a robust framework for understanding the complexity of university-stakeholder relationships, the importance of effective stakeholder management, the potential for conflicting interests, and the power dynamics among stakeholders. All of these elements are relevant to examining the influence of a university’s internal and external social responsibility on employee work engagement and the mediating role of affective commitment. By incorporating Stakeholder Theory, the study gains a holistic perspective on the dynamics at play and can offer valuable insights into how universities can enhance their social responsibility efforts to benefit both their stakeholders and their employees’ engagement. The ensuing discourse is in-depth analysis of how each stakeholder group specifically influences affective commitment and engagement.

Internal stakeholders or stakeholder groups such as the board of trustees, faculty and non-academic staff, students, administration, and alumni of higher education institutions (HEI) including universities and colleges play a crucial role in shaping and implementing CSR initiatives within the institution. It is also important to recognize internal stakeholder groups such as students’ unions (for example: Graduate Students Association of Ghana [GRASAG], workers’ unions (for example: University Teachers Association of Ghana [UTAG] and Ghana Association of University Administrators [GAUA]). A trustworthy HEI cares for the needs and interests of employees, students, administrative staff, students’ and workers’ groups, as well as those affiliated with these stakeholders. This is because these individual internal stakeholders and their groups can influence USR activities, affective commitment, and worker engagement that focus on academic quality, research output, and community or civic engagement.

In the context of USR programmes at universities, faculty and staff, being the resource persons, play a significant role in ensuring the success of these programmes. They are responsible for the student’s formal education and informal support. Their efforts in various USR activities, directly and indirectly, result in not only the students’ USR behaviors but also those extended through students to the other stakeholders at universities. Essentially, non-academic staff members should perform their jobs efficiently and effectively, whereas lecturers teach, supervise, and evaluate students as scheduled, and carry out their administrative and research activities as expected (Ddungu & Edopu, 2017).

In addition, they could embark on “Citizenship education” which often involves launching community service initiatives to benefit the less fortunate in their society or immediate community (Manock et al., 2013). For example, students and student groups could participate in extracurricular activities that enhance learning interaction with communities, such as volunteering, service learning, and the creation of clubs that raise money for the less fortunate, all of which serve to raise students’ awareness of the social needs and problems of their local areas (Olberding, 2012). Similarly, the board of trustees, faculty, and staff could allow local communities free access to campus recreational areas and facilities, host free visits and tours for students from elementary and secondary schools, and provide opportunities for growth and skill development to those who may be less fortunate (Ddungu & Edopu, 2017). The University administration, faculty, board of trustees, and other staff could also provide facilities for sporting activities for all students, provide facilities for all student religious activities, provide facilities for proper disposal of waste, provide career guidance programmes for students and graduates, participate in the social and educational activities of local schools, make financial and material contributions to local charitable causes, and provide financial assistance to needy students from deprived communities in the areas where it operates. Furthermore, internal stakeholder groups could collaborate with local organisations, NGOs, and the university community to address social issues like teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, drug abuse, armed robbery, environmental pollution, poverty, unemployment, racism, bribery and corruption, chieftaincy conflicts, land conflicts, illegal mining, child abuse, gambling, crime, and domestic violence, etcetera. The involvement and support of internal stakeholders are essential for the success of these CSR or USR initiatives (Mainardes et al., 2013; Warren, 2022).

College and university alumni constitute a key internal stakeholder of university social responsibility (USR) activities, affective commitment, and employee or worker engagement. One of the factors that will improve the role of alumni in advancing USR is the affective commitment and engagement of the alumni. In current conditions, universities need to form a community of alumni who are symbiotically connected, not only for the benefit of an individual but also to provide benefits for the entire organization and the wider community in general. The involvement of alumni is seen as a potential platform to connect the activities of USR. This is because alumni have also experienced the environment in the organization. Importantly, graduates could be prospective consumers and employees of the company with which their university is connected. It is very common in universities for an alumnus to give back to his or her Alma Mater when needed or to employ its present crop of students when the university is connected with any real social problems in the country or community.

External stakeholders, such as government agencies, non-profit organizations, industry partners, and local communities, play a critical role in influencing the social initiatives and community engagement efforts of universities. Understanding the dynamics of these relationships is essential for universities seeking to enhance their social impact and fulfill their broader responsibilities to society. By examining the various ways in which external stakeholders influence university social responsibility and engagement, we can gain valuable insights into how universities can effectively collaborate with external partners to create meaningful and sustainable social change.

External stakeholders in higher education play a vital role in shaping a university’s social responsibility initiatives. As universities strive to fulfill their educational mission and contribute positively to society, the involvement of external stakeholders such as government agencies, industry partners, and community organizations becomes crucial. These stakeholders not only provide valuable
resources and expertise but also offer diverse perspectives and priorities that can guide the development of socially responsible practices within universities. For instance, Harris (2018) highlighted that implementing CSR programmes contributes to employee attitudes, morale, productivity, and overall satisfaction.

External stakeholders play a pivotal role in shaping a university's social responsibility and engagement initiatives. These diverse range of external stakeholders influence and impact campus activities and decisions. Through strategic collaboration and engagement with external stakeholders, universities can enhance their reputation and social impact while fostering positive social implications (Barrena-Martínez et al., 2019). Through partnerships, collaborations, and feedback, these stakeholders have the power to shape the strategic direction and impact of universities in the community. By engaging with external stakeholders, universities can enhance their sustainability efforts, promote diversity and inclusion, and address social issues that affect the broader society. This interplay between universities and their external stakeholders creates a dynamic environment for innovation and social change. Moving forward, it will be essential for universities to continue fostering strong relationships with external stakeholders to ensure their social responsibility initiatives are aligned with the needs and expectations of the community. Ultimately, the collaboration between universities and external stakeholders can lead to a more impactful and sustainable approach to social responsibility and engagement in higher education.

Dencker and Gruber (2015) have argued that the performance of an organization is greatly influenced by the interaction of internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. Researchers believe that CSR eventually enhances the reputational benefits of an organization, improves its competitiveness in the market, and relieves public expectations. For instance, research has shown that when internal stakeholders are actively engaged and committed to CSR activities, it can have a positive impact on the overall organizational culture and reputation of the university or higher education institution (Mainardes et al., 2013; Warren, 2022). Additionally, the influence of internal stakeholders on affective commitment and engagement is also important. When internal stakeholders are engaged and committed to CSR activities, they are more likely to feel a sense of pride and loyalty towards the institution (Mainardes et al., 2010). This can lead to higher levels of engagement and productivity among faculty and staff, as well as increased satisfaction and motivation among students (Warren, 2022). Furthermore, internal stakeholders can contribute their expertise and knowledge to the development and implementation of UCSR activities. Their input can help ensure that the initiatives are aligned with the institution's values and goals, as well as address specific social and environmental issues relevant to the institution. These USR activities by the various internal stakeholder groups create a good reputation for the institution.

**Theorizing affective commitment as a mediator between USR and staff engagement: An empirical review**

This empirical review covers the hypothesized relationship between USR and staff engagement mediated by affective commitment.

**University Social Responsibility (USR) and Staff Engagement**

The constructs of interest in this discourse are university social responsibility, staff engagement, and affective commitment. Although scholars have yet to agree on a standard definition of USR, this paper adopts the definition by the European Commission University Social Responsibility [EU-USR] (2015) which views USR as the duty of universities to mitigate the adverse effects of their actions on society and the environment through open and honest practices. On the other hand, employee or staff engagement is conceptualized as the extent to which employees are committed to their work and the organization, characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and a willingness to go the extra mile and actively contribute to organizational success (Harter et al., 2020; Osoian & Petre, 2022). Also, affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization and indicates the extent to which employees are devoted to their organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Allen & Meyer, 1990). The interrelated concepts of social responsibility, employee work engagement, and affective commitment have gained significant attention as research topics in the academic setting (Glavas, 2016; Gond et al., 2017; Ramos-Monge et al., 2017).

University social responsibility has been empirically proven to improve staff engagement (Albrech et al., 2015; Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Bogan & Sarisik, 2020; Farid et al., 2019; Glavas, 2016; Gond et al., 2017; Harter et al., 2020; Harvard Business Review, 2019; Katsikeas et al., 2021; Marquez-Ramos et al., 2020; Mbughuni et al., 2022; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017; Saks, 2019; Shek et al., 2017). Some of these existing studies also hypothesized that social responsibility significantly impacts organizational performance, including employee commitment (Saks, 2019) thereby improving employee (staff) or work engagement (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Farid et al., 2019; Glavas, 2016). It becomes clear that affective commitment is an influential factor that mediates USR and employee engagement. Thus affective commitment has been empirically proven to mediate the relationship between URS and staff engagement. On this premise, this paper is guided by the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses guide the discourse.

**H1:** Employee affective commitment will significantly impact employee engagement.

**H1a:** CSR activities directed at the university's internal stakeholders, namely employees, students, and its internal environment, will significantly impact employee affective commitment.

**H1b:** CSR activities directed at the university's external stakeholders, namely its external community and immediate external environment, will affect employee affective commitment.
University Social Responsibility (USR) and Affective Commitment

Employees' affective commitment can be influenced by their attitudes towards and perceptions of CSR. Empirical evidence indicates that perceived CSR, including internal and external CSR, positively influences job satisfaction, which often contributes to high levels of affective commitment (Bouraoui et al., 2020; Jha, 2023; Uçkun Arslan & Yener, 2020; Van der Westhuizen & Malan, 2023). These studies reported that organisation-sponsored CSR, including internal and external CSR, can enhance employees' affective commitment, and job satisfaction by increasing their identification with the company (Jones, 2010; Valentine & Fleischman, 2008). For instance, Uçkun Arslan and Yener (2020) found proof for the assertion that CSR practices increase employee affective commitment. Similarly, Bouraoui et al. (2020) reported that CSR leads to employees’ affective commitment. Van der Westhuizen and Malan (2023) also found a positive relationship between perceived CSR and affective commitment. Similarly, Jha (2023) found that perception of CSR influences employee affective commitment.

Affective Commitment and Staff Engagement

Employee affective commitment can significantly impact employee engagement. Empirical studies revealed that affective commitment positively predicts work engagement (Decuyper et al., 2015; Duus & Harnish, 2018; Hamid et al., 2014; Ohly & Schmittand Almer-Jarz, 2017; Yiltiz, Aka-Demiroz & Karagonlar, 2016; Wu et al., 2023). For instance, Kumar et al. (2014) found a positive association between affective commitment and employee engagement. They cited that when employees experience a strong emotional attachment and identification with their organization, they are more likely to be engaged in their work. Decuyper et al. (2015) also reported that affective commitment positively influences work engagement, and the strength of this relationship is influenced by the level of task interdependence. On the other hand, Yiltiz et al. (2016) indicated that affective commitment positively influences employee engagement, and in turn, engagement also reinforces affective commitment. It could be inferred from these previous studies that employees who have a high level of affective commitment are likely to be more engaged. This evidence is a clarion call for Ghanaian universities to consider affective commitment as a critical factor in promoting employee engagement.

In conclusion, affective commitment can significantly mediate the relationship between company CSR and employee engagement, enhancing the impact of CSR activities on engagement through its influence on employees' emotional attachment to their organization. Affective commitment could act as a significant mediator in the relationship between CSR and employee engagement. This means that CSR activities may enhance employee engagement by increasing their affective commitment to the organization. When employees observe their company engaging in CSR activities, it may enhance their emotional attachment and identification with the organization, leading to increased affective commitment. In turn, this higher affective commitment can lead to increased engagement as employees who are emotionally attached to their organization are more likely to be motivated, involved, and committed to their work.

Research and Methodology

This study, guided by the research onion framework by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), employed the quantitative research approach based on the positivism paradigm and supported by the hypotheticico-deductive model to test hypotheses and measure relationships between variables — social responsibility (dependent variable) and staff engagement (independent variable) mediated by affective commitment (intervening variable) within the context of Ghanaian universities. The quantitative research approach is deductive because it allows researchers to formulate and test hypotheses and measure relationships between variables using statistical manipulation (Azizuddin & Nawaz, 2020; Leavy, 2017; Khatwani & Panhwar 2019; Postnikova & Nilsson, 2019; Trochim, 2020). Again, the hypotheticico-deductive model supported the collection of numeric data to test the hypotheses, analyse and explore explanatory relationships between variables of interest. Since the hypotheses were predictive and explanatory, the study employed the two-stage embedded approach for the model configuration to analyse the hypotheses. The rationale or motivation for using the research onion framework is that the framework helped the researcher to think holistically about the methodology, understand the series of stages under different methods of data collection, and the steps for methodological studies. It is suitable for this paper because of the possibility of not leaving out any information on what techniques and methods for the study. Again, the research onion framework was suitable and adapted to different models, including the hypothetico-deductive research model.

The population for the survey was 1896 permanent workforce including senior members, senior staff, and junior staff of both academic and non-academic departments in four universities both public (2) and private (2) in Ghana, namely; the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS =832), University of Environment and Sustainable Development (UESD =403), Evangelical Presbyterian University College (EPUC =253), and All Nations University (ANU=408). Multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 412 respondents for the survey. The multi-stage sampling was done in two stages. In the first stage, the four universities were purposively selected because they are noted for their immense involvement in CSR activities for both internal and external stakeholders. The second stage was the selection sub-groups of employees from the universities for the survey. The use of simple random sampling allowed the researcher to give an equal chance for inclusion in the study, thereby reducing the possibility of sampling errors (Balthrip et al., 2022).

Data was obtained through a 5-point Likert scale structured questionnaire adapted from a previous empirically validated questionnaire with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (α > 0.7) and analysed to measure the constructs of interest. The quantitative data collected were
configured and subjected to Structural Equation Modelling [SEM] involving the two-stage embedded approach using the SMART pls software to test the formulated hypotheses. The use of SEM offered the platform for testing the hypotheses in a way that minimised the personal influence of the researcher on the phenomenon of the study (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019). This research analyses 3 variables, namely social responsibility, staff engagement, and affective commitment.

Findings and Discussions

The findings cover respondents’ characteristics, test of hypotheses, and discussion of the findings.

Respondent Characteristics

The respondents in this research were 412 permanent employees comprising senior members, senior staff, and junior staff of both academic and non-academic departments in four universities in Ghana, namely; the University of Health and Allied Sciences, University of Environment and Sustainable Development, Evangelical Presbyterian University College, and All Nations University. Of all the respondents, this research identified several characteristics including the respondent’s gender, age, education, and work experience in terms of length of service in years. Detailed results of respondents’ characteristics are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Sample (n = 412)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>30 and below</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 – 40</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41 – 50</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Education</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma/HND</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below Diploma</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of service (years)</td>
<td>5 and below</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 and above</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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The survey found that the majority of respondents were males (59%), while 41% were females. This shows that male employees dominated the workforce in the universities. Furthermore, from the age aspect, it was found that the majority (81%) of the employees in the universities were aged 31 - 50 years with 61% within the 31-40 and 20% within the 41 - 50 age groups. A few number (19%) of the employees were below 30, or above 50 years of age. The result implies that the universities had a youthful workforce. Hence more responsibilities are on the human resource (HR) units of these universities to institute appropriate human resource development initiatives and policies to tap into the experiences of these workers over time to maximize their lifetime value for the betterment of the universities. In terms of length of service or number of years in service, the majority (83%) of the employees had 10 years of working experience or below with 57% constituting 6-10 years of work experience, while 26% had up to 5 years of work experience. Conversely, a few number (17%) of the employees had been working for 11 years or more, with 9% working for 11-15 years and 8% working for 16 years and above, respectively. It can be concluded that the majority (83%) of the workforce in the universities surveyed are less experienced. hence, proper succession planning and retention strategies could help the universities get the best out of their workforce. Based on the highest education level, the majority (66%) of the workforce in the universities had higher degrees (doctorate and master degrees), while 34% had bachelor’s degree and diploma certificates. Of the 66%, 49% of the staff had a master’s degree as their current highest level of formal education. More room should be given for staff development in their universities to produce more PhD staff and professors. In terms of job position, 53% of the respondents were junior workers while 47% were senior employees.

Analysis of Result

Test of Mediation Hypothesis

The paper theorizes that employee affective commitment will significantly impact employee engagement. Based on this mediation hypothesis, it is hypothesized that: a) H1: CSR activities directed at the university's internal stakeholders, namely employees, students, and its internal environment will significantly impact employee affective commitment; b) H2: CSR activities directed at the university's external stakeholders, namely its external community and immediate external environment, will affect employee affective
commitment. The test results of the mediation hypothesis were configured and subjected to structural equation modelling (SEM) for statistical analysis and inference. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

**Table 2: Specific Indirect Effect of Affective Commitment as a Mediator between CRS and Employee Engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t statistics</th>
<th>p values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal CSR -&gt; Affective commitment -&gt; Employee work engagement</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td>4.191</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External CSR -&gt; Affective commitment -&gt; Employee work engagement</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>2.590</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence from existing studies indicated that affective commitment could act as a positive significant mediator in the relationship between CSR and employee engagement. The result in Table 2 confirms the mediation hypothesis that affective commitment makes a statistically significant positive contribution to predicting the variance in employee work engagement (β=0.217; t=1.96; p=0.000: p<0.05) when the effects of other constructs in the model were statistically controlled for. Therefore, H1 is supported. The results of this study confirm that affective commitment plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between internal CSR and employee work engagement among university workers. This implies that affective commitment mediates significantly and positively the relationship between internal CSR and employee work engagement. This finding is proof that affective commitment significantly mediates the predictive relationship between internal CSR and employee work engagement among university workers. In a similar vein, the statistical analysis revealed that affective commitment had a positive and significant impact on the predictive relationship between external CSR and employee work engagement, as indicated by a Beta value of 0.065, a test statistic greater than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.005 (p<0.05) after holding the effects of other constructs in the model constant. This implies that affective commitment mediated significantly and positively the relationship between external CSR and employee work engagement. The prediction of H1 is supported. This finding highlights the importance of affective commitment in enhancing the impact of external CSR on employee work engagement, suggesting that external CSR alone is not enough to foster a culture of engagement among university workers.

**Table 3: Coefficient of Determination**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R-square</th>
<th>R-square adjusted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective commitment</td>
<td>0.359</td>
<td>0.356</td>
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</table>

The results in Table 3 show that changes in both external CSR and internal CSR account for 35.9% positive change in affective commitment (r-square=0.359). Technically, both external CSR activities and internal CSR activities jointly account for weak positive change in affective commitment among workers in private and public universities.

**Discussion**

Existing studies support the mediation hypothesis (assumption) that employee affective commitment positively and significantly influences the relationship between an organization's CSR activities and employee engagement. This survey found that affective commitment significantly enhances the impact of internal and external CSR on employee work engagement. Simply put, internal and external CSR alone are not sufficient to drive employee work engagement, but when combined with a high degree of affective commitment, they can produce exponential results. Therefore, the findings of this study prove that although internal and external CSR cause a significant improvement in employee work engagement, the inclusion of affective commitment provides the means to enhance this impact of internal and external CSR on employee work engagement in an exponential manner, hence helping to better explain the effect of internal and external CSR on employee work engagement. These findings imply that internal and external CSR alone are not enough to build the habit of employee work engagement among university workers in Ghana. This is because the concurrent degree of affective commitment among the workers also goes a long way to improve work engagement amid the direct role of internal and external CSR activities undertaken by the universities.

The findings provide a more accurate understanding of the relationship between internal CSR and employee work engagement. This finding is parallel to the views of other researchers who reported that affective commitment can significantly mediate the relationship between internal CSR and employee work engagement (Adhikari, 2016; Brammer, He & Mellahi, 2015). On the other hand, the study contradicts previous empirical studies that held that affective commitment does not mediate significantly and, in a positive manner, the predictive relationship between internal CSR and employee work performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The study found that affective commitment significantly mediates the predictive relationship between external CSR and employee work engagement among private and public university workers. This finding is in tandem with the position of other researchers who averred that affective commitment can significantly translate external CSR's impact to influencing employee work engagement (Ngoc et al., 2019; Romeiser et al., 2021). On the other hand, the study contradicts previous empirical studies that held that affective
commitment does not mediate significantly and positively the predictive relationship between external CSR and employee work performance (Serrano-Archimi et al., 2018).

This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Nguyen et al. (2020) and Ribeiro et al. (2021), which have also highlighted the positive impact of affective commitment on employee work engagement in the context of CSR initiatives. However, this finding contradicts that of Serrano-Archimi et al. (2018) who suggested that affective commitment did not play a significant role in mediating the relationship between external CSR and employee work performance. Overall, the study emphasises the importance of fostering affective commitment among employees to fully realize the potential benefits of external CSR initiatives in promoting employee work engagement. The findings of this study thus provide important insights into the relationship between internal and external CSR, affective commitment, and employee work engagement. The study's results suggest that university management should invest in both internal and external CSR activities and programmes that promote affective commitment among their workers to drive employee work engagement effectively.

Conclusions

This study examines the notion that affective commitment serves as a positive and substantial mediator in the relationship between CSR and employee engagement. This study discovered that affective commitment is a statistically significant variable that directly elucidates and forecasts the mediation effect of internal and external corporate social responsibility (CSR) on employee engagement in Ghanaian public and private universities participating in the survey (p<0.05). This discovery provides evidence that affective commitment plays a key role in mediating the predictive connection between internal or external corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employee work engagement among workers in private and public universities in Ghana. Essentially, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that prioritise the university's internal stakeholders, immediate external environment, and community directly influence the emotional connection, loyalty, and commitment of employees to the school. This discovery validates the mediation hypothesis that affective commitment has a statistically significant and favourable impact on predicting the variability in employee job engagement. The study's results and conclusions have important implications for both private and public universities. They offer vital insights into how affective commitment might improve the success of both internal and external corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. This discovery emphasises the need of establishing a favourable organisational culture that places a high value on the well-being and contentment of employees. According to these findings and conclusions, it is advised that both public and private colleges in Ghana should cultivate a robust sense of dedication and allegiance among their employees towards the organisation and its corporate social responsibility endeavours. This is because personnel who possess a profound emotional connection and unwavering allegiance to the university are more inclined to be actively involved and committed to their work. Ghanaian universities must enhance employee work participation in a more significant manner.

The current study's findings and conclusions suggest that Ghanaian universities should focus their corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts on external stakeholders. By involving these stakeholders in the development of CSR activities, universities can influence employee attitudes and actions towards the university. Therefore, making the satisfaction of the local community and environmental requirements a top priority in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities helps foster employee dedication and enhance the university's image as a socially responsible institution. Universities can boost their organisational performance by promoting employee work engagement through CSR programmes and other measures, which create affective commitment. This also has profound implications for the university's organisational culture and reputation as a socially responsible institution.

Universities in Ghana should prioritise providing favourable conditions that facilitate the successful execution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in order to boost the level of emotional dedication exhibited by employees. In order to accomplish this, it is advisable for universities to create a corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework that incorporates objectives related to emotional commitment. This framework is intended to function as a roadmap to ensure that CSR activities are planned and executed in order to effectively enhance the emotional involvement of employees. By implementing these measures, colleges in Ghana can boost the overall welfare of their employees and bolster their reputation among stakeholders.

While many scholars have examined CSR, there is a scarcity of comprehensive comparative research on University Social Responsibility (USR), affective commitment, and employee engagement in sub-Saharan Africa. The rise of 'University Social Responsibility' (USR) warrants further examination. Hence, it is recommended to conduct a longitudinal study in universities across sub-Saharan Africa to analyse and compare the activities related to university social responsibility (USR), affective commitment, and staff engagement. In developing economies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, corporate organisations, including higher educational institutions, should implement a long-term strategy to pursue USR (University Social Responsibility) or CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). This approach aims to gain the support of a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders, such as consumers, employees, alumni, suppliers, stock exchanges, and investors.

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