

# **The Strategic Intersection of HR and CSR: CSR Motive and Millennial Joining Intention**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The success and competitiveness of an organization recruiting the emerging workforce i.e., millennials can be ascribed in part to the organization's corporate social responsibility (CSR) engagement. This study explores the impact of organizational CSR on Nigerian millennials' joining intention through CSR motive perceptions: CSR-based organizational attractiveness (CSR-based OA) and perceived altruism (PA). To examine the empirical relationship among variables, data were obtained from respondents who were seeking employment or in-between jobs. Results revealed that CSR-based OA and PA significantly mediate the relationship between CSR and millennial joining intention. Findings present a unique perspective that significantly expands the literature. The theoretical implications of results are discussed and recommendations to managers are presented.

**Keywords:** CSR, CSR-based organizational attractiveness, joining intention, millennial, perceived altruism

## ÖZ

Ortaya çıkmakta olan işgücünü, bir başka deyişle Y kuşağını, işe alan bir örgütün başarısı ve rekabet gücü kısmen o kuruluşun örgütsel sosyal sorumluluk (KSS) katılımına bağlanabilir. Bu çalışma, örgütsel KSS'nin Nijeryalı Y kuşağının örgütlere katılım niyeti üzerindeki etkisini KSS'yi iki çeşit algıları aracılığıyla araştırmaktadır: KSS tabanlı örgütsel çekicilik (KSS tabanlı ÖÇ) ve algılanan özgecilik (AÖ). Değişkenler arasındaki ampirik ilişkiyi incelemek için, iş arayan veya iki iş arasında olanlardan veriler toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar, KSS tabanlı ÖÇ ve AÖ'nün KSS ile Y kuşağının örgütlere katılım niyeti arasındaki ilişkiye önemli ölçüde aracılık ettiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular, literatürü önemli ölçüde genişleten yeni bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Çalışmada elde edilen sonuçların teorik etkileri tartışılmış ve örgüt yöneticilerine öneriler de sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** KSS, KSS temelli örgütsel çekicilik, katılma niyeti, Y Kuşağı, algılanan özgecilik

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, from whom all good things and perfect gift  
comes from.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CI	Confidence Interval
CR	Composite Reliability
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSR-OA	Corporate Social Responsibility based Organizational Attractiveness
HRM	Human Resource Management
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
LL	Lower Limit
PA	Perceived Altruism
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SE	Standard Error
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
TLI	Tucker–Lewis Index
UL	Upper Limit

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

The classical argument about corporate social responsibility (CSR), has mainly been about generating economic benefits. The old social contract between businesses and society is embodied in the classical economic responsibility of organizations i.e. using resources for activities that contribute to and increase the organization's profits, as long as the organizations' operations are conducted without fraud or deception (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). CSR is now widely accepted as a practice from which both organizations and all stakeholder groups, including the society and the environment, should benefit. Based on the triple bottom line approach to sustainability, CSR activities that simultaneously take (economic) profit, (social) people, and the planet (environmental) into account have been reported to have a different impact on stakeholders-related attitudes and behavior toward the engaging firm (Paruzel et al., 2021).

As with the development, implementation, and enforcement of other workplace policies and practices, the human resource management (HRM) function also plays a major role in the process involved in establishing policies, including those CSR-related ones, and ensuring that the organization executes those policies that support its CSR strategy (Podgorodnichenko et al., 2021). To achieve these objectives, talent, which is regarded as a priceless organizational asset, is important, and HRM practices such as talent attraction, talent development, remuneration, and performance evaluation could be used to support the organization's CSR strategy and enable the attainment of its

overall bottom line (Aboramadan, 2022). While the HRM department could strategically support the CSR program of the engaging organization via employee preparation and active involvement in the organization's CSR agenda, the process of attracting talent to the organization is a necessary first step. It is therefore essential for organizations to arm themselves with an effective means of attracting top talent (Tarigan et al., 2020), especially with the struggle for competent talent among firms.

Long-term success, survival and health of an organization depends on its employees. To a large extent, many organizational performance metrics such as customer satisfaction, increased sales, enhanced service or good design, production and process delivery etc., are dependent on the caliber of employees an organization has. Thus, an organization's incompetence to develop, and implement initiatives, strategies and policies capable of attracting competent employees that could contribute to the achievement of the firm's strategic goals becomes a challenge.

The nature of today's workplace and particularly the composition of the workforce has contributed to increasing organizations' competition for quality and competent talent (Sharma & Tanwar, 2021). This has made it more challenging for organizations to attract and recruit suitable prospective employees, who have the skill set desirable and required for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and who are familiar and comfortable with today's work arrangements or modes of operation. Therefore, an organization's branding effort which is the marketing aspect of HRM can help organizations portray a desirable image or show off organizational characteristics or values that could be attractive to potential employees.

The complex, competitive, and ever-changing operational conditions and stakeholder expectations that characterize the business environment, have motivated organizations to utilize CSR as a strategic instrument that signals them as a preferred

employer among potential employees. This underlines the relationship between CSR and human resource management (HRM) (Turner et al., 2019), where an organization's CSR practice can influence its HRM practices, and HRM can support CSR agendas as the organization competes for the latest generation that have been entering the workforce, i.e. millennials. The millennials, who are also referred to as "Generation Y", are a generational cohort born into the same socio-cultural and historical context approximately between the mid-1970s to early 2000s (Nolan, 2015; Waples & Brachle, 2020). Although the birth year boundary of each generational cohort including that of millennials is debatable, they are shaped by the particular period and they develop shared attributes and value systems, which set them apart from other generations (Rank & Contreras, 2021).

Millennials' values, attitudes, and expectations have been shaped by factors such as increased environmental awareness and impact, television talk shows, social media, and technological developments that were dominant in their formative years (Onukwuba, 2020). They are highly motivated by and sensitive to social issues (Waples & Brachle, 2020); largely politically and environmentally conscious, have various ways to access information (Ahmad, 2019) and pursue outcomes that guarantee to maximize their individual benefit (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019). At the workplace, they possess distinct attributes, perceptions, and expectations from their employers and are anticipated to influence and revolutionize the workplace with their unique work attitude and expectations (Waples & Brachle, 2020). Interest has increased among researchers and practitioners concerning how to attract and manage this generational cohort. According to Rank and Contreras (2021), millennials are the largest generational group entering the workforce in massive numbers, gradually

replacing older generations at work, and are forecasted to make up to 75% of the world's workforce by 2025.

A unique approach is needed to appeal to potential millennial employees because past traditional HRM practices of talent attraction have been rendered ineffective (Turner et al., 2019), and recruiting quality employees is now critical for the performance and survival of organizations (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). Studies have linked organizational CSR engagement to the different attitudinal dispositions of potential employees (Akhouri & Chaudhary, 2019). Others specifically indicate that CSR is attractive to stakeholders like millennials, who have a deep sensitivity to CSR and ethical issues (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). More recently, researchers propose that stakeholders' attitudinal disposition towards an organization is linked to not only CSR engagements but the underlying motives behind CSR engagements as well (Asante et al., 2020; Donia et al., 2019; Fatma & Khan, 2020). It is, therefore, necessary for organizations to understand and take into consideration millennials' perceptions regarding an organization's CSR motivation.

Stakeholders perceive an organization's CSR motivation as either company-seeking, which aims at enhancing the economic benefits, reputation, performance, or attractiveness of the firm (i.e. CSR-based organizational attractiveness); or public-serving, which is a company's commitment to CSR due to its desire to contribute to society, and without expectation for stakeholder's reciprocity (perceived altruism) (Fatma & Khan, 2020; Jose & Venkitachalam, 2019; María & Perez, 2018) (María & Perez, 2018). The motivation why organizations engage in socially responsible activities is important (Asante et al., 2020) but stakeholder's cognitive evaluation in terms of causal attribution associated with CSR as well as their perceptions about organizations' CSR motivation lead them to evaluate the personal value of CSR

engagement and they also shape subsequent behavioral outcome (María & Perez, 2018). Although CSR initiatives can be used to create certain outcomes and send certain signals about an organization's values such as its obligation to particular social endeavors (Rank & Contreras, 2021), millennials could correspondingly speculate, form perceptions, and make decisions about organizations' CSR motives. But studies examining the underlying impact of CSR motives perception among potential employees are scarce.

For instance, Fatma and Khan's (2020) study on consumers' evaluation of companies' CSR motives showed that consumers tend to display positive attitudinal and behavioral dispositions such as purchase intention, identification, recommendation intention, etc. towards organizations whose CSR motives are genuine and perceived as altruistic. Donia et al. (2019) also establish that the attribution employees' stakeholder group makes about the motives underlying their firm's CSR engagement affects their performance and work-related outcomes. Considering the interest and research on CSR, its varied effect on various stakeholders group, as well as the recent attention to stakeholders' perception regarding CSR motives (Nave & Ferreira, 2019), a review of the relevant literature revealed that prospective millennial employees' perception concerning organizational CSR motivation remains unexplored. Although CSR concerns are a significant priority for the millennial stakeholder group, the bulk of CSR research conducted on millennial stakeholders have only focused on various impacts of CSR on millennial and related outcomes (see Ahmad, 2019; Waples & Brachle, 2019), rather than the underlying relationship such as millennials' perception about organization CSR motives and how such perceptions affect their intention to join an organization.



Since organizations' CSR motives could influence stakeholders' evaluation of, relationship with, and behavioral outcomes towards organizations (Akhouri & Chaudhary, 2019), it would be vital for organizations to take into account millennials' perception of organizational CSR motivation because CSR-related issues are important to this generational cohort. From a practice standpoint, companies operating in today's ethically charged and aware environment could benefit from insights about how CSR motive perception, i.e., CSR-based OA and PA, affects millennials, who are at present the burgeoning entrants in the workplace, and their intention to seek employment with an organization. The competition for qualified millennial employees amongst organizations and the cost associated with employee attraction (Waples & Brachle, 2020) also buttress the relevance of this study. Furthermore, as highlighted above, studies about stakeholder's CSR motive perception have largely concentrated on other stakeholders but millennials (Akhouri & Chaudhary, 2019; Vuković et al., 2020), and an ambiguous relationship still exists between CSR and millennial joining intention (Waples & Brachle, 2020).

The perception of a firm's CSR motives and response to CSR initiatives could be tied to stakeholders' surrounding context. Although CSR initiative is a strategic tool that organizations can wield in portraying themselves to the millennial as an employer of choice (Ouyang et al., 2020), mixed signals can be received by stakeholders, since contextual differences may affect how organizations' CSR initiatives are perceived and how other CSR-related decisions are affected (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019). Different contextual factors like resource availability, social, or economic influences may challenge or enhance CSR motives and stakeholders' perceptions (Stojanović et al., 2021). Moreover, most CSR-related studies are predominantly conducted in Western contexts and through perspectives that may be inappropriate to explain or

fully comprehend the case in developing economies (Ghosh, 2017). Similarly, despite concerns about millennial recruitment, attraction, and particularly regarding CSR profile and practices of organizations, research focusing on their perceptions about CSR and how these perceptions influence their intention to join organizations in emerging economies like Africa is lacking (Onukwuba, 2020).

The fact that the millennials in Africa make up to 37 percent of the global population of millennials (Onukwuba, 2020) underlines the importance of such research in an African country. Nigeria makes an interesting case since the country is not only the most populous but also the largest economy where CSR is in vogue (Raimi, 2018). The unique perspective of CSR in Nigeria can be gleaned from the fact that organizations through their CSR practices seek to satisfy and attend to the need of stakeholders and local communities. CSR practices of organizations are usually geared toward the enhancement of societal well-being, community development, and provision of social infrastructures such as education scholarships, skill acquisition programs, etc. given the extent of poor infrastructures and government failure in Nigeria (Uduji et al., 2020). In such a context, CSR motive perception varies along the lines of either compliance with the regulatory requirement of social and environmental policies or as voluntary altruistic initiatives (Raimi, 2018).

## **1.1 Research Purpose and Question**

This research addresses the gap in the literature regarding CSR, CSR motive perception, and behavioral disposition of millennial stakeholders' and inadequate research on the topic in developing nations like Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, although organizations across the world are increasing their CSR engagements, only a few studies have examined the effect of organizations' CSR engagement on the joining intention of millennials in developing nations, especially in the African region, which

has a significant millennial population. Secondly, the relationship could be affected by the motive perception of millennials, but research is yet to show how or whether millennial CSR motive perception mediates the relationship between CSR and target outcomes. The current research seeks to provide information to close the above-mentioned gap.

This study aims to explore what impact CSR has on the joining intention of millennials in Nigeria through CSR motive perceptions (perceived altruism and CSR-based organization attractiveness). We test if millennials, as prospective applicants to the jobs in organizations, perceive the motive underlying organizations' CSR engagement, and the study seeks to understand whether CSR motive perception plays any role in the indirect relationship between CSR and millennials' intention to seek employment in an organization. This is because it has become crucial for organizations to show the sincerity of CSR engagements, manage inconsistencies regarding organizational CSR motives, and garner favorable millennial joining disposition (Ramasamy et al., 2020).

This study is thus guided by two research questions:

What is the relationship between an organization's CSR engagement and Nigerian millennials' intention to join?

Do potential millennial employees' CSR motive perceptions (CSR-based perceived altruism and organization attractiveness and) influence the relationship between organizational CSR and millennials' joining intention?

Figure 1. shows the proposed relationships between the aforementioned variables.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The study's aim is achieved using quantitative data analysis and methodology.

Data was collected using an in-person pen-on-paper survey that was filled out by our respondents. The study's respondents were millennials who were in-between jobs or seeking employment across Nigeria. They were attendants in job fairs and career seminars organized for employment seekers. A random sampling technique was employed. Potential respondents were invited to participate in different events in different Nigerian cities. Only respondents who were aware of organizational CSR practices through job fairs, online advertisements, company websites, social media, and personal networks were considered during data collection.

Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step model structure that recognizes the analysis of measurement and structural model was employed in this dissertation to empirically analyze the data, as well as the relationship between variables. The first step involves investigating and reporting the quality of the model's data in assessing the relationship between latent variables and the items measuring them. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to analyze the measurement model and analysis that checks the convergence validity, discriminant validity, and internal validity of the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981a) was performed. In assessing the structural model, the study's hypotheses, which identify the relationships among the study's latent variables as pointed out by the theory, were tested in the second step. As suggested by Kline (2015), the data's normality was also checked by conducting a skewness and kurtosis test on SPSS IBM statistical program while AMOS SPSS 23 statistical program was used to test the studies' hypotheses.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This research makes some contributions to the literature. First of all, if CSR, CSR motive perception, and their impact on millennial behavior outcome are considered in a non-Western context, the exploration of the field can be more

conclusive and robust since most developing nations are rapidly expanding in terms of economy, lucrative markets, and a young labor force seeking employment. Moreover, such research in a non-Western context could provide valuable data and contribution to meta-analysis studies seeking to determine trends in the research field. It thus adds to the earlier studies (e.g.,(Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Waples & Brachle, 2020)), and extends the knowledge base about CSR and millennials, particularly from the perspective and context of a developing nation. Secondly, by focusing on the CSR motive perception of potential millennial employees, the present research contributes to the literature because other studies in the literature have mainly focused on other stakeholder groups; such as current employees (Donia et al., 2019), and consumers (María & Perez, 2018), etc.

Thirdly, this study expands the literature by revealing the process through which CSR and CSR motive perception influence millennial intention to pursue employment in an organization, thus contributing to the literature on recruitment by identifying aspects related to CSR in attracting prospective quality employees and highlighting why the CSR perception of potential employees could be influential on efforts of organizations to attract and recruit employees. Although CSR motive perception cannot be directly controlled by organizations, they are relevant and contribute to millennials' response to organizations' CSR undertakings. Organizations' awareness of such effects could enable them to gain additional benefits from their CSR engagements.

The structure of the paper is as follows: the introduction section is followed by an extensive review of the literature and a theoretical support section that focuses on this study's variables including CSR, millennial CSR motive perception (CSR-based OA and perceived altruism), joining intention and the theories-signaling and

stakeholders- used in this study. Research hypotheses were developed in the next section. The methodology section thoroughly discusses the procedure from data collection to hypothesis testing and other empirical analyses, which is followed by the results section. The findings are discussed in the conclusion and discussion section. The paper is concluded with implications, limitations, and suggestions for further studies.

## **1.4 Outline of the Study**

Chapter 1 covers the introduction where a broad overview of the study is contained. Details about the study's purpose, research question, and its significance to the existing body of literature for academia and practitioners in the industry are discussed. The first chapter also explains issues of Methodology, including sampling technique, data collection, and analysis.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review section. A comprehensive review of organizational CSR in extant studies is presented. Following that part, a literature review on CSR motive perception i.e. CSR-based organization attractiveness and perceived altruism and millennial joining intention which are major constructs in this study are presented. Furthermore, Chapter 2 also discusses the theoretical framework that supports the study in great detail. It comprises attribution theory (which is the study's over-arching theory) and signaling theory.

Chapter 3 provides the section where the study's hypothesized relationships between constructs are developed. This chapter reveals how the theories used in the study inform the relationship being examined among the studies constructs. In Chapter 4, which is the methodology section, full details regarding the research context, sampling strategy, data collection, construct measurement, and data analyses are discussed. Chapter 5 communicates obtained outputs from data analyses. The resulting

outcome from the performed statistical analysis delineated in the fifth chapter includes respondents' demographics, reports of CFA, and other model reliability findings. The chapter ends with results from the study's structural model.

Chapter 6 includes the conclusion and discussion section, where the study's findings, together with implications for practice and the extant body of literature are underlined. The current study's limitations and directions for further studies are also presented in this chapter. In conclusion, chapter 6 gives a summary of the whole dissertation with concluding statements.

## **Chapter 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Chapter 1 gives a broad overview of the thesis. It provides the background and establishes the current relevance of socially responsible organization practices, the role of millennials' perception of organizational CSR, and how such perception affects a critical HRM component i.e. the attraction of a quality millennial workforce. It went on to carve out a niche in the literature by identifying research gaps, and establishing a research aim that contributes to expanding the relevant body of knowledge. To better understand the study's background, the reason why the research problem exists, the relationships between variables, and the proposed contribution, this chapter presents an extensive review of extant literature on CSR, CSR motive perceptions (CSR-based OA and CSR-based perceived altruism), and millennial joining intention.

The section also expounds on signaling and stakeholders theories which constitute the theoretical framework that provides the basis for this study's hypotheses. Within the boundary assumptions made available by the selected theories, the relationships between all the variables are explained, predicted, and made sense of in this section.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

##### **2.1.1 Signaling and Stakeholder's Theory**

A systematic review of the literature shows that signaling and stakeholder theory are two of the most frequently used theories when discussing the impact of CSR on organization's success or in attracting stakeholders (Pfister, 2020). Signaling theory



dates back to the 1970s where signals are described as an organization's actions that directly or indirectly indicate an organization's goals, intention, or motivation (Spence, 1973). With regard to this theory, scholars have discussed the CSR engagements of organizations as a signaling mechanism (Hetze, 2016). In this study, signaling theory draws on stakeholders' theory, such that stakeholders (potential millennial employees) rely on information signaled by organizations to develop CSR-based perception and make the decision to join the organization. While stakeholder's theory describes a stakeholder as a group that can affect and be affected by the realization of an organization's objectives (Freeman, 2010), and who are increasingly concerned about the CSR engagements of organizations (Hetze, 2016), signaling theory, in turn, suggests that stakeholders search out signals or cues about organizations, interpret these signals and are guided by their perception about those signals when making decisions (Spence, 1973).

The process of decision-making is chiefly influenced by the amount of information made available to parties making the decision and the signaling theory is posited as being valuable in interpreting the cues between the parties, which includes, the receiver-potential employees, and the sender, i.e., the organization (Connelly et al., 2011; Kaun & Spence, 1975) who make the decision to either join or not join the signaling organization. The signaling party (signaler), which is the organization makes concerted effort and decision about the manner in which they communicate the intended information (Connelly et al., 2011). More so, the signaler uses intentional and persuasive means and action to communicate positive signals such as CSR information and practices about imperceptible organizational qualities (Carlini, Grace, France, & Lo Iacono, 2019). On the other hand, the receiver must choose how to decode the received cue. In general, the theory suggests that information asymmetry

that exists between the signaling organization and prospective job candidates produces some kind of dependency on the communicated signal (Connelly et al., 2011). By this, the prospective job candidate develops some CSR perception about the signaling organization (Waples & Brachle, 2020).

The strength of the sent signal quality is a relevant aspect of the signaling theory which also assists the signaling organization in improving its recognition or positive interpretation among major stakeholders such as job applicants in the competitive business environment (Dögl & Holtbrügge, 2014). Signal quality could be described as the unobservable, underlying ability of the organization sending the CSR signal to fulfill the demand or need of the party receiving the sent signal (Connelly et al., 2011, p.43). Therefore, strong and explicit CSR signals are those that can only be interpreted in a similar or a single way (Hetze, 2016). A weak signal, on the other hand, usually comes as ambivalent and is usually interpreted in various ways. As a result, the theory has been frequently utilized by researchers to examine job seekers behavior (Ronda et al., 2018) in response to an organization's CSR, and also to explore the relationship between organizations CSR practices, CSR information, and stakeholders' outcomes (Akhouri & Chaudhary, 2019; Dögl & Holtbrügge, 2014).

### **2.1.2 Attribution Theory**

To further capture the underlying relationship between organizational CSR and millennial joining intent through perceived altruism and CSR-based organizational attractiveness, attribution theory provided some insight into the relationship. The current study also employs attribution theory (Kelley & Michela, 1980) to explore the ways through which potential millennial employees respond and perceive the CSR engagement of organizations. According to Boğan and Sarıışık (2020), organizations' CSR undertaking may not always yield favorable stakeholders return because of how

stakeholders evaluate the CSR practices of organizations. Although earlier studies have shown that a firm's ultimate motivation for CSR may not be the same as stakeholders' attributions about the motive behind the undertaken CSR; stakeholder's attribution is a crucial factor that shapes subsequent attitudinal disposition and behavior (Afridi et al., 2020; Ifzal et al., 2019). This stance is embedded in Heider's (1958) seminal work on phenomenal causality and social perception. Kelley and Michela's (1980) attribution theory, which is founded on Heider's (1958) work, posits that people not only try to understand the motives behind other people's behavior with available information ( i.e. sent signal) but they also make a causal judgment about those behaviors and act accordingly in line with these judgments.

The theory discusses the causal inference stakeholders like potential millennial employees make over time, in different scenarios and based on available information. When stakeholders process CSR information they assign certain motives to an organization's CSR engagement and in most instances, attribution or causal inference is arrived at by relying on common sense (Kim & Choi, 2018). Stakeholders may generally attribute the CSR motives of an organization to either self-serving, extrinsic, profit-seeking, or firm-serving motives; to society-serving, intrinsic, public-serving, or altruistic motives (Donia & Tetrault, 2016; Kim & Choi, 2018; Rifon et al., 2004). Similarly, other scholars describe CSR attribution and motive perception along a symbolic and substantive line of thought. This distinction is based on the extent to which observers perceive CSR engagement or initiatives as a sincere manifestation of the organization's underlying values. Character or intentions; or as the self-serving organization's attempts to ingratiate itself in the society (Johns, 1999).

The substantive attribution, like society-serving, intrinsic, public-serving, or altruistic motive depicts an organization's CSR character as genuine, internally-driven

with authentic concern for the social environment and to address societal needs (Donia & Tetrault, 2016; Johns, 1999). Symbolic attribution, on the other hand is CSR activities perceived to be carried out with the intention to benefit the organization and realize competitive gains such as increased profits or market share. External forces such as the organization's desire for competitiveness or market forces determine symbolic attribution (Donia et al., 2019; Donia & Tetrault, 2016). Stakeholders are thus predisposed to make attribution about the CSR motivation that underly an organization's CSR initiatives and engagement. They could either attribute CSR engagements to motives that accrue potential benefits to the organization; or to those that are altruistic, offering benefit to other stakeholders (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006).

It is also possible for stakeholders in the same group to vary in their attributions about the same CSR initiative of an organization (Vlachos, Epitropaki, et al., 2013; Vlachos, Panagopoulos, et al., 2013). Social psychologists have considered attribution theory at the micro-individual level and they demonstrate that the underlying attribution or perception stakeholders have about an organization's CSR initiative affects their behavior and attitude towards the organization (Donia & Tetrault, 2016; Vlachos, Epitropaki, et al., 2013).

Based on prospective millennial employee attribution of organizational CSR, the attribution theory is a suitable lens to explore this stakeholder group attitudinal disposition and behavior in terms of joining intention because: (1) individuals are more concerned with why people do what they do than what they do (Kelley & Michela, 1980); as a result, they associate perceptions about organization's CSR motivation based on available CSR information (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006), and (2) there is a prevalent skepticism in stakeholders' attribution about the motives that underlie the CSR undertakings of a firm (Ramasamy et al., 2020).

While prospective millennial employees' CSR motive attribution (i.e. CSR-based organization attractiveness and perceived CSR altruism) may discuss millennial stakeholders' perception and explanation for firms' CSR practices and engagement, prior research has mainly focused on incumbent employees (Boğan & Sarıışık, 2020) or consumer stakeholder groups (Afridi et al., 2020). Therefore, exploring and examining prospective millennial employees' perception of the motive behind CSR engagements of the firm is a necessary step to enrich our understanding of millennials' intention to join organizations.

In summary, organizations disclose information about their CSR engagements to maintain the relationship they have with stakeholders (Freeman, 2010) with whom they have some sort of interdependent relationship (Ogunmokun, Timur, & Ikhide, 2021). Since stakeholders are impacted by and can impact an organization's outcome, the organization has to be conscious of the impact, interpretation, and perception stakeholders might have about their CSR activities (Dögl & Holtbrügge, 2014), as this could affect millennials' disposition. In other words, prospective employees, as a stakeholder group, can establish certain perceptions about organizations and their CSR practices from signals received from the organization. They can also make decisions through their assessment of the organization's CSR motives off the CSR standing of the firm. This affects their relationship with an organization and is central to the stakeholders' theory perspective.

## **2.2 Literature on Variables**

With increasing significance over the last decade, CSR research has gone in many directions. Although its growth in both research and practice, a consensus is yet to be arrived at, in that more research and development in the field open up novel areas of investigation. In this section, the author briefly reviews the history of CSR to show

its developmental trajectory over the decades. Showing how the strategic notion of CSR came about and has evolved. The aspects of focal variables such as CSR motive which include CSR-based organizational attractiveness and perceived altruism of CSR, Millennials as a generational cohort and finally joining intention were elaborated upon in this section.

### **2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility-CSR**

The notion that organizations should be socially responsible citizens towards the society they operate in and beyond the sole focus on economic benefit has been promoted by scholars, practitioners and different social and economic groups for a couple of decades now. Earlier CSR discussions show that it has been contested whether organization CSR should improve societal conditions and promote economic benefits (Carroll, 1999). As the CSR concept grew, sentiments were developed for organizations' to provide benefits and societal values would go beyond the organization's immediate area of operations (Frick, 2018). The seminal work of Bowen (1953) in the 1950s is argued to be the beginning of this argument (Carroll, 1999). His work proceeds from the argument that several organizations and businesses are vital centers of decision-making and power, whose actions affect the lives of stakeholders at different points (Bowen, 1953).

While it has been agreed in literature that the 1950s can be regarded as the beginning of the modern CSR era, the major discussion concerning an organization's obligation to society was centered around a discussion that contributes toward achieving desired values, policies, and objectives for the society (Latapí et al., 2019). Among the questions raised by Bowen (1953), one is of importance in this study. He questioned, "What responsibilities to the wider society are businesses/ businessmen reasonably expected to assume?" (p. xi). It could be argued that corporate boards of

directors and managers began to sense that they have some responsibilities and obligations to the immediate society they function in.

Contradicting Bowen (1953) and other researchers who take a similar CSR stance to his, some scholars such as Friedman (1962) argued that businesses maintain strict adherence to self-interests, i.e. profits (Husted & De Jesus Salazar, 2006). They all agreed that businesses should act legally and within ethical bounds. However, they saw no reason for businesses to concern themselves with societal problems, but to be more focused on achieving economic benefits and self-interest. On the other hand, CSR prominence in practice and academia has been argued to reflect stakeholders' demand for socially responsible organizations, with a sense of public concern. This is because, over time, the influence of business organizations in society has grown (Frick, 2018), which led to considering organizations as both social and economic institutions. Wood (1991) buttresses this idea by stating that the fundamental idea behind CSR is the interwoven rather than distinct nature of businesses and society. As social institutions, organizations are, therefore, expected to commit their resources to solve social societal problems. Especially with the rise of environmental issues, stakeholders are becoming more concerned about the actions of organizations that are perceived to be carried out entirely out of economic self-interest, ignoring any societal or environmental impact (Frick, 2018).

### **2.3.1 CSR Definition and Perspective over Time**

The CSR notion has evolved over the decades. To gain a full understanding of CSR and its impact on millennial joining intention through their CSR motive perception, it is important to provide not only definition of CSR but a brief historical perspective and background as well. Providing such discourse in the section below will give a snapshot of the evolving understanding of CSR, and some important

debates that have been made either against or for the notion of organizations taking up any organizational activity or responsibility beyond those that contribute to enhancing its economic gains or reputational wellbeing. The primary question being addressed here is to glean what organizations gain or intend to achieve out of CSR engagements, policies, and practices. The goal will therefore be to review and summarise extant literature that has over time impacted organizations' CSR motives as that is what impacts CSR motive attribution and perception of stakeholders.

The 1960s mark a significant attempt in the literature to formalize and more accurately define what CSR means (Carroll, 1999). Prior to this time, CSR discourse was limited and it was widely held that social welfare and concerns were the responsibility of the government and not of organizations (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Levitt, 1958). In addition to restricting the main goals of business with economic and financial ones, Levitt (1958), argues that paying attention to social responsibility would detract companies from their major motive, i.e. to make a profit. In other words, CSR was considered antithetical to business practice, and focusing on it would dilute organizations' focus on wealth creation. During the 1950s, there was a scant discussion of linking CSR with benefits for businesses themselves. The primary focus was on businesses' responsibilities to society and doing good work for society.

Carroll (1979) like Levitt (1958), insists that the first and most important responsibility of organizations was the maximization of shareholders' wealth and therefore should leave issues of societal needs and concerns to the civil societies and the government to manage. However, a book titled "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman," and the CSR definition offered by the author, Howard R. Bowen (1953) represents the most notable piece of CSR literature from that decade (Carroll, 1999). Carroll and Shabana (2010), considered Bowen's (1953) work to be ahead of its time



by a decade because it came to significantly shape future thoughts and discussions on the issue of CSR.

The social responsibility of businessmen, according to Bowen (1953), refers to “businessmen’s (or organization’s) obligation to make those decisions, pursue policies or follow those course of action that is desirable in terms of societal values and objectives”. Although Bowen (1953) acknowledged that CSR is no antidote that will heal societies of their ills, he applauded it as a development that required support and encouragement (Lee, 2008). As mentioned earlier, the 1960s provided a significant expansion for CSR literature and the focus of scholars was on (1) what social responsibility meant, and (2), its importance to business for society (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Lyu, 2016). For instance, Keith Davis described CSR as “businessmen’s action and decisions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the organization’s direct technical or interest” (Davis, 1960, p. 70).

During the 1960s’ Joseph McGuire (1963) argued that, and defined CSR as “using business resources for broad social goal ”and as the practice of organizations “assuming some other responsibilities to the society which extend beyond their legal and economic obligations” (Carroll, 1999). While it may have been difficult to clarify and comprehend what exactly these “other ”responsibilities, beyond legal and economic obligations, were, McGuire (1963) later elaborated on those “other ” corporate obligations.

According to McGuire (1963), organizations must be interested in the communities’ welfare, in politics, in the “happiness” of its staff, in education, and in summary the whole social world around it. Consequently, corporations must of necessity act “justly”, just as proper citizens should (McGuire 1963, p.144). This hints at the idea of corporate citizenship and business ethics. It also portrays a perspective

of social responsibility as an organization's obligation to consider the effect of its actions, decision, and dealings on an entire social system. In this regard, Carroll (1999) suggests that business owners undergo social responsibility when they consider the interest and needs of stakeholders who could be affected by their business actions. The discussion of CSR in the 1960s took a broad step forward by laying emphasis on how corporate actions affect a whole social system and highlighting the need for corporations to look beyond the narrow technical and economic interest of their firm but to maintain a broad view of their operation.

In a book series entitled “Corporate Social Responsibilities,” Clarence C. Walton (1967) who was another leading CSR expert of the 1960s, also addressed some aspects of CSR in a series of publications that were concerned about the role of businesses and business owners in contemporary society. While McGuire (1963) studied the development of business corporations and observed changes in the type and scale of these corporations, changes in the economic and social conditions of the time as well as changes in regulatory control and public policies for business, Walton (1967) examines the ideological changes and development taking place during that era and which were reflected in public policies at the time (Latapí et al., 2019). These policies viewed business organizations as potential sponsors to the development of the economic and social conditions of the time (Walton, 1967). He also emphasized that an amount of voluntarism was a vital element of a corporation’s social responsibilities, as against coercion, and also the recognition that costs involved in it may not be possible to measure against any direct gauge of measurable economic returns and performance (Walton, 1967, p.18). In essence, the practical implementation of CSR in the 1960s mostly remained with a philanthropical disposition (Latapí et al., 2019).

As a result of the changing ideologies that permeated the 1950s and 1960s and which were influencing public policies, he presented a number of social responsibility models and a fundamental definition of CSR that acknowledged the significance of the relationship between society and corporations. According to Walton, (1967, p.18), the fresh notion of CSR recognizes the association between the wider society and corporation, so much so that top managers must keep such a relationship in mind as they pursue their organizational goals.

It is also be important to mention that issues of women's rights, consumer rights, civil rights, and environmental movements were the social movements in the United States at the time (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). These events, ideas, and involved people were influential in shaping the social changes and CSR engagements ushered in during the 1960s era and corporations perceived the expectations being communicated, and which ultimately had to be attended to and addressed by them (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). At the close of that decade, the social setting reflected a form of high pressure on organizations that expected them to perform according to the prevailing social expectations and most of which were clearly expressed in the antiwar and environmental campaigns and protests (Latapí et al., 2019). While corporations did not initially perceive the social movements and environments of the 1960s in the way we do today, nonetheless, the social environment in which corporations would then have to function and operate in was being constructed by these movements.

In summary, the basis for CSR was rapidly being influenced by the social environment and also by the demands and pressures from others; specifically, activists who required that firms adopt CSR policies, practices, attitudes, and perspectives. In addition, CSR practices and development were also expanded by forward-looking

academic minds that were making an attempt to articulate what social responsibility implied and meant for corporations.

The overall social environment of the 1960s, antiwar sentiment and a rising sense of CSR awareness in societies transitioned into the 1970s and beyond (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Latapí et al., 2019). A later analysis by scholars proposed the 1960s and early 1970s as the “issue”, “responsiveness” and “awareness” eras of CSR because the period was characterized by changing social consciousness, an acknowledgment of the organization's involvement in community affairs, and overall responsibility, improvement to the issues of racial discrimination, concern about urban decay, mitigation of pollution and the ongoing philanthropic era in which there was huge attention on charitable donations and contribution by businesses (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). It could be said that that era in the evolutionary history of CSR was notable for the absence of any form of coupling between socially responsible practices and financial performance (Lee, 2008). In other words, CSR engagement and practices were primarily driven by externally and socially conscious motivations; the engaging organization was not aiming to receive any specific gain or behavioral response in return but was more interested in maintaining any form of relationship that existed between themselves (corporation) and the society.

The 1970s saw more proliferation of CSR definition (Carroll, 1999) with the trajectory being towards an emphasis on corporate social performance (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). The center of discussion was with regards to conceptual focus and variation of corporate social “responsiveness”, “responsibility” and “performance” (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). While the ambiguous use of the term and misappropriation of several CSR variations resulted in some sort of vagueness with regard to its definition (Latapí et al., 2019), and a breakthrough in conceptual consolidation and

development was not achieved until the end of the same decade (Lee, 2008). In 1979, Carroll offered what is possibly the first cohesive CSR definition as: “The social responsibility of a business embraces the legal, economic, discretionary and ethical expectations that the society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1979, p.500).

Carroll’s (1979) perspective and summation of social responsibility did not only correspond to the conversation on corporate behavior but it was also largely driven by the legislation in the USA and 1960s social movements. The relevance of the definition depended on the fact that it stems from, accommodates, and on the description and perspectives presented in the work of preceding and contemporary scholars of the time. The description offered by Carroll (1979) provides a concise and clear conceptualization of social responsibility that could be applicable in any context, which was lacking in previous CSR definitions (Latapí et al., 2019). In addition, Carroll’s understanding of social responsibility saw the social and economic objectives of CSR as fundamental parts of businesses' total social responsibility framework rather than as incompatible trade-offs (Lee, 2008). Many scholars disagreed on the compatibility of CSR objectives.

Before highlighting some other CSR definitions that were established in the 1970s, it is important to briefly consider the several variation and notion such as corporate social responsiveness, responsibility, and performance that the term assumed as a result of proliferation in the definition of the concept. Some scholars in 1970 scholars argued that what was really essential and could be the summation of CSR was that corporation was responding to the social environment in which they were embedded rather than “assuming a responsibility”(Carroll & Shabana, 2010). The distinction between corporate social responsibility and corporate social responsiveness

is seen in the emphasis on corporations “assuming” a socially responsible posture, while corporate social responsiveness focused on an organization’s literal act of being responsive or maintaining responsive attitudes towards the society and its needs.

More so, the mid-1970 also saw an emphasis on the emergence of corporate social performance. While it was an attempt by scholars to use corporate social performance to reconcile the standing of both corporate social responsiveness and corporate social responsibility, it was also about putting some emphasis on the outcomes of “socially responsible” initiatives and associated results achieved (Carroll, 1979; Wood, 1991). This singular act of focusing on CSR outcomes was pushing the field towards the idea of what CSR scholars have tagged as the “ business case for CSR” (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). This describes all business rationale and justification; i.e. particular benefits or returns that would flow to the organization in a financial and economic sense (bottom-line sense) from CSR engagement, initiative, and activities. This era saw an enormous amount of discussions and questions about the financial consequences of CSR (Latapí et al., 2019). In summary, highlighting outcomes prepares the stage for efforts to gauge or measure the outcome of CSR practices and policies.

Some definitions that informed the diverse conceptual development of the CSR term during the 1970 also need to be discussed to further the understanding of relevant concepts and terms.

Heald's (1970) book entitled “The Social Responsibilities of Business: Company and Community, 1900-1960” is an influential study published in that decade, which witnessed introduction of various definitions of CSR. Even though Heald did not offer a concise definition of the social responsibility construct, it was obvious that his understanding and presentation of the term were similar to those

definitions presented by CSR scholars in 1960s (Carroll, 1999). In the prologue of the book, Heald stated that his idea about social responsibility is concerned with the notion of the term just “as businessmen themselves have experienced and defined it”, and secondly, he added that the term’s definition should be sought out in regards to the actual policies they are associated with (Heald, 1970, p. xi). Social responsibility was described in a historical manner, community-focused policies, programs, and perspectives of business executives (Carroll, 1999).

Heald’s description of social responsibility suggests that businessmen during that period were considerably preoccupied with community relations and corporate philanthropy. Latapí et al.( 2019) recorded that for Heald (1970), there were several cases that echoed the social sensitivity of businessmen and their corporations, such as the instance of Macy’s in the United States of America (USA), which donated funds in 1875 to an orphanage and labeled that charity donation as miscellaneous expenditures within their accounting books.

Another scholar was Johnson Harold, whose work was titled “Business in Contemporary Society: Framework and Issues which was published in 1971. He presented a variety of CSR views and definitions in his book and also proceeded to analyze and critique them. His first definition of CSR was termed as conventional wisdom, with a description of a socially responsible firm as “one whose management staff balances an array of interests. Such firm takes into account its suppliers, dealers, employees, immediate local community and the nation instead of merely striving for greater profits for its investors” (Harold, 1971, p. 50). It should be pointed out that in this view of CSR, Harold could be hinting at a stakeholders approach (see Freeman, 2010), as he referred to a “multiplicity of interests” and also went on to mention some specific groups. He also argued that CSR is the quest for socio-economic goals by

means of elaborating social and societal norms in prescribed business roles (Harold, 1971). In simpler terms, business occurs, and corporations have their operation in a socio-cultural system that uses norms and business roles to outline particular ways of responding to the situation and in some other details, sets out prescribed ways of carrying out business affairs.

The second view of social responsibility presented by Johnson (1971) states that “businesses perform social programs to enhance the profits of their organization” (p. 54). Social responsibility is perceived as a long-term profit maximization scheme in this view. In a third view, which he calls “utility maximization”, he asserts that utility maximization is the primary motivation of businesses; with enterprises seeking numerous goals rather than merely maximizing profits” (p. 59). According to him, a socially responsible manager or entrepreneur is someone who has a utility function such that he or she is equally as interested in the well-being of their fellow citizens and members of the enterprise as well as their own well-being (p. 68). Finally, in a fourth outlook which he titled lexicographic view of social responsibility, Johnson (1971) suggested that organizational goals like those of customers are ranked certain order of priority and targets are evaluated for each goal. While targets are used to assess each organization's goals, a variety of factors tend to shape them but most importantly are the organization's past experience or performance of the goal and also those of similar organizations: organizations like individuals want to do as well as referent other in a similar situation (p. 73).

Similarly, a relevant contribution to the CSR concept at the time came from the Committee for Economic Development (CED). Their contribution came in the form of two landmark publications (Latapí et al., 2019). The first publication which explored the extent to which it was justified for business corporations to be concerned



or get involved in social problems was titled “A New Rationale for Corporate Social Policy” (Committee for Economic Development, 1971). The primary aim of the publication was to make an attempt at reconciling the social and economic interests of organizations (Lee, 2008). CSR will continue to be a controversial topic if it is not shown that it is and can be consistent with the interest of stockholders (Committee for Economic Development, 1971; Lee, 2008). Therefore, the committee took on the responsibility of providing a ‘fresh rationale’ that emphasizes the idea that social responsibility can be supported by an organization without having to compromise stockholders' interests.

Social Responsibilities of Business Corporations was the second article published by CED. It examined the new expectations and demands that the society was putting on business in their respective industry (Committee for Economic Development, 1971). Although businesses operate and function only by public consent, and they were expected to constructively satisfy the society’s needs (p. 11), the committee pointed out that the social contract between businesses and the society’s was being changed in important and substantial ways (Committee for Economic Development, 1971). Corporations were being asked to serve a broader range of human values and to take on more responsibilities to society than before. Business corporations were in effect asked to contribute to the welfare and quality of American life beyond the supply of services and goods because insofar as business enterprises exist to serve the society, their survival could be hinged on the quality of the firm's managerial board’s response to the public’s changing expectations (p.16). Since the committee’s publication, research orientation in the field shifted from whether or not organizations should undertake CSR activities to CSR content implementation

processes that do not conflict with the engaging firms' fundamental interest, albeit varying stance amongst researchers persists.

Research that was developed following CED's publication began to conceptualize CSR as a means to support a corporation's interest in the long-term. This is prosed to happen when corporations strengthen the environment they operate in or belong to (Lee, 2008). For instance, some scholars argued that an organization has a responsibility to 'appraise in its decision-making processes the effects its decision will have on external social systems, in such a manner that those decisions will not only be about traditional economic benefits which the firm is after but also achieve social benefits as well (Lee, 2008). The fundamental assumption is that business enterprises could lose their customer base and other critical support structure if the surrounding community where the business operates and belongs to begins to deteriorate. Therefore, it is in the organization's long –term interest to contribute to and support the well-being of the environment.

In the mid-1970 other scholars contributed to the evolution of the CSR concept. For instance, social responsibility was placed in context by Backman (1975), an economist who argued that social audit, social indicators, and social accounting, are terms that all cover different aspects of social performance. (See the earlier discussion about corporate social responsiveness, responsibility, and performance for more contexts). After stating that the terms are rather general than specific, Backman (1975) described social responsibility as it refers to the motives or objectives that should receive and be given priority by business enterprises, in addition to those concerning economic performance such as profits (p. 2). He presented some CSR examples such as improved medical care, reduction in pollution, employment of minority groups, more involvement in programs that develop the community, improved industrial safety

and health, and argued that these as well as other program or activities designed to enhance the quality of life are covered by social responsibility's broad umbrella (p. 2-3).

As mentioned earlier, it was not uncommon to encounter the terms corporate social performance (CSP) and CSR in the 1970s. Sethi (1975) was the researcher to underline the distinction between CSP and CSR. In discussing the different dimensions of CSP, he differentiated between corporate social behavior that might be termed "social responsiveness", "social obligation," and "social responsibility. According to the writer, social responsibility goes beyond social obligation because social obligation represents a corporate social behavior done in response to legal constraints or market forces (p.70). On the other hand, social responsibility denotes taking that corporate behavior to a point where it is congruent with prevalent social expectations, values, and norms of performance (p. 62). While social responsibility can be described as prescriptive, the social obligation is more proscriptive (Sethi, 1975). Social responsiveness is the third stage of Sethi's (1975) model, with social behavior being more adapted to social needs and having a more preventive and anticipatory nature.

The conceptual development and growth of the CSR term were sustained in the 1970s (Carroll, 1999). However, it was still debated that the field of business, ethics, and society was lacking a theoretical paradigm that was generally accepted (Preston, 1975). Preston (1975) called for tangible progress in policy development, conceptualization, and research in CSR. Carroll's theory of corporate social responsibility published by the Academy of Management Review (AMR) journal in 1979 was the first work to respond to Preston's (1975) call. The article was immediately accepted and the idea contained further developed by others (Lee, 2008; Wood, 1991). The key thrust in Carroll's (1979) article provided a concise definition

of CSR and offered a three-dimensional model which combined three dimensions of corporate social performance, which are corporate social responsiveness, CSR, and social issues under one rubric. The purpose of Carroll's (1979) model was to integrate and help clarify the many definitional strands that had appeared in the literature at the time (Lee, 2008).

Carroll's (1979) three-dimensional model did not treat the social and economic dimensions of an organization's CSR as irreconcilable and incompatible trade-offs. Both the social and the economic dimensions were fully integrated into the social responsibility framework of organizations that includes ethical, legal, discretionary, and economic categories. The magnitude of each dimension within the framework may carry different weights among the dimensions (Carroll, 1979). For instance, economic responsibility may be weightier than ethical responsibility, but each social responsibility dimension makes an integral part of the CSR framework. Carroll's article was written with a very pragmatic mindset (Lee, 2008) and for each CSR dimension, an organization may choose one possible strategy for action which could be pro-action, reaction, accommodation, or defense (Carroll, 1979).

As such, an organization's strategic action on social issues can be known and assessed against the model Carroll offered. The framework provides a means by which academicians may understand various CSR thoughts and a comprehensive tool that assists the managers of corporations in systematically thinking about the social issues they faced. The practical nature of Carroll's article prompted the focus of the article to more on the association between an organization and its immediate environment rather than on the abstract nature of the relationship. His article has become one of the most extensively cited articles in the business and society field.

In the 1980s more empirical research than conceptual or theoretical development took place on the CSR front. According to Carroll (1999), the preoccupation of the 1970s researchers and their concentration on redefining and developing the CSR concept gave way to the splintering of works in the field into alternative themes and concepts such as stakeholders theory, business ethics, public policy, corporate social responsiveness, corporate social performance, etc. and more empirical research, in the 1980s. In the quest to discover the actual truth about CSR, its central concerns were being cast into alternative themes, models, theories, or concepts. This reconciliation effort took the CSR discussion to a more observable and concrete level of organization and it also engaged the financial/economic ramifications of CSR. This resulted in the establishment of a positive linkage between CFP and CSR (Latapí et al., 2019).

Jones M. Thomas (1980) brought an interesting perspective to the 1980's CSR discussion. CSR was defined as a notion that organizations have an obligation/responsibility to other constituents' stakeholders other than shareholders and also beyond that prescribed by the union and law contract. Two critical facets are noteworthy in their definition. Firstly, the responsibility must be freely adopted; socially responsible behaviors influenced by the coercive force of union or judiciary contract are not voluntary. Secondly, the responsibility is broad, going beyond the expected traditional duty to stockholders but involving other social groups such as neighboring communities, suppliers, customers, and employees. According to Thomas (1980), although many of the concerns and issues about CSR have not been resolved in the CSR discussion, one of the major contributions made in Jones's article was an emphasis on social responsibility as a process. His argument was that it is almost impossible to reach an agreement as to what constitutes socially responsible behavior,

and thus CSR ought to be seen as a process and not as a set of outcomes (p. 65). As important as Jones' (1980) contribution was, it did not have the debate around the extent and content of CSR that was expected of businesses (Carroll & Shabana, 2010).

In the same decade, Tuzzolino and Armandi (1981) used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to develop a better framework for assessing the social responsibility of organizations by recommending a need-hierarchy framework. The authors accepted Carroll's (1979) definition of CSR as appropriate for the purpose (p. 21), and they proposed that it could be helpful in developing an analytical framework that facilitates the operationalization of CSR. According to them, organizations like individuals have needs that need to be met or fulfilled as Maslow depicted in his need-hierarchy framework. Through the need-hierarchy framework, Tuzzolino and Armandi's (1981) conceptual tool could be used to assess an organization's socially responsible performance based on criteria such as profitability, organizational safety, industry and affiliation context, competitiveness and market position, and self-actualization as reflected in human needs such as physiological, safety, affiliation, esteem, and self-actualization depicted by Abraham Maslow.

In 1983, Carroll further expanded on his 1979 four-part CSR definition. In his view, social responsibility involves business conduct and social behavior that are economically profitable, abiding by the law, socially and ethically supportive. To be socially responsible Carroll (1983), posits that obedience to the law and profitability are the primary conditions for discussing an organization's ethics and the extent to which it offers support to the society it exists in with contributions of talent, time, money, and other resources. Therefore, CSR composes of four parts which include legal, economic, ethical, and philanthropic or voluntary (Carroll, 1983, p. 604). the discretionary component Carroll proposed in his 1979 article together with a legal

and economic, expectations were reoriented, broken down, and posited to involve philanthropy and/or voluntarism because they seem to be the best representation of discretionary activities.

Some other notable contributions in the 1980s came from scholars who were interested in the increasing interest of operationalizing CSR and examining its relations with financial performance. As a backdrop to several empirical studies conducted at the time, it could be noticed that scholars were concerned about research questions that examine if socially responsible organizations were also profitable corporations (Carroll, 1999). Any finding in support of the profitability of socially responsible organizations only strengthened the argument that supported the CSR movement. For instance, in examining the relationship between CSR and financial performance, Cochran and Wood (1984) used a reputation index (a manner by which CSR was operationalized in the past) as their measure for CSR. According to Carroll (1999), the reputation index was developed in 1970, and it was a measure that categorized an organization's CSR engagement as either outstanding, honorable mention, or worst. Although Cochran and Wood (1984) acknowledged the weaknesses of this measure of CSR measure and suggested that a new measure be developed (p. 55), their finding established some correlation between CSR and an organization's financial performance.

In summary, the 1980s witnessed research on the economic/financial profitability; voluntariness/philanthropy; law-abiding, social, and supportive aspect of CSR. CSR activities were found to increase organizational reputations, increase customers' confidence in the services and products of those engaging companies, and as a result boost profitability (Carroll, 1999). It was during that period that Freeman (1984) proposed the stakeholders theory. The theory, which was a systematic and

coherent expression of stakeholders' management (Lee, 2008), expresses the role and involvement of stakeholders in promoting CSR. A unique aspect of the theory is that it saw the purpose of an organization in a whole different manner. Within the framework of the theory, the fundamental issue became a firm's survival and emphasis on the difference between the economic and social goals of organizations became irrelevant (Lee, 2008). The development of the theory had some effect on CSR development because the survival of organizations is affected by various stakeholder groups such as customers, government, and employees and is not limited to shareholders alone. This was a result of Freeman's (1984) emphasis on the normative foundation and relationships that identified the inherent value of the interest of stakeholders who are non-shareholder.

In fact, issues concerning employment discrimination, environmental pollution, quality of work-life, employee safety and health, deterioration of urban life, consumer abuses, and abusiveness/ questionable practices of multinational organizations were the most prominent societal expectations and concerns of corporate behavior in the 1980s (Latapí et al., 2019). This context paved the way for scholars to incorporate the concepts of stakeholders' management and business ethics vocabulary into corporate behaviors discussions of the time.

By the 1990s, the notion of CSR became universally endorsed and promoted by individuals, and constituencies including the government, non-government organizations, and corporations (Lee, 2008). There were also some important international events that affected the sustainable development approach and the international view towards CSR and social behavior (Latapí et al., 2019), the United Nations (UN) summit that was held in Rio de Janeiro about Environment and Development.



That summit produced the Rio Declaration on environment and development, which led to the establishment of the European Environment Agency in the year 1990, the adoption of Agenda 21, which was a non-binding plan of action by the UN regarding sustainable development, the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and the adoption of the UN's Kyoto Protocol which was an intercontinental treaty that extended the 1992's UNFCCC that was committed to improving environmental issues and managing the negative effect of environmental pollutions (Latapí et al., 2019).

According to Lee, (2008), many of the major international organizations such as the World Bank, International Labor Organization, the UN, and the Organization of Economics and Development did not only endorse or support CSR but they also established guidelines and policies as well as setting up permanently staffed divisions that researched and promoted CSR (Lee, 2008). It could be argued that the reason CSR gained international appeal in the 1990s was perhaps the result of the recognition of international bodies and their approach to sustainable development and also globalization taking place at the time. Globalization intensified the operation of multinational firms which were faced with dissimilar business situations and the environment abroad and, conflicting pressures, expectations, and demands from both the host and home countries (Latapí et al., 2019). In a general statement, Carroll (1999) observed that only very few contributions were made to the definition of CSR in the 1990s. The CSR concept functioned as the building block, base point, and point-of-departure for other CSR-related themes and concepts, many of which were either somewhat compatible with it or which embraced CSR thinking.

Wood| (1991) was one of the major and earliest contributors to the CSR treatments that were developed in the 1990s. Her definition and CSR model were

however a development of the three-dimensional CSR model proposed by Carroll (1979) as well as Wartick and Cochran's (1985). She related Carroll's (1979) CSR principles that considered discretionary, ethical, legal, and economic CSR domains, and identified how they associated with CSR principles of managerial discretion at the individual level, public responsibility at the organizational level, and social legitimacy at the institutional level. Secondly, she went on to identify the organizational social responsiveness process in a way that went beyond Carroll's corporate responsiveness categories of proactive, accommodative, defensive and reactive and then highlighted the process as issues management, stakeholders' management, and environmental assessment. Thirdly, Wood (1991) took Wartick and Cochran's (1985) policies and reorganized them as results of corporate behavior, which included social policies, social programs and impacts. Unlike earlier models of CSR, Wood's model was more robust and also addressed matters that were not addressed earlier by previous models. CSR was placed into a wider context than merely a detached definition.

Carroll also revisited his four-part CSR definition in the same decade. At the time, he was already speaking about the discretionary component of CSR as philanthropic. According to Carroll (1991), CSR will have to be framed or outlined in a manner that captures the entire array of business responsibilities for it to be acceptable to a conscientious business person. The four types of social responsibility i.e. economic, philanthropic, ethical, and legal dimensions constitute total CSR and can be illustrated as a pyramid. Although the different CSR types had existed to some extent, the philanthropic and ethical functions were recently taking a significant place in literature (p. 40). At the bottom of the CSR pyramid is the economic category, the basis upon which all other CSR dimensions rest, and then the pyramid is built upwards to include the legal, ethical and philanthropic dimensions (Carroll, 1991, p. 42). The

ethical function shaped the organization's behavior beyond the responsibility of abiding by the law, and the philanthropic dimension concerns an organization's contribution to improving the society's welfare and quality of life. The four major responsibilities of any corporation were represented within the pyramid (Carroll, 1991).

The Pyramid was developed with the intention of providing managerial executives that wanted to balance their responsibility to an array of stakeholders and their commitment to stockholders with a useful and pragmatic means. The obligation to these various stakeholder groups originated from regulatory groups in the United States of America and also from new policies established by governmental bodies (Latapí et al., 2019). While it should be noted that the CSR pyramid was a mere graphical illustration of the different dimensions of CSR, business enterprises ought not to sequentially fulfill the dimension of CSR, but strive to fulfill each dimension at all times (Carroll, 1991). To state in clear managerial and pragmatic terms, the socially responsible organization should endeavor to make a profit, be a legal citizen by obeying the law, be ethical and maintain the status of a good corporate citizen (p. 43).

Another notable contribution to the literature came from Burke and Logsdon (1996) with their article entitled "How corporate social responsibility pays off". The authors examines CSR programs that are said to generate strategic benefits i.e., "pays off" for the organization, its stakeholders, and the wider society. Five factors which include visibility, centrality, proactivity, specificity, and voluntarism were identified as dimensions of corporate strategy that are critical to the organization's success and also valuable in relating CSR processes, programs, and policies to the firms' value creation (Burke & Logsdon, 1996). Value creation is usually regarded as a critical organizational objective and useful in its strategic decision-making process. Burke and

Logsdon (1996) highlighted using CSR as a strategic approach that could support core business operations and improve the engaging organization's effectiveness in achieving its bottom line.

In evaluating the possible contributions of an organization's CSR activities and engagements to value creation for the organization, the following dimensions are utilized :1) centrality; which measures how fit or close CSR program or policy are to the organization 's objectives and mission; 2) specificity, represents the firm's ability to internalize or capture the specific benefits of CSR, rather than creating nonspecific collective or public goods that are broadly available and shared by the society or community at large or others in the industry; 3) proactivity, which is discussed is light of how CSR behavior, program or policies is planned in anticipation of is planned in anticipation of crisis situation and in anticipation of emerging technological, social, economic, or political trends; 4) voluntarism, point toward the discretionary decision-making process by the CSR engaging organization that lacks, and is not influenced by externally imposed compliance requirements.

According to Burke and Logsdon (1996), organizations habitually engage in decision-making and voluntary behaviors in issues regarding core business functions such as new product introduction and product lines. These operational business activities are regarded as voluntary in the sense that the organization maintains a high level of discretion and control over daily activities. With regards to CSR, for example, an airline organization will surpass the minimum standard for safety or quality, going beyond airport authorities' maintenance and inspection requirements exhibits voluntarism. While these activities offer both social and strategic responsibility payoffs, organizational executives could be subject to pressure from social networks to contribute to their charity of choice (Burke & Logsdon, 1996).

Visibility is the fifth dimension of corporate strategy that is critical and valuable in relating CSR processes, programs, and policies to the firm's value creation. It denotes the recognizable and observable credits to the organization from external and internal stakeholders. Visibility can have either negative or positive consequences for the organization. Favorable media presence and mentions are positive forms of visibility while negative ones include instances of damaging visibility including the case of poisoning or discovery of dangerous side effects from products or otherwise beneficent drugs, or the discovery of toxic contamination in waste disposal sites. The implementation and application of strategic CSR through the above-discussed five dimensions could translate into measurable and identifiable strategic outcomes by means of the firm's value creation. However, it is limited to economic benefits for the organization (Burke & Logsdon, 1996; Latapí et al., 2019).

The value created by CSR activities that organizations engage in is the critical measure of the strategic benefits that stem from CSR. The readily quantifiable and assessable stream of economic benefits which an organization expects to receive is what Burke and Logsdon (1996) termed "value creation". While Burke and Logsdon's (1996) work can be closely associated with attempts from earlier researchers in the field who made an attempt at establishing the relationship between CSR and economic performance, Burke and Logsdon (1996) are arguably the first researchers to assess the benefits and strategic outcome of strategically implemented CSR activities for the engaging organization. Organizations attempt to create or creates value in their business activities through investments in customer services, training, production facilities, new technology, brand awareness, and new product, to the extent that these activities are integrated with CSR goals or objectives because such CSR programs are most likely to generate economic benefit to the firm.

The debate around CSR extended to include the “triple bottom line” concept in the 1990s. The triple bottom line notion related to CSR was conceived in 1994 by John Elkington, as a framework for sustainability that balances an organization’s economic, environmental, social impact. According to him, for an organization to be sustainable, it has to simultaneously take into account people, profit, and the planet. Some researchers have attributed the social focus of CSR to people, meaning that CSR is aimed at enhancing the welfare of people or society at large; the economic aspect focus on profit, increasing the firm’s economic portfolio, acting profitably, lowering cost; while environmental focus relates to the plant, improving ecological quality and natural environment (Jamali et al., 2015).

Elkington (1998) later explained the way by which an organization can achieve an exceptional triple bottom line performance. According to Elkington (1998), this could be achieved through long-term and effective partnerships between the public and private sectors and among stakeholders. In the 1990s, the triple bottom line idea became popular as a pragmatic approach to sustainability. Its relevance in the CSR literature was a result of its ability to show that organizations need to maintain environmental or socially responsible behavior that could positively align and balance with their economic objectives (Latapí et al., 2019). The integration of social, ethical, and environmental values into an organization's business model, brand, and strategy could increase attractiveness of the organization (Jamali et al., 2015).

Based on Burke and Logsdon's (1996) and Elkington's (1998) summation which has been informed by earlier CSR studies through the decades, it could be argued that an organization’s HRM function could potentially provide both the operational and strategic support to CSR and close integration of those could generate strategic outcome and create value such as organizational attractiveness and joining

intention for the engaging organization. Although the outcome of millennial joining intentions and CSR motive perception may not be easily identified and captured in an economic term as suggested in Burke and Logsdon's (1996) article about the payoffs of CSR, what's important is that the body of literature could be further developed in that CSR pays off need not be quantifiable in economic terms and also that an important strategic relationship could exist between CSR and HRM that needs to be systematically and sufficiently explored.

There are some relevant events in the new millennium, the year 2000, and the 21st century that further expanded CSR recognition and its implementation. The United Nations Global Compact –UNGC, was created at the time to fill the gaps with regard to environmental and social issues (Latapí et al., 2019). The UNGC's most remarkable achievement was in establishing and defining ten (10) principles that guide the corporate act and behaviour of its member which was made up of twelve (12) civil and two (2) labour society organizations, forty-four (44) multinationals, and six (6) business association. The members were expected to incorporate the principles which were focused on anti-corruption, environment, and labour, human rights, and attention towards social behaviour and responsibility, into their procedures, policies, and strategies, with the aim of establishing a good corporate culture. However, the UNGC was never at any time directly linked to CSR (Latapí et al., 2019).

In 2000, the UN proposed its Millennium Declaration with eight (8) Millennium Development Goals –MDGs, although the discussions around the goals were not directly associated with CSR. However, it was only a year after the establishment of the UNGC and the adoption of the MDG that CSR began being promoted as a distinct strategy in Europe. This occurred around the same time when a green paper entitled “Promoting a European framework for CSR” was presented by

the European commission-EC to address new social concerns and expectations of the time, such as the increasing concern about the environmental effect of economic dealings and activities. The green paper particularly presented a European perspective on CSR that intended at reflecting and integrating it into the broader international context (European Commission, 2001). After this first step, the EC has led a series of discussions and campaigns to promote the European perspective on CSR which is based on the understanding of CSR as the obligation or responsibility of organizations for their impacts on the wider society, and it goes on to outline what organizations should do to meet those obligations.

In 2015, CSR Europe proposed to set the direction of organizations in Europe, as well as develop an inclusive and broad sustainable economy (CSR Europe, 2016). In that regards it launched a manifesto, the enterprise 2020 manifesto which can be understood to be a response to both the UN's MDG and the EU's strategy on CSR (Latapí et al., 2019). Mainly because of its strategic approach to guaranteeing value creation for stakeholders, the manifesto was possibly one of the most significant contributions to CSR in Europe (CSR Europe, 2016). The enterprise manifesto concentrates on generating value for its stakeholders through the one thousand (1, 000) organizations reached through its network by focusing on five (5) key areas: 1. impact on the society through promoting sustainable and responsible business practices 2. financial stability 3. The assessment of environmental impact in a bid to determine those areas that require improvement 4. Employee engagement that is focused on developing individuals, as well as enhancing the organization's capacity 5. Membership satisfaction and engagement which is supposed to ensure the continuity of CSR Europe's work to achieve societal impact and its proposed mission.



International certificates have also influenced the global recognition of CSR. For instance, the International Organization for Standardization -ISO 26000 (guidance and issues on social responsibility) was developed based on a multi-stakeholder approach involving professionals from over ninety (90) countries and forty (40) broadly-based regional or international organizations that are involved in different CSR aspects. The professional involved stakeholder groups included government, consumers, labor, industry, non-governmental organizations -NGOs; academics, research, service, support, and others. Specific provisions were made to attain a balance between developed and developing countries.

The scope covered by ISO 26000 includes the definition, terms, and concepts of CSR; characteristics, trends, and background of CSR; practices and principles relating to socially responsible behavior; core issues and the subject of social responsibility; promoting, integrating, and implementing socially responsible behavior in organizations and through practice and policies within its influence sphere; engaging and identifying stakeholders; communicating performance, commitment and other relevant and related information to CSR (ISO, 2010). According to ISO 26000 (2010), the principles of a socially responsible organization include transparency, accountancy, respect for stakeholders' interests, ethical behaviors, respect for intention norm of behavior, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

ISO 26000 also highlighted core issues and subjects of CSR including; human rights-political and civil rights, social, economic, and cultural rights, right to work and fundamental principles; labor practices-social dialogue, safety and health at work, social protection and work conditions, employment relationships, training, and human development; the environment-environmental protection, restoration of natural habitat, sustainable resources, pollution prevention, mitigation of climate change; fair

operating practices-fair competition, respect for property rights, anti-corruption, responsible political involvement; consumer issues; sustainable consumption, awareness and education, fair marketing, unbiased and factual information, consumer privacy and data protection; community development and involvement (ISO, 2010). ISO 26000 is relevant in the CSR Movement because of the guidelines it provides for business to be socially responsible, and as a result of this, more than 80 countries has adopted it as a guideline for CSR (Latapí et al., 2019).

The early years of the 21st century saw other contributions to the CSR concept through academic literature.

Smith (2001) described CSR as the obligation of an organization to its stakeholders – everyone affected by the firm’s corporate practices and policies. The obligation goes beyond legal requirements and the organization’s duty to its stakeholders. This definition shows and also reinforces earlier CSR definition which suggests that CSR scope (from the perspective of the business) is inclusive of broader stakeholder groups. The organization’s fulfillment of its responsibility is proposed to maximize the long-term beneficial impact and minimize any harm of the organization to the society (Smith 2001, p.142). This CSR definition also speaks to the strategic perspective of CSR in order that an organization will be able to benefit from society. It was also reaffirmed by Lantos (2001) who highlighted that the 21st-century society will demand that organizations make social challenges and issues a part of their strategy.

### **2.3.2 The Notion of Strategic CSR**

The strategic CSR idea has been around for some time, as seen in previous sections, with discussion from scholars like Burke and Logsdon (1996), and from other earlier researchers who emphasized that organizations ought to convert their socially

responsible actions and initiatives into an avenue to generate economic or financial benefits. Strategic CSR include an organization's ability to invest in long-term innovative resources and having a focus on both economic and social value creation (Rhee et al., 2021). Other studies also highlight that CSR and profitability ought not to be incompatible (Jamali, 2007). The notion of strategic CSR can be illustrated by the idea that organizational socially responsible behavior and philanthropic contribution are being aligned with the business strategies and goals, thereby balancing and reconciling the social benefits with economic returns and performance (Jamali, 2007; Lantos, 2001).

Lantos's (2001) CSR definition which included a strategic consideration to it, was built on by Smith's (2001) study, as shown in the previous section. Lantos (2001) posited that CSR involves the responsibility or obligation that stems from the implicit social agreement or contract between the society and businesses wherein business are expected to be responsive to the society's long-term wants and needs, to minimize the negative impact of their activities on the society and optimize its positive effect on society (p.9). He states that strategic CSR is shown when an organization embarks on certain community caring services or activities that promote the achievement of its strategic business goals (Latapí et al., 2019). Chandler and Werther (2013) portray it as "the process of incorporating CSR perspective into an organization's core operation and strategic planning so that the organization is not only managed in the interests of stakeholders but to achieve maximum social and economic value over a long to medium term period" (p. 65) CSR becomes strategic when it becomes part of the organization's management plan and tactics to generate profits (Lantos, 2001). This means that the organization would only take part in activities and initiatives that can be assumed as socially responsible only if they culminate in economic and financial

returns for the organization and not essentially to achieving a rounded approach as suggested by Elkington's (1998) triple bottom line idea.

It can thus be suggested that strategic CSR of an organization will widely involve any philanthropic activity that the organization and its board perceive will result in a long-term gain for the company. The benefits of strategic CSR could either be tangible and direct or intangible. Tangible gains include increased loyalty and goodwill among potential customers or other stakeholders such as potential job candidates, while intangible benefits include untapped financial returns and new business avenues. In addition to strategic CSR, Lantos (2001) highlighted altruistic and ethical CSR as other CSR kinds. Altruistic CSR is caring, voluntary, and true, even at possible organizational or personal sacrifice while ethical CSR is the mandate and demand for organizations to be morally responsible in preventing harm and injuries that could be caused as a result of their activities. Lantos's (2001) explanation, precisely those about strategic CSR contributed to the discussion about CSR and further expanded debates about the inherent link between the 'strategic' notions of CSR which makes up a part of this study.

Correspondingly, a new overview of the concept of corporate sustainability and strategic CSR was presented by Marrewijk (2003). According to him this novel societal approach to CSR is an organization's strategic response to challenges the organization will face as a result of the expected responsibilities and evolving roles of the organization in each sector of the society. Organizations are able to respond to challenges by implementing and integrating the different levels of CSR into their structure (Van Marrewijk, 2003). According to Marrewijk (2003) the contemporary understanding of CSR is corporate sustainability; interpreted to be in his holistic CSR perspective as CSR being motivated by organizations' search for sustainability. In

providing a contemporary overview of CSR based on philosophical analyses, historical perspectives, practical considerations and the impact of changing situation and contexts, it was discovered that “CSR is not a one size fit all” notion. As a result, more CSR description that matches the ambition, awareness and developmental levels of organizations should be presented (Van Marrewijk, 2003).

Werther and Chandler (2005) further explored the strategic responses that organizations make to the specificities of their developing social context. Their first work concentrated on implanting strategic CSR as part of an organization’s brand management efforts. This was to enable the engaging organization to maintain and achieve legitimacy and competitiveness in the context of a globalized brand. The significance of their work can be seen in the emphasis that was placed on CSR shift, transforming CSR to a portion of strategic necessity, rather than receiving a mere minimal commitment from organizations (Werther & Chandler, 2005, p 319). Although the writers posit that the integration of strategic CSR must stem from the organization’s genuine commitment to self-analysis and change, the main contribution that is of interest to this study stems from their perspective that regards CSR as a strategic necessity. Hence, this shows how CSR could be indispensable to any organization.

A year after, the notion of strategic CSR was further extended by Porter and Kramer (2006). They explained that organizations can attain a competitive edge over other companies through strategic CSR when the engaging organization can use a strategic approach to address their competitive context of operation, create value that benefits the society, and simultaneously enhance its competitiveness. The company’s responsibility is to look inside out and map out its value ‘chain’s social impact, then identify the negative and positive effects of its activity on the society and then pay

attention to those with the greatest strategic value (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Secondly, the organization should look outside-in to get an understanding of the impact its social context has on its productivity, implementation, and execution of its strategic plans (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

In this way, the organization would have the ability to comprehend its interrelationship with the social context where it is embedded and therefore adapt its strategy accordingly. According to Latapí et al. (2019), Porter and Kramer's (2006) work provides a new perspective with which to understand the strategic nature of CSR and the interdependence between society and business through a more holistic approach, instead of through a limited goal-oriented perspective. If an organization's CSR is focused on certain limited objectives such as (a tool for attaining and managing reputational status, achieving operational license, or addressing stockholder's satisfaction) and without a holistic attitude to it, it could limit the organization's potential to support its corporate goal and create social benefits. With such orientation, it is possible that many CSR engagements and initiatives could be perceived differently by stakeholders and attributed to different perceived motivations for engagement.

The idea of creating value and attaining competitive advantage through strategic CSR was also addressed by Heslin and Ochoa (2008). In their study, they argued that even strategic CSR needs to follow some principles even though the CSR practices are effectively tailor-made with the inside-out and outside-in approach. Using twenty-one (21) exemplary CSR practices, it was detected that principles of the greening of the supply chain, customer involvement, profiting from by-products, minimizing environmental footprint, protection of labor welfare, and developing of the needed talent guides the strategic CSR initiatives of the observed organisation. The importance of Heslin and Ochoa's (2008) study comes from the understanding that an

organization can improve its business opportunity and strategic values while providing benefits to the social environment it operates in.

So far, it could be suggested that the strategic CSR notion is also about the belief that generating shared values between the society, stakeholders and the business became the driver for incorporating societal issues and concerns into the CSR policies and practices of businesses. Thus CSR, and precisely the strategic notion of it has been understood as possessing the potential to generate shared values and in addressing societal concerns. It has become difficult for organizations to discount the appeal of strategic CSR. The ability for an organization to deliver value to shareholders, simultaneously promote societal value and meet societal expectations (i.e. doing good while doing well) is certainly a desired scenario for organizations. More so, given the persistent pressure by shareholders and investors for accountability and increased returns, the CSR trend will possibly be toward more strategic-type initiatives and interventions in the future (Jamali, 2007; Lantos, 2001).

This is practically the case in developing nations like Nigeria where CSR drivers tend to be weak, where organizations are expected to undertake many responsibilities due to the failure of the government to provide essentials amenities, and where severe macroeconomics challenges such as unemployment, inflation, poor economic growth and other constraints that could divert organization's attention or focus on securing stockholder's return and basic viability (Jamali, 2007; Uduji et al., 2020). As a result of this, firms' CSR activities are usually distanced or unrelated to business goals. However, organizations in such a situation could, according to Van Marrewijk (2003) respond by taking a context-focused approach to strategic CSR and by understanding that business has new roles to play within its specific society of

operation and consequently has to adapt its CSR engagement to respond to challenges around so as to remain sustainable.

## **2.4 CSR Motive**

Stakeholders are increasingly not only concerned about the corporate social responsibility (CSR) engagement and CSR performance level of organizations. Although CSR initiatives demonstrate the commitment of an organization to positively impact both internal and external stakeholder groups including employees, consumers, competitors, government and non-government organizations, the society, the natural environment, and future generations (Turker, 2009), several studies report a negative relationship between CSR engagement and stakeholders outcome or behavior (Aljarah et al., 2022). In this regard and among some other factors, the motivation underlying organizational CSR engagement is an important factor that has been found to equally affect, encourage (or discourage) stakeholders' response to organizations' CSR endeavors (Donia et al., 2019; Ikhida et al., 2021; Ogunmokun et al., 2021). In other words, stakeholders' assessment, perception, or attribution concerning the motive behind an organization's CSR initiative or engagement significantly affects their decision, and relationship, and shapes subsequent behavior e.g. word of mouth, joining intention, and outcomes such as skepticism, affective commitment, etc. towards the engaging organization. Hence, it is important to discuss CSR motive, which has mainly been comprehended from the perspective of attribution theory.

Kelley's (1973) attribution theory addresses causal inferences observers (people) make. These inferences are usually arrived at from the observer's common sense, certain cognitive processes, personal observation, and assessment over time and by observing the behavioral patterns of the observed target across situations. It presumes that people infer the observed motivation to act, interpret the observed



actions, either good/bad or success/failure at face value, and then use their interpretation as information to arrive at a reason why the observed behaves the way they behave(d) (Kelley, 1973; Ogunmokun, Timur, Bayighomog, et al., 2021). In simple terms, “what caused the observed behavior?” is the basic inference to be made. Therefore, people try to understand why an organization engages in CSR. While the observer’s perceived attributions of CSR motive are generally shaped by accessible CSR information about the engaging organization, attributions frequently represent the observer's personal evaluation (Kang & Atkinson, 2021). Furthermore, an observer’s cognitive assessment could be shaped by contextual factors; such factors contribute to and also influence how the observer evaluates signals received from an organization’s CSR activities or CSR communication (Ikhida et al., 2021). Accordingly, it is vital to be aware of the different CSR motive categorizations that an organization’s CSR activities, engagement, or CSR communication may engender among stakeholders. This is because perceived CSR motivation can be the basis for other reactions/responses an organization may get from a stakeholder or the wider society it operates in.

Stakeholders could perceive an organization's CSR motive as either public-serving or company-seeking (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Ikhida et al., 2021). While CSR motive has commonly been divided into two primary categories, several alternative terms have been used in the literature to refer to these fundamental classifications.

#### **2.4.1 Perceived Altruism of CSR-(PA)**

The basis for pro-social actions like philanthropy or CSR practice is altruism (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017). Generally described as an unselfish behavior towards others, exalting ‘others’ welfare above one’s own and without an inclination

toward reciprocation (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017), altruism has been studied because of its relevance to understanding social behaviors. Organizations can be identified as altruist when CSR initiatives are performed with the motive of doing good, fulfilling societal obligation, or engaging in CSR practices that transcend transactional benefits (e.g., reputation enhancement or positive advocacy) for the firm; which earlier research suggest as “payback for CSR” (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2007,p. 225). Perceived CSR-based altruism refers to stakeholders overall assessment of a firm’s motive for CSR as genuinely enhancing the welfare of the society even at the expense of the organization's benefits, and without expected payback (Rim et al., 2016). Therefore, the public-seeking CSR motive describes an organization’s commitment to CSR due to its desire to genuinely contribute or impact stakeholders without expected reciprocity from a target stakeholder group.

In the literature, public-serving CSR motivation has closely been associated with concepts like “other-centered” CSR motive (Becker-Olsen et al, 2006; Ogunmokun et al., 2021), “substantive, cause-serving, authentic, stakeholder-driven, value-driven, intrinsic and altruistic” CSR motivation (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; María and Perez, 2018; Ikhida et al., 2021). CSR-based altruist behaviors are devoid of company-seeking interests but full of pure motive and moral intention (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017). With this CSR motive, an organization is commonly construed as a giver (Donia & Tetrault, 2016) and stakeholders trust the benevolent character of the organization. As a result, public-serving CSR motivation has been associated with a more positive response, behavior, and outcome from stakeholders (María and Perez, 2018; Aljarah et al., 2022). However, it is also emphasized in the literature that individual perception of altruistic CSR behavior

determines whether an organization's CSR deeds will be met with indifference, commendation, or condemnation (Carlson & Zaki, 2018).

PA has recently been emphasized by scholars in understanding stakeholders' engagement with organizational CSR, since company-seeking motives i.e CSR-based OA have not always been met with favorable stakeholder perception, but increased CSR skepticism (Rim et al., 2020). Stakeholders' perception of CSR motives as altruism is more likely to lower CSR skepticism (Ramasamy et al., 2020). Other researchers have, on the contrary, argued that however altruistic an organization's CSR behavior may seem, it is in core driven by company interest (Carlson & Zaki, 2018). It has also been argued that CSR motive cannot be fully public-serving, devoid of company-seeking interest, or carrying an undertone of expected reciprocity (Rim et al., 2016). The explanation for that argument is that CSR activities are never kept anonymous or remain uncommunicated to the public (Kotek et al., 2018).

#### **2.4.2 CSR-based Organizational Attractiveness (CSR-based OA)**

Given the strategic importance of millennial talent as competitive enablers for today's business, attracting and managing this cohort cannot be sidelined by organizations. As organizations in the corporate world compete for human resources (Ikhide et al., 2019), employer branding, which is the marketing aspect of human resources or talent management, is becoming an important corporate strategy to respond to the challenges firms face in attracting and maintaining human capital (Kumari & Saini, 2018). Kumari and Saini (2018) assert that employer brand strategy encompasses the practices, tools, and principles by which an organization creates its reputation, brand, or image to specific stakeholders. CSR practice is an observable attribute of an organization's brand that can be controlled by the organization and evaluated by stakeholders (Ronda et al., 2018). That is, an employer branding strategy

based on CSR practice can be used by organizations to create and signal a positive corporate image.

CSR-based organizational branding carries company-seeking motives (Du et al., 2007; Wongpitch et al., 2016). Organizations can influence stakeholders perception by making information about their organization CSR practice, values, and morals (Carlini et al., 2019). While stakeholders are able to holistically evaluate organizations based on signals they receive from organizations branding effort, Carlini et al (2019) posits that CSR-based organizational attractiveness is the cognitive impression that target stakeholder's (potential millennial job applicants) have and develop about an organization as a place of possible employment. The impression is developed based on the organization CSR activities. According to Klimkiewicz and Oltra (2017) CSR-based OA could be regarded as a symbolic employer attribute. Just like other symbolics organizational feature, CSR is also an intangible and abstract quality a firm's branding that stakeholders can identify with. They also leave an impression on the minds of potential employees because it can help enhance their self-image, maintain a self-identity, express their values or impress others around them (Kumari & Saini, 2018).

Company-seeking CSR motivation are those CSR practices engaged in by an organization that stakeholders perceive to be performed with the aim of avoiding some form of rebuke/punishment or with the intention of getting some reciprocity such as enhancing reputational value, improving economic and financial benefits, boosting sales or organizational attractiveness (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; María and Perez, 2018). This means that an organization is considered to have ulterior motives, and is mainly concerned about attaining its own benefits and welfare through CSR practices (Kang & Atkinson, 2021). CSR practices associated with company-seeking motives

could be impactful for society, however, stakeholders just perceive that the engaging organization is being strategic with its CSR activities and initiatives (Ikhide et al., 2021). Thus, this can be regarded as the business case for CSR.

Concepts akin to CSR-based organizational attractiveness can be found in the literature. They include “substantive, self-serving, egoistic-driven, and extrinsic-driven” CSR motives (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Donia et al., 2019; Aljarah et al., 2022). Unlike CSR-based altruistic motivation, company-seeking CSR motivation has frequently been associated with negative stakeholder responses and unfavorable outcomes in the literature (María & Perez, 2018). For instance, attribution of company-seeking CSR motive was found to make employees feel less proud and unwilling to associate with their organization than employees working in an organization with public-serving CSR motivation (Donia et al., 2019). The reason is that an organization’s image could also be a reflection of its employee and in other instances; employees deduce that the organization may also act disingenuously and in a self-serving manner towards them. In the literature, it has also been reported that consumers consider organizations whose CSR initiative has been attributed to self-seeking motive as manipulative, calculating and unreliable (Aljarah et al., 2022).

Despite the unfavorable response and behavioral action stakeholders may display towards an organization when CSR practices are perceived as having a firm-seeking, rather than an authentic and public-serving motivation, some studies argue strongly against this linearity perspective. Firm-seeking CSR motive attribution may not always be met with negative or unfavorable stakeholders' responses and public-serving motive with a positive and favorable response (Ellen et al., 2006; Ikhide et al., 2021). Other studies also confirm that negative responses from stakeholders regarding firm-seeking CSR motive can be neutralized or reduced especially when some public-

serving attribution is also available (María & Perez, 2018). As contrasting as this may seem, it shows that both CSR motive attribution can co-occur within stakeholders. In other words, stakeholders can cognitively evaluate an organization's CSR and occasionally develop a mix of both CSR-based organization attractiveness and perceived altruistic CSR motive attribution concurrently (Ellen et al., 2006; Ogunmokun and Timur, 2021). Buttressing this point, millennial employees were found to be attracted to and inclined to pursue employment with organizations whose CSR motivation was perceived as seeking the interest of the society as well as enhancing the attractiveness of the organization (Ikhide et al., 2021).

It is worthy of note that contextual/situational factors such as resource availability, socio-cultural, and economic factors could engender mixed or different CSR motives perceptions. However, in the long run, it is the stronger CSR motive attribution that largely influences how stakeholders' CSR-related decisions or behavior are affected (María & Perez, 2018). Other factors are the perceived fit between the company, its image and core offering, and the CSR activities engaged in. A close or high fit between an organization's CSR activities and the organization's brand image, positioning, target market, or product line could cause stakeholders to attribute motives targeted at benefiting others (akin to public-serving CSR motive) (Ellen et al., 2006; Ogunmokun and Timur, 2021). As evidenced by this discourse, stakeholders are keen about the authenticity of firms' CSR activities and the reason behind organizations' selected CSR initiatives. This societal concern around CSR endeavors makes it vital to have an understanding of the different CSR motive perceptions, the cognitive process involved in attributing CSR motives based on a firm CSR communication and signals, as well as the effect on ensuing stakeholder action and behavioral outcome.

## **2.5 The Generation Cohort-Millennial**

Millennial, like other generational cohorts, is a group of individuals born into and shaped by the same socio-cultural and historical context (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). They may be born within a range of years apart from each other but they are born in a period that generated similar life events or experiences, common social and historical happenings that members of a particular generational cohort share (Rank & Contreras, 2021). They thereby develop shared values, expectations, and attributes that impact their social behaviors and pattern, as well as professional and personal work-life as a result of being born in the same period of time (Onukwuba, 2020). While the bulk of today's labor force comprises four major generational cohorts, which include baby boomers, Generation (Gen) X, Gen Y also known as millennials, and Gen Z, the birth-year period or boundaries of each generation cohort is largely debatable in literature (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Rank & Contreras, 2021), but the focus of this study is Millennial.

Gen Y, who are also referred to as millennia were born in the transition periods between the Cold War and economic globalization; around the mid-1970s to early 2000s (Nolan, 2015; Waples & Brachle, 2020). Unlike other generations at work, millennials make up a huge part of employees at work. It has been projected that they will account for 75% of the global labor force by 2025 (Rank & Contreras, 2021). Millennial seems to be attracting special attention in the literature and practice globally, as they make up the majority of the present employee base. The growing presence of this generational cohort in the workplace has produced a lot of interest among scholars researching organizations, with particular attention on the generational shift and changing dynamics in the workplace (Onukwuba, 2020). Despite the recognition and attention placed on millennials as dominating today's workplaces,

limited research has been carried out with regards to understanding the preference and needs of millennials within the African context (Onukwuba, 2020).

This generation cohort is portrayed as having different work ethics and expectations of their work-life than experienced and older colleagues. In addition to flexible working hours, autonomy, work-life balance, and constant feedback, they have been found to be sensitive to environmental issues and are attracted to socially responsible organizations (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Rank & Contreras, 2021). Each generation has defining events that impact their views about society and other important life-impacting situations. Millennial has a list of defining moments that shaped them in their formative year; many of the occurrences and trend also affected their baby boomers' parents, but inclusive of rapid technological development that surround the time they were born, their growth and development (Nolan, 2015; Onukwuba, 2020). Some of these events include the Persian Gulf War, major natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the Asian tsunami, and extensive usage of technology, mobile phones, the internet, cameras, and other information and communication devices, including the internet, cell phones, laptops, I-pads, computer games, digital cameras.

Millennials are distinctive from earlier generations because they have been shaped by and immersed in technological development. Many scholars have referred to them as natives of the digital revolution and globalization, who have huge access to non-stop and rapid flow and exchange of information, especially when compared to previous generations (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021; Waples & Brachle, 2020). They make use of the power of technology, which allows them to be knowledgeable and informed about world events, remain connected, and have information about family, friends, and organizational brands (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021). This



has made it easier for millennials to evaluate CSR initiatives and policies of the organization they may or may not find attractive (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). This generational cohort has proven to be intolerant of unethical practices, take front about green-related issues, and tend to be in support of organizational disposition to strategic CSR (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021). They take good concern for ethical issues, believing that they stand a chance at making a difference in the world, even though their employment with socially responsible firms (Ikhide et al., 2021).

Although millennials are highly socially motivated they are also very materialistic and self-centered. When compared with the older generation, millennials have been found to value employment with organizations that provide more extrinsic rewards such as income, advancement opportunity, and status rather than those offering more intrinsic values (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021; Rank & Contreras, 2021). While this means that millennial do not necessarily seek employment based on 'meaningfulness' and satisfaction Waples and Brachle (2020) highlights the contrasting view and mixed findings regarding attempts to understand millennial attraction and retention. Some scholars have referred to the findings of millennial's attraction and retention as contradicting and confusing, thus confirming the need for ongoing research about their expectations (Waples & Brachle, 2020).

## **2.6 Joining Intention**

The changing demography of employees at work has caused research on recruitment and job pursuit intention to increase in the last decade (Warmerdam et al., 2015). There is a need to understand how to effectively attract and recruit talented employees because for an employer to be selective with job applicants it must generate a large pool of applicants from which they can hire. If this criterion is unmet and if the size and quality of the pool are relatively small and low, the organization's recruitment

aim may be affected. Furthermore, significant resources including time, effort, and money is usually invested or spent to attract and recruit potential employees (Warmerdam et al., 2015) now millennial.

It was mentioned in an earlier section that millennials will make up to 75 percent of the world's working population by 2025 (Rank & Contreras, 2021). While many studies make reference to an aging and retiring workforce, the trend is to a degree offset by the influx of millennials, who have been found to bring a new set of expectations, competence such as technological capabilities, and digital skill and demands to the contemporary workplace. Their skill and competence will not only be critical to business competitiveness but this generational cohort will be leading corporations shortly (Nolan, 2015). A war for millennial talent is imminent, which can be described by fierce competition amongst organizations to attract this generational cohort (Nolan, 2015). An organization's ability to attract and retain millennials will be important for the firm's survival and thus it is becoming an existential challenge for organizations to create or maintain a work environment that this generation wants to be a part of and work for (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). Therefore issues of talent management and employer branding have become more of a key concern of employers in the 21st century (Sharma & Prasad, 2018).

Maintaining an attractive employer brand, which has been depicted as an organization's efforts to promote itself as an employer of choice amongst other organizations through the process of showcasing what makes it unique and desirable as a favorable option, is critical for the purpose of recruitment and for strengthening the firm's relationship with stakeholders (Ruchika & Prasad, 2019), including potential employees. Employer branding is referred to in the literature as the marketing aspect of HRM. The different features of employer branding that organizations emphasize are

CSR and ethics, work-life balance, belongingness and acceptance, and company reputation (Sharma & Prasad, 2018). Employer branding with a focus on areas of interest such as CSR and ethics enhances and supports joining intention (Ruchika & Prasad, 2019; Sharma & Prasad, 2018). In other words, for an organization to gain an appealing reputation or employer brand, which eventually sets the tune for pursuit intention, it has to be strategic in marketing itself on several factors that prospective employees could be attracted to and as well evaluate before applying for a job position. The idea is that an organization's image before stakeholders may promote (or foil) a candidate's job choice, pursuit intention, and acceptance.

Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003) have been major contributors in this area, stating that employer branding and by extension, its attractiveness can be a surrogate evaluation of a potential job applicant's inclination to pursue employment with the organisation. In the recruitment literature, pursuit intention denotes an individual's desire to apply for a job or vacant position in an organization with or without giving himself/herself pursuit behavior ( Turban & Keon, 1993). It could also portray the applicant's decision, interest, and willingness to apply for an employment position with a particular employer, this does not only include thoughts that indicate further action about an organization, but also actions such as applying for a vacant position, accepting invitation offers, and accepting a job offer (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003).

Prospective employees and job seekers form certain beliefs about potential employers even before finding employment with them, just like customers develop a belief about services and products without using them. According to Sharma and Prasad (2018), such beliefs provide the foundation and basis upon which the job applicant's decision to reject or accept the job offer. The branding and marketing

strategies of organizations could result in anonymous perceptions and beliefs from stakeholders (Sharma & Prasad, 2018). It was added that how job candidates perceive an employer brand and form their attitude towards it are factors associated with job pursuit intention. Although prospective job applicants may not have comprehensive information about the organization they may be interested in, they, however, tend to assess it through various signal and branding activities such as recruitment messages, websites, promotional activities information from other stakeholders, etc. (Sharma & Tanwar, 2021). The joining intention of candidates is developed and informed based on the mental schema they have about the organization according to received signals and organizational characteristics.

## **Chapter 3**

### **HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

This chapter presents the theoretical argument and conceptual reasoning behind the hypothesized relationships between variables in the current dissertation. Insights from extant and current studies as found in the literature are employed to guide the establishment of both the direct and indirect relationships between constructs.

#### **3.1 Hypotheses Development**

##### **3.1.1 Perceived CSR and Joining Intention.**

Attracting quality employees is vital for the survival of any firm, and employers with poor reputations are less likely to attract competent job seekers (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). Although this stance has been consistently stated in the recruitment literature, it could also be argued that socially responsible organizations are more likely to portray a positive image that would attract millennial talent (Kumari & Saini, 2018). As the older generation leaves the workforce, organizations are left to hire the millennials; the emerging workforce that seeks meaningful employment with organizations that are involved with the community, have a strong social and environmental agenda as part of their company values, and in general have a socially responsible image (Waples & Brachle, 2020). The values millennials hold (e.g., engaging in a cause bigger than themselves and wanting to make a difference) can be argued to be the reason for their attraction to socially responsible employers (Alonso-Almeida & Lluch, 2019). In view of this, organizations can use their CSR practices to

signal to potential millennial employees and enhance their overall organization image by communicating their CSR information.

Millennials correspondingly evaluate an organization's signal and can consider pursuing employment with them based on their actual CSR practice and communicated CSR information. Since an organization's CSR practice is not only desirable by the wider society, but also an issues of high importance and much sensitivity to millennials, this generational cohort would tend to connect and identify socially responsible firms. According to Lievens and Slaughter (2016) and Turner et al. (2019), this stance consistent with findings that posits CSR as a symbolic attribute that many firms can take on because stakeholders are pleased to identify with organizations that has an image of 'doing good' for the environment or their immediate society. But, what has been covered and discussed in extant literature is a blanket impression and overview of millennials; usually with regards to their general assessment of organizations, joining intention and employment decision, and their inclination to reject or accept employment offers based on an organization's socially responsible profile. (Waples & Brachle, 2020). This deduction was mainly arrived at by examining millennials in societies that are developed and organized. But, other contexts in which millennials are embedded should also be considered (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019) because this can shed light on the divergences and specifics that can be pertinent for HRM and CSR. We, therefore, propose that:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a relationship between perceived CSR of an organization and millennials' intention to join that organization.

### **3.1.2 PA and CSR-based OA as Mediators**

The inconclusive and inadequate state of research concerning CSR and millennial joining intention (Waples & Brachle, 2020), the associated cost of

successfully attracting millennials in a competitive environment, the level of sensitivity millennials have toward CSR and the effect of varying contextual factors that affect both CSR engagement and employment decision (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019) require examining CSR-related predictor of joining intention and the underlying relationship between CSR and joining intentions. According to Ogunmokun, Timur and Bayighomog, et al. (2021) stakeholders make causal attributions, which are cognitive processes based on the perception that explain events such as organizational CSR engagements. CSR-based OA and PA of CSR are proposed mediators that could play a major role in gaining in-depth insight into the indirect relationship between perceived CSR and the joining intention of millennials.

Although a company's CSR initiative displays its commitment to positively impact its society and environment, Rim et al. (2016) posit that the motivation behind CSR is not totally altruistic. Rather, in many circumstances, such CSR initiatives are transactional and have expected reciprocation undertone. Stakeholders are expected to reciprocate with a favorable attitudinal disposition when they perceive that an organization considers socially responsible business processes, and acts responsibly in dealing with the environment, society, and stakeholders (Vuković et al., 2020). The same argument can explain why CSR initiatives are always communicated to the public and not kept anonymous (Kotek et al., 2018). Therefore, it could be argued that CSR is not merely a product of sheer altruistic motivation but a part of the organization's business strategy to gain CSR-based OA. On the other hand, a stream of research argues for the possibility of altruistic CSR motives not regarded as a means to CSR-based OA but an end in itself (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017).

María and Perez's (2018) CSR cognition-attitude model provides insight into different antecedents and consequences of CSR attitude. According to the model,

millennial's CSR cognition (i.e., CSR-based OA and PA), which are formed by interpreting organizations' CSR signals (practice, information, and motive), will often precede attitudinal intention (joining intention). A company may attract favorable attitudinal disposition from stakeholders owing to its engagement in CSR initiatives. The literature further suggests that stakeholders' perception of CSR motive plays a role in how they respond to the organization (Vuković et al., 2020). For instance, only CSR motives perceived as public-serving (akin to PA) resulted in favorable attitudinal disposition such as employee connection and identification with their organization as well as other performance benefits to the organisation (Donia et al., 2019). Firm-serving motive (akin to CSR-based OA) has been associated with a negative disposition toward firms while public-driven (akin to PA) generates positive CSR-based organizational evaluation and attitudinal disposition including stakeholder engagement (Jiang & Luo, 2020; Rim et al., 2020).

Although employees may display unfavorable attitudes toward CSR-based OA because motives behind such CSR initiatives are usually perceived as neither sincere nor aimed at improving societal or environmental welfare, it should be noted that potential millennial employees may differ in their perception about CSR motives of an organization. Different stakeholder groups may differ in their perception of organizational CSR motives because of the amount of CSR information they are privy to (Rank & Contreras, 2021). Contextual factors may be influential in determining their attitudinal response as well (Vuković et al., 2020). The millennials may have a different perception about CSR motives since the wider society always benefits from CSR even those perceived as enhancing the attractiveness (CSR-based OA) of the organization (Kotek et al., 2018). Although a millennial's disposition to go through with the decision of seeking employment with an organization based on their CSR



perception (CSR-based OA and PA) may not be a simple psychological process; CSR perception according to María and Perez (2018) precedes attitudinal disposition, i.e., millennial joining intention regardless (Figure 1). In a bid to understand the underlying relationship between CSR and millennial joining intention through CSR-based OA and PA it is hypothesized that:

**Hypothesis 2a:** The relationship between perceived CSR of an organization and millennial intention to join that organization would be mediated by perceived altruism (PA) of the organization.

**Hypothesis 2b:** The relationship between perceived CSR of an organization and millennial intention to join that organization would be mediated by CSR-based organization attraction (CSR-based OA) of the organization.

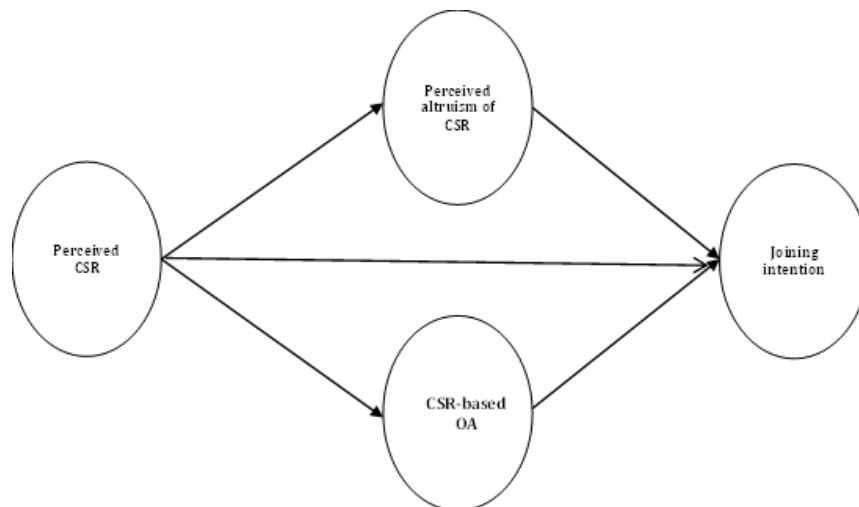


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

## **Chapter 4**

### **METHODS AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter presents the methodology used in this dissertation. It covers all issues including the study's survey design and measurement items, the study's respondents, data collection method and process, and research context. The study's hypotheses developed in the preceding section i.e. Chapter three (3) are also tested in this section utilizing the collected data.

#### **4.1 Procedures and Participant**

To empirically examine the proposed hypotheses, this study's sample is drawn from a population of millennials who are in-between jobs or seeking employment across Nigeria. These participants in these categories were approached for data collection. To ascertain the feasibility and soundness of the research instrument, as well as to optimize the research process, a pilot study was conducted. This preliminary study was performed on a small scale (n=30) using the study's proposed instrument. The pilot study did not show any potential problem or impending challenge with the intended research procedure and instrument. Hence, the researcher developed confidence in the procedure and went ahead with the actual data collection.

In order to provide an answer to the study's research questions and develop hypotheses, data were obtained through self-administered field surveys from attendants in job fairs and career seminars organized for employment seekers. Following a clear identification of the target population and an exploration of the sampling frame, it was arrived at that millennials were the best population for this

study, precisely those who are unemployed and seeking employment. A random sampling technique where each representative member of the population (millennial job seekers) has an equal chance of being selected at random to fill the study's questionnaire, was employed in the data collection stage. According to Taherdoost (2018) the probability random sampling technique is one of the most accurate one and it has the greatest freedom from bias because each respondent is selected independently of the other members of the population and the sample created could be very representative of the population. However, it should also be noted that this technique is costly in terms of time and other costs associated with obtaining the samples that may be dispersed geographically.

Potential respondents were invited to participate from different career fairs and events across different large and small Nigerian cities. This was to give participants in both highly industrialized cities such as Lagos and Kano states, as well as those in smaller cities such as Zaria and Dutse equal chance of participating in the research. Participation in the study was voluntary and all respondents were guaranteed anonymity. The opening portion of the questionnaire contained some brief descriptions of the model's purpose and an explicit consent form that emphasized the anonymous and voluntary nature of the survey. As a criterion for participating in the study, respondents were asked about their familiarity with, awareness of, and examples of CSR activities and engagement of organizations. The potential respondents were aware of organizational CSR practices through job fairs, company websites, online advertisements, social media, and personal networks.

The designed and distributed questionnaire had three (3) main parts. The first section contained instructions for respondents, a general overview of the study, the model, an and introduction. The second part had questions about respondent's

demographics and personal data while the third section contained the survey items that were acquired from scales previously validated by extant and related studies.

Since the study's respondents were attendees at a one-day career seminar and job fair, it was pre-empted and apparent that it may be almost impossible, difficult and resource-consuming to find the same respondents to fill the questionnaire in a second wave. Thus, as an apriori measure to prevent common method bias (CMB) issues, the study's survey items from different variables were mixed in the questionnaire to provide some temporal and psychological separation in the respondent's minds (Conway & Lance, 2010). In other words, rather than arrange items measuring similar items together and sequentially, items from all variables were mixed together and in no particular order. According to Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) mixing survey items by not ordering them sequentially according to variables could impact the quality of responses received. This technique works by decreasing the adverse effect of item order on theoretical testing, reduces the possibility for response sets, and mitigates order effects such as respondents having a desired relationship among variables. This techniques has been employed in some CSR-related studies (Ogunmokun & Timur, 2021).

After collecting the data, processing, and analyzing the obtained data after incomplete questionnaires were excluded, a total of 330 useable questionnaires remained out of the 500 questionnaires distributed at the events, giving a response rate of 66%. The response rate is moderately high, and this could be because the length of the survey was relatively short and respondents were comfortable in filling out the survey as anonymity was guaranteed.

Details of the respondents' demographics are reported in Table 1. The demographics showed that 47.3% of the respondents were male and 52.7% of them

were female. This could be explained by the minority status, general stereotype, and role-based standard of the female gender (Nadler et al., 2017). These factors, according to research, are responsible for the low level of desirability of female employees by employers and which make them more likely to be higher in number than their male counterparts at job fairs and related events. Regarding age, 71.2% of the study's participants were between 18 and 26 years of age, 18.8% of the respondents were between 27 and 35 years of age, and the remaining 10% were between 36 and 44 years. This study's age range for millennials is not only very inclusive but it also strongly aligns with related studies in the literature ( e.g. Nolan, 2015; Waples & Brachle, 2020). Regarding educational qualification, 82.1% of the respondents had completed an undergraduate degree program while the remaining 17.9% possessed a postgraduate level degree.

Table 1: Sample profile (n=300)

	Frequency	Percent
<b><i>Gender</i></b>		
Male	156	47.3
Female	174	52.7
<b><i>Age</i></b>		
18-26	235	71.2
27-35	62	18.8
36-44	33	10.0
<b><i>Education level</i></b>		
Bachelor degree	271	82.1
Master degree	59	17.9

## 4.2 Instrument

All items that make up the study's model variables were measured at an individual level on a Likert-type scale ranging from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). This is because perceptions of CSR motives may vary among prospective

job applicants just like the perception of other workplace-related variables (Nishii et al., 2008).

Perceived CSR is measured using Turker's (2009) items. The items measure how participants perceive an organization's external CSR to society, the future generation, the natural environment, and non-governmental organizations ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Millennial joining intention was measured with items ( $\alpha = .80$ ) adopted from the studies by Turban and Keon (1993) and Highhouse et al. (2003). CSR-based OA was measured with items ( $\alpha = .83$ ) adapted from Highhouse et al. (2003) and Vlachos, Panagopoulos, and Rapp's (2013) study addressing an organization's attractiveness based on CSR motive perception. The root phrase "based on an organization's CSR profile" was added to the items, which measures the extent to which the respondent wants to apply or accept a job offer from a company based on its CSR profile. PA was assessed with items ( $\alpha = .84$ ) adapted from Rifon, Choi, Trimble, and Li (2004) and Rim et al. (2016) study. It measures respondents' perception of an organization's CSR engagement as purely altruistic or public-serving.

### **4.3 Control Variables**

Scholars have demonstrated that certain demographic variables like gender and education level could have a significant influence on the current study's variables. For example, Tsai and Yang (2010) demonstrated that gender is related to organizational attractiveness. Likewise, Nadler, Gann-Bociek, and Skaggs (2017) demonstrated that gender relates to the perceptions of organizational attractiveness. Further, Warmerdam, Lewis, and Banks (2015) argued that education level could influence millennials' joining intentions. Therefore, to control for the effect of education and gender, they were included as covariates in this study (see Table 3).

## 4.4 Results

### 4.4.1 Preliminary Analysis

The data's normality was checked using the SPSS IBM program and the variables' skewness and kurtosis are within acceptable thresholds. Using AMOS 24, the measurement instruments' factorial validity was also carried out. Each construct's internal consistency is acceptable as they all exceed the 0.7 thresholds (Nunnally, 1978). Convergent validity was also acceptable as all standardized factor loadings were statistically significant and greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). Likewise, constructs' average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.5. Table 2 also shows that all CR was greater than 0.7 and the square roots of AVE values were greater than inter-construct correlations, this, therefore, confirms the discriminant validity and convergent validity of the constructs used in this study (Fornell & Larcker, 1981b). Additionally, using AMOS, the study's data showed a good fit with the proposed four-factor model:  $\chi^2 [196] = 545.3365$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.782$ , CFI = 0.942, IFI = 0.942, TLI = 0.932, SRMR = 0.059, RMSEA = 0.074.

Table 2: Factor Analysis

Items	Loadings	Cronbach alpha
<i>Perceived CSR</i>		0.894
It appears that this company participates in activities that aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment.	.949	
It appears that this company makes investment to create a better life for the future generations.	.937	
It appears that this company implements special programs to minimize its negative impact on the natural environment.	.921	
It appears that this company targets a sustainable growth, which considers to the future generations.	.784	

It appears that this company supports the non-governmental organizations working in problematic areas.	.774	
It appears that this company contributes to the campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of the society.	.612	
It appears that this company encourages its employees to participate to the voluntarily activities.	.565	
<b><i>Perceived Altruism</i></b>		0.847
This organization really wants to help improve society with its CSR programs	.907	
The motives of this organization in helping the society with its CSR programs are very pure	.897	
This organization does not expect anything in return for its CSR programs	.731	
This organization does not have any hidden agenda for its CSR programs	.639	
Being socially responsible institution is really this organizations mission	.549	
<b><i>CSR-based Organizational Attractiveness</i></b>		0.837
For me, this company would be a good place to work	.778	
I would not be interested in this company, except as a last resort.	.773	
This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.	.770	
I am interested in learning more about this company.	.766	
A job at this company is very appealing to me.	.609	
<b><i>Joining Intention</i></b>		0.804
I would accept a job offer from this company	.883	
I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer.	.852	
If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go.	.672	
I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company	.582	
My willingness and likelihood to apply for a job at this firm is high	.534	

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Table 3: Correlation and Validity

Variables	M	SD	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Education level	1.18	.384									
2. Age	1.42	.676			.693**						
3. Gender	1.53	.500			-.065	-.110*					
4. Perceived CSR	4.01	.410	0.926	0.648	.003	.004	-.013	<b>0.805</b>			
5. Perceived Altruism	3.83	.671	0.867	0.574	-.102	-.134*	.001	.338**	<b>0.758</b>		
6. CSR-based OA	4.05	.558	0.859	0.551	-.019	.030	-.088	.288**	.356**	<b>0.742</b>	
7. Joining Intention	4.35	.522	0.837	0.516	-.105	-.060	-.082	.331**	.320**	.431**	<b>0.718</b>

Square roots of AVEs in bold in the diagonal

To ensure that common method variance is not an issue in the current study, common latent factor analysis and Harman's one-factor test were employed. Although none of these tests are superior to the other, they make up for the limitation of each other (Podsakoff et al., 2003). All factors were loaded onto a principal components factor and it showed that no single factor accounted for a threshold of 50% variance. The first factor extracted accounted for 31.183% of the total variance extracted. The common latent factor test revealed that the difference in items' loading on the underlying latent construct is  $< 0.2$ , which is less than the 0.5 cut-offs (Eichhorn, 2014). Based on the results of these two techniques, there seems to be no substantial common factor bias.

#### **4.4.2 Hypothesis Testing**

The study's hypotheses were tested using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) with age, education level, and gender controlled for. Hypothesis 1 proposes that millennial joining intention is influenced by their perception of an organization's CSR. A bootstrap confidence interval with 5,000 resamples showed that perceived CSR predicts joining intention ( $b=.1932$ ;  $t=3.73$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; 95%CI [.1161, .3753]). Hypothesis 2a postulates that the perception of CSR motive, i.e., an organization's perceived altruism will mediate the relationship between the organization's perceived CSR and joining intention. An indirect effect analysis revealed that PA mediates the relationship ( $ab = .0444$ ,  $SEboot = .0194$ , 95% CI [.0078, .0846]). Thus Hypothesis 2a is supported. Hypothesis 2b, an indirect effect analysis also revealed that CSR-based OA mediates the relationship between an organization's perceived CSR and joining intention ( $ab = .0923$ ,  $SEboot = .0263$ , 95% CI [.0468, .1503]). Thus Hypothesis 2b is also supported. Furthermore, CSR-based OA motive in Hypothesis 2b has a slightly higher coefficient ( $ab = .0923$ ) than PA in Hypothesis 2a ( $ab = .0444$ ) in the indirect

relationship between perceived CSR and millennial joining intention. A further difference analysis check was conducted to assess the difference in coefficient effect size and the results were insignificant ( $b = -.0479$ ,  $SE_{boot} = .0357$ , 95% CI  $[-.1233, .0165]$ ). That is, no statistically significant difference exists between the intervening mechanisms of CSR-based OA and PA when both mediation paths were compared in the model.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

	Perceived Altruism (Model 1)		CSR-based OA (Model 2)		Joining Intention (Model 3)	
	<i>B</i>	CI (95%)	<i>β</i>	CI (95%)	<i>β</i>	CI (95%)
<b>Education level</b>	-.103	-.3591; -.0018	-.026	-.1886; .1142	-.090	-.2514; .0066
<b>Gender</b>	-.001	-.1390; .1353	-.087	-.2128; .0197	-.057	-.1583; .0394
<b>PCSR</b>	.338	.3868; .7203	.287	.2483; .5309	.193	.1161; .3753
<b>Perceived Altruism</b>					.131	.0203; .1836
<b>CSR-based OA</b>					.322	.2049; .3976
<b>PCSR=&gt; Perceived Altruism=&gt;</b>					.044	.0078; .0846
<b>PCSR=&gt; CSR-based OA</b>					.092	.0468; .1503
<b>Total Effect</b>					.137	.0836; .1999

**Model 1** summary-  $R = .3535$ ,  $R^2 = .1250$ ,  $F(3,326) = 15.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . **Model 2** summary-  $R = .3009$ ,  $R^2 = .0905$ ,  $F(3,326) = 10.82$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

**Model 3** summary-  $R = .5088$ ,  $R^2 = .2589$ ,  $F(5,324) = 22.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**Total Effect model**-  $R = .3575$ ,  $R^2 = .1278$ ,  $F(3,326) = 15.93$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

## Chapter 5

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As discussed in the introductory section of this study, HRM, which is regarded as a strategic support organizational function, is required to develop and implement strategies that support the organization's CSR practices and assist the achievement of its triple bottom line objectives. This is usually achieved through employees. Many organizations now attempt to attract employees by differentiating themselves from other firms in the labor market. Studies have shown that behavior and attitude relating to potential employees' job choices can be influenced by organizational characteristics such as CSR involvement and initiatives (Ikhida et al., 2021; Waples & Brachle, 2020). The HRM department of organizations is increasingly taking a strategic perspective to CSR, branding themselves accordingly. This has been reported to be a means of addressing the needs and expectations of millennials, who make up a significant number of the incoming labor force (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). Integrating HRM and CSR is vital as HRM plays a significant role in facilitating and enabling actions that appropriately align their organizations.

Hypothesis (1) is supported and confirms that millennials are largely concerned about CSR. Like other millennials across the world that are often labeled as sensitive to ethical issues, and concerned with wanting to make a difference; Nigerian millennials are also disposed to, and have the intention of seeking employment opportunities with organizations that engage in CSR. This finding is not only consistent with that of previous studies conducted in the Western and Asian contexts

(see Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Waples & Brachle, 2020), but it also provides a well-rounded theoretical perspective by expanding findings in prior CSR-HRM recruitment literature to include the African context. Generally, organizations that engage in CSR are more likely to be considered as a good place to work, and millennials are predisposed to search for and apply to these organizations for employment. In addition to assessing the firm's ability to meet other expectations, millennials also review its ability to match their ethical and moral values. It can thus be argued that organizations' engagement in CSR is a strategic device, and a good signal to attract a large pool of millennial applicants during the recruitment stage. While millennials may in the process consider the possible sense of identification, environmental/societal concern, and value associated with them being part of a potential employer and whose social image and reputation is desirable for them, the recruiting firm on the other hand will be able to select the most suitable candidates from a wide pool of millennial applicants who are attracted to socially responsible organizations. On the other hand, if an organization fails to align and brand itself in a socially attractive manner, it will most likely be considered as unattractive and not regarded as a first employer of choice by job seekers. Thus, to attract and recruit millennials, an organization must take a deliberate stance on CSR issues.

In Hypothesis (2), empirical proof is provided for the direct effect of CSR on CSR motive perception of potential employees. It can be construed that potential millennial employees, similar to other widely studied stakeholder groups, also engage in some cognitive assessment through CSR-based OA and PA of an organization's societal/environmental commitment before seeking out, applying for, accepting or rejecting employment offers. This reasoning process is firstly shaped by stakeholders' environment as it provides the cues for evaluating and interpreting signals i.e.

organization's CSR that are influential in predicting possible behavioral action such as joining intention (María & Perez, 2018). Although potential employees may not be able to fully assess an organization's CSR dealings (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017) to arrive at an objective cognitive appraisal, millennials' evaluation could be dependable because of their deep concern for CSR issues and their wide access to information. Such an external opinion from millennials is important because it could be a pointer or a reflection of how the general public perceives an organization's CSR practices and the motivation behind them. It is this CSR motive perception that forms the basis for other reactions the organization may receive from the wider society it operates in, including millennial joining intention.

More specifically, Hypotheses 2a and 2b- which state that PA and CSR-based OA independently mediate and explain the indirect relationship between organizational CSR and the joining intentions of millennial are supported. Potential Nigerian millennial employees are willing to join an organization that engages in CSR if they perceive that CSR practices are performed: (1), altruistically with the moral intention of fulfilling obligations and doing good to society. As well as those (2), strategically conducted to gain stakeholders' attraction, and generate economic or reputational value for the organization. However, this is contrary to the findings in related studies such as Donia et al. (2019) and María and Perez, (2018) that found only more altruistic CSR motives to positively affect stakeholder's behavioral intention towards an organization. While PA has been identified more frequently over CSR-based OA to be a stronger CSR motive perception, potential millennial employees from Nigeria were inclined and attracted to pursue employment with organizations whose CSR motives are perceived as altruistic as well as those that enhance the organization's attractiveness.

This finding reemphasizes the importance of this study and provides an inclusive perspective to CSR by showing that Nigeria, a developing country, cannot be fitted into the framework proposed by studies conducted, for the most part, in developed, Western countries. It also presents an opportunity to discuss and attract companies' attention to differences among countries. The environment in developing countries presents a distinct and challenging set of CSR agendas (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019), which could shape millennial CSR motive perception and intention to join. For instance, CSR activities in developing nations take the form of resource contribution, socio-economic development, and other concerns pertaining the provision of basic education, capacity building, job creation, and social change which satisfy pressing societal needs, and compensate for the government's inadequacy (Uduji et al., 2020). Consequently, everyone in the society directly or indirectly materially benefit from the CSR activities of an organization; whether the CSR motives are perceived as altruistic or solely to benefit the organization. While Nigerian millennials consider the benefits that accrue to the general public as a result of perceived altruistic CSR motives, Hypothesis 2b also shows that organizational CSR not perceived as altruistic, but attributed to serving the interest of the organization is also acceptable, and can influence joining intention.

As highlighted earlier, strategic CSR has to do with an organization's commitment and active investment of resources such as capital, technology, network etc. to socially responsible initiatives through innovative and strategically driven activities in its value chain that contributes to social benefits and economic performance. In other words, it depicts all responsible activities undertaken by an organization to address or solve social contextual issues such as community infrastructural needs, poverty, access to educational infrastructure, availability of



portable water etc., while aiming to enhance its competitiveness and promote organizational-linked value chain innovation. This is acceptable by stakeholders i.e., millennial job seeker in developing context and thus organizations in similar situations and contexts can brand themselves in that light without penalty or criticism from the community, even when it sometimes seems like there's some sort of incongruence between originations of core business and operations and its CSR activities, which is referred to as poor CSR fit (Ogunmokun, Timur, Bayighomog, et al., 2021). A bank organizing or sponsoring fashion or food festivals can be given as an example. Regardless of this stance, which has also been criticized and questioned in the literature, potential millennial job candidates in developing nations like Nigeria who form part of the larger secondary stakeholders' group are being somewhat attracted to organizations i.e., banks in this instance, that engage in CSR. This could be tied to factors such as investment and relationship which Rhee et al. (2021) identifies as critical aspects of strategic CSR.

This means that based on the relationships organizations develop with stakeholders through different CSR initiatives as well as the collaboration that exists between them, potential millennial job candidates develop some cognitive acceptance that influence their perception of firms that engage in CSR, and eventually their joining inclination. On the flip side, the banks in this instance are indirectly building a relationship with stakeholders by contributing to the community development through giving small fashion and food vendors to showcase their trade while also benefiting from it because vendors who can participate in the fashion or food festival organized by the banks are expected to maintain bank accounts with the engaging bank. The communities, and specifically potential employees' buy-in to strategic CSR initiative are what promotes the effectiveness of strategic CSR since the innovative initiatives

and opportunities the organizations offer are lacking within the society and often are not provided by the government. The resources which organizations commits to local CSR activities usually complement the economic development of the host community and enhance community participation. The question is, will the benefits of strategic CSR such as millennial joining intention reduce in societies that are economically developed and where stakeholders' societal needs such as jobs, infrastructural development and access to basic amenities available? Will potential millennial employees in developing nation still be attracted to and be influenced by both CSR motive perceptions i.e. Perceive altruistic and CSR-based OA , as with this study's finding ?

In conclusion, while evidence demonstrates millennial job-seekers as generally interested in organizations that demonstrate good social standing, this study integrates some contributions that can be considered when explaining millennials' joining disposition towards CSR. It is vital to note that the contextual setting matters as this could engender different CSR motive perceptions about organizations' CSR and the eventual behavioral action of particular stakeholders. Though all millennials are concerned about issues of social responsibility, a cross contextual lesson can be drawn, in that response to CSR motive perceptions may differ. Therefore, organizations should pay cautious attention to factors in the environment that millennials are embedded in since it also performs a vital role in their CSR response and eventual decision to apply for job openings within an organization

## Chapter 6

### CONCLUSION

This study aims to provide insight into the underlying relationship between perceived CSR and the joining intention of millennials through two CSR motive perceptions. The CSR motive perception could be perceived by stakeholders as either purely altruistic, and out of genuine concern to stakeholders or the society—PA, or an organization's CSR motive could be attributed to or regarded as a means to boost the firm's reputation, attractiveness and also to supply economic benefits to the firms-- CSR-based OA. This motive perceptions have been found as factors that explain and play a big role in millennial joining intention. Both mediators whose hypotheses are supported were selected based on stakeholders' evaluation of what motivates an organization's CSR practices. That is, millennials' disposition to pursue employment and join an organization is determined by their perception of the organization's CSR motivation.

#### **6.1 Theoretical Implication**

This study bears implications for the literature. The relationship among the study's variables has not been considered in extant studies, nor has any study considered potential millennial stakeholders, or evaluated such a model in a developing, and socio-economically uneven setting like many African countries. Other studies in the literature have focused on other national contexts but the environment in developing countries (e.g. Nigeria) is different and affects organizational CSR practices and how those practices are perceived (Ghosh, 2017). This difference

necessitates a distinctive and separate focus on developing nations. This could be useful in shaping research and expanding the literature as influential insight into how perceptions about organizations' CSR motives may alter or undo the impact of CSR signals on stakeholders' outcomes. By exploring CSR motive perceptions on joining intention of millennial job applicants, our finding recommends a new lens for examining CSR from the perspective of a millennial job applicant.

Some studies in the literature have used signaling theory to explain the relationship between CSR engagement, which are signals sent by organizations to particular stakeholders. Although information asymmetry may pose some limitations, stakeholders can decide to join the organization based on the information they have. This study extends this theoretical perspective by providing empirical proof to show that CSR signals to stakeholders but the process of interpreting that signal and deciding what action to take on the sent signal goes through the underlying cognitive process (CSR motive perception), which then motivates to seek employment with an organization. This also lends supports to the recruitment literature in that applicants are still able to make a decision about potential employers even without having full information.

## **6.2 Practical Implication**

The increasingly competitive environment for recruiting talented employees and the benefits associated with attracting high-performing millennial employees underscore the need to understand influential factors. As our findings established, engaging in CSR is expected to provide organizations with such distinctness to win the battle for talent, sustain their competitiveness, and obtain other associated benefits. Practitioners must not underestimate job-seekers' CSR motive perception, as they are influential on individuals, especially millennials' assessment of an organization as a

prospective workplace and on the overall decision of pursuing employment with that organization. They should attentively assess the underlying reason behind particular CSR choices, and implement CSR initiatives that are contextually relevant. Since the environment of operation not only primarily forms the basis by which CSR dealings and motives are cognitively evaluated, but guides behavioral responses as well.

By understanding this process and also considering the prevailing socio-economic context, the practitioners can gain insights required to not only frame effective CSR and recruitment systems and policies but achieve other associated benefits as well. This study also bears implications for the recruitment process and related decisions since CSR signals an organization's CSR orientation, ethical principles, and social values, such values. Such values are likely to differentiate an organization in the competitive market sphere. This can influence and promote subsequent attraction and engagement with the organization because CSR initiatives would thus align effectively with millennials' expectations and values. This would not only send favorable signals to millennials but enable organizations to implement appropriate CSR initiatives.

### **6.3 Limitations and Direction for Further Studies**

This study focused on impact of CSR on potential job applicants in Nigeria and it may be challenging to extrapolate findings to countries with different characteristics. Nonetheless, it reflects that CSR motive perception affects disposition towards CSR. This points to research opportunities even among millennials in developed societies. Studies can consider other dimensions of CSR, the influence of other possible motives underlying organizational CSR engagement, and its outcome for other categories of employees. Considering that the survival of many organizations is hinged on ethical legitimacy, and the younger generation's demand for sustainable business practices

and CSR, a comparative study that replicates this research can be performed to test our model across different contexts. It could also be worthwhile to further explore the reasons and context why CSR motive perceptions like CSR-based OA and PA would not statistically differ. This can be analyzed against other outcomes such as motivation and retention and also among other stakeholder groups.

By establishing CSR-based OA and PA as the underlying mechanism, our study provides an understanding of the micro-level process by which organizational CSR influences prospective millennial employees. This unlocks other possibilities to explore more of such mechanism given that a better and more rounded understanding of the underlying mechanism can provide a strong foundation needed to design an effective CSR framework that not only provides support for novel CSR studies but also long-term organizational policies including those for recruitment and staffing. The relationship can also be explored with potential employees who do not intend to pursue permanent employment with any organization but would prefer a freelancing job or being an entrepreneur. Additionally, other studies can consider examining the direct, indirect, or interacting impact of a company's size, profit, or cash flow on the relationship between CSR, CSR motive perception, and joining intention. This is because although firm size/financial capability is important for CSR, size or lack of resources should not be used as an excuse for not engaging in organizational CSR; especially in the case of developing nations where there are many small and medium organizations that have a substantial impact on national and local economic development (Ogunmokun & Timur, 2021; Stojanović et al., 2021).

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