The Outcomes of Corporate Social Responsibility to Employees: Empirical Evidence from a Developing Country

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Abstract: Employees creativity has been recognized as a crucial part of an organization’s ability to be innovative. To know which factors contribute to employee involvement in creative work, in this paper, we first examine the effects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to employees. Moreover, we study the employees’ positive work attitudes and their intention to leave as a mediating mechanism to explain the effect of CSR to employees on the involvement of employees in creative work. Survey data from 209 employees in 45 small-sized enterprises in Iran were used to test the hypotheses of the study. The hypotheses were tested with hierarchical regression analyses using SPSS software. The results support the direct impact of CSR to employees on employees’ creative work involvement. In addition, the findings indicate that the indirect effect of CSR to employees on the involvement of employees in creative work through positive work attitudes and their intention to leave are significant. Consequently, small-sized enterprises should reinforce CSR to employees to elevate their involvement in creative work.

Keywords: creative work involvement; employee positive work attitudes; intention to leave; corporate social responsibility to employees; small-sized enterprises

1. Introduction

The involvement of employees in creative work is a crucial competency for small-sized firms’ survival [1,2]. In recent years, business scholars are increasingly interested in the concept of employee involvement in creative work [3–7]. Creative work involvement refers to the ability of employees to realize valuable opportunities and to apply creative skills on the job [1]. Employee involvement in creative work thrives in dynamic environments [8] which is essential for long-term organizational success [9,10]. It is presented as a critical factor for facilitating organizational innovation [9,11].

Scholars have searched for different personal and contextual characteristics that can contribute to the level of employee involvement in creative work [7,12]. Personal characteristics received a high level of attention, e.g., employees motivation and cognition styles [4], norms [3] and personalities [13]. The characteristics of the organizational context play an important role in the involvement of employees in creative work, e.g., supervisor’s close monitoring [14] and support [8], leadership style [15] and job design [12].

Given the dominant role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in shaping the employees’ behavior, emotion and attitudes [16], one key organizational factor that may have a substantial impact
on the employee involvement in creative work [17,18] shall be identified. This paper aims to answer the following research question: Does CSR to employees promote employee involvement in creative work? To answer this question, we examined the role of CSR for employees by collecting data from 209 employees who work in 45 small-sized enterprises in a developing country.

Most research studies on CSR and sustainability focused on developed countries [19,20] and external stakeholders, i.e., customers [21,22]. This may limit our understanding about the antecedents and outcomes of the firms’ socially responsible activities to the internal stakeholders (employees). Recent research in the CSR and sustainability context pay more attention to the developed countries [23–27]. Our paper theoretically and empirically contributes to the emerging literature of CSR to employees in developing countries. It is important to know the outcomes of CSR to employees because the social performance of the organization can shape their perceived image, attitudes, and intended behaviors of the employees [28].

2. Literature Review

2.1. CSR to Employees

CSR in general refers to the firms’ social responsibility [29] with regard to various stakeholders [30]. The stakeholders can be classified into four major groups: (1) organizational stakeholders such as customers, employees, suppliers and shareholders; (2) community stakeholders such as local residents; (3) regulatory and governmental stakeholders such as municipalities; and finally (4) media stakeholders [31,32]. In this paper, we examined the outcomes of CSR to employees in the workplace. According to [33], CSR to employees includes the corporate activities that involve the employees’ welfare and business ethics, such as non-discrimination policies in the workplace, equal education opportunities to develop the employees’ skills, vocational training, and human rights protection within the organization.

2.2. Employee Involvement in Creative Work

Employee involvement in creative work is one of the main components of organizational creativity [34]. It refers to “the extent to which an employee engages his or her time and effort resources in creative processes associated with work” ([3] p. 36). The involvement in creative work explains the employees’ subjective assessment of their involvement in creative tasks in the workplace [6] and its difference from a well-established construct, such as “creative performance” which focuses more on the supervisors’ evaluation of the employees’ creative problem in the workplace [5,12]. Involvement in creative work is one of the critical factors for fostering creative performance at the organization [6,35].

2.3. Employees’ Positive Work Attitude

The positive work attitudes of employees describe their high tendency and desire to have a positive attitude toward the organizational objectives and values [36]. Positive work attitudes decrease the employees’ resistance to changes and their intention to leave [37]. It enhances employees engagement [38] and acts as an essential factor for diminishing counterproductive workplace behaviors [37]. On the other hand, several factors can lead to have positive work attitudes toward the achievement of organizational goals, e.g., workplace friendship [36] and job climate [39].

2.4. Employees’ Intention to Leave

Intention to leave refers to the subjective estimation of an individual in regard to the probability of leaving an organization in the near future [40], and the behavioral preferences that ultimately lead to leave the organization [41]. Intention to leave has been considered as a major predictor of actual turnover [42,43] and employee performance [44]. One of the effective ways to decrease actual turnover rate is to identify the motivational factors that would lower the employees’ intention to leave the workplace [45,46]. Since the intention to leave is an undesirable outcome for organizational
effectiveness [47], it is valuable to understand its predictors in order to minimize it among employees [48].

3. Hypothesis Development

3.1. CSR to Employees and Creative Work Involvement

In the first hypothesis, we predict that the higher level of CSR to employees leads to more involvement in creative work. CSR to employees describe the employees self-evaluation and personal interpretations of the CSR activities performed in the organization [49]. This evaluation and perception shaped the employees attitudinal and behavioral reactions in the workplace [50]. CSR to employees means that the organization encourages the employees to participate in the voluntary activities and set different policies to develop their skills and careers. In such organizations, the top level management pays high attention to the employees’ needs and wants and tries to implement flexible policies to provide a good work and life balance for the employees [51,52]. Based on earlier research, employees in a supportive work environment are much more inclined toward creative tasks in the workplace [53,54].

Providing equal training opportunities for all employees is one of the main aspects of CSR to employees [55,56]. Previous studies highlighted the importance of training programs for employees to generate creative and new ideas [57,58]. These types of training programs enhance the employees’ understanding about the organizational activities and environment [59]. Promoting the employees’ knowledge and information about the workplace facilitates generating novel responses that are useful when dealing with their work tasks [57].

Making work conditions healthy and safe is another aspect of CSR to employees [55,56]. By collecting data from 128 employees [60], we found that the feeling of psychological safety in the workplace lead to more involvement in creative work. From the above literature, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). CSR to employees has a positive impact on the employee involvement in creative work.

3.2. Mediating Effects of the Employees’ Intention to Leave

In the second hypothesis, we predicted that CSR to employees decreases the employees’ intention to leave; in turn, employees with less intention to leave show more creative work involvement. Previous studies showed that organizational CSR activities, in general, improved the firms’ reputation [20] and image [61]. Employees may feel proud of their organization once they find out that their company has a good social reputation and prestige [62,63]. When the employees realize that they are working for a well-respected company, they like to associate themselves with it [64], which in turn may reduce their intention to leave [28]. Emphasizing CSR to employees enhances the importance attached to the employees’ work performance and the feeling that their work within the organization is very important and has a social meaning [65]. Employees will have less intention to leave the company once they believe the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being and employability [66,67].

On the other hand, employees with less intention to leave engage more in organizational activities [68,69]. More commitment to the job and several organization activities raise their awareness about the company and business environment as well. Furthermore, employees engaged in the organization have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities [69], which enables them to go beyond their minimal job responsibilities [70]. They are engaged and proactively shape their work environment [71] by generating novel ideas and alternatives [72]. Combining the arguments above, we expect that the employees’ intention to leave mediate the relationship between the firms’ CSR to employees and creative work involvement.
Hypothesis 2 (H2). Employees’ intention to leave mediates the relationship between CSR to employees and the employees’ involvement in creative work.

3.3. Mediating Effects of Positive Work Attitudes

In the last hypothesis, we expected that CSR to employees promotes positive work attitudes towards the organizational objectives, which in turn enhances their creative work involvement. Organizational CSR activities, in general, increases the employees’ commitment, because these kind of activities let employees feel that they are positively contributing to the broader social system [73]. In other words, employees seek membership in the organizations that are socially responsible because such institutions can enhance the way employees feel about themselves [51]. By collecting data from employees of six large companies from different sectors in Thailand [52], it was found that CSR to employees increase their satisfaction with work life. It seems that the firms which are highly involved in CSR activities treat the employees more fairly [25]. If employees see an organization as fair, they may view the organization more positively [74] and exhibit a more positive attitude towards the organizational objectives.

On the other hand, employees positive work attitudes led to higher levels of employees engagement within organization which eventually facilitates positive organizational changes [38]. Employees with more positive work attitudes may engage in fewer deviant behaviors within organization [75]. In contrast with less happy people in the workplace, more happy and positive employees tend to be more creative and resourceful at work [76]. Those employees who experience positive feelings in the workplace generate more innovative and novel ideas within the organization [77]. From the above literature, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Positive work attitudes mediate the relationship between CSR to employees and the employee involvement in creative work.

The quoted literature above and the developed hypotheses form Figure 1, which depicts the conceptual research framework of the study.

![Conceptual model of study](image)

Figure 1. Conceptual model of study.

4. Methodology

4.1. Sample

We randomly selected 150 small-sized companies from the directory of the Association of SMEs in the Southeast of Iran [78]. After contacting the CEOs, only 45 companies verbally agreed to be surveyed. The sample of the study was drawn from employees of 45 small sized companies. In total, these 45 companies had 1008 employees. We randomly selected 300 employees from these companies. We collected our data in two rounds. In the first stage of data collection, a questionnaire with independent, control and mediating variables was distributed in mid-2016. In this stage, 233 usable
questionnaires were received. Approximately six months later, we distributed our second questionnaire to the same employees with only the dependent variable. Finally, we received 209 completed questionnaires resulting in a response rate of 0.697.

Following the Back Translation Method, we took different steps to translate our measurement items into Persian [79]. In doing so, we asked two business and management professors to translate the original questionnaire to Persian first. Then, we asked one bilingual expert to translate the documents back to English. In the final step, we had a meeting with all the three translators to compare the original version of the questionnaire with the back translated one. Any confusing words were modified [80,81]. However, to ensure that the criteria of the questionnaire construction and pre-testing were met, we dedicated time and effort to the design, layout, and wording of the used questionnaire. Before sending the questionnaires, we pre-tested them with ten employees, who were not included in the final sample. We asked them to review the questionnaire for readability, ambiguity, completeness, and to evaluate whether individual items appeared to be appropriate measures of their respective constructs [82].

To know if there was any significant common variance, the Harman one-factor test was conducted. The first factor explained 21.02 percent. Thus, no single factor emerged, nor did single factor account for the majority of variance [83]. We also randomized the order of items to reduce the common-method variance [84]. When comparing early respondents (first 25%) with late respondents (last 25%) on the respondents’ age and education, we did not find any significant difference. Therefore, our result does not suffer from non-response bias.

4.2. Measurement

4.2.1. CSR to employees

To measure this specific dimension of corporate social responsibility, we relied on the scale recently developed by Turker [51]. For measuring CSR to employees, we adopted five items from [51] on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.955.

4.2.2. Intention to Leave

Intention to leave is defined as the employee’s plan or intention to leave the current job and to look for another job in the near future [85]. For measuring this construct, we adopted the four-item scale developed by Rosin and Korabik [86]. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.88.

4.2.3. Employees’ Positive Work Attitudes

Positive work attitudes refer to a high tendency and desire to have a positive attitude toward the organizational objectives [36]. In our study, the employees’ positive work attitudes were measured using five items from Lehman and Simpson [39] on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “very often”. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the employees’ positive work attitudes was 0.88.

4.2.4. Employee Involvement in Creative Work

We measured the employee involvement in creative work using the nine items by Tierney et al. [4]. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they regularly exhibit various behaviors that indicate the involvement in creative work. Responses were made on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The involvement in creative work scale has a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.90. Appendix A provides the wording of the items for all the main study variables.

4.2.5. Control Variables

Based on the literature, we added some relevant control variables to our analyses including the respondents’ age, education, gender, organizational tenure (years of employment), management
experience, marketing experience, and technology experience. Previous studies showed that the employees’ age [87], educational level [88], gender [89], organizational tenure [4] and experience [90] influence their creativity level. We measured the employees’ educational level on a five-point scale (1 = “high school”, 5 = “doctorate”). Employees may bear different levels of work experience and, accordingly, we controlled three types of experiences in management, marketing and technology [91,92].

5. Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A SPSS 24 software package was used to carry out all the data analyses. Table 1 provides information about gender frequency distribution, percentage, and cumulative percentage of participants in the study. As we can see, 28.2 percent of the respondents were female and the majority were male (71.8 percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By checking the age distribution of the study participants, we found that 18.2 percent of respondents are between 20 and 30 years old, 35.9 percent of participants are between 31 and 40 years old, 28.2 percent of participants are between 41 and 50 years old, and 17.7 percent of participants were more than 51 years old. Accordingly, the majority of respondents were 31–40 years old. Table 2 provides information about the education level of the participants. As we can see, 23.9 percent of the respondents hold a high school diploma and the majority of respondents have an academic degree (76.1 percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate/technical degree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also checked the distribution of the respondents according to their organizational tenure (number of years working for the current company). We found that 11.5 percent of the respondents have 1–5 years of work experience, 39.7 percent of respondents have 6–10 years of work experience, 30.6 percent of respondents have 11–15 years of work experience and only 22.2 percent have ≥16 years of work experience in the current company. Table 3 illustrates the mean, standard deviation, and correlation of the variables used in this research. The table shows significant correlations among CSR to employees, positive work behavior, and intention to leave with creative work involvement ($p < 0.05$ or $0.01$). Among the control variables, employees’ age and tenure negatively correlated and the employees’ management, marketing and technology experiences positively correlated to their involvement in creative work.
### Table 3. Correlation and Descriptive Statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>40.316</td>
<td>9.214</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Education</td>
<td>2.526</td>
<td>1.029</td>
<td>−0.008</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender</td>
<td>1.718</td>
<td>0.451</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tenure</td>
<td>11.110</td>
<td>5.265</td>
<td>0.663**</td>
<td>−0.061</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Manag. Experience</td>
<td>3.517</td>
<td>0.861</td>
<td>−0.179**</td>
<td>−0.056</td>
<td>−0.068</td>
<td>−0.121</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mark. Experience</td>
<td>3.344</td>
<td>1.081</td>
<td>−0.079</td>
<td>−0.093</td>
<td>−0.085</td>
<td>−0.100</td>
<td>0.407**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Tech. Experience</td>
<td>3.365</td>
<td>1.064</td>
<td>−0.216**</td>
<td>−0.125</td>
<td>−0.035</td>
<td>−0.151*</td>
<td>0.331**</td>
<td>0.399**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. CSR to Employees</td>
<td>4.106</td>
<td>1.294</td>
<td>−0.392**</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>−0.001</td>
<td>−0.250**</td>
<td>0.223**</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>0.334**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Intention to Leave</td>
<td>4.034</td>
<td>1.415</td>
<td>0.458**</td>
<td>−0.007</td>
<td>−0.065</td>
<td>0.304**</td>
<td>−0.067</td>
<td>−0.080</td>
<td>−0.188**</td>
<td>−0.366**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Positive Attitude</td>
<td>3.786</td>
<td>1.282</td>
<td>−0.367**</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>−0.002</td>
<td>−0.256**</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.372**</td>
<td>−0.513**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Creativity</td>
<td>3.057</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>−0.345**</td>
<td>−0.065</td>
<td>−0.052</td>
<td>−0.206**</td>
<td>0.163*</td>
<td>0.194**</td>
<td>0.200**</td>
<td>0.319**</td>
<td>−0.475**</td>
<td>0.345**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Before testing the study hypotheses, we computed several regression diagnostics and checked the variance inflation factors (VIF) to exclude multicollinearity. The results of VIFs test for all models of study were below 5 (the highest VIF was 2.196), thus multicollinearity was not an important issue in our study [93]. To test the convergent validity of our construct measures, we have performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with Varimax Rotation. We identified four factors with eigenvalues greater than one, accounting for 73.46% of the total variance. All the items loaded significantly on the individual measures on their a priori defined factors. We found a KMO value of 0.860 (chi-square 7838.71) and significant Bartlett’s test results ($p < 0.001$).

In the first hypothesis, we expected that CSR to employees enhance their involvement in creative work. We conducted hierarchical regression analyses to assess the hypothesized effects. As shown in Table 4, control variables were entered first. In the second step, we entered control variables and independent variable to the equation. As shown in Table 4, there is a positive and significant relationship between CSR to employees and the employees’ involvement in creative work ($\beta = 0.118$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, our first hypothesis is supported.

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results (direct effect of CSR to employees on the involvement of employees in creative work).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Work Involvement</th>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>Main Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>−0.029 ***</td>
<td>−0.022 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Education</td>
<td>−0.024</td>
<td>−0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender</td>
<td>−0.030</td>
<td>−0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Management Experience</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Marketing Experience</td>
<td>0.089 †</td>
<td>0.102 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. CSR to employees</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5.221 ***</td>
<td>5.379 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, † $p < 0.10$.

For testing the second hypothesis, we used the regression procedures suggested by [94]. These have been extensively used by business and managements scholars [95]. The mediated regression has to meet three requirements. First, independent variables (CSR to employees) should relate significantly to dependent variable (involvement in creative work). Second, the independent variable should relate significantly to the mediator (positive work attitude). Third, when positive work attitude is entered before the CSR to employees, the significance of the independent variable (CSR to employees) relationship with the dependent variable (creativity work involvement) should decrease if positive work attitude is the mediator.

In the second hypothesis, we predicted that positive work attitudes by employees mediate the relationship between CSR to employees and the involvement in creative work. As we can see in Table 5, Model 2, there is a positive and significant relationship between CSR to employees and positive work attitude ($\beta = 0.307$, $p < 0.001$). In Table 5, Model 3, the relationship between CSR to employees and involvement in creative work is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.118$, $p < 0.01$). Lastly, in Table 5, Model 4, when positive work attitude is entered before CSR to employees, the significance of the relationship of the independent variables (internal marketing) with the dependent variable (creativity work involvement) decreased and becomes non-significant ($\beta = 0.083$, n.s.). Therefore, our result supports the mediation role of positive work attitude on the relationship between CSR to employees and involvement in creative work.
Table 5. Indirect effect of CSR to employees on the involvement in creative work through positive work attitude.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Work Attitude</th>
<th>Creative Work Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−0.051 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>−0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Experience</td>
<td>−0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Experience</td>
<td>0.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Experience</td>
<td>−0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR to employees</td>
<td>0.307 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive work attitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²                   | 0.142                     | 0.207    | 0.183     | 0.215 |
Adj. R²               | 0.112                     | 0.174    | 0.149     | 0.177 |
F                     | 4.627 ***                 | 6.180 ***| 5.379 *** | 5.655 ***|

*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001, † p < 0.10.

In the last hypothesis, we expected that the employees’ intention to leave would mediate the relationship between CSR to employees and employee involvement in creative work. As shown in Table 6, Model 2, there is a negative and significant relationship between CSR to employees and the employees’ intention to leave (β = −0.235, p < 0.01). In Table 6, Model 3, the relationship between CSR to employees and involvement in creative work is positive and significant (β = 0.118, p < 0.01). Lastly, in Table 6, Model 4, when the employees’ intention to leave is entered before the CSR to employees, the significance of the relationship of the independent variable (CSR to employees) to the dependent variable (creativity work involvement) decreased (β = 0.084, p < 0.05). Therefore, our result supports the mediating role of the employees’ intention to leave on the relationship between CSR to employees and the involvement in creative work.

Table 6. Indirect effect of CSR to employees on creative work involvement through the intention to leave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention to Leave</th>
<th>Creative Work Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.068 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>−0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>−0.283 †</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Experience</td>
<td>0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Experience</td>
<td>−0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Experience</td>
<td>−0.133 †</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR to employees</td>
<td>−0.235 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²                   | 0.227                     | 0.256    | 0.183     | 0.280 |
Adj. R²              | 0.199                     | 0.225    | 0.149     | 0.245 |
F                     | 8.183 ***                 | 8.097 ***| 5.379 *** | 7.980 ***|

*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001, † p < 0.10.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Almost all small-sized enterprises nowadays face a highly dynamic environment characterized by rapid technological changes, varying customer taste, and a growing number of competitors [96].
Employees are one of the most important stakeholders of any organization [51]. There is a newly emerged stream of research regarding the effects of CSR activities on the employee attitudes and behaviors in the workplace [17,65,97]. Our paper contributes to this literature by exploring the effect of CSR to employees on the employee involvement in creative work by considering two mediator variables, namely intention to leave and positive work attitudes. It is worth knowing which personal and contextual characteristics predict the employees creative work involvement because this factor has been proven to be critical to the overall job effectiveness [98] and the success, growth and survival of organizations [4,99].

Using the original survey data from 209 employees working in 45 small sized firms, we found a direct and positive relationship between CSR to employees on the employee involvement in creative work in our first hypothesis. This result highlighted the importance of the context in which employee fosters creativity. In the same line of research, Nooteboom [100] found that internal CSR enhance their engagement and Abdullah, Ashraf and Sarfraz [17] found that the employees who value CSR practice show more creativity in their work performance.

Furthermore, we found that CSR to employees can affect the involvement in creative work through the decrease of the employees’ intention to leave. In other words, CSR to employees reduce the future planning of employees to leave their current organization and search for new job in other company. Less intention to quit, in turn, helps to stimulate the employees’ mind and thoughts to creatively contribute in the organizational activities. In the same vein, previous studies found that CSR activities enhance employees commitment [101–104].

Lastly, we found that positive work attitudes mediate the relationship between CSR to employees and their involvement in creative work. Emphasizing CSR leads to a positive attitude towards their jobs. Once the employees have a positive attitude towards their job they tend to be more involved in creativity and develop new ideas. If employees feel happy when they are working, they are likely to support their organization as a mutual exchange.

7. Limitation and Opportunities for Future Research

Our study suffers from several limitations. Since we have collected our data at two specific points in time, our results may not shed light on the variation in the involvement of the employees in creative work over long time. A follow-up survey or interviews conducted over almost three years would be able to capture whether these factors contribute to employee involvement in creative work. Furthermore, our survey was limited to only small-sized firms in Iran. It is a bit challenging to generalize our findings to medium- or large-sized companies and those operating internationally. Therefore, more research is needed in this area. Another limitation of this research is that it considered only one independent variable (i.e., CSR to employees) to predict the involvement of employees in creative work. It would be useful for further work to consider other types of CSR activities (customer, government and environment) which are important to organizational creativity. We have used the self-report method to measure the involvement of employees in creative work. Future research can approach the managers or leaders to measure this construct. Finally, the position held by an employee may affect his/her creativeness within organization. Some works are more challenging and may need more creative ideas, but some other job positions would not allow using new ideas to complete duties. This may affect the employee involvement in creative work. Future studies might evaluate the impact of the employees’ job title on their involvement in creative work.

Author Contributions: Asghar Afshar Jahanshahi coordinated the project and drafted this paper; Behrooz Gharleghi provided conceptual comments and contributed to revising the article; Khaled Nawaser contributed to data collection and data analysis.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Appendix A. Measurement Items

### Creative work involvement [4].

“Please indicate how often the following statements characterize your behavior in work place.”

1. I demonstrate originality in my work.
2. I take risks in terms of producing new ideas in doing job.
3. I find new uses for existing methods or equipment.
4. I solve problems that had caused other difficulty.
5. I try out new ideas and approached to problems.
6. I identify opportunities for new products/processes.
7. I generate novel, but operable work-related ideas.
8. I serve as a good role model for creativity.
9. I generate ideas revolutionary to our field.

### CSR to employees [51].

1. Our company encourages its employees to participate to the voluntarily activities.
2. Our company policies encourage the employees to develop their skills and careers.
3. The management of our company primarily concerns with employees’ needs and wants.
4. Our company implements flexible policies to provide a good work and life balance for its employees.
5. The managerial decisions related with the employees are usually fair.
6. Our company supports employees who want to acquire additional education.

### Positive work attitude [39]

In the last 12 months, how often have you.

1. Did more work than required.
2. Volunteered to work overtime.
3. Made attempts to change work conditions.
4. Negotiated with supervisors to improve job.
5. Tried to think of ways to do job better.

### Intention to Leave [86]

1. I often think about quitting.
2. It is likely that I will actively look for a new job next year.
3. I will probably look for a new job in the next year.
4. I often think of changing my job.

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