Corporate Social Responsibility and Employees' Affective Commitment: A Multiple Mediation Model

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Corporate social responsibility and employees' affective commitment

A multiple mediation model

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employees' affective commitment. Three underlying mechanisms are used to explain the relationship between CSR and commitment, namely, deontic justice, social identity theory and social exchange theory.
Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected through survey questionnaires. The sample consisted of 161 employees who work in private and public organizations in Tunisia. Regression analysis was conducted using a multiple mediation model.
Findings – The results reveal a positive and significant relationship between CSR and employees' affective commitment. The perception of person–organization fit, organizational identification and perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between CSR and affective commitment.
Originality/value – With regard to CSR, past studies have never deal with deontic values in analyzing work behaviors. Furthermore, most previous studies have considered a direct effect between CSR perceptions and affective commitment. This study extends the literature by conceptualizing the indirect mechanisms linking CSR to employees' affective commitment.
Keywords Justice, Commitment, Identification, CSR, Social exchange
Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Research examining the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employees' organizational commitment is increasing in recent years (Farooq *et al.*, 2014; Glavas and Kelley, 2014; Vlachos *et al.*, 2014; Ditlev-Simonsen, 2015). This relationship is important because the effects of CSR on employees' commitment may diffuse into greater organization performance (Glavas and Kelley, 2014). Numerous scholars have indeed shown the importance of organizational commitment, defined as the extent to which one is committed to his/her organization, for employees' performance and well-being (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Albeit this greater scholarly attention, the analysis of intervening mechanisms linking CSR to organizational commitment remains underdeveloped. Most of the existing research only demonstrate the presence of a positive and direct relationship between CSR and organizational commitment (Brammer *et al.*, 2007; Rego *et al.*, 2010; Mueller *et al.*, 2012; Ditlev-Simonsen, 2015). The few studies focusing on intervening mechanisms have shown that perceived organizational support and meaningfulness (Glavas and Kelley, 2014), authenticity (Glavas, 2016b), organizational identification and trust (Farooq *et al.*, 2014) represent important individual and organizational factors

explaining how CSR influences employee commitment. However, Glavas (2016a) in a recent review of the literature noticed that this area of inquiry is still underdeveloped, given that among the 181 articles reviewed; only 16 articles (8 percent) examined intervening mechanisms in the CSR–commitment relationship. Moreover, when scholars adopt the micro-level approach in the analysis of CSR, which focus on the influence of CSR on individuals' attitudes and behaviors, this number sharply decreases to only three articles (1.6 percent). We, thus, know that this relationship exists but we do not know sufficiently why and how (Glavas, 2016b).

The goal of this paper is, thus, to extend prior research on this aspect and examine additional intervening factors in the CSR–commitment relationship. By studying underlying mechanisms of this relationship, we thus open "a black box that needs to be opened" De Roeck and Maon (2018). To do so, we rely on two main traditional frameworks that have been used to investigate the CSR effects on individuals' attitudes and behaviors, namely, the social identification theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Moreover, to advance current research, we also focus on deontic theory (Folger, 2001), which suggests that individuals attitudes and behaviors are influenced by the perceived moral obligations to uphold norms of justice. Deontic theory is an insightful framework for this paper because, contrarily to social identification and social exchange theories, it explains how people's perception of fairness influences their attitudes and behaviors above and beyond the influence of their own personal interest. Drawing on these three theoretical paradigms, and as illustrated in Figure 1, we suggest the following three mediators to explore the indirect effect of the relationship between CSR and commitment: person–organization (P–O) fit, organizational identification and perceived organizational support.

This paper advances current CSR and commitment research in the following three ways. First, by considering the impact of CSR on employees' commitment, this research contributes to expanding the number of studies adopting the micro-level approach to the analysis of CSR, which is a promising area of inquiry still underdeveloped in comparison with studies adopting the traditional focus on financial performance associated with CSR initiatives (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). Second, by examining intervening mechanisms in the relationship between CSR and organizational commitment, this research contributes to filling the shortage of studies on potential mediators in the relationship between CSR and organizational attitudes and behaviors (Glavas, 2016a). Our study is important as it also associates novel antecedents, such as the individual perception of CSR initiatives implemented into the company, to well-studied organizational attitudes and behaviors, likewise organizational identification, support and/or deontic concerns, thereby offering a novel perspective toward the examination of the predictors of such influential attitudes at work. Finally, a focus on deontic theory as an explanation of the mediating mechanism is important as this research enables to integrate both micro-CSR and justice literatures in order to explain the effects of CSR initiatives realized by an organization and commitment (Rupp *et al.*, 2006).
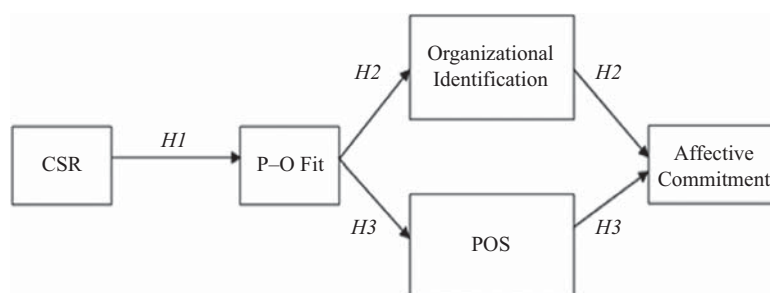

Figure 1.
Multiple mediation model of the impact of CSR on employees' affective commitment

2. Literature review

2.1 CSR and individual consequences

Since its introduction in the seminal contribution by Bowen (1953, p. 6), who defined CSR as "the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society", the interest in CSR has exploded both in academia and in corporate world (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). So far, the literature has been fragmented regarding the conceptualization, measurement, theories and examination of CSR (Carroll, 1979). Most of the prior research has examined the implications of CSR for organizations by adopting a macroeconomic approach, which considers the financial returns for organizations when launching CSR initiatives. In recent years, we witness the rise of an emerging approach that focuses on the implications of CSR initiatives on individuals' organizational behaviors and performance, a so-called micro-CSR approach (Rupp and Mallory, 2015; Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Rupp *et al.*, 2014; Glavas, 2016a). This approach suggests that CSR initiatives can shape employees' attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, commitment, work engagement and, ultimately, their performance (Rupp *et al.*, 2006). Despite the growing interest in the micro-CSR approach, the number of studies examining the effects of CSR on individuals' behaviors remains underdeveloped in comparison with the traditional approach focusing on financial returns of CSR initiatives (Glavas, 2016a). According to Aguinis and Glavas (2012), only 4 percent of studies examining CSR has adopted a micro-level focus. Nevertheless, the advantages of adopting a micro-level approach to the study of CSR are significant. First of all, using the micro-level approach enables researchers to consider more deeply the role played by employees in achieving the organization's goals in terms of CSR. Second of all, the micro-level approach enables to consider the consequences of individuals' perceptions of CSR, which can be different from the CSR reputation built by the company, thereby providing a more realistic lens to examine how CSR shape employees' attitudes and behaviors at work (Aguinis and Glavas, 2013; Glavas and Kelley, 2014), considering that individuals' attitudes and behaviors at work are strongly influenced by their perceptions.

2.2 CSR and organizational commitment

A recent literature review (Glavas, 2016a) shows that CSR is an important antecedent of employees' attitudes and behaviors at work, including job satisfaction (Vlachos *et al.*, 2013; Valentine and Fleischman, 2008), job performance (Carmeli *et al.*, 2007), organizational citizenship behaviors (Rupp *et al.*, 2013), creative efforts (Brammer *et al.*, 2015) and organizational commitment (Brammer *et al.*, 2007; Mueller *et al.*, 2012; Glavas and Kelley, 2014).

In this paper, we focus on organizational commitment because it is one of the most studied attitudes in the managerial literature and it has a profound impact on employees' performance and well-being (Allen and Meyer, 1996). Commitment is a psychological state (Meyer and Allen, 1991) capturing the extent to which an individual is attached to his/her organization (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Affective commitment captures the emotional identification, engagement and attachment that an individual has toward his or her organization. It is associated to one's desire to contribute to the welfare of the organization and willingness to be affiliated and identified with the own organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Thus, when employees are committed affectively toward their organization, they are more likely to remain in their organization because they want to, whereas other employees who develop other forms of commitment with their organization, likewise normative and/or continuance commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 1993), are likely to remain in their organization because they feel the moral obligation to do so (in the case of normative commitment) or because they are worried about the departure costs (in the case of continuance commitment) (Meyer *et al.*, 1993).

Regarding the effects of CSR on affective commitment, scholars have traditionally assumed that the relationship between CSR and affective commitment is positive and direct (i.e. Brammer *et al.*, 2007; Rego *et al.*, 2010; Turker, 2009b). Deontic justice theory (Folger, 2001), social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) are insightful theoretical frameworks that could help us to elucidate why individuals tend to be more emotionally attached to their organization when it is perceived as more socially responsible. Even if the role of organizational identification has been rarely tested empirically (e.g. Farooq *et al.*, 2014), social identity theory is the most frequent explanatory framework used to explain the CSR-outcome relationship (Gond *et al.*, 2017). Social exchange theory is the second fundamental theoretical framework used as an underlying mechanism of that relationship De Roeck and Maon (2018). We did not consider in this paper the other major framework, i.e. signaling mechanisms, for two reasons. First, such framework (i.e. signaling mechanism) is mostly adopted to explain how CSR initiatives are likely to influence job seekers (Rupp and Mallory, 2015) whereas we are interested in examining the link between CSR and individual organizational attitudes. Second, in this paper, we focus on the two theoretical frameworks (namely, exchange and identity) which have been considered as critical in elucidating the effects of CSR in the recently introduced integrative framework by De Roeck and Maon (2018). Finally, we have decided to focus on a third, and understudied, theoretical mechanism underlying CSR effects, namely, the deontic theory framework. Indeed, even if it has been acknowledged that CSR can be explained by the three mechanisms of instrumental, relational and deontic (Aguilera *et al.*, 2007), the deontic mechanism has been overlooked in prior research. As Glavas (2016a, p. 6) stated: "despite the obvious link to the ethics literature, the literatures on ethics and CSR have largely grown in parallel." In our paper, we thus add a new mechanism through the deontic literature that we integrate with existing ones.

3. Our study and hypotheses
3.1 The importance of CSR perceptions
As above mentioned, the study of CSR is recently characterized by a greater focus on employees' perceptions (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012), i.e. the micro-level approach to CSR. Following this trend, in the following paper, we focus on employees' perceptions of the CSR practices implemented in their organization. Unlike most research on CSR studied at the organizational level, we analyze how individual's perceptions of CSR affect employees' attitudes at work. A focus on individual perception is crucial to explain the effects of CSR on individual outcomes. Indeed, there is wide consensus among scholars that employees perceive in different way the CSR initiatives implemented in the same company (Aguinis and Glavas, 2013). As Ong *et al.* (2018, p. 45) state, "individuals vary in the extent to which they value such activities, and therefore individuals vary in the extent to which they are likely to be influenced by their organizations' CSR activities." Moreover, the use of this subjective approach in the study of CSR is recommended due to difficulty to rely on objective measures of CSR (Glavas and Kelley, 2014). Finally, the micro-level approach to CSR has been under investigated in the current literature, making this an important area of investigation for the future (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Rupp *et al.*, 2013).

Relying on organizational justice theory, we contend that the individuals' perceptions of CSR practices can translate in equal and fairer relationships in the workplace that are likely to influence employees' attitudes and behaviors (Rupp *et al.*, 2006). As Rupp *et al.* (2014, p. 362) state: "CSR is justice." Similar to what happens in term of individual evaluation of organizational justice, employees may evaluate the set of CSR practices implemented in their companies at the distributive, procedural and interactional level. More specifically, employees' reactions toward CSR practices can be similar to the reactions that employees develop when evaluating the manner through which different stakeholders are treated by

the organization. For example, when a company internally promotes the presence of a fair and sustainable relationship with a particular supplier, employees might evaluate if the supplier has been paid fairly (distributive justice), if the supplier had a voice in the transaction procedures (procedural justice) and if the supplier has been treated with dignity and respect (interactional justice). Organizational justice literature also suggests that people are influenced by how themselves and others are treated by organizational entities (organization, supervisor, colleagues, etc.). Indeed, the "third-party justice" perspective (Skarlicki *et al.*, 2015) posits that employees develop justice-pertinent perceptions on how internal and external stakeholders are treated even when they are not directly concerned by this particular treatment. Indeed, third parties can experience strong emotions for transgressors upon witnessing another's unfair treatment (Rupp, 2011). Drawing a parallelism with organizational justice research, we contend that employees' perceptions of a company's CSR can be considered as externally focused third-party justice judgments (Rupp *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, CSR can be seen as a particular case of application of organizational justice by considering how employees react to the organization's actions, practices and policies toward external stakeholders. In support of our claim, a multitude of studies in CSR literature is recently drawing on justice research to develop their theoretical background (e.g. De Roeck *et al.*, 2014).

Furthermore, CSR refers to the relationships that an organization develops with its different stakeholders. Turker's (2009b) model defines CSR using four dimensions. The first dimension is centered on the relationship between an organization and its social and non-social stakeholders, and it describes the efforts of an organization in helping and protecting the local community, the natural environment, the future generations and the nongovernmental organizations. The second dimension is centered on the employees and it refers to the human resource practices adopted by an organization with the intention of creating a more sustainable workplace and responding to the employees' needs. The third dimension is centered on the clients and it captures the organizational efforts to treat clients with respect and dignity. Finally, the fourth dimension is centered on the local authorities and it describes the extent to which the policies implemented in an organization respect the governmental regulation. Accordingly, we contend that the extent to which an organization is more or less socially responsible can influence the employees' perception of fairness of how the above-mentioned stakeholders are treated by an organization, with important repercussions on employees' attitudes and behaviors at work, including affective commitment.

3.2 CSR perceptions and person–organization fit
First, we rely on deontic theory to elucidate how CSR initiatives influence the perceived fit between employees and their organization. According to the deontic theory (Folger, 2001), employees tend to believe that CSR practices are a moral obligation of the organization that is implemented in compliance with ethical and justice norms. Thus, employees care for justice of CSR practices as they believe it is a moral obligation. The impact of CSR practices on one's moral obligation can be captured by the concept of P–O fit. P–O fit examines the compatibility between an individual and the characteristics of the organization (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996). This definition focuses on the fit of an individual with the whole organizational rather than focusing on a specific aspect. However, several authors have conceptualized P-O fit as a larger concept composed of several dimensions, including the congruence between the characteristics of the organization and the individual goals, needs and values (Kristof, 1996). Importantly, prior research has shown that congruence in values (Chatman, 1989) between an organization and its members is an important aspect of fit that can influence employees' organizational attitudes and behaviors. The more individuals' values are similar to the ones of the organization, the stronger will be their perception of

their fit with the organization (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). For a socially responsible organization, it is likely that most salient corporate values are fairness, ethics, responsibility and respect of moral obligations (Folger, 2001). When an organization treat in a fair manner all the different stakeholders with whom it interacts, employees are more likely to perceive a similarity of values between self and the organization, which can make them perceive higher level of P-O fit. Consequently, in light with the above, we propose the following:

H1. CSR perceptions are positively related to individuals' perceptions of P–O fit.

3.3 Person–organization fit and affective commitment: a social identification perspective

Prior research has demonstrated that the perception of P–O fit has positive consequences on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Hoffman and Woehr, 2006), including individual and organizational performance (Chatman, 1989), citizenship behavior (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986) and organizational identification (Cable and DeRue, 2002). P–O fit has also been recognized as an important factor to influence the development of organizational commitment (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Glavas and Kelley, 2014).

In this paper, we hypothesize that an individual's identification with his or her organization mediates the relationship between the P–O fit induced by the presence of meaningful CSR initiatives and affective commitment. We draw on social identity theory to justify such relationship (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Social identity theory suggests that an individual's self-concept is influenced by his or her belonging to a particular social group. The aim of an individual is to maintain a positive social identity; thus, in presence of low levels of identification with a particular group, an individual may be likely to leave his or her social group and join another one (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Organizational identification refers to the social identification of an employee toward the organization s/he works for (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). It is an important psychological condition that explains several important work attitudes and behaviors, including citizenship behaviors, job satisfaction, intention to leave and commitment (Riketta, 2005). So far, prior research has suggested that P–O fit enhances employees' satisfaction (Kristof, 1996), by enhancing employees' positive feelings such as the feeling of belonging. The perceptions of fit with one's organization might thereby enhance an individual's self-concept and, in turn, improve their organizational identification (Porter and Kramer, 2006). Thus, when the values of the organization coincide with the values of an employee, as in the case of a high P–O fit, it is likely that such employee will feel a strong affective bond with his or her organization, i.e. higher affective commitment. Relying on the above we propose the following:

H2. Organizational identification mediates the relationship between individuals' perceptions of P–O fit and affective commitment.

3.4 The relationship between person–organization fit and affective commitment: a social exchange perspective

Prior research has shown that when individuals perceive to be supported by their organization, they are likely to develop a stronger organizational commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). A possible explanation for the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment lies in the basic assertions of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Social exchange theory suggests that employees give great value to the perception of being cared and valued by their organization and they tend to behave accordingly. When individuals receive favorable treatments, they tend to respond positively in order to reciprocate such positive treatment (Gouldner, 1960). Thus, when employees are valued and supported by their organization, they feel they owe a positive response. This feeling does not only translate in the obligation of working hard to favor the

accomplishment of organizational goals but also in a greater affective commitment and a stronger desire to remain in such organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986).

Importantly, when employees highly value the justice and ethics practices adopted by their organization, they may be likely to perceive greater organizational support as an attempt of the organization to fulfill its moral obligations toward the employees, i.e. fulfilling the second dimension of CSR (Turker, 2009b). Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the P–O fit can be considered as an insightful framework to explain how perceived organizational support can be considered as an antecedent of organizational commitment. More specifically, we contend that when employees perceive that their values are similar to those of their organization (high P–O fit), they may consider CSR practices as an important form of organizational support that contribute fulfilling their basic needs. Further, an organization who treats its different stakeholders fairly contributes to the well-being of the employees and the improvement of the work environment quality (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Thus, drawing on social exchange theory, we posit that employees who perceive their organization to be supportive, will be likely to reciprocate the positive treatment received with greater organizational commitment:

H3. Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between P–O fit and affective commitment.

4. Method

4.1 Sample and procedure

Data were collected from employees working in 19 companies (in various job industries such as oil, telecommunication, finance and so forth) located in the city of Tunis, Tunisia. We used one of the researcher's personal network to reach out the HR department in each of these companies asking for collaboration in recruiting potential participants. The HR department distributed questionnaires to its employees indicating that they could have deposited their anonymous surveys once finished in a specific box present in their office. We obtained 161 valid questionnaires over a three month-period. In total, 45 percent of the respondents were female, 43 percent were between 26 and 35 and 40 percent worked in their company for more than ten years. The questionnaires were translated in French using the Brislin (1980) method. The aim of this method is to identify the translation and comprehension problems. Employees answered questions using a seven-point Likert scale (from 1 = totally disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

4.2 Measures

Employees' perceptions of CSR: the independent variable. Employees' individual perceptions of CSR were measured using the 17-item scale by Turker, (2009b). Respondents were asked to indicate their perception of the extent to which their organization was developing CSR initiatives toward the following actors: social and non-social stakeholders (six items), employees (six items), clients (three items) and finally initiatives undertaken to comply with government requirements (two items). Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.93.

Affective commitment: dependent variable. In the present study, affective commitment evaluates the positive attitudes that employees held toward their organization. The measure contains six items from the organizational commitment scale of Allen and Meyer (1996). A sample item is the following: "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me." Cronbach's α was 0.85.

Organizational identification: mediator. Organizational identification was measured using the six-item scale by Mael and Ashforth (1992). A sample item is: "When someone criticizes the organization, I feel like a personal insult." Cronbach's α was 0.89.

The person–organization fit: mediator. The scale of Cable and Judge (1996) measures the extent to which the individual's values fit with the ones of their organization. The scale is composed of three items. A sample item is: "The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values." Cronbach's α was 0.93.

Perceived organizational support: mediator. The scale of Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) measures employees' perceptions of the organization's support and caring toward their work and non-work goals. In the present research, we used the short scale of this scale by Lynch and colleagues (1999) which is composed of eight items. A sample item was "My organization cares about my well-being." Cronbach's α was 0.86.

Covariates. We identified four socio-demographic variables expected to covary with our independent and dependent variables and that should be controlled for in our data analyses (i.e. gender, age, education and tenure). As none of these variables appears to be significant in the following analyses, we decided to remove control variables for the subsequent analyses in order to reduce model complexity (Becker, 2005).

4.3 Data analysis: a test of multiple mediation effect

The hypothesized research model is a multiple mediation model in which the effect of CSR on affective commitment is mediated, respectively, by P–O fit, perceived organizational support and organizational identification (see Figure 1). In order to do so, we relied on a series of mediation analyses using the model 6 on PROCESS multiple mediation (Hayes, 2013). PROCESS is a modeling program of conditional process that uses an analytical framework of least square ordinary paths to test the direct and indirect effects on simple multiple mediation models (Hayes, 2013). Structural equation modeling would have been an alternative method to test our hypotheses. However, given the number of variables and items, it would have required a much larger sample size to fully trust the results.

Figure 1 illustrates a three-mediator model in which the predictive variable $(X) = $ CSR affects the outcome variable ($Y = $ affective commitment) through seven paths. Path 1 (Ind1) is indirect and goes from X to Y via the first mediator only (M1: P–O fit). Path 2 (Ind2) is indirect and goes through both M1 and M2 (P–O fit and organizational identification) sequentially, where M1 affects M2. Path 3 (Ind3) is indirect and goes through M1 and M3: (P–O fit and perceived organizational support) sequentially, where M1 affects M3. Path 4 (Ind4) is indirect and goes through M1, M2 and M3 sequentially where M1 affects M3 and M3 affects M2. Path 5 (Ind5) goes through the third mediator only (M3). Path 6 (Ind6) goes through both M2 and M3 sequentially, where M3 affects M2. Finally, path 7 (Ind7) goes through the third mediator only (M2). All the indirect effects have been subject to bootstrap analysis with 5,000 bootstrap samples and a confidence interval of 95% (CI, see Table II). The significant indirect effect of the interval confidence (CI) of bootstrap (95%) is the 1 not including 0 (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).

5. Results

We first conducted a CFA with MPLUS8. The five factors model $(\chi^2(726) = 1,722,$ RMSEA $= 0.09$, SRMR $= 0.09$) fits the data in an acceptable manner given the small sample size (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Because common method variance could be present, we conducted the Harman single-factor test (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) and results of this test indicated that the one-factor model was very poor $(\chi^2(736) = 3,215$, RMSEA $= 0.15$, SRMR $= 0.14$). We also tested the direct relationship between employees' perceptions of the CSR initiatives implemented in their company and affective commitment. A regression analysis show a positive and significant effect (effect $= 0.627$, SE $= 0.0850$, $p < 0.001$, CI $= (0.4590; 0.7949)$).

According to the research hypotheses, namely, *H1–H3*, the correlation coefficient between CSR, affective commitment, organizational identification, P–O fit and perceived

organizational support are positive and significant. Table I indicates that CSR is correlated with P–O fit ($r = 0.505$). *H1* is, thus, confirmed. In turn, P–O fit is positively correlated with organizational identification ($r = 0.48$) and perceived organizational support ($r = 0.546$). Finally, organizational identification and perceived organizational support are positively correlated with organizational commitment ($r = 0.723$) and ($r = 0.411$), respectively. The research hypotheses also suggest that P–O fit, the perceived organizational support and organizational identification mediate the relationship between CSR and affective commitment. To test our hypotheses, we conducted a multiple mediation analyses. The findings presented in Table II show that:

- CSR has a significant and positive effect on P–O fit ($b = 0.6270$, $t = 7.3731$, $p < 0.001$).

- P–O fit has a significant and positive effect on POS ($b = 0.2706$, $t = 4.8438$, $p < 0.001$) which, in turn, influences the affective commitment ($b = 0.0245$, $t = 0.4725$, $p < 0.001$).

- P–O fit has a significant and positive effect on organizational identification ($b = 0.3566$, $t = 5.1301$, $p < 0.001$) which, in turn, influences the organizational commitment ($b = 0.5878$, $t = 10.6746$, $p < 0.001$) (Table III).

Furthermore, results indicate that significant indirect effects occurred. For example, P–O fit had a significant indirect effect on IO with a point estimate of 0.1314 and CI between 0.0737 and 0.2187. This result supports *H2*. Because the indirect effect when we considered organizational identification as a further mediator was not significant (effect equals −0.0091 and 0 belongs to the confidence interval), we can conclude that the mediation of P–O fit on the relationship between CSR and affective commitment is total. Similarly, P–O fit had a significant indirect effect on POS with a point estimate of 0.029 and CI between 0.0060 and 0.0649. This result supports *H3*. Because the indirect effect when we considered POS as a

Variable	M	SD	Coeff. (α)	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Individual perceptions of corporate social responsibility	4.41	1.28	0.93	1				
(2) Affective commitment	5.10	1.16	0.85	0.300**	1			
(3) Organizational identification	5.21	1.27	0.89	0.254**	0.723**	1		
(4) Person–organization fit	3.98	1.59	0.93	0.505**	0.450**	0.480**	1	
(5) Perceived organizational support	3.98	1.27	0.86	0.580**	0.411**	0.312**	0.546**	1

Notes: $n = 161$. Scales are from 1 to 7. **$p < 0.01$

Table I.
Descriptive statistics, reliability estimates and study variable intercorrelations

Direct effects	Estimate	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
CSR→P–O fit	0.6270***	0.0850	7.3731	0.4590	0.7949
P–O fit→POS	0.2706***	0.0559	4.8438	0.1603	0.3810
CSR→POS	0.4051***	0.0694	5.8370	0.2680	0.5422
P–O fit→OI	0.3566***	0.0695	5.1301	0.2193	0.4939
POS→OI	0.0787***	0.0924	0.8519	−0.1037	0.2611
CSR→OI	−0.0155***	0.0888	−0.1749	−0.1910	0.1599
P–O fit→AC	0.0245***	0.0518	0.4725	−0.0779	0.1269
POS→AC	0.1685***	0.0639	2.6377	0.0423	0.2947
OI→AC	0.5878***	0.0551	10.6746	0.4790	0.6966
CSR→AC	0.0106***	0.0613	0.1735	−0.1104	0.1317

Table II.
Results of mediation tests

Notes: CSR, individuals' perceptions of the CSR initiatives implemented in the company; P–O fit, person–organization fit; POS, perceived organizational support; OI, organizational identification; AC, affective commitment. ***$p < 0.001$

further mediator is significant (effect equals 0.0683 and 0 does not belong to the confidence interval), we can conclude that the mediation is partial, leaving some room for another explanation of the CSR-P–O fit–commitment relationship.

6. Discussion
The present research proposes to examine the effects of CSR on employees' affective commitment. Although previous research has found that CSR can influence positively employee organizational commitment, the underlying mechanisms to explain this relationship had been overlooked. In order to filling this gap, this paper has examined three different mechanisms to understand the CSR-affective commitment relationship. More precisely, in line with deontic justice theory, social exchange theory and social identity theory, our findings provide support for the mediating role of P–O fit, organizational identification and perceived organizational support in the relationship between CSR and commitment.

6.1 Theoretical implications
The present study has three important contributions for the literature. First, this research contributes to the micro-CSR literature by showing that CSR's perceptions shape employees' affective commitment. Despite the amount of research examining CSR, few studies have stressed the importance of CSR policies in affecting employees' attitudes and behaviors at work (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). So far, most of the research on CSR outcomes has treated the concept in terms of CSR objective indicators and their impact on the overall financial performance of the organization. This research shows the importance of considering employees' perceptions of the several CSR initiatives implemented by an organization when examining CSR outcomes. Despite the burgeoning emergence of micro-CSR, our research contributes to the literature by showing the necessity of studying individual subjective perceptions of CSR to have a more complete picture of its influence on attitudes and behaviors of employees. Furthermore, all prior studies that have examined the impact of individuals' perceptions of CSR initiatives on affective commitment have considered a direct effect between CSR perceptions and affective commitment (Mueller *et al.*, 2012; Turker, 2009a). Therefore, the main novelty of this research consists of shedding light on the indirect mechanisms linking CSR to employees' affective commitment, which is an aspect that has been overlooked so far. Consequently, we contribute to the literature by opening the black box of the CSR–commitment relationship.

The second contribution of this study is the exploration of the mediating effect of P–O fit, organizational identification and perceived organizational support, which are three

Indirect effects	BC 95% CI Mediators	EFFECT	BOOT SE	LLCI	ULCI
Total		0.02611	0.0632	0.1353	0.3872
Ind1	P–O fit	0.0154	0.0410	−0.0654	0.0956
Ind2	P–O fit and OI	0.1314	0.0362	0.0737	0.2187
Ind3	P–O fit and POS	0.0286	0.0143	0.0060	0.0649
Ind4	P–O fit and POS and OI	0.0078	0.0114	−0.0090	0.0372
Ind5	POS	0.0683	0.0349	0.0106	0.1455
Ind6	POS and OI	0.0187	0.0240	−0.0277	0.0684
Ind7	OI	−0.0091	0.0554	−0.1231	0.0999

Notes: LLCI, lower limit confidence interval; ULCI, upper limit confidence interval; CSR, individuals' perceptions of CSR; P–O fit, person–organization fit; POS, perceived organizational support; OI, organizational identification; AC, affective commitment. Process multiple mediation Model 6, Hayes, 2013

Table III.
Results for test indirect effects of CSR–affective engagement through three mediators (person–organization fit, organizational identification and perceived organizational support)

important psychological mechanisms that can help elucidating more clearly the effects of CSR on commitment. This is an important contribution given that most of prior research has relied on social identity theory to examine intervening mechanisms De Roeck and Maon (2018). Social exchange theory has been rarely used in examining the CSR-affective commitment relationship. So far, the existing research on social exchange has examined the effects of trust (Farooq *et al.*, 2014) and perceived organizational support (Glavas and Kelley, 2014). Thus, we believe that it is essential to explore simultaneously social identity and social exchange mechanisms to better understand how CSR affects affective commitment. While previous research has indicated that the presence of multiple mediators leads to the dominance of one mediator over the others, our research has shown the concomitant mediating role of, respectively, organizational identification and perceived organizational support. That is, the impact of CSR's perceptions on affective commitment occurs at the same time across the mechanisms of social identity and social exchange. Indeed, from a methodological point of view, it is very important to integrate multiple mediators in a same model because the effects of a mediator can disappear when another one is integrated. For example, Glavas and Kelley (2014) found that even if perceived organizational support mediates the CSR-outcomes relationship when considered alone, this mediating effect disappears when meaningfulness was introduced as a further mediator in their model. By integrating several underlying mechanisms concomitantly in our model, we thus showed the robustness of previously found mediating mechanisms of support and identification. As Glavas (2016a, p. 9) states in his literature review about micro-CSR: "models with multiple mediators and moderators are needed in order to create more comprehensive models and avoid false positive findings of more simplistic models." We, thus, responded to this call in our research by identifying three underlying mechanisms at stake concomitantly.

Third, this research contributes to the literature on the micro-level approach to CSR by introducing deontic justice as a mediating mechanism of the relationship between CSR perceptions and affective commitment. The results indicate that employees are morally concerned about the social responsibility of their organization and that deontic justice constitutes one of the mechanisms explaining employees' attitudes and behaviors (Rupp *et al.*, 2014). Previous research has focused on social identity and social exchange theory to explain employees' perceptions of CSR and subsequent outcomes (e.g. affective commitment). Interestingly, while ethic is in the heart of CSR concerns, no research has considered the moral principles in the relationship between CSR perceptions and outcomes. Specifically, we found that employees' affective commitment is influenced by their moral and ethical concerns when evaluating the CSR practices implemented by their organizations. Moreover, our results show the central role of individuals' P–O fit perceptions that could also influence the other two mediators used in our model (i.e. organizational identification and perceived organizational support). Thus, this paper contributes to the literature by helping to understand the complex mechanisms that explain how CSR transforms into affective commitment. The next step in micro-CSR research is to study the differential effect of targeted stakeholders of CSR on the deontic appraisal of employees. In our paper, we use a unidimensional measure of CSR perceptions. Indeed, in the main, research tends to use a single aggregate measure of CSR (Edwards and Kudret, 2017). Examples of such research include Gao and He (2017), De Roeck and Delobbe (2012), and Vlachos *et al.* (2014). This approach makes sense because individuals are sensitive to a global perception of fairness of entities (Ambrose and Schminke, 2009). It means that whatever the target (stakeholder) of the action, people will evaluate the general perception of fairness of their organization. It is precisely this general perception that will be responsible of a deontic appraisal of their organization whatever the stakeholder at stake. Deriving different hypotheses regarding the stakeholders on the moral perception of CSR exceed the scope of this paper. However, differentiating stakeholders may be a fruitful avenue to

consider in future research. Recently, Wang *et al.* (2016) urge researchers to assess CSR toward different stakeholders in their model. An example of this promising stream of research is Edwards and Kudret (2017).

6.2 Managerial implications
The present research has important practical implications. The main practical implication of this study is that in order to increase employees' affective commitment, organizations should increase their investments in CSR initiatives. Another important implication of this study is to highlight that CSR initiatives are differently perceived by employees and there might be a misalignment between employees' perceptions and reality. A possible remedy to reduce this problem is enhancing the communication of CSR practices through forums, internal reports, training and targeted communication (Glavas and Godwin, 2013; Gond *et al.*, 2017). In addition, our results indicate that the perception of deontic justice is likely to shape employees' emotional attachment with the organization. Thus, organizations should further develop the values of respect and dignity through CSR initiatives to strengthen the emotional bond with their employees. Managers could also build their relationships with employees upon deontic justice and use justice as a mutual value shared with all the members of the organization in order to promote greater commitment. Finally, we recommend managers to actively involve employees in the enactment, promotion and execution of CSR initiatives in an effort to foster their perceptions of the organization morality through CSR actions (De Roeck *et al.*, 2016).

6.3 Limits and future research
This research is subject to limitations which suggest interesting improvements for future research. First, the study has been conducted in Tunisia where Tunisian employees can show lesser concern about CSR initiatives than employees in more established economies. The efforts made by the companies to sensitize the employees toward CSR are neither structured nor sufficient. Thus far, of the 40 Tunisian companies which have adhered to the Global Compact of 2005, only 10 of them maintained their membership. Consequently, our findings have to be interpreted in light of this particular cultural context.

Second, one limit can be related to our sample composed of 161 employees coming from 15 national companies and 4 international companies. Thus, our results might be more representative in the international companies who have been more engaged into CSR initiatives after the Arab spring revolution. Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to explore the post-revolution social context which revealed the impairment of the work relationships inside the companies and shed light on the importance of the popular claims in favor of the values conveyed in CSR (social justice and equity).

Third, our research model does not consider potential boundary conditions influencing the CSR–commitment relationship. Thus, a research design including a moderator is important to stress the causal effect between CSR and affective commitment. Specifically, trait personality and company's culture should affect the P–O fit, organizational identification and perceived organizational support. Consequently, it would be interesting in future research to test the effects of CSR on affective commitment using a moderated model.

Fourth, we were interested in individual perceptions of CSR only. Studying the collective perception of CSR inside a company ("CSR climate") may be of interest. By paralleling the justice climate framework, it could help to understand how individual beliefs about CSR could spread throughout the organization and the consequences of such shared perceptions.

Finally, as our research has been conducted on one level, some aspects have not been controlled in our analysis such as the size and the type of the company. Future research should, thus, explore the effects of the macroeconomic variables on individual outcomes relying on a theoretical and multi-level empirical model.

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