Research Article

From CSR to Commitment: A thematic review of psychological capital and employee resilience in emerging economies (2020–2024)

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ABSTRACT

This thematic review investigates the pathways through which Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) influences critical employee outcomes, specifically commitment and resilience, by focusing on the mediating role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap). We conducted a systematic analysis of 20 empirical studies published between 2020 and 2024, focusing on emerging economies and labor-intensive sectors. The synthesis reveals four dominant themes: (1) CSR's crucial function during crises as an adaptive mechanism for employee resilience; (2) enhanced employee commitment derived from industry-specific and context-aware CSR practices; (3) the mediating power of psychological and emotional mechanisms (such as trust and empowerment) that connect CSR to positive attitudes; and (4) PsyCap's pivotal role in translating CSR perceptions into sustained commitment and proactive behavior. Our findings confirm that employee-focused CSR (e.g., welfare, safety) effectively boosts the core PsyCap dimensions (hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy). This cultivated PsyCap, in turn, strengthens affective commitment and supports organizational performance. The discussion positions CSR-driven PsyCap development as both an essential recovery resource during uncertainty and a proactive driver of engagement. Theoretically, this study integrates strategic psychological mechanisms into the CSR-employee outcomes framework. It also provides actionable insights for managers in emerging economies who seek to design PsyCap-centered CSR strategies capable of fostering workforce resilience and organizational sustainability.

Keywords: perceived corporate social responsibility; psychological capital; employee commitment; organizational resilience; sustainable management

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved far beyond its origins as an optional philanthropic activity. It is now a critical strategic imperative, especially for organizations within the dynamic and often resource-constrained environments of emerging economies. This shift is driven by the complex socio-economic challenges tied to rapid industrialization, such as massive workforce mobilization, wealth inequality, and heightened vulnerability to global crises[1]. Within these economies, labor-intensive sectors function as vital pillars of economic stability. The agricultural value chain, for instance, provides a powerful

exemplar. The Chinese tea industry alone supports the livelihoods of over 70 million people and achieved a market value of 351.18 billion yuan in 2023, with projections for continued growth[2,3]

Despite this economic significance, sectors like this grapple with persistent challenges. These include limited competitiveness in premium segments, environmental degradation, and pronounced disparities in socio-economic benefits and skill access for the large rural workforce[4]. Furthermore, the swift adoption of innovative technologies, such as artificial intelligence, demands proactive employee skill enhancement to prevent a widening of labor stability and skills gaps[5]. In this context, CSR emerges as a potentially transformative solution, linking organizational growth with sustainability, fostering ethical supply chains[6,7], and, most critically, enhancing the well-being and commitment of the workforce[8,9].

To successfully implement CSR, organizations must move beyond generic initiatives and truly understand the mechanisms through which employees perceive their actions. Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) is essential; employees who view their firm as socially responsible are far more likely to exhibit heightened job satisfaction, loyalty, and affective commitment[10-12]. The efficacy of PCSR, however, is not linear. It is profoundly mediated by internal employee resources, specifically Psychological Capital (PsyCap). PsyCap—comprising self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience—serves as a core psychological resource that enables employees to internalize CSR values and translate them into sustained workplace behaviors. This makes it crucial for navigating high-stress, crisis-prone work environments[13-15].

Building on this need, this thematic review systematically synthesizes recent literature to construct a cohesive framework for improving workforce stability in emerging economies. By analyzing studies from 2020 to 2024, this paper addresses the central research question: How does the interplay of Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) and Psychological Capital (PsyCap) influence employee commitment and resilience across labor-intensive sectors in emerging economies, as evidenced in recent literature (2020–2024)? The resulting thematic synthesis provides actionable insights that can be applied to address the labor and sustainability challenges faced by sectors similar to the Chinese tea industry.
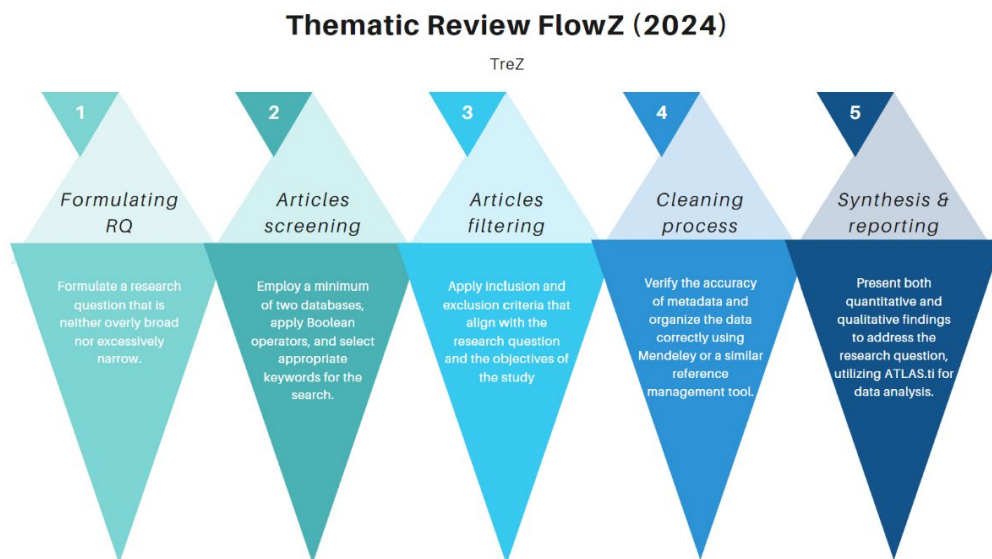
2. Theoretical foundation

Understanding Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) refers to employees' interpretations and subjective beliefs regarding their organization's CSR initiatives. Unlike broader corporate governance, PCSR emphasizes the internal impact of social activities on employee perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Employees who perceive their organizations as responsible are more likely to experience enhanced job satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment[16,10]. This perspective aligns with findings by Hosseini [17], who demonstrated that sustainable HR practices within CSR initiatives significantly enhance employee engagement, particularly when supported by strong employer branding. Research indicates that PCSR fosters pride, loyalty, and engagement, directly influencing employee commitment[18,19]. Bizri[12] found that positive perceptions of CSR practices not only enhance affective commitment but also improve job performance. However, the authenticity of CSR initiatives plays a pivotal role in shaping employee perceptions and subsequent commitment[20]. When employees perceive CSR initiatives as genuine and aligned with company values, they respond positively. Conversely, perceived discrepancies between stated CSR objectives and actual practices can lead to skepticism, undermining the initiatives' effectiveness[21,22]. Strategic communication is vital in amplifying PCSR's impact by ensuring employees understand and value their organization's CSR efforts[23,24].

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) and Employee Commitment Psychological Capital (PsyCap)—encompassing self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism—is a critical mediator linking PCSR with

employee outcomes[13]. Employees with high PsyCap are better equipped to internalize CSR initiatives, aligning their personal values with organizational goals and enhancing their commitment[25]. Research demonstrates that PsyCap reduces employee burnout, promotes job satisfaction, and enhances engagement[14,26]. Furthermore, leadership plays a crucial role in cultivating PsyCap, as authentic leadership styles significantly enhance subordinates' PsyCap, fostering a proactive and resilient workforce[27]. The interplay between PCSR and employee commitment is often examined through Social Exchange Theory (SET), Stakeholder Theory[28], and Social Identity Theory (SIT). SET suggests that employees reciprocate organizational CSR initiatives with increased loyalty and engagement[29]. SIT emphasizes that CSR practices aligned with employees' values enhance organizational identification, fostering stronger emotional and psychological bonds[11]. However, notable research gaps persist in applying these established frameworks to labor-intensive and rural contexts within emerging economies, which this review aims to address.

3. Method

This study adopts a thematic review methodology to synthesize and analyze existing literature on PCSR, PsyCap, and employee commitment, contextualized for labor-intensive industries. Thematic analysis, as conceptualized by Braun & Clarke[30], involves systematically identifying patterns and constructing themes through an in-depth review of literature. Guided by the methodological framework developed by Zairul[31,35], this study utilized ATLAS.ti software for thematic analysis. This copyrighted approach ensures a robust process of identifying patterns, constructing themes, and synthesizing insights from relevant literature[33]. A systematic workflow, illustrated in **Figure 1**, was implemented to ensure methodological rigor.

Figure 1. Thematic review FlowZ (Zairul, 2024).

The review process commenced with the formulation of a focused research question. Articles were then retrieved using Boolean operators and specific keywords across multiple academic databases. The screening phase applied predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of the selected literature. Metadata organization and accuracy were verified during the data cleaning stage using Mendeley. Finally, in the synthesis and reporting phase, ATLAS.ti facilitated the identification of key themes and trends to address the study's research question. This iterative process enabled the development of a deeper understanding of the dynamics between CSR, PsyCap, and employee commitment.

A comprehensive search strategy was conducted across four major databases—Emerald Insight, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search process utilized Boolean operators and tailored keywords (see **Table 1**). Key inclusion criteria were applied: (1) articles published from 2020 onwards; (2) focus on PCSR, PsyCap, and employee commitment; (3) prioritization of studies from labor-intensive sectors; and (4) only peer-reviewed, full-text journal articles in English.

Table 1. Summary of database search strings and results.

Database	Search String	Results
Emerald Insight	("Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility" OR "PCSR" OR "Corporate Social Responsibility" OR "CSR") AND ("Psychological Capital" OR "PsyCap" OR "psychological resilience" OR "self-efficacy" OR "optimism" OR "hope") AND ("Employee Commitment" OR "organizational commitment" OR "employee engagement" OR "employee loyalty") AND ("Tea Industry" OR "tea production" OR "tea sector" OR "labor-intensive industry" OR "agricultural industry")	27
Scopus	(ALL ("Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility" OR "PCSR" OR "Corporate Social Responsibility" OR "CSR") AND ALL ("Psychological Capital" OR "PsyCap" OR "psychological resilience" OR "self-efficacy" OR "optimism" OR "hope") AND ALL ("Employee Commitment" OR "organizational commitment" OR "employee engagement" OR "employee loyalty") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("empirical" OR "quantitative")) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final"))	298
ScienceDirect	("Corporate Social Responsibility" OR "CSR") AND ("Psychological Capital" OR "Self-Efficacy" OR "Optimism" OR "Resilience" OR "Hope") AND ("Employee Commitment" OR "organizational commitment" OR "employee engagement" OR "employee loyalty")	49
Google Scholar	("Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility" OR "PCSR" AND "Psychological Capital" OR "PsyCap" AND "Employee Commitment" OR "Employee Engagement") OR ("Corporate Social Responsibility" AND "Psychological Capital" AND "Organizational Commitment" AND "Labor-Intensive Industry") OR ("Corporate Social Responsibility" AND "Psychological Capital" AND "Employee Engagement" AND Empirical) OR ("CSR" AND "Psychological Capital" AND "Employee Loyalty" AND "Agricultural Sector" OR "Tea Industry")	11

The search on Emerald Insight initially identified 27 articles focusing on CSR, PsyCap, and employee commitment, of which 9 articles were retained after screening for empirical evidence and relevance to labor-intensive industries. Similarly, Scopus yielded an initial pool of 4,413 articles, which was refined to 298 through the application of filters for empirical or quantitative studies, relevant subject areas (e.g., business and social sciences), and open-access availability; ultimately, 9 articles were selected based on abstract screening and inclusion criteria. On ScienceDirect, a search returned 518 articles, which were narrowed to 49 after filtering for subject areas such as psychology, management, and social sciences, with a final selection of 9 articles after relevance screening. Lastly, an additional search on Google Scholar using specific keyword combinations yielded 11 relevant articles, all of which were included in the final analysis. This rigorous search and selection process ensured the inclusion of high-quality and contextually pertinent studies for thematic analysis. The search process resulted in an initial pool of 374 articles. These were imported into Mendeley for deduplication, which removed 76 duplicate entries. **Figure 2** illustrates the filtering process. The database searches yielded an initial pool of 374 articles. These were imported into Mendeley, which removed 76 duplicate entries. The remaining 295 unique articles were then screened based on abstract relevance, inclusion criteria, and empirical focus. This rigorous process resulted in the selection of 20 core articles for the final thematic analysis.

Figure 2. Prisma flowchart for article selection and screening process.

The thematic analysis of the 20 selected articles was conducted using ATLAS.ti 8, following a structured three-step coding process. First, open coding was performed to identify recurring patterns and concepts within the articles. This was followed by axial coding, where related codes were grouped into broader thematic categories. Finally, selective coding refined these themes to ensure their alignment with the research objectives. The thematic categories were designed to explore publication trends, thematic structures, and key gaps in the research on CSR, PsyCap, and employee commitment in labor-intensive industries. The results of this analysis, including a summary of coding outcomes, are visualized through the code manager and a word cloud generated from the dataset, providing a comprehensive overview of the thematic landscape. This comprehensive approach is further visualized through the coding framework and word cloud illustrated in **Figures 3** and **4**.

Figure 3. Coding framework developed in ATLAS.ti.

Figure 4. Word cloud representation of thematic analysis.

4. Findings

This thematic review identified key trends from the 20 selected articles, focusing on the interplay between PCSR, PsyCap, and employee commitment. The findings are categorized into a descriptive overview of the literature and the presentation of the core thematic clusters that emerged from the analysis.

4.1. Journal representation

The 20 articles span diverse academic journals, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature of the topic (**Table 2**). Contributions frequently come from journals focused on labor-intensive, high-interaction sectors like tourism and hospitality (e.g., Current Issues in Tourism, Tourism Management). For instance, Tandon et

al.[36] explored how green human resource management in tourism fosters pro-environmental behavior and employee engagement. Employee-focused journals, such as Human Resource Development Quarterly [15] and Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal[37], provide insights into how CSR influences employee well-being and organizational citizenship behaviors. The increasing contributions from multidisciplinary journals, such as Heliyon and Frontiers in Sustainability, highlight the expanding focus on sustainability as a central theme in CSR research. This journal diversity reflects the effort to balance sector-specific insights with broader employee-focused perspectives, creating a robust foundation for analyzing PCSR's impact across contexts.
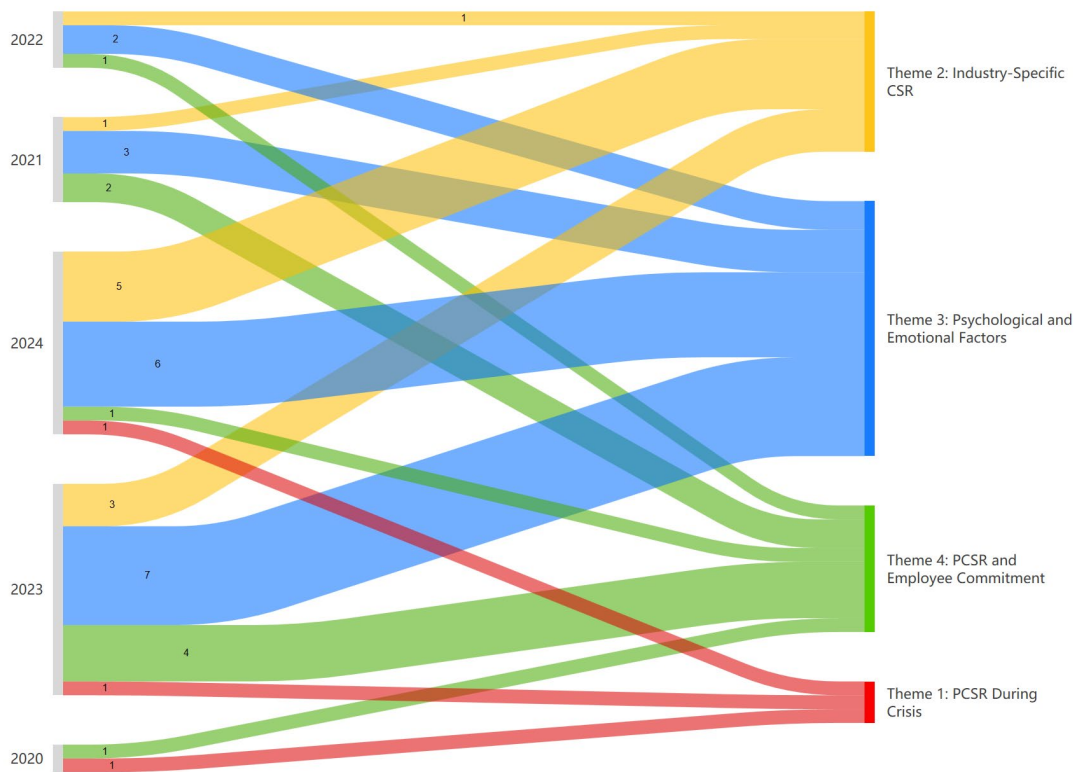
Table 2. Journal representation of reviewed articles (2020–2024).

Journal Title	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Acta Psychologica					1
Asian Journal of Shipping and Logistics		1			
Behavioral Sciences				1	
China Finance Review International					1
Current Issues in Tourism	1				
Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal			1		
Frontiers in Sustainability				1	
Heliyon				1	
Human Resource Development Quarterly		1			
International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences					1
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights				1	
Journal of Innovation and Knowledge					1
Journal of Risk and Financial Management					1
Managing Sport and Leisure			1		
Social Responsibility Journal					1
Sustainability (Switzerland)		1		1	
Tourism Management				2	1

4.2. Temporal distribution

The temporal analysis (**Figure 5**) highlights an increasing academic focus on PCSR and PsyCap from 2020 to 2024, peaking in 2024 with eight articles. This suggests intensified academic interest, likely accelerated by the global challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced organizations to reconsider employee resilience and well-being.

Figure 5. Temporal trends in key research themes (2020–2024).

Table 3 provides a high-level overview of which articles contributed to the formation of these themes. Theme 1, focusing on PCSR during crises, examines how CSR initiatives foster resilience and adaptability. Studies like Mao et al.[38] and Jalil et al.[1] illustrate the protective role of CSR in mitigating employees' socio-economic and psychological challenges during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Theme 2, addressing industry-specific CSR practices, highlights the effectiveness of tailored CSR strategies in improving employee engagement and reducing turnover. Research by González-De-la-Rosa et al.[39] and Wang et al.[40] demonstrates how customized CSR initiatives, such as workplace safety measures and health programs, align with the unique needs of sectors like hospitality and logistics. Theme 3 focuses on the mediating mechanisms of psychological and emotional factors, such as organizational pride and perceived fairness, in enhancing employee outcomes like job satisfaction and resilience. Jalil et al[1] and Papacharalampous & Papadimitriou[15] provide robust evidence of CSR-driven PsyCap and employee participation as critical mediators linking CSR initiatives to affective commitment and resilience. Finally, Theme 4 emphasizes the role of PsyCap in linking CSR initiatives to employee outcomes such as innovation and proactive behaviors. Studies like Su & Hahn[41] and Mohamed Azim & Abdul Mutalib[42] illustrate how CSR-driven PsyCap fosters optimism, resilience, and pro-environmental behaviors, particularly in high-stress and labor-intensive industries. Together, these themes highlight the interdisciplinary relevance of PCSR research, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding its nuanced impacts on employees and organizations.
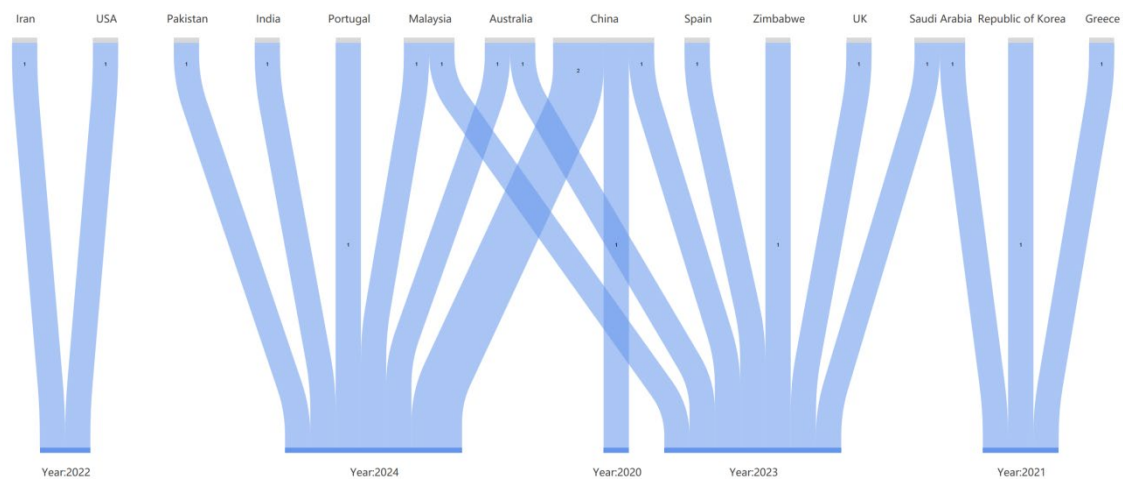
Table 3. Temporal distribution of reviewed articles by key themes (2020–2024).

Author Names	Theme 1: PCSR During Crisis: Adaptive Mechanisms and Resilience	Theme 2: Industry-Specific CSR Practices and Their Effects on Employee Commitment	Theme 3: Mediating Mechanisms: Psychological and Emotional Factors	Theme 4: The Role of Psychological Capital in Linking PCSR and Employee Commitment
Hosseini et al. (2022)		/	/	
He & Sutunyarak (2024)		/	/	
Hazzaa et al. (2022)			/	/
Mohamed Azim & Abdul Mutalib (2024)			/	/
Pimenta et al. (2024)		/	/	
Wang (2024)		/	/	
Robinson et al. (2024)	/		/	
Thomas & Albishri (2024)		/	/	
Ahmad et al. (2024)		/		
Kariri & Radwan (2023)			/	/
Jalil et al. (2023)	/		/	/
Albrecht et al. (2023)			/	/
Su & Hahn (2023)			/	/
Vakira et al. (2023)		/	/	
González-De-la-Rosa et al. (2023)		/	/	
Tandon et al. (2023)		/	/	
Mao et al. (2020)	/			/
Ko et al. (2021)		/	/	
Al-Ghazali et al. (2021)			/	/
Papacharalampous & Papadimitriou (2021)			/	/

4.3. Geographical distribution

As illustrated in **Figure 6**, the geographical analysis reveals a diverse yet uneven representation of research. China leads with four studies, reflecting its prominence in CSR research within labor-intensive sectors. Studies like Wang[40] emphasize how CSR initiatives in China address labor investment efficiency while enhancing employee satisfaction. Other countries, such as Australia (e.g., Albrecht et al.[43]) and Malaysia (e.g., Mohamed Azim & Abdul Mutalib[42], contributed consistently with two studies each, focusing on sustainability and green behavior. In contrast, countries like the USA, UK, India, and Greece had a single contribution each, showcasing sporadic but widespread global interest. The prominence of 2024 as the peak year for publication reflects an increasing international focus on CSR practices and their psychological and organizational impacts, further underscoring the relevance of these themes across regions.

Figure 6. Geographical distribution of reviewed articles (2020–2024).
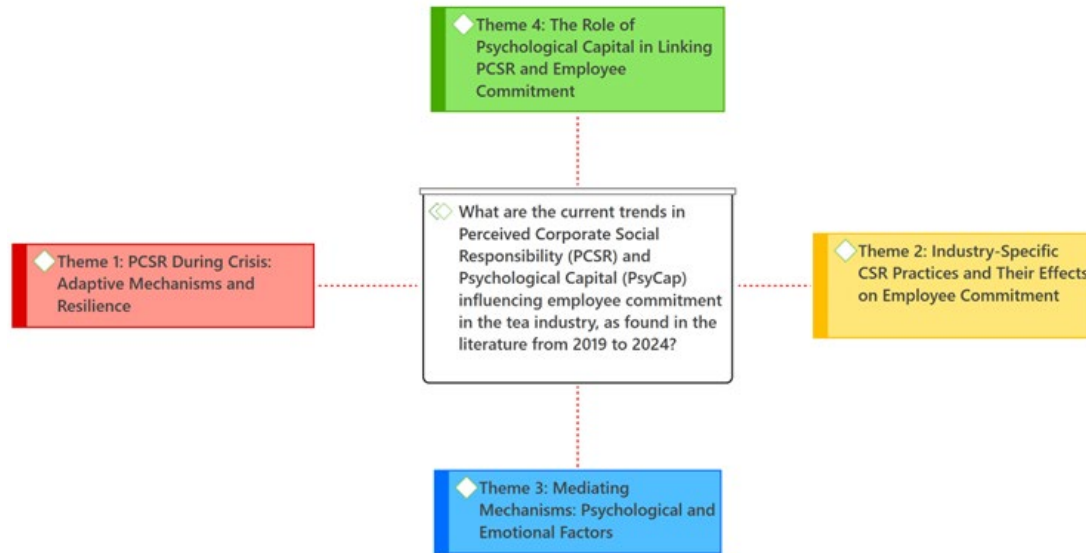
4.4. Industry representation

The industry-wise distribution of reviewed articles (**Table 4**) highlights the diversity in PCSR and PsyCap research across various sectors, with notable patterns and gaps. Cross-industry studies constitute the largest category, with seven articles adopting a comparative approach to uncover universal CSR mechanisms applicable across multiple sectors. This trend underscores the academic effort to identify overarching principles of PCSR and PsyCap beyond specific industrial contexts. The hospitality and tourism sectors collectively account for eight articles, with hospitality leading (five articles), reflecting their labor-intensive nature and the importance of employee-customer interaction. Research in these sectors, such as Thomas & Albishri[44] and González-De-la-Rosa et al.[39], emphasizes the positive impacts of CSR initiatives on employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, and customer satisfaction. Conversely, sectors like manufacturing and construction are underrepresented, with only one article each, exemplified by Su & Hahn [41,] who investigates PsyCap's mediating role in construction workers' organizational behaviors. Other industries, including energy, logistics, and technology, also show minimal representation, with one article per sector. Notably, no studies explicitly focusing on the agricultural or tea sectors met the inclusion criteria, marking a significant gap in the literature.

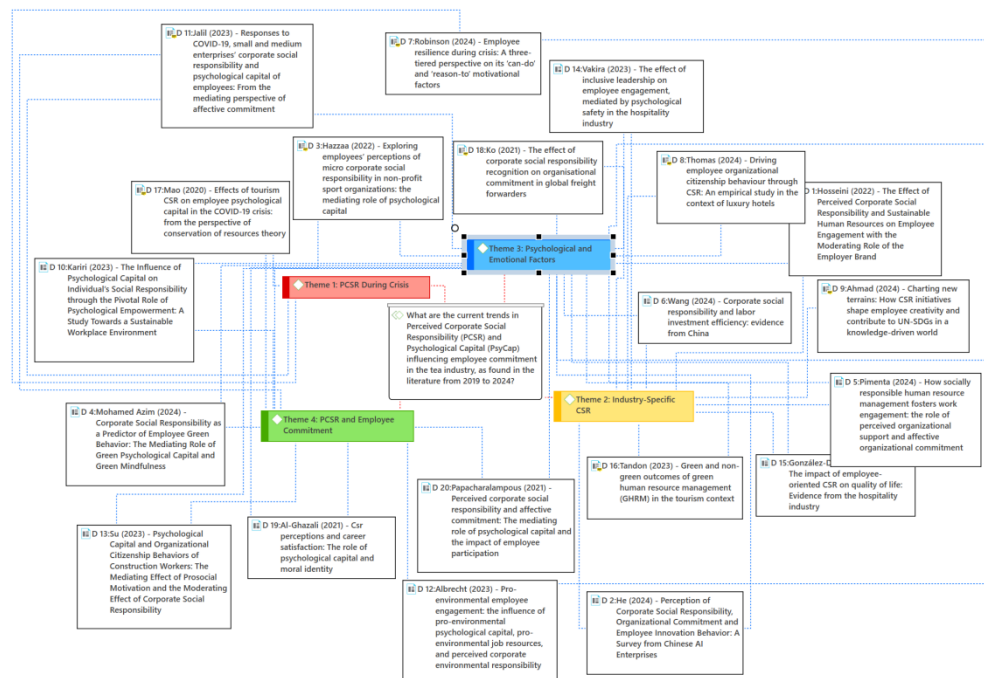**Table 4.** Industry-wise distribution of reviewed articles (2020–2024).

Industry area	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Construction industry				1	
Cross-industry		1		3	3
Energy industry			1		
Financial Services		1			
Hospitality industry			1	2	1
Information Technology					1
Logistics industry		1			
Manufacturing					1
Tourism industry	1			1	1

5. Discussion

This review identified four dominant themes that collectively illuminate how PCSR operates as a psychological and organizational resource, particularly within the context of labor-intensive sectors in emerging economies (see **Figures 7** and **8**). These themes—crisis response, industry specificity, psychological mechanisms, and the mediating role of PsyCap—form an integrated framework that advances theory and practice.

Figure 7. Thematic map of research question and key themes in pcsr and employee commitment. (2019–2024).

Figure 8. Conceptual network mapping articles to identified themes in pcsr literature (2019–2024).

This context is crucial. The effectiveness of CSR is not universal; in emerging economies, employees may be especially sensitive to the authenticity of such initiatives. Perceived gaps between corporate rhetoric

and action can breed skepticism and accusations of "corporate hypocrisy"[45]. This is compounded in settings where employees, based on cultural or organizational history, may harbor distrust in management. Consequently, CSR must be demonstrably authentic to foster genuine employee identification with the company [46], making perceived responsibility even more critical than the policy itself.

First, the review extends the CSR–PsyCap–commitment model by introducing contextual specificity. Prior frameworks often treat CSR as a universal good. Yet, this synthesis shows that the salience of CSR practices depends heavily on industry characteristics, such as labor intensity and community embeddedness[47,48]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, CSR-driven support was perceived as socio-economic protection, enhancing resilience and trust. This reframes CSR as a form of "contextualized organizational support."

Second, this review identifies PsyCap as a dynamic mediator that both transmits and transforms CSR's effects. Rather than a static trait, PsyCap emerges as a socially cultivated resource shaped by perceived fairness, empowerment, and authentic communication. This challenges the assumption that PsyCap operates independently of institutional context[49]. In resource-constrained settings, employees' optimism, hope, and resilience are cultivated through participatory CSR activities, demonstrating how CSR functions as a psychological enabler.

Third, the review integrates industry-specific and psychological mechanisms. It suggests that CSR effectiveness is co-determined by (a) the authenticity of its communication, (b) the perceived fairness of its benefits, and (c) its alignment with local livelihood concerns. When these conditions are met, PsyCap development acts as the mediating engine. When CSR is perceived as symbolic, PsyCap fails to materialize, explaining inconsistent results across industries.

Finally, this synthesis proposes an integrative framework where contextual CSR practices are antecedents, PsyCap dimensions are mediators, and commitment/performance are outcomes. The model highlights reciprocal feedback loops: successful CSR enhances PsyCap, which in turn reinforces CSR credibility. This dynamic view aligns with emerging sustainability theories that conceptualize CSR as an evolving, mutually reinforcing process[50.] By contextualizing these interactions, this review bridges the micro (psychological), meso (organizational), and macro (socio-economic) levels of analysis.

5.1. Theme 1: PCSR during crisis: adaptive mechanisms and resilience

CSR activities have become essential instruments for enhancing corporate resilience during crises, focusing on employee well-being and engagement. This theme examines how organized CSR initiatives empower firms and employees to adeptly manage uncertainty, alleviating socio-economic and psychological difficulties. Vlachos et al.[51] asserts that internal CSR practices, particularly those that prioritize employee welfare, are crucial for enhancing organizational commitment, an assertion that resonates with the broader findings regarding employee-driven CSR initiatives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CSR initiatives providing health benefits, job security, and socio-economic assistance markedly improved employees' PsyCap, especially resilience and optimism[1]. Mao et al.[38] similarly illustrated the beneficial effects of tourism-oriented CSR on employees' PsyCap, grounding their work in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory[52]. This theory posits that individuals seek to protect their resources, and CSR initiatives act as an organizational resource helping them manage external disturbances and psychological stress.

Robinson et al.[53] present a motivational paradigm identifying self-efficacy ("can-do") and a sense of meaning ("reason-to") as crucial mediators between crisis-responsive CSR and employee resilience. This multi-level perspective highlights the need to integrate CSR at governmental, organizational, and individual levels. Employee perceptions of CSR during crises account for a substantial variance in PsyCap growth[54].

Liu et al.[55] further emphasize the role of ICSR in healthcare, where mental health support and resilience programs mitigated burnout. Furthermore, an ethical organizational climate and transparent communication are shown to enhance job satisfaction, trust, and psychological safety[56].

The aggregated evidence highlights CSR's strategic capacity to enhance resilience in labor-intensive industries. Notably, the effectiveness of crisis-responsive CSR hinges on its ability to act as contextualized organizational support, cultivating PsyCap through perceived care, fairness, and shared meaning, consistent with a resource-based view of stress and coping[52].

5.2. Theme 2: Industry-specific CSR practices and their effects on employee commitment

Tailored CSR strategies are pivotal for addressing unique industry challenges. The hospitality sector exemplifies this, where targeted CSR (e.g., workplace safety, community engagement) improves quality of life, reduces turnover, and promotes a collaborative culture[39]. Similarly, environmental CSR in luxury hotels drives green engagement, aligning employee values with corporate sustainability[44]. In other labor-intensive industries, fair employment practices in China, for example, were shown to enhance labor efficiency and trust, providing long-term stability[40]. Addressing fundamental socio-economic needs through CSR (e.g., equitable compensation, education) strengthens commitment in sectors with high physical demands[54].

In knowledge-intensive industries, such as technology and AI, CSR practices often focus on fostering creativity and equitable treatment. He & Sutunyarak[57] show that CSR initiatives in Chinese AI enterprises, including skill enhancement and ethical treatment, bolster innovation while deepening employees' emotional bonds with their organizations. These practices highlight the strategic importance of CSR in high-pressure environments where innovation and human capital are critical to success. Furthermore, such initiatives demonstrate how CSR can nurture intrinsic motivation and engagement in industries reliant on intellectual output.

While practices are tailored, recurring themes of equity, safety, and environmental responsibility create opportunities for cross-industry learning. Pimenta et al.[37] underline that socially responsible HRM enhances engagement and commitment across industries, showcasing the adaptability of these strategies. Collectively, these findings reveal that industry-specific CSR operationalizes the contextual dimension of the framework. By aligning strategies with sectoral challenges, organizations translate abstract CSR principles into domain-specific psychological resources that strengthen affective commitment.

5.3. Theme 3: Mediating mechanisms: psychological and emotional factors

Psychological and emotional mechanisms are critical mediators in the relationship between CSR initiatives and employee outcomes, fostering intrinsic motivation, emotional engagement, and psychological resilience. Employees' perceptions of authentic CSR positively influence career satisfaction through the development of PsyCap[58]. Similarly, Papacharalampous & Papadimitriou[15] show that engagement in CSR projects strengthens PsyCap, leading to greater emotional commitment and a stronger sense of affiliation with the organization.

Emotional mechanisms like trust, perceived equity, and pride amplify CSR's effectiveness. Robinson et al.[53] demonstrate that resilience, fueled by self-efficacy and purpose, is vital during crises. Hazzaa et al.[59] show that psychological empowerment and fairness moderate micro-CSR effects, enhancing organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Moreover, Hosseini et al.[17] emphasize that consistent communication is crucial for reducing skepticism and fostering trust.

Sector-specific applications of CSR strategies reveal how psychological and emotional mechanisms operate under different contexts. For instance, Tandon et al.[36] demonstrate the importance of green HRM

practices in the tourism industry, showing that they improve job satisfaction and engagement by aligning employees with sustainability objectives. Furthermore, psychological empowerment plays a vital role in enhancing PsyCap benefits, particularly in high-pressure work environments[60].

Taken together, these studies suggest that psychological and emotional mechanisms constitute the micro-foundations of the CSR–PsyCap–Commitment relationship. Through trust, fairness, and empowerment, CSR initiatives transform external organizational practices into internalized psychological states that reinforce employees' sense of meaning and belonging. This mechanism-based perspective clarifies how contextual CSR practices (Themes 1–2) activate psychological processes that ultimately sustain commitment and resilience.

5.4. Theme 4: The role of psychological capital in linking pcsr and employee commitment

PsyCap functions as a strategic personal resource that aligns individual capabilities with organizational objectives long-term. PCSR initiates a cascading effect on PsyCap development. Psychological empowerment mediates this effect, enabling employees to internalize CSR values and translate them into sustained behaviors[60]. In tourism during COVID-19, CSR targeting employee well-being fortified individual PsyCap, restoring optimism and resilience[38]. However, PsyCap extends beyond crisis recovery; it is a proactive driver of innovation. Mohamed Azim & Abdul Mutalib[错误!未找到引用源。] identify "Green PsyCap" as a mechanism fostering alignment between environmental CSR and pro-environmental behaviors, demonstrating how hope and self-efficacy transform values into action. Leadership and organizational support amplify this impact. Su & Hahn[41] highlight prosocial motivation's role in mediating the PsyCap-OCB relationship, with CSR acting as a moderator. Albrecht et al. [43] reveal how perceived corporate environmental responsibility enhances employees' resilience through tailored leadership. These studies underline that PsyCap flourishes in contexts where leaders prioritize fairness and empowerment.

PsyCap's ability to transform PCSR into commitment lies in its dual function as both a recovery resource and a strategic enabler. Organizations can harness this by designing CSR initiatives that explicitly target PsyCap dimensions (hope, self-efficacy, resilience). This alignment between CSR and employees' personal values is also noted by Mueller et al.[11]. Queiroz et al.[61] further demonstrated that CSR aimed at employees (internal CSR) significantly influences affective commitment, often more than external CSR. This review found limited research exploring how these specific dimensions impact PsyCap, presenting an opportunity for future qualitative studies.

Collectively, these findings position PsyCap as the central integrative mechanism. Building on contextual (Themes 1–2) and psychological (Theme 3) foundations, PsyCap functions as the conversion hub through which CSR practices are internalized into enduring employee commitment, linking individual meaning-making with organizational resilience.

While these studies clarify how PsyCap functions as the psychological mechanism linking PCSR and employee commitment, an important practical question is how organizations—especially those in emerging economies—can translate these insights into everyday management practices. One useful starting point is to design CSR activities that intentionally reinforce the four PsyCap dimensions. For instance, offering structured skill-development pathways or clear promotion criteria can strengthen hope by helping employees see a realistic future for themselves in the organization. Even simple practices, such as pairing new employees with experienced mentors or rotating junior workers into small project roles, can gradually build self-efficacy by giving them opportunities to succeed in low-risk contexts. These actions echo prior evidence that developmental support enhances psychological resources and commitment[14,61].

Resilience can be cultivated through policies that help employees navigate uncertainty. Many organizations in emerging economies operate with limited budgets, yet even modest initiatives—such as establishing an emergency assistance fund, providing flexible shift arrangements during family crises, or offering basic stress-management workshops—can make employees feel more supported. These practices reinforce the importance of leadership and social support observed in recent studie[41,43]. Optimism, meanwhile, is often shaped through communication. When managers explain why certain CSR actions are undertaken, report progress transparently, and follow through consistently, employees are more likely to interpret CSR efforts as genuine rather than symbolic.

Importantly, these strategies need to be adapted to the realities of local labor markets. In many emerging economies, workforces include large numbers of first-generation industrial workers, migrants, or individuals with limited formal training. For these groups, CSR programs that provide job stability, fair supervision, or community-linked support often matter more than sophisticated corporate initiatives. By focusing on issues that are meaningful in employees' daily lives—such as predictable income, safe working conditions, and respectful treatment—organizations are better positioned to activate the PsyCap mechanisms identified across the reviewed studies. When CSR practices resonate with workers' lived experience, they are far more likely to foster the psychological resources that underpin long-term commitment.

6. Limitations and future research

Despite its theoretical and practical relevance, this review is subject to several limitations. As the analysis draws entirely on secondary data, its conclusions depend on the quality and methodological choices of the original studies. Variations in research design, measurement approaches, and contextual backgrounds across the included articles inevitably limit the depth of insight that can be obtained from a thematic synthesis. While this approach helps identify broader patterns, it constrains the extent to which finer contextual dynamics or causal mechanisms can be examined. Future studies may benefit from longitudinal or mixed-method designs to observe how CSR and PsyCap develop and interact over time.

A second limitation concerns the uneven representation of industries. Although this review includes evidence from hospitality, manufacturing, logistics, and technology, some key labor-intensive sectors—particularly agriculture and primary production—are notably absent from the final dataset. This gap is especially relevant considering that the tea industry was used as an introductory example in this paper. Workforces in these rural or community-embedded industries often face different socio-economic pressures and cultural norms, which may shape how employees interpret the authenticity and value of CSR initiatives. More empirical work in these underrepresented settings would help build a more balanced understanding of PCSR, PsyCap, and employee commitment across diverse forms of labor.

Finally, the reviewed studies also reveal inconsistencies in how CSR and PsyCap are conceptualized and measured, which makes cross-study comparisons challenging. Future research may explore greater methodological alignment, as well as cross-cultural differences and emerging forms of digital CSR communication, to understand how new channels of organizational engagement influence trust and psychological resources. Addressing these gaps would refine existing models and further clarify the pathways linking CSR perceptions, PsyCap, and employee outcomes.

7. Conclusion

This review synthesizes findings from 20 key studies, illuminating the pathways linking PCSR, PsyCap, and employee commitment. The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that CSR initiatives are most effective when they are contextually grounded and psychologically informed, enabling employees to internalize corporate values and translate them into sustained engagement. PsyCap emerges as the crucial psychological bridge, transforming CSR perceptions into tangible behavioral outcomes through enhanced hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience. Moreover, leadership and communication are pivotal in amplifying CSR's influence; ethical leaders and transparent practices cultivate the trust necessary for long-term success. Collectively, this review underscores that CSR is not merely a corporate obligation but a strategic and humanistic tool that promotes innovation, commitment, and sustainable growth. By integrating psychological and organizational perspectives, this study contributes a cohesive framework for understanding how responsible corporate behavior can foster both employee well-being and organizational resilience in an era of global and technological transformation.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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