

**Title of Paper: How internal CSR leads to employer recommendation -
A mediation analysis based on the S-O-R model and Social-Identity Theory**

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Abstract

In times of the war for talent, word-of-mouth for employers (WOME) - that is, employees recommending their company as an employer - is essential for the recruitment process. Employers have low costs related to it (Keeling et al., 2013), and employees see information transmitted by WOME as highly credible (see e.g. Van Hove and Lievens, 2007). Prior studies have focused on the determinants as well as outcomes of WOME, but little importance has been given to the employee who recommends his employer to friends or family members. What is in this person's mind, and what inner thought processes and emotions are triggered that cause the individual to speak positively about the employer organization? Based on Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and the Stimulus-Organism-Response model (S-O-R; Woodworth, 1918), we have developed a model with internal corporate social responsibility (ICSR) as a key evolving and from the authors' point of view as the most interesting trigger of WOME, and we hypothesize that the relationship between ICSR and WOME is sequentially mediated by organizational identification (OI) and organizational pride (OP), as depicted in Figure 1:

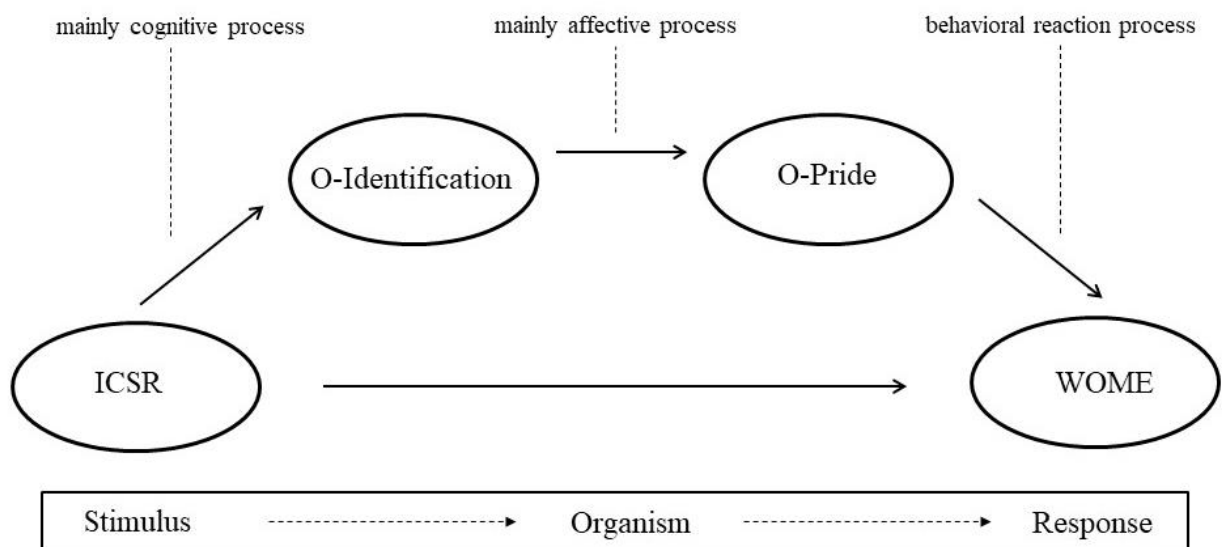


Figure 1: Measurement Model

While much research has focused on CSR activities directed to external stakeholders, ICSR has only recently come into focus in organizational research. ICSR measures are aimed at maintaining employees' physiological and psychological well-being (De Roeck and Maon, 2018; Turker, 2009); thus these are essential aspects when looking at employer-employee relationships. With the inclusion of the two organism variables OI and OP, we seek to reduce the research gap on employees' inner thought processes and psychological factors in the WOME concept and develop a complete model of employees spreading positive information about their employers. Based on SIT, we hypothesize that employees are more likely to identify with organizations that value and respect the needs of their employees. In turn, a strong identification with the organization can result in a feeling of pride that employees want to communicate by engaging in WOME. Thus, our model includes and reflects cognitive, emotional, as well as behavioral processes.

The dataset we used for our analysis was provided by Great Place to Work® (GPTW), a globally acting institute that has conducted research and consulted organizations on their workplace culture for more than 30 years. From 2017 to 2021, 136,478 employees from different industries in Germany participated in the GPTW survey which focuses on employees' emotions and inner thoughts on their working atmosphere. To measure our constructs of interest, we selected specific items from the employee survey and ensured their validity and reliability in the course of our analysis. We tested our hypothesis by conducting a mediation analysis using the HAYES Process macro.

The results discussed in light of the above-mentioned theories show an interesting output: the relationship proved to be only partially mediated, which highlights the importance of the S-O-R model but also the unconscious inner thought processes of people. In summary, it can be seen that for strategic and human resources management, people, their emotions, and feelings should continue to come first. The black box employee was thus examined one more time,

showing its complex nature but also its power. We develop a theory expanding and deepening the evolving micro-CSR landscape and build on prior research that has looked at how CSR activities can affect recruiting efforts (see e.g. Bachrach et al., 2022). Since we found a partial mediation, future research is still needed to detect further processes affecting employees' decisions to engage in WOME. Our paper concludes with proposals for future studies.

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