A CROSS LOOK AT THE ORGANIZATION'S COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. CASE OF A MINING COMPANY IN QUEBEC, CANADA

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Abstract: *This paper presents research results from a larger project, focusing on the study of the links between employees' perceptions of their social identification and the social responsibility management models implemented by their organizations. In this article, we will present the subject of comparative analysis from the perspective of the company and its employees, in relation to the social responsibility management model implemented by the company. The study area for this research is represented by a company in the field of gold mining in the province of Quebec, Canada. Thus, using an exploratory qualitative research method based on the case study, we were able to observe firstly that the integrative model that we designed represents a relevant tool for the analysis of CSR. What's more, the research results showed similarities between the vision of company managers and its employees on CSR, but also divergences, which leads us to conclude that additional efforts should be made by organizations in order to improve their management of social responsibility and make sure it is well known by its employees.*

Keywords: organizational social responsibility, benevolent and corporate citizen model, responsible human resources management

JEL Classification : M14

1. Introduction

We are currently experiencing great upheavals in the work world. Indeed, the labor shortage in the province of Quebec, Canada, is very real (Mohamed, 2022). This labor shortage affects businesses, employees, and services to citizens (Canadian Federation of Independent Business [CFIB], 2022). For all these reasons, organizations have every advantage in using various strategies to fill available positions.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) could play a key role in responding to these upheavals in the world of work. It is a concept little known to employees and even employers (Gilbert and Greffect, 2019). The difficulty of agreeing on a common definition of the concept gives an idea of the extent of the divergences surrounding it (Baba, 2018, Pereira, 2014). One of the most often cited definitions in the literature

is that of Carroll (1979) who argues that CSR encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and voluntary expectations of a society towards organizations at a given time. CSR could then be considered as being, for example, the commitment of the organization which goes beyond the simple satisfaction of the interests of shareholders, by instead targeting all its stakeholders. The organization's stakeholders could be employees, consumers, suppliers, as well as other groups with which it has relationships.

Several studies have found a positive link between the company's involvement in social responsibility activities and satisfaction, organizational commitment, or the perception of a good organizational image by employees (Schill, Letheilleux, Godefroit-Winkel and Combes-Joret, 2018). Igalens, Akremi, Gond and Swaen (2011), tried to understand the link between employees' perception of CSR and their perception of the organization. The results of the study demonstrate that companies can strengthen their power of attraction and influence organizational identification through their social responsibility actions.

This paper is part of a larger research project, which aims to study the link between social responsibility models implemented by companies and the perception of organizational identification by employees. In what follows, we will present the part of the project which concerns the analysis of the company's perspective as well as that of its employees on the social responsibility management model implemented by this company.

2. Corporate social responsibility analysis model

As part of our research, we decided to retain three established models of CSR and a research model that we created and which we called the integrative model.

The first established model that we retained is that of Carroll (1979). The model proposes, among other things, four levels of responsibility that society expects from companies. Each responsibility, individually, is only part of CSR as a whole. The four levels are part of the definition of CSR, namely, the economic, legal, ethical, and voluntary level (Carroll, 1979, p.500).

The second author we selected is Pasquero (in Turcotte, 2018). This author proposes to develop an open model that could evolve over time, while paying attention to the history of the concept of CSR. All the dimensions currently covered in the different concepts or definitions of CSR are present in this model, that is, efficient management, philanthropy, solicitude, limitation of nuisances, social responsiveness, ethics, accountability as well as proactive citizen engagement. Also, it is important to specify that for Pasquero, the model must be conjunctive, that means that all the elements included in the model must be minimally satisfied.

Finally, we also used the ISO 26000 standard to design our research model. The model of this standard, published in 2010, aims to establish two fundamental practices of social responsibility. First, the organization must identify its social responsibility and the stakeholders in its environment. Subsequently, the standard proposes to rely on seven central questions of CSR: human rights, relations and working conditions, questions relating to the environment, fairness of practices,

questions relating to consumers, the community and local development and ultimately, the integration of social responsibility practices throughout the organization.

Following the literature review, we designed an integrative CSR management model. The companies that participated in our research offer CSR measures within the organization, but on the other hand, did not have a CSR management model. We went back and forth between theory and practice to define a model for each organization. We have established characteristics specific to the integrative model. The following characteristics were considered when designing the CSR management model: i) the content of the CSR measures; ii) the level of importance of the CSR components; iii) temporality; iv) social pressure.

The factors that influence the determination of the integrative model were established based on the social responsibility management models proposed by Carroll (2016), Pasquero (2018) and the ISO 26 000 Standard (2010). The integrative model is schematized in Figure 1.

We can see that within the integrative model, the level of importance of the CSR components, temporality as well as social pressure represent our contribution in the design of the integrative model. The choice of these factors seemed relevant to us to deepen the perception of the social responsibility of organizations.

3. Research Methodology

As we wanted to link CSR management with the social identity of employees, we favored qualitative research to clearly understand the feelings of workers. Qualitative research generates information that is very detailed, to describe a specific situation (Gavard-Perret et al., 2012). The research approach determined is the case study, which represents an empirical approach which consists of investigating a phenomenon, an event, a group, or a set of individuals, selected in a non-random manner, in order to derive a precise description and an interpretation that goes beyond its limits (Roy, 2009, p. 207).

For our overall research project, we studied two organizations in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, in the province of Quebec, Canada. The one we present in this paper works in the gold mining sector. In order to build the CSR management model in place, we met with one manager per organization. Then, to be able to analyze the employees' point of view, we carried out simple random sampling among the volunteers. A total of eight employees per organization were retained.

As part of this study, we used two types of data. The first consists of consulting the documentation which helped us to identify the integrative model of CSR management in the organization. We consulted human resources management policies, organizational strategic plans, and sustainable development reports.

The second type of data are the verbatims of the interviews. The individual semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually, on the Zoom platform, by the first author of this article. They lasted approximately one hour per participant and were recorded.

Figure 1: Integrative CSR analysis model

Once the interviews were completed, we proceeded to analyze the data. Following each meeting, we produced the verbatim, the coding and carried out a preliminary thematic analysis. We reorganized them by theme to facilitate the comparison of groups (Gavart-Perret et al. 2012; Paillé and Muchielli, 2012). An indexing of the documentation was subsequently carried out to facilitate the search for themes.

Regarding coding, the first step was to define the cutting rules. Emergent coding was established around the themes and of course, the thematic analysis steps were carried out by the researcher (Gavart-Perret, 2012). To assist us in our analysis, we used NVIVO software throughout the process. This software allowed us to keep the extracts, sentence by sentence, from our interviews and to build coding around the themes discussed (Paillé and Muchielli, 2012).
In what follows, we present the main results that emerged from our analyses.

4. Research results

4.1. The CSR management model of company B

Organization B is a mining company, therefore a private sector company. During the interview with a manager of this organization and by consulting the organization's documentation, we were also able to list different social responsibility measures. Still drawing inspiration from the integrative model, we present here the measures marked by the four categories of the model. Due to the restricted limits of the text, we will present extracts from the verbatim texts selectively. For more

information, we invite you to consult Marie-Pier Coté's master's thesis at the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi.

4.1.1. Efficient management

For organization B, efficient management is important. The manager to whom we spoke believes that efficient management is a key element to the proper functioning of his organization.

The list that we present in Table 1 shows the different measures proposed by the company in connection with this component of social responsibility.

Table 1: Compilation of elements related to the efficient management of organization B

Efficient management
➢ Founder of the company who instilled from the start a culture of benevolence and efficiency
➢ Efficiency is linked to the feeling of belonging and employees motivation
➢ Efficient use of resources
➢ Knowledge and skill promote efficiency
➢ Be at the cutting edge of technology

Efficient management for company B is defined first of all by the founder of the company, who instilled values of benevolence. The intelligent use of resources must be evident everywhere and in all trades. Still according to the manager, a worker should have a global vision of his work, which allows him to know what to do once a task is completed.

"At (name of organization) it's a question of culture, it goes back to the influence of its founder (name of founder), who created this company, so he had a caring personality. Then, his way of interacting with others, with employees, with business partners, suppliers and with communities rubs off on the organization, even today, 30 years after his death. It's really special" (GB)

This aspect of kindness will come up several times during our interview with the manager. The culture of organization B indeed seems to be based on benevolence, which is defined as a mindset inclined towards understanding and indulgence towards others (Larousse online, 2023).

Organization B also relies on technologies to ensure efficient management.

"Of course, there are other factors, having knowledge, technical skills is very important to be on the lookout for the latest technologies, then the latest efficient practices" (GB)

So, for organization B, efficient management involves corporate culture, understanding of work, motivation and technologies.

4.1.2. Ethics and working conditions

This element of CSR refers to the morality of the company, the laws with which it must comply and the working conditions that go beyond what the law requires.

The different elements in Table 2 describe the measures related to this element of CSR which we discussed with the manager during our interview.

Table 2: Compilation of elements related to the ethics and working conditions of organization B (selective presentation)

Ethics and working conditions
➤ Policies and procedures are not just written, they must be known and everyone should adhere to them
➤ Compliance with laws around the world, in company branches
➤ Maintain credibility in terms of ethics and have policies and measures evaluated by external auditors
➤ Health and safety are the most important aspects of human resource management
➤ Promote health and general well-being and establish programs to preserve them
➤ Provide training and appropriate tools to all employees so that they can perform their tasks safely
➤ Very attractive overall remuneration
➤ Provide a confidential complaint mechanism to report unethical, illegal or irresponsible behavior
➤ Do not tolerate any discriminatory conduct in the workplace
➤ Provide employees with a fair and non-discriminatory grievance resolution system
➤ Value diversity and treat all employees fairly by offering them equal opportunities at all levels of the organization, without bias
➤ Hire and promote employees based on merit
➤ Enforce the principle of a drug and alcohol-free workplace

Being a mining company, health and safety are essential aspects for maintaining activities. According to the manager, this is the most important element of responsible human resources management.

"[…] responsible management of human resources, first and foremost, is to ensure their safety. It's having health and safety programs that are very, very strong and then, we have a very strict supervision formula with inspection of workplaces, hundreds, and hundreds of procedures for working at height, hot […]" (GB).

4.1.3. Compliance with laws and limitation of nuisances

The manager to whom we spoke told us that the environment was a key issue for the organization today. Environmental laws have tightened in their area and the community is more sensitive to this issue.

The elements that we present in Table 3 indicate the precise measures taken by the company to ensure that it complies with the laws and limits the impact of its activities on the environment as best as possible.

Table 3: Compilation of elements related to compliance with laws and limitation of nuisances of organization B

Compliance with laws and limitation of nuisances
➢ Clean energy in Quebec ➢ Less emissions than its competitors ➢ Understand the risk of climate change such as cyclones, wildfires and heavy rains ➢ Minimize the production of residues and ensure their proper disposal ➢ Minimize the risks associated with the management of waste rock, mine tailings and water by using applicable best available practices ➢ Implement measures to preserve natural resources, including energy and water ➢ Implement measures to reduce emissions into air, water, soil and minimize the environmental footprint, including deforestation ➢ Implement measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and countering the effects of climate change on activities ➢ Integrate aspects relating to biodiversity conservation and land use planning at all stages of activities ➢ Restore mining sites to ensure long-term stability

We can see that there are numerous measures related to the environment. The mining industry is an industry with a strong environmental impact, the organization makes a duty to counter as much as possible the effects of its activities on its environment.

4.1.4. Philanthropy and local development

Obviously, as company B is a private sector organization, it is called upon more to give to philanthropic foundations than to use funds that may come from philanthropy. Local development is at the heart of its strategy to ensure the acceptability of its activities in communities.

The CSR measures in Table 4 emerged following the discussion with the manager of this organization.

Table 4: Compilation of elements related to philanthropy and local development of organization B

Philanthropy and local development
➢ Very important participation in the community ➢ Gives a lot to the community in all areas ➢ Considers himself a corporate citizen ➢ Involvement and collaboration with indigenous peoples ➢ Support local communities and their sustainability through the implementation of measures such as development programs, local purchasing programs for goods and services as well as local workforce hiring programs

For the manager of organization B, philanthropy and local development are important issues. He views the company as a corporate citizen.

> "Then, it comes from taking responsibility and being a corporate citizen, who is part of the community and with the luck that we have, then the means that we also have" (GB)

The company considers that it gives back a lot to the community through various means, including its involvement in the activities of its employees.

> "That too has always been important, and basically natural. (Name of organization) has always been a sponsor in all locations where it has operated" (GB)

To conclude, we could say that organization B wishes to continue to be involved in its community and ensure that it remains caring, just like the founder of the company. These reasons led us to name the CSR model of organization B: **Benevolent and corporate citizen model.**

4.2. Employee perception of the CSR management model implemented by their company

We introduced employees to their organization's social responsibility model. This model was presented earlier in this document. After reading it, we wanted to know the overall assessment of the model from the point of view of employees. We also asked employees to identify for each category which measures were most important to them. Subsequently, we addressed the temporality and social pressures that can influence the perception of CSR measures. Finally, employees were invited to express themselves regarding the measures that may have influenced their attraction or retention within the organization.

To begin, we presented to the employees of organization B their company's social responsibility management model. We wanted to know if, in general, they found the model fair and good. Most of study participants indicated that the model presented to them was completely accurate.

> "I quite agree with all the points… especially philanthropy and local development… it's certain that this one touches me a little more" (Employee B4)

Some employees still mentioned being a little less in agreement with the principle of fairness. According to them, even if it appears in the model, it is more or less applied in the field. But for the most part, the model is true to reality.

We wanted to ask employees about the importance they attach to their organization's social responsibility measures. In terms of efficient management, most respondents mentioned the culture and values of the company.

In terms of working conditions, several employees mentioned salary as being very important to them, but health and safety is also a major issue for the study participants.

"My god, health and safety is really important" (Employee B4)

It should be mentioned that the list of actions related to compliance with laws and limitation of nuisances is impressive at the level of organization B. It is therefore not surprising that all the participants mentioned the same measure as being the more important to them.

During our discussions with employees, we noted great pride for employees in feeling that their organization is contributing to their community. Several mentioned actions related to local development as being very important to them.

"At the indigenous level too… We are going to work more and more with the indigenous people, we are in the process of evaluating the possibilities of signing an agreement with them in terms of local purchasing…" (Employee B1)

Regarding temporality, we asked the participants if, in their opinion, the measures were still relevant and if some of them had been proposed a little late. Connections with the Indigenous community and people were mentioned as something that developed a little late. On the other hand, the majority of them did not see any issue with the temporality of CSR measures, they are being all current.

We also wanted to know employees' perceptions of the possibility that CSR measures could come from different social pressures felt by the organization. Employees at Organization B largely agreed that connections to the community and Indigenous peoples and the environment could arise from social pressures.

The social pressures identified by employees of organization B therefore come from employees, interest groups and even the community.

To conclude, we can mention that employees of organization B have a good perception of their organization's social responsibility management model. Working conditions and community involvement are important to them. The measures are perceived as being current and social pressures may have played a role in the development of the measures according to the participants.

5. Discussion

As for the theoretical contributions, our first objective was to create an integrative model of CSR from the founding texts. We began the research project by establishing an integrative model of social responsibility management that we presented previously. We called it "integrating" since it was built from an exhaustive literature review making it possible to identify classic writings on the subject. We conclude that the three models of the CSR concept that we used are relevant since we were able to identify most of the components retained from the models enshrined in the discourse of the participants in the study.

Subsequently, we added three factors which, according to us, could enrich the discussions with the participants concerning their perception of CSR, namely the importance of measures, temporality as well as social pressures, which also proved to be very relevant for our analysis.

The integrative model is also an important theoretical contribution of our study project. Indeed, the pooling of three literature models concerning social responsibility and the addition of original factors allowed us to propose an original research model.

Another theoretical contribution is based on the identification, from interviews and documentation, of concrete original models of CSR management by the participating organizations. The integrative model was an important tool to allow us to better structure the interviews with the participants and to highlight the originality of each of the models.

Finally, another theoretical contribution is at the level of qualitative research methodology. Indeed, the richness of the results obtained demonstrates the relevance of using this method to study complex concepts, the measurement of which is difficult to do using quantitative measurement scales. This way of proceeding could go against the research perspective on CSR in recent years, which ardently wishes to quantitatively measure concepts specific to CSR such as Igalens et al., (2011) or Closon (2010).

In terms of practical contributions, one of the important contributions of our study project consists of the creation of an original model for analyzing the management of social responsibility. Indeed, managers or human resources management professionals could use our model to undertake CSR initiatives. The use of the three factors could also be used to question the importance of the measures for the organization, to ensure that the proposed measures are current and that they evolve over time. This framework also allows organizational managers to take the time to reflect on the social pressures that may be felt on the organization. This awareness can allow managers to put in place measures to respond.

Future research could explore the idea of designing quantitative research to measure the CSR components of the integrative model. Indeed, measurement scales already exist for CSR. Igalens and Tahri (2012) have in fact constructed and validated a scale for measuring the perception of CSR by employees, but it could be interesting to develop one more specific to our model, by including the factors that can influence perception of CSR.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, our study project is a promising subject, which led to rich and important findings. We can emphasize the importance for today's organizations to pay attention to the current values that drive human resources, including diversified measures of organizational social responsibility.

Our research is part of a school of thought according to which the more we study CSR, the more we will be able to identify tools allowing us to better understand it, to continue its evolution and, overall, to better manage it.

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