

**The Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Culture on Securing
Frontline Service Employee Support during a Product-Harm Crisis**

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ABSTRACT

Firms are vulnerable to the effects of product harm-crises which can impact their brand image, reputation, and credibility. This empirical paper looks at antecedents and factors that can lead to frontline service employee support when firms are faced with a product-harm crisis. Social exchange theory, with its focus on reciprocal exchanges, is used to enlighten how firms can provide employees with conducive working conditions, empowerment, job support, and task-variety, and in turn employees reciprocate through demonstrating unanimity and unflinching support during difficult situations. Through data collected from 332 frontline service employees, it is found that job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior, fully mediate the link between perceived organizational support and employee support during a product-harm crisis. Additionally, it is found that employee association with substantive corporate social responsibility policies leads to greater support during a product-harm crisis. Implications for researchers and practitioners that will enable organizations to identify loyal employees, reduce work ambiguity in their work environments resulting in lower turnover, and focus on the type of cause-related initiatives to implement, are presented.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Firms are vulnerable to product-harm crises that can occur through potentially damaging negative information and informal grapevine which can jeopardize their brand equity through diminishing brand loyalty by stakeholders (Dawar and Lei 2009; Dutta and Pullig 2011; Chen, Ganesan, and Liu 2009; Siomkos and Kurzbard 1994; Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Helsen 2008; Liu and Shankar 2015). Examples of such product-harm crises that have caused reputational damage to firms include big names like Procter and Gamble's "Wash and Go" shampoo in Denmark, which was purported to cause hair loss to users and led the Cincinnati-based Fortune 500 giant to lose a majority of its market share (Jensen 1993).

Firms are susceptible to reputational damage, loss of image, and credibility through incidents of product-harm crises (Dawar and Pillutla 2000; Klein and Dawar 2004; Heerde, Helsen, and Dekimpe 2007; Chen, Ganesan, and Liu 2009; Borah and Tellis 2016; Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Heerde 2017; Liu and Shankar 2015). Product-harm crises refer to situations where the products manufactured by firms are deemed to be dangerous, harmful, faulty, or otherwise unsafe for consumption and use (Dawar and Pillutla 2000; Germann et al. 2014; Liu and Shankar 2015; Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Heerde 2017).

In such situations, firms take corrective steps of engaging in product recalls to alleviate the severe damage that can be caused by product-harm crises (Klein and Dawar 2004; Heerde, Helsen, and Dekimpe 2007). For example, the significant effects of product recalls are felt by erosion in the firm's stock market performance, loss of

sustainable competitive advantage to rivals, and depletion of consumer loyalty (Klein and Dawar 2004; Chen, Ganesan and Liu 2009; Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Helsen 2008). In recent years, the incidents of product recalls are increasing due to factors such as global manufacturing taking place in different countries, intricacies involved in designing and producing the product, and rigorous regulations that stipulate conformance to acceptable standards (Chen, Ganesan, and Liu 2009). It is important to note that although a product-recall is a reaction and mitigating action in response to a product-harm crisis, several studies in marketing have used the terms interchangeably, and with a view to define and measure a product-harm crisis (Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Heerde 2017).

A prime example of a product-harm crisis is Firestone, which had to recall 6.5 million tires in the United States in the year 2000, as these tires were defective thus causing accidents, and resulting in deaths of consumers (Advertising Age 2000). The incident caused considerable damage to Firestone, as not only did the media and press highlight it significantly, but it also created frictions and soured relations between them and Ford Motor Company, whose Explorer vehicles accounted for a majority of the accidents and deaths witnessed due to this catastrophe (Greenwald 2010). In 2010, the quintessential American quick-service restaurant (QSR) chain, McDonald's, had to recall its Shrek drinking glasses that were painted with a toxic metal substance called cadmium, which was deemed dangerous, as it could come off on children's hands (Neuman 2010). Cadmium is known to cause damage to the liver, kidneys, lungs, nervous system and brain, and thus the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) stepped in warning customers not to use these glasses (Farrell 2010), all of which resulted in negative publicity for McDonald's. Thus, it can be seen that even reputed established firms with

stable operations and strong brand equities can be susceptible to the debilitating effects of a product-harm crisis.

In 2013, Chobani, the market leader in the Greek yogurt category, had to recall moldy yogurt that had reportedly caused more than 400 people in the United States to fall sick (Chappell 2013). Although Chobani's iconic CEO Hamdi Ulukaya immediately stepped in with an effort towards damage control by apologizing on social media, the United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA) too became involved, and the company received unfavorable media publicity (Lopez 2013). In 2016, Samsung, the South Korean conglomerate faced an unexpected product-harm crisis, when failure to discover and fix a defect caused its Galaxy Note 7 smart phones to cause fires and explode. This debacle caused many leading airlines to enforce a ban on carrying the phone during flights, and companies like AT&T and T-Mobile decided to stop selling these devices, all of which was a severe setback for the electronics behemoth (Berr 2016).

An evident observation that can be seen from all these examples suggests that the crisis situation was primarily caused by products that were detrimental, damaging, hazardous, and defective in their attributes. This aligns very well with extant research which states that unlike a brand crisis, in the case of a product-harm crisis, the product, fundamentally and intrinsically, should be faulty, harmful, dangerous, or unsafe for consumption (Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Heerden 2017). Thus, this dissertation investigates crises that occur due to defective products, food contamination problems, or issues with product performance, and not those that occur due to branding, contentious advertising, or association with country-of-origin related issues. Further, research conducted by Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Heerden (2017) suggests that some of the industries that are more

prone to a product-harm crisis are automobiles, consumer packaged goods, and the medical/pharmaceutical sectors, although food and related services are also susceptible to the effects of such crises and figure prominently in the literature.

Frontline service employees (FSEs) employed in jobs such as customer service representatives, sales staff, cashiers, and wait staff positions represent the face of the firm to customers and thus serve as an important interface between the firm and its customers (Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Swain 2014). Prior research on the efficacy of the bond between FSEs and customers demonstrates that some customers are more loyal to FSEs than they are to the firm whose services they are patronizing (Palmatier, Scheer, and Steenkamp 2007). As such, after a product-harm crisis, firms rely on FSEs to provide outstanding services and communicate with customers to alleviate their concerns as well as dispel their doubts (von Walter, Wentzel, and Tomczak 2016), which can prove to be far more effective than communication messages from the firm's leadership team. Boshoff and Allen (2000) state that the role of FSEs during service recovery is critical as they promote the firm through engaging in remedial action, shape positive customer notions about the firm and its operations, and promote an environment where faith and loyalty reign supreme. This suggests the importance of FSEs as important personnel and communication mechanisms that firms can leverage to correspond with customers following a product-harm crisis. Therefore, obtaining the support of FSEs is very important for firms that are faced with product-harm crises.

However, prior research conducted on product-harm crises has mostly looked at its impact on the firm's marketing effectiveness, brand equity, or its financial value. For example, Heerde, Helsen, and Dekimpe (2007) looked at the effect of product-harm

crises on a firm's sales over a period of time by using the example of Kraft Foods in Australia. Dawar and Pillutla (2000) studied the impact of product-harm crises on customer-based brand equity. Chen, Ganesan and Luo (2009) conducted research on how proactive damage-control strategies by firms experiencing product-harm crises can actually backfire, since the stock market construes such action plans as a reaction to severe financial deficits that the firm might have experienced due to the crisis. Other studies such as the one by Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) looked at consumer involvement and message framing during communication as moderators, thus focusing on the impact that the crisis has on customers.

While all these studies have contributed to the literature and provided important insights on how firms can solicit customer support and commitment, as well as recoup financial losses suffered, very little attention has been devoted to how organizations can gather support from FSEs and leverage them as an important conduit between the firm and its customers. Firms that experience a product-harm crisis typically rely on their brand equity to mitigate and alleviate the harmful impact of such crises (Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Helsen 2008). However, such a benefit does not sustain over the long-term (Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Helsen 2008), and thus firms need to look at other factors which can ensure they do not lose patronage and business from loyal customers. This is where the role of frontline service employees is so critical and assumes significant importance.

Extant research has not looked at the role of frontline service employees during a product-harm crisis. To my knowledge, there has been only one other study that has looked at how companies can enlist frontline employee support in the wake of an ethical scandal. The study by Von Walter, Wentzel, and Tomczak (2016) investigates how

frontline employee support for the firm was higher after scandals that involved greater number of offenders than a smaller number, and that employees also supported the firm when scandals involved high-ranking superiors in comparison with low-ranking employees when remedial action was taken. On the other hand, employee support was greater for scandals involving low-ranking employees rather than high-ranking superiors, when a ceremonial response was implemented.

The current study is different from von Walter et.al's (2016) study because it examines both the antecedents and factors such as those which frontline service employees experience at the workplace, and are therefore instrumental in providing support to their employer during times of product-crises. The present study has important implications for managers at firms as it provides insights into how firms can reduce training and turnover costs for employees who might leave the firm following a product-harm crisis, along with alleviating the harmful effects of such crises through inculcating a strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) culture that employees can identify with, and which creates conducive work environments, thereby encouraging employee support.

Social Exchange Theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976), with its roots in economics, psychology, and sociology posits that there exist transactions between at least two parties that focus on mutual rewards and recognition. The theory makes use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives (Homans 1961). Cost could be perceived in terms of missed opportunities or those that do not materialize, while alternatives are those choices that individuals make which help them in accumulating the greatest profits, rewards, social approvals, autonomy and security (Nye 1979; 1982). Blau (1964) was a strong influence

in propagating social exchange theory and his work focused on how exchanges occur between groups and individuals. The defining feature of his work was on how exchanges between individuals typically hold a future expectation regarding acts that are done as favors. Importantly, the expected future returns that can accrue from such a transaction between two or more parties is not very clearly defined in advance, but is implicitly ingrained within the exchange.

Research done on social exchange theory (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005) has demonstrated that relationships are long-lasting enduring ties that gradually develop and transform over time into long-term commitments and stable partnerships that carry an assumption of reciprocity. These parties also form and create certain rules of exchange which are fundamental to the relationship to thrive and succeed (Emerson 1976). For example, in an organization when employees receive certain monetary rewards and intangible benefits, such as a conducive work environment and harmonious culture, there is a strong propensity of reciprocation involved. Such employees are also found to be more engaged and emotionally connected with their organizations (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). The underlying assumption involved here is that if one party provides benefits then the other part is obligated to return that benefit at some stage (Kelley and Thibault 1959; 1978). From this, we can surmise that if an organization provides strong economic benefits and highly conducive work environments that foster employee satisfaction and productivity, then employees of such an organization are prone to reciprocating the rewards that they receive. Thus, social exchange theory can explain how organizations that encourage rewards, recognition, and effective corporate cultures can solicit support from their employees during times of crises.

This research will investigate factors such as perceived organizational support which reflects reassurance felt by employees that the firm cares about them and their well-being, organizational commitment that refers to the emotional bond between the firm and its employees, job satisfaction that refers to empowerment, autonomy, and other elements that are important to employees in performing their daily duties efficiently and effectively. This study will also explore organizational citizenship behavior, an element of corporate culture, which states that if employees are treated in a fair and just manner by employers, then they reciprocate by performing additional duties and tasks that serve the best interests of their organizations.

In addition, research conducted by scholars such as Donia et.al (2017) has found that employees are increasingly concerned about the type of corporate social responsibility (CSR), that their organization implements, such as substantive (genuine and authentic aimed at societal welfare), versus symbolic (not authentic and initiated with an objective of bolstering profits and reputation). Thus, this research paper is one of the few studies that examines changing employee perceptions about the role and nature of CSR in firms, and thus separates CSR into distinct and dynamic components, namely substantive and symbolic.

Thus, the research questions for this study address the following issues:

RQ1: How does perceived organizational support leading to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior play a part in securing frontline service employee support during a product-harm crisis and how can social exchange theory explain these phenomena?

RQ2: How do substantive and symbolic corporate social responsibility policies (CSR) of the firm play a part in securing frontline service employee support during a product-harm crisis and what is the role of social exchange theory in this process?

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social Exchange Theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976) focuses on explaining negotiated exchanges between parties with reference to social change. Homans (1958; 1961) had introduced the notion that individuals are motivated by perceptions of rewards and recognition in order to reduce their costs in the context of social behavior which involved power, authority, status, leadership and justice. Blau (1964) developed the theory further by including the underlying premise of trust that explains the exchanges between two or more parties in a relationship. In addition, he introduced the concepts of rewards and costs through the notion that satisfaction is experienced by individuals or groups when they experience just and equitable returns for the expenses that they incur. He also mentioned that effective exchanges between parties can result in commitment that one party feels towards the other. Homans (1958; 1961) then developed some key propositions. These include the pivotal ones useful in explaining employee engagement, such as the success proposition which states that behavior resulting in positive outcomes is more prone to being repeated, the stimulus proposition which states that behavior resulting in rewards and recognition in the past will continue to be repeated in comparable situations, and the value proposition which states that an action resulting in value to the individual or group that engages in it is more likely to be replicated.

Molm (2000; 2003) touches upon the concept of a reciprocal exchange where there is no clear presumption of bargaining involved. In fact, the behavior of one party leads to reciprocal actions taken by the other party which mitigates risk and fosters

mutual collaboration. Thus, in the context of frontline service employees and the firm they represent we can interpret this to refer to a situation where interdependence exists between the two parties. If one party (the firm) is able to provide good working conditions that enhance employee engagement, then the other party (the employees) would reciprocate through displaying solidarity and support.

In the context of work settings and employee satisfaction, prior research by several scholars (Masterson et al. 2000; Moorman, Blakely, and Niehoff 1998; Eisenberger et al. 2001) has demonstrated that when employees perceive their employer to be supportive and considerate, they are more likely to engage in acts of generosity and kindness towards such employers with whom they engage in social exchange. Thus, perceived organizational support for the firm leads to increased levels of corporate citizenship and organizational commitment resulting in superior job performance (Eisenberger et al. 2001). In another study, perceived organizational support led to greater commitment from employees which thus played a key role in improving performance (Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli 2001). As such, trust and commitment between the employees and the firm is of critical importance (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Past research conducted on social exchange theory has demonstrated how the theory can explain the rationale behind why subordinates feel a sense of commitment with respect to their superiors, and this, in turn, propels them into performing duties that go beyond their regular scope of responsibilities, thus demonstrating organizational citizenship behavior (Settoon, Bennett and Liden 1996).

Employee engagement has been studied by various scholars (Robinson et al. 2004; Rothbard 2001; Maslach et al. 2001; Kahn 1990) and refers to the involvement and

intensity that employees bring to their role in creating a vibrant, positive, and high-energy work environment that fosters productivity and efficiency. In his paper, Saks (2006) argues that social exchange theory is able to provide a strong theoretical explanation for employee engagement. He refers to the relationship between employers and their employees to be mutually collaborative. Thus, if the organization provides its employees with adequate tools and resources, employees are committed towards responding through higher levels of engagement, involvement, and support. Through increased levels of engagement, employees are able to leverage the resources they receive from their organization and are able to add value to the firm, thereby demonstrating reciprocity for the benefits received in the form of optimum working conditions (Saks 2006).

Saks (2006) further elaborates on some of the critical antecedents of employee engagement and identifies task variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback that are important for employees in performing their job efficiently. If an organization is able to provide these resources and meaningful working conditions, then employees are more involved and satisfied, engaged in organizational citizenship behavior, and prone to providing support to the firm they represent. The basic premise of social exchange theory is manifested here in that each party offers something valuable to the other, each party understands that reciprocation, though implicit, is important to the continued success of the relationship, and each party sees the relationship as being transparent and fair (Wayne, Shore, and Liden 1997; Settoon, Bennett, and Liden (1996).

Thus, social exchange theory has demonstrated that it can provide strong theoretical support for why increased levels of perceived organizational support create situations wherein employees feel the onus is on them to repay the firm due to the

benefits, job satisfaction, and support they receive (Settoon, Bennett, and Liden (1996); Eisenberger et al. 1986). The theory is thus well-positioned to explain how frontline service employees can provide support and be pillars of strength to the firm during times of crises.

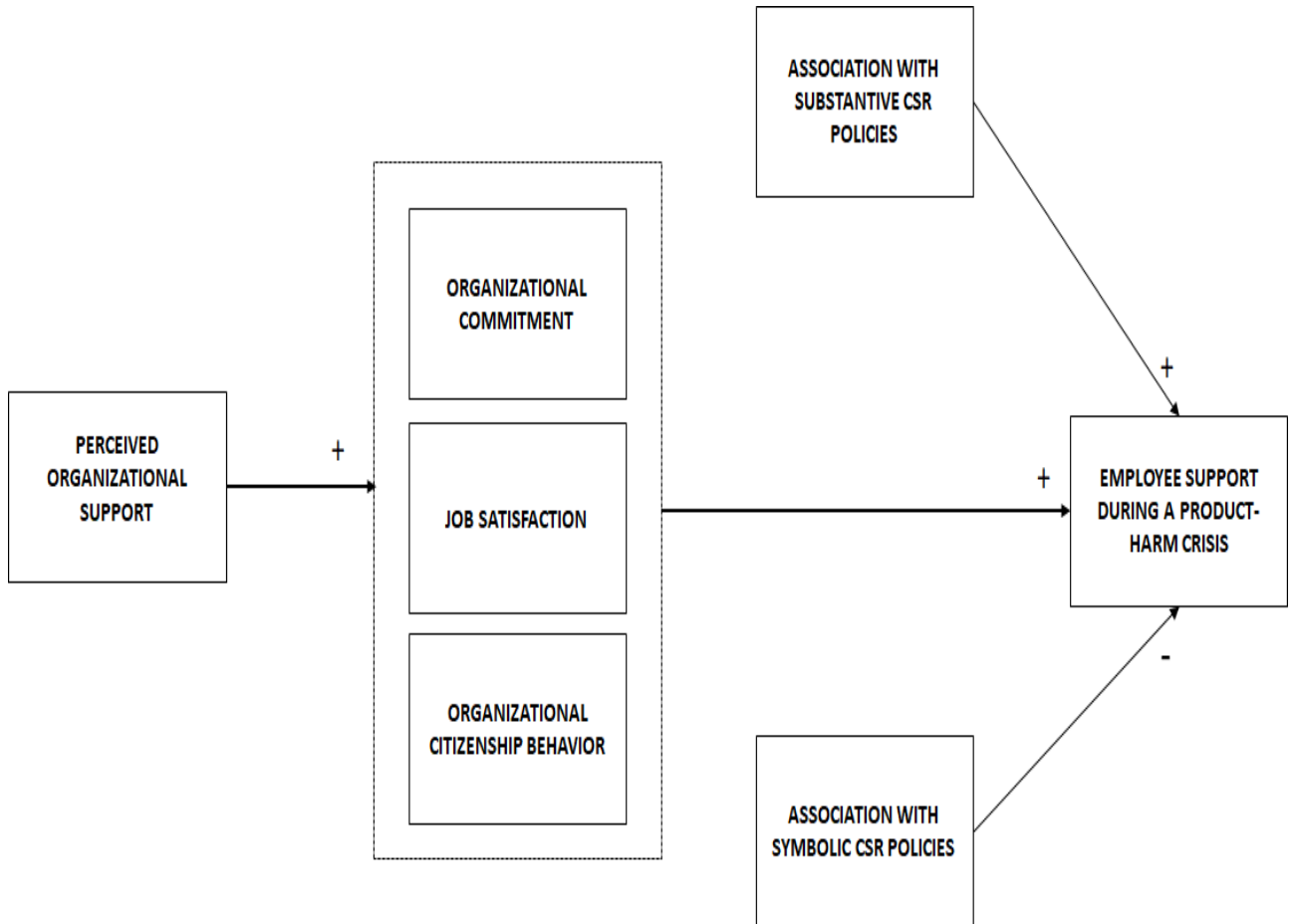
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Conceptual Model

This study focuses on how conducive working conditions and employer support plays a vital part in securing frontline employee support during turbulent times, such as a product-harm crisis. Based on social exchange theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976), the conceptual model for this study, shown in Figure 1, is developed by incorporating factors important to frontline service employees in developing commitment, fostering organizational citizenship behavior, and experiencing job satisfaction. Perceived organizational support serves as an antecedent to these factors. In addition, since corporate social responsibility (CSR) has assumed significant importance to employees regarding societal welfare initiatives taken by their employees, this study includes two types of CSR, substantive and symbolic (Donia et.al 2017, Donia, Sirsly and Ronen 2017), which can shape employee perceptions regarding their firm.

FIGURE 1: Factors that help secure employee support during a product-harm crisis



3.2 Perceived Organizational Support

FSEs are the backbone of an organization and management faith and trust in their capabilities is important in creating a quality service culture that promotes service excellence (Hartline and Ferrell 1996). Employee commitment demonstrated through displaying superior performance, taking on additional responsibilities, engaging in customer delight, and exhibiting reduced turnover (Mathieu and Jazac 1990) is respected and cherished by employers. As a result, such employees are rewarded by the firm through providing various benefits such as recognition, compensation hikes, career advancement opportunities, and greater access to information and knowledge, all of which can help motivate them to better perform their tasks and responsibilities efficiently, and experience job satisfaction (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Thus, a reciprocal arrangement can be seen here which reflects enhanced work efforts from employees and unstinting support from employers. Perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et.al 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002) is defined as confidence, faith, and reinforcement felt by employees in an organization that it will support them, provide assistance that can help in performing their daily jobs and activities, and help them in countering anxiety and workplace pressures effectively. Extant research has demonstrated that higher levels of perceived organizational support generate feelings of gratitude and accountability among employees to support and reciprocate the firm (Settoon, Bennett, and Liden 1996).

The reciprocity aspect of social exchange theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976) plays a key part in making employees feel that they are valued and respected in the firm, if they contribute towards the organization's

success, and the organization recognizes and appreciates their contributions through providing adequate learning opportunities, remuneration and promotion incentives, and conducive working conditions. The key element here is that employees will be more appreciative of organizational support if such actions taken by the firm are done of their own free will without any coercion or pressure that the organization faces from external bodies such as trade unions, safety regulations, and labor bureaus (Eisenberger et.al 1986). In such cases, employees too are motivated to go beyond their daily scope of work, conform to work culture and norms, and engage in camaraderie (Wayne et.al 2002).

Stamper and Johlke (2003) state that boundary spanners in service organizations put in their best efforts on the job to demonstrate commitment with the organization's goals and values, and with the expectation that the organization will be aware of their stellar efforts and adequately reward them. They further state that frontline service employees that possess higher levels of perceived organizational support encounter lower stress levels at their job and that perceived organizational support is negatively associated with role conflict and role ambiguity because in the case of such employees, the firm clearly defines and delineates job roles and responsibilities, as well as sets transparent expectations. Additionally, perceived organizational support is able to create feelings of felt obligation and belongingness to the organization, thus resulting in commitment (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002).

Levinson (1965) conducted research which demonstrated that adequate steps and actions taken by the organization are construed by employees to represent the firm's agenda driven by its culture and processes, rather than something that will merely provide

benefits to the employees. As such, any such actions taken by the firm that positively benefit or adversely impact the employees are interpreted by them to indicate exactly how much the firm cares about their welfare and appreciates their efforts. This can make a big difference in the way employees approach their jobs and make meaningful contributions that lead to organizational success. For example, Google has succeeded in creating an enviable and highly effective workforce through its practice of employee support which is manifested through its Global Education Leave Program', which allows employees opportunities to advance their education, thereby contributing towards organizational goals (Riggle, Edmondson, and Hansen 2009). Google also provides many other employee incentives, such as the flexibility to work on autonomous projects, the use of high-quality medical amenities, and the availability of recreational facilities such as fitness centers and swimming pools (Riggle, Edmondson, and Hansen 2009). All of these incentives succeed in creating perceived organizational support for organizations such as Google since employees reciprocate through displaying superior performance (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002).

This leads to my first multi-part hypothesis:

H1a: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment

H1b: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction

H1c: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior

3.3 Organizational Commitment

The role of frontline service employees in organizations is very critical as not only are they conduits of the firm and its brand, but they also help create a positive service experience for customers they interact with, by delivering specialized expertise and capabilities (Zeithaml and Bitner 2003; Singh 2000). In their role as boundary spanners, frontline service employees are evolving from being tasked with performing regular duties and responsibilities to introducing, implementing and making customers familiar with new-age initiatives such as service innovation (Cadwallader et al. 2010). Organizational commitment is an important element in the process of how frontline services employees represent the firm to its customers and deliver quality service. Organizational commitment has been defined in a variety of ways by several different scholars (Porter et al. 1974; O'Reilly and Caldwell 1980; Mathieu and Jazac 1990), but essentially it refers to the association and emotional attachment that exists between a firm and its employees. Intrinsic to this strong bond lies the belief and assumption that employees who possess organizational commitment believe in the firm's mission, goals and values, and feel motivated in their jobs (Mowday, Porter, and Steers 1979). Thus, organizational commitment can be defined as the degree to which an employee is involved or engaged with their organization, and shares the organization's mission and values, endeavors to accomplish tasks and objectives on behalf of the firm, and behaves in an appropriate manner, with a view to continue as a member of the organization (Mowday, Porter, and Steers 1979).

Boshoff and Allen (2000) found that there is a very strong link between organizational commitment and enhanced service performance. Rhoades and

Eisenberger(2002) conducted a study and found that perceived organizational support leads to organizational commitment since employees experience some kind of obligation or need to reciprocate for the concern and encouragement shown by the organization, along with a strong sense of identity and belongingness felt by such employees. This could be manifested in a scenario where employees support their firm during turbulent times such as a product-harm crisis.

Other scholars such as Meyer and Allen (1991) state that organizational commitment reflects through ways in which the firm's employees identify with firm policies and culture, remain involved with the firm's activities, and contribute to organizational performance and efficiency. Liao and Chung (2007) found that frontline service employees with higher levels of organizational commitment possess greater autonomy in their daily jobs, such as reporting customer feedback and complaints to management. Based on this, we can infer that in the wake of a product-harm crisis, frontline service employees with higher organizational commitment are more prone to being the face of the firm by providing reassurance to customers through soliciting and reporting customer feedback to management, thus demonstrating solidarity with the firm.

Prior research has demonstrated that organizational commitment is an effective mechanism for the dissemination of shared group norms between the firm and its employees (Kelley 1992). Work group socialization (Jones 1986) that results in espousing and embracing organizational cultures, values, principles, and ethics is important in this context. This instills a sense of belongingness within employees that makes them strive towards achieving their goals. Boshoff and Mels (1995) state that organizations which enable employees to actively participate in decision-making find that

such employees demonstrate higher levels of organizational commitment. All these organizational initiatives are key tenets of social exchange theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976) where the organization is taking adequate action to improve the working conditions of its employees, providing them with optimum job resources to achieve their goals, and ensuring employees are involved in organization policies and processes, and in turn employees will reciprocate the good gestures extended by management. This indicates that organizations which attempt to build relationships and promote inclusivity experience higher organizational commitment from their employees. Thus employees develop strong bonds and affinity for the organization that helps garner support for the firm when faced with a product-harm crisis.

Research has also been conducted on organizational commitment and turnover intentions of frontline service employees (Brown and Peterson 1993; Singh 2000). This research demonstrates that higher organizational commitment leads to lower turnover intentions thereby implying that employees who are involved and motivated in their jobs are more likely to be loyal to the organization. This augurs well for an organization since considerable training and costs are incurred in getting frontline service employees to participate in initiatives like implementing service innovation (Cadwallader et al. 2010).

This leads to my second hypothesis:

H2a: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational commitment and employee support during a product-harm crisis

H2b: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee support during a product-harm crisis

3.4 Job Satisfaction

Extant research has demonstrated that FSEs are pivotal to the success of an organization because of their underlying ability to cross-sell, potential to communicate and create awareness about new products, and capability to gauge customer habits and preferences, thereby increasing patronage and loyalty (Jaworski and Kohli 1993). In order for FSEs to successfully excel at their jobs, creativity is very important as this helps foster fresh concepts, new proposals, and innovative processes that can improve job satisfaction and lead to organizational efficiency (Oldham and Cummings 1996). Therefore organizations need to introduce creativity and task variety at the workplace so that employees achieve job satisfaction and contribute to organizational goals. Job satisfaction is defined as an emotional response felt by an employee regarding their job, which involves a comparison of results obtained, with those that the individual desires or covets (Cranny, Smith, and Stone 1992).

Prior research has indicated that when employees experience less variety in their jobs they tend to be dissatisfied and feel their capabilities are not being fully utilized (Kanungo 1979). This means employees need task variety in their jobs so that they feel their contribution to the organization's cause holds importance thus improving productivity and efficiency. Coelho and Augusto (2008) add to this by stating that task variety is critical to the learning and continued success of FSEs in organizations since that allows for experimentation and building new skills which contribute to experiencing job satisfaction, providing better customer service, and adding value to the firm.

The nature and structure of service organizations means that FSEs are an important cog in the wheel and are often times indispensable to the firm (Singh 2000;

Kraemer, Gouthier and Heidenreich 2017). Service firms allocate and spend huge budgets for recruiting and training FSEs, so if employees exhibit high turnover due to job dissatisfaction, it can affect organizational performance and can also create a work pool of inexperienced employees that might not have the relevant experience and expertise to resolve problems and engage in service recovery (Alexandrov, Babakus and Yavas 2007). Empowerment is a powerful tool that service companies can use to increase job satisfaction and thus retain and engage FSEs productively. Bowen and Lawler (1995) explain how empowerment works by stating that it is a process where employees at all levels, from top to bottom, are supported and motivated to envisage how best they can perform their jobs and assume control over factors where they can add value to the organization. The authors further state that power, information, rewards, and knowledge are key in this context, specifically power, since it provides FSEs with freedom and control to rectify any mistakes made and engage in customer satisfaction, both of which can lead to greater organizational performance.

Empowerment also helps a firm in serving its customers better as it induces feelings of organizational pride, shared norms and values towards achieving a common goal, and camaraderie among FSEs (Bowen and Lawler 1992). In addition, empowerment provides employees with confidence, flexibility, adaptability, tenacity, and zeal to excel by responding faster to customer concerns (Hartline, Maxham and Mckee 2000; Bowen and Lawler 1992).

Task significance (Hackman and Oldham 1980) refers to the confidence and beliefs possessed by FSEs that the tasks they carry out are meaningful to their organization or people around them. Coelho and Augusto (2010) contribute to the

literature by stating that if tasks undertaken by FSEs contribute towards making a significant impact in the lives of others by bringing joy and contentment in their lives, then such tasks assume significance for the FSEs. This results in increased motivational levels of FSEs and also fosters inventiveness. Task significance is important in the context of FSEs because it leads to several outcomes that are advantageous for both the organization and the employee, such as enhanced job satisfaction, increased motivational levels, lesser turnover, and reduced shirking at work (De Varo and Brookshire 2007).

Social exchange theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976) can provide a theoretical explanation as to how organizations that provide employees with conditions that enhance job satisfaction find that such employees are more motivated and productive. On their part, the employees also take pride in the work they do which impacts their firm and others around them in a positive manner. Such employees are thus prone to supporting the organization in difficult times such as a product-harm crisis. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found that job satisfaction is one of the consequences of perceived organizational support through meeting expectations pertaining to rewards, recognition, assistance, and other work-related support that employees expect from the organization.

This leads to my third hypothesis:

H3a: There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee support during a product-harm crisis

H3b: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee support during a product-harm crisis

3.5 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

In their roles as boundary spanners, FSEs carry out two main roles, first, they coordinate with customers in developing services by placing customers in the role of co-producers of service, and second they are the primary and most significant contact that customers have with the firm, and therefore customers form opinions of the firm based on such service encounters (Berry 1995). As such, the tasks that FSEs engage in have significant impact on customers, the organization as well as other coworkers, since employees need to work in tandem with their colleagues to deliver effective service performance (Ilgen and Pulakos 1999). Organizational citizenship behavior is defined as employee behavior that is voluntary in nature, not formally rewarded, goes beyond their daily scope of responsibilities, and can involve facilitation, interaction and coordination with others leading to organizational effectiveness, keeping in mind the social ecosystem of the firm (Organ 1988; Organ 1997). Hackman and Oldham (1976; 1980) state that empowerment, autonomy, constructive feedback, task variety, and creativity that the organization provides to its employees can instill a strong sense of responsibility in employees. Such behavior can lead to enhanced organizational citizenship behavior since employees feel a strong sense of commitment and trust towards the organization (Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch 1994).

Organ (1988) studied social exchange and organizational citizenship behavior by stating that supervisors who treat their employees fairly and justly invoke feelings of trust and commitment among such employees, who then reciprocate through engaging in behavior that goes above and beyond their regular scope of responsibilities. He further proposed five key elements of organizational citizenship behavior, namely altruism

(helping others at work), conscientiousness (compliance with norms and processes), sportsmanship (not protesting about routine matters), courtesy (taking the opinion of others into consideration before taking any steps), and civic virtue (concern about the company demonstrated through behavior such as attending meetings that add value to the company or suggesting processes for improvement).

Morrison (1994) argued that job tenure is positively associated with organizational citizenship behavior by employees. She supports her view by stating that employees develop certain expertise and core competencies based on their tenure with the organization and as such develop more trust and commitment due to feelings of obligation, which manifest into assuming a broader set of responsibilities and carrying these out successfully. George and Bettenhausen (1990) state that organizational citizenship behaviors result in reduced turnover at organizations because frontline service employees develop close bonds, affinity, and feelings of harmony with coworkers and supervisors, thus resulting in higher job satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

Meyer and Allen (1997) state that organizational citizenship behaviors include such elements as taking time out to help coworkers achieve their tasks and goals, going beyond the call of duty by participating in additional work activities or events, and offering suggestions for improvement that enhance workplace efficiency. At the heart of all these behaviors lies the underlying principle of social exchange which espouses that reciprocation will be done at some later stage in consideration for contributions made (Blau 1964; Organ 1990). Wayne et.al (2002) state that perceived organizational support leads to organizational citizenship behavior, as employees feel the need to go beyond the

call of duty, and support the organization in achieving its mission and goals during tumultuous and unstable times, such as a product-harm crisis.

This leads to my fourth hypothesis:

H4a: There is a positive relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and employee support during a product-harm crisis

H4b: Organizational citizenship behavior mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee support during a product-harm crisis

3.6 Association with Substantive Corporate Social Responsibility Policies

Frontline service employees (FSEs) constitute among the most valuable resources of an organization as they represent the firm to its customers and very often, are the only contact that the firm has with its customers (Hartline, Maxham, and McKee 2000). As such, firms need to focus on developing and retaining these critical resources and ensure that the right factors, attitudes, and perspectives that are paramount for delivering quality service to customers are cultivated among FSEs (Gronroos 1983; Babin and Boles 1998). One of the important factors that play a part in ensuring efficiency and productivity and efficiency is the presence of a culture that propagates strong corporate social responsibility (CSR). Kotler and Lee (2005) define CSR as efforts and endeavors taken by businesses to create social welfare and value through the use of firm resources.

In their research on how frontline service employees identify with CSR practices of the firm they represent, Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Swain (2014) found that FSEs are aligned with organizational identification and with the firm's customers if they perceive the leadership and customers to endorse and support the firm's CSR activities. They also found that CSR activities of the firm helped FSEs discover their organizational

identity and motivated them towards enhanced job performance. In recent years, researchers have found that employees are not just concerned about how much CSR the organization engages in, but also the drivers of such CSR implementation (Donia et.al 2017; Donia, Sirsly, and Ronen 2017; Vlachos, Theotokis, and Panagaopoulous 2010). Substantive CSR is defined by Donia et.al (2017) as cause-serving and genuine in actions, thoughts, or deeds that purport to reinforce and sustain activities that can benefit the society at large. Godfrey (2005) contributes to the literature by adding that substantive CSR practices by the organization are sincere and authentic in their approach and represent the firm's vision, goals, and mission, in harnessing resources that can contribute to societal welfare.

Glavas and Kelley (2014) add to the literature by stating that substantive CSR activities and subsequent investments by the firm in such activities assuages employees that it is genuinely concerned about cause-related activities such as minimizing environmental damage or reducing wastage. As such, substantive CSR activities indicate to employees and provide reassurance that the firm too will be similarly concerned about them and care for them. Social exchange theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976) provides a solid theoretical foundation for understanding why substantive CSR activities will be viewed positively by employees and encourage them to support the firm during times of crises. For example, employees are cognizant of not only how they are treated by their organizations but also how their organization treats others and behaves responsibly (Cropanzano et al. 2001). Such expectations manifest themselves when employees see or hear stories about how their organization has behaved in an ethical and morally correct manner resulting in greater job satisfaction, higher

productivity, and better service quality (Rupp et al. 2006). Jones (2010) adds that substantive CSR activities such as volunteering for a good cause also leads to employees reciprocating through organizational citizenship behaviors and increased commitment.

This leads to my fifth hypothesis:

H5: There is a positive relationship between association with substantive CSR policies of the firm and employee support during a product-harm crisis

3.7 Association with Symbolic Corporate Social Responsibility Policies

Extant research by several scholars extols the virtues of a strong CSR culture which can go a long way in creating job satisfaction for employees, resulting in higher involvement with organizational policies and greater organizational efficiency (Tekleab and Chiaburu 2011; Lam, Kraus and Ahearne 2010; Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Sen 2014). However, the drivers of CSR implementation are assuming importance for employees, and symbolic CSR is one of them (Donia et.al 2017). Symbolic CSR, as defined by Donia, Sirsly, and Ronen (2017), refers to CSR activities undertaken by the organization which serve their self-interests and are implemented mainly to receive accolades, recognition, and plaudits from stakeholders with a view to enhancing reputation, revenues, and credibility. In short, symbolic CSR can be better described as ‘green washing’ and not genuine in intentions (Jahdi and Acikdilli 2009). Donia, Sirsly, and Ronen (2017) add that symbolic CSR, with its diminished focus on societal welfare, does not resonate with employees the same way that substantive CSR does, and therefore its contribution towards job satisfaction, organizational effectiveness, and efficiency is minimal. They further add that in fact, substantive CSR is perceived by employees as being positive while symbolic CSR can be perceived as being negative.

Research conducted by several scholars portrays symbolic CSR as carefully-designed and strategically planned behavior by firms with a view to bolster profits and reputation, thereby sidestepping the issue of societal welfare and common good for all (Aguilera et.al 2007; Highhouse, Brooks, and Gregarus 2009). Employees who form an opinion that their organization is not genuine and legitimate in its intentions, thus engaging in symbolic CSR, could think that the firm only believes in taking from society and not contributing much to it, while those employees who believe their organization focuses on substantive CSR activities could judge that it is contributing and giving back to society (Donia, Sirsly, and Ronen 2017). The authors add that such perceptions might manifest themselves into employees thinking that an organization engaging in symbolic CSR will also not take care of its own staff, since it does not demonstrate concern for others, but only itself.

Donia et.al (2017) state that while substantive CSR leads to job satisfaction for employees, symbolic CSR does not contribute towards increased levels of job satisfaction for such employees. This is because the substantive nature of CSR signals to employees that the organization is engaged in contributing for good causes which makes them proud to be part of such firms, but in the case of symbolic CSR, if employees perceive that the organization is just engaging in such CSR to benefit itself, then it could have a reverse effect of decreasing job satisfaction and lowering motivation and morale. Social exchange theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976) can also explain how employees will perceive symbolic CSR as not being a good fit with organizational goals and policies, and therefore not reciprocate (Donia et.al 2017) during difficult times, such as a product-harm crisis.

This leads to my sixth hypothesis:

H6: There is a negative relationship between association with symbolic CSR policies of the firm and employee support during a product-harm crisis

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

4.1 Data Collection and Sample

This paper studies factors such as conducive environment at the workplace, corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies, autonomy, and task variety, which are critical for frontline service employees. Thus, the data for this paper was obtained from a survey targeting FSEs working in a variety of industries such as electronics, automobile, and quick-service restaurants (QSRs). Accordingly, the participants were provided with a scenario and administered scale measures employed in the literature. The choice of industries and job functions that the FSEs worked in, is also motivated by the fact that FSEs working in such roles face a challenging and dynamic environment in their daily jobs and as such, are better equipped to answer the survey questions pertaining to this study.

Three hundred and thirty two FSEs were recruited through the market research vendor, Qualtrics. The employees were all customer-facing and the first point of contact between the firm and its customers. Factors such as age, gender, income, position, experience and tenure in the organization, type of job, and number of crisis incidents witnessed, were included as part of demographics information collected (please refer to Table 1 for complete demographics information). Three hundred and thirty two FSEs constituted an adequate number of responses keeping in mind the type of questions being asked. The data obtained was analyzed using *R* software and in line with the two-step process prescribed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), which incorporates a confirmatory factor analysis procedure (CFA) to test reliability and validity of the constructs, and a

structural equation model (SEM) to test the proposed hypothesized relationships between the constructs. Initially, the participants were asked questions pertaining to their job and work environment by having them answer measures of perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, association with substantive CSR policies of the firm, and association with symbolic CSR policies of the firm. After the participants answered these measures, they were asked to read a scenario regarding a hypothetical situation that had taken place in their organization. Then, they were asked to answer measures about employee support during a product-harm crisis. The detailed scenario has been presented in Appendix H.

Table 1**Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

No	Demographic characteristics	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender:		
	Male	128	39
	Female	204	61
2.	Ethnicity of participants:		
	White/Caucasian	134	40
	Asian /Pacific Islander	39	11
	Black/African American	67	20
	Hispanic/Latino	88	27
	Native American	4	2
3.	Age group (years):		
	Below 18		
	18-25	4	2
	26-35	61	18
	36-45	122	37
	46-55	90	27
	56-65	41	12
	Above 65	14	4
4.	Annual salary range(\$):		
	Below 25,000	147	44
	25000-49,000	139	42
	Above 50,000	46	14
5.	Work experience in current company (in years):		
	Below 1	38	11
	1-3	107	32
	3-5	116	35
	5 and above	71	22
6.	Title in current company:		
	Cashier	63	19
	Wait staff	77	23
	Customer Service Representative	91	27
	Technical Support Representative	28	8
	Sales staff	47	14
	Other	26	9

Table 1. Continued

7.	Product-harm crisis incidents witnessed by the participants		
	0		
	1	133	40
	2	68	20
	3	85	26
	More than 3	46	14

N=332, Percentage values are rounded off

4.2 Measures

The measures used in this study were taken from existing measures used in past research studies. The measures used a 5-point scale ranging from “1 (strongly disagree) and “5” (strongly agree). A complete list of the items is provided in Appendix A to G.

4.2.1. Perceived organizational support

Perceived organizational support was measured using 5 items with the highest factor loadings relevant for this study, taken from the existing scale developed by Eisenberger et.al (1986). This scale has been used in several studies by scholars in marketing and management, such as Shore et.al (2006) and Homburg et.al (2010).

4.2.2 Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment was measured using 4 items taken from the existing scale developed by Maltz and Kohli (1996).

4.2.3 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured using 4 items adapted from the existing scale developed by Wright and Cropanzano (1998). This modified scale has been used by other studies in marketing and management, such as Lund (2003).

4.2.4 Organizational citizenship behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was measured using 6 items with high factor loadings, adapted from the existing scale developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989). These 6 items represent some key constructs, namely, altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, and conscientiousness, and civic virtues describing specific behaviors that employees engaged in leading to organizational citizenship behavior. This modified scale has been used in several other studies in marketing and management, such as Niehoff and

Moorman (1993) and Pillai, Schriesheim, and Williams (1999). It is pertinent to note that while several other studies in the past have administered OCB measures to supervisors, in the case of this study the measures were acquired from FSEs. The reason behind having FSEs answer these questions is because the study focuses on how OCB behavior, along with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, moderated by the specific type of CSR that the organization implements, leads to employee support during a product-harm crisis. There are many studies which have followed this pattern; prominent among them is the one by Yoon and Suh (2003), which also had employees answer questions on the OCB scale, instead of supervisors.

4.2.5 Association with substantive CSR policies of the firm

Association with substantive CSR policies of the firm was measured using 6 items taken from the existing scale developed by Donia, Sirsly, and Ronen (2017). The original scale consisted of 8 items, from which 6 items with the highest factor loadings, and relevant for this study were chosen.

4.2.6 Association with symbolic CSR policies of the firm

Association with symbolic CSR policies of the firm was measured using 5 items taken from the existing scale developed by Donia, Sirsly, and Ronen (2017). The original scale consisted of 6 items, from which 5 items with the highest factor loadings and relevant for this study were chosen.

4.2.7 Employee support during a product-harm crisis

Employee support during a product-harm crisis was measured using 5 items adapted from the existing scale developed by Eisenberger et.al (2001).

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1 Measure reliability and validity

The measurement properties of the scales used in this study were evaluated using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) process. It is important to note that according to the guidelines prescribed by Hu and Bentler (1999), the data generated by the fit statistics demonstrates that the model fits well with the data ($\chi^2 = 860.83$, $df = 526$, $p < 0.01$, $CFI = 0.97$, $TLI = 0.95$, $RMSEA = 0.04$, $NNFI = 0.95$). In line with the recommendations proposed by Wheaton et.al (1977), the relative normed chi-square calculation, also known as the chi-square to df ratio (χ^2/df) is also calculated, so as to alleviate the impact of sample size on the model. This ratio is 1.63, which is well below the threshold of 2, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), thereby demonstrating conformance. It is also worth noting that the majority of the factor and item loadings exceeded the 0.40 threshold (Hulland 1999) and were retained, while the few that were less than this cutoff value were dropped. It should be mentioned that all but one construct demonstrated acceptable average variance, exceeding the recommended 0.50 threshold. Given that the magnitude of departure from this threshold was relatively minor (on the order of 0.01, for employee support during a product-harm crisis), these constructs were deemed to have convergent validity, and thus acceptable for continued analysis. Next, the model's discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the average variance extracted for each construct to its shared variance with other constructs. As shown in Table 2, discriminant validity was indicated as the average variances extracted were greater than the shared variance between each construct and all other constructs (Anderson and Gerbing 1988;

Fornell and Larker 1981). Table 2 demonstrates that the AVE values range from 49-70 percent, while the shared variances range from 24-51 percent. Thus, except for the average variance of one construct (employee support during a product-harm crisis) which was marginally lower than the highest shared variance, and is thus not a cause for concern, discriminant validity was established for the constructs. Additionally, the composite reliabilities for the constructs exceeded the value of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994), thereby exhibiting strong reliability. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the model has acceptable psychometric properties, allowing for further analysis.

Table 2
Descriptive and Correlation Matrix

	Variable	N	Mean	SD	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Perceived Organizational Support	332	3.69	0.91	0.53	0.85						
2	Organizational Commitment	332	3.59	1.03	0.65	0.68	0.88					
3	Job Satisfaction	332	3.83	0.91	0.55	0.72	0.75	0.90				
4	Organizational Citizenship Behavior	332	4.04	0.79	0.57	0.59	0.61	0.69	0.94			
5	Association with substantive CSR policies of the firm	332	3.72	0.98	0.70	0.67	0.72	0.74	0.60	0.93		
6	Association with symbolic CSR policies of the firm	332	3.97	0.78	0.53	0.52	0.52	0.56	0.70	0.50	0.90	
7	Employee support during a product-harm crisis	332	3.95	0.77	0.49	0.57	0.58	0.62	0.65	0.62	0.54	0.89

Note: Composite reliabilities are all shown on the diagonal

5.2 Common Method Variance

Measurement errors in research studies occur due to method biases (Podsakoff et.al 2003). It is important to note that the data for this study was collected at the same time and from the same questionnaire, and therefore could be vulnerable to the effects of common method bias. In order to mitigate this problem, multiple methods were used. First, Harman's one-factor method was used, which accounted for only 34.6% of the variance. Since this variance is less than 50% and because the single factor model produced poor fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 1553.96$, $df = 289$, $\chi^2/df = 5.37$, $CFI = 0.74$, $TLI = 0.78$, $RMSEA = 0.239$, $NNFI=0.78$), evidence of common method bias is ruled out, and not a concern (Andersson and Bateman 1997). Second, in line with the recommendations prescribed by Podsakoff, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff (2012), and Feldman and Lynch (1988), the measures of the independent and dependent variables were separated using a scenario situation, so that the reasons for collecting these measures were camouflaged, and less conspicuous to the respondents. Thereby, method bias is significantly diminished, since respondents do not receive any signal regarding questions pertaining to the dependent variable, as a basis for answering questions pertaining to the independent variables. Third, as per the guidelines suggested by Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski(2000), every effort was taken to ensure that the scale questions were clear, unambiguous, simple, concise, and not double-barreled. This also helps mitigate problems related to common method bias. Thus, common method bias for this study was addressed.

5.3 Results of hypotheses testing

The hypotheses for this study were tested using structural equation models (SEM) as per the guidelines prescribed by Kline (2011). The fit indices of the SEM demonstrated conformance with acceptable thresholds and values ($\chi^2 = 950.36$, $df = 534$, $\chi^2/df = 1.78$, $p < 0.01$, $CFI = 0.95$, $TLI = 0.94$, $RMSEA = 0.05$, $NNFI = 0.94$). These fit indices were in conformance with those prescribed by scholars, such as Hu and Bentler (1999). The results of this SEM analysis are presented in Table 3. It is pertinent to note that the sample size for this study was adequate, so as to provide sufficient statistical power and belief in the results (Hair, Babin, and Krey 2017). The model fit statistics, such as the RMSEA with a value of 0.05 add further credence to this (Hu and Bentler 1999). On the basis of the hypotheses testing, it is found that Hypothesis 1a, 1b, and 1c are fully supported. It is found that there is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior by way of strong statistical significance, thereby implying full support. Hypotheses 2a, regarding the positive relationship between organizational commitment and employee-support during a product harm crisis, and the mediating effects of organizational commitment between POS and employee support during a product-harm crisis are not supported, as the results are not significant. Hypothesis 3a and 3b, which elucidate on the positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee-support during a product harm crisis, and the mediating effects of job satisfaction between POS and employee support during a product-harm crisis are supported, as the effects are significant. Similarly, there is support found for Hypotheses 4a and 4b too, regarding the positive relationship between organizational citizenship

behavior and employee-support during a product harm crisis, and the mediating effects of organizational citizenship behavior between POS and employee support during a product-harm crisis, as the effects are significant. Hypothesis 5, which describes the positive relationship between substantive corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies of the firm and employee support during a product-harm crisis, is also fully supported as evidence of statistical significance is demonstrated. Hypothesis 6, which explains the negative relationship between association with symbolic CSR policies and employee support during a product-harm crisis, is not supported, as statistical significance is not demonstrated. Thus, the results support four out of the six hypotheses that were tested as part of the model.

Table 3**Direct and Indirect Effects on Employee Support During a Product-Harm Crisis****Direct and indirect effects model:**

<i>Paths Modeled:</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>z-Value</i>	<i>Overall Model Fit</i>
Perceived organizational Support → Organizational Commitment	0.00*	15.26	$\chi^2= 950.36$ df=534 RMSEA=0.05 NNFI=0.94 CFI= 0.95
Perceived organizational Support → Job Satisfaction	0.00*	13.88	
Perceived organizational Support → Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.00*	12.00	
Perceived organizational Support → Employee Support			
Perceived organizational Support → During a Product-Harm Crisis	0.757	-0.30	
Organizational Commitment → Employee Support	0.525	0.64	
Organizational Commitment → During a Product-Harm Crisis			
Job Satisfaction → Employee Support	0.06+	1.84	
Job Satisfaction → During a Product-Harm Crisis			
Organizational Citizenship Behavior → Employee Support	0.00*	5.55	
Organizational Citizenship Behavior → During a Product-Harm Crisis			
Association with substantive CSR polices of the firm → Employee Support	0.01**	2.38	
Association with substantive CSR polices of the firm → During a Product-Harm Crisis			
Association with symbolic CSR policies of the firm → Employee Support	0.15	1.42	
Association with symbolic CSR policies of the firm → During a Product-Harm Crisis			

* Significant at $p < 0.01$ ** Significant at $p < 0.05$ + Significant at $p < 0.10$

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Frontline service employees (FSEs) are important resources for an organization as they represent the face of the organization and often times are the only link that the firm has with its customers (Singh 2000). Customers often form perceptions about the firm and its service quality based on their interactions with FSEs (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985). The bond between FSEs and customers is so strong that sometimes customers prefer other service providers if they find that their favorite employees are no longer part of the organization (Schneider and Bowen 1985). As such, FSEs are engaged with multifaceted skills and adept at multitasking, including being tasked with innovation, creativity, customer orientation, resolving and diffusing a service crisis, and boundary-spanning (Chung and Schneider 2002; Berry 1995; Kelley 1992; van der Heijden et.al 2013; Coelho and Augusto 2010).

A product-harm crisis (Dawar and Pillutla 2000; Klein and Dawar 2004; Herde, Helsen, and Dekimpe 2007; Chen, Ganesan, and Liu 2009) can do irreparable damage to an organization's reputation and tarnish it beyond repair. Incidents of product-harm crisis include product recalls and controversial advertising that can deplete a firm's market share and cause it to lose loyal customers (Vezina and Paul 1997; Dutta and Pullig 2011). In such cases, frontline service employees can represent the firm and reassure customers by rallying around the firm and restoring the lost confidence that stakeholders experience (von Walter, Wentzel, and Tomczak 2016). Social exchange theory (Homans 1961; Blau 1964; Thibault and Kelley 1959; Emerson 1976), with its focus on reciprocal exchanges between parties, is able to provide a robust theoretical foundation and explain

how FSEs can support firms during times of product-harm crises. The underlying assumption is that if firms provide employees with optimum working conditions, resources, empowerment, and creativity in their tasks, then employees correspondingly reciprocate by supporting firms during difficult times.

The results obtained from this study demonstrate that job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee support during a product-harm crisis. One of the possible reasons for this could be that employees who perceive their firm to be supportive and who are exposed to autonomy, empowerment, task variety, and task significance in their daily jobs experience job satisfaction (Coelho and Augusto 2008; Singh 2000). This creates reciprocal feelings of supporting the firm during a turbulent time, such as a product-harm crisis. Likewise, organizational citizenship behavior involves going beyond the regular scope of duties, helping coworkers excel in their jobs, attending meetings, and offering suggestions for improvement, as well as, facilitation, interaction, and coordination with others to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Organ 1988). This behavior manifests itself in employees supporting their firm during a product-harm crisis which is explained by the significant result obtained. However, organizational commitment does not mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee support during a product-harm crisis. One possible explanation for this finding could be that extant research has found that organizational commitment leads to higher tenure in the organization along with reduced turnover (Lee and Mowday 1987; Steers and Mowday 1981). However, the mere presence of reduction of turnover and increased tenure does not necessarily equate to a reliable and dependable

workforce for firms, since employees might still be slack in performing one's daily duties and tasks effectively (Meyer and Allen 1991). Moreover, employees might be committed to remaining in the organization, but they might not be committed to engaging in extra-role behavior (Organ 1987), such as alleviating customer concerns and supporting the firm during difficult times, like a product-harm crisis.

The results also demonstrate that the hypothesis regarding a negative relationship between symbolic CSR and employee support during a product-harm crisis is not supported. One possible explanation could be the fact that some firms are adept at balancing both types of CSR initiatives (substantive and symbolic) as part of their organizational culture (Schons and Steinmeier 2016), so employees are not able to discern the true intentions of their employers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The findings from this study provide two major substantive contributions to the literature, first, perceived organizational support (POS) is an important antecedent that leads to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior. As shown in Table 3, if POS is shown as a direct link leading to employee support during a product harm crisis, then the result is insignificant ($p=0.757$, as shown in Table 3). This finding demonstrates how employees cherish the fact that the firm is concerned about the welfare of its employees and endeavors to provide them with superior working conditions, through avenues such as supervisor support and rewards and recognition (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). The second significant contribution of this study is the result which demonstrates association with substantive corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies to be significant. This finding establishes and validates the importance of substantive CSR policies to FSEs. Thus authentic, cause-serving, and genuine CSR initiatives are perceived by employees to be a means of demonstrating that the firm cares about societal welfare, and subsequently about its people as well (Donia, Sirsly and Ronen 2017; Glavas and Kelley 2014). Employees perceive the firm to be a benevolent contributor towards cause-related initiatives that espouse fairness and equity, with the ultimate goal of benefiting the society. Such perceptions and feelings about the specific CSR activities that their firm engages in give rise to feelings of positivity towards employers and can influence employee support during a product-harm crisis. Thus, firms need to design their CSR policies accordingly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

There are important research implications and findings for scholars that can emerge from this study. First, extant research has viewed CSR as a single construct, when conducting studies on its efficacy regarding employee attitudes, performance, and satisfaction (Vlachos, Panagopoulos, and Rapp 2013; Singhapakdi et.al 2015; Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Swain 2014). By viewing CSR as genuine (substantive CSR) versus insincere (symbolic CSR), this research studies the importance accorded by FSEs to these two distinct types of CSR during difficult times, such as a product-harm crisis. Thus, this study contributes to the literature and espouses cause-related initiatives that resonate with FSEs in order to solicit employee support during a crisis. Second, with the exception of one study (von Walter, Wentzel, and Tomczak 2016), previous research has looked at the effects of a product-harm crisis from a customer perspective, (Vanhamme and Grobбен 2009; Klein and Dawar 2004; Kim 2014; Liu and Shankar 2015), while ignoring the importance of FSEs in mitigating such difficult situations. Thus, this study brings to the fore the importance of employees in mitigating and alleviating customer concerns, as well as supporting their employer during turbulent times. Third, this study can serve as a nucleus for future research on the effect of management structure, policies, and strategies on employee perceptions and satisfaction regarding their working conditions during a product-harm crisis.

There are some limitations to this study, as is the case, for most research studies. First, for the sake of building a parsimonious model, organizational trust was not included as one of the variables in this study. Prior research has demonstrated that

organizational trust is an important indicator of social exchange relationships between the firm and its employees, since reciprocal exchanges are built on the basis of trust (Konovsky and Pugh 1994). Future research in this area can look at including organizational trust as one of the variables to be studied. Second, even though the sample size of FSEs for this study is fairly large, it might not be fully representative of the population at large. Third, unlike a longitudinal study, this study implements a cross-sectional design through emphasis on data collection at a single point in time. As such, it is therefore difficult to establish causality, although correlation is definitely established.

Future research can investigate employee perceptions of top leadership influence on driving CSR culture and implementing employee-friendly strategies to enhance satisfaction and harmony at the workplace. Also, does the past experience of top management in handling crises successfully instill confidence among FSEs to support the firm? Future research can also look at whether a product-harm crisis actually drives and propels FSEs in taking on additional roles and fosters service innovation, thus improving productivity and organizational efficiency. Lastly, future research can also explore the effect of a product-harm crisis on trusted suppliers and vendors. For example, does a firm risk alienating and losing its long-standing and exclusive suppliers to competitors who might then develop a sustainable competitive advantage? Consider the example of McDonald's, the iconic American quick-service restaurant chain, which sources its beef primarily from Lopez Foods (Palmer 2012), and its chicken, seafood, and fish from Keystone Foods (Huffstutter and Baertlein 2015), which is another trusted supplier. What would be the impact of a product-harm crisis and its subsequent aftermaths on these two

suppliers? Such research can provide further insights into the dynamics and complexities that a firm encounters when dealing with a product-harm crisis.

The study also has important implications for managers and practitioners at firms on how they can create superior working conditions, bring about clarity in job roles, and empower employees thus motivating them to contribute towards superior organizational performance. Employee support during times of adversity and crises can demonstrate strong loyalty towards the organization and deep organizational commitment (Mathieu and Jazac 1990; Boshoff and Allen 2000). Such feelings of attachment and affection for the organization show that employees consider a long-term future with the organization and will not defect during difficult times (von Walter, Wentzel, and Tomczak 2016; Kruglanski 1970).

In addition, a large number of employees leaving at the same time can play havoc with a firm's operations. Therefore employee support can be construed as leading to less turnover, reduced absenteeism, safeguarding of hiring and training costs that the firm has incurred, and fewer transaction costs (Alaxandrov, Babakus, and Yavas 2007; Williamson 1975; 1985; Brown and Peterson 1993; Singh 2000). Additionally firms always desire the right mix of new and old employees so that service delivery is not affected and the older employees can act as a mentor to the newer ones (Alaxandrov, Babakus, and Yavas 2007). Therefore it is not in the best interest of firms to lose their experienced and seasoned employees during a crisis. Organizations also invest much time and resources in training their FSEs to excel in service delivery (Elmadag, Ellinger, and Franke 2008), and therefore employees are aware about insider information, trade secrets, and internal innovation strategies that can be compromised if they leave the organization.

Lastly, CSR has become an intrinsic and invaluable paradigm in firms. This study advocates the implementation of substantive CSR policies in order to retain and garner employee support during difficult times such as a product-harm crisis. Thus, this study provides managers with valuable insights on how to retain key employees during times of product-harm crises, mitigate and salvage the crisis situation, and implement strategies to recover lost ground.

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APPENDIX A

Measures of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisemberger et.al 1986)

Measures
The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work
The organization really cares about my well-being
The organization shows very little concern for me (R)
The organization takes great pride in my accomplishments at work
The organization tries to make my job as interesting as possible

APPENDIX B

Measures of Organizational Commitment (Maltz and Kohli 1996)

Measures
I feel emotionally attached to this organization
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me
I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization
I really feel this organization's problems are my own

APPENDIX C

Job Satisfaction (adapted from Wright and Cropanzano 1998)

Measures
All in all, I am satisfied with the work I do in my job
All in all, I am satisfied with my coworkers
All in all, I am satisfied with my supervisor
All in all, I am satisfied with my compensation
All in all, I am satisfied with the promotional opportunities available to me

APPENDIX D

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1989)

Measures
I willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems
I help orient new people even though it is not required
I take steps to prevent problems with other employees
I obey company rules, regulations, and procedures even when no one is watching
I attend and participate in meetings regarding the organization
I keep up with developments in the company

APPENDIX E

Association with Substantive CSR Policies of the Firm (adapted from Donia, Sirsly and Ronen 2017)

Measures
My organization wants to help solve problems in the community
My organization has a genuine interest in the welfare of external individuals affected by its practices
My organization feels it is important to help those in need
My organization really strives to help external entities it does business with
My organization values its role of interacting with the community
My organization takes on the needs of the community as its own

APPENDIX F

Association with Symbolic CSR Policies of the Firm (Donia, Sirsly and Ronen 2017)

Measures
My organization tries to avoid looking bad in front of others
My organization tries to look good in comparison with its competitors
My organization tries to avoid criticism from the external actors it interacts with
My organization tries to appear to be an ethical organization
My organization tries to impress its employees by showing that it cares about other members of society

APPENDIX G

Employee Support During a Product-Harm Crisis (adapted from Eisenberger et.al 2001)

Measures
I feel a personal obligation to do whatever I can to support my organization in achieving its goals during a crisis
I owe it to the organization to give 100% of my support to achieve its goals during a crisis
I owe it to the organization to ensure that customers are satisfied during a crisis
I would feel guilty if I did not meet the expected performance standards during a crisis
I would feel an obligation to take time off from my personal schedule to provide support during a crisis

APPENDIX H

Companies face reputational crises when their products are blamed for outcomes that threaten their customers or the public, such as food contamination, product recalls, or environmental damage caused by a company's faulty products.

Imagine a situation where your current employer is facing a reputational crisis due to an alleged malfunctioning or contamination of its products. Your current employer has never been involved in any such crisis in the past. It is taking remedial action, such as product recalls, to alleviate this issue. Additionally your company is well-known for its focus on sustainability, societal welfare, and environmental conservation. The media has highlighted these incidents resulting in considerable negative publicity and reputational damage for your company.

Many of your regular customers are curious to know what went wrong regarding the crisis it is facing, some are upset, and some demonstrate anxiety regarding doing business with you again. Based on this scenario and your feelings about your company, answer the following questions.