

Article

# The effects of perceived corporate social responsibility (CSR) on thriving at work in the hospitality industry

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Copyright © 2024 by author(s). Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development is published by EnPress Publisher, LLC. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/ by/4.0/ **Abstract:** Despite the proliferation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) studies, it is accruing academic interest since there still remains a lot to be further explored. The purpose of the study is to examine whether/how CSR perception affect employee/intern thriving at work and its mediator through perceived external prestige in the hospitality industry. Data from 501 hospitality industry employees and interns in China were collected using a quantitative survey consisting of 35 questions. Statistical findings showed that CSR perception and thriving at work were positively related. Additionally, perceived external prestige partially mediated the connection between CSR perception and thriving at work. Furthermore, the study found that hotel interns generally exhibited lower levels of CSR perception and thriving at work compared with frontline or managerial staff. The study underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between hotel practitioners and university educators to enhance CSR perception and thriving at work, the hotel sector can potentially mitigate workforce shortages and reduce high turnover rates.

**Keywords:** corporate social responsibility; CSR perception; thriving at work; perceived external prestige; hospitality; interns

# 1. Introduction

In the contemporary job market, not a few employees are under great work pressure from all walks of life. If not dealt with properly, stress from work may result in reduced passion and increased job turnover. In the labor-intensive hospitality industry, it is especially important to energize employees because they are the service providers whose vitality at work is crucial to the industry. However, hotels are often complained of unsatisfactory working environment, low salaries and heavy workload (Yang et al., 2012). In addition, hotels are forced to control personnel cost to survive in the industry due to the pandemic (Japutra and Situmorang, 2021). Therefore, it is of critical significance to conduct research on the workforce and the development of the hospitality industry.

Thriving at work is normally conceptualized as a state of positive psychology with both learning and vitality at work. As indicated by Porath et al. (2012), individuals who are thriving experience development and progress, characterized by a lively and energetic spirit (vitality) and a continuous improvement and advancement in their work (learning). Extant literature highlights the positive effect of thriving on work-related outcomes and organizational performance (Chang and Busser, 2020; Shahid et al., 2021). Compared with studies that examine the effects of individual factors, workplace relationships and leadership styles on thriving (Nawaz

et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022), contextual factors such as CSR that work on thriving at work are less examined.

CSR is a multidimensional management strategy whereby enterprises make efforts to enhance financial performance, improve corporate reputation and bring benefits to all the stakeholders involved (Babajee et al., 2022; Ben Saad and Belkacem, 2022; Lin-Hi and Blumberg, 2018; Raj and Subramani, 2022). Hotel CSR perception from employees is an important dimension because it can reflect the actual effect of CSR practice. However, research on the influence of hotel CSR perceived by employees on their positive psychological state, namely thriving at work, is scarce.

Perceived external prestige (PEP) is how employees consider the prestige of the organization they work in from the perspectives of the outsiders. PEP is closely linked with work attitudes and outcomes (Boğan and Dedeoğlu, 2020; Mishra, 2013). If PEP is high, employees will be motivated. If PEP is low, work enthusiasm may be discouraged. Accordingly, the study proposes that PEP mediates CSR perception-thriving at work link.

Apart from formal employees, interns are selected as the research sample because they have become an integral part for the hotel labor structure (Teng and Cheng, 2021). In many Chinese universities, hospitality internship program is an essential component in talent training (Qu et al., 2021). It enables students to get a deep understanding of the industry, cultivate comprehensive skills and achieve long-term development in the workplace. However, the 'China Tourism Talent Development Report (1949–2021)' released during the 2022 China Tourism Academy Conference revealed that most of the college graduates majoring in Tourism and Hotel Management work in other fields after graduation for the last few years. In other words, many graduates do not consider it an ideal career choice to stay in the hotel sector. In light of this, research on hotel interns is vital in retaining talents for the industry.

## 2. Literature review

Whilst CSR has been extensively studied, it is still an important topic in academic research. So far, no consensus has been reached yet in terms of the definition of CSR (Farmaki et al., 2022; Iyer and Jarvis, 2019). According to Bowen (1953), it was the obligation of businessmen to act in line with desired objectives and societal values. Friedman (1970) proposed that the main objective of CSR practice is the maximization of profits. In the present study, CSR in the hospitality industry refers to corporate multidimensional activities towards stakeholders comprising customers, employees, environment as well as the whole community (Gonzalez-Dela-Rosa et al., 2023; Ko et al., 2019; Wong and Kim, 2020).

Different from CSR, CSR perception is individuals' responses and reactions to CSR practice. CSR perception from employees can affect job-related outcomes (Kim et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2022), quality of life (Bibi et al., 2022) as well as the actual implementation of CSR (Wong and Kim, 2020). However, not enough attention has been paid to individual stakeholders' reactions despite that they are found to be conducive to CSR activities (Sendlhofer, 2020).

Thriving at work is the energetic state at work with positive learning motivation and vigorous passion in dealing with tasks (Spreitzer et al., 2012). Individuals tend to thrive at work and behave in agentic manners when embedded in certain environments. In the current fast-paced and competitive economy, a thriving workforce is key to an organizations' sustained growth long-term development (Walumbwa et al., 2018). Research indicated that employees who are thriving at work tend to be healthier with fewer physical problems (Spreitzer et al., 2012). Moreover, thriving employees are more likely to achieve better work performance (Van der Walt, 2018) and career development (Chang and Busser, 2020).

Recently, with considerable literature on thriving at work, antecedents of it have received increasing attention. Personal traits such as prosocial motivation, emotional stability and proactivity that stimulate agentic behaviors and attitudes are examined (Alikaj et al., 2021; Nawaz et al., 2020). Additionally, workplace relations and leadership styles also work on thriving (Badri et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Compared with employees' personal traits and work-related contexts that are relatively uneasy to alter, organizational contexts are more flexible and modifiable. As an important organizational context, CSR strengthens employees' identification and relationship with the organization. Individual thriving potentials will be generated with positive CSR perception as well. However, the underlying mechanisms of thriving at work and CSR perception remain to be further explored.

PEP concerns with how employees perceive outsiders' opinions on their organization. Individuals define themselves in a particular group and may generate attachment and sense of pride to the workplace that have good social fame (Carmeli et al., 2006). In general, corporate responsible actions will contribute to corporate reputation. Previous studies have demonstrated a positive CSR perception-PEP link (Gaudencio et al., 2021; Lee, 2020). According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), individuals' social interaction and exchange are based on careful consideration of pros and cons. Two key dimensions involved in the exchange process are cooperation and reciprocity. Employees tend to cooperate with others and reciprocate with the organization's good deeds (Gaudencio et al., 2021). Based on the reciprocity principle, employees tend to form positive picture of the organization and have high positive emotions at work when perceiving the stimulus PEP.

So far, research has demonstrated the role of PEP in CSR perception on attitudinal or behavioral outcomes (Brachle and Waples, 2022). In China, underlying mechanisms on emotional aspects need to be deeply uncovered for the reason that under the collectivist culture, people deal with more emotions and expect more from the organizations for welfare. Hence, mechanisms relevant to employee-perceived CSR on thriving at work need to be investigated.

#### **Research questions**

To date, inadequate literature has examined the effects as well as underlying mechanisms of CSR perception on thriving at work. To explore the understudied issue, the present paper seeks to verify the following research questions:

RQ1: What factors affect CSR perception, thriving at work and perceived external prestige?

RQ2: Is there any statistically significant difference of CSR perception, thriving at work and perceived external prestige in terms of position level (managerial employees, frontline employees, interns)?

RQ3: Is there any interaction effect between tenure and educational level on CSR perception, thriving at work and perceived external prestige?

RQ4: Does perceived CSR positively affect thriving at work?

RQ5: Does perceived CSR positively affect thriving at work via the mediating role of perceived external prestige?

# 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Research context & study sample

In the field of hospitality, CSR reports are issued by many internationally noted hotels such as Hilton and Marriott International. Compared with foreign hotels, it is hard to access the news and reports related to CSR practice of Chinese hotels (Wang et al., 2020). In addition, CSR is valued by Chinese employees due to the unique Chinese culture characterized by Confucianism and Collectivism (Anthony and Hong, 2014). Thus, CSR practice of Chinese hotels requires attention and advocacy. In light of this, the present study takes hospitality industry as the field of study with the attempt to analyze the effects of CSR perception on job thriving in China.

As a labor-intensive industry, employees are of critical importance to the hospitality industry. Moreover, intern retention is a tricky issue to hotels because not a few college graduates majoring in Tourism and Hotel Management work in other fields after graduation for the last few years in China. Hence, the research population consists of managerial employees, frontline employees as well as interns.

In order to ensure that interns have a general understanding of hotels' operations and CSR practice, all the sampled student interns in the present study have already finished their internship programs. Students who have just started or have not finished internship are excluded. The final number of valid questionnaires collected is 501.

#### 3.2. Study instrument & data collection

In the present study, three 5-point Likert scales were adopted. The questionnaire was designed in English and translated into Chinese because the respondents are all Chinese. The scales employed were based on mature ones that measure thriving at work (Porath et al., 2012), CSR (Farmaki et al., 2022; Park and Levy, 2014; Turker, 2009) as well as PEP (Herrbach et al., 2004). Besides, modifications were made in accordance with the specific context of the study. Back-translation was used to examine the quality of the translated version (Brislin, 1970).

The questionnaires were distributed and collected over a four-week period in May 2023. An online survey was employed due to its convenience and costeffectiveness. Respondents accessed the survey via an e-survey link distributed through various social media platforms. Convenience sampling was used. This method was chosen to efficiently gather a large number of responses within a limited time frame. Consequently, the selection of respondents was not entirely random. The survey targeted local hotels across six provinces in China, ensuring a broad geographic representation. While convenience sampling was employed, within the chosen hotels, respondents were selected randomly to participate in the survey. Thus, the respondents (managerial employees, frontline employees, and interns) did not have an equal chance of being selected in the sample.

The questionnaires were distributed through popular social media platforms in China, including WeChat, QQ, and Douyin (Chinese TikTok). The distribution of respondents across these platforms was as follows: WeChat: 60% (301 participants), QQ: 28% (140 participants) and Douyin: 12% (60 participants). Participation in the survey was voluntary, which may have influenced the demographics of the respondents.

#### 3.3. Reliability and validity issues

SPSS statistics 26.0 is used to run reliability and validity tests. Reliability refers to the degree of dependability and consistency when testing a certain trait (Taherdoost, 2016). A scale is reliable if same results are produced under repeat conditions (Viglia and Dolnicar, 2020). In order to check whether the scale is internally consistent, Cronbach' alpha is used. Reliability for the entire questions and each factor are tested separately. The range of reliability coefficient is from 0 to 1. Greater values indicate higher agreement between items. Generally, Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 or above is deemed acceptable. Validity concerns with how accurately a test measures what it intends to evaluate (Chu and Murrmann, 2006). In the present study, EFA is conducted to test construct validity. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are tested. KMO value greater than 0.7 together with sig value less than 0.05 indicate that factor analysis can be performed. Eigenvalues greater than 1 are likely to represent a factor. In rotated component matrix, variables belong to a common factor is in the same column. However, in real analysis, it is very likely that variables appear in more than one column or with negative values. Therefore, researchers need to make modifications or delete certain variables accordingly.

#### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Demographics

According to the analysis of frequency, the questionnaires were collected with the ratio of 45.7% males and 54.3% females respectively. It was revealed that more than half of the respondents (53.5%) were under the age of 30. The proportions of interns, frontline employees and managerial employees were 47.1% (n = 236), 30.5% (n = 153) and 22.4% (n = 112).

The higher rate of participation among managerial employees was not predetermined. It resulted from the voluntary nature of the survey and the convenience sampling method, where certain groups may have been more available or willing to respond. The unequal distribution among managerial employees, frontline employees, and interns can be attributed to the convenience sampling method and the voluntary participation. This method does not ensure equal representation among different categories of employees. Managerial employees might have had more access to or time for online surveys, leading to their higher participation rate.

In terms of work tenure, the largest duration occupying 43.7% was less than 1 year (n = 219), followed by 17.4% work length of 1 to 3 years (n = 87). The last three groups differed slightly: 4 to 6 years (n = 65), 7 to 9 years (n = 64), 10 years and above (n = 66). The educational profile had a nice spread as the majority of respondents (82.8%) owned associate degrees or above which can ensure a relatively good comprehension of the questionnaires. Detailed respondents' profiles were depicted in **Table 1**.

Variables	Categories	n	%
Condon	Male	229	45.7
Gender	Female	272	54.3
	18–29	268	53.5
Ago	30–39	114	22.8
Age	40-49	74	14.8
	50 and above	45	9.0
	Intern	236	47.1
Position	Frontline employee	153	30.5
	Managerial employee	112	22.4
	High school and below	86	17.2
Educational level	Associate degree	136	27.1
Educational level	Bachelor's degree	246	49.1
	Master's degree and above	33	6.6
	Less than 1 year	219	43.7
	1–3 years	87	17.4
Tenure	4–6 years	65	13.0
	7–9 years	64	12.8
	10 years and above	66	13.2

**Table 1.** Profiles of the respondents (n = 501).

**Table 2.** Statistical information of CSR perception scale (n = 501).

Survey questions	М	SD
Q2. My hotel encourages employees to develop careers.	3.79	0.88
Q3. My hotel cares about employees' opinions.	3.78	0.97
Q4. My hotel organizes activities for employees to enrich their lives.	3.72	0.94
Q5. My hotel treats all the employees equally.	3.73	0.99
Q6. My hotel treats all the employees fairly.	3.72	0.98
Q9. My hotel provides a good work and life balance for employees.	3.75	0.95
Q10. My hotel tries to improve service quality.	4.20	0.74
Q11. My hotel tries to enhance customer experience.	4.22	0.74
Q12. My hotel attaches importance to customer satisfaction.	4.35	0.73
Q14. My hotel provides strict inspection on sanitation.	4.18	0.80
Q15. My hotel provides strict inspection on food safety.	4.25.	0.78
Q16. My hotel is responsive to customer complaints.	4.13	0.75
Q18. My hotel incorporates environmental concerns into decision process.	3.95	0.83
Q19. My hotel supports green innovation.	4.03	0.86
Q21. My hotel works with the local government to conduct charitable cause.	3.70	0.98

In the present study, three scales with 35 questions in total were distributed to

participants. Basic statistical information was demonstrated in **Table 2** (CSR perception scale), **Table 3** (thriving at work scale) and **Table 4** (perceived external prestige scale) separately.

The questions with the highest and lowest mean scores in CSR perception scale (**Table 2**) were Q12 (M = 4.35, SD = 0.73) and Q21 (M = 3.70, SD = 0.98) respectively. The highest mean score in Q12 indicated that employees have high perception levels in hotel CSR practice towards customer satisfaction. On the contrary, the lowest mean score in Q21 revealed that employees' perception of hotel CSR was low with regard to hotels' cooperation with the local government in charitable cause.

**Table 3.** Statistical information of thriving at work scale (n = 501).

Survey questions	М	SD
Q23. At work, I find myself learning often.	3.99	0.88
Q24. At work, I continue to learn more and more as time goes by.	4.05	0.84
Q25. At work, I see myself continually improving.	4.06	0.81
Q26. At work, I have developed a lot as a person.	3.94	0.91
Q27. At work, I feel alive and vital.	3.61	1.02
Q28. At work, I have energy and spirit.	3.60	1.04
Q29. At work, I feel alert and awake.	3.79	0.89
Q30. At work, I am looking forward to each new day.	3.50	1.07

The questions with the highest and lowest mean scores in thriving at work scale (**Table 3**) were Q25 (M = 4.06, SD = 0.81) and Q30 (M = 3.50, SD = 1.07) respectively. The highest mean score in Q25 demonstrated that hotel employees believed they can make continuous progress in the workplace. On the contrary, the lowest mean score in Q30 showed that employees' level of expectation for work was relatively low.

The questions with the highest and lowest mean scores in perceived external prestige scale (**Table 4**) were Q34 (M = 4.01, SD = 0.75) and Q31 (M = 3.45, SD = 0.99) respectively. The highest mean score in Q34 demonstrated that the hotel enjoyed a high reputation among customers in the eyes of employees. On the contrary, the lowest mean scores in Q31 signified that the hotel employees did not perceive that the hotel they worked in as an ideal workplace.

**Table 4.** Statistical information of perceived external prestige scale (n = 501).

Survey questions	М	SD
Q31. My hotel is considered a good place to work.	3.45	0.99
Q32. My hotel has a good reputation in the community.	3.90	0.80
Q33. My hotel has a good overall image in the society.	3.92	0.79
Q34. My hotel has a good prestige among customers.	4.01	0.75
Q35. Employees of other hotels would be proud to work in my hotel.	3.56	0.94

## 4.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

To answer research question 1, factor analysis was implemented. It is a statistic technique of variable reduction by extracting communalities in latent factors. In the present study, factor analysis was conducted for three scales (CSR perception,

thriving at work and perceived external prestige) to identify underlying factors respectively.

Existing literature demonstrated that to conduct EFA 200 as sample size is fair and 300 seems good and reasonable (Howard and Henderson, 2023). Therefore, the present sample size (n = 501) is enough to conduct EFA analysis. Moreover, factor analysis initially showed the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient to be 0.961 and Bartlett's test of sphericity shows the approximate  $X^2$  (595, n = 501) equal to 11,526.862 and p < 0.05. Statistic results indicated that sufficient sample size was obtained for analysis.

Principal component EFA was conducted to analyze the dimensions in the scales. Eigenvalues, scree plot and component matrix were used as the initial criteria for factor interpretation. Rotated component matrix demonstrated that several variables appeared in crosstabs. Altogether seven items were deleted as a result of factor analysis. Questions that appeared in more than two crosstabs or with positive and negative values at the same time were removed from the scale.

After running the factor analysis for multiple times, three interpretable factors were extracted from CSR scale, one factor from thriving at work scale as well as one factor from perceived external prestige scale.

The factors extracted from CSR scale were illustrated as follows: CSR for employees (M = 3.75, SD = 0.77); CSR for customers (M = 4.22, SD = 0.59) and CSR for environment and community (M = 3.89, SD = 0.74). The three factors explained 65.83% of the total variance with 26.23%, 23.75% and 15.85% of the item variance respectively.

			CSR	CSR	CSR
М	SD	Items	For employees ( $\alpha = 0.90$ )	For customers ( $\alpha = 0.88$ )	For environment and community ( $\alpha = 0.77$ )
			Six Items	Six Items	Three Items
3.72	0.98	Q6	0.808		
3.73	0.99	Q5	0.802		
3.78	0.97	Q3	0.728		
3.72	0.94	Q4	0.714		
3.75 3.79	0.95 0.88	Q9 Q2	0.707 0.694		
4.25	0.78	Q15		0.763	
4.35	0.73	Q12		0.763	
4.22	0.74	Q11		0.747	
4.20 4.18 4.13	0.74 0.80 0.75	Q10 Q14 Q16		0.687 0.664 0.580	
4.03 3.70 3.95	0.86 0.98 0.83	Q19 Q21 Q18			0.762 0.755 0.693

**Table 5.** Coefficient alphas and basic statistics in relation to CSR factors (n = 501).

The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value was 0.93 for the entire CSR scale with 15 items in total. The reliability for the three sub-factors in CSR scale was 0.90, 0.88 and 0.77

respectively (**Table 5**). The results indicated that the entire scale and each factor have high levels of internal consistency.

One factor was extracted from thriving at work scale (**Table 6**) which accounted for 61.20% of the item variance. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for thriving at work scale was 0.91 with eight items. It indicated that the scale has very good reliability.

M	SD	Items	Eigenvalues
3.60	1.04	Q28	0.834
3.61	1.02	Q27	0.815
3.94	0.91	Q26	0.800
4.05	0.84	Q24	0.798
4.06	0.81	Q25	0.777
3.79	0.89	Q29	0.773
3.50	1.07	Q30	0.748
3.99	0.88	Q23	0.706

**Table 6.** Basic statistics in thriving at work scale ( $\alpha = 0.91$ , 8 items, n = 501).

One factor was extracted from perceived external prestige scale (**Table 7**) which accounted for 66.55% of the item variance. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for PEP scale was 0.86 with five items. The results demonstrated that the scale was reliable.

**Table 7.** Basic statistics in perceived external prestige scale ( $\alpha = 0.86$ , 5 items, n = 501).

М	SD	Items	Eigenvalues
3.90	0.80	Q32	0.881
3.92	0.78	Q33	0.863
4.01	0.75	Q34	0.833
3.56	0.94	Q35	0.768
3.45	0.99	Q31	0.723

## 4.3. Comparative tests

To answer research question 2, one-way ANOVA (**Table 8**) was conducted to examine whether position level has significant effect on CSR perception, thriving at work and perceived external prestige. In addition, post-hoc test was adopted to see from which group (interns, frontline employees, managerial employees) the differences (if any) occurred. As indicated in **Table 9**, the position level has statistically significant effect on all those factors (p < 0.05). It was shown that managerial employees and interns have the highest and lowest levels respectively. In addition, frontline employees and managerial employees have higher levels in all the factors than interns. Compared with frontline employees, managerial staff have higher levels in CSR perception, CSR for employees as well as CSR for environment and community. Meanwhile, managerial employees were more thriving in the workplace than their frontline colleagues.

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Factor	Inter	n	Fron	tline E.	Mana	igerial E.			
	М	SD	М	SD	М	SD	F	р	Dunnett C Post-hoc test
CSR perception	3.71	0.56	4.10	0.55	4.33	0.54	55.012	0.000	Frontline > Intern Managerial E. > Intern Managerial E. > Frontline E.
CSR for employees	3.44	0.74	3.90	0.71	4.20	0.62	49.010	0.000	Frontline > Intern Managerial E. > Intern Managerial E. > Frontline E.
CSR for customers	4.01	0.58	4.35	0.50	4.50	0.57	35.231	0.000	Frontline > Intern Managerial E. > Intern
CSR for environment and community	3.65	0.71	3.99	0.70	4.26	0.66	31.293	0.000	Frontline > Intern Managerial E. > Intern Managerial E. > Frontline E.
Thriving at. work	3.51	0.71	3.98	0.63	4.25	0.59	55.145	0.000	Frontline > Intern Managerial E. > Intern Managerial E. > Frontline E.
PEP	3.49	0.64	3.96	0.61	4.10	0.67	44.132	0.000	Frontline > Intern Managerial E. > Intern

#### Table 8. ANOVA and post-hoc results.

Table 9. Two-way ANOVA on CSR perception, thriving at work and PEP.

Factor	Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	р
	Tenure	3.717	4	0.929	2.906	0.021
CSD	Educational level	1.297	3	0.432	1.352	0.257
CSR perception	Tenure * Educational level	5.906	12	0.492	1.539	0.106
	Error	153.776	481	0.320		
CSR for employees	Tenure	8.141	4	2.035	3.856	0.004
	Educational level	1.363	3	0.454	0.861	0.461
	Tenure * Educational level	7.056	12	0.588	1.114	0.346
	Error	253.8661	481	0.528		
CSR forcustomers	Tenure	667	4	0.417	1.298	0.270
	Educational level	1.508	3	0.503	1.565	0.197
	Tenure * Educational level	4.844	12	0.404	1.257	0.241
CSR for environment and community	Error	154.469	481	0.321		
	Tenure	3.782	4	0.945	1.896	0.110
	Educational level	4.250	3	1.417	2.841	0.037
	Tenure * Educational level	9.570	12	0.797	1.599	0.088
Thriving at work	Error	239.888	481	0.499		
	Tenure	4.970	4	1.243	2.723	0.029
	Educational level	1.096	3	0.365	0.801	0.494
	Tenure * Educational level	9.390	12	0.783	1.715	0.061
PEP	Error	219.480	481	0.456		
	Tenure	5.839	4	1.460	3.628	0.006
	Educational level	3.535	3	1.178	2.929	0.033
	Tenure * Educational level	8.064	12	0.672	1.670	0.070
	Error	193.544	481	0.402		

To answer research question 3, two-way ANOVA was performed to evaluate the effect of tenure and educational level on CSR perception, thriving at work and perceived external prestige. According to **Table 9**, no significant effect has been found on any of these factors in terms of the interaction of tenure and level of education (p > 0.05). But tenure and educational level in separate have statistic effect on some factors. In specific, significant main effect (p < 0.05) was obtained for tenure on CSR perception, CSR for employees, thriving at work and PEP. In the meantime, statistic results demonstrated that employees' level of education was significant in their perception of CSR for environment and community as well as external reputation (p < 0.05).

As revealed in **Table 9**, tenure has a significant main effect on CSR perception. Thus, post hoc test was adopted to delve into the differences. Statistic results in **Table 10** (p < 0.05) demonstrated that the perception of CSR was higher for those who have worked for 10 years and above than less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years and 7 to 9 years. In addition, employees who have worked for 7 to 9 years and 4 to 6 years have higher CSR perception than those with the tenure of less than one year.

(I) Tenure	(J) Tenure	Mean Difference (I-J)	р
	1–3 years	-0.17	0.146
T 4h 1	4–6 years	-0.35	0.000
Less than 1 year	7–9 years	-0.28	0.005
	10 years and above	-0.61	0.000
	Less than 1 year	0.17	0.146
1.2	4–6 years	-0.19	0.258
1–3 years	7–9 years	-0.11	0.742
	10 years and above	-0.45	0.000
	Less than 1 year	0.35	0.000
1 (	1–3 years	0.19	0.258
4–6 years	7–9 years	0.07	0.946
	10 years and above	-0.26	0.065
	Less than 1 year	0.28	0.005
7.0	1–3 years	0.11	0.742
7–9 years	4–6 years	-0.07	0.946
	10 years and above	-0.33	0.007
	Less than 1 year	0.61	0.000
10 years and above	1–3 years	0.45	0.000
10 years and above	4–6 years	0.26	0.065
	7–9 years	0.33	0.007

 Table 10. Post-hoc test for tenure on CSR perception.

In the meantime, post hoc test was used to examine how tenure worked on one of the three factors in CSR perception: CSR for employees. Statistic results in **Table 11** (p < 0.05) showed that the perception of CSR for employees was higher for those who have worked for 10 years and above than less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years and 7 to 9 years. In addition, employees who have worked for 7 to 9 years and 4 to 6 years respectively have higher levels of CSR for employees than those worked for less than one year. Finally, the level of CSR perception for employees was lower among hotel staff with the tenure of 1 to 3 years than 4 to 6 years.

(I) Tenure	(J) Tenure	Mean Difference (I-J)	р
Less than 1 year	1-3 years	-0.07	0.928
	4–6 years	-0.43	0.000
	7–9 years	-0.35	0.006
	10 years and above	-0.75	0.000
1-3 years	Less than 1 year	0.07	0.928
	4–6 years	-0.35	0.028
	7–9 years	-0.28	0.135
	10 years and above	-0.68	0.000
4–6 years	Less than 1 year	0.43	0.000
	1-3 years	0.35	0.028
	7–9 years	0.07	0.981
	10 years and above	-0.33	0.077
7–9 years	Less than 1 year	0.35	0.006
	1–3 years	0.28	0.135
	4–6 years	-0.07	0.981
	10 years and above	-0.40	0.017
10 years and above	Less than 1 year	0.75	0.000
	1–3 years	0.68	0.000
	4–6 years	0.33	0.077
	7–9 years	0.40	0.017

 Table 11. Post-hoc test for tenure on CSR for employees.

(I) Tenure	(J) Tenure	Mean Difference (I-J)	р
Less than 1 year	1-3 years	-0.09	0.822
	4–6 years	-0.46	0.000
	7–9 years	-0.33	0.006
	10 years and above	-0.70	0.000
1–3 years	Less than 1 year	0.09	0.822
	4–6 years	-0.37	0.008
	7–9 years	-0.24	0.208
	10 years and above	-0.61	0.000
4–6 years	Less than 1 year	0.46	0.000
	1-3 years	0.37	0.008
	7–9 years	0.13	0.794
	10 years and above	-0.24	0.261
7–9 years	Less than 1 year	0.33	0.006
	1–3 years	0.24	0.208
	4–6 years	-0.13	0.794
	10 years and above	-0.37	0.016
10 years and above	Less than 1 year	0.70	0.000
	1–3 years	0.61	0.000
	4–6 years	0.24	0.261
	7–9 years	0.37	0.016

Likewise, tenure has statistically significant effect on thriving at work. Therefore, post hoc test was conducted to check the inner differences. Statistic findings in **Table 12** (p < 0.05) indicated that in general, the level of thriving at work increased with the extension of work tenure. Hotel employees with 10 years' work experience and above were more thriving in the workplace than those with the tenure of less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years and 7 to 9 years. In addition, employees with the tenures of 4 to 6 years and 7 to 9 years have higher levels of work thriving than those who have worked for less than 1 year. What's more, hotel employees with 1 to 3 years of work experience were less thriving in the workplace than those with the tenure of 4 to 6 years.

Similarly, the effect of tenure on perceived external prestige was examined by the post hoc test. As demonstrated in **Table 13**, in general, PEP became stronger with the extension of tenure. To be concrete, the levels of PEP became higher in the tenure of 10 years and above than less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years and 7 to 9 years. Besides, employees with 7 to 9 and 4 to 6 years of work experience have higher levels of PEP than those with the tenure of less than 1 year. Moreover, the level of PEP was lower in the tenure of 1 to 3 years compared with 4 to 6 years.

(I) Tenure	(J) Tenure	Mean Difference (I-J)	р
Less than 1 year	1-3 years	-0.08	0.869
	4–6 years	-0.43	0.000
	7–9 years	-0.31	0.006
	10 years and above	-0.70	0.000
1-3 years	Less than 1 year	0.08	0.869
	4–6 years	-0.35	0.008
	7–9 years	-0.23	0.184
	10 years and above	-0.63	0.000
4–6 years	Less than 1 year	0.43	0.000
	1-3 years	0.35	0.008
	7–9 years	0.12	0.825
	10 years and above	-0.28	0.089
7–9 years	Less than 1 year	0.31	0.006
	1-3 years	0.23	0.184
	4–6 years	-0.12	0.825
	10 years and above	-0.40	0.004
10 years and above	Less than 1 year	0.70	0.000
	1-3 years	0.63	0.000
	4–6 years	0.28	0.089
	7–9 years	0.40	0.004

Table 13. Post-hoc test for tenure on PEP.

The effect of educational level on CSR perception and the three sub-factors was significant only in CSR for environment and community. As revealed in **Table 14**, significant differences were found in employees with the educational level of high school and below and associate degree and bachelor's degree. Interestingly, CSR perception for environment and community was higher among employees with the

educational level of high school and below than the other two groups.

(I) Educational level	(J) Educational level	Mean Difference (I-J)	р
High school or below	Associate degree	0.30	0.013
	Bachelor's degree	0.43	0.000
	Master's degree and above	0.35	0.074
Associate degree	High school or below	-0.30	0.013
	Bachelor's degree	0.13	0.286
	Master's degree and above	0.05	0.980
Bachelor's degree	High school or below	-0.43	0.000
	Associate degree	-0.13	0.286
	Master's degree and above	-0.08	0.927
Master's degree and above	High school or below	-0.35	0.074
	Associate degree	-0.05	0.980
	Bachelor's degree	0.08	0.927

**Table 14.** Post-hoc test for educational level on CSR for environment and community.

Likewise, the effect of educational level on PEP was found significant in the relationships between high school or below and bachelor's degree, associate degree and bachelor's degree, master's degree and above and bachelor's degree (**Table 15**). The findings indicated interesting results that hotel employees with bachelor's degree have the lowest level of PEP. Specifically, employees with master's degree and above, associate degree as well as high school or below have higher PEP levels than those with bachelor's degree.

(I) Educational level	(J) Educational level	Mean Difference (I-J)	р
High school or below	Associate degree	0.16	0.286
	Bachelor's degree	0.51	0.000
	Master's degree and above	0.17	0.581
Associate degree	High school or below	-0.16	0.286
	Bachelor's degree	0.36	0.000
	Master's degree and above	0.01	1.000
Bachelor's degree	High school or below	-0.51	0.000
	Associate degree	-0.36	0.000
	Master's degree and above	-0.35	0.017
Master's degree and above	High school or below	-0.17	0.581
	Associate degree	-0.01	1.000
	Bachelor's degree	0.35	0.017

Table 15. Post-hoc test for educational level on PEP.

To answer research question 4, multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify whether three sub-factors in CSR have simultaneous effects on thriving at work. Statistic results (**Table 16**) demonstrated that coefficient of R and Adjusted R

square were calculated as 0.546 and 0.543 respectively. It was shown that 54% variation in work thriving can be explained by the variation in the three sub-factors. According to **Table 16**, CSR for employees ( $\beta = 0.45$ , p < 0.05), CSR for customers ( $\beta = 0.20$ , p < 0.05), CSR for environment and community ( $\beta = 0.18$ , p < 0.05) can well predict job thriving. The standardized regression equation is as follows:

(Thriving at Work =  $0.461 + 0.428 \times CSR$ -employee +  $0.248 \times CSR$ -customer +  $0.182 \times CSR$ -environment and community)

Variable	Unstandardized B	Standardized coefficients Beta	р
(Constant)	0.461		
CSR for employees	0.428	0.454	0.000
CSR for customers	0.248	0.202	0.000
CSR for environment and community	0.182	0.184	0.000

**Table 16.** Multiple regression analysis on thriving at work.

R Squared = 0.546 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.543).

To answer research question 5, four steps were carried out to test the mediating role of PEP on CSR perception and thriving at work relation (**Table 17**). As was shown in Model 1, CSR perception has a significantly positive effect on thriving at work ( $\beta = 0.735$ , p < 0.001). In addition, significant effect of CSR perception on PEP (the mediator) was proved in Model 2 ( $\beta = 0.701$ , p < 0.001). In Model 3, it was examined that PEP has a significant and positive effect on thriving at work ( $\beta =$ 0.716, p < 0.001). In model 4, the effects of CSR perception and PEP on thriving at work were analyzed simultaneously. It was revealed that both CSR perception and PEP worked positively on job thriving. While CSR perception still has positive effect on job thriving, the coefficient has decreased from 0.735 in model 1 to 0.459 in model 4. Hence, PEP has a partial mediating role in CSR perception and thriving at work relation.

Variable	Thriving at work	PEP	Thriving at work	Thriving at work
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
CSR perception	0.735***	0.701***		0.459***
PEP			0.716***	0.393***
R square	0.541	0.492	0.512	0.619
Adjusted r square	0.540	0.491	0.511	0.618

Table 17. Relationship of CSR perception, thriving at work and PEP.

Note: \*\*\* *p* < 0.001, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \* *p* < 0.05.

### 5. Discussion

In the present study, the effects of CSR perception on thriving at work with PEP as a mediator are examined. The findings are depicted as follows.

Firstly, factor analysis revealed that three factors, namely, CSR for employees, CSR for customers as well as CSR for environment and community can be extracted from CSR scale. It is found that responsible behaviors towards customers, employees, environment and community are upheld in hotel CSR practice (Farmaki

et al., 2022; Holcomb et al., 2007; Park and Levy, 2014; Wong et al., 2020). With regard to thriving at work scale, one factor is extracted in the present study while two dimensions (learning and vitality) are found in previous literature (Porath et al., 2012; Van der Walt, 2018). In addition, one factor extracted from perceived external prestige scale is in keeping with previous research (Boğan and Dedeoğlu, 2020, Tuna et al., 2016). The results indicate that employees' CSR perception, thriving at work and PEP in the hospitality industry has their own features.

Secondly, one-way ANOVA suggested that employment status (interns, frontline employees, managerial employees) exerts considerable influence on CSR perception, thriving at work and perceived external prestige. It is revealed that the highest and lowest levels of CSR perception, work thriving and PEP are found in managerial employees and interns respectively. As a type of workforce with dual roles, student interns are temporary workforce with less understanding of hotel management practice and external comments. Besides, they are confronted with a gap between career expectations and actual working realities. The discrepancies can lead to the negative perception of the industry, thus affecting their motivation and passion at work (Dickerson, 2009; Giousmpasoglou and Marinakou, 2021; Kim and Park, 2013). Moreover, managerial staff possessing more authority of control, selfaccomplishment and self-efficacy are more likely to work with vitality (Porath et al., 2012). Therefore, it is suggested that efforts from various parties such as university support, hotel professional guidance as well as individual initiatives should be made to strengthen interns' perception of hotel CSR practice and external prestige as well as arouse their passion to learn and feel alive at work.

Thirdly, two-way ANOVA demonstrated that there lacks interaction effect of tenure and educational level on CSR perception, thriving at work and perceived external prestige. It is found that tenure has a main effect on CSR perception and CSR for employees which contradicts the insignificant results demonstrated by several researchers (Garrido-Ruso and Aibar-Guzmán, 2022; Kim et al., 2018; Ng et al., 2019). In the present study, the time span hotel employees spend with the hotel affects their evaluation of hotel CSR's efforts. In general, employees with 10 years or longer work experience have higher CSR perception levels. This might be due to the fact that senior staff can have well-rounded judgement related to hotel CSR practice. In addition, the present study reveals that tenure has a statistic effect on work thriving which is in line with previous literature (Zhang et al., 2022). This might be due to the fact that more autonomy and independence at work can be exerted with the extension of organizational tenure, thus positively affecting work vitality. Moreover, tenure is revealed to work positively on employees' perception of external prestige. It can be explained that the perception of external prestige strengthens with the increase of tenure because employees are more likely to have a better comprehension of the hotel's external reputation. For the effect of educational level on those factors, statistic effects have been found on CSR for environment and community as well as PEP. It is interesting to find that in general, employees with the educational level of high school or below have higher perceptions in terms of CSR for environment and community. It might be explained that employees with relatively lower educational level understand the specific CSR practice with regard to environment and community since they are more likely to engage in daily

frontline work. The findings also indicate interesting results that employees with bachelor's degree have the lowest perception of external prestige. One possible explanation is that not a few undergraduates have high expectation towards their job but are discouraged by the trivial routine work. Over time, they tend to have negative feelings, thus affecting their perceptions.

Fourthly, multivariate regression was applied to investigate the degree to which CSR factors and thriving at work are linearly related. Statistic result reveal that 54% variation in thriving at work could be explained by the three factors in CSR. The result reconfirms previous literature that CSR perception and job vitality have positive relations (Yan et al., 2022). It can be explained that when employees receive the signal that the hotel is responsible towards all the stakeholders involved rather than focusing on profits merely, their passion for work will be motivated. To be more specific, when employees perceive CSR practice for employees, they will feel highly valued and work hard as a reciprocation (El Akremi et al., 2018). Likewise, when employees perceive that hotels are responsible towards customers, environment and the whole community, they will consider it meaningful to work for such socially responsible hotels (Tourigny et al., 2019).

Finally, the mediating role of PEP in CSR perception and thriving at work was examined. It is demonstrated that PEP has a significant partial effect in CSR perception-thriving at work relation. The main reason is that when employees form positive CSR perception, especially CSR towards external stakeholders, they are more likely to develop a good social image of the hotels in their mind (Khan et al., 2021). Meanwhile, with the enhancement of hotels' image-building, employees tend to feel proud of working in the prestigious hotel with high motivation (Gaudencio et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2010). To be more specific, their desire to learn and make progress with the hotels becomes stronger.

# 6. Conclusion

Taking interns, frontline employees and managerial employees as research objectives, the present study examines the relation of CSR perception and thriving at work. In general, all the three factors (CSR for employees, CSR for customers, CSR for environment and community) in CSR perception contribute to learning and work vitality. Therefore, it is effective to enhance employees' thriving by making them perceive that their hotels are socially responsible towards all the stakeholders. Additionally, PEP was proven to exert a mediating effect on CSR perception and thriving at work, indicating that a high sense of PEP is conducive to achieving a state of job prosperity.

Furthermore, the present paper provides empirical evidence that compared with frontline and managerial employees, interns have the lowest level of CSR perception and thriving at work. What's more, it is proposed that tenure and educational level in separate are statistically significant. Limitations, implications for practice and future research are addressed as follows.

#### **6.1. Implications for practice**

The findings in the present research can provide some practical implications to

the development of hospitality industry and hospitality management major in institutions of higher learning.

Firstly, it is essential to incorporate CSR practice into corporate culture and involve employees in CSR decision making and implementation process. At this point, active engagement in CSR activities can increase employees' appreciation of hotels, thus stimulating work vitality and enthusiasm.

Secondly, it is suggested that hotel practitioners strengthen the perception of CSR activities from external stakeholders. In specific, CSR activities can be shared through hotel official websites, annual or sustainability reports to evoke affirmative and positive reactions from the external stakeholders. With the enhancement of external prestige, employees will feel honored to be a member in such hotels.

Thirdly, great importance should be attached to intern training. Currently, student interns and potential employees are mostly from millennium youth and economic returns are no longer their primary concern. Instead, the perception of meaningful work is becoming increasing significant (Supanti and Butcher, 2019). In this context, hotel practitioners need to actively involve or empower interns in CSR implementation to enhance their group identity. Moreover, pre-employment, while-employment and post-employment tests should be conducted to better understand interns' expectations, concerns, opinions and feedback. In addition, experienced supervisors should be assigned to provide necessary assistance and demonstrate professional skills to alleviate interns' uncertainties and concerns for the coming future careers. As a result, interns' sense of belonging can be increased with the perception of care, fairness and loving working environment.

Finally, university educators are expected to reevaluate and properly redesign the existing curriculum by involving hotel experts in curriculum designs and offering more emphasis on business ethics, customer equity, unresolved sticky issues globally and sustainable development of mankind. Furthermore, hospitality management major should be skill-oriented and business-based to equip students with necessary competencies required for the long-term career development.

#### **6.2.** Limitations and implications for future research

The current paper is not free from limitations. Firstly, the respondents are Chinese employees working at hotels in China. Greatly influence by the traditional Chinese culture which emphasizes collectivism, social harmony and group identity, Chinese people tend to value social responsibilities. Due to the specific regional restriction, the findings cannot serve as a representative for the hotel sector in other countries or regions. Hence, researchers in the future can expand the scope or conduct cross-cultural analysis to generate more findings. Furthermore, quantitative research is conducted in the present study. Future research can integrate quantitative and qualitative methods to yield more comprehensive findings. Finally, the present paper examines only one mediator (PEP) in CSR perception-thriving at work relation. However, other factors such as leadership style, psychological safety or organizational identification may have effect on thriving at work. Hence, more factors with mediating or moderating roles can be tested in future research.

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formal analysis, SY; investigation, SY; resources, SY; writing—original draft preparation, SY; writing—review and editing, HT; supervision, HT. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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