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**<sup>1</sup>Unveiling the Innovation Nexus: How Workplace Belongingness Shapes  
Tomorrow's Breakthroughs through Corporate Stakeholder Responsibility**

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**Abstract:** The study seeks to investigate how corporate stakeholder responsibility acts as a mediator, elucidating the impact of workplace belongingness on both exploratory innovation and exploitative innovation within the retail sector. In 2020, this research enlisted 171 executives from retail businesses registered with the Adana Chamber of Commerce in Adana, Turkey. Employing structural equation modeling, the study analyzed data through the lens of social exchange, stakeholder theory, and organizational change management theories. According to the research findings, it was determined that workplace belongingness had positive effects on corporate stakeholder responsibility, corporate stakeholder responsibility had positive effects on exploratory innovation and exploitative innovation, workplace belongingness had positive effects on exploratory and exploitative innovations. Further analyses revealed that corporate stakeholder responsibility acted as a significant mediator in the relationship between workplace belongingness and both exploratory and exploitative innovation.

**Keywords:** *Corporate stakeholder responsibility, workplace belongingness, exploratory innovation, exploitative innovation, retail industry.*

### **Introduction**

Competition between firms is gradually increasing in today's world and environmental factors are affecting businesses negatively (Van Bavel et al., 2020). Geographical events, climate changes, pandemics, technological developments differentiate consumer needs. Political and economic crises, government policies, and cultural factors affect the entry of businesses into new markets (Van Bavel et al., 2020). COVID 19 pandemic, which has recently influenced the whole world, is one of these factors (Holmes et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2020). Many businesses went bankrupt due to this pandemic. The economy recessed in many countries and exports and imports came to a standstill (Rosenbaum, 2020). In light of these developments, the retail, health, and e-commerce industries grew (Qiu, Chen, & Shi, 2020).

One of the important issues pandemic poses in the global economy is the workplace. The virtual and physical environments in which products and services are offered to customers have increased the importance of the workplace (Bélanger, Edwards, & Haiven, 2020). The threat of infection caused by the pandemic has made it difficult for employees to provide service (Ripp, Peccoralo,

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& Charney, 2020). These difficulties led to the development of an important sense of responsibility (Hamid, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic being a social event affecting humanity has led to the development of the responsibilities of employees and businesses (Ahmad, 2020). Many businesses and individuals have supported governmental organizations to eliminate pandemics (Giritli Nygren & Olofsson, 2020). While this support contributes to public health, it also benefits individually and institutionally (Gostin & Wiley, 2020).

Businesses need stakeholders to cope with emerging challenges (Jabbour et al., 2020). Customers, the natural environment, community, employees, suppliers, and shareholders play an important role in minimizing the risks posed by economic difficulties (Zaid, Abuhijleh, & Pucheta - Martínez, 2020). It is possible to demonstrate this situation by fulfilling mutual responsibilities.

Innovation is important as well as fulfilling the responsibilities towards stakeholders and the business network in minimizing risks. Innovation contributes to entering new markets, new suppliers, new processes, creative ideas, new techniques, and applications, the profitability and total performance of the business (Alsultan et al., 2020). Innovation can play a redeemer role in the economically difficult times of the business (Robinson et al., 2020). This important factor is realized through the interaction and communication of the employees. As a result of this interaction, the experience and knowledge gained by the employee can turn into innovation through sharing (Talukder & Quazi, 2011). The same interaction and sharing increase the loyalty of the employee to the workplace and enhance the sense of belonging (Liu et al., 2020). In this case, the effects of belonging to the workplace on innovation is an important issue that needs to be investigated.

The significance of the connection between exploitative innovation—focusing on enhancing existing innovation—and employees' sense of belonging to the workplace holds crucial implications for both human resources management and business performance (Tung, 1984). On the other hand, the seek for beyond the current innovations that enable the transformation of negative situations into opportunities that current innovations are not sufficient or caused by sudden changes are within the scope of exploratory innovation (Zhang & Luo, 2020). This scope involves radical changes and organizational change management beyond existing innovations (Todnem By, 2005).

The adaptation of businesses to important changes concerning humanity and society takes place through organizational change management (McCabe, 2020). The relationship of the business with its existing stakeholders necessitates mutual responsibilities and resource exchange in the face of significant changes (Blau, 1964). What role does this responsibility play in the relationship between the sense of belonging to the workplace and exploratory and exploitative innovations? This question will essentially reveal workplace-related innovative actions of businesses' social responsibilities regarding stakeholders. Thus, the relationship between the sense of responsibility demonstrated to stakeholders, who have an important contribution to the total performance of the businesses, and innovative actions can be revealed (Xie et al., 2018). The aim of this study is to investigate the relationships between workplace belongingness, corporate stakeholder responsibility, exploratory and exploitative innovations in the retail sector, which has gained significant momentum in the context of profitability due to the pandemic that affects the whole world. As a result of this research, it is aimed to contribute to the business, organizational behavior, human resources, innovation, management and strategy, and sectoral fields.

## **Literature review and hypotheses**

### **Corporate stakeholder responsibility**

Each organization is responsible for its environment and the social networks it is connected to. This responsibility is one of the requirements to be included in society. Social and economic obligations required by society reveal the ethical element (Sachs and Maurer, 2009). Involvement in society, participating in social classes, entering consumer groups is possible by following these ethical factors. Being accepted by society or consumer communities requires responsibility. However, responsibility requires interaction and interdependence. This commitment reveals the concept of stakeholders in organizations (Welch and Jackson, 2007).

Stakeholders are dependent or independent individuals and entities who contribute to total success and have a connection with the organization. The commitment of stakeholders to the organization requires the responsibility of the organization (Balser and McClusky, 2005). Thus, a sense of mutual responsibility can also improve the organization's performance. This reciprocity is based on the social exchange theory (Frooman, 1999). Interaction between individuals and groups requires the mutual sharing of resources. Interaction resources are shared for mutual purpose and benefit (Madhok, 1998). These resources can be social, psychological, and economic. The cost of the resources shared in the mutual relationship is proportional to the benefits obtained. This theory was introduced to explain human behavior in social interaction (van Huy, N and Lee, 2020). With the changing social structures and digitalization, this sharing type has revealed a significant acceleration among organizations. Mutual change in the relations of leaders-managed organizations with their stakeholders is one of the important facts of today. On the other hand, the stakeholder is an essential element for mutual interaction and sharing. The sharing of resources, mutual obligations, duties, ethical principles, and responsibility develops as a result of this interaction. Developing responsibility reveals corporate stakeholder responsibility (Collinge, 2020).

The stakeholder theory introduced by Freeman et al. (2006) forms the basis of corporate stakeholder responsibility. This theory is based on the idea that the organization should be considered as a whole (Friedman and Miles, 2002). Organizations should act in harmony with their stakeholders to achieve their success targets determined with their mission and vision. The basic element of the theory is the "value" (Freeman et al., 2006). The value is related to the organization's standards and principles. Criteria related to the mission of the organization, organizational culture and climate, human resources, and management policies are important indicators for these values (Freeman et al., 2006). Stakeholder theory is based on creating value for key stakeholders with which the organization is constantly in contact (Friedman and Miles, 2002).

Corporate stakeholder responsibility is the type of responsibility affecting the linked environment and elements of the business and the total performance (Zhu et al., 2014). This responsibility is essential for the sustainable competition of the business, promotion, an effective marketing strategy, and future customers (Jones, Harrison, and Felps, 2018). Customers who consume the produced product or provided service by the business, natural environment, community, employee, suppliers, shareholders are in close relationship and interaction with the business (Zhu, Sun, and Leung, 2014). This relationship requires some responsibilities in the relations of the business with its stakeholders. Because this relationship necessitates mutual and fair sharing of resources.

Community-oriented responsibility depends on certain rules and ethical behavior in society (El Akremi et al., 2018). Law and ethical rules required by collective living are compulsory elements of coexistence. Organizations must comply with these rules. Otherwise, they oppose social values and face exclusion/isolation by society (Aoki, Akai, and Nishino, 2016). Ethical values and culture are the basic building blocks of society (Scholtens and Dam, 2007). Since it is not always possible to ensure fair distribution of resources among community members, organizations, and individuals

undertake important tasks in ensuring this justice (Colquitt, 2012). These duties undertaken with invisible rules are social responsibility (Jones, 1980). Humanitarian assistance in pandemic situations such as COVID 19 and natural disasters are community-oriented responsibilities.

The natural environment is an important factor that interacts with businesses. Businesses need natural resources for production and service delivery (El Akremi et al., 2018). Consumption of natural resources such as energy and food ensures these needs are met. However, it causes harmful waste after every consumption. For this reason, the realization of necessary initiatives to reduce environmental pollution, recycling, waste management, carbon control, savings in food consumption, conservation of diversity, reduction of gas emissions, measures for global warming, renewable energy are necessary responsibilities for the natural environment (El Akremi et al., 2018).

Businesses achieve significant successes thanks to their human resources. The relationship of the business with the external environment is developed through the employee. Digital innovations and robotic technology realized in production have not reduced the importance of human resources. Due to the contribution of the human to the business performance, the belongingness of the employees to the business must be realized (Hagerty and Patusky, 1995). The realization of belongingness in the workplace depends on ensuring equality and justice in human resources management, increasing the importance given to occupational health and safety, improving the culture and climate of the organization, supporting the business in the difficult times of the employees (medical care, social assistance), and ensuring the work-life balance. In this context, the exchange of mutual interests put forward by the social exchange theory reveals these responsibilities of the business towards the employee (Malone et al., 2012). On the other hand, the sense of belonging and commitment is likely to reveal the responsible behavior of the business.

*H1. There is a positive association between Workplace belongingness and corporate stakeholder responsibility.*

Businesses obtain the raw materials of the products they produce and the infrastructure elements required for production from suppliers. Outsourcing requirements such as production, marketing, distribution, delivery, design, consultancy, training are important parts of the supply chain (Buurman, 2002). Social obligations and ethical principles are also applied to the supplier.

Each supplier is an employment opportunity for unemployed individuals in the community. Besides, suppliers are important actors in the realization of new businesses and businesses (Cohen and Roussel, 2005). Therefore, it is within the corporate responsibility field.

Customers are organizations or individuals that consume and benefit from the business's products and services. Customers help sustainability by making financial contributions to the business. The sustainability of financial resources obtained from customers against the products and services offered by businesses requires an important understanding of responsibility. These resource exchanges between the customer and the business are based on a concealed agreement and commitment (Ferrell, 2004). The company guarantees to its customers that it offers products and services that meet quality and constantly changing needs. Customers show their commitment to the brand and the business in response to this responsibility behavior (Akman and Yörür, 2012). The business assumes responsibility for the defects and negligences that arise during the consumption of the product it produces. A continuous relationship is established with customers to provide the service required for the maintenance and repair of the product.

The financial interests of the shareholders that provide the necessary contribution to the interests of the business should also be maintained (Maury and Pajuste, 2005). It is the company's responsibility to ensure that shareholders have access to business information, the right to vote,

and equal rights to shareholders. The maintenance of communication with the shareholders is essential for the sustainability of the business and new ventures. The fact that the shareholders have a voice in the decisions to be taken in the business is an important responsibility in the context of mutual resource exchange (Griseri and Seppala, 2010).

### **Exploratory Innovation**

Businesses need resources for sustainable competition. This need meets the operational needs of the business such as distribution, marketing, logistics, production, after-sales services. The resource dependency theory reveals this requirement (Phelps, 2010). Businesses that constantly interact with their environment need to be supported by external resources. This theory is based on the commitment of organizations to the external environment. The stakeholders of the business are also important actors that provide resources. Relations with these actors also increase the managerial power of the business. On the other hand, this approach put forward by the theory poses an important problem: the transformation of the activities in the internal environment of the business into new resources.

Often, businesses' dependence on external resources is not sufficient for total performance and efficiency. Developing technology and new techniques, differences in customer needs, low level of satisfaction, and increased consumer expectations require innovative behavior of the elements of the business (Wang et al., 2014). On the other hand, new markets and new customers are required for the growth strategy of the businesses. Innovations need to be explored when the sustainability curve with external resources gains momentum from the marginal utility point. Because innovations are new distribution channels, creative ideas and practices, and the emergence of new products. Innovative behaviors related to the company's design, brand value, corporate culture, and organizational climate contribute significantly to competitiveness and sustainability (Li, Zhou and Si, 2010). These innovations can be explored through the organization's stakeholders (Hong et al., 2018). Feedback from customers, creative ideas, and behaviors of employees, innovation ideas from suppliers are innovations that need to be explored (Park and Kim, 2015). Exploratory innovations involve such innovations. Exploratory innovation is rooted in the concept that innovations should be explored, where existing innovations are not sufficient (Jansen, Van den Bosch, and Volberda, 2005). According to this approach, businesses should explore innovations that go beyond the borders to enter new markets and grow (Subramanian, 2012). Innovations previously introduced cannot go beyond maintain the day. Therefore, new suppliers, innovations, new innovative processes, new technology are required for new customers and markets (Huang, Ding and Chen, 2014).

The basic resource needs of businesses are raw materials, energy, technological infrastructure, and employees. The consumption of these resources by the business, on the other hand, can cause damage to the natural environment. The benefit to be obtained from the energy outsourcing dependency and the savings to be achieved through innovations to be explored should be compared for total performance and efficiency. Recycling, waste management, and renewable energy increase the savings of the business, preventing the reduction of resources (Lundgren and Zhou, 2017). On the other hand, since every resource consumption harms the natural environment, such savings actions are also important initiatives for corporate social responsibility (El Akremi et al., 2018).

Studies on exploratory innovation in the literature are limited. Studies demonstrate that there is an association between this type of innovation and organizational antecedents (Jansen, Van Den Bosch, and Volberda, 2006), environmental moderators (Jansen, Van Den Bosch, and Volberda, 2006), environmental antecedents (Jansen, Van Den Bosch, and Volberda, 2005), alliance network

structure (Phelps, 2010), knowledge and collaboration networks (Wang et al., 2014), external and internal advice seeking (Alexiev et al., 2010), firm performance (Li, Zhou, and Si, 2010; Jian-li, 2009), organization's knowledge elements (Guan and Liu, 2016), relational, cognitive, and structural social capital (Li, Zhang, and Zheng, 2016), geographic network diversity (Bahlmann, 2014), workforce aging (Park and Kim, 2015), geographic and network ties (Ozer and Zhang, 2015). Huang, Ding, and Chen (2014) determined that environmental dynamism had a moderation effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and exploratory innovation. These findings reveal the relationship between the environment and the network of the business and exploratory innovation.

*H2. There is a positive association between Corporate stakeholder responsibility and exploratory innovation.*

Besides, the environment and network constitute the elements of corporate stakeholder responsibility.

### **Exploitative Innovation**

Changing environmental, technological, climate, health, and economic conditions can cause businesses to maintain their current status (Heidhues, Kőszegi, and Murooka, 2016). Implementing growth strategies can sometimes cause business losses (Zeng, Hu, and Ouyang, 2017). Entering new markets, production, and design of new products, new processes, new suppliers, and new customers can often lead to high costs for the business. In this case, businesses prefer to maintain and improve their current innovations. This creates disadvantages for the undertaking of risks. Thus, research and discovery of new methods, techniques, technology, design, processes, products, and services are excluded from the scope of the business strategy (Jansen, Van den Bosch, and Volberda, 2005). These actions of businesses to protect and improve their current innovations are exploitative innovations (Jansen, Van Den Bosch, and Volberda, 2006).

Exploitative innovation involves continuity and improvement in the business's relationship with stakeholders (Jansen, Van den Bosch, and Volberda, 2005). Exploring innovations and processes are very costly and risky according to this understanding of innovation. New suppliers can negatively affect the satisfaction of products and services. New processes can waste time and loss of existing customers. Time and financial resources spent on discovering innovations can reduce the profitability of the company by increasing operating expenses. On the other hand, the relationship established between the business and the customers must be sustainable. Because a sustainable relationship is an important factor in meeting the current expenses of the business. Exploitative innovation is based on the approach that the time spent on maintaining and improving the existing innovations of the business is more valuable than the time spent on expecting innovations (Jansen, Van den Bosch, and Volberda, 2005). Hence, maintaining sustainable relationships with current stakeholders is crucial for fostering this form of innovation (Heidhues, Kőszegi, and Murooka, 2016). In the same manner, corporate stakeholder responsibility is based on this thought.

*H3. There is a positive association between Corporate stakeholder responsibility and exploitative innovation.*

### **Workplace Belongingness**

The legal entities of businesses that are independent of their environment, legal structure, various resources reveal the concepts of shareholders and the workplace (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Ensuring the sustainability of the workplace is important for employers, which is a crucial factor for competitiveness, efficiency, and performance (Hagerty and Patusky, 1995). The workplace, which is functional with a virtual and physical environment, enables the development of the

employee-business relationship (Leary and Cox, 2008). This relationship also applies to shareholders, stakeholders, leaders, managers, customers, suppliers (Malone et al., 2012).

Relationships in the workplace lead to the emergence of emotions through interaction (Lee and Robbins, 1995). This virtual and physical environment, where employees fulfill their current duties, earn their earnings, show their performances, self-fulfillment, develops a sense of loyalty and belonging (Leary et al., 2013). The individual develops a career while performing her/his duties in the workplace and makes plans for the future. These plans are multi-faceted such as elimination of financial concerns, participation in different lifestyles in a geographical or cultural context, entering social classes, and adapting to society. These multi-factor effects increase the loyalty of the employee to the workplace and increase the sense of belonging. Another factor in the sense of belonging is organizational climate, colleague relationships, leader influence, teamwork, and organizational culture (Cockshaw et al., 2013; Cockshaw et al., 2014).

Workplace belongingness emerges due to workplace, employee/individual, and employee-business interactions. Organizational climate, physical and virtual environment, interpersonal relations, are the workplace-related factors (Somoray, Shakespeare-Finch, and Armstrong, 2017). Emotions, attitudes, motives, expectations, intentions are related to employee / individual factors. On the other hand, employee-organization similarity consists of factors such as we-feeling, needs, values, vision, mission, and leader effect. These similarities and interactions result in workplace belongingness by employees (Gkorezis, Kalampouka, and Petridou, 2013). Thus, the employee dedicates him/herself to the workplace and her/his sense of loyalty and commitment to the workplace is strengthened. An employee with a sense of responsibility and commitment to the workplace is expected to develop positive relationships, develop innovations by creating creative ideas, and maintain and improve existing innovations.

*H4. There is a positive association between Workplace belongingness and exploratory innovation.*

*H5. There is a positive association between Workplace belongingness and exploitative innovation.*

The fact that the interaction and communication within the business cause a significant sense of commitment and belonging in the context of stakeholders triggers innovative behaviors (Shakespeare-Finch and Daley, 2017). In employees, this sense of belonging leads to the development of a sense of responsibility towards the workplace. Employers who fulfill their duties with this sense of responsibility can demonstrate their innovative ideas and behaviors (Gkorezis, Kalampouka, and Petridou, 2013). In this case, it is expected that workplace belongingness has a mediation role in the relationship between corporate stakeholder responsibility and innovation behavior. Because it is an important fact that the sense of belonging causes a sense of responsibility. On the other hand, this sense of responsibility is a necessary prerequisite for innovative ideas and behaviors (Ng, Feldman, and Lam, 2010). Individuals carry out their innovative actions as a requirement of the organization or their responsibilities. The sense of responsibility is transformed into innovation for the individual, profit and career, sustainable competition, and profitability for the organization. Innovations are performed by considering the total contributions of responsibilities related to stakeholders to the business. Because, the contributions of the market, suppliers, shareholders, credit institutions, customers, and employees are mandatory elements for the sustainability of businesses (Labuschagne, Brent, and Van Erck, 2005). The contribution of these elements requires the responsible behavior of businesses.

*H6. Corporate stakeholder responsibility has a mediation effect on the relationship between workplace belongingness and exploratory innovation.*

*H7. Corporate stakeholder responsibility has a mediation effect on the association between workplace belongingness and exploitative innovation.*

## **Method**

This study was performed in Turkey one of the countries where the pandemic has emerged as COVID-19. Many manufacturing and service businesses in Turkey have been forced to close their businesses due to the COVID-19. People aged 65 and over and younger under 20 are imposed a curfew. On the other hand, individuals stay in their homes due to the pandemic and can only meet their compulsory needs. In this case, the food and retail industries gained significant momentum. Companies operating in the retail industry in Adana-Turkey and registered to the Adana Chamber of Commerce (ACC) were included in the study. The reason why this industry is included in the study is the importance of the sector in the supply chain. The stakeholders and the business network of companies in this sector concern every segment of society. Besides, waste management related to package and waste of sector-related businesses is an important and current issue in the context of corporate stakeholder responsibility. On the other hand, obtaining information about the causes and consequences of the innovative behavior of the employees working in these businesses will make important contributions in practice.

A simple random sampling method was adopted in the study. This method is a sampling method in which the selection of items depends on chance or probability. In simple random sampling, the probability that every element in the universe is included in the sample is the same and independent. However, as with every sampling method, this method has some limitations. In this method, conducting the research caused significant time and effort loss. The study was carried out in February, March, and April and lasted three months. Another limitation is the generalization of the findings.

According to the simple random sampling method, the recommended sample size was determined to be 176 at the 0.05 significance level and 90% confidence level. According to Adana Trade Registry Directorate data in April 2020, 85 companies were operated in the retail sector. The targeted research universe is the white-collar employees of 85 companies. According to the information received from the ACC, the number of white-collar employees working in this sector was 498 according to the employment data of April 2020. Due to the ongoing pandemic in the country, 73 businesses were reached. 61 of these businesses approved to conduct the research. Contact information for businesses was obtained from their websites and the chamber of commerce. The contact information obtained was obtained from businesses that allowed access under the Law on Protection of Personal Data. The survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews as the primary method of data collection. The validity criteria of the questionnaires are as follows: a) There should be no missing answers, b) the participant should voluntarily participate in the survey, c) the survey should not be damaged, d) the researcher or interviewer should not direct the participant. The research was conducted with 205 white-collar participants in total and 34 surveys were excluded. Finally, 171 questionnaires were included in the research. The error rate of the sample size was determined as 5.10% at a 90% confidence level. The sample met 34.34% of the universe. The survey return rate was 83.41%. Thus, a sufficient number was reached to generalize the research results to the universe ( $N = 498$ ;  $n = 171$ ).

Ethical rules about the research were clearly explained to the participants before the application of the survey. It was explained to the participants that the participants were able to quit the implementation of the questionnaire at each stage of the research, refuse the research, and stop answering any questions and that the research was voluntary. Besides, before the implementation of the questionnaire, a consent form containing this information was signed by the participants.

## **Measurements**

The research survey encompasses demographic details alongside scales measuring workplace belongingness, corporate stakeholder responsibility, exploitative innovation, and exploratory innovation. To mitigate common method biases, the questionnaire's scales were meticulously divided into distinct sections.

The Workplace Belongingness scale, comprising 12 items, was developed by Jena and Pradhan (2018). Respondents rated these items on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree).

The Corporate Stakeholder Responsibility (CSR) scale comprises six sub-dimensions with a total of 35 items. Adapted from El Akremi et al.'s (2018) stakeholder-based CSR scale, it is measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree ↔ 5 = strongly agree). The scale's validity and reliability were established by Hur et al. (2016), El Akremi et al. (2018), and Perez and del Bosque (2013).

The Exploitative Innovation and Exploratory Innovation scales, each comprising seven items, were developed by Volberda (2006) and Jansen, Van den Bosch: Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree).

The sub-dimensions of CSR include:

Community-oriented CSR (CMO): 7 items

Natural environment-oriented CSR (NEO): 7 items

Employee-oriented CSR (EMPO): 7 items

Supplier-oriented CSR (SPO): 5 items

Customer-oriented CSR (CSO): 5 items

Shareholder-oriented CSR (SHO): 4 items

## **Data Analysis**

The analysis was conducted using the AMOS software, a widely accepted tool recommended in the literature (Gefen et al., 2000; Hu and Bentler, 1999).

In this study, a range of fit indices including  $\chi^2$ ,  $\chi^2/df$ , CFI, RMSEA, GFI, IFI, AGFI and NNFI (TLI) were calculated. The interpretation of the data relied on threshold values recommended in the literature to ascertain the goodness of fit.

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

Table 1 outlines the demographic details of the participants, encompassing gender, age, marital status, and education level.

Table 1. Demographic findings

Type		f	%
<b>Gender</b>	Woman	69	40,35
	Man	102	59,65
<b>Age</b>	18-23	6	3,51
	24-29	26	15,21
	30-35	37	21,63
	36-41	45	26,32
	42-47	35	20,47
	48-53	12	7,01
	54 and over	10	5,85
<b>Marital status information</b>	Single	53	30,99
	Married	118	69,01
<b>Education level</b>	High School Graduate	24	14,03
	Bachelor's Degree	102	59,64
	Associate's Degree	16	9,35
	Postgraduate	29	16,96
<b>Usefulness</b>	Useful	158	92,39
	Not useful	13	7,61

f: frequency; n=171; %100

Among the participants, 40.35% were female and 59.65% were male. Additionally, 68.42% of the participants fell within the age range of 30-47.

#### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a method utilized to assess the structural validity of a model under investigation (Byrne, 2013). This analytical approach furnishes dependable insights for constructing complex models with its sub-factors (Byrne, 1998). The goodness-of-fit values obtained from CFA determine whether the model has been substantiated structurally. Figure 1 depicts the estimated model of the research.

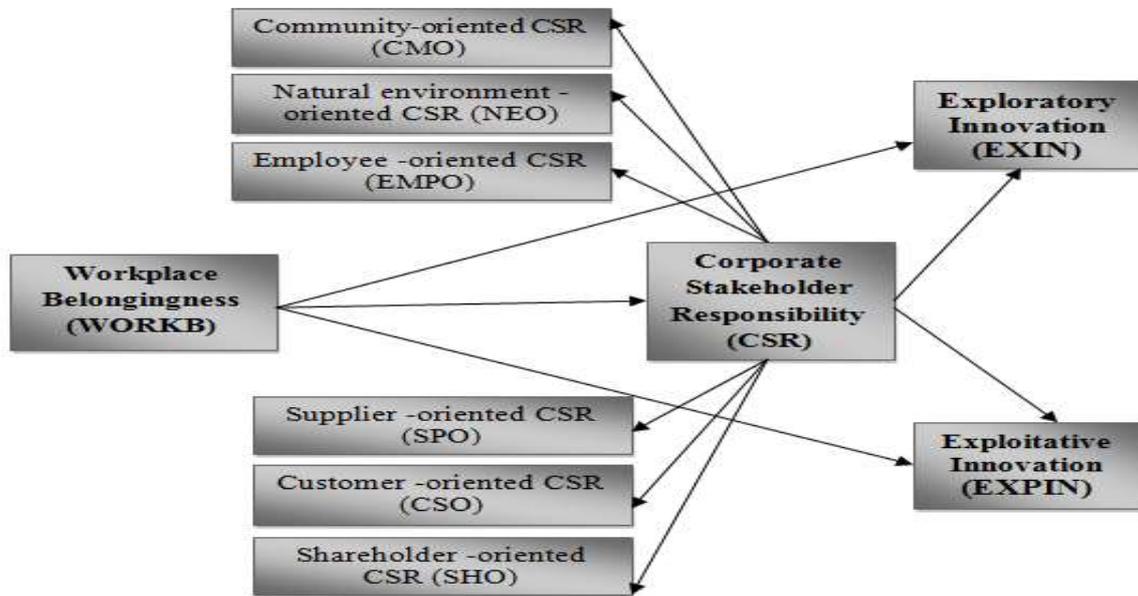


Figure 1. Estimated model of the research

The initial data failed to meet the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) threshold values (Table 2). To address this, two methods recommended in the literature were employed (Brown, 2015). Firstly, items with high covariance loads were linked, and subsequently, items with low standardized regression weights were removed (Sharma et al., 2005; Field, 2005). These adjustments were aligned with the study's objectives (Stevens, 1992). Initially, WB 6 (SRW\*: .490) was removed from the model. Subsequently, the item WB 2 (Standardized regression weight: .597) was eliminated. Following these modifications, the model met the recommended (Table 2). Table 2 displays the original and modified values of the model.

\* SRW: Standardized regression weight

Table 2. Model fit coefficients

Fit indices	Description	Original Model Values	Values of the adjusted model	Values for the single-factor model	Threshold values for model fit	Sources
$\chi^2$ (171)	Discrepancy Chi-Square	3122,491; p = .000	1660,299; p = .000	5811,784; p = .000; $\Delta_m\chi^2 = 4151,555$	Low $\chi^2$ value; p < .01; p > .05	Hooper, Coughlan and Mullen (2008)
$\chi^2/df$	Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom	1,819	1,218	3,285	$\chi^2/df < 3$ $\chi^2/df < 2$	Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin and Summers (1977); Kline (2005); Tabachnick and Fidell (2007)
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error	,084	,043	,140	RMSEA < .05–Good RMSEA < .08–	Steiger (2007); Hu and Bentler

	Square of Error Approximation				Acceptable	(1999)
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index	,587	,801	,286	.95 ≤ GFI ≤ 1.00 Good .90 ≤ GFI ≤ .95 Acceptable	Miles and Shevlin (2007); Tabachnick and Fidell (2007)
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit	,545	,730	,237	.90 ≤ AGFI ≤ 1.00 Good .85 ≤ AGFI ≤ .90 Acceptable	Tabachnick and Fidell (2007)
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	,822	,943	,489	.95 ≤ CFI ≤ 1.00 Good .90 ≤ CFI ≤ .95 Acceptable	Schumacker and Lomax, (1996); Hu and Bentler (1999)
IFI	Incremental Fit Index	,825	,944	,493	.95 ≤ IFI ≤ 1.00 Good .90 ≤ IFI ≤ .95 Acceptable	Miles and Shevlin (2007)
NNFI (TLI)	Non-Normed Fit Index	,811	,930	,472	.97 ≤ NNFI ≤ 1.00 Good NNFI > 0.90 Acceptable	Hu and Bentler (1999); Fan et al. (1999)

In conducting surveys with a sample size greater than 30, it is recommended to employ parametric tests while considering common method biases (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). To mitigate participant biases and researcher influence on measurement tools, certain precautions should be taken during questionnaire preparation. In this regard, the original scale items were retained. Language validity analysis was conducted during questionnaire development. Translation was carried out by two experts fluent in both languages. The final questionnaire, validated for language clarity, was administered to a sample group of 63 individuals (33 males, 30 females). Participants rated item clarity using a Likert scale. This rating was performed to affirm the content validity of the measurement tools.

To prevent and reveal common method biases (CMB) the one-factor method is often recommended. Measurement tools can cause such problems (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). In this approach, the tested structural validity model is compared with a one-factor structure. As indicated in Table 2, the comparison with the single-factor structure demonstrates the absence of CMB for the current model [ $\chi^2$  (171): 5811.784,  $p < .01$ ;  $\Delta m\chi^2 = 4151.555$ ;  $\chi^2/df$ : 3.285; RMSEA: .140; GFI: .286; AGFI: .237; CFI: .489; IFI: .493; TLI: .472].

Discriminant and convergent validity was analysed and the following values were detected:

Workplace Belongingness ( $\alpha$ : .960; CR: .961; AVE: .691; MSV: .697; MaxRH: .970;  $\sqrt{AVE}$ : .831)  
Corporate Stakeholder Responsibility ( $\alpha$ : .960; CR: .892; AVE: .605; MSV: .697; MaxRH: .950;  $\sqrt{AVE}$ : .778)

Exploratory Innovation ( $\alpha$ : .923; CR: .927; AVE: .646; MSV: .785; MaxRH: .938;  $\sqrt{AVE}$ : .804)

Exploitative Innovation ( $\alpha$ : .887; CR: .884; AVE: .523; MSV: .785; MaxRH: .893;  $\sqrt{AVE}$ : .723)

When the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceed 0.5 and the Composite Reliability (CR) values surpass 0.70, the discriminant and convergent validity are generally not impacted by low values in other coefficients (Kline, 2016; Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Nunnally, 1976). As seen in table 3, the model met convergent and discriminant validity criteria.

*Table 3. Measurement of Convergent and Discriminant validity*

Variables	C $\alpha$	CoR	AVE	MSV	MaxR	EXPIN	WORKB	EXIN	CSR
<b>EXPIN</b>	.923	.927	.646	.785	.938	.804			
<b>WORKB</b>	.960	.961	.691	.697	.970	.618	.831		
<b>EXIN</b>	.887	.884	.523	.785	.893	.886	.652	.723	
<b>CSR</b>	.960	.892	.605	.697	.950	.728	.835	.720	.778

C $\alpha$ = Cronbach's alpha; AVE= average variance extracted; MSV= maximum shared variance; MaxR= maximum reliability; CoR= composite reliability; The significance value of AVE is over the 0.50 level, CR should be 0.7 and above; \* Pearson Correlation.

### Direct Effects

The standardized total effect of workplace belongingness (WORKB) on exploratory innovation (EXIN) was measured as .564, and on exploitative innovation (EXPIN) was measured as .587. This implies that when WORKB increases by 1 standard deviation, EXIN increases by 0.564 standard deviations due to both direct and indirect effects, and EXPIN increases by 0.587 standard deviations.

WORKB on EXIN [The standardized unmediated (direct) effect]: .274,

WORKB on EXPIN [The standardized unmediated (direct) effect]: .301.

Thus, when WORKB increases by 1 standard deviation, EXIN increases by 0.274 standard deviations, and EXPIN increases by 0.301 standard deviations directly.

WORKB on EXIN [The standardized mediated (indirect) effect]:.290,

WORKB on EXPIN [The standardized mediated (indirect) effect]: .286.

Consequently, when WORKB increases by 1 standard deviation, EXIN increases by 0.290 standard deviations due to indirect effects, and EXPIN increases by 0.286 standard deviations.

WORKB on EXIN and EXPIN [The confidence interval for the standardized mediated (indirect) effect] ranged from .204 to .391, and .201 to .388 respectively, indicating the range of values with a specified level of confidence.

Additionally, positive and direct effects of corporate stakeholder responsibility (CSR) on EXIN (.468) and EXPIN (.462) were observed.

Squared multiple correlations were employed to determine the total variance explained ratio of the mediator, corporate stakeholder responsibility (CSR). It was found that the predictors of CSR explain 47.6% of its variance in the relationship between workplace belongingness (WORKB) and exploratory innovation (EXIN), indicating that approximately 52.4% of the variance in CSR is attributed to error variance. Similarly, in the relationship between WORKB and exploitative innovation (EXPIN), the predictors of CSR explain 47.3% of its variance, with approximately 52.7% of the variance in CSR being error variance. These findings indicate that CSR plays a mediation role in the effect of WORKB on both EXIN and EXPIN, thereby supporting hypotheses H6 and H7 regarding indirect effects (see Table 4).

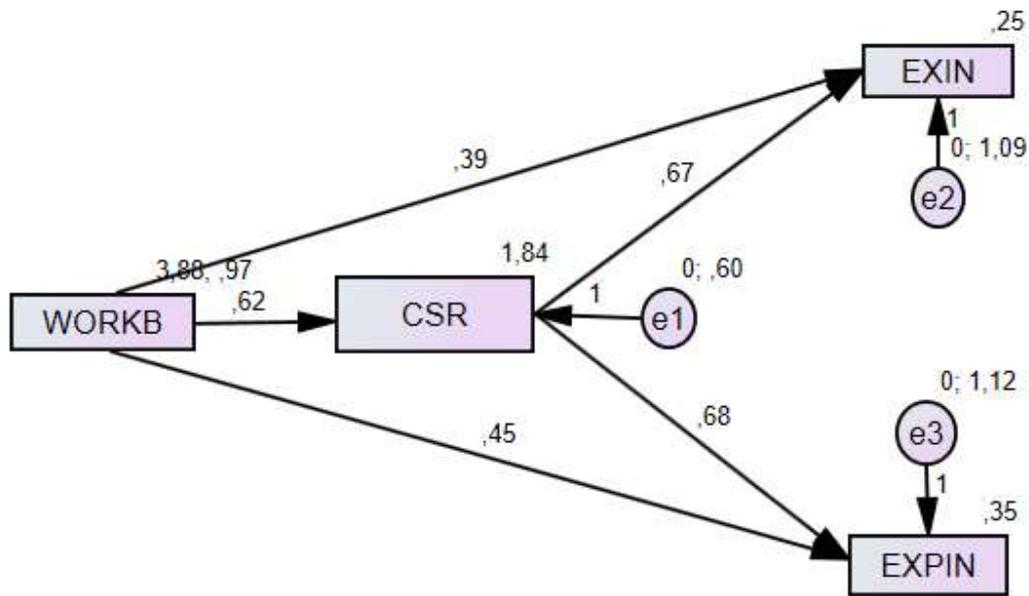


Figure 2. Mediation model featuring standardized estimates

### Indirect Effects/Mediation Analysis

AMOS was employed to conduct the mediation analysis, with full mediation indicated by total variance explained exceeding 80%, while values between 20% and 80% suggesting partial mediation (Howell, 2010; Hayes, 2013). Additionally, the bootstrapping method, recommended for mediation analysis, provides reliable estimates for larger samples (Sacchi, 1998). Once the model attains good fit values following confirmatory factor analysis, the mediation model is constructed. Furthermore, the bootstrapping method facilitates the identification of indirect effects (Hair et al., 2006), allowing for an in-depth examination of the structure obtained from confirmatory factor analysis in terms of direct and indirect effects. AMOS software enables the exploration of models not previously tested in this context. The results of the mediation analysis are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Mediation analysis results

CSR	Total Effects	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Lower Bounds	Upper Bounds	p	Mediation Effect
H6.WORKB -EXIN	.564	.274	.290	.204	.391	.001***	Partially (TVE:47,6%)
H7.WORKB -EXPIN	.587	.301	.286	.201	.388	.002**	Partially (TVE:47,3%)

Notes: The confidence interval values for indirect effects were revealed through Bootstrap (N = 1710). TVE: Total variance explained; Perform bootstrap: 1710; Bias-corrected confidence intervals: 95%; percentile confidence intervals: 90%)

## Testing

Based on the results, a positive and significant relationship was observed between WORKB→CSR, CSR→EXIN, CSR→EXPIN, WORKB→EXIN, and WORKB→EXPIN. Thus, H1, H2, H3, H4, and Table 5 shows the H5 regarding direct effects was supported.

Table 5. Results for hypothesis testing of direct effects

Alternative Hypotheses	Results	t(1710) Critical ratio	β Standard Beta	p
H1.WORKB →CSR	Supported	8,500	.619	0.001***
H2.CSR → EXIN	Supported	5,357	.468	0.001***
H3. CSR → EXPIN	Supported	5,393	.462	0.001***
H4. WORKB → EXIN	Supported	3,131	.274	.002**
H5. WORKB → EXPIN	Supported	3,517	.301	0.001***

According to the mediation analysis, the exogenous variable (WORKB) exhibited significant effects on the endogenous variables (CSR, EXIN, and EXPIN).

[WORKB→(CSR)→EXIN= t(1710)=.204↔.391; p<0,001; TVE: 47,6%; WORKB→(CSR)→EXPIN; t(1710)=.201↔.388; p<0,001; TVE: 47,3%]. Thus, the H6 and H7 hypotheses were supported.

## Discussion and Conclusion

According to the research findings, it was determined that workplace belongingness had positive effects on corporate stakeholder responsibility. Researches focus on the relationship between corporate social responsibility and firm performance (McGuire, Sundgren, and Schneeweis, 1988), financial performance (Cochran and Wood, 1984), gender equality (Grosser and Moon, 2005). It was determined in the literature that corporate social responsibility was associated with a psychologically healthy workplace (Catano, and Morrow Hines, 2016), organizational justice (Rupp et al., 2006), organizational commitment (Ali et al., 2010; Turker, 2009; Farooq et al., 2014), employee–company identification (Kim et al., 2010), and internal employee motivation (Skudiene and Auruskeviciene, 2012).

According to another finding of the research, corporate stakeholder responsibility was found to have positive effects on exploratory and exploitative innovations. It was determined that corporate social responsibility was associated with innovation performance (González-Ramos, Donate, and Guadamillas, 2014) and innovation (Hu, Du, and Zhang, 2020; Su-ping, 2010; Rexhepi, Kurtishi, and Bexheti, 2013; Abimbola et al., 2010; Martinez-Conesa, Soto-Acosta, and Palacios-Manzano, 2017; Luo, and Du, 2015; Mahmoud, and Hinson, 2012; Amos, 2017). However, these studies do not fully meet the responsibility of the stakeholder, they do not involve findings that include the features of exploratory and exploitative innovations. Findings regarding the positive effects of CSR on both types of innovation show the importance of the company's relationship and interactions with stakeholders in revealing innovation. Improving the sense of belonging to the workplace through the expectations of customers about products and services, the contributions of suppliers to products and processes, the resources provided by shareholders for new processes and innovations, the savings provided by responsibilities against the natural environment (recycling, renewable energy, etc.), protection of employees' rights, conversion of customer expectations into innovation with customer-oriented responsibility activities are among the reasons for these effects. The studies in the literature are generally related to the psychological status of the employees (Cockshaw et al., 2014; Shakespeare-Finch and Daley, 2017) and their success (Gkorezis,

Kalampouka, and Petridou, 2013). Findings regarding the relationship of belonging with current and future innovations demonstrate the importance of the workplace on innovations that effect the total performance and efficiency of the business. This situation requires developing strategies in the context of developing a sense of belonging to the human resource. This effect of the social exchange on the positive behavior of the employees also requires the investigation of the main factors in developing a sense of belonging.

According to the findings obtained from the research, corporate stakeholder responsibility mediates the effect of workplace belongingness on exploratory innovation and exploitative innovation. The obtained partial mediation effect shows that corporate stakeholder responsibility plays an important role in the conversion of the sense of belonging. The sense of belonging becomes an important creative action after interaction with stakeholders. This creative action emerges as an improvement of existing innovations or the exploration of innovations.

The fact that the study was carried out at the time of the COVID 19 pandemic caused time constraints and effort. Some businesses refused the research because of the pandemic. In the days when there was a curfew, the research could not be carried out and time wasted. The study's limitations included the generalization of findings due to the adoption of simple random sampling and the small sample size (Converse and Presser, 1986).

Despite the difficulties in realizing the study, important inferences have been provided regarding the retail industry. Since the sector is in the supply chain, increasing the importance to be given to stakeholders and human resources will provide significant benefits in developing and exploring innovations Practices for social activities that will improve employee belongingness and for developing relations with stakeholders are recommended. Virtual and social media applications should be developed especially for the feedback towards customers, suppliers, consumers, employees, and shareholders. It should be noted that these practices involve elements that will improve the belonging to the workplace and the business Considering the relationship of the retail industry with all sectors, it is recommended to create virtual platforms and organize meetings where current problems with other sectors are discussed. In this platform and meetings, cooperation should be developed by addressing current issues related to the social and natural environment. Conversion of the effects of humanitarian events, especially pandemic and natural disasters, on businesses, to innovative actions may depend on communication and interaction with stakeholders.

According to the theoretically discovered and verified research model, the relationship between the elements of belonging, responsibility, and innovation in businesses should also be explored in other types of organizations and industries. Especially, the comparison of service-manufacturing sectors can contribute to the literature. In future studies, it is suggested to investigate other mediator variables such as ethical leadership, intrapreneurship, which are thought to complement the partial mediation effect of corporate stakeholder responsibility, based on this model. On the other hand, it is recommended to conduct the pre-and post-pandemic status of the research model comparatively.

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