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Influence of National Culture in Companies with Different Ownership on Employees' CSR Perception in a Developing Country: The Case of Serbia

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Abstract: Starting from the fact that perceptions of employees might be related to national culture and our previous finding that CSR perception by employees depends on company ownership, in the present research, we aim at the investigation of relations between CSR and national culture perception by employees' dependence on company ownership in the specific context of Serbia as a developing post-socialist country. Questionnaire-based research was conducted among employees in public and private companies in Serbia with domestic and foreign ownership. The results pointed out that both CSR and national culture perceptions are highly dependent on company ownership with the dependence of CSR perception on national culture perception by employees in public but not private companies. The obtained results point out that in private companies, excessive adoption of managerial practices not aligned with national culture resulted in shifts in perception of national culture, as well as in divergence between national culture and perceptions of CSR activities.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; national culture; Serbia; company ownership; employees

1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a concept that emerged in the 1950s as an answer to increasing public demands for more responsible behavior of companies in developed countries with open market economies [1,2]. Since then, CSR has developed, both in terms of theoretical explanations [3,4] and holistic practical implementation, into one of the most studied and widely applied concepts. However, in developing countries, which during the second half of the twentieth century belonged to the socialist/communist bloc, the socially responsible behavior of companies had somewhat different development paths, with different aspects prioritized [5,6]. Serbia, as a country with a very specific development path, represents a quite specific case in comparison to other post-socialist countries, even in comparison to other countries that developed from former Yugoslavia [7].

In post-socialist countries, including Serbia, CSR developed as a hybrid concept under which socially responsible behaviors characterizing companies during the communist period (endogenous CSR) merged with practices introduced from open market economies (exogenous CSR) by multinational companies that entered these markets [6–8].

It had already been shown by a number of authors from different parts of the world that national culture highly influences planning, perception, and implementation of CSR activities in companies [9,10]. In Serbia, as a country with a particularly specific post-socialist society that developed from a specific self-management form of socialism practiced in former Yugoslavia through a development path which, due to economic sanctions

and late start of transition process, differs from all other post socialist countries [11], the relationship between national culture and corporate social responsibility has not yet been studied. The information about these relations would be of high importance for numerous companies' initiation of their businesses in Serbia in present times, as it will enable incorporation of national culture-based limitations and directions in CSR programs.

In previous research [7], it has already been demonstrated that perception of CSR activities in companies in Serbia differs in dependence on company ownership, and that it is not dependent on employees' experience from the socialist period.

Based on numerous reports stating that CSR perception by employees is related to national culture, the present research aims at the investigation of these relations in a specific, Serbian context. Research questions addressed in this research are: (a) does CSR and national culture perception in companies depend on company ownership, i.e., if these perceptions differ in multinational companies with introduced CSR programs and national culture values from abroad, companies owned by domestic entrepreneurs capturing values of national culture developed under the socioeconomic context of Serbia, and public companies in which, to a great extent, national culture from previous periods might be preserved; (b) do relations between national culture and CSR exist and do they depend on company ownership.

This investigation is structured as follows: a theoretical background is introduced first—the concept of national culture, the socio-economic context of national culture in Serbia, national culture and organizational behavior with emphasis on CSR, and national culture in Serbia. In the second part, empirical results obtained from companies with different ownership in Serbia, based on which the stated hypotheses were analyzed, are presented. In the final part, conclusion, limitations, theoretical, and practical implications and further research needs are presented.

2. Theoretical Background

The main findings and facts related to the concept of national culture, including an overview of national culture dimensions, the introspection into main issues which predefine socioeconomic context in Serbia, review of the main finding in respect to influence of national culture on organizational behavior with emphasis on CSR, and short information about findings regarding national culture in Serbia are provided in this section.

2.1. The Concepts of National Culture

The opinion that members of a culture share values that are further translated into attitudes and beliefs and embedded in practices and norms of the society is accepted by numerous scholars [12]. There are different definitions of national culture but generally, the term 'national culture' represents ethical codes by which societies regulate behavior. Habits, values, traditions, beliefs, and norms representing certain national cultures are inherited by an individual and affect their responses and reactions to different situations and how they carry out tasks and duties at the workplace [13].

Measurement and comparison of national cultures is a challenge many scholars have decided to undertake. Measurement of cultural dimensions can be performed at different levels: as practices, values, or fundamental assumptions. For measurement of national culture, questionnaires in which evaluations, preferences or values are rated are used [14].

The models defining and measuring national culture with the widest acceptance are the ones developed by Hofstede [15–17], Trompenaars and Turner [18], and House [19].

Hofstede defines national culture as the collective mental programming at the level of nationality, which shapes the values, attitudes, competencies, behaviors, and perceptions of priority by the nation [20], forming in this way a 'broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others' and resulting in a much lower variance of national culture dimensions within a nation than between nations [14]. Hofstede's model dominates in research, studying the relationship between culture and management; however, it is also

subjected to considerable criticism for a number of reasons, including, for example, equating nation to culture and assuming the stability of cultural scores [21].

The GLOBE project under which a study using a sample of 17,730 middle managers from 951 organizations of 62 countries was conducted [19] was a significant point in the development of Hofstede's doctrine. The GLOBE project relies strongly upon Hofstede's work—it clarifies some unclear points and thus improves the understanding and perception of national culture [22].

There is a methodological difference between the approach of Hofstede and the one applied by the GLOBE project: measurement of national culture by Hofstede was performed at the level of the individual, while in the GLOBE, the values of the respondent's society/country were measured [14].

In Hofstede's model, national culture is characterized by five dimensions (power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence), while in the GLOBE project, nine dimensions (uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation) are defined. An integrated overview of national culture dimensions is provided in this section in which similarities and differences among dimensions used by Hofstede and in the GLOBE project are emphasized. Power distance, future orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and individualism are the cultural dimensions present in both Hofstede and the GLOBE national culture model.

Power distance deals with the problem of human inequality [13]. It is the measurement of the expectations regarding power distribution. In societies with high power distance, members at a higher level in the hierarchy are expected to preserve their status and use their power, position, and privileges, while the less-powerful members expect and accept unequal power distribution [12].

Future orientation or long-term versus short-term orientation measures whether in the society future or past and present are valued as more important [12]. High future orientation indicates engagement in planning, investing in the future, delaying gratification, and other future-oriented activities [23] and emphasizing savings and investments, keeping obligations and maintaining interpersonal relations. Future orientation in the GLOBE project measures the degree to which future-oriented behaviors such as planning and delaying gratification are encouraged and rewarded.

Individualism/collectivism indicates to what extent are individual rights and opportunities valued versus group success and an individual's loyalty to the group and it refers to the tendency of society to associate and integrate into groups [13]. In collectivistic societies, individuals prioritize a group's goals and success over their interests [23]. In the GLOBE project, two aspects of collectivism are measured: institutional collectivism representing the degree to which collective distribution of resources and collective action are rewarded and in-group collectivism representing a degree of expression of pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in groups [22].

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as the extent of reliance on social norms, rules, and procedures in order to decrease the unpredictability of future events [23] and to which uncertain or unknown situations can be tolerated [12]. High uncertainty avoidance points out a high need for security provided through formalization with rigid rules and procedures, while in societies with low uncertainty, avoidance changes are acceptable and freedom is highly valued and thus the level of formalization is low [13].

Masculinity/femininity is a cultural dimension in the Hofstede model according to which, in a masculine society, individual success and personal achievement are valued as opposed to a valuation of quality of life and social relationships in feminine societies [10]. Masculine cultures are less compassionate and more focused on aggressiveness and gaining respect, payments, promotions, and challenging work while feminine cultures are orientated towards sentiments, emotions, harmony, and cooperation.

In the GLOBE project, similar properties are valued as two distinct dimensions: Humane Orientation is defined as the degree to which individuals are rewarded for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others, while Performance Orientation is the degree to which performance improvement is rewarded [22].

The GLOBE project defines the national culture dimension named Gender Egalitarianism as the degree to which gender inequalities are minimized [22], recognizing societies in which gender roles are distinguished and the ones where they are overlapping [12].

In the Hofstede model, the dimension of Indulgence/restraint describes the extent to which desires and impulses are controlled [12], while in the GLOBE model, Assertiveness represents the degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others [22].

2.2. Socio-Economic Context and National Culture of Serbia

Due to its specific development path, Serbia can be categorized as an extreme variant of the post-socialist context [11]. It was one of the federal units of former Yugoslavia in which in the period after the Second World War, a specific form of socialist society was developed. As the society in which the Marxist doctrine of the proletariat dictatorship was embraced, Serbia, similarly to other countries accepting this concept, nurtured among the employees and population, in general, the illusion of privileged worker position through the declaration of commitment to the worker [24] and through other forms of promotion of workers' central position [25]. Additionally, a high level of accessibility of social security and health systems, guaranteed wages, lifetime employment accompanied with seniority-based promotion [26], and workforce protection by managers and institutions [27] resulted in a widely present perception and high valuation of social security [28].

On the other hand, in the period of planned administrative economy, the economic roles of companies were largely neglected, and through development plans, industrial structures which were not economically and ecologically sustainable were established, resulting in abuse and destruction of natural resources, thus endangering the environment [24].

Specificity for Serbia as a part of the former Yugoslav federation, in comparison to countries from the Soviet bloc, was the specific form of state-collectivist and quasi-market-oriented socialism, which was under the large influence of developed countries [29]. Additionally, in Yugoslavia, self-management socialism characterized with unique social ownership and self-management mechanisms in the economy [30] was introduced as a never-before and nowhere-else practiced form of socialism. In self-managed socialism, employees quasi-ruled the companies; and equality, wellbeing, satisfaction, safety, social and political engagement, and other rights of the employees were proclaimed as priorities [7].

During the 1990s, majority of post-socialist countries passed through a period of transition and had to cut down their extensive social programs [31], while global trends towards greater corporate social engagement put increasing pressure on companies [32]. In Serbia, the transition period started later and lasted longer than in other countries. The reasons for such a situation are diverse. Primarily, Serbian leaders did not embrace orientation towards an open-market economy [33]. The use of nationalism as an instrument of labor pacification pushed Serbia into the civil war and resulted in economic sanctions imposed by developed countries. As a result of sanctions in the nineties, serious setbacks of companies occurred [28], while NATO bombings in 1999 resulted in physical devastation of large companies, particularly the petrochemical industry. During the sanctions with support from the government, companies sustained operation with passive workforce contribution to further enlargement of accumulated economic problems. Therefore, deterioration of the living standard of the Serbian population, accompanied by the destruction of social-benefits systems, occurred [34]. Among the Serbian population, in this period, feelings of isolation, insecurity, anxiety, and fear grew, while resistance to the reforms towards open-market economy increased [11]. By the end of the 20th century, Serbia was transformed into a traditionalist, xenophobic, isolated, and prospectless entity with emphasized ethno-nationalism [35]. As a consequence of such a situation, the largescale entrance of

multinational companies in the nineties characterizing other post-socialist countries did not occur in Serbia [36].

Democratic parties that took over leadership in 2000 did not succeed in efforts to develop Serbia at the level of a modern European state [37]. Privatization, which in comparison to other post-socialist countries occurred much later [38], in many cases were not followed with implementation of appropriate business strategies, resulting in an economic setback of the companies [39], accompanied by transformation of the ownership, which resulted in the absence of participation of the employees in the management of the company without liberal conditions of equal opportunities [40]. Serbian workers were not prepared for new management practice; privatization resulted in their disappointment and resulted in an increase of resistance to change [11]. They remained disorganized and marginalized with the feeling of impotence at the level of the workplace, while the values of collectivism and egalitarianism remained strong [41].

2.3. National Culture and Organisational Behaviour with Emphasis on CSR

It has been shown through numerous empirical studies that national values predict managerial practices and organizational processes [23]. Opinions that managers coming from the region with different national cultures face the challenge to make a compromise between their style and cultural considerations in the country was emphasized by Harris [42] at the very beginning of the era of growth of multinational companies worldwide and thus must be prepared for their multicultural experience (Smith [43]) were emphasized long before the systematic investigation of the relationship between national culture and CSR were initiated.

In order to find specific optimal solutions for sustainable performance and improvement of circular economy practices, organizations have to take into account the cultural background of a country as well as the social, political, economic, and historic context of the society [41].

The efforts to link CSR performance and its perception and readiness for implementation by employees was quite extensively studied and reported in academic literature. The majority of research in which relations between national culture and CSR practice were investigated relayed on the Hofstede [15–17] classification of national culture dimensions, but results relying on other systems of national culture classification are also available. Although quite different research methodologies and diverse data sources were applied by different authors, some general conclusions regarding relations between national culture dimensions and CSR practices can be made.

From existing research, it is quite obvious that high scores for individualism and masculinity demonstrate a negative impact on different aspects of CSR. In the case of individualism, negative effects on positive and negative CSR scores [44], society, health and safety and environment-related CSR [9], employee, community and environment-related CSR [45] were reported. Examples of the negative influence of high masculinity scores were confirmed in the case of a positive CSR score [44], employee, community and environment-related CSR [45]. However, it was demonstrated that even in highly individualistic and masculine cultures, companies which go beyond compliance standards to tailor to the well-being of their employees are likely to attract like-minded employees that will positively react to internal CSR initiatives [10]. The engagement of employees in CSR activities is of great importance and thus alignment of CSR with employees' expectations is essential. For example, using employees' pro-environmental behaviors as a mediator, company environmental performance can be influenced, directly and indirectly [46]. However, the ecological response differs substantially dependent on national cultural-ecological strategies across countries [47].

Company environmental proactivity is influenced positively by in-group collectivism, performance orientation, assertiveness while uncertainty avoidance affects negatively [48]. National culture characteristics related to uncertainty avoidance, in-group collectivism,

future orientation and performance orientation can also influence the shift of investment away from an expected response [49].

National culture shapes also consumer reactions. Thus, companies have to choose culture-specific CSR programs and response strategies to crises in order to protect the moral reputational status and to make the market sustainable [50].

On the other hand, reported relations between uncertainty avoidance and power distance are not so consistent and reported relations seem to be highly dependent on characteristics of the culture in which the investigation was conducted. For example, in the case of investigation related to the US hospitality industry [44] as well as in investigations involving a number of European and East Asia countries [45], positive relations of uncertainty avoidance and total CSR score and individual CSR areas, respectively, were noted. Oppositely, in research conducted in Italy and Morocco [9], as well as in multinational research involving 16 countries [12], a negative relation of uncertainty avoidance and environment-related CSR and composite CSR index, respectively, were reported. Similar is the situation in the case of power distance for which both positive [13,44] and negative [9,12] relations with CSR were reported.

The influence of individual dimensions of national culture is not independent of other dimensions, but the rather composite structure of national culture results in a complex response to certain CSR initiatives. Thus, cultural configuration models that identify the potential nature and range of cultural values that seem to support CSR activities contributing toward employees were proposed [51].

The confirmed influence of CSR on company sustainability [52], including different aspects influencing sustainable business such as financial performance [53], viability [54] and different employee-related aspects [23,55–58] (work engagement, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and organizational identification) is oriented to the company and other co-workers.

CSR is linked to employee outcomes through different mechanisms, which are still not sufficiently understood [59]. The fact that national culture influences the response of the workforce is often underestimated by the headquarters of multinational companies [21]. However, intrinsic work values are shaped by both national culture as well as a range of individual-level psychological and cognitive processes [60]. Defining of strategic behaviors of companies is in a complex way influenced by national culture as well as by relevant historic events in the country and its market development, and by the diversity, ambiguity, and arbitrary enforcement of the institutional framework existing in the country [61].

In opposition to statements that adaptation of management models designed in one cultural environment can even be harmful to the welfare of people if applied in an environment with different cultural values, the views stating that national culture does not play a strong role as a constraint on organizational culture pointing out at organizations' discretion regarding localization vs. standardization of organizational culture and related management practices [14] also exist. In the process of alignment of management practices under national culture, it is to be kept in mind that the proportion of cultural subgroups significantly distinct from the mainstream national culture in a pluralistic society is quite large [62].

Keeping in mind that contemporary consumers are becoming more and more interested in aspects of CSR, such as for example in environment, responsible consumption or circular economy [63], CSR programs nowadays represent one of the tools to gain a competitive advantage for the company [64].

2.4. National Culture in Serbia

In developing countries, national cultures are mainly characterized by low individualism and masculinity, accompanied by high uncertainty avoidance and power distance [22]. Based on the results of Hofstede's studies conducted in Yugoslavia in 1980 on the territories of Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia, the scores for Hofstede cultural dimensions in these countries were calculated. Serbia is characterized with extremely high scores for

uncertainty avoidance (92) and power distance (86), while the scores for individualism (25) and masculinity (43) are quite low. However, as explained above, since this evaluation in Serbia, substantial changes have taken place. However, Hofstede's dimensions were tackled only in a few studies, which point out changes in national culture [22].

Among former Yugoslav republics, only Slovenia joined the GLOBE project. Investigation using the GLOBE methodology to measure national culture in Serbia was conducted in 2011 and published in 2018 [22].

3. Research Hypothesis

CSR programs in developing countries, including Serbia, are in many cases, particularly in multinational companies, developed as the extension of CSR programs of principal companies without taking into account specific requirements and specific responses by stakeholders, which are dependent on the socio-economic situation and national culture in each country [6,31,65]. Oppositely, in companies owned by domestic entrepreneurs, who in many cases do not have appropriate education, knowledge, and experience [11,25], CSR programs are not developed systematically [38], but they rather represent the mixture of measures aimed at fulfilment of legal requirements, and strivings for increase of profits without appropriate CSR programs [39,40]. Finally, in public companies which did not undergo systematic transformation, the values of endogenous CSR forms are preserved to a high extent, including support to local community and employees [7]. Having in mind different inputs and paths of CSR, differences in perception of CSR in varying areas in dependence on company ownership can be expected. Based on this statement, the following hypothesis was stated:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Perception of application of CSR in different areas by employees in Serbia differs dependent on company ownership.*

It can be assumed that company ownership resulted also in forming of specific national subculture and its perception among employees with differences among multinational companies, private companies owned by domestic entrepreneurs, and public companies. In subsidiaries of multinational companies, elements of preferred organizational culture from their countries is usually introduced through established behavior codex, which subsequently influence the forming and perception of national culture dimensions among the employees [8]. In companies owned by domestic entrepreneurs, it can be assumed that values of national culture developed under the socioeconomic context of Serbia and emphasized particularities of its development path are captured, resulting in differences of national subculture developed among employees and its perception. In public companies in which processes forcing the change of national culture were not initiated, national culture from previous periods might be preserved to a high extent. Based on the presented assumptions, the following hypothesis is stated:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Perception of national culture by employees in companies in Serbia differs dependent on company ownership.*

National values, to a great extent, predict organizational processes [23], including the engagement of employees in implementation of CSR activities [10,47,56]. Both positive and negative relations between different dimensions of national culture were confirmed in countries with different national cultures worldwide [9,12,44,45,48]. Based on differences of existing results obtained in diverse cultural environments, it is obvious that the relation between national culture and CSR are culture-dependent. Starting from the above-stated assumptions that both national subculture and CSR programs in Serbia as a specific socio-economic environment will differ in dependence on company ownership, the third hypothesis stating that the relations between national culture and CSR perception will also differ in dependence on company ownership is stated:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Influence of perception of national culture dimensions by employees on perception of application of CSR in companies in Serbia differs in dependence on company ownership.*

4. Materials and Methods

Questionnaire-based research was conducted among employees in public and private companies in Serbia. Among private companies, differentiation was made between companies with domestic owners and multinational companies with owners from abroad. Answers were obtained from 627 respondents, out of which 307 declared to work for a public company, 213 for a multinational company with foreign ownership, and 99 for a company with domestic ownership, while in 8 cases, ownership was not stated, and these questionnaires were not used for this investigation. In the sample, respondents of different gender (male 37%, female 63%) and age (young 43%, older 57%) were represented with shares providing an adequate composition of the sample representing the population to which the investigation refers.

The questionnaire consisted of two sets of questions. Respondents rated their opinion on stated questions on the Likert scale (from 1 to 7). Questionnaires were distributed to selected companies and answers were collected via e-mail with a response rate of 45%.

The first set consisted of a list of questions in which respondents provided feedback on their perception of the application of different forms of CSR in their companies. A questionnaire presented by Vuković et al. [7] was used but the questions were grouped according to the areas of CSR application: CSR towards employees (8 questions regarding working conditions, safety, fairness and transparency of salaries, personal development, work and free time balance, involvement of employees in decision making, and cooperation with unions), CSR regarding equality (3 questions implying equality of genders, disabled persons, and ethnic groups), CSR towards customers (8 questions regarding price policy transparency, customers safety and implementation of international safety standards, details in offers, feedback from customers and complaints, ethical advertising and education of customers), CSR in respect to environment protection (6 questions regarding application and promotion of environment protection, energy consumption, waste reduction and recycling, and CO_2 emission), and CSR in respect to society (6 questions regarding collection information on local community problems, involvement in solving of problems, supporting projects and improving living conditions of local community, supporting sport and other events, and supporting employees' engagement in socially responsible activities).

The second set consisted of a list of questions used in the Globe project [19] for evaluation of the perception of national culture dimensions as currently perceived by respondents in respect to 9 national culture dimensions defined in the Globe project: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation.

Based on obtained ratings from the respondents, composite variables were formed. Five composite variables were formed based on which CSR perception was rated, including perception of CSR towards employees, CSR regarding equality issues, CSR towards customers, CSR regarding environment, and CSR regrading society. National culture was characterized by 9 composite variables, including uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation.

Statistical data processing included calculation and testing of differences among average values obtained from respondents employed in public, domestic private companies, and foreign multinational companies using t-test. Pearson correlation coefficients among perception of different forms of CSR by employees and their perception of national culture were calculated. Statistical calculations were performed using TIBCO Data Science—Workbench (Statistica® 14.0.0) (http://tibco.com accessed on 10 April 2021.).

5. Results and Discussion

The presented results provide insight into differences in perception of CSR and national culture by employees in Serbian companies in dependence on company ownership, as well as the analysis of their relations.

5.1. Perception of CSR by Employees

Average values of perception of the application of CSR in different areas by the employees are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Perception of application of CSR in different areas by employees in companies in Serbia in dependence on company ownership.

	All $n = 627$	Public $n = 307$	Domestic $n = 99$	Foreign $n = 213$
CSR employees	4.66 [B]	4.53 [aB]	3.96 [bC]	5.15 [aB]
CSR equality	4.82 [B]	5.17 [aA]	4.37 [bB]	4.52 [bC]
CSR customers	5.42 [A]	5.11 [bA]	5.34 [aA]	5.90 [aA]
CSR environment	4.84 [B]	4.67 [bB]	3.86 [cC]	5.54 [aAB]
CSR society	4.71 [B]	4.78 [aB]	4.19 [bB]	4.82 [aBC]

[a,b,c] different lowercase letters in superscript denote statistically different values by rows (company ownerships). [A,B,C] different uppercase letter in superscript denote statistically different values by columns (CSR areas).

The obtained data point out that in general employees perceive CSR towards customers as the area in which the most developed CSR activities are applied. The lowest value of the perceived intensity of CSR activities are recorded in the case of CSR towards employees, but in general lower values of CSR activities in comparison to CSR towards customers is recorded also in the cases of equality issues, environment-related CSR activities, and CSR activities related to the society and the local community.

There are significant differences in perception of the intensity of CSR activities dependent on company ownership with the most expressed dispersion of obtained data by CSR areas in the case of companies with domestic ownership. For companies with domestic ownership, significantly lower perception of CSR activities by employees is recorded in the case of CSR activities related to the environment and CSR activities related to employees. Perception of environment-related CSR in private companies with domestic ownership is at a significantly lower level than in public, and particularly in multinational companies with foreign ownership. It can be assumed that such a situation might be the consequence of neglecting environmental responsibility for many years during the socialist period [24].

An interesting fact is that there is a remarkable difference in the perception of CSR towards employees in private companies, dependent on whether the ownership is domestic or foreign. In multinational companies with foreign ownership, employees perceive the application of CSR activities towards employees at quite a high level, while in the case of companies with domestic ownership, this perception of the application of activities in this area of CSR is rated significantly lower. However, in companies with public ownership, employee-related CSR activities are perceived at a significantly higher level, although somewhat lower than in multinational companies with foreign ownership. This observation might, on one hand, be the consequence of retaining high expectations in respect to employee-related CSR originating from the socialist period [25], while on the other hand, in multinational companies, programs for increased care of employees resulted in high scoring of CSR in this area. Keeping in mind the importance of employee-related CSR activities and their contribution to the engagement of employees in the achievement of company goals [66], a low level of perception of employee-related CSR in private companies might represent a serious drawback for their development.

The highest perception of CSR activities in private companies, regardless of domestic or foreign ownership, is recorded in the case of CSR related to customers. This area of CSR is also rated at a high level in public companies. High scores in this CSR area might be also a consequence of the fact that some aspects of responsible treatment of customers are also a

legal obligation for the companies. The fact that companies get involved in CSR in order to attract consumers [1,67] might also be the reason for high scores in these CSR areas.

In the case of multinational companies with foreign ownership, as explained by Vuković et al. [5], exogenous CSR introduced from western cultures is dominant; the perception of CSR activities related to customers is also scored by respondents with the highest average value. However, in this group of companies, CSR activities related to the environment are rated also at a high level which is not significantly different from the CSR towards customers. The fact that in developed countries, environment protection rules and standards are at a much higher level in comparison to Serbia might have contributed to this finding.

In multinational companies with foreign ownership, CSR areas which are by the employees perceived at a significantly lower level are CSR activities related to different aspects of equality. As emphasized earlier, the socialist period was characterized by a high level of egalitarianism and thus high expectations in these terms might have remained, leading to a lower score in this CSR area. The rating of this aspect of CSR is quite opposite in companies with domestic ownership in which this CSR area is rated in second place after CSR towards customers, and particularly in companies with public ownership in which employees perceive equality of gender, disabled persons, and ethnic groups as the area in which CSR is at the highest level.

CSR activities relating to society and the local community, which are mainly the part of altruistic CSR (Carrol, 1990), are perceived to be applied at a significantly lower level by the employees of private companies with domestic ownership. The fact that after privatization, cases of irresponsible behavior of new owners were not rare [39] might have contributed to this finding.

The presented results point out that there are significant differences in perception of the application of CSR in different areas by employees in Serbia dependent on company ownership. Based on this statement, Hypothesis 1 can be accepted.

5.2. Perception of National Culture

Average values of perception of GLOBE national culture dimension by employees in companies in Serbia dependent on company ownership are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation of national culture dimensions according to the GLOBE project by employees in companies in Serbia dependent on company ownership.

	All $n = 627$	Public $n = 307$	Domestic $n = 99$	Foreign $n = 213$	Nedeljković et al., 2018
Uncertainty avoidance	4.37 [CD]	4.14 [aC]	3.75 [bD]	5.00 [aBC]	3.13
Power distance	5.68 [A]	5.39 [bA]	5.70 [abA]	6.09 [aA]	6.13
Institutional collectivism	4.65 [C]	4.61 [aB]	4.17 [b]	4.94 [aC]	3.67
In group collectivism	5.16 [B]	5.27 [aA]	5.33 [aB]	4.92 [bC]	5.33
Gender egelitarianism	4.48 [C]	3.61 [cD]	4.53 [bC]	5.22 [aB]	3.43
Assertiveness	4.48 [C]	4.54 [aB]	4.36 [aC]	4.45 [aCD]	3.97
Future orientation	3.72 [E]	3.92 [a]	3.26 [bE]	3.75 [aE]	2.34
Performance orientation	4.12 [D]	4.36 [aB]	3.38 [bDE]	4.10 [aD]	3.11
Humane orientation	4.22 [D]	4.37 [aB]	3.57 [bD]	4.31 [aD]	3.48

a,b,c different lowercase letters in superscript denote statistically different values by rows (company ownerships). A,B,C,D,E different uppercase letters in superscript denote statistically different values by columns (CSR areas).

The obtained overall values for a rating of "as is "national culture values are compared to those obtained based on research conducted in 2011 by Nedeljković et al. [22] on the sample of 254 respondents from the subgroup of the Serbian population, including only middle-class managers.

The highest value for the perception of current national culture in Serbia is obtained in the case of power distance. This finding is aligned with data about national culture in Serbia from other sources [26] but also with findings obtained by Hofstede [15–17,68]. In

groups, collectivism is also perceived as the cultural dimension present to a high extent in Serbia. This finding is also aligned with the characterization of Serbia as a collectivistic society characterized by a low score for individualism.

The lowest value for the perception of current national culture in Serbia is obtained in the case of future orientation, followed by performance and humane orientations, as well as uncertainty avoidance. Low scores for these national culture dimensions were obtained also by Nedeljković et al. [22] based on research from 2011. Interestingly, for uncertainty avoidance, which is according to Hofstede [68] the most expressed national culture dimension in our research, as well as in the research by Nedeljković et al. [22], relatively low scores were obtained.

For seven out of nine dimensions of national culture, as defined by the GLOBE project, average ratings in our investigations on a scale from 1–7 are higher than the ones obtained in the research from 2011. The two national culture dimensions for which lower values are obtained in our research are power distance and group collectivism, as the national culture dimensions in Serbia have the highest score.

Some significant differences among the scores for national culture were recorded, dependent on company ownership. For five out of nine national culture dimensions, significantly lower scores were obtained in the case of private companies with domestic ownership: uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation. In the case of power distance, in-group collectivism and gender egalitarianism, significantly higher scores were obtained in the case of private multinational companies with foreign ownership. Only in the case of assertiveness, there were no significant differences in recorded values for national culture dependent on company ownership.

The obtained results point out that organizational culture introduced by owners from abroad, as well as the introduction of managerial practices accepted in private companies with domestic ownership, influenced the alteration of national culture, but the influence of introduced practices from abroad was different to the one introduced by practices adopted by domestic owners.

Based on the obtained results, Hypothesis 2 stating that perception of national culture by employees in companies in Serbia differs depending on company ownership can be accepted.

5.3. Relations between National Culture and CSR Perception by Employees

Correlation coefficients between scores for national culture dimensions and perceived CSR in different areas are provided in Table 3 separately for companies with public, private domestic, and private foreign ownership.

In the case of companies with public ownership, a significant positive correlation for all observed CSR areas was obtained in the case of six out of nine national culture dimensions: uncertainty avoidance, in-group collectivism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, humane orientation, while in the case of institutional collectivism and gender egalitarianism, correlation was not significant only with equality related CSR. The cultural dimension which was not significantly correlated with CSR perception in three out of five observed CSR areas is power distance. These findings point out that in companies with public ownership, perception of CSR activities is, to a great extent, dependent on the perception of national culture.

Oppositely to this finding, in the case of private companies, including both multinational companies with foreign ownership and companies with domestic ownership, significant correlation coefficients between the perception of national culture dimension and perception of CSR activities in different CSR areas by employees appear randomly.

Such findings provide evidence based on which Hypothesis 3, stating that the influence of national culture dimensions by employees on perception of application of CSR in companies in Serbia differs in dependence on company ownership, can be adopted.

Table 3. Correlations between the perception of CSR in different areas and national cultures dependent on company ownership.

	Employees	Equality	Customers	Environment	Society
PUBLIC					
Uncertainty avoidance	0.60	0.31	0.42	0.58	0.59
Power distance	-	0.25	-	-	0.15
Institutional collectivism	0.31	-	0.19	0.29	0.23
In group collectivism	0.24	0.37	0.41	0.28	0.32
Gender egalitarianism	0.38	-	0.16	0.33	0.31
Assertiveness	0.29	0.19	0.17	0.26	0.24
Future orientation	0.44	0.25	0.32	0.42	0.43
Performance orientation	0.56	0.30	0.33	0.59	0.54
Humane orientation	0.54	0.26	0.32	0.51	0.48
PRIVATE—DOMESTIC					
Uncertainty avoidance	0.39	0.33	-	0.43	0.29
Power distance	-	-	-	-	-
Institutional collectivism	-	-	−0.46	-	-
In group collectivism	-	-	-	-	-
Gender egalitarianism	-	-	-	-	-
Assertiveness	-	-	-	-	-
Future orientation	-	-	−0.37	-	-
Performance orientation	0.43	0.28	-	0.31	0.32
Humane orientation	0.28	-	-	0.26	-
PRIVATE—FOREIGN					
Uncertainty avoidance	0.19	-	-	0.20	0.18
Power distance	-	-	-	-	-
Institutional collectivism	-	-	-	-	-
In group collectivism	0.22	0.25	-	0.17	-
Gender egalitarianism	0.19	-	-	-	-
Assertiveness	-	-	-	-	-
Future orientation	-	-	-	-	-
Performance orientation	0.33	0.21	-	0.27	0.26
Humane orientation	0.45	0.29	0.29	0.34	0.34

Only statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) correlation coefficients are presented.

Finding that in public companies, in which most probably managerial practices from developed countries did not penetrate significantly, CSR practices are aligned with national culture expectations, while in private companies, excessive adoption of managerial practices not aligned with national culture resulted, beside above-stated shifts in perception of national culture, also in divergence between national culture and CSR activities perceptions.

In existing research focusing on relations between national culture dimensions and CSR, the Hofstede model was mainly used as a tool for evaluation of national culture, making direct comparison with the obtained results quite challenging. However, the fact that individualism is negatively related with CSR [9,44,45] is confirmed also in this research with significant positive correlations for in-group collectivism and institutional collectivism registered in the case of public companies and in some CSR areas also in the case of foreign private companies. However, this relation was not confirmed in the case of domestic private companies. Positive correlation of environment-related CSR with in group collectivism was reported also by Calza et al. (2016) [48].

The other national culture dimension for which negative relation to CSR was confirmed in existing research is masculinity [44,45]. High positive correlation of human orientation as an opposite to masculinity obtained in this research in the case of public companies and private foreign companies, but in the case of employee and environment related CSR, also in the case of private domestic companies, is aligned with these findings.

Positive relations between performance orientation and environment-related CSR [48] was confirmed in this research, regardless of company ownership.

6. Conclusions

In Serbia, as a developing, post-socialist country with a specific development path, the perception of both CSR and national culture is highly dependent on company ownership. In public companies, perception of CSR in the areas of employees, equality, customers, environment, and society related CSR is significantly dependent on perceived national culture values regarding all national culture dimensions, except power distance. Oppositely, in private companies, including both multinational companies and companies with domestic ownership, the relation between CSR perception and perception of national culture is present in rare, random cases, pointing out that adoption of managerial practices not aligned with national culture resulted in a divergence between national culture and CSR activities perceptions.

The presented results confirm Hypothesis H1 that there are significant differences in the perception of employees in Serbia regarding the application of CSR in different areas, depending on the ownership of the company. The findings indicate that employees in privately owned companies perceive at a much lower-level CSR activities which relate to society and the local community. Cases of irresponsible behavior of new business owners in Serbia, and after the not-very-successful privatization in Serbia, certainly contributed to such a finding.

Hypothesis H2 that the perception of national culture by employees in companies in Serbia differs depending on the ownership of the company was also confirmed by this research. Namely, the results indicate that the organizational culture and management practices introduced by foreign and domestic owners of private companies had different influences on changing our national culture, while those introduced in private companies by foreign owners were generally accepted, unlike those practices that were adopted by local owners.

Hypothesis 3 that the influence of perceived national culture on perceived CSR activities depends on company ownership can be accepted because in the case of public companies perception of CSR activities is too high extent dependent on the perception of national culture, while in private companies, regardless of the ownership these dependences are only randomly recorded pointing thus at divergence between national culture and CSR activities perceptions.

The obtained results provide clear answers to the stated research questions. Namely, as both CSR and national culture perception in companies differ significantly in dependence on company ownership, it is obvious that influence of different inputs in development of CSR programs and national culture, such as introduction of values and CSR programs of the principal company, mainly from developed countries in subsidiaries of multinational companies, capturing of values of national culture developed under the influence of socioeconomic context of Serbia in the transition period in companies owned by domestic owners, as well as the tendency of preserving of national culture from previous periods in public companies resulted in different perception of both observed aspects. It can also be concluded that strong relations between national culture and CSR exist only in the case of public companies, while inexistence of these relations in both subsidiaries of multinational companies and private companies with domestic ownership point out at adoption of managerial practices not aligned with national culture.

The findings pointing out at divergence between national culture and CSR activities perceptions in private companies are the base for the main practical implications of present research warning private companies in Serbia that national culture among employees should be considered as potential obstacle in implementation of CSR programs, but possibly also in adoption of other introduced managerial practice.

This research contributes to the development of emerging theories related to the development and forming of CSR in post-socialist countries. The finding that national culture in

private companies which mainly introduce CSR practices from developed countries is not related to national culture particularly contribute to the theory that CSR in post-socialist countries present a mixture of practices introduced from abroad and practices retained from the socialist period.

The fact that Serbia presents a very specific socio-economic environment, with significant differences in development path in comparison to other post-socialist countries including the other ones having the same origin from former Yugoslavia as a specific case of socialist society, limits the implications of this study to the Serbian context.

In future research, similar research might be conducted also in other post-socialist countries as well as in the countries with diverse national culture. Future research relying on findings obtained in present research in Serbia may be directed towards several different issues. Keeping in mind the divergence between national culture and CSR practices in private companies, consideration of relations between national culture and other managerial practices might also be considered. Consequences of such divergence on implementation of CSR programs should also be the focus of future research.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, G.R. and L.M., data curation, S.K.; formal analysis, G.R. and L.M.; investigation, L.M. and M.D.M.; methodology, L.M. and S.K.; resources, L.M. and M.D.M.; software, M.B.; validation, L.M. and S.K.; visualization, L.M. and M.D.M.; writing—original draft preparation, L.M.; writing—review and editing, L.M. and G.R. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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