

# A Study on the Linkage between the Workplace Variations and Lawyers' CSR Meanings in Chinese Legal Service Market Using Ordinary Linear Regression Model

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**Abstract.** Recent evidence shows that lawyers' pro bono practice has been embedded into CSR. It has been increasingly institutionalized in Chinese legal service market. I use ordinary linear regression model to examine the relationship between the Chinese lawyers' perceptions of CSR and the workplace variations. The results show that the meanings of Chinese lawyers' pro bono including their motivations as well as benefits they get from such work vary across the work sectors. The findings imply that CSR have been situated in China based on lawyers' pro bono work.

**Keywords:** CSR , Pro Bono , Legal Service Market

## 1 Introduction

Pro bono, a Latin phrase, commonly refers to public services delivered by professional lawyers at no or very low cost for the public good in the legal service market. When pro bono has increasingly globalized in the industry of legal service, it has been widely recognized as a commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) in global lawyering. Since doing pro bono is for the public good, globalized legal service market began to use pro bono service as an important avenue to fulfill CSR commitment.[1]

When Chinese legal professionals entered the global arena amid rapid business growth throughout the world in this decade, performing CSR based on lawyers' pro bono work has emerged in Chinese legal service market. By doing Chinese style pro bono, the value of CSR has been integrated into the Chinese legal service industry [2]. As a direct result, an increasing number of Chinese law firms and individual lawyers began to deliver a variety of pro bono work to declare CSR in the field of the legal profession [3]. Evidence indicates that pro bono work with Chinese characteristics emphasizing lawyers' CSR commitment is taking shape across the country [4]. The quality of CSR practice is becoming a remarkable sign to evaluate Chinese lawyers and law firms' performance [3].

Previous research suggests that institutional variations especially the workplace differentiation impact lawyers' pro bono meanings [2]. In this research, I will apply institutional theory to test whether Chinese lawyers' workplace characteristics influence their meanings on CSR practice.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 CSR Practice in Chinese Legal Service Market**

Previous research shows that delivering varieties of pro bono work is perceived as an inherent CSR for lawyering [3], which is no longer a theory, rather it has become a series of practices in the Chinese legal service market. Many law firms and lawyers have come to realize the importance of CSR and made a great effort to deliver a variety of public services, namely pro bono work to meet their commitment to CSR after it was promoted by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and All Chinese Lawyers Association (ACLA). In 2019, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), a state bureaucracy which oversees law firms and professional lawyers released a document ‘Opinions for Promoting Chinese Lawyers’ Pro Bono Legal Service Participation’, which specifically instructed Chinese legal professionals to complete at least 50 hours pro bono legal service every year [5]. This leads to great enthusiasm and supportive attitudes towards CSR work and its development.

To implement CSR, lawyers and law firms voluntarily contribute their billable hours to a range of public services. Many large firms have their own foundations for CSR activities, and they regularly publicize the value of CSR on their official website. The public can also access their annual CSR report on the internet, demonstrating their efforts to promote the sustainability of society from a wide array of areas including environment protection, green development, and eliminating poverty. As for individual lawyers, they can deliver public service associated with local media, NGOs, and the local community. Evidence shows that pro bono work is becoming Chinese legal professionals’ main pathway to fulfilling their CSR commitment and delivering CSR value [2].

### **2.2 Institutional Variations and Lawyers’ CSR Practice**

Research on institution variations in the legal profession is not a fresh idea in academia. Much of the U.S. literature has focused on the influence that institutions have had in shaping the decision-making pattern and behaviors mode of lawyers when practicing pro bono work [6].

It is noted that the sociological foundation can be realized through the ideology of civic professionalism [7]. Pro bono practice should largely rely on the claims of professionalism that lawyers have an inherent obligation to serve the public good [8]. For law organizations, civic professionalism reflects the value of CSR. However, previous research shows that the meaning of professionalism for lawyers is not identical to a homogenous unity. Rather, it will vary based on the context of the work sectors [9]. Scholars have identified that the institutionalization of pro bono is influenced by various factors related to the work setting. The characteristics of work environment has been found to shape lawyers’ decision making regarding pro bono [6].

According to previous studies, the size and organizational structure of law firms are one of the most important institutional predictors that may influence lawyers’ decision making [10], because, from an institutional perspective, the number of pro bono hours and the type of work varies based on the organizational context of the firm [11]. Many scholars have noted that the enactment of pro bono work is differentiated between large and small-sized firms. Although the revenue of some large firms is negatively affected by their pro bono commitments, it could enhance their reputation as “good-hearted lawyers” [12].

Within law firm development, pro bono has been effectively integrated into CSR. Its practice is rationalized as a new narrative of professionalism and will reconstruct the managing structure of the firms [13]. Moreover, it has become a habitus, meaning a lifestyle and value attached to the professional group of elites. Therefore, it is essential to recruit new associates, train young lawyers to broaden their professional skills, as well as improve client relationships [14].

The motivation to fulfil pro bono work also varies depending on the work environment of the firms. In small firms, doing the work is seen as a good opportunity to gain experience by working directly with clients as opposed to big corporate law firms as there are fewer opportunities. In most small firms, most pro bono opportunities come from friends, families, and existing clients. They are less likely to run pro bono programs by themselves. Insufficient administrative support can cause low motivation. As a result, lawyers working in these firms tend to fall short of mandatory pro bono requirements. “‘Low bono’, which is usually at a discounted rate of legal service, has been widely performed. [15].

Education, in an institution, often provides rule-like conventions to direct action and enforces its legitimacy within an organization. Theoretically, peoples’ mindsets and behavior patterns will be determined by their learning experiences under the influence [16]. Law school education is a process to confer legal professional status on graduates and mold their minds into future lawyers with professionalism [17].

### **3 Research Design**

According to previous research, the meaning of pro bono is affected by the law firm context in which a lawyer practices law. For this study, I will explore the variation in the emotions and perceptions of a lawyer across the legal work sectors with quantitative research methods. The quantitative analysis is in terms of a survey. Survey questions in my research are adapted from Granfield’s survey of pro bono attitudes in the U.S. with minor modifications [6]. This quantitative research could strengthen the comparative and theoretical understanding of global pro bono work and the internationalization of CSR among professional lawyers. Rooted in the purpose of the research and referencing Granfield’s study, three dependent variables were constructed in the research: 1. support for CSR (pro bono) work, 2. perceived benefits from pro bono work 3. motivation to perform the work. Granfield (2007) states that the variables “adequately capture the complexity of what respondents thought about pro bono, why they did it, and what they gained from the experience” [6:124].

In October 2022, a survey named Chinese legal professionals’ CSR has been distributed on a social media platform for lawyers. Overall, 497 lawyers completed the survey. In this research, I used an ordinary least-squares regression (OLS) model to examine the research questions. Statistically, dependent variables, independent variables, and control variables will be clarified.

Three dependent variables were created to examine the meanings of respondent regarding CSR. The first dependent variable is the support for pro bono work because ethically lawyers should take a small amount of responsibility for public good out of consideration for civic professionalism [7], which is reflected in the level of support in law firms. A group of four-point Likert scale (1-4) of statements was used to measure the general endorsement of the

value of CSR (pro bono). To examine the differentiation of the value, another four-point Likert scale of the statement was applied to determine the mandatory support for pro bono practice.

The second dependent variable is the perceived benefits from pro bono work. They are essential aspects as CSR work including pro bono has been found to have many valuable benefits for lawyers involved in expertise training and professional development [6]. Hence, respondents were asked about the degree (on a scale of 1-4) to whether pro bono work can enhance their legal skills or promote careers.

The motivation to perform pro bono is the third dependent variable. Although pro bono is regarded as an inherent responsibility for legal professionals, incorporating public service into business is broadly applied in the U.S. as a tool to monopolize the market [19]. Therefore, the motivation of pro bono should be considered from two aspects as Granfield (2007) proposed [6] - factors associated with a sense of CSR and the relationship with professional autonomy.

To assess the impact of institutional variation on lawyers' CSR, two groups of independent variables were designed based on work environment and education. In terms of education, questions were about the frequency respondents applied learn knowledge about pro bono to CSR study and practice in law school. The second group is the characteristics of the workplace with three dependent variables – work setting (size of the law firm); committee monitoring; hierarchical structure as they may significantly influence the legal practice within a law firm, in addition to bureaucracy and geographical diversification [20]. Respondents with different occupational backgrounds were compared using a regression model. With the first variable, given the current situation of the Chinese legal field, the size of law firms was divided into mega law firms (over 200 lawyers); large-sized firms (100-200 lawyers); upper medium-sized firms (50-100 lawyers); medium-sized firm (20-50 lawyers); small or solo law firm (up to 20 attorneys). Regarding the second variable, many U.S. law firms, especially large firms established a pro bono committee or manager to oversee the practice [21].

Applying a statistical model, control variables in this research are gender, age, education, career length and political status. All dependent, independent, and control variables were entered into an OLS regression equation in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

## 4 Hypotheses

Based on the above research questions, design, sampling, and variables. The following hypotheses were formed to examine the effect of the institutional variation of Chinese pro bono. I suppose that the independent variable, pro bono education, may positively impact lawyers' supportive attitude on CSR by doing pro bono. Therefore, the first hypotheses will be tested on this issue:

**Hypothesis 1:** *Lawyers who had pro bono education in legal studies are likely to continue to support the value of CSR.*

Since clinical legal education provide legal skills training courses, it is significant to test whether respondents' pro bono education enhanced their legal skills which are necessary for legal practice and career development. I, therefore, formed the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2:** *Lawyers who had pro bono experience in law school are likely to continue to perceive the benefits of doing pro bono in career mobility and legal skills enhancement.*

Pro bono education is mandatory in U.S law schools [17] as it cultivates students' sense of CSR in their future legal practice, ultimately contributing to the community. This notion has been adopted by many countries amid globalization including China [2]. That led to the next hypothesis - whether pro bono education can cultivate Chinese legal practitioners' sense of CSR.

**Hypothesis 3:** *Lawyers who studied pro bono in law schools are likely to fulfil pro bono commitments because of the sense of CSR.*

How to perform CSR implies a rational choice that has a different meaning depending on the work environment. In addition, the institutionalization of pro bono is influenced by characteristics regarding the work environment [6].

According to two hemisphere thesis, legal practitioners working in large law firms have more social resources and connections than their counterparts and are more likely to invest in CSR to attract corporate clients [12]. It is noted that Chinese large law firms have already initiated their own CSR projects. That CSR practice may be worth examining to establish a good social image of lawyers in the legal services market. Besides, they can develop necessary legal skills from Pro bono practice. To further investigate this in China, the next hypothesis was formulated based on the characteristics of the large law firms' work environment:

**Hypothesis 4:** *Lawyers from large-sized firms are more likely to believe that performing pro bono work is beneficial for career mobility and legal skills enhancement.*

Previous research demonstrates that the pro bono work of U.S. law firms is a work of market reliance. Particularly, in large firms that conduct organized pro bono practice to attract potential corporate clients to address fierce market competition [12]. Lawyers from those firms see pro bono opportunities as a reliable source to build their clientele on the vision of clients' CSR. In more complex structured firms, the work environment is becoming alienated due to the considerable pressure and job dissatisfaction caused by the bureaucratic system where lawyers have to obey "the boss" and have a rare opportunity to practice law independently. Exercising client control for professional autonomy is a pressing issue for the future development of large firm lawyers, who tend to approach pro bono clients independently as the work is motivated for obtaining professional independence [6]. It is meaningful to test whether Chinese lawyers' pro bono practice is motivated by professional autonomy. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated:

**Hypothesis 5:** *Lawyers in large-sized law firms who practice pro bono tend to be motivated for professional autonomy.*

In order to effectively manage law firms' pro bono practice, a new role inside the managing structure of law firm emerges. Many law firms in China initiate to establish a committee or designate special staff who is responsible for developing, arranging, and outreaching pro bono practice for the firm. Pro bono culture could be taken shape through this setting up. Also, it will help individual lawyers to understand CSR as well. Besides the variable of the firm's size, the

internal organizational settings of the firm can also influence lawyers' CSR meanings. This can be examined by a pro bono special committee or designated staff [13], which has a positive effect on firms' CSR development in the Chinese context. Lawyers within the firm are more inclined to believe CSR meanings and substantively work to fulfil CSR commitment under effective management because they can gain more from CSR practice as well as a better sense of CSR.

Therefore, this characteristic will be examined as the three following hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 6:** Lawyers in a firm with a pro bono committee or manager are more likely to advocate for CSR value.

**Hypothesis 7:** More respondents are working in a law firm with a pro bono committee or manager to secure benefits from CSR practice.

**Hypothesis 8:** Lawyers in a firm where a pro bono committee or manager in place tend to believe pro bono as a sense of CSR.

Lawyers' work position in a firm is likely to influence CSR meanings. In a hierarchical structure of the firm, Lawyers' work position in a firm is likely to influence CSR meanings. Previous research suggests that the work environment of law firm especially large sized law firm is a palace of alienation. Lawyers who are young and low position are very difficult to work closely with clients and handle cases independently. Lawyers who are standing at senior level have bureaucracy power to take control of clients. Practitioners in lower positions have to work in a "proletarian-like" condition [22]. Taking control of their daily legal work and practicing pro bono for professional autonomy can put them on the right path towards career promotion. Hence the next hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 9:** Lawyers in lower positions are more likely to do pro bono because of professional autonomy.

## **5 Findings**

### **5.1 Descriptive Statistics**

I input the raw data into the SPSS software and three outcomes are generated as 3 tables. As Table 1 demonstrates, nearly 46 % of lawyers were employed by large firms (100-200 lawyers), 32.8% in mega law firms (over 200 lawyers), 12.7% practiced in law firms having 51-99 lawyers, 6.58% practiced in firms with 20-50 lawyers, 1.8 % from small firms or are solo practitioners. These numbers reflect the current trend of Chinese law firms' rapid expansion with nationwide firms across the country and the size of the firm is becoming larger and larger. This survey also reveals that over 40% of lawyers have 3-6 year experiences in legal practice, and the age of most respondents was between 26 and 34. About 56% of the respondents reported that they hold a bachelor's degree in law, and 29% with master's degree. In terms of profession, 6% are partners in the firm, 57.1% are attorneys, and legal associates and other associates are 27.8% and 15.1% respectively.

A list of dependent variables shows the distribution and standard deviation in Table 2.

**Table 1: Sample Characteristics**

<b>Gender</b>	
Male	51.3%
Female	48.7%
<b>Age</b>	
Below 26	13.1%
26-34	56.7%
34-45	25.4%
Above 45	4.8%
<b>Degree</b>	
Below Undergraduate	14.1%
Undergraduate	56.5%
Graduate	29.4%
<b>Length of Legal Practice</b>	
Less than 3 Years	24.1%
3-6 Years	41.2%
7-10 Years	26.2%
Over 10 Years	8.5%
<b>Work Setting</b>	
Mega (Over 200 Lawyers)	32.8%
Large (100-200 Lawyers)	45.9%
Upper medium (51-99)	12.7%
Medium (20-50 Lawyers )	6.58%
Small and Solo (Less 20 Lawyers)	1.8%
<b>Class of Positions</b>	
Partner	5.6%
Attorney	57.1%
Legal Associate	27.8%
Other Associate	15.1%
<b>N=497</b>	

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Dependent Variable 1: Support for Pro Bono</b>	Mean	Std.	Cronbach's alpha
<b>1. The endorsement of the value of pro bono</b>			
Generally, pro bono should be paid attention by the legal profession	3.1	0.75	0.90
Performing pro bono is for repaying to the community	3.04	0.87	
Lawyers' pro bono can deliver a positive energy to our society	3.04	0.88	
Chinese lawyers should engage in pro bono work every year	3.04	0.82	
Pro bono is an inherent responsibility for lawyers	3.01	0.89	

Because of pro bono, I am more satisfied with my work	3.00	0.89	
<b>1.2 Lawyers' pro bono work should be mandatory</b>	2.98	0.88	
<b>Dependent Variable 2: Benefits of Pro Bono</b>			0.94
<b>2.1 Career Mobility</b>			
Career development	3.05	0.94	
Professional reputation	2.97	0.85	
Social Networking	2.97	0.94	
Gaining client resource	3.00	0.93	
Establishing a good public image	2.98	0.92	
<b>2.2 Enhancing Legal Skills</b>			
Enhancing general legal skills	2.92	0.94	
Enhancing litigation skills	2.94	0.95	
Enhancing communication skills	2.99	0.95	
<b>Dependent Variable 3: Motivation for Pro Bono</b>			0.90
<b>3.1 The Sense of CSR</b>			
Personal Satisfaction	3.11	0.79	
Professional Obligation	3.04	0.90	
For building a good social image	3.07	0.87	
<b>3.2 Professional Autonomy</b>			
For obeying superior order	2.99	0.91	
For more work experience	2.98	0.92	
For working directly for clients	2.99	0.91	
For social networking	3.00	0.94	
For demonstration social responsibility	3.03	0.89	

## 5.2 OLS Regression Results

According to previous studies, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was applied to obtain the data's reliability concerning these dependent variables. Statistically, items are reliable when the value of Cronbach's alpha is above 0.8 [6]. As shown in Table 2, the first dimension of the dependent variable "support for pro bono" was composed of seven items and yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.90. The second dimension of the variable "perceived benefits of doing pro bono" yielded 0.94 and 0.90 for the third dimension, which means that they are reliable enough to run a regression model.

The ordinary regression model will be used sequentially to analyze three groups of dependent variables with independent variables and control variables. The above hypotheses have been tested. The outcome of ordinary regression is presented in table 3. For the first dimension of institutional factor, education, the outcomes present that the first, second and third hypotheses were not supported by this result. Participation in pro bono education in law schools appears to have minimal impact on three dependent variables. However, it is noted that respondents' law degree significantly influences endorsement of the value of CSR ( $b=0.82$ ,  $p<0.01$ , see Table 3), namely, lawyers who had higher legal education are more likely to favor the value of CSR as they tend to believe that lawyers should perform pro bono practice to give back to the community.



When looking at independent variables regarding the characteristics of the workplace, it is noted that two variables of law organizations greatly impact lawyers' feelings about CSR. The size of the firm is an important determinant of lawyers' attitudes to CSR. According to statistical findings, when a law firm becomes larger, lawyers tend to support the value of CSR ( $b=0.58$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), because they are more likely to believe that they secure benefits from pro bono practice either for facilitating career or enhancing legal practice skills ( $b=0.19$ ,  $p<0.01$ ;  $b=0.38$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). It, therefore, supports my fourth hypothesis. However, the fifth hypothesis is not supported by the outcome because the results indicate that the size of a law firm does not significantly influence lawyers' motivation of doing pro bono.

More importantly, compared to other law professionals, respondents from a law firm where pro bono work have been institutionally managed are more likely to support the value of CSR and mandatory pro bono work ( $b=2.3$ ,  $p<0.01$ ;  $b=0.27$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Hence, hypothesis 6 is supported. Also, they are more likely to perceive pro bono practice are beneficial for their career development and legal skills enhancement ( $b=1.23$ ,  $p<0.05$ ;  $b=0.97$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), which supports the 7<sup>th</sup> hypothesis. Finally, the 8<sup>th</sup> hypothesis is supported by the regression results as lawyers in those firms tend to perform pro bono because of the sense of CSR ( $b=0.86$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The 9<sup>th</sup> hypothesis does not obtain empirical support. This means that lawyers in lower positions do not tend to practice pro bono to gain professional independence due to the minimal influence shown in statistics.

**Table 3.** Ordinary Least-Squares Regression Coefficient

	Support for Pro Bono Work		Benefits of Pro Bono Work		Motivations for Pro Bono	
	Endorsement of CSR value	Support Mandatory Pro Bono	Career Mobility	Legal Skill Enhancement	Sense of CSR	Professional Autonomy
Gender	-0.22 (0.28)	0.04(0.08)	0.03(0.32)	0.13 (0.20)	-0.04(0.20)	-0.19(0.32)
Age	0.22 (0.35)	-0.05 (0.06)	0.02(0.26)	-0.05 (0.16)	0.23(0.16)	0.32(0.26)
Law Degree	*0.83 (0.28)	0.02(0.06)	0.09(0.26)	0.68 (0.16)	0.18(0.16)	-0.50(0.25)
Work Length	0.39 (0.23)	0.07(0.05)	0.30(0.21)	0.15 (0.13)	0.15(0.13)	0.21 (0.21)
Political Status	-0.25 (0.65)	-0.15(0.12)	** -1.89(0.52)	** -0.87 (0.32)	-0.28 (0.32)	* -1.02 (0.50)
Position	0.30 (0.22)	0.02(0.05)	-0.16(0.21)	-0.11(0.13)	-0.13 (0.13)	0.08 (0.20)
The size	**0.58(0.20)	0.07(0.05)	**0.87(0.19)	**0.38(0.12)	0.39(0.12)	-0.05 (0.18)
Management	**2.39(0.53)	*0.27(0.12)	*1.27(0.50)	**0.97(0.31)	**0.86 (0.31)	**1.61 (0.49)
Education Experience	0.30(0.14)	0.01(0.03)	0.002 (0.13)	0.05(0.08)	0.14(0.83)	-0.19 (0.13)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.15	0.05	0.16	0.12	0.05	0.07
Constant	10.57	2.24	10.11	6.12	7.18	14.00

\* $p<0.05$ ; \*\* $p<0.01$ .

Value in parentheses represent standard error

## 6 Discussion

The findings of this research suggest that lawyers' gender, age and the length of legal practice have minimal impact to their CSR meanings. The outcomes show that stratification within legal education impacts the value of pro bono. Respondents with higher legal education are more likely to support the value of CSR. Previous research in the U.S. elaborates that elite education could instill CSR value for the public good in their students. [23] In U.S elite law schools, doing for the public good is inherent value of legal education. CSR value is embedded into "doing for the public good" training and practice. Elite U.S law schools would train students' value of CSR through well established pro bono clinical training programs and the required coursework "legal ethics".

Based on outcomes, It is evident that similar education in China is more effective in instilling CSR value because the academic environment assists future lawyers with the advocacy of the value as that of the U.S.

The results demonstrate that the pro bono program and practice in law schools do not significantly and positively impact attitudes on CSR endorsement despite the amount of work that the schools put in. Legal professional with much pro bono education do not show a significant difference in CSR endorsement and perceiving pro bono benefits. Also, pro bono program in law schools does not significantly motivate lawyers' pro bono participation as well as raise the consciousness of CSR in the marketplace. These results are not surprising as most U.S. respondents did not believe that the pro bono learning experience in school impacts their current career despite the time they spent on the study [17]. The outcome from the regression is consistent with that of the U.S. A disconnection between pro bono education policy in school and practice in the market does exist in the Chinese context. Although scholars emphasize legal ethics, CSR as well as pro bono education in law schools [18], it is hard to impact professional lawyers' mindset and behavior towards CSR.

Regarding independent variable, the workplace, the findings suggest that pro bono can be contextualized in the work sectors of legal professionals in China. When the size of the firm becomes larger, lawyers are more likely to favor the value of CSR and feel pro bono to promote career development and enhance legal skills. The main reason of these outcomes could be identified through the thesis of two hemispheres. [24].

Two hemispheres means that the size of law firm may lead to a social stratification in the legal service market. According to the thesis of "two hemispheres", larger-sized law firms are more likely to invest more economic and human capital in a wide array of CSR practices and establish a good public image through performing CSR, such as CSR foundation, awards, annual reports as well as advertisements on their website [3]. Larger-sized firm attorneys could be offered a great number of pro bono opportunities due to the institutional privileges and reputation of the firm. Meanwhile, these work and resource help firms and lawyers establish a good social image to the public. No doubt, it would bring more clients to lawyers. Therefore, lawyer who are employed by larger firms tend to show supportive attitudes on performing CSR. Moreover, they would become more competitive in the legal service market due to varieties of CSR practice. They can gain more so called good-lawyer reputation in the legal service market. Hence, they incline to believe CSR practice are beneficial for their career development and legal skills enhancement.

Lawyers who are working on smaller sized firms are encountering fierce competition in the legal service market. Lawyers from small sized law firms are more likely to be concerned with “take home income” instead of CSR value [15]. In the characteristics of the work sector, their work environment is less likely to have strong social capital, economic resource, and opportunities on CSR practice. Most their CSR including pro bono opportunities rely on local justice bureau or bar association’s designation and recommendation. Or, it comes from their personal connections. The number of pro bono opportunity is relatively small. This condition makes their pro bono difficult to be performed constantly and institutionally. Therefore, their supportive attitudes or feelings on CSR is not as strong as their counterparts. Fewer pro bono for them has been well organized. It is less likely for them to feel the benefits on doing pro bono on both legal skills enhancement and career development. It matters formal research in U.S. Lawyers in small sized law firm tend to advocate “low bono” instead of pro bono [15]. It is evidence that the institutionalization of Chinese pro bono is more likely to display in large sized law firms’ work environment.

Although the size has significantly impacted the supportive attitudes on doing pro bono, it has minimal impact to the support on mandatory pro bono. Either large or small sized firm’s lawyers in China do not tend to look at pro bono work as an extra “tax” which should be performed as only one unified standard. When pro bono has been increasingly developed within Chinese context, pro bono has been performed with varieties of public interest service. Both legal or non-legal service has been accounted into lawyers’ CSR practice. The mode of pro bono or CSR become more complex and insightful. Respondents believe that it is very difficult to be fully standardized and to be mandatory.

Furthermore, size may not be the only determinant of legal workplace. Attorneys from a firm where CSR have been well-organized perceive pro bono work differently from their counterparts because pro bono partners or counsel is playing a key role in advancing pro bono practice and raising professional profiles, which resembles that of U.S. research [25]. Pro bono committees or coordinators are responsible for developing policies and procedures, outreach, assigning cases, evaluating attorney performance, and publicizing pro bono affairs [2]. Through their effort, the consciousness of law practitioners on pro bono has been institutionally valued and constructed within the work settings. In other words, a culture of CSR commitment has been installed within the work environment [26]. As a result, lawyers tend to contribute their billable hours to free service. Mather and her colleagues’ (2001) research in the U.S. context might explain this finding. The professional legal community is not as unified as an abstract theory makes it out to be. Rather, collegial interactions in a work setting might be an area in which the variation of professional perceptions and ideology are produced.[27] In a firm where the pro bono committee or coordinator manages pro bono work, a distinct community can be formed to support the value and practice of CSR, which is witnessed in Chinese characteristic pro bono as CSR, becoming commonplace among lawyers within that work environment [3]. Good pro bono performance could be honored by the firm, and the work itself could be accounted for billable hours, lawyers can even receive extra financial compensation. With these incentives, lawyers are inclined to show more enthusiasm for committing to CSR. In addition, the quality and diversity of well-organized pro bono work can make more law professionals feel that pro bono could enhance their legal skills and offer them career promotion opportunities. Therefore, despite a minor modification in management, the pro bono committee or coordinator should be an avenue through which Chinese lawyers can promote CSR practice in the legal

services market and a force inside the legal workplace advancing CSR in China for effective management.

## 7 Conclusion

Since little CSR research was conducted into Chinese legal service industry, this research offers scope for CSR meanings among Chinese law firms and individual lawyers based on OLS model. It shows pro bono value and practice has been widely accepted by Chinese lawyering. CSR has been increasingly implemented in the Chinese context as an organizational management policy. When a Chinese style of pro bono is embedded into CSR, either CSR value or practice is instituted into the world of the legal profession through performing the work. From an institutional perspective, this research suggests that the perceptions of CSR should be understood concerning the context in which lawyers work, particularly for Chinese lawyering, it does not merely adhere to abstract norms and rules. The research also supports that the work environment of legal practice has a constitutive effect on legal professionals and constructs a sort of localized meaning of CSR, whose understandings toward CSR are not homogeneous among Chinese lawyers.

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