

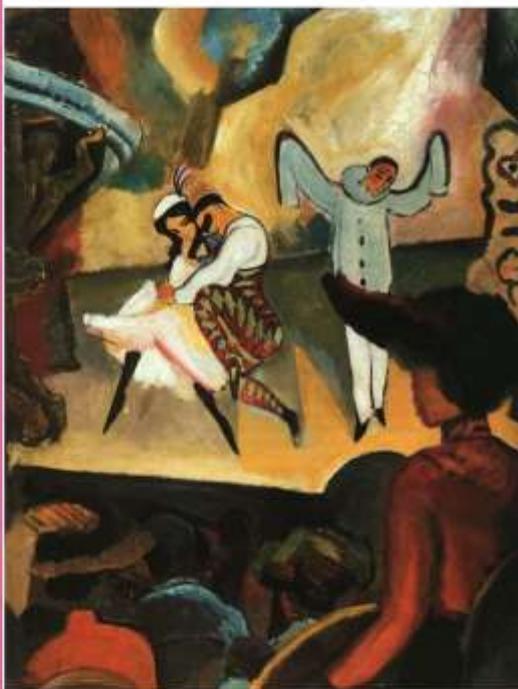
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Ajman University students' perspectives on university social responsibility: A field study

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate Ajman university students' perspectives on university social responsibility via a descriptive methodological approach, analyzing secondary data collated from selected existing Literature on USR that were related to the concept, origins, importance, and constraints of implementing of USR practices. The results indicate the extent to which students, as internal stakeholders, are aware of the USR, opportunities for its improvement, and its future challenges. In conclusion, no relationship existed between students' academic grades and the USR and its role in the process of teaching, learning and dissemination of knowledge and the teaching of good citizenship.

Keywords: University, social, responsibility, stakeholders, Likert.

Perspectivas de los estudiantes universitarios de Ajman sobre la responsabilidad social universitaria: Un estudio de campo

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es investigar las perspectivas de los estudiantes universitarios de Ajman sobre la responsabilidad social de la universidad a través de un enfoque metodológico descriptivo, analizando los datos secundarios recopilados de la literatura existente seleccionada sobre la USR que se relacionaron con el concepto, los orígenes, la importancia y las limitaciones de la implementación de la USR prácticas. Los resultados indican hasta qué punto los estudiantes, como partes interesadas internas, conocen la USR, las oportunidades para su mejora y sus desafíos futuros. En conclusión, no existía una relación entre los grados académicos de los estudiantes y la USR y su papel en el proceso de enseñanza, aprendizaje y difusión del conocimiento y la enseñanza de la buena ciudadanía.

Palabras clave: Universidad, social, responsabilidad, grupos de interés, Likert.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education can be seen by higher education institutions as a driver, a core value, and a key factor in human development. UNESCO believes university social responsibility (USR) to be a vital factor for higher education institutions facing the complexity of current and future global challenges, as well as a factor for advancing

understanding of multifaceted issues involving social, economic, scientific, and cultural dimensions while strengthening higher education stakeholders' ability to respond to these challenges. USR is important for leading society toward sustainable development and regenerating global knowledge to address global challenges such as climate change, water management, intercultural dialogue, renewable energy and public health. USR facilitate universities' playing of a key role in the undertaking of research, teaching and services to the community within a context of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Furthermore, USR helps increase interdisciplinary focus while promoting critical thinking and active citizenship, thereby contributing to sustainable development, wellbeing, and the realization of human rights, including gender equity.

The importance of higher education institutions' practicing of USR has been highlighted by various researchers. Deketele maintains that the importance of higher education is best expressed through the various academic services it offers for society while taking into consideration the needs of local people and society. Herrera (2009) has remarked that the new notion of USR has taken an additional step forward as it affects and makes demands of educational policies that might "encourage greater correspondence between the fundamental objectives of universities and the environment in which they operate" (Herrera, 2009: 40). Herrera also notes that USR requires "a two-way perspective between universities and society, which involves directly multiplying the critical uses of knowledge in society and the economy"

(Herrera, 2009: 40). In practical terms, USR promotes the social usefulness of knowledge and improves quality of life.

Esfijani et al., (2012) illustrate the importance of USR as a philosophy or principle for social movement and the use of an ethical approach to develop and engage with the local, regional, and global community in order to sustain social, ecological, environmental, technical, and economic developments. Accordingly, a policy of ethical quality is implicit in USR for governing the performance of a university community this is undertaken using responsible management of the university's educational cognitive, staff, and environmental impact via an interactive dialogue with society and its communities. This will promote sustainable human development through education for the transformation of knowledge, teaching, research, scholarship, and provision of service. All these processes underline an ethical collaboration, not only with the university community, but also with the business community in terms of stakeholder involvement (Vallaey, 2013). USR has become a critical area of debate in the higher education sector and, due to its importance, has become a central issue in most higher education systems around the world.

However, Hart and Northmore (2011) emphasize that the incorporation of USR in most higher education systems can benefit both the university and society. Partnerships between universities and their communities have several possible potentials, including the development of critical thinking through high-quality education. They also promote public engagement and responsibility in citizens, improve

health and wellbeing, nurture better-informed citizens with greater social awareness, and enhance employability; all these effects improve the quality of life and provide further social and economic benefits (Hart and Northmore, 2011). UNESCO declared international recognition of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as an integral and transformative element of inclusive quality education, and as a lifelong learning tool for sustainable development. ESD focuses on generating and scaling up ESD action across all levels and areas of education and among all sustainable development sectors.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used an analytical descriptive methodological approach to analyze secondary data related to the concept, origins, importance, and constraints on implementing of USR practices. Data were collated from relevant researches on USR. A quantitative data analysis method was also employed using a questionnaire tool developed from and based on the established approach of Valley. Many professors and doctors who are members of AU's academic staff and who specialized in social responsibility have verified the validity of the questionnaire. This questionnaire uses a Likert scale to measure the four areas of USR as factors, including responsible campus, professional and citizenship education, social knowledge management, and social participation. Data were analyzed using SPSS.

3. ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Table 1: Analysis of the first hypotheses – University social responsibility and its role in creating an ideal educational and administrative environment

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-Square	Sig.	Result
1- The university provides an attractive, healthy and safe learning environment for both faculty and students.	2.80	.550	199.760	0.00	Agree
2-The university provides the study halls, labs and studios which are equipped with suitable modern educational tools and equipment.	2.75	.626	186.800	0.00	Agree
2- The university has an administrative approach that is responsible, consultative, fair,	2.59	.726	70.820	0.00	Agree

transparent and accountable.					
3- The university encourages students to participate fully in the processes of university environmental sustainability through which the university can teach its students important aspects of social responsibility.	2.63	.706	132.720	0.00	Agree
4- The university promotes sustainable environment and development practices by introducing energy-saving measures and promoting the use of renewable energy sources on campus.	2.48	.745	40.340	0.00	Agree
5- The university promotes sustainable environment and development practices	2.49	.732	40.820	0.00	Agree

by introducing measures to provide energy, to reduce the waste and utilizing of renewable energy resources and facilitate recycling process.					
6-The university encourages the principles of sustainable development inside the campus.	2.62	.648	65.660	0.00	Agree
Result factor one	2.70	.577	84.080	0.00	Agree

Table 1 shows the analysis of the data pertaining to the first research hypothesis. Statistics concerning participants' responses to item one (The University provides an attractive, healthy and safe learning environment for both faculty and students) revealed a mean of (2.80), a standard deviation of (.550), a Chi-Square value of (199.760), and a Sig. value of (0.00), which is lower than (0.05). Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there is a difference (agree).

Table 2: Analysis of the second hypotheses – links and linkages between the university and the beneficiaries of social responsibility

Topic two	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-Square	Sig	Result
1-The University contributes to creating a positive consumer culture to preserve private and public resources from damage, loss and leakage. Promotion the feeling of the student belonging to the community that the student loves and works for its good, p	2.68	.665	93.860	0.00	agree
2-The university instills in its students the desire to help the less fortunate and address and solve the challenges they face.	2.66	.728	157.040	0.00	Highly agree
3-The university instills in its students the value	2.78	.524	111.740	0.00	Highly agree

of recognizing their role
 in making society and
 the world in general a
 better place to live in.

4-The university provides students with Educational level classroom activities and social initiatives outside the study halls.	2.70	.577	84.080	0.00	Highly agree
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5-The University provides social services and educational programs for students outside the university campus.	2.58	.699	111.360	0.00	Agree
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6-The University serves the community and sponsors human capital to support the process of development of the country at the social, economic and scientific levels.	2.62	.678	124.400	0.00	Agree
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7-The University strives to provide equal opportunities in education for all, to those with special needs and to disadvantaged groups in society	2.70	.659	155.440	0.00	agree
8-The university introduces students to ethical concepts and social responsibility.	2.74	.597	170.240	0.00	Agree
9-The university recognizes the global challenges and encourages students to work locally and think globally.	2.74	.676	186.480	0.00	agree
10-The university encourages the exchange of cultural programs with other educational institutions in other countries.	2.66	.685	142.880	0.00	agree

11-The university is keen to adhere to the issues of scientific research ethics and avoid its dangerous social impacts e.g. the plagiarism in research papers and the manipulation of the results of scientific research.	2.79	.556	193.680	0.00	agree
12-The university incorporates the community social problems and social needs into research ideas and topics.	2.73	.633	174.960	0.00	agree
13-The university encourages the students to participate in graduation projects for solving their local community problems.	2.75	.557	166.640	0.00	Highly agree
14-The university is interested in the field of	2.74	.661	181.120	0.00	agree

scientific research to
produce knowledge to
serve the community
and improve the quality
of life.

15-The university	2.75	.557	166.680	0.00	agree
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contributes to the
formulation of
productive and
responsible citizens in
the society.

16-The university	2.78	.596	193.520	0.00	agree
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encourages the students
to widely participate in
civil society and
develop their social
skills and trends.

17-The students	2.73	.679	180.560	0.00	agree
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constitute huge wealth
of valuable resources in
helping the
communities served by
the university.

18-The university	2.71	.591	150.800	0.00	agree
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encourages the students

to engage in
 community partnership
 and thus teaching them
 how to deal with social
 and cultural issues.

19-The university	2.66	.670	139.120	0.00	agree
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encourages the students
 to think and participate
 in the service of the
 international
 community in
 developing countries
 and to promote new
 types of multicultural
 cooperation and
 understanding.

20-The University is	2.76	.553	171.840	0.00	agree
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concerned with the
 factors of globalization,
 progress in information
 technology, scientific
 and technical
 innovation and global
 competitiveness.

Result topic two	2.77	.468	98.180	0.00	agree
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Table 2 shows the analysis of the data pertaining to the second research hypothesis. Statistics concerning participants' responses to item one (The University contributes to creating a positive consumer culture to preserve private and public resources from damage, loss and leakage. Promotion the feeling of the student belonging to the community that the student loves and works for its good) revealed a mean of (2.6), a standard deviation of (.665), a Chi-Square value of (93.890), and a Sig. value of (0.00), which is lower than (0.05).

Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is a significant difference (agree). Statistics concerning participants' responses to topic two (Links and linkages between the university and the beneficiaries of social responsibility) revealed a mean of (2.77), a standard deviation of (.468), a ChiSquare value of (98.180), and a Sig. value of (0.00), which is lower than (0.05). Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is a significant difference (agree) (Argandoña, 2012; Sears, 2018).

Table 3: Analysis of the third hypotheses: The social responsibility of the university and its role in the process of teaching, learning and dissemination of knowledge and the teaching of good citizenship

Topic three	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-Square	Sig	Result
1-The University applies new technologies and	2.68	.680	152.800	0.00	Agree

knowledge to address
 major global challenges
 such as climate change.

2-The university
 employed modern
 techniques in the field
 of knowledge
 production and
 dissemination.

	2.72	.621	160.400	0.00	Agree
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3-The University
 contributes to the
 development of
 students' talents to be
 productive citizens in
 the future.

	2.76	.622	187.040	0.00	Agree
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4-The University
 contributes to instilling
 understanding,
 appreciation and respect
 for the various cultures
 in the students.

	2.80	.586	205.840	0.00	Agree
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5-The university
 harmonizes its
 academic and research
 programs with the

	2.75	.557	166.640	0.00	Agree
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requirements of the labor market.					
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6-The university encourages multidisciplinary curriculum to link applied sciences to social sciences.	2.66	.714	144.800	0.00	Agree
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7-Specialized courses include subjects such as the environment, social impact and ethical implications of scientific activity.	2.72	.604	156.640	0.00	Agree
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9-The university strives to improve its position in the university world ranking.	2.78	.596	193.520	0.00	Agree
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10-The university considers scientific research as a basic component of the university mission.	2.72	.637	164.640	0.00	agree
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11-The university is committed through its	2.69	.706	163.120	0.00	agree
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educational and learning programs, in contributing to the transfer of modern technology, developing innovation skills, and continuous education for students.

Result topic three	2.78	.486	102.970	0.00	agree
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Table 3 shows the analysis of the data pertaining to the third research hypothesis. Statistics concerning participants' responses to topic three (The social responsibility of the university and its role in the process of teaching, learning and dissemination of knowledge and the teaching of good citizenship) revealed a mean of (2.78), a standard deviation of (.486), a Chi-Square value of (102.970), and a Sig. value of (0.00), which is lower than (0.05). Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is a significant difference (agree) (Kosari, 2018).

4. DISCUSSION

According to the data collected from respondents, half (50%) the student participants in the research sample were male, while half (50%) were female. Concerning social status, a high percentage (78%) of

students in the study sample were single, while only a small percentage were married (20%); only a very small percentage of students (2%) were divorcees. There was a higher percentage of employed (68%) compared to unemployed (32%) participants in the study sample, and a higher percentage (40%) of students in the research sample had very good academic grades compared to the low percentage (6%) with pass academic grades. The data analysis revealed that the reliability and validation averages of the study data were (0.968) and (0.983), respectively. Gender was shown to be an independent variable through the Chi-Square test in relation to all of the following correlations.

The study results indicated that no significant relationship existed between gender and that of USR and its role in creating an ideal educational and administrative environment. No significant relationship existed between gender and the links and linkages between the university and the beneficiaries of social responsibility. Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between gender and USR and its role in the process of teaching, learning and dissemination of knowledge, and the teaching of good citizenship.

Lastly, gender was determined to have no significant relationship with USR regarding its role when adhering to values and principles and maintaining the ethics of society. Concerning social status, the Chi-Square test showed this to be an independent variable in relation to all the following correlations.

The research analysis results indicated that there is no relationship between social status and USR and its role in creating an ideal educational and administrative environment. Additionally, no

significant relationship was found between social status and the links and linkages between the university and the beneficiaries of SR. No significant relationship was identified between social status and the USR and its role in the process of teaching, learning and dissemination of knowledge and the teaching of good citizenship. Finally, no relationship was found between the variable of social status and the USR and its role in adhering to values and principles and maintaining the ethics of society.

5. CONCLUSION

No relationship was found between students' study level and USR and its role in the process of teaching, learning and dissemination of knowledge and the teaching of good citizenship. It was also found that no significant relationship was present between this variable and the USR and its role in adhering to values and principles and maintaining the ethics of society. The Chi-Square test for the students' academic grades showed it to be an independent variable, with no relationship between academic grades and the USR and its role in creating an ideal educational and administrative environment. No significant relationship was identified between academic grades and the links and linkages between the university and the beneficiaries of social responsibility.

The research revealed that no relationship existed between students' academic grades and the USR and its role in the process of

teaching, learning and dissemination of knowledge and the teaching of good citizenship. Lastly, no relationship was found between students' academic grades and the USR and its role in adhering to values and principles and maintaining the ethics of society.

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