Review Article

DOES UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IMPROVE PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES IN DELTA STATE?

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Abstract: The increase in number of universities in Nigeria has led many university management to introduce university social responsibility (USR) to rival their competitors. This study examines how USR improves the performance in Nigerian Universities in Delta State, Nigeria. A survey research was adopted, and data collected from the two hundred and eighty-three useful copies of questionnaire was used for the analysis. Canonical correlation analysis (CCA) was used to establish the association between the sets of USR (ethical responsibility, research & development, and philanthropic responsibility) and sets of University performance (UP) (university reputation, service quality, student satisfaction). Results show a positive and statistically significant relationship between proxies of UP and USR using Wilk's lambda for dimension 1-3, dimension 2-3 and reports no statistically significant association for dimension 3. The study concludes that a direct relationship exists between USR and UP, thus USR improves the performance of UP in Universities in Delta State. Arising from above, the study recommends improvement in USR by university management will lead to student satisfaction and invariably increase UP.
Keywords: Reputation, Student satisfaction, Service quality, University Performance, University Social Responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

The approval and granting of licenses by the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) to several public and private Universities has led to high competition among them to secure students to be admitted into their institutions. This has made university management see students as customers who need to be satisfied in order to secure and retain them. Thus, since most universities are currently set up for commercial purposes, it becomes relevant for university management to adopt strategies to attract more students by providing social responsibility (Bunce, Baird, & Jones, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017; Latif, Bunce & Ahmad, 2021).

University social responsibility (USR) is the term used to describe the social responsibility that the University carries out with regard to students. The management of the University adopted USR in order to monitor the institution (internally) and improve its reputation (externally). UNESCO (1998) noted that social challenges that hinder development have led most Universities to play critical roles in the society where they operate. Vazquez, Aza and Lanero (2014) noted that USR is to provide education and reach a specific performance threshold to satisfy the social set-up needs. In addition, Piacentini, MacFadyen and Eadie (2000) that "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) is the source of USR as it plays other roles outside her normal legal and economic responsibilities. Based on the preceding, it can be concluded that higher education institutions' (HEI) responsibilities have shifted from knowledge transmission to environmental, social, and economic accountability (Latif, Tariq, Muneeb, Sahibzada & Ahmad, 2022)

Previous studies have established that USR boosts student-related outcomes (student satisfaction) and social intrapreneurship (Vazquez, Aza & Lanero., 2015; Sanchez, Hernandez & Mainardes, 2016). Despite USR's significance to students, very little work has been done in developing countries, though reasonable work has been carried out in developed countries (Dumay, Frost & Beck., 2015; Vazquez *et al.*, 2015). In addition, empirical results on USR and University performance (UP) vary from one country to another. For instance, Latiff *et al.* (2022) have conflicting results, reporting a positive and significant impact relationship between USR and UP in Pakistan and an insignificant relationship in China in the same study. Most empirical studies have used univariate statistical analyses such as simple regression, multiple regression, and ANOVA instead of using multivariate techniques such as canonical correlation analysis (CCA) designed to study the linkages between sets of two variables (Sherry & Henson, 2005). The empirical literature, particularly with regard to universities in Delta State, Nigeria, is lacking in explaining the connections between the sets of UP (university reputation, service quality, and student satisfaction) and USR (ethical responsibility, research & development, and philanthropic responsibility). This research adds to the few using canonical correlation analysis (CCA) to find out the association between UP and USR in universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

University Social Responsibility

Social responsibility has shifted gradually from 'philanthropy' in nature to the contribution of business to sustainable development and finding solutions to societal and environmental challenges. Presently, the University's function is to train students for various vocations to enable them to be socially relevant by acquiring essential skills that will assist them in finding a sense of direction and thinking about society rather than merely receiving certificates (Vasilescua, Barnaby, Epurec, Baicud, 2010).

University social responsibility is comprehensible as a policy of ethical performance in higher education institutions (HEI) through responsible management in the University areas of teaching, research, extension, and University management (Vallaeys, De La Cruz & Sasia, 2009). Reiser (2008) defines the USR concept as "a policy of ethical quality of the performance of the university community (students, faculty and administrative employees) via the responsible management of the educational, cognitive, labour and environmental impacts produced by the University, in an interactive dialogue with society to promote sustainable human development.

In a competitive environment like the university sector, research and development (R&D) helps firms to survive and prevent imitation (Erickson & Jacobson, 1992; Ghaffa & Khan, 2014). Improved technology, being a fallout of R&D, positively impacts a firm's performance (Michael, 2008; Ghaffa & Khan, 2014). Thus, there is a direct relationship between R&D expenditures and performance (Chao-Hung Wang, 2011).

However, Donelson and Resutak (2012) established an inverse relationship between R&D and profit. They argued that R&D increases the cost of production and directly reduces organizational profit. Contrarily, Cooper, Gulen, and Schill (2008) noted that in finance, a negative relationship exists between R&D and a firm's earnings.

Ethical responsibility deals with moral issues that do not comply with the organization's norms and standards. If the University does what is right as the law requires, it will lead to student satisfaction. Thus, university organizations are expected to formulate ethical standards to promote or increase satisfaction. Given the higher proportion of female students than male students, sexual harassment by university personnel towards them will, for example, directly impact female admission to the University and performance.

The philanthropic responsibilities entail the actions the University takes to respond to society's (students) expectations or demands, such as grants, scholarships, exchange programmes, and so on. Thus, these will impact positively on performance.

University Performance

In every organization, whether profit-making or not, management is interested in performance. Previous studies had measured organizational performance using either financial or non-financial or both. This study used non-financial performance as it considers currently available information (Tarurhor, 2018; Tarurhor & Olele, 2020) to correct the weaknesses of financial data focusing on past performance.

Even though disseminating knowledge is a university's primary goal, the growing number of universities has led to a focus in recent years on the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution. For instance, Delta State had seven Universities as of 2015, and currently, fifteen Universities comprised of five federal Universities (Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun; Nigerian Maritime University Okerenkoko, Delta State; Admiralty University of Nigeria, Ibusa Delta State; Federal University of Medical and Health Science, Kwale in Delta State; Federal University of Education, Isiokolo), four state Universities (Delta State University, Abraka; University of Delta, Agbor; Delta University of Science and Technology, Ozoro; Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba) and six Private Universities (Edwin Clark University, Kaigbodo; Michael & Cecilia Ibru University; Novena University, Ogume; Western Delta University, Oghara Delta State; Margaret Lawrence University, Umunede, Delta State; Sports University, Idumuje, Ugboko, Delta State).

Forrant and Silka (2006) that universities can improve performance through operational efficiencies and USR activities. Latif (2022) stated that there are no prescribed measurements of organizational performance and that researchers are at liberty to use any appropriate measures for their organization. However, Uluskan (2017) noted that university performance can be measured by financial and teaching. Similarly, Maltez *et al.* (2003), as cited by Tseng (2010), used improvement on administrative operations, resource development, effectiveness & efficiency, university students, and getting ready for the future as University performance measurement.
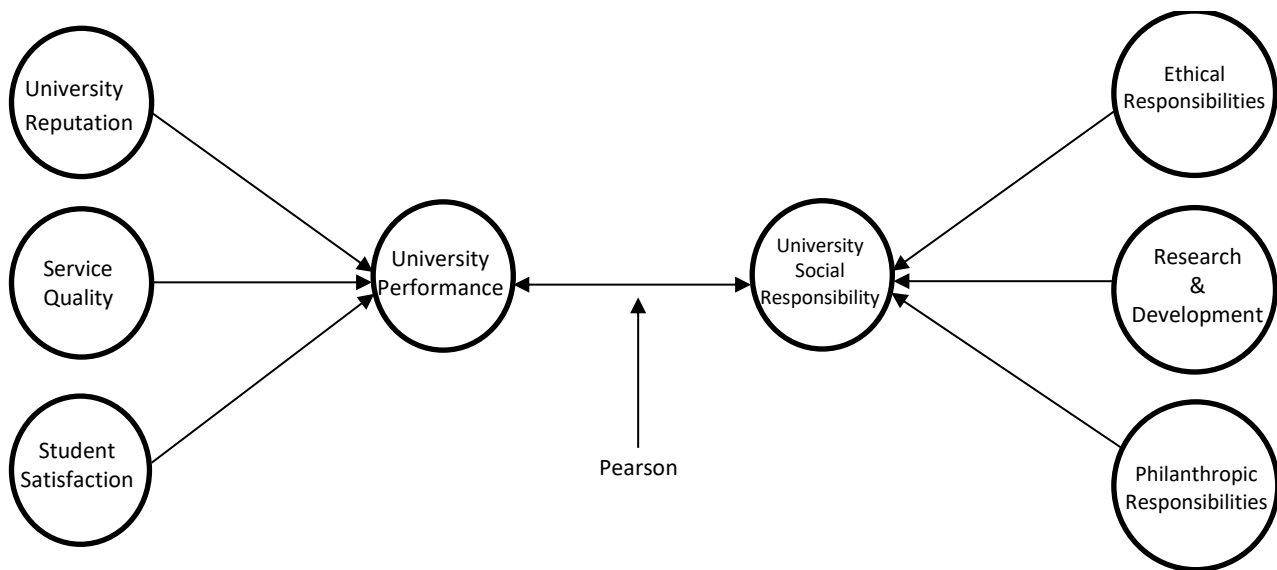
Fig 1: Conceptual Framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

University Social Responsibility and University Performance.

Social responsibility research is derived from the stakeholders' theory (Freeman, 1984). The stakeholder theory's main interest is to manage the stakeholders (students) effectively and efficiently (Yuen *et al.*, 2018). Thus, Perrini *et al.* (2001) noted that the stakeholder theory interpretation helps establish the link between organizational performance and social responsibility.

Gomez (2014) established that universities that implement USR improve positive outcomes on organizational (students, union, and association as stakeholders), social impacts, educational (professional and citizenship training), and cognitive impacts (integration with communication of socially responsible practice, local community, etc.). Latif *et al.* (2022) noted that any USR that focuses on ethics, philanthropic practices, and improving R&D can help Universities improve their performance. Their study established a positive and significant connection between UP and USR in Pakistan and insignificant in China. The findings of Latif *et al.* (2022) confirmed the works of Chen and Vancley (2020) that USR is yet to develop in most HEIs and, therefore, plays a small impact in the higher educational sector as applicable to China.

Ho: USR has a significant impact on UP.

Service Quality

Quality of service differentiates one University from another, guiding each student not to provide low-quality service corresponding to the resource-based view (RBV). Quality products or services attract new and retain existing customers, which now become a focus of most organizations to gain a competitive advantage.

Providing a quality service attracts customers (students), directly leading to an increase in enrollments and organizational performance (Abd-Elrahman & Kamal, 2020). According to Girad and Pinar (2021), the University offers services that set it apart from rival universities. When lecturers, administrators, and non-teaching staff cause pain and frustration to the stakeholders (students), its resultant effect would be poor UP (Annamdevule & Bellamkonda, 2016). Annamdevula and Bellamjonda (2016) asserted that student loyalty can be achieved if university management develops a solid relationship with the students.

The service quality (SQ) of the University will improve if the social responsibility initiatives of the University are targeted at fulfilling her responsibilities towards the students (Yuen *et al.* 2018). Furthermore, Latif *et al.* (2022) noted that there are scarce empirical works regarding the relationship between SQ and USR. Their study found a significant impact of USR on service quality. Similarly, Santos *et al.* (2020) found a significant impact relationship between service quality and USR in HEI.

Ho: There is a significant positive impact of USR on service quality.

Student Satisfaction.

No organization can survive without the customer (students). Thus, the success of any University depends on student satisfaction (Sultan & Wong, 2012). Student satisfaction describes how students enjoy classes and experiences during their programme. In addition, Sullan and Wong (2012) also concluded that student satisfaction plays a significant function in gaining market share. Universities are set up to draw in applicants, so management's primary goal is maintaining customer satisfaction. According to Fornell *et al.* (2020), there is a strong relationship between performance and customer

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satisfaction; therefore, satisfying customers (students) should always be a priority.

It is the responsibility of University management to practice social responsibility to improve the quality of service, which will directly lead to student satisfaction (Latif *et al.*, 2022). According to Vazquez *et al.* (2014), USR has a statistically significant positive effect on student satisfaction. Similarly, Latif *et al.* (2022) study noted that student satisfaction significantly impacts USR.

Ho: There is a significant positive impact of USR on student satisfaction.

University Reputation.

If an institution adopts appropriate external and internal management techniques, USR practices in education and marketing strategies can build on its reputation (Latiff *et al.*, 2022). As Alves and Rapso (2007) observed, a university's reputation attracts existing and intending students into the institution and is therefore regarded as a significant asset. The outcome of university reputation shows an increase in performance, implying that improved UP results from reputation (Baltaru, 2019). Thus, Baltaru (2019) concluded that reputation contributed to university performance in their study using United Kingdom Universities.

Consistent with the stakeholder's theory focusing on the managerial aspects, increasing social responsibility might improve reputation (Perez *et al.* (2017). According to Manzoor *et al.* (2021), rankings and institution reputation serve as indicators of higher education institutions' awareness. By focusing on research and development, ethical behavior, and philanthropy, universities can contribute to improving their reputation. Khoin (2021) found that funding, leadership, social contributions, research & development, and student guidance build up a university's reputation.

Ho: There is a significant positive impact of USR on the University's reputation

METHODOLOGY

The study used a survey research method focused on staff and students from selected Nigerian Universities. Data were gathered from the respondents' distributed, amended questionnaires. The Latif *et al.* 2021 works served as the model for these questionnaires.

To effectively guard against non-response bias, research assistants were hired and trained to monitor the distributed questionnaires. Out of the three hundred and eleven distributed questionnaires, twenty-eight were discovered to have been modified or filled out incorrectly. Thus, two hundred and eighty-three copies of the valid questionnaires, accounting for about ninety-one percent, are evidenced to produce a robust result. Previous empirical studies have established that retrieved copies of questionnaires used for analysis must exceed 60 percent (Draugalis, Coons & Plaza, 2008), 75 percent (Bailey, 1987; Fowler, 2002), and 50 percent (Babbie, 1990). Arising from the above, as the percentage of useful retrieved copies of questionnaires exceeds the benchmarks, the result of the findings will be credible and reliable (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998).

The study adopts CCA, which is presumed to be a more appropriate technique for studies handling multiple sets of dependent and independent variables because separating the variables will lead to spurious results (Sherry & Henson, 2005; Adama & Haruna, 2020; Tarurhor & Olele, 2020).

Model Specification

The model captures the relationship among the sets of university social responsibilities and university performance variables as specified below.

Performance = f (University Social Responsibilities)

$$UR + SQ + SS = \beta 0 + \beta 1ER + \beta 2RD + \beta 3PR + \varepsilon t$$

Where performance is proxied by university reputation, service quality, and student satisfaction. Ethical responsibilities, research & development, and philanthropic responsibility measure University social responsibilities. Thus, the overall hypothesis is stated as:

There is no significant relationship between the set of university social responsibilities variables and the set of university performance variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The response to university reputation and student satisfaction have the highest maximum of 5.00, respectively, and research & development, with a minimum of 1.75. These values range from 5.00 – 1.75, confirming that the data are reliable as no values exceed or less than the 5 Likert scale used (Dankaew & Silpcharu., Tarurhor & Temile, 2020; Tarurhor 2021., Tarurhor, 2023). Thus, as shown in Table 1 under observation, the data set used is 283, corresponding with the applicable retrieved copies of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Ur	283	4.009717	.6334661	2.5	5
Sq	283	3.196113	.754104	2	4.833333
Ss	283	3.719435	.7211179	2	5
Er	283	3.634528	.5026913	1.857143	4.571429
Rd	283	3.478799	.6540187	1.75	4.5
Pr	283	2.874205	.7137994	1.4	4.4

Source: Author's own

As presented in Table 2a, a correlation matrix was conducted to establish the strength of association of university performance variables. The results reveal a positive relationship between proxies of university performance (ur, sq, ss) employed in the research. In addition, all values range from 0.4243 to 0.2381, are less than 0.90 cannot cause multicollinearity (Dimitrous & Hall, 2007; Tarurhor, 2018).

Table 2A: Correlation Matrix for University Performance

	Ur	Sq	Ss
Ur	1.0000		
Sq	0.3935	1.0000	
Ss	0.2381	0.4243	1.0000

Source: Author's own

Similarly, Table 2B displayed the correlation analysis of measurements of USR (er, rd, pr). Results exhibited that ethical responsibility (er) has a positive relationship with research & development (rd) and philanthropic responsibilities (pr), while the relationship between rd and pr is negatively weak (-0.0137).

Table 2B: Correlation Matrix for University Social Responsibility

	Er	Rd	Pr
Er	1.0000		
Rd	0.2441	1.0000	
Pr	0.2574	-0.0137	1.0000

Source: Author's own

The variables of the UP and USR in the correlation analysis show a positive relationship between both variables, whose values range from 0.5942 to 0.1558. Thus, the values exhibit the absence of multicollinearity. Therefore, one can rely on the result's outcome.

Table 2C: Correlation Matrix between University Performance and University Social Responsibility

	Ur	Sq	Ss
Er	0.3827	0.5942	0.4747
Rd	0.3929	0.3245	0.1558
Pr	0.1546	0.1742	0.1084

Source: Author's own

This study adopts the works of (Sherry & Henson, 2005; Tarurhor & Olele, 2020) by reporting more on Wilks Lambda, as it yields better results. Wilks Lambda 0.510316,

$F_{(9, 674.296)} = 23.8548$, $P \leq 0.5$ reports a statistically significant relationship between sets of UP and USR. This is evident that a relationship exist between the two sets. The findings are consistent with the works of Vazquez et al (2014) and Latif et al (2022) in Pakistan. However, it is at variance with the study by Latif et al (2022) in China. In addition, an inverse effect of 0.489684 (1-0.510316), which amounts to 49%, is unexplained in the model. Impliedly, there are many other sets of UP and USR not captured in the model.

Table 3A: Test of significance of canonical correlations 1-3

	Statistic	df1	df2	F	Prob>F
Wilks' lambda	.510316	9	674.296	23.8548	0.0000 a

Source: Author's own

Furthermore, dimensions 2 and 3 combined reported a significant relationship, 0. 952667, $F_{(4, 556)} = 3.4113$, $P \leq 0.5$, as shown in Table 3b. Thus, only 5% of the model variation is unexplained, implying the model is perfect and reliable. In practice, as the second pair (dimensions 2 and 3) shows significant correlation, there would need to proceed to dimension 3, as reported below.

Table 3B: Test of significance of canonical correlations 2-3

	Statistic	df1	df2	F	Prob>F
Wilks' lambda	.952667	4	556	3.4113	0.0091 e

Source: Author's own

Similarly, testing for canonical correlation of dimension 3 as reported in Table 3c, 0. 989512, $F_{(1, 279)} = 2.9572$, $P \geq 0.5$, shows that no statistically significant relationship exists between the sets of UP and USR.

Table 3C: Test of significance of canonical correlation 3

	Statistic	df1	df2	F	Prob>F
Wilks' lambda	.989512	1	279	2.9572	0.0866 e

Source: Author's own

CONCLUSION

This study examined whether university social responsibility improves Nigerian Universities' performance in Delta State. The results obtained from the canonical correlation analysis showed that the

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combination of university reputation, service quality, and student satisfaction variables proxied for university performance had a statistically significant positive association with the sets of university social responsibilities variables measured by ethical responsibility, research & development, and philanthropic responsibility. Interestingly, the first-dimension and second-dimension reports are statistically significant, which confirms that a relationship exists between the sets of USR and UP. The study suggests that university administration should prioritize USR to attract students to improve performance.

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