Social Responsibility of Higher Education Institutions and Sustainability Educational

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Abstract:

Research Question (RQ): This paper focuses on: a) What are the main challenges and barriers universities face when attempting to fulfil their social responsibility, and b) What innovative approaches or best practices can be identified to overcome these obstacles and enhance their social impact. b) How do universities measure and report on their social responsibility initiatives, and what are the key indicators and metrics used to assess the effectiveness and impact of these programs? c)What are the key dimensions and components of social responsibility for universities, and how do they vary across different cultural and institutional contexts?

Purpose: The research purpose and goal of studying the social responsibility of universities is to understand better, assess, and improve the impact of these institutions on society, the environment, and their local communities. This study also aims to inspire positive change, promote accountability, and contribute to the broader goals of sustainability and ethical leadership in education.

Method: The method used is mainly the analytical approach, with conceptual analysis and examination of arguments. The research material focuses on various articles, reports, and relevant literature on the issue under consideration. The research material also includes the administration of 30 semi-structured interviews with lecturers who agreed to share their attitudes and perceptions on the issues.

Results: The findings indicate that institutions, on their part, must change their approach towards society, the philosophy of being only in the function of student preparation and scientific research, but take responsibility towards society.

Organisation: To maximise the impact of university research on managers, organisations, and practices, there is often a need for effective knowledge transfer mechanisms, such as research dissemination, industry-academia partnerships, and knowledge exchange programs. Universities, businesses, and policymakers often collaborate to facilitate the practical application of research findings and ensure that research is accessible and relevant to those who can benefit from it.

Society: The concept of social responsibility at universities, often referred to as the civic or public mission of universities, can have a significant research impact on society, social responsibility, and the environment. This concept emphasises that universities should actively engage with and contribute to their communities and the wider world.

Originality: The social responsibility of universities extends beyond education and research. It encompasses a commitment to contribute to the well-being of society and the environment. By embracing this concept, universities can enhance the impact of their research on these critical areas, fostering positive change and sustainability. For Albanian higher education, it is a challenge because it is necessary to intervene in the legal framework in force by drafting acts of criteria for their identification and measurable indicators.

Limitations and further research: It is necessary to undertake a more in-depth study with a more comprehensive approach, where data, considerations, and different actors involved in the role of universities in facing the challenges stemming from social problems and sustainability are highlighted.

1   Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a key role in shaping the future of societies. In addition to their traditional role as knowledge disseminators, they are increasingly recognised as key actors in promoting social responsibility and sustainable development.

The global changes that have taken place over the last few decades have had a clear impact on the education sector, particularly on higher education and its institutions. The university has gone through a series of reform processes aimed at new challenges such as globalisation, sustainability, knowledge society, innovation, technological development, and, in addition, increasing market concentration, which is part of the important factors affecting the identity of the university and its identity organisation (Vasilescu et al., 2010). Meanwhile, educational policy in the Albanian context has tried to address the universal problems of public education over the years (Council of Ministers, 2009), but there is still a need for more research in this area, even efforts to understand and examine how they affect society.

In this context, this study aimed to identify and understand the problems and difficulties faced by universities in fulfilling their social responsibilities. It examines the specific issues that prevent universities from addressing social, environmental, and community issues. By examining these issues, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and obstacles that universities must overcome in fulfilling their roles in society.

This research is important because, examining these issues, leads to a deeper understanding of the challenges and obstacles that universities must overcome in fulfilling their roles in society. By identifying these issues, research can also recommend policies and interventions to address them, ultimately leading to universities increasing their social impact and promoting a learning path to stability. Overall, research into the key issues and challenges universities face in fulfilling their social responsibilities leads to accountability, promoting good change, and achieving the overall goal of improving higher education.

The methodological approach will be based on a data triangulation approach, which we believe provides a perspective that gives good opportunities for all social issues in the university. Using this method, we will conduct qualitative interviews with university leaders and analyse institutional documents and research literature.

The social responsibility of universities is an integral part of the broader framework of sustainable development. As catalysts for change, universities have a unique ability to shape not only the knowledge and skills of future generations but also to actively contribute to building a more sustainable and just world.

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This brief introduction sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the multifaceted relationship between higher education, social responsibility, and sustainable development.

2 Theoretical framework

Although the existing literature suggests a growing emphasis on the social role of universities, there are still gaps in understanding the specific challenges and obstacles that prevent them from fulfilling their social responsibilities.

Focused on the European context, this review assesses the state of socially responsible universities. In the field of European higher education policy, according to research by Maassen and Stensaker (2010), universities are considered to have a dual role in European higher education policy studies: not only to provide good education but also to conduct research and promote innovation (Pee and Vululleh, 2020). The main idea is that the integration of these elements can increase a country's competitiveness, promote economic growth, and solve social problems.

Meanwhile, Berman (1990) highlights certain aspects of social responsibility education that need to be considered. These aspects include: i) developing an understanding of our interdependence through global education, multicultural education, environmental education, and systems analysis; ii) providing opportunities to become responsible members of the community through shared goals, shared decision-making, collective efforts, and recognition of community achievements; iii) providing opportunities for social contribution, including community service, student support, school services, and examples of individuals and organisations who can make a difference; iv) developing basic social skills, including cooperation, conflict management, monitoring others, and speaking up; v) developing basic skills of understanding and participation, such as organisational skills, consensus-building skills, group problem-solving skills, and long-term thinking skills; vi) an examination of the problems of the contemporary world, which includes research, critical thinking, dialogue, and negotiation.

Kouatli (2019) emphasises the importance of a participatory approach for the benefit of society. This includes encouraging stakeholders to participate in activities that contribute to economic, social, environmental, and educational benefits. The aim is to fulfil the needs of people at different levels and to carry out sustainable activities that will bring long-term results. According to Godonoga and Sborn (2023), universities are becoming more globally connected, and, as a result, social responsibility is becoming more important. It is essential to examine these challenges and develop targeted strategies and policies to enhance the contribution of universities to society. D'Adamo and Gastaldi (2023) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of the social dimension, especially the third mission of universities. According to Giuffre and Ratto (2014), a university's social responsibility refers to "the university's ability to disseminate knowledge through the provision of training services and knowledge transfer while adhering to ethical principles and

sound governance. It also includes showing respect for the environment, engaging in social activity, and maintaining good relations with the public."

The literature shows that the topic of sustainability in higher education is increasingly important worldwide. Universities are integrating sustainability concepts into their policies, curricula, and field research. Wals and Leal Filho (2019) analysed international standards for community involvement in higher education and highlighted practices such as community involvement, leadership equity, and environmental safety. Leal Filho et al. (2019) delve into how European higher education institutions are navigating the landscape of social responsibility, particularly in terms of governance structures, community engagement initiatives, and ethical practices.

The literature highlights the complexity of integrating sustainability principles into higher education (Barth et al., 2015; Giesenbauer & Müller-Christ, 2020) and focuses on challenges such as organisational resistance to change, faculty involvement, and the need for a holistic sustainability framework within institutions (Lozano et al., 2016). In addition, discourses on various practices such as community participation, justice management, and environmental security shed light on universities' changes in society's education (Wiek et al., 2017). Previous studies support new solutions to address school accountability issues and highlight the importance of strategic initiatives. The identification and analysis of high-impact university models with social impact provides valuable information for institutions seeking strategic opportunities. Additionally, Mader and Araya-Castillo (2018) explore the process of making progress in universities, while Matten and Moon (2004) explore the practices universities use to promote sustainability at different levels, strategies, policies, and practices. Figueiró and Raufflet, (2015) show the possibilities to advance the sustainability of management education, while Peter Scott (2017) analyses the impact of globalisation on the structure and purpose of the brand of higher education.

In the context of Albania, the social responsibility of higher education institutions and sustainable development are very few. According to Mora et al. (2014), research in Albanian universities is still at an early stage, and more efforts are needed to make universities more socially responsible. In recent years, the Albanian higher education system has shown a growing tendency towards the social responsibility of universities. According to Article 1 of Law No. 80/2015 on Higher Education in the Republic of Albania, the mission of higher education is to contribute to economic, social, and cultural development at the national and regional levels, as well as to strengthen public and national institutions.

An important issue that needs to be addressed is the failure to effectively implement good laws in practice. As the European Commission's 2023 report states, although efforts to improve education and training have produced some positive results, further reforms are necessary. The report states that Albania's research, development, and innovation capacity remains extremely low (European Western Balkans, 2023). However, this remains a

challenge, as it is necessary to intervene in the existing legal framework by proposing criteria and measurable indicators for their identification.

The literature currently lacks a comprehensive understanding of the different dimensions and components of social responsibility, especially in different cultural and institutional settings. However, the economic aspect of social responsibility (Dragusha & Lugji, 2022; Qosja & Çabiri, 2023) is more developed. We believe that economic responsibility includes responsibilities related to profit-generating activities that maintain and strengthen the competitive advantage of the university, achieve a high level of operational efficiency, and ensure the success of the company. According to Thanasi and Kastrati (2021), there is no difference between public and private universities in terms of their situation. Organisational governance was identified as the domain with the highest score, while the environment domain received the lowest score. Meanwhile, Peshkopia (2014), argues that Eastern European universities face some social responsibility dilemmas in fulfilling their educational responsibilities. Recognising these variations is essential for designing culturally sensitive and adaptable social responsibility frameworks for Albanian universities.

With these approaches in mind, we believe that the construction of the questions will guide our study of HEIs. We aim to explore the challenges, best practices, measurement methodologies, and cultural differences in this field. Our research questions are as follows:

- What are the main challenges and barriers that universities face when trying to fulfil their social responsibility?
- What innovative approaches or best practices can be identified to overcome these barriers and enhance their social impact?
- How do universities measure and report on their social responsibility initiatives, and what are the key indicators and metrics used to assess their effectiveness and impact?
- What are the key dimensions and components of social responsibility for universities, and how do they differ in different cultural and institutional contexts?

Overall, it can be said that the literature shows a diverse impact of social responsibility in society concerning its context.

3   Method

Data triangulation is a very effective way to ensure accuracy in the study of a phenomenon that has several data sources. A descriptive presentation of the entire research process is provided along with an illustrative Figure 1 for better understanding.
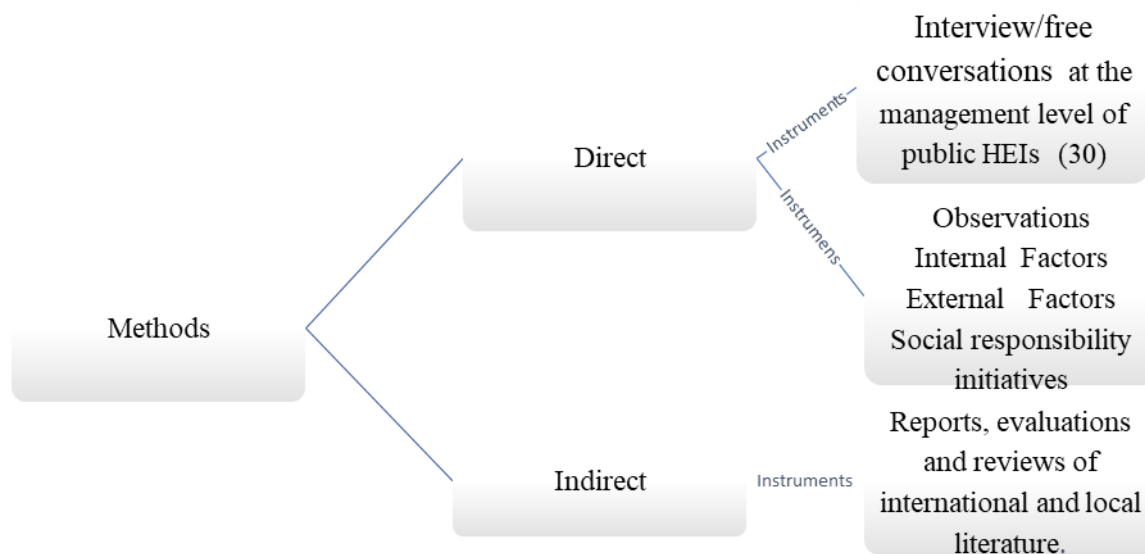
Figure 1. Research model

A qualitative design was adopted to fulfil the objectives of the study. Such a design is inherently exploratory, aimed at understanding the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations within the research domain. It facilitates insight into the given problem and helps in formulating relevant research questions. In addition, qualitative research helps uncover trends of thought and delve deeper into complex issues. Data collection methods varied and used unstructured or semi-structured techniques such as open-ended interviews, individual interviews, and participant observation (DeFranco, 2011). As noted by the Albanian sociologist Dervishi (2003), who emphasised the effectiveness of open-ended interviews in gathering insider information, the semi-structured interviews conducted during the meeting with the participants were willingly engaging.

To ensure impartiality and balance, semi-structured interviews were carefully prepared to gather input from stakeholders. Thirty management-level participants were selected based on their roles within the university. The interviews aimed to elicit participants' perceptions, rationales, and attitudes towards social issues within the university context, with particular emphasis on identifying issues that hinder the achievement of social goals.

The main focus is the identification of problems in achieving the university's social goals. The data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify issues associated with the study through interviews. Thematic analysis served as the main approach to reviewing the collected data following the objectives of the study. This method facilitated the systematic identification and exploration of recurring themes within the interview responses. This process involved organising and synthesising these themes, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges, innovative approaches, measurement strategies, and different dimensions of social responsibility that universities face.

Using existing data for analysis saves data collection time and ensures a high degree of reliability and validity because the data is obtained from official sources (Boslaugh, S., 2007). This study involved the analysis of secondary data based on a review of international literature, such as studies, reports, and evaluations, to explore the challenges and opportunities in educational processes related to social responsibility in education.

The literature review phase facilitated the compilation of existing reports and studies on this issue. This process was instrumental in formulating the main research questions and served as the basis for the analysis of the study results. The results of this analysis are incorporated into the entire work.

Another method used was the analysis of institutional documents, focusing on official university documents such as social policies, reports, and other published materials. By conducting a content analysis of these documents, we can understand the values, goals, and practices of these social entities. Based on these findings, we conducted interviews to better understand the university's practices and consistency. For a study to be robust, it is important to ensure that the data constructs, models, and findings are reliable and valid. To achieve this, we implemented rigorous measures such as detailed documentation of the research process, clear operational definitions, and intercoder reliability checks for thematic analysis. We also addressed validity concerns by using triangulation, which involved cross-referencing findings from different sources to confirm the study's conclusions.

The study used an analytical research model using systematic analysis of facts and information to derive specific conclusions. For a visual representation of the theoretical foundations of the research, a graphical representation of the theoretical model is presented (see Figure 2). The model encapsulates the relationships and interactions between key variables and clarifies the dynamics of the problem under investigation.

University Social Responsibility

Internal Factors
Institucional Culture
Leadership Commitment
Resource Allocation

External Factors
Regulatory Culture
Societal Commitment
Stakeholder Engagement

Social responsibility initiatives
Community outreach program
Sustainable practices
Educational impact

Figure 2. Observed factors

After collecting data from various sources, we moved on to the phase of data analysis and interpretation. We compared and contrasted the relationships and various contexts obtained through interviews and free interviews, the results of observations, and the values obtained through literature research in the field. I used triangulation to analyse and interpret the results, which helped the university gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of these social issues. Based on the analysis of the results, several proposals were presented.

Some limitations of the study include potential sampling bias, as some perspectives or stakeholders may be underrepresented. Furthermore, while qualitative research provides valuable insights, it may not capture the breadth of perspectives that quantitative methods do. Generalizability is limited due to the focus of the study on the Albanian higher education system. Despite the limitations of the study, it fulfils its purpose and calls for a deeper study of all the challenges that arise in this field.

4 Results

4.1 Challenges and Barriers to Fulfilling Social Responsibility

This study shows that universities face many difficulties in fulfilling their social responsibilities. These challenges relate to resource constraints, resistance to change, lack of knowledge, competitive advantage, regulatory challenges, organisational challenges, assessment barriers, the complexity of global business, and the struggle for management responsibility.

Universities face many problems and challenges in achieving their complex areas of responsibility, starting with complex issues in education and beyond. Capacity constraints, often in the form of financial constraints and a lack of human resources, represent a significant barrier to investment in responsible action. This financial pressure limits the pace of change, while a lack of expertise further complicates the development and implementation of relevant measures.

Resistance to change is rooted in the culture of the institution and the perspective of lecturers, which adds another layer of complexity. Creating an academic culture can hinder the transition to social responsibility and create friction when trying to follow non-traditional practices. Lecturer resistance stemming from apprehension about engaging with new content created additional challenges that required a balance between leadership and innovation. We think that these issues are more dependent on institutional awareness and their mentality as community or business institutions. A direct consequence of this is the lack of clarity in defining and implementing a culture of accountability and the need for clarity of purpose and success.

Laws and regulations pose challenges due to uncoordinated policies and strict rules that restrict innovation and limit the influence of specific social circumstances. Laws and

regulations pose challenges due to uncoordinated policies and strict rules that restrict innovation and limit the influence of specific social circumstances. The finding shows that this is driven by both the desire to establish robust relationships with local communities and the ambiguity of regulations that may vary depending on various social circumstances.

Measuring and measuring impact comes with its own set of challenges, from the lack of valid metrics to measure social impact to the difficulty of measuring impact over long periods. The issue of globalisation and diversity demonstrates the need for compromise, especially when dealing with international problems that require different cultures and international cooperation.

Inclusive governance and stakeholder engagement add complexity by requiring universities to address the challenge of achieving inclusive decision-making processes that include multiple perspectives. This situation requires a balance between the needs of society and the solution of global problems.

Overcoming these challenges requires a collaborative approach with both internal and external stakeholders. Setting a clear strategy, creating a culture of accountability, and advocating for political support is key to ensuring that universities fulfil their responsibilities in society. This collaborative approach proposes changes that have the potential to reshape the role of community universities and improve their social impact.

4.2 Measurement and Reporting of Social Responsibility

In terms of how universities measure and report on social responsibility initiatives, the study identifies several indicators and metrics. These include sustainability reporting standards, community engagement metrics, education and research assessments, ethical governance indicators, diversity and inclusion measures, social impact assessments, health and well-being metrics, financial allocation assessments, stakeholder satisfaction measurements, participation in global initiatives, and recognition. innovations and best practices.

Addressing the second research objective, which focuses on how universities measure and report their social responsibility initiatives, the study reveals a diverse array of indicators and metrics used to assess the effectiveness and impact of these programs. The selection of these indicators is intricately linked to the specific goals and nature of each initiative. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of establishing a clear methodology for data collection, analysis, and reporting in measuring and reporting on university social responsibility initiatives.

Regular review and updating of indicators based on evolving social, economic, and environmental contexts is considered essential for meaningful evaluation. In addition, disseminating information through annual sustainability reports or contributions to external sustainability rating systems improves communication of social responsibility efforts with

stakeholders and the wider public. This holistic approach ensures transparency and consistency in depicting the multifaceted impact of university social responsibility initiatives.

4.3 Key Dimensions and Components of Social Responsibility

The results of the study offer insight into the multifaceted landscape of university social responsibility. Through comprehensive analysis, we identified various dimensions key to assessing institutional impact, including academic and research programmes, community engagement, ethical governance, diversity and inclusion, environmental sustainability, economic impact, global engagement, technology and innovation, stakeholder engagement, and civic responsibility. In particular, we recognised the importance of these aspects in shaping institutional strategies and practices, emphasising the need for adaptable approaches to effectively address different cultural and institutional contexts.

In our investigation of how universities quantify and report on their social responsibility initiatives, we discovered a diverse set of indicators forming the basis for evaluating this aspect. Ingeniously linked to the unique goals and characteristics inherent to each initiative, these metrics ranged from governance and diversity to community impact and environmental sustainability. In particular, sustainability reporting standards exemplified by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) have emerged as a comprehensive framework, including economic, environmental, and social dimensions, reflecting the multifaceted nature of university initiatives.

Our investigation focused on community involvement and established important variables including the variety of relationships and the rates of staff and student participation in outreach programmes. Fundamental pillars of social responsibility, research and education, were evaluated using metrics such as curricular integration of sustainability and quantifiable research outputs on these subjects.

Furthermore, ethical management, diversity and inclusion, and social impact assessment were identified as critical dimensions of universities' social responsibility. Ethical governance requires the creation of policies that support ethical behaviour and decision-making, promoting a culture of integrity and accountability. Likewise, valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity within the university environment is essential to creating vibrant and equitable academic communities. Social impact assessment requires universities to measure the tangible results of their activities on wider societal well-being, including the success of graduates in areas related to social responsibility.

Our study highlights the need for universities to adopt a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting. An iterative process of revising and updating indicators in response to changing contexts is critical to ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of social responsibility initiatives. In addition, transparently communicating these efforts through

sustainability reports and contributions to external rating systems increases transparency and reaffirms the institution's commitment to social responsibility.

Ultimately, while providing a comprehensive framework, the prioritisation and emphasis on these dimensions may vary depending on the cultural, social, and economic context. Tailoring initiatives to align with local values and needs is essential to ensuring relevance and effectiveness in different cultural and institutional contexts, highlighting the importance of contextual considerations when assessing universities' social responsibility.

4.4 Social Responsibility in the Albanian Context Higher Education Context

In response to these challenges, Albanian universities have demonstrated resilience and growth, with the sector expanding significantly and institutions becoming more internationally competitive through participation in the Bologna process. Despite progress, Albania faces ongoing economic developments, political changes, and social challenges that affect the strategic direction of higher education institutions. Financial constraints and limited resources create barriers to investment in social responsibility initiatives, while cultural diversity requires a different approach to inclusion. Moraes and Melo Neto (2018) emphasise that economic factors significantly influence the ability of universities to engage in socially responsible activities. Meanwhile, the interviewees said: »*Albanian universities have made progress in developing and globalising, but they still face social and economic constraints that limit their ability to fully engage in socially relevant project*s. Barriers created by limited resources and cultural differences.« Underscoring the importance of this are innovative approaches to promoting inclusion and sustainable development. HEIs must communicate these challenges effectively to cater for their long-term development and social support.

The respondents concur, saying that social responsibility is essential to universities' missions and social integrity. "*Social responsibility is fundamental to the mission and integrity of universities in society. In addition to preparing students to become successful professionals, universities have a moral and social obligation to contribute to community development and solve societal challenges. Funding is a critical factor in enabling universities to fulfil their social responsibilities. Lack of financial resources can limit the social responsibility programmes and projects that universities can offer, making it difficult to positively influence society. The need for large investments and financial support for universities is an important step in developing social responsibility and its positive impact on society.*" We believe that universities have a moral and ethical duty to address social issues and promote community development in addition to training students to become successful professionals. For universities to achieve their social obligations, funding is a crucial component. Universities may not be able to provide as many social responsibility courses and initiatives as they would want, which makes it more difficult to have a constructive impact on society. Developing social responsibility and its beneficial effects on society requires significant financial assistance and university investments.

Government policy plays an important role in shaping higher education programmes, particularly in terms of social responsibility, sustainability, and community engagement. An understanding of national and regional development priorities underpins institutional strategies and highlights the importance of aligning them with the wider socio-economic agenda. Community-led initiatives and partnerships with local stakeholders are becoming important strategies to meet local needs and promote sustainable development. One interviewee explained: "*University social responsibility policies are an important step to ensure that universities adapt to the needs and challenges of the 21st century. However, university policies still struggle to engage with communities and take action towards needs and interests.*" Universities support education and scientific research through projects and special projects created for this purpose.

Engagement of youth, especially that of university students, is a driving force behind societal progress and responsible citizenship. Tinkler and Tinkler (2019) argue that universities, as social institutions, have a responsibility to actively engage with their communities. Student engagement is consistent with the perspective of Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2019), who argue mphasi positive impact of diversity on campus. As they point out, universities play a key role in shaping the future cohort of professionals and conscientious citizens. By providing high-quality education and practical training and cultivating a dynamic learning environment conducive to personal and professional growth, universities equip students to participate actively in society. Several interviewees further emphasised the idea that universities can promote students' awareness and involvement in various areas of social responsibility and encourage their involvement in initiatives and projects that positively impact the local community and society as a whole. "*Universities need to actively include students in the development of society, as this helps shape responsible citizens. Universities must foster an engaged culture and give students an exceptional education to empower them to make significant contributions to their communities. Students who are encouraged to take part in civic duty initiatives develop empathy and a sense of civic obligation, which better prepares them to deal with difficult local and global situations.*" Through such an approach, universities not only educate a professionally competent generation but also instil a sense of responsibility and mindfulness, ready to contribute to the social development and well-being of society.

The study explores international collaboration for advancing science and education, as well as the social responsibility of universities. It suggests that universities should advance social ideals, build knowledge networks, and create local and global projects. Regarding this issue, a significant part of the respondents stated that universities should be leaders in promoting social values and in cooperation with international partners in the exchange of ideas and experiences. Below, we present the professor's statement: "*Social responsibility and international cooperation are essential. This cooperation can bring great benefits for all parties involved, including new knowledge, increased professional skills, and the creation of opportunities for joint projects that have a great impact locally and internationally. They are*

the engine of social and cultural development." Collaboration with international partners and participation in global networks provide opportunities to address common challenges and promote social responsibility programs. Incorporating social responsibility into the academic curriculum equips students with the skills and mindsets they need to engage meaningfully in the public sphere. Marginson (2016a) discusses the contribution of research to the public good, mphasizing the importance of global knowledge networks. However, balancing global initiatives with local priorities requires careful consideration to avoid potential pitfalls, as pointed out by Cowen, Fleming, and Berman (2019). They emphasise the need for historical and contemporary perspectives to understand the role of universities in the public sphere. We believe that global collaboration, as previously mentioned, offers avenues for positive social impact.

Although the challenges are diverse, higher education institutions worldwide face common obstacles in pursuing social responsibility. Addressing this complexity requires a holistic approach that involves collaboration between university leadership, faculty, students, and external stakeholders. Respondents suggest: "*Institutions must change their thinking from an exclusive focus on student training and scientific research to actively taking responsibility for society. They should increase their public involvement by initiating programmes aimed at training and conducting research with individuals who lack direct education or professional ties to higher education. This includes forging links with civil society as well as public and private partners to create and strengthen lasting collaborative relationships that benefit society as a whole*." The statement reflects a call for universities and academic institutions to expand their roles beyond the traditional roles of student training and scientific research and urges them to engage actively in social responsibility. The survey shows that respondents acknowledge the growing role of educational institutions in society. By adopting a broader mandate for public participation, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving, universities can better fulfil their social responsibilities and contribute to positive social change.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to go beyond traditional measures and evaluate universities based on their actual impact on society rather than their actual contribution to social welfare. More than half of the respondents agree that if until now the social impact of universities was measured only by the product that universities were able to offer on the labour market, the time has come for these institutions to be evaluated based on well-defined standards as part of their institutional accreditation and social responsibility criteria and the real impact of their activities in society.

This paradigm shift in assessment criteria highlights the need for higher education institutions to demonstrate their commitment to meaningful social impact and sustainable development.

5 Discussion

5.1 Discussion on Challenges in Fulfilling Social Responsibility

The results of the study provide insight into the many obstacles that universities face in fulfilling their social responsibility mission. These difficulties are closely related to the complex environment of universities, reflecting external circumstances, systemic problems, and the complicated dynamics of the academic sphere. The issue of social responsibility at universities, which was identified in the study, follows the previous study at the university.

It is widely recognised that the promotion of social responsibility initiatives in universities is hampered by a lack of funding, resistance to change, regulatory barriers, measurement difficulties, global engagement, and governance concerns. These difficulties highlight the necessity of strategic leadership, policy advocacy, and stakeholder engagement to successfully negotiate the complicated terrain of higher education.

The research findings reveal the multifaceted challenges universities face in fulfilling their mission of social responsibility, which are deeply connected to the university environment. These challenges include resource constraints, resistance to change, regulatory barriers, measurement complexity, global engagement, and governance issues. These challenges underscore the need for strategic leadership, policy advocacy, and stakeholder engagement to effectively navigate the complex landscape of university social responsibility.

The study supports research findings and provides theoretical underpinnings for understanding the complexity inherent in the promotion of social responsibility within higher education institutions. The study draws on insights from scholarly work and improves our understanding of the complexities involved in promoting social responsibility within higher education institutions. In addition, it highlights the importance of evidence-based strategies and collaborative approaches in addressing these issues and advancing the societal role of universities.

Addressing the challenges outlined in the study requires a multifaceted approach that includes collaboration between university leaders, faculty, students, and external stakeholders. Universities play a key role in solving societal problems and promoting sustainable development. By prioritising social responsibility and adopting innovative practices, universities can maximise their impact and contribute positively to society. Achieving meaningful change, however, will require a concerted effort to overcome resistance to change, overcome regulatory barriers, and promote inclusive governance structures.

The discussions highlighted the multifaceted nature of the challenges facing universities in fulfilling their social responsibility obligations. These challenges ranged from economic constraints to regulatory hurdles and cultural diversity, reflecting the complex landscape of higher education institutions. Measurement strategies emphasised the importance of

comprehensive assessment frameworks, global standards, and stakeholder satisfaction metrics to transparently communicate universities' societal impact. Key dimensions of social responsibility emphasise the universality of principles such as community engagement and ethical governance while acknowledging contextual differences in prioritisation and implementation.

Although the discussions did not explicitly formulate hypotheses, they provided valuable insights into the complexities of social responsibility in universities. The findings supported the idea that social responsibility is indeed multifaceted and context-dependent, requiring tailored approaches to solving problems and making effective use of opportunities. The discussions were thus in line with the understanding that universities play a key role in societal development and need to adopt a more socially responsible approach.

The discussion presented a comprehensive analysis of social responsibility in universities and highlighted both challenges and opportunities. From my perspective, it is clear that solving these challenges requires joint efforts and strategic initiatives from various stakeholders. Additionally, the emphasis on adaptability and context sensitivity resonates strongly, indicating the importance of tailoring social responsibility initiatives to local needs and priorities. Overall, the discussions highlighted the transformative potential of universities that can meaningfully contribute to societal values when they actively embrace their social responsibility commitments.

5.2 Measurement and Reporting of Social Responsibility Initiatives

The diverse set of indicators and metrics for measuring social responsibility initiatives shows the complexity of the evaluation process. The importance of sustainability reporting standards, community engagement, and stakeholder satisfaction underscores the need for universities to transparently communicate their social impact. Regularly updating indicators based on evolving contexts ensures ongoing relevance and meaningful assessment. The complexity of measuring and reporting social responsibility initiatives at universities is evident from the diverse range of indicators and metrics identified in the study. This academic discussion will delve into the implications and scientific perspectives of the identified dimensions.

Based on the research results, we found that the evaluation of social responsibility programmes in higher education is complex and requires a wide range of metrics and indicators. These include sustainability reporting standards, community engagement measures, research and education assessments, governance ethics measures, diversity and inclusion initiatives, social impact assessments, financial distribution assessments, stakeholder satisfaction measures, involvement in international projects, and knowledge of new ideas and methods.

Transparency and accountability were found to be essential for universities to transparently report on their social impact, as evidenced by sustainability reporting criteria, stakeholder satisfaction, and community involvement. These metrics provide comparability and accountability in line with academia and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Community engagement measures should include qualitative elements to fully reflect the extent of their impact on local communities. Based on the findings, we believe that ethical governance metrics emphasise transparency, accountability, and integrity in higher education institutions. Diversity and inclusion initiatives should be considered when evaluating long-term implications and societal change. Estimates of financial distribution must be cautious to ensure efficiency and sustainability.

Universities must lead international projects to solve common problems and advance society. For society to progress, innovation and best practices must be embraced. This scholarly discourse underscores the congruence of these dimensions with broader discourses in higher education and social responsibility and highlights the importance of considering these metrics for a comprehensive assessment of the social impact of institutions.

5.3 Key Dimensions and Components of Social Responsibility for Universities

The discussion highlights the key dimensions and components of social responsibility in universities, emphasising their universal importance while acknowledging contextual variations. Academic programmes, community engagement, and ethical governance are identified as universally important aspects of social responsibility. However, their prioritisation may differ across contexts, necessitating adaptable strategies. The critical role of community engagement in societal development is emphasised, aligning with the literature on the civic role of universities.

Based on the findings, the results underscore the intricate interplay between universal principles and contextual variations in university social responsibility. While certain principles, such as academic programmes, community engagement, and ethical governance, are deemed universally important, their prioritisation may vary based on local values, needs, and circumstances. This variability emphasises the need for adaptable strategies that can effectively address the specific context of each institution. Moreover, the emphasis on community engagement highlights the significant role universities play in societal development by actively involving themselves with their communities. The implications of interdisciplinary approaches suggest a holistic perspective in managing and measuring social impacts, aligning with the interconnected nature of social, environmental, and economic aspects.

The discussion supports the understanding that social responsibility in universities is indeed multifaceted and context-dependent. While certain principles hold universal importance, their implementation and prioritisation may vary based on local contexts. Thus, the need for

adaptable strategies to effectively address the diverse needs and values of different communities is acknowledged.

From the interview's perspective, the emphasis on adaptable strategies aligned with local values and needs resonates strongly. It underscores the importance of universities being responsive to the unique contexts in which they operate, ensuring that their social responsibility initiatives are relevant and impactful. Additionally, the recognition of community engagement as a critical aspect highlights the importance of universities actively engaging with their surroundings to foster positive societal change.

Based on the discussion It is advised that academic institutions create flexible plans for carrying out social responsibility programmes in light of the discussion of the essential elements and aspects of social responsibility in higher education. To effectively address complex societal challenges, these strategies should include many key actions, such as: thoroughly understanding local contexts; prioritising key dimensions based on the particulars of each context; implementing interdisciplinary approaches; actively involving local communities in project planning and implementation; fostering collaboration with external stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise; and establishing robust measurement and evaluation mechanisms for continuous improvement. Universities can effectively traverse the challenges of meeting their social responsibility duties while making significant contributions to their communities and society at large by implementing these suggested strategies.

Overall, the discussion provides valuable insights into the nuanced nature of university social responsibility and the importance of contextually relevant approaches to fulfilling this role effectively.

5.4 Social Responsibility Challenges and Opportunities for Albanian Universities

The discussion explores the responsibilities of universities in Albania, highlighting both challenges and opportunities. It highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to address challenges and leverage opportunities in higher education. Economic constraints and cultural diversity are identified as significant challenges, potentially hindering the allocation of resources for comprehensive social responsibility initiatives. Balancing global initiatives with local priorities is crucial. The "third mission" of higher education in Albania requires a paradigm shift in societal perception and institutional approaches towards social responsibility. The analysis suggests that social responsibility is a multifaceted and context-dependent concept, requiring nuanced approaches for implementation. Albanian higher education institutions must reorganise their mission and adopt a more socially responsible approach.

The discussion focuses on the potential problems that Albanian universities have when it comes to their social responsibility aspects. It also emphasises the paucity of research in this field and names legislative difficulties, cultural diversity, and financial limitations as major

obstacles. It also emphasises how crucial it is to get students involved, collaborate internationally, and connect with the community as possible means of making a beneficial effect on society.

The study explores the nuances of Albania's higher education system and highlights the need for a fundamental change in institutional and cultural attitudes towards social responsibility. Global cooperation, student involvement, and community engagement create potential, but cultural diversity and economic limitations often pose problems. The debate also touches on the legislative system's vagueness about social responsibility and the revolutionary struggle.

Although the debate is in line with the general objective of comprehending the difficulties, approaches to assessment, and aspects of social responsibility in higher education, it does not specifically provide any hypotheses. It acknowledges that social responsibility is complex and context-specific, necessitating the use of sophisticated strategies in its execution.

To solve the issues and take advantage of the potential found in Albania's higher education scene, I believe that flexibility and context awareness are essential. Developing effective social responsibility projects that are adapted to the local environment requires a comprehensive strategy that includes stakeholders from all disciplines. Furthermore, universities have the power to significantly improve society, underscoring the significance of making social responsibility a central component of their purpose.

Some of the recommendations provided by the discussions were:

It is suggested that further study be done on the roles that universities play in Albania, with an emphasis on how they could advance social development in areas like labour practices, environmental protection, and human skills. This study would contribute to addressing the existing gaps in Albanian higher education's knowledge of social responsibility and offer insightful information for practice and policy.

To establish an atmosphere that allows universities to successfully carry out their social obligations, institutions and legislators ought to give top priority to resolving legal uncertainties, cultural diversity, and financial limitations. This might entail the strategic allocation of resources, the promotion of inclusive behaviours, and the clarification of social responsibility-related regulatory frameworks.

Academic institutions ought to be actively involved in their local communities, assign students to participate in social responsibility projects, and look for national and international partnerships. These initiatives have the potential to improve universities' social influence and promote constructive social change.

The way that Albanian higher education views social responsibility and the institutional commitment to it has to be revolutionised. Institutions must restructure their missions and

take a more socially conscious stance, stressing the significance of judging institutions according to clear norms and guidelines for social responsibility. To do this, it would be necessary to expand public participation and fortify enduring partnerships to better match higher education with societal demands.

In general, it is advised to take a complete strategy that takes advantage of possibilities and tackles the difficulties that have been recognised.

6   Conclusion

Universities face numerous challenges in fulfilling social responsibility, including resource constraints, resistance to change, political barriers, engagement difficulties, measurement barriers, the complexities of globalization, struggles for inclusive governance, and balancing local and global responsibilities.

A comprehensive collaborative strategy involving university management, faculty, students and external stakeholders is critical to overcoming the challenges of fulfilling social responsibility.

Universities must establish a clear methodology for data collection, analysis and reporting in social responsibility initiatives, and regularly review and update indicators based on social, economic and environmental contexts for meaningful evaluation.

Social responsibility initiatives must be tailored to cultural, social and economic contexts to ensure relevance and effectiveness and to ensure alignment with local community values and needs.

Addressing the challenges of fulfilling social responsibility requires collaboration between university leadership, faculty, students and stakeholders. Strategies include clear policies, fostering a culture of social responsibility and community engagement. Institutions should be judged on social and real contributions, not just academic achievements.

The study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to social responsibility in Albanian universities, highlighting the challenges they face and the importance of localized strategies, government support, community collaboration, faculty involvement and interdisciplinary approaches.

The study provides empirical evidence on the integration of social responsibility in Albanian universities, emphasizing context-specific strategies and a holistic approach. It emphasizes the need for universities to evaluate societal impact beyond traditional academic metrics, thereby promoting a shift towards university social responsibility.

The study underscores the importance of government support and clear policies in promoting social responsibility initiatives, emphasizing community collaboration and youth mobilization for sustainable development.

The research highlights the need for further investigation of the challenges faced by universities in different regions and countries, as well as the effectiveness of social responsibility strategies in different cultural contexts. It also highlights the role of future research that should explore case studies, comparative studies and longitudinal studies.

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Povzetek:
Družbena odgovornost visokošolskih institucij in trajnostno izobraževanje

Raziskovalno vprašanje (RQ): Kako univerze merijo in poročajo o svojih pobudah za družbeno odgovornost ter kateri so ključni kazalniki in metrike, ki se uporabljajo za oceno učinkovitosti in vpliva teh programov? Katere so ključne razsežnosti in sestavine družbene odgovornosti za univerze in kako se razlikujejo v različnih kulturnih in institucionalnih kontekstih?

Namen: Raziskovalni namen in cilj preučevanja družbene odgovornosti univerz je bolje razumeti, oceniti in izboljšati vpliv teh institucij na družbo, okolje in njihove lokalne skupnosti. Namen te študije je tudi spodbuditi pozitivne spremembe, spodbujati odgovornost ter prispevati k širšim ciljem trajnosti in etičnega vodenja v izobraževanju.

Metoda: Uporabljena metoda je predvsem analitični pristop s konceptualno analizo in preverjanjem argumentov. Raziskovalno gradivo se osredotoča na različne članke, poročila in ustrezno literaturo o obravnavanem vprašanju. Raziskovalno gradivo vključuje tudi izvedbo 30 polstrukturiranih intervjujev s predavatelji, ki so privolili, da bodo delili svoja stališča in dojemanje obravnavane problematike.

Rezultati: Ugotovitve kažejo, da morajo institucije s svoje strani spremeniti svoj pristop do družbe, filozofijo, da so le v funkciji priprave študentov in znanstvenega raziskovanja, ampak morajo prevzeti odgovornost do družbe.

Organizacija: V okviru projekta je bilo na voljo več informacij o tem, kako bi se zavodi lahko vključili v projekt: Za čim večji vpliv univerzitetnih raziskav na menedžerje, organizacije in prakse so pogosto potrebni učinkoviti mehanizmi prenosa znanja, kot so razširjanje raziskav, partnerstva med industrijo in akademsko sfero ter programi izmenjave znanja. Univerze, podjetja in oblikovalci politik pogosto sodelujejo, da bi olajšali praktično uporabo rezultatov raziskav in zagotovili, da so raziskave dostopne in pomembne za tiste, ki imajo od njih koristi.

Družba: Koncept družbene odgovornosti na univerzah, ki se pogosto imenuje državljansko ali javno poslanstvo univerz, lahko pomembno vpliva na družbo, družbeno odgovornost in okolje. Ta koncept poudarja, da morajo univerze aktivno sodelovati s svojimi skupnostmi in širšim svetom ter prispevati k njim.

Originalnost: Družbena odgovornost univerz presega področje izobraževanja in raziskovanja. Vključuje zavezanost k prispevanju k blaginji družbe in okolja. S sprejetjem tega koncepta lahko univerze povečajo vpliv svojih raziskav na ta kritična področja ter tako spodbujajo pozitivne spremembe in trajnost. Za albansko visoko šolstvo je to izziv, saj je treba poseči v veljavni pravni okvir s pripravo aktov z merili za njihovo opredelitev in merljivimi kazalniki.

Omejitve/nadaljnje raziskovanje: Potrebno je izvesti bolj poglobljeno študijo s celovitejšim pristopom, v kateri bodo izpostavljeni podatki, premisleki in različni akterji, vključeni v vlogo univerz pri soočanju z izzivi, ki izhajajo iz družbenih problemov in trajnosti.

Ključne besede: družbena odgovornost, visokošolske institucije, visokošolsko izobraževanje, trajnostno izobraževanje, okolje.