

Measuring University Social Responsibility: A Quantitative Study at Cadi Ayyad University, Morocco.

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Abstract

This study examines how University Social Responsibility (USR) can be objectively measured and evaluated through a quantitative approach, focusing on students' perceptions at the Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences (FLESS) of Cadi Ayyad University in Morocco. Based on a stratified sample of 380 students, the research evaluates four dimensions of USR: Responsible Campus (RC), Professional and Civic Training (PCT), Social Management of Knowledge (SMK), and Social Participation (SP). Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings reveal that Social Management of Knowledge is the most influential determinant of perceived USR ($\beta = 0.522$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Professional and Civic Training ($\beta = 0.177$, $p < 0.001$) and Social Participation ($\beta = 0.164$, $p < 0.001$). Surprisingly, Responsible Campus showed no significant impact on USR perception. The model explains 71.41% of the variance in USR, indicating strong explanatory power. These results provide actionable insights for university policymakers seeking to enhance their institution's social responsibility profile.

Keywords: University Social Responsibility, USR measurement, higher education, PLS-SEM, Morocco, Cadi Ayyad University

Introduction

In recent years, Social Responsibility (SR) has gained increasing importance in organizations, with a growing number of entities implementing SR-oriented practices within their management frameworks (Navarro-García, de la Poza, & Rodríguez-Domínguez, 2020). Universities are no exception. The concept of University Social Responsibility (USR) has emerged to reflect the institution's commitment to social, economic, and environmental concerns while fulfilling its educational mission (Vallaey, 2019). Higher education institutions are increasingly adopting USR not only because they are organizations themselves, but also because they are responsible for educating future professionals who will contribute to organizational and societal development (Marinoni, Behrman, & Diaz, 2019).

At the international level, a critical milestone was the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century, adopted by UNESCO at the World Conference on Higher Education in Paris in 1998. This declaration emphasizes that higher education must strengthen its service to society, and highlights the responsibility of universities to maintain long-term relevance, evaluated based on the alignment between societal expectations and institutional performance (UNESCO, 1998). Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Summit of 2015 reinforced the role of universities as key actors in advancing sustainability, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which positions higher education institutions as central to generating innovative solutions to complex social, environmental, and economic challenges (United Nations, 2015).

In Morocco, Law 01-00 on the organization of higher education has transformed universities into institutions open to their social and economic environment. The law emphasizes the university's role in providing society with research results, innovation, and qualified professionals capable of contributing to socio-economic development. Moreover, the law grants universities legal personality and significant financial, administrative, educational, cultural, and scientific autonomy, allowing them to function as public enterprises responsible for managing public funds while meeting performance objectives and obligations (Law 01-00, 2000).

USR represents a paradigm shift that seeks to revive the social commitment of universities, which has diminished in recent decades, and to generate innovative solutions for the challenges of the knowledge society (Kuhn, 2004). Globalization and the demands of a capitalist economic model have led universities to prioritize workforce readiness over their humanist mission, prompting reflection on a philosophy centered on the common good (Drucker, 1999). USR,

therefore, must enable universities to respond effectively to societal needs through their core functions-teaching, research, outreach, and internal management-while promoting justice, solidarity, and social equity (Vallaey, 2009).

Currently, USR is understood as the alignment of the four fundamental university processes-management, teaching, research, and extension-with the scientific, professional, and educational objectives that support equitable and sustainable local and global development (Vallaey, 2014). In line with this perspective, Cadi Ayyad University (CAU) seeks to integrate its processes with its institutional mission, values, and social commitments, thereby achieving coherence, transparency, and participatory engagement with the university community and relevant social actors (USR-CAU Charter). The Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences of Marrakech, as part of CAU, is therefore positioned to promote economic and social development through actions that leverage knowledge for human well-being, comprehensive education, and sustainable development-core objectives of USR.

Despite the growing importance of USR in both academic discourse and institutional practice, one major challenge remains the objective measurement and evaluation of university social responsibility. Existing studies often emphasize conceptual discussions or descriptive analyses, while empirical approaches for assessing USR remain limited and fragmented. The absence of standardized measurement frameworks makes it difficult to evaluate universities' social performance and to identify the key dimensions that characterize socially responsible institutions.

Based on the above context, this study addresses the following research problem:

How can university social responsibility (USR) be objectively and validly measured and evaluated ?

From this overarching problem, the study formulates the following research questions:

1. What are the priority dimensions of social responsibility for universities?
2. What are the most relevant indicators and metrics for measuring university social responsibility?

Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to develop and empirically validate a comprehensive framework for measuring University Social Responsibility. By identifying the most relevant dimensions and indicators of USR, this study aims to contribute to both the

theoretical development of the concept and the practical implementation of socially responsible strategies within higher education institutions.

Finally, the remainder of this article is structured as follows. Section 1 presents a review of the literature on University Social Responsibility and the theoretical foundations underlying the research model. Section 2 introduces the conceptual model, the research hypotheses and describes the research methodology, including the data collection process and the analytical approach used in the study. Section 3 presents the empirical results obtained from the statistical analysis. Section 4 discusses the findings in relation to existing literature and highlights their implications for higher education institutions. Finally, the study concludes by outlining its main contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

1. Theoretical Framework: University Social Responsibility

1.1. Social Responsibility and Universities

Social responsibility has become a central concern for organizations worldwide, including universities, which are increasingly recognized as actors with significant societal influence (Navarro-García, de la Poza, & Rodríguez-Domínguez, 2020; Lozano, 2020). Historically, most research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has focused on businesses in North America and Western Europe, emphasizing managerial practices and strategies for organizational responsibility (Hill, 2004). However, when universities examine their own responsibility, the focus is often on the teaching of social responsibility rather than the institution's actual performance or ethical behavior (Hill, 2004). This discrepancy has led some scholars to argue that universities risk being perceived as 'charlatans'-teaching principles they fail to apply in practice (Hill, 2004; Aguinis & Glavas, 2019).

Universities cannot remain on the sidelines of social responsibility debates because they are not only organizations themselves but also educational institutions shaping future professionals and citizens (Zolfagharian, Zadfar, & Zolfagharian, 2017; Vallaeys, 2006; Hernández & Reimers, 2020). Accordingly, the concept of University Social Responsibility (USR) has emerged as a framework to integrate ethical, social, and environmental considerations into university practices and to foster the development of socially responsible graduates (Stensaker & Harvey, 2013; Lozano et al., 2019).

Vallaeys (2006) defines USR as a strategy for ethical and intelligent management of the impacts generated by the university in its human, social, and natural environment. Ethical management

ensures that stakeholders benefit while minimizing harm, and intelligent management ensures that these actions are sustainable and beneficial to the institution itself. By embedding social responsibility into its operations, a university can foster positive development within its environment.

The dual mission of universities-academic training and knowledge creation-forms the foundation for USR. Academic content is informed by research conducted by faculty, highlighting the interconnectedness of teaching and knowledge production (Sofian, Saeidi, Saeidi, & Saaeidi, 2015). USR, therefore, requires universities to manage the social, cognitive, professional, and environmental impacts of their activities in a manner that promotes sustainable human development through participatory engagement with society (Vallaey, 2009; Hernández & Reimers, 2020).

1.2. Impacts of Universities on Society

Universities, like other organizations, exert multiple impacts on their environment, which may be positive or negative (Vallaey, 2008; Marinoni, Behrman, & Diaz, 2019). Understanding and managing these impacts is essential for the implementation of USR. The literature identifies four main categories of university impacts:

- **Organizational impacts:** Universities affect the lives of faculty, staff, and students through their organizational structures and policies. Additionally, they have ecological impacts, including waste generation, energy consumption, and pollution, contributing to an institutional ecological footprint (Deem, 2001; Vallaey, 2008; Lozano, 2020).
- **Educational impacts:** Universities shape the knowledge, skills, and ethical perspectives of students, influencing their professional behavior and societal contributions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Kuh, 2008; Velázquez et al., 2020).
- **Cognitive and epistemological impacts:** Universities influence the production and dissemination of knowledge, the definition of what constitutes 'truth' and 'science,' and the social perception of expertise (Illeris, 2018; Biesta, 2012; Breslin, 2020). Through curricula design, research agendas, and knowledge dissemination, universities can either promote elitism or democratize access to knowledge (Vallaey, 2008; Hislop, 2009).

- Social impacts: Universities contribute to societal development by producing educated citizens, fostering social capital, and engaging with communities on development initiatives (Denson & Bowman, 2018; Hernández & Reimers, 2020; Bowman, 2010). The institution's visibility and interaction with stakeholders shape public perceptions of its legitimacy and capacity to address social challenges (Vallaey, 2008).

These impacts form the foundation for defining the core dimensions of USR.

1.3. Core Dimensions of University Social Responsibility

1.3.1. Responsible Campus (RC)

The Responsible Campus (RC) dimension involves the socially responsible management of the university's internal processes, human resources, work climate, and environmental practices (Vallaey et al., 2009; Lozano & Huisin, 2011; Velázquez & Munguia, 2018). This dimension emphasizes fostering ethical, transparent, and democratic organizational behavior among faculty, staff, and students. Daily practices promoting good governance, interpersonal respect, and sustainable environmental management reinforce ethical norms within the university community (Stensaker & Harvey, 2013; Lozano et al., 2019).

Research question for RC: How can universities promote responsible organizational behavior based on ethical, democratic, and environmentally sustainable practices?

1.3.2. Professional and Civic Training (PCT)

The Professional and Civic Training (PCT) dimension addresses the socially responsible management of academic programs and student development (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Hartley & Zlotkowski, 2009). Universities should design curricula that respond to real economic, social, and ecological challenges and facilitate engagement with external stakeholders, including employers, public organizations, and civil society actors (Gottlieb & Robinson, 2002; Vallaey et al., 2009). PCT aims to foster ethical, civic-minded, and socially responsible graduates capable of contributing to sustainable societal development.

Research question for PCT: How can universities organize education to train citizens committed to societal development?

1.3.3. Social Management of Knowledge (SMK)

The Social Management of Knowledge (SMK) dimension refers to the responsible production, dissemination, and application of knowledge and research (Hislop, 2009; Vallaey's et al., 2009). Universities are expected to align research agendas with societal needs and collaborate with external stakeholders to ensure that knowledge contributes to local, national, and global development objectives (Easterby-Smith, Lyles, & Tsang, 2008; Dalkir, 2005). SMK also emphasizes transdisciplinarity, public engagement, and knowledge accessibility to enable societal appropriation of scientific findings (Vallaey's et al., 2009; Lozano et al., 2019).

Research question for SMK: What knowledge should universities produce, with whom, and how should it be disseminated to ensure social relevance and accessibility?

1.3.4. Social Participation (SP)

The Social Participation (SP) dimension captures the university's engagement with society through collaborative projects, community development, and mutual learning (Hartley & Minkler, 2016; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Dencik & Leistert, 2015). Universities foster social capital and participatory learning by involving students, faculty, and external actors in initiatives addressing pressing social problems (Vallaey's et al., 2009). SP encourages universities to act as active agents of sustainable and humane development.

Research question for SP: How can universities engage continuously with society to promote more equitable and sustainable development?

2. Methodological Framework

2.1. Methodological choice

This study adopts a positivist epistemological stance, which assumes that social phenomena can be observed, measured, and analyzed objectively through rigorous scientific methods. This perspective is particularly appropriate for research that aims to examine relationships between theoretical constructs using empirical data. In the present study, the objective is to measure and evaluate University Social Responsibility (USR) by identifying observable indicators and empirically assessing the relationships between its different dimensions. In line with this objective, the research relies on a quantitative approach, allowing for the collection and analysis of measurable data through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents. Furthermore, the study follows a hypothetico-deductive reasoning process, which involves

drawing on existing theoretical frameworks from the literature to formulate research hypotheses and subsequently testing them using statistical analysis. This approach enables the confrontation of theoretical propositions with empirical evidence in order to confirm or reject the hypothesized relationships between the different dimensions of University Social Responsibility.

2.2. Research Model

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate and measure the University Social Responsibility (USR) of Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, focusing on the Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences (FLESS) as a case study.

Based on the theoretical framework and prior studies on USR (Vallaeyes et al., 2009; Lozano et al., 2019), we developed a formative research model comprising four explanatory dimensions hypothesized to influence USR:

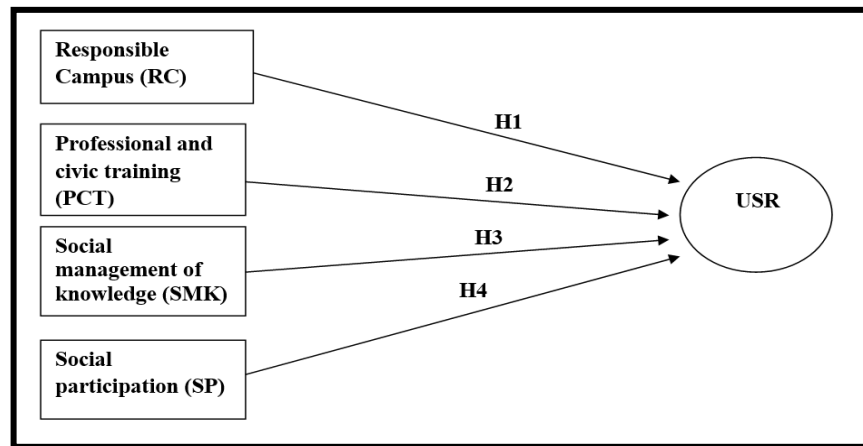
- Responsible Campus (RC): ethical and sustainable management of the university environment, human resources, and institutional procedures.
- Professional and Civic Training (PCT): socially responsible management of teaching and academic programs.
- Social Management of Knowledge (SMK): alignment of research and knowledge dissemination with societal needs.
- Social Participation (SP): active engagement of the university in its surrounding community.

The research model was operationalized into a simplified econometric form as follows:

$$USR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RC + \beta_2 PCT + \beta_3 SMK + \beta_4 SP + \varepsilon$$

Where β_0 is the intercept, β_1 - β_4 are the regression coefficients, and ε is the error term.

Figure 1: Research model



Source: made by ourselves

2.3. Research Hypotheses

Based on the research model, the study tests the following hypotheses:

H1: Responsible Campus (RC) positively influences USR.

H2: Professional and Civic Training (PCT) positively influences USR.

H3: Social Management of Knowledge (SMK) positively influences USR.

H4: Social Participation (SP) positively influences USR.

These hypotheses allow us to evaluate the relative contribution of each dimension to the overall USR performance of the FLESS.

2.4. Population and Sampling

2.4.1. Population

The study focuses on students of the FLESS at Cadi Ayyad University, who are considered the primary internal stakeholders affected by USR activities. The total population comprises 39132 students, distributed across academic levels as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of the parent population of students enrolled at the FLESS

Level of study	Number of students	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	36930	94,37%
Master's degree	1450	3,70%
Phd	752	2,03%
Total	39132	100 %

Source: compiled by us (<http://www.fsjes.uca.ma>)

2.4.2. Sample

A stratified probability sampling method was used to ensure proportional representation across academic levels (Chao, 1993). The required sample size was calculated using the formula:

$$n = (Z^2 \times p \times q \times N) / (N \times E^2 + Z^2 \times p \times q)$$

Where: N = 39,132 (population size), Z = 1.96 (confidence level 95%), p = 0.5 (proportion expected to participate), q = 1-p = 0.5, E = 0.05 (margin of error).

This results in a required sample of n = 380 students. To determine the sample size for each stratum, a constant fraction k = n/N = 380/39,132 = 0.0097 was applied to each sub-population. Table 2 shows the resulting stratified sample distribution.

Table 2: Sample distribution according to sub-population percentage

Level of study	Number of students	Sample	Law (60%)	Economic and management (40%)
Bachelor's degree	36930	358	215	143
Master's degree	1450	14	9	5
Phd	752	8	5	3
Total	39132	380	229	151

Source: made by us

This stratified sampling approach ensures that the sample reflects the composition of the student population in terms of both academic level and field of study, enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

2.5. Operationalization of USR Variables

Previous studies on university social responsibility have attempted to measure USR through qualitative techniques such as interviews, document analysis, or website reviews (Nadeem & Jan-Kakahhel, 2012; Ruiz & Soria, 2010; Baca, 2015). However, these studies often lack operationalized indicators, making comparisons difficult. Few quantitative studies provided robust measurement instruments or theoretical grounding for their items (Ruiz-Corbella & Bautista-Cerro, 2016).

In this study, a quantitative survey instrument was developed to measure the students' exposure to USR activities across four dimensions (RC, PCT, SMK, SP) and overall USR. A 6-point Likert scale was used for all items, ranging from: 1 - Totally Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Partially Disagree, 4 - Partially Agree, 5 - Agree, 6 - Totally Agree.

The questionnaire contains 40 items across four dimensions and 3 items measuring overall USR. The operationalization of each variable is detailed in Tables 3-7, ensuring clarity, reliability, and alignment with the conceptual framework (Vallaeyes et al., 2009; Lozano et al., 2019).

Table 3: Operationalization of the explanatory variable RC.

Explanatory variable (dimension)	Sub dimensions	Items	Measure
Responsible Campus « RC »	SD1: Human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination.	RC1: interpersonal relations are generally of respect and cordiality at the faculty. RC2: Students are treated with respect and collaboration. RC3: I do not perceive any discrimination based on gender, race, socio-economic level or political orientation. RC4: The university is organized to accommodate students with special needs.	Likert Scale 1-6
	SD2: Environment and Sustainable Campus	RC5: The faculty takes measures to protect the environment on campus (green space, waste, water, energy). RC6: I have acquired ecological habits since I was at the faculty.	

	SD3: Transparency, Communication and Democracy	RC7: I feel heard as a citizen, I can participate in university life. RC8: I perceive a coherence between the principles declared by the faculty and what is practiced in the field. RC9: Freedom of expression and participation reigns at the faculty for all teachers, non-teaching and students. RC10: I am informed in full transparency of everything that concerns me at the faculty.	
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Source: made by us

Table 4: Operationalisation of the PCT explanatory variable.

Explanatory variable (dimension)	Sub - dimensions	Items	Measure
Professional civic and training « PCT »	SD4: Presence of citizen themes and social responsibility in programs.	PCT1: The faculty offers me an ethical and citizen training that helps me to be a socially responsible person. PCT2: My training is truly integral, human and professional, and not only specific.	Likert Scale 1-6
	SD5: Articulation between professionalization and volunteering	PCT 3: The faculty motivates me to put myself in the shoes of others and to react to social and economic injustices present in my social context. PCT 4: My training allows me to be an active citizen in the defense of the environment and informed of risks and ecological alternatives to current development. PCT 5: As part of my courses, I had the opportunity to participate in social projects outside the university.	
	SD6: Learning based on social projects.	PCT 6: In my training, I had the opportunity to confront poverty face to face.	

		<p>PCT 7: The different courses I offer in my training are up to date and meet the social needs of my entourage.</p> <p>PCT 8: My teachers associate their teachings with today's social and environmental problems.</p>	
	<p>SD7: Integration of external social actors in program design.</p>	<p>PCT 9: As part of my training, I have the opportunity to meet with social and environmental development specialists.</p> <p>PCT 10: In my courses, I had the opportunity to do applied research to solve social and/or environmental problems.</p>	

Source: made by ourselves

Table5 : Operationalization of the SMK explanatory variable.

Explanatory variable (dimension)	Sub - dimensions	Items	Measure
Social Management of Knowledge « SMK »	<p>SD8: Promotion of applied research on development issues.</p>	<p>SMK 1: The faculty has research lines oriented towards social development and environmental sustainability.</p> <p>SMK 2: Faculty has socially useful research promotion systems</p> <p>SMK 3: The faculty encourages the ongoing integration of research results, case studies and methodologies into curricula.</p> <p>SMK 4: Students must do internships in several courses of their training.</p>	Likert Scale 1-6
	<p>SD9: Integration of external social actors in research and</p>	<p>SMK 5: The faculty establishes alliances and synergies with other actors (government, business, NGOs) to develop knowledge policies, research lines or training areas adapted to social requirements.</p>	

	design of research lines.	SMK 6: Research themes are defined in consultation with the interests of relevant external groups. SMK 7: The faculty studies the knowledge needs of the most excluded social groups and strives to meet them.	
	SD10: Dissemination and transfer of socially useful knowledge to audiences.	SMK 8: The faculty encourages the formation of various social groups to research and produce their own knowledge. SMK 9: The faculty has specific means of dissemination and transfer of knowledge to citizens. SMK 10: The faculty encourages scientific popularization and dissemination of knowledge to marginalized audiences of the academy.	

Source: made by Our selves

Table 6: Operationalization of the SP explanatory variable.

Explanatory variable (dimension)	Sub - dimensions	Items	Measure
Social participation « SP »	SD11: Promoting social rights for development.	SP1: I feel that the faculty cares about social problems and wants students to be agents of development. SP2: the faculty maintains close contacts with key players in social development (State, NGO, international organizations, companies).	
	SD12: Integration of university education into social projection.	SP3: The faculty offers its students and teachers opportunities to interact with various social sectors. SP4: The faculty organizes many forums and activities on development, social and environmental issues.	

	SD13: Volunteering, extension and social assistance.	<p>SP5: There is an explicit policy of non-segregation of access to academic training for marginalized groups (indigenous population, racial minority, low-income students, etc.) through scholarships or other means.</p> <p>SP6: Voluntary initiatives exist in the faculty and it motivates us to participate.</p> <p>SP7: During my studies, I was able to see that social assistance and development are unrelated.</p> <p>SP8: Since I have been at the faculty, I have been able to be part of social or environmental groups and/or networks organized or promoted by the faculty.</p>	Likert Scale 1-6
	SD14: Active participation in local and national development program.	<p>SP9: Students who graduate from the faculty have received training that promotes their social and environmental sensitivity.</p> <p>SP10: During my training, I was able to learn a lot about the national reality and the social problems of my country.</p>	

Source: made by ourselves

Table 7: Operationalization of the variable to explain USR.

Variable to be explained	Sub dimensions	Items	Measure
USR	Economic	USR1: My faculty contributes to growth and economic development	Likert Scale 1-6
	Social	USR2: My faculty contributes to solving social problems	Likert Scale 1-6
	Environmental	USR3: My faculty contributes to respect and protection of the environment	Likert Scale 1-6

Source : made by ourselves

2.6. Data Collection Technique

The survey method was employed as the primary data collection technique (Munch & Angeles, 1990). This approach allows for systematic measurement of pre-defined indicators through a structured questionnaire. The survey instrument consists of two parts:

- Sociodemographic information - collecting data on age, gender, academic level, and field of study.
- USR measurement items - 43 items distributed across the five USR dimensions, capturing student perceptions of organizational, educational, knowledge-related, and social participation activities.

This methodological framework ensures that the data collected is valid, reliable, and suitable for quantitative analysis, including the application of structural equation modeling using SmartPLS, to evaluate the impact of each USR dimension on overall university social responsibility.

3. Results and Interpretation

The data collected from 380 students of the Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences (FLESS) at Cadi Ayyad University were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and SmartPLS for structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The analysis aimed to evaluate the perceived level of University Social Responsibility (USR) and to test the hypothesized relationships between USR and its four dimensions.

3.1. Descriptive Analysis of Variables

3.1.1. *Dependent Variable - USR*

Descriptive statistics of the USR items indicate varying perceptions among students (Table 3). The environmental dimension (USR3) achieved the highest mean value of 4.58, suggesting that students recognize and appreciate the faculty's efforts in environmental protection. In contrast, the social dimension (USR2) recorded the lowest mean of 3.66, indicating a perceived weakness in the faculty's contributions to addressing social problems. The economic dimension (USR1) showed a mean of 3.91, suggesting partial agreement regarding its role in economic development.

Table 8: descriptive analysis of the variable USR.

Variable à expliquer : USR					
items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
USR1	380	1	6	3,91	1,392
USR2	380	1	6	3,66	1,488
USR3	380	3	6	4,58	,832
N valide (liste)	380				

Source: by our own care

3.1.2. Explanatory Variable - Responsible Campus (RC)

Analysis of the Responsible Campus (RC) dimension (Table 4) reveals that students partially agree with the faculty's performance. Among sub-dimensions, SD2 (Sustainable Campus) recorded the highest mean (4.00), reflecting positive recognition of environmental measures. SD1 (Human Rights, Gender Equality, Non-Discrimination) had a mean of 3.95, indicating relative disagreement. SD3 (Transparency, Communication, and Democracy) obtained the lowest mean of 3.38, suggesting that students perceive gaps in participatory governance and transparent communication. The overall RC mean is 3.77, indicating moderate agreement.

Table 9: descriptive analysis of the variable RC by SD.

Explanatory variable (dimension)	Sub-dimensions	Items	SD mean	CR mean	Standard deviation
Responsible Campus « RC »	SD1	RC1 ; RC2 ; RC3 ; RC4	3,95	3,77	0,48
	SD2	RC5 ; RC6	4		
	SD3	RC7 ; RC8 ; RC9 ; RC10	3,38		

Source: by our own care

3.1.3. Explanatory Variable - Professional and Civic Training (PCT)

The PCT dimension (Table 5) shows a general mean of 3.83, reflecting partial agreement regarding the faculty's contribution to professional and civic training. Notably, SD6 (Learning Based on Social Projects) received the highest score (4.53), suggesting that students value experiential learning and engagement with social issues. Other sub-dimensions, including SD4, SD5, and SD7, recorded lower means (3.52-3.69), reflecting relative disagreement on aspects such as program articulation with social realities.

Table 10: descriptive analysis of the PCT variable by SD.

Explanatory variable (dimension)	Sub-dimensions	Items	SD Mean	PCT mean	Standard deviation
Professional and civic training« PCT »	SD4	PCT1 ; PCT2	3,69	3,83	0,70
	SD5	PCT3 ; PCT4 ; PCT5	3,53		
	SD6	PCT6, PCT7 ; PCT8	4,53		
	SD7	PCT9, PCT10	3,52		

Source: by our own care

3.1.4. Explanatory Variable - Social Management of Knowledge (SMK)

SMK exhibited the lowest mean among explanatory variables (3.55) (Table 6), indicating moderate recognition of the faculty's efforts in socially responsible knowledge management. Sub-dimensions SD8-SD10 ranged from 3.50 to 3.59, suggesting that students perceive limited integration of research with societal needs, dissemination of knowledge, and involvement of external stakeholders in research design.

Table 11: descriptive analysis of the SMK variable by SD.

Explanatory variable (dimension)	Sub-dimensions	Items	SD Mean	PCT mean	Standard deviation
Social Management of Knowledge « SMK »	SD8	SMK1 ; SMK2 ; SMK3 ; SMK4	3,50	3,55	0,52
	SD9	SMK5 ; SMK6 ; SMK7	3,55		
	SD10	SMK8 ; SMK9 ; SMK10	3,59		

Source: by our own care

3.1.5. Explanatory Variable - Social Participation (SP)

The SP dimension achieved the highest mean of all explanatory variables (4.07) (Table 7), suggesting that students perceive strong engagement of the faculty in community development initiatives. The sub-dimension SD11 (Promoting Social Rights for Development) scored 4.59, reflecting a high level of agreement, whereas other sub-dimensions showed means between 3.82 and 3.96.

Table 12: descriptive analysis of the SP variable by SD.

Explanatory variable (dimension)	Sub-dimensions	Items	SD Mean	SP mean	Standard deviation
Social Participation « PS »	SD11	SP1 ; SP2	4,59	4,07	0,66
	SD12	SP3 ; SP4	3,96		
	SD13	SP5 ; SP6 ; SP7 ; SP8	3,82		
	SD14	SP9 ; SP10	3,94		

Source: by our own care

Summary of Descriptive Analysis: The average scores of the four USR dimensions indicate a moderate to high perception of USR activities among students. SP is the most positively perceived dimension (4.07), followed by PCT (3.83), RC (3.77), and SMK (3.55). This ordering highlights the areas of strength (social participation, experiential learning) and areas requiring attention (knowledge management and governance transparency).

3.2. Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Hypothesis Testing

3.2.1. Measurement Model Validation

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (ρ_c), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity (Tables 13-14).

Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.737 to 0.928, exceeding the 0.70 threshold (Chin, 1998), indicating high internal consistency. Composite reliability values ranged from 0.849 to 0.939, confirming strong construct reliability. AVE values ranged from 0.500 to 0.653, satisfying the convergent validity criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was verified, showing that all constructs are empirically distinct. These results confirm that the measurement model is reliable and valid, allowing for structural model assessment.

Table 13: Convergent validity of measurement scales

	RC	PCT	SMK	SP	USR
RC	0,733				
PCT	0,726	0,751			
SMK	0,716	0,714	0,773		
SP	0,604	0,745	0,764	0,780	
USR	0,670	0,719	0,720	0,737	0,808

Source: by ourselves (SMART PLS)

Table 14: Discriminatory validity of the measurement model

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	(rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE
RC	0,879	0,899	0,903	0,500
PCT	0,902	0,907	0,920	0,563
SMK	0,903	0,910	0,920	0,538
SP	0,928	0,931	0,939	0,609
USR	0,737	0,764	0,849	0,653

Source: by ourselves (SMART PLS)

3.2.2. Structural Model Evaluation

Multicollinearity: The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 2.878 to 3.475 (Table 10), well below the critical threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2011), indicating no multicollinearity issues.

Table 15: Structural Model VIF

USR	
	VIF
Responsible Campus (RC)	2,878
Professional and Civic Training (PCT)	3,475
Social Management of Knowledge (SKM)	3,306
Social Participation (SP)	3,139

Source: by ourselves (SMART PLS)

Coefficient of Determination (R²): The model explains 71.41% of the variance in USR (R² = 0.7141, Table 11), reflecting a high explanatory power of the four dimensions.

Table 16: Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable to be explained	R^2	R^2 adjusted
USR	0,7172	0,7141

Source: by ourselves (SMART PLS Results)

Effect Sizes (f^2): SMK had a medium effect (0.291), while PCT (0.032) and SP (0.030) had small effects, and RC had no significant effect (0.005) (Table 12), suggesting that knowledge management is the strongest determinant of perceived USR.

Table 17: Effect size index

Variable	USR	Effect size
RC	0,005	no effect
PCT	0,032	small
SMK	0,291	medium
SP	0,030	low

Source: by ourselves (SMART PLS)

Goodness of Fit (GoF): The overall GoF index is 0.68, exceeding the threshold of 0.36, which indicates a very strong model fit according to Tenenhaus et al. (2005).

3.2.3. Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping (n=380) was used to assess the significance of path coefficients (Table 18):

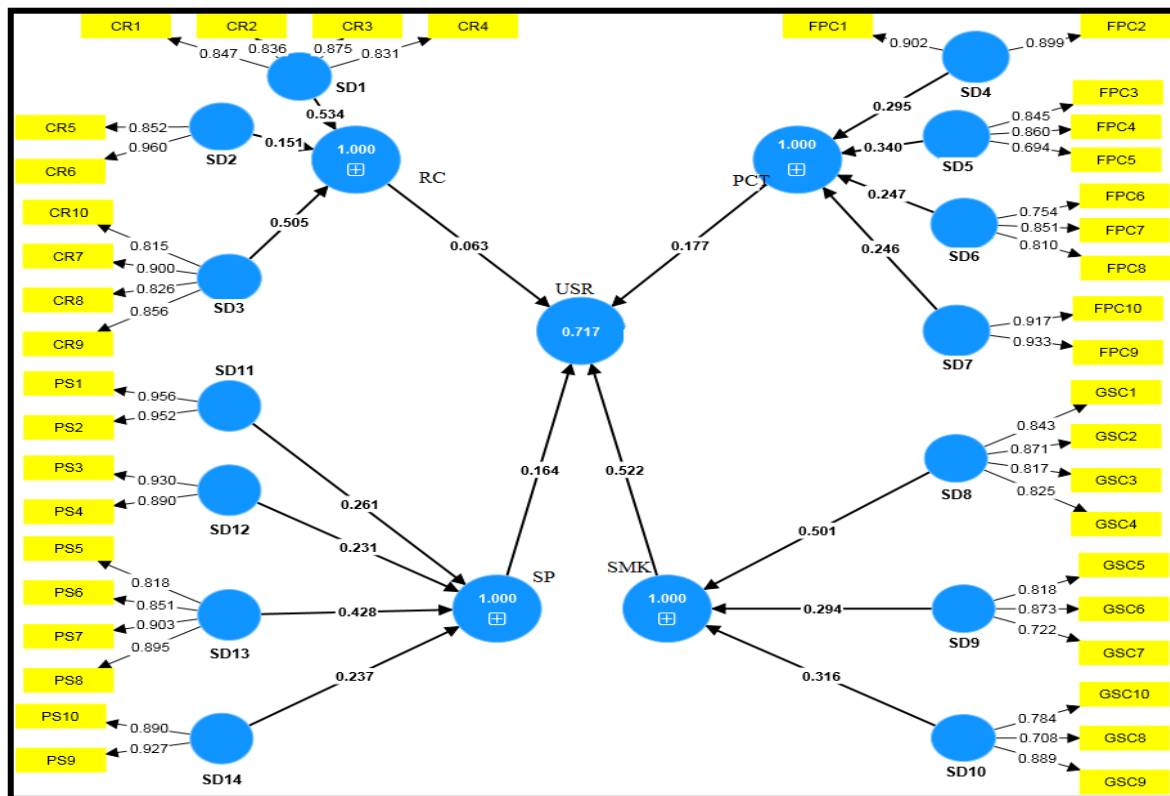
Table 18: Regression coefficients and hypothesis testing

Dimensions	β_i	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
RC -> USR	0,063	0,063	0,057	1,101	0,271	Rejected H1
PCT -> USR	0,177	0,177	0,048	3,694	0,000	Accepted H2
SMK -> USR	0,522	0,522	0,051	10,316	0,000	Accepted H3
SP-> USR	0,164	0,162	0,045	3,615	0,000	Accepted H4

Source: by ourselves (SMART PLS Results)

The results indicate that social management of knowledge (SMK) is the most influential determinant of perceived USR, accounting for 52.2% of the total effect. PCT and SP also positively influence USR, though to a lesser degree. Surprisingly, RC has a negligible impact, suggesting that students perceive campus governance, human rights, and transparency measures as less effective in shaping USR perceptions. Overall, the FLESS achieves a USR score of 0.7174, meaning that approximately 71.74% of students perceive the faculty as socially responsible, particularly in terms of knowledge dissemination and social engagement.

Figure 2: Structural model.



Source: by ourselves (SMART PLS Results)

4. Discussion

This study examined student perceptions of University Social Responsibility (USR) at the Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences (FLESS), Cadi Ayyad University. The moderately positive overall USR score of 71.74% indicates that students recognize the faculty's contribution to social responsibility. This finding is consistent with the growing recognition in the literature that higher education institutions are increasingly expected to integrate social responsibility into their missions, particularly in alignment with sustainable development goals (Salguero, Duche-Pérez, Ugarte & Castillo, 2025).

Despite this overall positivity, the Responsible Campus dimension was rated lowest by students. The comparatively weak perceptions of internal governance, transparency, and participatory communication reflect challenges observed in other contexts, where internal management functions lag behind external engagement efforts (Cherboub, Cherboub, Benslama & Malainine, 2025). Research suggests that universities that proactively involve stakeholders-including students-in governance and decision-making tend to score higher on internal responsibility measures (Darouassi & El Gueddar, 2025). In the Moroccan context, qualitative analyses indicate structural constraints and fragmented implementation of social responsibility

practices, underscoring the need for more coherent governance frameworks (Ahekkad & Charba, 2025).

The moderate score for Professional and Civic Training aligns with evidence that integration of USR into curricula enhances students' perceptions and commitment to social responsibility (Travis et al., 2022). Studies comparing students across cultural contexts report that knowledge about social responsibility and formal curriculum inclusion significantly influence student attitudes toward USR (Travis et al., 2022). However, results from this study suggest that while social projects and experiential learning are appreciated, there remains a gap in systematically embedding social responsibility themes across all programs.

The Social Management of Knowledge (SMK) dimension emerged as the most influential predictor of overall USR perception, highlighting the importance students place on applied research and knowledge dissemination. This aligns with research from Saudi and Spanish contexts showing that sustainable knowledge-sharing practices and research relevance are integral to effective USR (Nazneen et al., 2023). Moreover, studies indicate that when universities align research with societal needs, it strengthens stakeholder engagement and institutional legitimacy (Salguero et al., 2025).

Students' relatively high ratings for Social Participation underscore the value they place on community engagement and outreach activities. This is supported by research showing that community involvement and social projects are key visibility indicators of USR and significantly shape student perceptions (Vasilescu, Moura & Marques, 2020). Additionally, studies have shown that active student engagement in volunteer and outreach initiatives positively influences their satisfaction and perceptions of their university's social commitment (Alves & Raposo, 2006; Saleem et al., 2017).

Overall, the results of this study reveal both convergence and divergence with international USR research. The moderately favorable perception of USR at FLESS aligns with global evidence that universities are increasingly adopting socially responsible practices, particularly in community engagement and applied research (Salguero et al., 2025; Nazneen et al., 2023). However, the weaker performance on internal governance dimensions-such as transparency and stakeholder participation-diverges from contexts where these functions are more strongly institutionalized.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the multidimensional nature of USR as a concept that encompasses governance, education, research, and community engagement. Practically, the study suggests that FLESS and similar institutions should strengthen internal governance transparency, expand curricular content on social responsibility, and institutionalize mechanisms for stakeholder participation in research and decision-making processes.

Conclusion

University Social Responsibility (USR) has emerged as a fundamental dimension of higher education institutions, reflecting their societal mission and their responsibility to contribute to sustainable and equitable development. As key social actors, universities are expected not only to produce knowledge and skilled professionals, but also to foster ethical values, civic engagement, and social awareness among students.

This study sought to examine how USR can be objectively measured and evaluated through a quantitative approach, focusing on students' perceptions at the Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences of Cadi Ayyad University. The findings indicate that students perceive the faculty's overall commitment to USR as moderately positive. Among the four USR dimensions, social participation received the highest evaluation, followed by professional and civic training, responsible campus management, and social knowledge management. Nevertheless, social knowledge management emerged as the most influential dimension in shaping students' overall perception of USR, highlighting its strategic importance in reinforcing universities' societal impact.

Despite its contributions, this study presents certain limitations, notably its reliance on self-reported data and its focus on a single faculty within one public university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could extend this framework to multiple institutions, incorporate qualitative approaches, and examine additional stakeholder perspectives. Such developments would enhance the robustness of USR assessment models and support the formulation of more comprehensive and context-sensitive university social responsibility strategies.

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