

# Research on critical factors in university-corporation social responsibility

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## Abstract

This study investigated three factors of strategic philanthropy, social impact, and social participation in university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility. This study employed Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to systematically analyze complex issues of social responsibility. The participants included enterprise and university staff who used to carry out social responsibility projects, and 20 valid questionnaires were collected. Synthesized critical factors from literature included policy benefit, social impact, and community participation, which were further divided into five sub-phases, including fifteen criteria in total. Finally, based on the importance, factors that influenced university and corporate joint implementation of social responsibility were ranked and discussed on their priority. This study expects to provide practical suggestions to university and corporate joint implementation of social responsibility projects.

**Keywords:** Strategic philanthropy, Social impact, Community participation, University social responsibility, Corporate social responsibility

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# 1. Introduction

In recent years, enterprise pursues to combine university advantages to provide rural areas with services, such as schooling, nonprofit projects, and others, and these services receive concerns and attention from the public. These projects not only satisfy social needs but also create values and reputation to both enterprise and universities. In particular, project-based corporate social responsibility not only solves emergent local problems but also frees local government from trivial reporting tasks to provide immediate solutions to local needs. This study employed quantitative methods to analyze university and corporate strategies in joint implementation of social responsibility, and the results of this study will provide practical suggestions to practitioners.

The concept of university social responsibility is related to corporate social responsibility (Clugston & Calder, 1999; Latif et al., 2022; Lo et al., 2017; Yang, 2022; Zoubida, 2023). Corporate social responsibility is a corporate act to make contributions to economic development, improve its employees' life quality, and provide services to the local community and society (Porter & Kramer, 2002; Armstrong & Green, 2013). As a social and educational organization, universities need to make contributions and realize responsibilities in addition to educating, researching, and cultivating professionals (Clugston & Calder, 1999; Gomez, 2014; Latif et al., 2022; Monteiro et al., 2023). Yang (2022) considered universities could have multiple positive influences on local communities. Gomez (2014) claimed that positive impacts from activities of university social responsibility on students included increasing students sense of responsibility, civil awareness, social responsibility, project-based problem-solving abilities, and diverse thinking and creativity. Shriberg (2002) pointed out the criteria of evaluating university social responsibility included mission and goals, education and research, community participation, environmental sustainability, ethics and transparency. Latif et al. (2022) pointed out that university social responsibility involved service quality, student satisfaction, university reputation, and student trust, leading to the university performance and achievement. Lo et al. (2017) claimed that university social responsibility was closely related to stakeholders. Adomako & Tran (2022) found that there had been a research niche for evaluating the current mechanism for social responsibility. Adhikariparajuli et al. (2021) claimed that there had been a gap between the content and the revelation of corporate social responsibility, and there was a long way to go for sustainable development. Therefore, this study proposes that evaluation criteria are needed for joint investment of university and corporate social responsibility as a reference for future policy making.

Based on literature review, this study explored key determinants for the success of

joint implementation of university and corporate social responsibility. In order to find out the key determinant for success, this study employed Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and placed the chosen determinant in the phases of AHP for analysis. Prioritizing the importance of phase and the criteria can be helpful for practitioners' further revision for each determinant. Finally, according to the priority ranking, suggestions can be derived for universities and enterprise to avoid policy errors. It is expected that this study can offer suggestions for selecting beneficiaries for nonprofit projects.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Factors for Universities and Corporations to Decide on Realizing Social Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility refers to corporate decisions involving moral and ethic factors. In the decision-making process, the enterprise needs to consider the impact that might be caused by its policy on the society, and therefore, the enterprise is obliged to make decisions beneficial to the society, assisting to solve social problems (Porter & Kramer, 2002; Bhatti et al., 2022; Griffin, 1999; Hung et al., 2022). Corporate social responsibility was a concept raised by Lord Holme and Richard Watts, proposing that corporate actions needed to make contributions to the economic development, improve life qualities of the employees' family, and provide services to local community and the society (Armstrong & Green, 2013). Taking Taiwan as an example, public and private universities get government subsidies, and the universities and their faculty also gain research grants from the government or private corporations. With a marketization trend of higher education, the government and the society endow university with social obligations, similar to those to the corporations, and therefore, university social responsibility requires universities make contributions to the local community and the society in addition to teaching, research, and cultivating professional personnel (Clugston & Calder, 1999; Gomez, 2014; Hung et al., 2022; Yang, 2022).

Gomez (2014) considered related activities of University Social Responsibility (USR) might have positive influences on students, such as increasing their expertized responsibility, civil awareness, social responsibility, project-based problem-solving abilities, and multiple thinking and innovation. Yang (2022) proposed that universities could have various positive impacts on local communities, which were common goals of most countries to promote USR. Shriberg (2002) pointed out that criteria of evaluating university social responsibility included missions and goals, education and research, community involvement, environmental sustainability, and ethics and transparency. Lo et al. (2017) proposed Values-Process-Impact (VPI) to systematize

and evaluate the economic, social, and environmentally sustainable contributions of university social responsibility so that feedback for sustainable improvements of universities could be gained. Adhikariparajuli et al. (2021) claimed university social responsibility needed to provide a framework for practitioners to follow, which had been based on questionnaire surveys and examination of classes provided by higher education institutes. However, the emphasis should be placed on the process, not the product, of the university social responsibility. In particular, the administrative staff, academics, communities, government, policy makers, and supervisors have growing impacts, which have been overlooked by scholars. There should be a consensual framework for future practitioners to carry out university-corporate social responsibility. Hung et al. (2022) proposed a competency scale based on USR, reflecting that students participating in USR exhibited correlation among personal growth, responsibility of citizenship, social interaction, and intellectual growth.

## **2.2 Evaluative Determinants for Universities and Corporations to Jointly Implement Social Responsibility**

More and more corporations not just pursue short-term profit and define itself as a profitable economic organization; instead, they actively participate in socially profitable activities to unlimitedly expand the space of the market and the society, such as charitable donation, non-profit marketing, and cause-related marketing, from altruistic donation to win-win charitable marketing (Brønn, & Vrioni, 2001; Schamp et al., 2022; Chang et al., 2023). Therefore, the present study developed an advanced concept of strategic philanthropy, regarded as an important transformation of the corporations to realize social responsibility, indicating that the corporations realize their economic goals and social responsibility to reach commercial values through investment in social welfare (Bhatti et al., 2022). Strategic philanthropy is also an efficient way for corporations to realize social responsibility and commercial goals at the same time. It is a strategic charitable promotion, integrating philanthropy into the corporations' overall strategic planning and offering long-term investment and commitment to strategic philanthropy, but the ultimate goal is promoting corporate image, reputation, and marketing (Ali et al., 2020; Flores-Hernández et al., 2020).

Corporate social responsibility based on strategic philanthropy brings the following solutions: balance between economic and social values, relation management of stakeholders, identification and responses to threats and opportunities created by stakeholders, enforcement of sustainable commercial management, and development of humanistic activities based on organizing capacities (Flores-Hernández et al., 2020). On the other hand, universities realize social responsibility with strategic philanthropy in the following ways. First, cooperation between universities and corporations allows implementation of social responsibility through common strategic philanthropy. The

interests of the universities and corporations can be maximized based on the expertise and experiences of the universities and resources and commercial network of the corporations. Second, universities can cultivate social entrepreneurs to realize social responsibility through strategic philanthropy. The goal can be reached by teaching knowledge of social corporations and practical skills and offering resources and support for entrepreneurship. Finally, universities can invest in or cooperate with corporations in social enterprise to realize social responsibility. Then, universities can be linked to strategic philanthropy to realize their social responsibility and have impact on the society (Bhatti et al., 2022; Chang et al., 2023).

Social impact refers to the contributions and influences of organizations or companies (Friedkin, 1998). Social responsibility can arouse organization members' social awareness and influence efficiency of organizations. If universities can cooperate with corporations' strategic philanthropy, they can make contributions and have great influences on students' values. For instance, based on research resources and human resources, universities can help solve social problems or cultivate students' awareness and implementation of social responsibility through cooperation and strategic philanthropy. Then, social development and progress can take place (Hung et al., 2022). Thus, the integration between universities and strategic philanthropy not only raises universities' social impact but further promotes social development and progress (Adhikariparajuli et al., 2021).

There is a close relationship between social impact and social responsibility (Berniak-Woźny et al., 2023). Previous studies have indicated that social impact refers to influences of the organization to the outer world, including those on the society and the environment, and how they responsibly work to maximize positive influences (Adomako & Tran, 2022). In order to promote social impact of organizations, previous studies have proposed many organizational resources, including professional knowledge and skills, social network, social responsibility of organizations, and social environment (Adhikariparajuli et al., 2021; Yasir et al., 2021; Hung et al., 2022). Therefore, through increased social impact, universities can be more efficient to realize their social responsibility and maximize payback to the society. In recent years, more and more universities start to be concerned about their social responsibility and social impact, which are gradually integrated into their operation (Hung et al., 2022).

Social participation is an important means for universities to realize social responsibility and promote strategic philanthropy and also a critical determinant to establish interaction with local community. Through community participation, universities can utilize their professional knowledge and resources to cooperate with local community to solve local problems, promote community development, and bring practical advantages to local community (Buchta et al., 2018). At the same time, local

community can offer valuable suggestions to the universities to further realize their social responsibility (Roos, 2019). On the other hand, such participation can promote relationship between universities and local community to produce win-win situations. Students can also know culture and history about the local community, which further promotes good cooperative relationship among communities (Hung et al., 2022). Students can strengthen their sense of social responsibility and civil awareness and pay close attention to problems of local community, further building a basis for future social service and public welfare (Adhikariparajuli et al., 2021).

Based on analysis of relevant literature and particularly the research findings of Adhikariparajuli et al. (2021) and Hung et al. (2022), this study synthesized three phases, including strategic philanthropy, social impact, and community participation, and fifteen criteria. Detailed definitions and main references are shown as Table 1.

**Table 1 Synthesis of Evaluative Criteria for Joint Implementation of Universities and Corporations**

Phase	criteria	Definitions	References
strategic philanthropy	Supportive leadership	Leaders set up visions and goals and pass information to employees to promote philanthropy.	Porter & Kramer (2002); Bhatti et al. (2022); Zoubida(2023)
	Strategic thinking	Planning must be built on the basis of strategic thinking to ensure the goal is consistent with that of the organization.	Moon & Parc (2019); Brønn & Vrioni (2001) ;
	Cooperative partnership	Through the partnership, resources, management philosophy, corporate culture, problem-solving techniques, corporate learning, experiences and knowledge can be shared.	Flores-Hernández et al. (2020) ; Bhatti et al. (2022); Chang et al. (2023)
	Resource investment	Plentiful resources are invested to confirm the implementation, including human resources, funding, and techniques.	Brønn & Vrioni (2001); Ali et al. (2020); Flores-Hernández et al. (2020)
	Evaluation and continuing improvement	Planning is regularly evaluated to confirm it has reached the expected goals, and it also should be continually modified to keep updated.	Brønn & Vrioni (2001); Chang et al. (2023)
Social impact	Organizational resources	Hunan resources, supplies, financial resources are needed for carrying out the project.	Moon & Parc (2019); Flores-Hernández et al. (2020)
	Professional knowledge and skills	Professional knowledge and skills of the organization personnel are needed to carry out the USSR project.	Adhikariparajuli et al., (2021); Yasir et al. (2021)
	Social network	Organization relationship with other groups, groups, and individuals might influence the implement of the project.	Adomako & Tran (2022); Bhatti et al. (2022)
	Organizational social responsibility awareness	The awareness of social responsibility is increased through the implementation of projects.	Porter & Kramer (2002) Berniak-Woźny et al.(2023)
	Social environment	Awareness of the changes of the social environment is needed to make timely adjustment to the project goals.	Adomako & Tran (2022); Monteiro et al. (2023).
Community participation	Community needs and expectations	Understandings of the community needs and expectation is required for the project investment.	Buchta et al.(2018),
	Communication and trust	Communication capacities between community leaders when the project is executed and the trust for the practitioner are needed.	Adhikariparajuli et al., (2021); Chang et al. (2023)
	Leadership style and	Community leaders' capacities are essential to	Moon & Parc (2019), Lo et al. (2017)

Phase	criteria	Definitions	References
	support	carry out the project and support.	
	Resources and skills	Evaluation of communities' skills is needed to implement the projects and offered resources.	Adhikariparajuli et al., (2021), Roos (2019)
	Community culture and history	Community culture and history may influence the project implement.	Chang et al. (2023); Hung et al.(2022)

### 3. Research Methods

Methods of social responsibility research have mostly utilized factor analysis for evaluation items or have selected the phase and criteria based on literature review (Adhikariparajuli et al., 2021; Hung et al., 2022). The present study aimed to meticulously investigate critical factors that lead to successful implementation of university social responsibility. First, this study collected critical factors of three main phases based on literature review, followed by two-stage information analysis. On the first stage, factor analysis was employed to synthesize and eliminate unnecessary variants. Important factors and phases were selected and named according to their attributes. Then, according to the phases and criteria generated on the first stage to construct a hierarchical evaluation framework to design an Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) questionnaire to determine the relative rating of all phases and criteria. Finally, this study can offer suggestions to decision-makers based on the research findings. The factor analysis and AHP used in this study are shown as follows.

#### 3.1 Participants

This study employed purposeful sampling and included corporations, universities, sponsored communities and schools, and personnel who had implemented social responsibility, to collect information from participants across genders, age, occupation, and working years and to explore critical factors for successful university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility. Before the participants filled out the questionnaire, the researchers explained to them and assisted if needed. Twenty valid questionnaires were collected and processed by Power Choice, and the demographics was shown as Table 2.

**Table 2 Demographics of this Study**

Item	Variants	Number	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	11	55
	Female	9	45
<b>Age</b>	31-40	5	25
	41-50	9	45
	Older than 50	6	30
<b>Occupation</b>	Corporations	6	30
	Universities	8	40
	Communities	6	30
<b>Status</b>	Managers	11	55
	Staff	9	45
<b>Working years</b>	0-5 years	4	20
	6-15 years	10	50
	Longer than 15 years	6	30

### **3.2 Factor Analysis**

Factor analysis is a multivariate technique used to process the inter-dependability among variables, extract factors according to their loadings and name them. These named factors were then used as the evaluation phase of the present study. The main purpose of factor analysis is to reduce variables and to preserve the representativity of the original data. This study utilized Principal Components Analysis for extraction and Varimax as the rotation to confirm the irrelevance among factors for the following stage of AHP that required hierarchy and items be independent from one another.

This study used Bartlett test of sphericity and KMO value to determine whether data collected through the “questionnaire of critical factors of successful university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility” were adequate for the factor analysis. If the Bartlett test of sphericity showed a significant correlation and KMO value was higher than 0.8, then the data were adequate for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Then, this study adopted common factors with an eigenvalue higher than 1 and kept criteria with factor loadings higher than 0.6 and then named the evaluation phases. In addition, to confirm the consistency of the phases, Cornbach’s  $\alpha$  was used for reliability test; the higher the value was, then more reliable the scale was. However, if Cornbach’s  $\alpha$  was lower than 0.6, the instrument should be modified. To test the validity of the items included in the scale of this study, Principal Components Analysis and Varimax were employed, and common factors with an eigenvalue higher than 1 were kept. The higher the correlation coefficient, the more valid of the item was. Then, item-to-total correlations were used to determine the construct validity of the scale used in this study, which referred to the connection between the details for implementation and those in reality, with a preferred value higher than 0.3, and statistical significance should be reached (Hair et al., 2010).

### **3.2 Analytic Hierarchy Process**

Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was proposed by Thomas L. Saaty in 1971 and has been highly emphasized in analyzing and evaluating policies. It is mainly used in uncertain policy-making conditions with several evaluation criteria. To policy makers, hierarchical structure is helpful for understandings of overall situations, but when selecting appropriate solutions, they need to evaluate all alternative solutions based on criteria to determine the priority of these solutions to choose the most appropriate one. AHP hierarchizes the complex evaluated problems, i.e. confirm the criteria for evaluation, and further categorize these criteria into phases, and that at the bottom of the hierarchy is what the policy-makers have to evaluate. AHP can be applied in the following problems and fields: planning, generating a set of alternatives, setting priorities, choosing the best alternative/policy, allocating resources, determining



requirements, predicting outcome/risk assessment, designing systems, measuring performance, insuring the stability of a system, optimization, and resolving conflict.

Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is a multiple-criteria policy-making tool, which systematically simplifies a complex problem into hierarchical structure. Then the problems turn to be hierarchized, numbered, structured, and easy to understand and to analyze. With AHP, policy-makers can analyze these problems and look for consistency among them, choose appropriate solutions, and reduce risks when they are faced with uncertain, complex, and divergent problems. Therefore, AHP can be used for prioritize decisions, investment combination, resource planning and allocation and is appropriate for policy-making when there are multiple criteria in uncertain situations. Based on surveys from experts, this study used AHP to analyze the ranking of critical factors of university-corporate joint implementation of social responsibility.

Recent years AHP has been widely used in policy-making in many fields, such as economics, management, marketing, and strategies, and it has shown its practicability. Through rating scales, AHP evaluates criteria through pairwise comparison in all hierarchies and build up matrix through quantification. Through estimation in Eigen Vector, relative ranking of all items in each hierarchy is calculated, and the mechanism is consistent. In the evaluation process, the logics and reliability of the results are confirmed to be consistent. If the C. R. is lower than 0.1, then the matrix passes the consistency testing, and items will be prioritized based on Priority Vector. To sum up, AHP has a solid theoretical foundation for consistent evaluation and selection of valid questionnaires to confirm the reliability of the results. The format is shown as 3.1~3.4.

$$\text{mean} = \sqrt[n]{X_1 \cdot X_2 \cdot X_3 \cdots X_n} \dots\dots\dots(3.1)$$

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & a_{12} & \cdots & a_{1n} \\ a_{21} & a_{22} & \cdots & a_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{n1} & a_{n2} & \cdots & a_{nn} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & a_{12} & \cdots & a_{1n} \\ 1/a_{12} & 1 & \cdots & a_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 1/a_{1n} & 1/a_{2n} & \cdots & 1 \end{bmatrix} \dots\dots\dots(3.2)$$

$$C.I. = \frac{\lambda_{\max} - n}{n-1} \dots\dots\dots(3.3)$$

$$C.R = \frac{C.I.}{R.I.}$$

(3.4)

## 4. Results and Discussions

This study aims to investigate critical factors for successful university-corporation joint implementation for social responsibility. Firstly, a literature review helped synthesize important evaluation factors, and factor analyses extracted evaluation phases to build up hierarchical evaluation framework. Then, AHP was utilized to analyze relative ranking among all evaluation criteria to explore critical factors for successful university-corporation joint implementation for social responsibility. The selection of evaluation factors, AHP framework, and relative weighing calculation of this study are stated as follows.

**Table 3 Weighing and Ranking of Factor Analysis of University-Corporation Joint Implementation of Social Responsibility**

Main phase Weighing (ranking)	Sub-phase	Weighing of each item	ranking	Overall weighing	Overall ranking
<b>Strategic philanthropy</b> 0.297 (2)	Leadership support	0.080	4	0.036	14
	Strategic thinking	0.120	3	0.036	13
	Partnership	0.512	1	0.120	2
	Resource investment	0.219	2	0.083	5
	Evaluation and continual improvement	0.068	5	0.023	15
<b>Social impact</b> 0.411 (1)	Organization resources	0.085	5	0.051	10
	Professional knowledge and skills	0.135	4	0.055	8
	Social network	0.372	1	0.143	1
	Social awareness of organizations	0.257	2	0.099	3
	Social environment	0.151	3	0.062	7
<b>Community participation</b> 0.292 (3)	Community needs and expectation	0.293	2	0.091	4
	Communication and trust	0.079	5	0.068	6
	Leadership style and support	0.096	4	0.038	12
	Resources and skills	0.397	1	0.054	9
	Community culture and history	0.136	3	0.042	11

AHP analyses show that the inconsistency of the construct, and the criteria should be lower than 0.1. All of the indicators met the requirement, as displayed in Table 3. Among all the factors leading to successful university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility, social impact (0.411) ranked first among the three, followed by strategic philanthropy (0.297) and community participation. The results show that 15

participants weighed social impact the most, indicating that both parties' social impact weighed the most in university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility. For instance, when enterprise has budget to implement social responsibility, it has to cooperate with universities with similar social impact, particularly those with similar appeal in the social network, so that resources can be gained to offer to the communities and rural areas in need.

Then, the three main phases and each sub-phase are analyzed. Firstly, social network outnumbered (0.372) other factors, showing that the greatest impact on university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility is social relationship. During an era of inflation, high schools and elementary schools in rural areas need universities and corporations with social impact to help raise funds for their teaching resources or other equipment. Awareness of social responsibility of organizations ranked second, indicating that the level of corporate awareness of social responsibility had great impact on social impact of the organization. Thus, whether corporations are willing to contribute resources and integrate social power to assist schools and communities in need turns out to be critical factor.

The secondly ranked phase was strategic philanthropy (0.297), among which partnership was prioritized (0.297), indicating that critical factor for successful lay in the two parties' partnership, a foundation for cooperation and a process for sharing. Through the establishment of partnership, resources, management concepts, organizational culture, problem-solving methods, organizational learning, experiences and knowledge, and research outcomes can be shared. On the other hand, resource investment (0.219) ranked secondly in this phase, showing that resources are also the foundation for cooperation and capacities to implement projects. Through development and accumulation of each party's resources and capacities, long-term advantages of philanthropic strategies can be formed.

Finally, the top weighed item of the phase of community participation (0.292) was resource and skills (0.397), and it is obvious that the resources used in university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility is important. The skills learn when they study and resources for cooperation are both critical in the process. Community needs and expectations (0.293) are secondly ranked, revealing that in the community participation, communities not only expect for corporate social responsibility but also for universities' services with the society to find out and solve local problems in addition to cultivation of academics in order to create win-win social responsibility.

In the present study, strategic thinking (0.036), leadership support (0.036), and evaluation and continual improvement (0.023) were lowest ranked, revealing that the participants did not take them as their main concern. Possible reasons include that

participants were more concentrated on other items and that they lacked sufficient knowledge and understanding of these projects. Personal backgrounds and experiences may also have influenced their views of these items.

## **5. Conclusions and Suggestions**

This study employed AHP to for a preliminary investigation into critical factors for university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility, and the results showed that the importance ranking of main phases were social impact, strategic philanthropy, and community participation. Among the sub-phases, the overall weighing revealed that the most important five items were social network, partnership, awareness of communities' social responsibility, community needs and expectations, and resource investment. To sum up, the critical factors for successful university-corporation joint implementation of social responsibility lie in both parties' efforts to arouse employees', faculty staff's and students' attention to communities through the cooperation. Through social network and partnership, practitioners can understand community needs followed by resource investment, corresponding to communities' expectations towards universities and corporations, which in turn will be concerned about the importance of social responsibility. As a social organizations and educational groups, universities should make contributions and fulfill responsibility to local communities and the society in addition to teaching, research, and services. The contributions of this study lie in providing references of criteria and factors for success to universities and corporations when they jointly implement social responsibility projects. The main findings and contributions of this study are: (1) strategic philanthropy: the findings reveal that universities can efficiently fulfill social responsibility and gain significant social impact through planning and implementation of strategic, philanthropic activities. This finding provides suggestions to universities to fulfill social responsibility through philanthropic strategies; (2) social impact: this study enables practitioners to understand how to make impact on the society and the outcome of university social responsibility through activities of social responsibility; (3) community participation: the findings show that cooperation between universities and communities is critical for social responsibility and allows universities to understand communities' needs for the following resource investment through the implementation of the projects.

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