



RESEARCH ARTICLE

UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: FROM A STUDENT POPULATION PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to evaluate the degree of University Social Responsibility from a student perspective. The methodology used was quantitative, with a quasi-experimental descriptive design carried out in students; men and women in the fifth year of the Dental Surgeon career. The instrument used was: characteristics related to university social responsibility present in university students. The results showed that dental students, in general, have a high degree of University Social Responsibility. Occasionally, in personal transformation, they are considered good citizens. As for the transformation of relationships, they are conceived as good agents of social change. In line with collective patterns of thought and action, students are able to generate concrete actions to achieve common goals. Finally, in structural transformation, the student population is able to discuss community issues. By way of conclusion; USR proved to be an effective policy, which promotes the structuring of good agents of social change, qualified to design, debate and achieve common goals.

INTRODUCTION

According to Macías *et al.* (2019), University Social Responsibility (USR) is a policy that is related to the continuous improvement of universities, with respect to the real performance of the social mission. This is corroborated through 4 phases: Ethical and environmental management of the institution; Training of responsible and empathetic citizens; Production and dissemination of social knowledge and social participation in the promotion of human and sustainable development. In the 90's, companies began to introduce and practice the concept of social responsibility in their background; Hence the need for universities to train human resources that meet the needs that companies require, and this human resource must have at least the knowledge of social responsibility. Sometime later, a network of Latin American universities emerged in 15 countries; The objective of these was to generate the first university network in Latin America with identity, shared leadership and the ability to transform education and society. In 2007, the Network of University Responsibility Counterparts was formed, whose objective was to develop and strengthen the practice of USR among higher education institutions (Yfarraguerri, 2014).

The purpose of the USR is closely linked to the work of the university; above the creation of programs and policies that serve society. USR does not aim to transform society; rather, it is part of the nature and mission of universities related to the promotion of research for the benefit and benefit of society. Higher education institutions are awarded social commitment, justice and responsible development as an activity for the community with ethics, efficiency and effectiveness. It is understood that it is not from a philanthropic perspective, as well as from a business management perspective (Rodríguez, 2012).

Social Responsibility in Universities: SR applied to the field of higher education rethinks the social commitment of the university in relation to the relevance and integration of its functions. In such a way that USR tries to organize the four guiding axes of its *raison d'être*. These are: management, training, research and extension with scientific, professional and educational requirements (Vallaes, 2014). The education system needs innovative management models that reflect its vision, philosophy, values, objectives, among others; and that, in addition, the strategic axes of social responsibility are implicit: economy, society and environment. With the above, the aim is to redefine the social role of higher education institutions by

strengthening them as an entity that promotes and improves the quality of their future professionals (López *et al.*, 2016). In the same vein, universities are increasingly committed to their functions; which are not complete in terms of quality if they do not include social responsibility. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which are socially responsible, are obliged to integrate personal, professional and ethical values into their training, which will benefit the respectable and responsible behavior of future leaders. These must correspond to the requirements of the community in a fair way, and that contribute to the needs of their environment (López *et al.*, 2016).

Socially responsible universities generate good practices to carry out the social part they must carry out. This consists, among other things, of promoting and actively participating in the care of the environment. The research carried out by these institutions must aim to solve real problems and its results must serve to promote social responsibility (Ramírez, *et al.* 2024). The same author points out that the USR functions as an important point to be able to identify and get to know a genuine university. Higher level institutions can transform society's problems into an action plan. These can be individual and collective, with the aim of improving the environment, fostering solidarity within the community and building a sustainable future (Vallaey, 2014). On the other hand, the student, in his role as such, cannot ignore the social problems that are generated in his environment; They must be able to act from the exercise of their profession with concrete and effective solutions focused on the common good (García, *et al.* 2016).

University Social Responsibility from the Stakeholder Theory: Stakeholder theory is based on the existence of people who have a certain inclination for companies because they interact with them in a direct or indirect way. The word Stakeholders was coined in 1983 at the Stanford Research Institute. The translation of this concept into Spanish is *participants or interest groups* (Forero, 2019). For Larrán and Andrades (2015), this theory emphasizes that there are more people who show some interest in organizations than shareholders. This interest has several edges; One of them is that the groups are related to generating values. These values have to do with actions to contribute to society. The need to integrate stakeholder theory into public sector management has to do with improving the mechanisms of the decision-making process. In this sense, the authors point out that higher education institutions represent the sector that society tends to demand different types of demands. This is because the essence of universities lies in public attention having a social responsibility; It is society itself that determines the extent of the responsibilities of these institutions. Along the same lines, the authors point out that the implementation of an MSW model represents, at least, a feature of stakeholder theory; since the strategic decisions of higher education systems must be based, among other things, on the interests of the different social actors. Thus, the responsibility of a compromise between the interests of the groups of which the universities are made up and the objectives of the Institution (Larrán & Andrades, 2015). Therefore, it is important to evaluate the degree of University Social Responsibility that university students have; more specifically those of the Dental Surgeon career, since they have a business profile. By obtaining this information, the Academic Unit will be able to assess whether it is necessary to rethink the activities that promote USR, the generic competencies that are promoted to students and thus strengthen the academic program.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

This study is quantitative with a quasi-experimental descriptive design since it is not limited to data collection, but to the prediction and identification of the relationships that exist between two or more variables. The instrument that was used was called *characteristics linked to university social responsibility present in university students*. The information collected was processed in the SPSS statistical software.

Participants: In this study, there were 83 fifth-grade students of the Dental Surgeon program at the Autonomous University of Nayarit.

Participants were men and women between the ages of 21 and 26. It was decided that the subjects of study would be fifth grade students, because they are the ones who are close to graduating, therefore, they are the ones who must already have all the skills and teachings to be able to have a more developed university social responsibility.

Instruments: For this study, an instrument called Instrument to evaluate the characteristics of University Social Responsibility in university students was used (Bolio & Pinzón, 2019). This questionnaire is made up of 4 dimensions: *Personal Transformation, Transformation of Relationships, Collective Patterns of Thought and Action, and Structural Transformation*. In total there are 48 items divided into the previous dimensions; these are graded according to a Likert scale with the following values: (1) I don't know; up to (5) Totally agree. Regarding the validity and reliability data of the instrument, it has high overall internal consistency, which is: alpha of 0.932 overall. In addition to this, the dimensions have a high consistency; Personal transformation (0.804), transformation of relationships (0.811), transformation of collective patterns (0.815) and structural transformation (0.875).

RESULTS

The results of this research are presented in a descriptive manner. The first graph shows the gender of the participants. 71% are women and 29% are men. There is a majority female population. 42% more than men. See Figure 1.

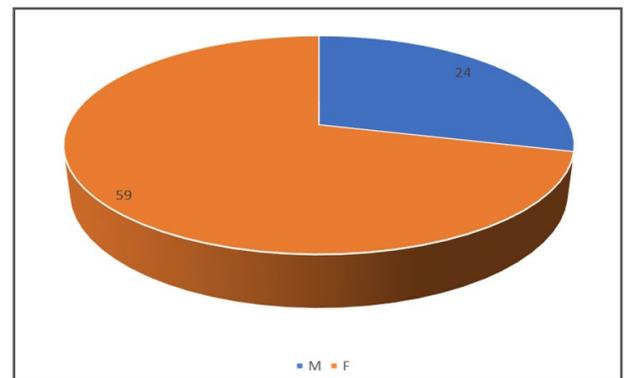


Figure 1. Gender of dental surgeon students. Own creation

Personal transformation: This dimension refers to the internal change of each individual. It analyzes identity, mental models, emotions, and feelings. In Figure 2, it can be seen that most fifth-grade students have a good understanding of this transformation; That is, they know their identity, are respectful of different mental models and are perceived to have a good management of their emotions and feelings.

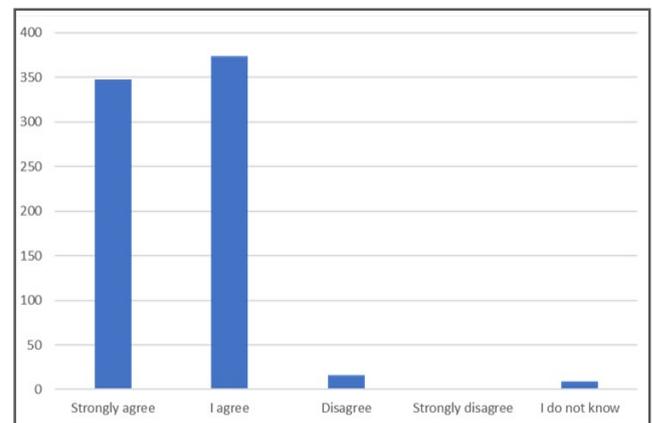


Figure 2. Personal transformation of fifth-year students of the Dental Surgeon career Own creation

Transformation of relationships: This dimension speaks to the individual's change with the environment. It delves into behavior, people's behavior, and their relationship with the environment. Figure 3 shows how the majority of Dentistry students are in favor of the transformation of relationships; This implies that their conduct, their behavior and their relationship with the text is regulated so that they can coexist peacefully. These students see themselves as agents of social change; Engaging in dialogue and empathy

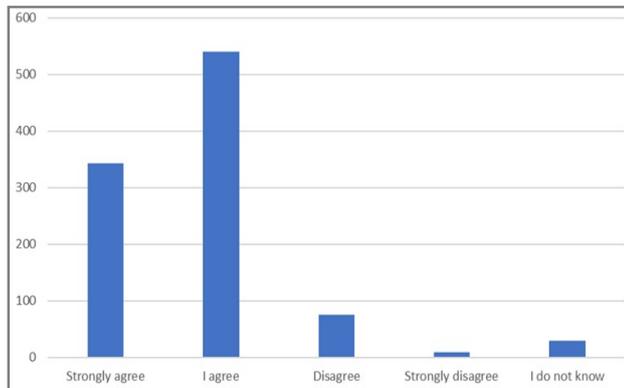


Figure 3. Transforming Fifth-Year Dentistry Student Relationships. Own creation

Collective patterns of thought and action: This dimension refers to people who are able to discuss issues of collective concern as citizens and can achieve a common understanding or collective thinking that contributes to a social transformation. It is possible to perceive in the following figure that most of the study subjects have a collective identity, a critical collective behavior and thinking and manage to have a common understanding. See Figure 4. Figure 4.

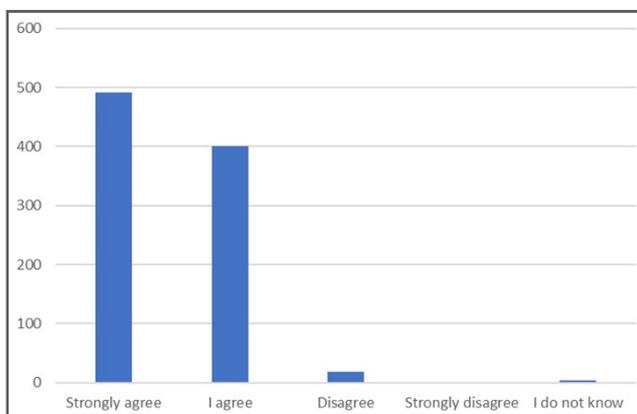


Figure 4. Collective patterns of thought and action of fifth grade students of the Dental Surgeon career. Own creation

Collective patterns of thought and action of fifth grade students of the Dental Surgeon career. Own creation.

Structural transformation: In this dimension, subjects discuss issues of social concern; they are able to design projects that can be presented in important mass spaces such as forums. They are actively involved in its implementation. The structural transformation of fifth-grade students is depicted in Figure 5.

It indicates that most of them tend to participate in collective problems. They are interested in having an active participation in social projects or programs that provide solutions and that are exhibited in places where they have an important impact. However, it is striking that there are students (the minority) who are not willing to participate in order to achieve a structural transformation.

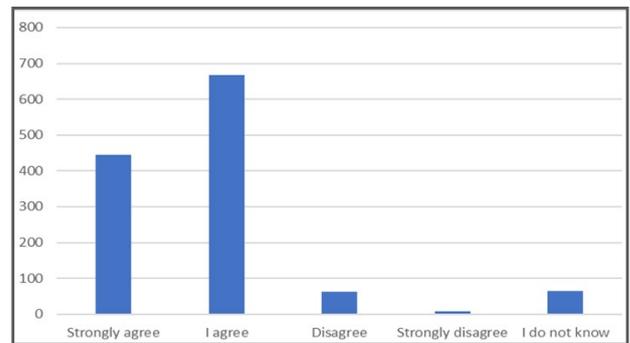


Figure 5. Structural transformation of fifth-grade dental students. Own creation

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the results carried out in this work has allowed the degree of responsibility and social commitment of the students of the Dental Surgeon career of the Autonomous University of Nayarit. As this is a topic that has been little addressed, this study constitutes a precedent to promote research on this topic. This study shows that the comprehensive education provided to the students of the Dental Academic Unit objectively and coherently promotes academic learning with social and civic responsibility. This is consistent with Martínez, Gil and Macias (2019); They affirm that University Social Responsibility has been included with an institutional perspective of universities, legitimized by international institutions and organizations such as UNESCO, which shows full support for this issue. Importantly, these organizational and political guidelines may be uncomfortable and difficult to accept for some of the different actors. For this reason, it is necessary to have appropriate tools, instruments and work methodologies (Chiva, Capella & Martínez, 2018). Considering the results obtained, it is concluded that:

In terms of personal transformation: the students of the Dental Surgeon career have understood and manage their emotions and feelings very well, in addition to knowing their identity and respecting different ways of thinking. In other words, they consider themselves good citizens. A very small percentage of students (3.35%) have not achieved or are in the process of achieving personal transformation.

Regarding the transformation of relationships: Most dental students conceive of themselves as agents of social change; their conduct and behavior is regulated so that through dialogue and empathy they can coexist with their environment. On the other hand, 11.35% of students do not identify with these characteristics. It does not mean that their behavior and conduct is not regulated in order to coexist. Rather, they don't see themselves as agents of social change.

Regarding collective patterns of thought and action: It is conclusive that dental students are capable of generating concrete actions to achieve common goals. This alone sends a message that they have a collective concern and are committed to social change.

Regarding structural transformation: It is clear that most dental students have managed to have a structural transformation that allows them to debate collective problems, that they can also design projects for social improvement and that they are active actors in the implementation of these purposes.

On the other hand, there is 10.68% of the student population that has not achieved or is not interested in structural transformation. As a suggestion, it is important to carry out new studies with larger samples, with the aim of corroborating how students are evolving in social responsibility and with them confirm if the institution is achieving its goals in this area.

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