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Article

Institutional Administrative Practices of Social Responsibility in Universities: A Study From Academic Leaders' Perspective

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Abstract

This study analyzed the institutional administrative practices of social responsibility (SR) in Saudi public universities to highlight their alignment with global trends in sustainable university governance. A descriptive survey design was used to collect data from 107 senior academic leaders across three major universities in Riyadh, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential tests (*t*-test and one-way analysis of variance). The findings revealed that while SR practices are generally effective, with an overall mean score of 3.79 on a five-point Likert scale, they remain at a formative stage, characterized by limited institutional integration and strategic alignment. The ethical and societal dimensions ranked highest, whereas the administrative and Procedural dimension scored lowest. The study contributes to international scholarship by framing SR as an institutional governance function that bridges local priorities with global sustainability and higher education reforms.

Keywords: institutional administrative practices; social responsibility; universities; academic leadership; Saudi Arabia
JEL: I23, I28, M14, L31, Q01

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the concept of social responsibility (SR) has undergone a profound transformation, evolving beyond its traditional roots in the business sector to become a key component of institutional management systems in universities. The modern university is now perceived as not merely an educational institution but also a social and ethical organization that contributes to sustainable development through structured policies and management practices, ensuring continuous interaction with the community and surrounding environment (Ramos-Monge et al., 2017; Wigmore-Álvarez and Ruiz-Lozano, 2012). Given this context, SR is no longer confined to charitable initiatives or limited volunteer activities; rather, it has become an institutional administrative practice embedded in the university's organizational structure, strategic plans, and decision-making processes. As a result, universities that have adopted systematic approaches to managing SR have achieved a balance between their academic and societal roles, thus strengthening their institutional reputation and building community trust (O'Brien et al., 2022).

In higher education, SR is no longer perceived as a collection of discrete, charitable endeavors but rather as an institution-wide framework focused on governance. According to recent research, formalized policies, specialized organizational structures, resources, and methodical procedures for evaluating social impact are all essential factors for effective SR (Arias-Valle and Marimon, 2024; Nardo et al., 2021). Therefore, it is frequently difficult for universities to convert normative commitments into sustainable institutional practices if they do not integrate SR into their administrative and strategic architectures.

Over time, the concept of SR has been broadened to encompass a strategic and ethical commitment by universities to manage their economic, social, and environmental impacts within the academic context, reflecting an integration of teaching, research, and community service (Chen et al., 2015; Nazneen et al., 2023). This perspective highlights that institutional administrative practices are foundational for transforming SR from temporary initiatives into a sustainable system with clear policies, defined budgets, and measurable performance indicators.

University SR (USR) models have evolved to include interrelated dimensions that reflect the university's holistic role in society and capture the diverse purposes of prior studies. The present study identified and adopted six analytical dimensions that form the conceptual foundation of its framework to assess institutional administrative practices of SR. International research has demonstrated that integrating these dimensions into university management enhances organizational performance and embeds SR within the institutional culture instead of treating it as an auxiliary activity (Ilieva-Trichkova et al., 2024). According to Sasaki and Horng (2023), USR is characterized as a dynamic, practice-based process, a methodology for designing collaborative university management in an institutionalized form, and a top-down model of governance. Similarly, Al-Samhan (2023) emphasized the significant influence of transformational leadership in promoting SR within universities, which further supports the premise that admin-

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istrative management and leadership practices play a decisive role in strengthening institutional responsibility. This view underpins the administrative dimension analyzed in the current study.

In the Saudi context, universities strive to align with Saudi Vision 2030, which highlights the national and developmental role of universities as non-profit institutions with SR toward human and community development. However, many universities still face challenges in translating these aspirations into clear institutional administrative practices, including establishing specialized structures, allocating resources, and creating mechanisms for assessing social impact. For instance, European studies indicate that weak administrative governance and the absence of an institutional strategic framework remain major barriers to institutionalizing SR in higher education (Alabdulkarim, 2025; Remišová et al., 2013).

From this standpoint, the present study aimed to analyze the current reality of institutional administrative practices of SR in Saudi universities by exploring university leaders' perceptions of the extent to which their institutions adopt the identified SR dimensions and by revealing areas of strength and weakness in their implementation. Moreover, the study sought to propose a conceptual framework for university management that integrates SR, governance, and institutional sustainability. Its importance lies in enriching both Arab and international literature on the institutional management of SR in higher education by constructing a comprehensive framework linking SR dimensions with academic leadership practices in the Arab context, thus providing practical insights to assist decision-makers in Saudi universities in improving administrative policies and aligning institutional strategies to strengthen SR within the higher education system. Accordingly, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are university leaders' perceptions of institutional administrative practices of SR in Saudi universities?

2. What practical proposals can enhance the development of these practices in Saudi universities?

Additionally, it also tested the following hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of participants' evaluations of institutional administrative practices of SR attributable to university, college type, academic rank, or administrative position.

Answering these questions contributes to establishing a conceptual framework for activating SR within university management systems and supporting the development of a responsible and sustainable institutional culture consistent with national and international directions in higher education. This study's theoretical innovation is that it examines institutional administrative practices as a governance function rather than as activities and results when analyzing USR. Thus, this study adds to the body of USR literature by conceptualizing SR as an embedded administrative system shaped by structures, policies, and leadership. Besides, it provides a leadership-centered institutional perspective that is still understudied, especially in non-Western higher education contexts.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 University Social Responsibility

The concept of USR represents both an intellectual and practical extension of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which was originally developed in the business sector. According to Remišová et al. (2013), CSR in the European context is grounded on four pillars—profitability, ethics, sustainability, and the public good—with the European model distinguished by its institutional comprehensiveness, which integrates social and environmental dimensions into long-term management. This provides a theoretical foundation for developing sustainable administrative practices in universities. Within higher education institutions, the concept of SR has acquired a distinctive institutional character, as universities are now expected to manage their educational, social, environmental, and ethical impacts in a manner consistent with their academic and research missions (Godonoga and Sporn, 2023; Wigmore-Álvarez and Ruiz-Lozano, 2012).

This paradigm shift reflects the transition of universities from performing isolated community activities to adopting institutional administrative practices that translate SR into policies, plans, and strategies with clearly defined objectives and resources, making SR an integral component of university governance (Ali et al., 2021; O'Brien et al., 2022). For instance, a bibliometric study conducted by Meseguer-Sánchez et al. (2020), which analyzed 870 research papers on university sustainability published between 1970 and 2019, revealed a growing global interest in USR and its economic and environmental implications. The study demonstrated that universities are increasingly managed according to sustainability principles, with the United States leading in publications and citations, followed by a rising contribution from Asian institutions such as Wuhan University. The study also recommended strengthening the connection between responsible university consumption and its short-term financial and economic impacts. Conversely, Al-Khateeb (2022) found that SR in Arab universities remains weak and poorly institutionalized, with minimal awareness and dissemination. This is because most strategic plans and organizational structures of ministries and universities in the region lack dedicated units for managing SR.

The available literature emphasizes that the success of universities in embedding SR depends on their ability to achieve institutionalization—that is, the transformation of ethical and social principles into operational and assessable administrative systems. When clear organizational structures, specialized units, and measurable performance indi-

cators exist, SR practices become more sustainable (Nardo et al., 2021). This view is consistent with the institutional theory, which shows that CSR has been framed around voluntary corporate action, as "a recurring theme in the CSR debate is its grounding in the voluntary behaviour of companies" (Brammer et al., 2012, p. 3). Strategic adoption of SR contributes to organizational resilience by embedding social and environmental values into management and governance processes. Its effectiveness depends on stakeholder engagement and trust-building, which, in turn, enhances institutional performance and sustainability. To assess the integration of SR within university strategies, Liu and Zhou (2025) proposed a management framework comprising seven interrelated dimensions—namely, governance, strategic management, relationships, financing, culture, product, and SR—all of which can be adapted to higher education institutions.

Moreover, university leadership plays a critical role in embedding this institutional culture. According to the responsible leadership approach, academic leaders must balance organizational goals with the public good while promoting practices grounded in transparency, accountability, and participation (Maak et al., 2016). Study have shown that universities incorporating ethical leadership within their governance systems have succeeded in transforming SR into a sustainable institutional culture that influences decision-making and strategic planning (Remišová et al., 2014). This stresses that governance and leadership are not merely administrative tools but represent the ethical and structural foundations from which SR policies and practices emerge. In the same vein, Gonzalo Cortez (2023) demonstrated that SR requires a restructuring of university missions in the 21st century, placing universities at the forefront of scientific, technological, social, and cultural transformation. Arias-Valle and Marimon (2024) further argued that universities integrating SR with organizational sustainability achieve more enduring social and environmental impact, as sustainability encompasses not only environmental management but also administrative performance, governance, and community relations. Thus, SR becomes a cornerstone of institutional sustainability, and a university's quality can be measured by its ability to balance academic excellence with social impact.

2.2 University Social Responsibility in the Saudi Context

National contexts inform the various ways in which these concepts are understood and applied, even though international research shows that SR is becoming more institutionalized in higher education. The Saudi higher education system, in particular, offers a unique environment where local cultural, religious, and developmental priorities collide with these global trends. In both the Arab and Saudi contexts, more attention is being given to institutionalizing USR in alignment with Saudi Vision 2030, which identifies community service and human development as key pillars of national progress. Nevertheless, empirical studies demonstrate that several Saudi universities still confine their SR activities to community service deanships or public relations units, without formally integrating them into their governance (Alabdulkarim, 2025; Almutari, 2021; Alshammari, 2020). Researchers have argued that this separation between social initiatives and top management limits the institutional impact of SR and hinders its integration into university strategy (Ilieva-Trichkova et al., 2024). Sheikhawi (2021) identified several challenges hindering Arab universities' adoption of SR, including the absence of a clear vision, limited financial resources, and a lack of SR culture among university leaders and members.

Recent studies have emphasized that the institutionalization of SR depends on the interaction of three interrelated levels: organizational, leadership, and societal. At the organizational level, institutions establish the policies, structures, and procedures that form the foundation for responsible governance. The leadership level shapes the institutional culture and values, guiding the translation of these policies into ethical and participatory practices. Finally, the societal level reflects the university's external engagement and its partnerships with the broader community. Achieving synergy among these levels requires a comprehensive administrative system that can translate social and ethical values into measurable and actionable operational plans (Al-Huwaish, 2023; Brammer et al., 2012; O'Brien et al., 2022).

Within this context, the present study sought to conceptualize the relationship between institutional administrative practices and the effectiveness of SR implementation in Saudi universities. It assumed that the clearer and more structured the organization, the stronger the leadership commitment. Further, it also assumed that the greater the alignment of university policies with national goals, the more mature and sustainable the university's SR becomes. This conceptual framework underpinned the current study, which aimed to analyze university leaders' perceptions, identify strengths and weaknesses in institutional SR practices, and propose developmental pathways that enhance governance and sustainability across Saudi higher education.

According to previous studies, opinions about SR practices can differ depending on leadership roles, organizational traits, and institutional context. It has been demonstrated that the understanding, prioritization, and implementation of SR in higher education institutions are influenced by variations in governance models, disciplinary orientations, and managerial roles (Arias-Valle and Marimon, 2024; Nardo et al., 2021; Remišová et al., 2013). It is, therefore, theoretically justified to investigate possible disparities in the perceptions of university leaders across institutional affiliation, college type, academic rank, and administrative position. This served as the foundation for evaluating the study hypothesis concerning the presence of sta-

tistically significant variations in the perceived institutional administrative practices of SR among these variables.

2.3 Previous Studies

In recent decades, the concept of USR has gained significant prominence in educational and administrative literature, after being long confined to the business and corporate sectors. Universities globally have undergone a fundamental transformation in their perception of their societal role, expanding beyond teaching and research to encompass developmental, ethical, and institutional dimensions (Godonoga and Sporn, 2023).

One of the earliest studies addressing this transformation was conducted by Bain et al. (1998), who examined the changes in Russian universities and their responsiveness to local community needs. Their findings revealed that community service was primarily practiced as voluntary activities detached from institutional management, such as offering general professional courses or local partnerships, but was not yet integrated into university governance or strategic planning. The researchers warned that maintaining such efforts as isolated volunteer work could negatively affect academic and research performance. Nearly two decades later, Hersh and Schneider (2005), in their study on fostering personal and SR in American universities, found that elite institutions such as Harvard, Stanford, and Duke had adopted programs linking ethical values and SR as graduation requirements. Their findings emphasized the need to embed SR into learning and academic assessment systems, ensuring that it becomes part of institutional practice rather than an external activity.

In Latin America, Gomez (2014) reviewed the USR movement that spread across Latin American universities, stressing the integration of responsible and sustainable practices into daily university operations, including campus management, teaching, research, and community engagement. Similarly, Alcota et al. (2013), who examined USR in the dental faculties of the University of Chile, found that curricula emphasized technical rather than ethical and social aspects, which weakened students' and faculty members' sense of SR. They recommended revising curricula to incorporate moral and social values that promote active citizenship. Expanding on this, Valencia-Arias et al. (2024) presented a case study demonstrating how SR can be translated into a measurable institutional strategy through governance arrangements and performance indicators covering ethical, environmental, and educational dimensions. The study confirmed that institutionalizing SR enhances transparency and stakeholder trust, supporting the current research's focus on administrative institutionalization.

In the European context, Remišová et al. (2013) stated that USR is based on four main pillars: profitability, ethics, sustainability, and the public good. They argued that ethical leadership plays a decisive role in translating social principles into measurable executive policies within organizational structures. Likewise, Vutsova et al. (2023) investigated students' perceptions of the social role of universities in France and Bulgaria, concluding that weak integration of community engagement into academic curricula limits the development of a culture of responsibility. Thus, they called for embedding SR in educational and co-curricular activities.

During the last decade, research linking USR, governance, and sustainability has expanded notably. For instance, Nardo et al. (2021) found that universities incorporating SR into their strategic plans improved their organizational performance and community relations. However, they also noted that Italian public universities still paid limited attention to SR's multidimensional aspects in their strategic documents. Similarly, Arias-Valle and Marimon (2024) argued that university sustainability cannot be achieved without institutionalizing SR within management and quality systems, as sustainability requires the interaction of economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Moreover, a recent bibliometric study by Fauzi et al. (2024) identified a global research trend shifting from a "voluntary" to an "institutional and managerial" conception of USR, highlighting measurable indicators and performance criteria. Supporting this direction, Sasaki and Horng (2023) described SR as a dynamic process that evolves with the university's organizational environment, especially under the growing challenges of digitization and smart governance. Additionally, by connecting USR research with more general management and human resource (HR) perspectives, recent scholarship has expanded the field. It has been demonstrated that sustainable leadership in higher education fosters social innovation and improves the incorporation of sustainability and responsibility into institutional strategies (Iqbal and Piwowar-Sulej, 2022). The institutionalization of SR within organizational cultures is supported by CSR-oriented HR practices that increase employee engagement and organizational commitment, according to studies on socially responsible HR management (Pimenta et al., 2024).

In the Arab context, Al-Khozahe and Badah (2011) conducted a study at Al-Balqa Applied University in Jordan, revealing a high level of faculty awareness regarding the university's community role but noting that this role was limited to quantitative indicators, such as graduate numbers, admissions, and employment rates, without clear institutional policies. Similarly, Mahmood (2023), in her study on Egyptian higher education, stressed the need to integrate SR into universities' strategic plans consistent with international quality standards Social Accountability 8000 (SA 8000).

Furthermore, in the Saudi context, recent studies have emphasized transforming SR into a sustainable institutional practice. A comparative study across Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Canada conducted by Al-Huwaish (2023) concluded that Saudi universities remain in the early stages

of administrative institutionalization of SR and recommended establishing independent institutional units within university structures. Alghamdi (2022) found a positive relationship between students' satisfaction with service quality and their perception of their university's SR. Alabdulkarim (2025) also showed that while Saudi universities have written SR policies, they lack effective implementation mechanisms and sustained community partnerships. Similarly, Alharthey (2016) found that SR practices in Saudi universities remain primarily focused on the social dimension, influenced by cultural and religious factors shaping business and educational practices.

A review of these studies reveals an evolutionary trajectory in understanding and implementing USR globally and regionally, from the stage of voluntary activities to that of institutionalization and governance. However, most previous research concentrated on general SR concepts or community activities without adequately analyzing institutional administrative practices or the role of university leadership. The present study, therefore, sought to address this gap by analyzing institutional administrative practices of SR in Saudi public universities through six integrated dimensions: administrative and procedural, societal, ethical and value-based, environmental and health-related, national and affiliational, and cognitive and educational. This multidimensional framework offers a comprehensive approach to evaluating the extent of SR institutionalization within Saudi higher education environments.

It should be noted that even though the corpus of USR literature is expanding, the majority of earlier research is still primarily descriptive, concentrating on recording actions or attitudes without adequately examining the administrative processes that lead to the institutionalization of SR. Furthermore, non-Western contexts and leadership-driven governance processes have received little attention, a disparity that highlights the necessity of conducting studies that critically analyze SR as an institutional administrative practice rather than a collection of stand-alone projects.

3. Methodology

The present study adopted the descriptive survey method, which is considered one of the most appropriate approaches for administrative research aimed at describing and analyzing phenomena as they exist in reality, in terms of their nature, prevalence, and general trends. This method involves collecting data from a representative sample of the study population and analyzing them statistically to derive accurate quantitative indicators that can be generalized. The choice of this method stemmed from its suitability to the study's primary objective: analyzing institutional administrative practices of SR in Saudi universities from the perspectives of university leaders and exploring their views regarding the current state and level of implementation of such practices. A questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection due to its effectiveness in covering a large number of respondents and providing quantitative data suitable for statistical analysis, provided that it was constructed according to rigorous scientific standards. The questionnaire was designed around a USR framework consisting of six integrated dimensions, reflecting the comprehensive role of the university in society:

- Administrative and Procedural Dimension: Concerns the organization of SR within institutional policies, governance structures, and administrative processes.
- Societal Dimension: Reflects the university's engagement with its local environment and partnerships with civil society organizations.
- Ethical and Value-Based Dimension: Promotes the values of integrity, accountability, and transparency in university performance.
- Environmental and Health Dimension: Addresses the university's commitment to environmental sustainability and public health promotion.
- National and Affiliational Dimension: Focuses on strengthening national identity, belonging, and active citizenship within the university community.
- Cognitive and Educational Dimension: Integrates SR into education, research, and training processes.

This multidimensional framework enabled the study to systematically assess the extent to which Saudi universities have institutionalized SR within their administrative structures and governance systems and to identify areas for development and improvement.

While various tools for measuring USR exist, the majority of them focus on the opinions of stakeholders or broad aspects of USR rather than on institutional administrative procedures from the viewpoint of university administration. As a result, a new tool was created to measure how SR is incorporated into institutional decision-making, administrative procedures, and governance frameworks in higher education. The questionnaire was developed using a multistage process that included (1) a thorough review of validated USR models and scales, (2) the identification of common administrative and institutional dimensions, (3) the initial generation of items, (4) expert review for content validity, and (5) reliability analysis and pilot testing (Appendix A).

3.1 Study Population and Sample

The study targeted the population of university leaders in public universities located in Riyadh, as they represent the group most capable of providing accurate assessments of the institutional administrative practices of SR. This population included vice-rectors, assistant vice-rectors, deans of colleges and deanships, vice-deans, and several consultants and program directors. At present, there are 32 public universities in Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia, 2025). Public universities were selected because they represent the largest and most influential segment of higher education in terms of student enrollment and insti-

Table 1. Distribution of the study sample according to demographic variables.

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
University	King Saud University	46	43.0
	Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	33	30.8
	Princess Nourah University	28	26.2
College type	Scientific	60	56.1
	Humanities and social sciences	47	43.9
Academic rank	Professor	28	26.2
	Associate professor	29	27.1
	Assistant professor	50	46.7
Administrative position	Vice-rector	8	7.5
	Assistant vice-Rector	5	4.7
	Dean	24	22.4
	Vice-dean	49	45.8
	Other leadership roles	21	19.6

tutional size, whereas private universities remain fewer in number and operate within a more limited organizational scope. Due to the lack of accurate official statistics regarding the number of academic leaders in each university, a stratified random sampling method was used to ensure proportional representation of all academic leadership levels. A total of 130 questionnaires were sent electronically, of which 113 were returned. Six questionnaires were excluded due to significant missing data, resulting in 107 valid questionnaires for analysis. Due to the absence of reliable official statistics on the total number of academic leaders in the selected universities, the overall population size could not be determined precisely. Nevertheless, the obtained sample is considered adequate for the exploratory nature of the study, as the sampling process emphasized diversity across different academic leadership positions within the participating universities. Consultants and program directors were included in the sampling frame because of their contribution to university planning and decision-making processes, while university presidents/rectors were excluded owing to their low accessibility and the assumption that their views can be represented through those of their vice-rectors/deputies and senior deputies. Approval was granted by the Deanship of Scientific Research at the University of Hafr Al-Batin, and participation was voluntary with guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality. In Table 1, "scientific colleges" refer to colleges of natural sciences, engineering, medicine, health sciences, and applied sciences, while "humanities colleges" include social sciences, education, arts, and related disciplines.

The sample included participants from King Saud University, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, and Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University. Respondents were distributed according to four demographic variables: university, college type, academic rank, and administrative position, as shown in Table 1.

This distribution indicates a balanced representation of various leadership levels and institutional types, supporting the reliability and contextual relevance of the study's findings within the context of Saudi public universities.

3.2 Research Instrument

The questionnaire, which served as the primary tool for data collection, was carefully designed to examine the institutional administrative practices of SR in Saudi universities, in alignment with the study's objectives and research questions. The questionnaire comprised two main sections: the first section captured demographic information about the participants (university, college type, academic rank, and administrative position), while the second section comprised 63 positively worded statements, distributed across six dimensions representing the key domains of the study.

The instrument was developed following an extensive review of established USR models and validated measurement scales addressing SR in higher education. This review aimed to create a more comprehensive tool that captures both the administrative and institutional dimensions of USR. The development process drew on several key frameworks, including Latif (2018), who identified the ethical, educational, environmental, and organizational dimensions, and Liu and Zhou (2025), who proposed a multidimensional framework integrating governance, culture, and sustainability. Although originally developed in a private-sector context focusing on organizational resilience, this framework was used in the present study as a conceptual reference to inform the administrative and governance dimensions of institutional SR in higher education. Insights from Ali et al. (2021) and Valencia-Arias et al. (2024) further emphasized institutional management, community engagement, and integrating ethical, environmental, and social dimensions into strategic planning. Additionally, Dawodu et al. (2022) contributed indicators related to governance and sustainable management. Meanwhile, reviews by Dias-Broens et al. (2024), Crawford et al. (2024), and Alfirević et al. (2023) helped reinforce the dimensions of national identity and institutional belonging. Guided by

Table 2. Validity and reliability coefficients of the research instrument.

Dimension	Number of items	Reliability (α)	Validity (r)
Administrative and procedural	14	0.879	0.937
Societal	12	0.922	0.960
Ethical and value-based	10	0.874	0.934
Environmental and health	8	0.917	0.957
National and affiliational	10	0.911	0.954
Cognitive and educational	9	0.871	0.933
Total	63	0.979	0.989

these models, the final instrument was designed to encompass six interrelated dimensions that collectively represent the institutional administrative practices of SR in Saudi universities. The questionnaire was originally developed in Arabic. To ensure linguistic accuracy, the instrument was translated into English and then back-translated into Arabic by two bilingual academic experts. Minor wording adjustments were made based on this process to enhance clarity and equivalence.

To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts in educational administration and university leadership, who evaluated the clarity, coverage, and relevance of each item. Revisions were made according to their feedback. Internal consistency validity was assessed by examining item–dimension correlations, yielding a coefficient of 0.989, which indicates a high level of coherence between items and their respective dimensions.

For reliability, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha after a pilot application involving 13 participants from the study population. The overall reliability coefficient reached 0.979, reflecting a high degree of internal homogeneity. The reliability coefficients for the six dimensions ranged between 0.871 and 0.922, confirming the instrument's robustness and consistency.

These results demonstrate that the instrument possesses high validity and reliability, making it a suitable and credible tool for measuring the extent and nature of institutional administrative practices of SR across Saudi universities (Table 2).

A five-point Likert scale was employed to measure respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward the institutional administrative practices of SR, where 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. An open-ended question was added at the end of the questionnaire to allow participants to propose suggestions for enhancing the university's role in SR. To interpret the mean scores of the items, the following classification was used to determine the perceived level of reality as evaluated by respondents (Table 3):

Table 3. Interpretation of levels.

Mean range	Interpretation of level
Less than 2.00	Weak Level
2.00–<3.00	Moderate Level
3.00–4.00	Good Level
Above 4.00 = Excellent level	Excellent Level

The study variables were selected to reflect the administrative and institutional nature of the research, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of variations in practices across Saudi higher education institutions. The study included three major public universities that represent leading models in academic governance and community engagement initiatives: King Saud University, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, and Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University. In addition to the institutional variable, the following demographic and organizational variables were analyzed:

- College Type (Scientific or Humanities): To explore differences in practices related to disciplinary orientations.
- Academic Rank: To reflect faculty experience and involvement in academic decision-making.
- Administrative Position: Covering both senior and middle management (vice-rectors, assistant vice-rectors, deans, vice-deans, and consultants), as the main actors in adopting institutional SR policies.

Data analysis and hypothesis testing were conducted using the IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 26 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA), applying the following statistical procedures:

- Means and standard deviations to determine the general trends and distribution of responses.
- Percentages to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample.
- Cronbach's alpha to verify the internal consistency reliability of the instrument.
- Independent samples *t*-test to compare mean differences between two independent groups (college type).
- One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify statistically significant differences among multiple groups (e.g., university or administrative position).
- Least significant difference (LSD) post-hoc test to determine the source of significant differences between mean scores when applicable.

These analytical methods enabled precise quantitative examination of the collected data and the derivation of statistically supported findings, providing a clear depiction of

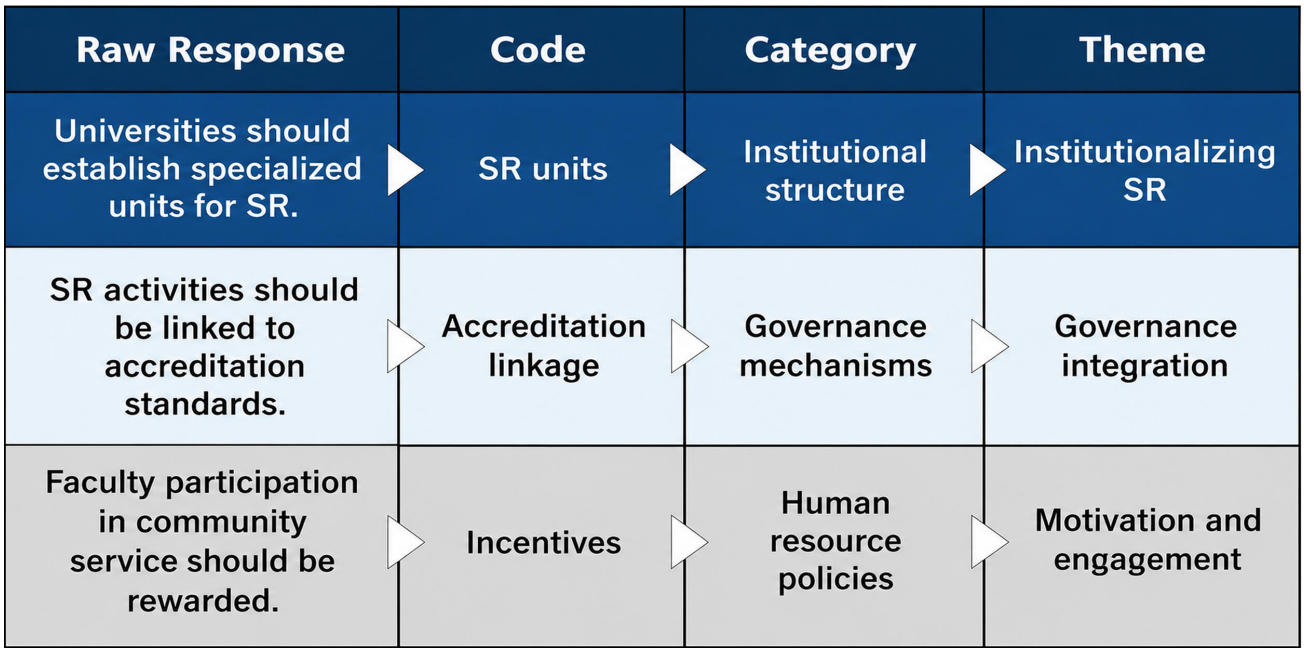


Fig. 1. A model of the objective analysis process in qualitative research. SR, social responsibility.

the institutional administrative practices of SR as perceived by academic leaders in Saudi universities.

Responses to the open-ended question were optional. Qualitative data were analyzed using simple thematic content analysis, whereby responses were coded, grouped into categories, and summarized according to emerging themes and frequencies (See an example of the analysis method in Fig. 1). Responses marked as "Neutral" were treated as missing values and excluded from item-level statistical analyses to avoid distorting the calculated means. This approach is widely used in qualitative research to systematically interpret textual data and identify recurring themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.3 Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the number of participants may be considered limited for this type of study. Second, the use of self-reported data from academic leaders might have resulted in some bias. Third, the universities chosen for the study were all located in Riyadh. It should be noted that Riyadh may not be representative of all areas of Saudi Arabia.

4. Results

4.1 University Leaders' Assessment of Institutional Administrative Practices of SR in Saudi Universities

The means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the six dimensions of the questionnaire, as well as for the overall instrument. The dimensions were ranked in descending order according to their mean scores, as presented in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, the overall assessment of the role of universities in SR among the institutions under study was rated at a "good" level, with an overall mean score of 3.79 according to the interpretation scale adopted for this research. All six dimensions scored within the same "good" range, reflecting a consistent performance across the different domains of institutional SR. The ethical and value-based dimension ranked the highest (M = 3.92), indicating that Saudi universities demonstrate relatively strong adherence to ethical principles, transparency, and moral responsibility in their institutional practices. Conversely, the administrative and procedural dimension received the lowest mean (M = 3.62), suggesting that while SR is conceptually acknowledged, its formal institutionalization—in terms of policies, structures, and resource allocation—remains underdeveloped. These findings imply that universities in Saudi Arabia have made tangible progress in adopting and practicing SR across multiple dimensions; however, such efforts are still in the process of institutional maturity and consolidation, requiring more systematic frameworks to align with the aspirations and objectives outlined in national and international forums on USR. A more detailed discussion of each dimension's results is presented in the following sections.

The results in Table 5 present the means and standard deviations for each item in the Administrative and Procedural Dimension, which ranked last among all dimensions with an overall mean of 3.62. Notably, this dimension includes one of the lowest-rated items in the entire instrument—"The university allocates a clear and detailed budget for SR" (M = 3.18)—followed by "The university provides incentives and support to faculty members

Table 4. Arithmetic means for each dimension and the overall average.

No.	Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Ethical and Value-Based Dimension	3.92	0.74	Good Level
2	Societal Dimension	3.90	0.67	Good Level
3	National and Affiliational Dimension	3.88	0.71	Good Level
4	Environmental and Health Dimension	3.75	0.68	Good Level
5	Cognitive and Educational Dimension	3.70	0.78	Good Level
6	Administrative and Procedural Dimension	3.62	0.67	Good Level
Overall mean		3.79		Good Level

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for the administrative and procedural dimension.

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The university designates a committee to oversee SR activities.	3.76	0.92	5
2	The university adopts a clear plan and system for SR.	3.63	1.00	7
3	The university allocates a clear and detailed budget for SR.	3.18	0.96	14
4	The university conducts evaluation studies on its SR performance.	3.33	1.00	12
5	The university organizes conferences that contribute to community development and problem-solving.	3.89	0.98	4
6	The university provides consulting services to various community institutions.	4.04	0.92	2
7	The university encourages the establishment of student associations related to community issues.	3.55	1.10	8
8	The university includes SR-related courses within its academic programs.	3.71	0.98	6
9	The university uses social media platforms to promote SR concepts.	3.38	0.97	11
10	The university offers community training courses in project and business management.	3.89	0.91	3
11	The university holds free workshops to raise awareness about SR.	3.46	0.94	9
12	The university issues periodic bulletins that enhance awareness of SR.	3.44	1.07	10
13	The university continuously sponsors cultural activities.	4.06	0.81	1
14	The university provides incentives and support to faculty members engaged in community service.	3.28	1.17	13
Overall mean		3.62	0.67	

SR, social responsibility.

engaged in community service" (M = 3.28). Conversely, the highest-rated items were "The university continuously sponsors cultural activities" (M = 4.06) and "The university provides consulting services to various community institutions" (M = 4.04). These findings indicate that the administrative and procedural role of universities in managing SR remains insufficiently defined and institutionalized. While universities show commendable engagement through cultural and advisory activities, these efforts are still fragmented and not governed by clear structures, budgets, or formalized frameworks. The results suggest that current practices largely fall within the traditional third function of universities—community service—rather than representing a fully integrated institutional responsibility. This gap underscores the need for structured administrative systems, dedicated budgets, and policy frameworks that clearly articulate SR as a core organizational mission, aligned with strategic governance and accountability standards in higher education.

The results presented in Table 6 detail the findings for the societal dimension, which achieved an overall mean score of 3.90, placing it among the higher-rated dimensions of the study. The highest-rated item was "The university works to enhance its position and reputation within the community" (M = 4.31), followed by "The university participates in community events" (M = 4.12). These findings highlight that universities have made notable efforts to strengthen their institutional image and public engagement, reflecting an awareness of their social role and reputation within the community. In contrast, the lowest-rated item was "The university encourages community members to visit and benefit from its facilities" (M = 3.69), suggesting a limited level of community accessibility and outreach.

Interestingly, items most directly linked to tangible interaction with the public, such as inviting community participation or providing open access to university facilities, scored lower than those related to symbolic or representational engagement, such as image enhancement and event participation. This pattern indicates that while Saudi universities are successfully building their external reputation and institutional presence, they have yet to fully internalize and operationalize SR as a broad, inclusive concept that integrates direct community involvement into daily university functions. Hence, the results reflect a partial adoption of the SR model, focused more on image and structured partnerships rather than continuous, grassroots-level engagement with community needs. This highlights the need for a more expansive and participatory approach to USR that goes beyond traditional outreach to embrace sustainable community integration and collaboration.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for the societal dimension.

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Rank
1	University leaders clearly understand their SR.	3.85	0.95	7
2	The university is committed to building strong relationships with community institutions.	3.94	0.91	4
3	The university supports exhibitions and seminars related to social services.	3.97	0.89	3
4	The university encourages community members to visit and benefit from its facilities.	3.69	1.02	12
5	The university participates in community events.	4.12	0.73	2
6	The university works to enhance its position and reputation within the community.	4.31	0.80	1
7	The university provides better opportunities for people with disabilities to promote social inclusion.	3.70	0.91	11
8	The university links academic research topics to community problems.	3.78	1.00	9
9	The university allows faculty members to engage in voluntary community service.	3.84	0.87	8
10	The university contributes to implementing social and developmental projects.	3.76	0.87	10
11	The university helps its students address their social problems.	3.88	0.83	6
12	The university contributes to student support funds for financially disadvantaged students.	3.91	0.82	5
Overall mean		3.90	0.67	

Table 7. Descriptive statistics for the ethical and value-based dimension.

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The university works to develop morally upright citizens who are proud of their country's religious values.	4.06	0.82	3
2	The university links SR to Islamic beliefs and values.	4.06	0.87	4
3	The university distinguishes between voluntary charitable work and SR.	3.31	0.92	10
4	The university combats unethical behaviors such as cheating and violence.	4.26	0.81	1
5	The university promotes a culture of integrity and anti-corruption.	3.99	0.99	6
6	The university promotes respect for laws and regulations.	3.95	1.04	7
7	The university reinforces values of participation, interaction, and dialogue.	4.00	0.93	5
8	The university provides various activities that help develop students' character.	4.08	0.79	2
9	The university contributes to promoting respect for and protection of human rights.	3.83	0.96	8
10	The university provides fair and transparent mechanisms for resolving issues of students and faculty members.	3.63	1.07	9
Overall mean		3.92	0.74	

The results in Table 7 reveal that the ethical and value-based dimension achieved the highest overall mean (3.92) among all dimensions, indicating that universities show strong performance in fostering moral and ethical values. The top-rated item was "The university combats unethical behaviors such as cheating and violence" (M = 4.26), followed by "The university provides various activities that help develop students' character" (M = 4.08). Conversely, the lowest-rated item was "The university distinguishes between voluntary charitable work and SR" (M = 3.31), suggesting that universities have not yet fully differentiated between SR as an institutional strategic function and traditional charitable volunteer work.

These findings reinforce the earlier results from the administrative and societal dimensions: although universities demonstrate ethical awareness and value-oriented behavior, the concept of institutionalized SR is still not clearly defined or systematically implemented. The persistence of conceptual overlap indicates the need for universities to establish distinct frameworks and policies that articulate SR as a strategic, measurable, and integral component of university governance rather than a voluntary initiative.

As Table 8 shows, the environmental and health dimension obtained an overall mean of 3.75, indicating a good level of practice. The highest-rated item was "The university promotes a culture of health awareness in the community" (M = 4.02), followed by "The university conducts studies related to environment and health" (M = 3.94). These results reflect that Saudi universities are increasingly active in health promotion and applied research, areas that directly impact community well-being. However, the lowest-rated items, "The university launches initiatives that encourage greater responsibility toward the environment" (M = 3.47) and "The university participates in addressing emergencies such as disasters and crises" (M = 3.50), suggest limited engagement in proactive environmental and crisis management initiatives.

Overall, these findings indicate that while universities are supportive of environmental and health causes, their contributions are primarily reactive or program-based rather than part of a comprehensive institutional sustainability framework. Thus, greater emphasis is needed on strategic environmental planning, cross-sector partnerships, and the integration of sustainability education and crisis preparedness into the university's long-term vision and operations.

As Table 9 shows, the national and affiliational dimension achieved an overall mean of 3.88, indicating a

Table 8. Descriptive statistics for the environmental and health dimension.

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The university contributes to environmental protection programs.	3.67	0.93	5
2	The university participates in addressing emergencies such as disasters and crises.	3.50	0.95	7
3	The university links academic course content to environmental contexts.	3.64	0.93	6
4	The university launches initiatives that encourage greater responsibility toward the environment.	3.47	0.94	8
5	The university promotes the importance of preserving public property.	3.85	0.89	4
6	The university contributes to community health care programs.	3.91	0.87	3
7	The university promotes a culture of health awareness in the community.	4.02	0.78	1
8	The university conducts studies related to environment and health.	3.94	0.76	2
Overall mean		3.75	0.68	

Table 9. Descriptive statistics for the national and affiliational dimension.

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The university views SR as a moral and national duty.	4.04	0.80	4
2	The university regards community service as a core value to be nurtured.	4.09	0.79	3
3	The university rejects practices based on geographic, sectarian, or other forms of discrimination.	3.85	1.04	7
4	The university reinforces values of good citizenship and virtuous behavior.	4.16	0.82	2
5	The university actively participates in national events.	4.38	0.70	1
6	The university regularly hosts officials and decision-makers to enhance students' awareness of national and global developments.	3.69	1.11	9
7	The university views SR as a beneficial investment for both the university and the nation.	4.00	0.85	5
8	The university considers SR an essential factor in its institutional success.	3.88	0.94	6
9	The university contributes effectively to raising awareness of political events.	2.92	1.05	10
10	The university contributes to protecting the cultural and civilizational heritage.	3.81	0.91	8
Overall mean		3.88	0.71	

good level of implementation. The highest-rated item was "The university actively participates in national events" (M = 4.38), followed by "The university reinforces values of good citizenship and virtuous behavior" (M = 4.16).

The lowest-rated item, "The university contributes effectively to raising awareness of political events" (M = 2.92), not only ranked lowest within this dimension but also among all items of the study. This result reflects a restricted institutional scope in addressing the broader dimensions of SR, particularly those related to civic awareness and political engagement.

Overall, these findings suggest that universities in Saudi Arabia excel in symbolic and ceremonial expressions of national identity, such as celebrating national events, but exhibit limited engagement with critical social and political education. The national and belonging role, thus, remains largely event-driven and representational rather than being embedded in the university's educational and developmental mission. A more comprehensive approach is required to integrate citizenship education, civic responsibility, and cultural preservation as sustainable pillars of institutional SR.

Although the cognitive and educational dimension is central to the university's core mission of teaching and learning, it ranked second to last among all dimensions, with an overall mean of 3.70. As Table 10 shows, the highest-rated item was "The university works to improve access to education across all disciplines" (M = 3.98), reflecting universities' efforts to enhance educational opportunities and inclusivity. Conversely, the lowest-rated item was "The university offers evening study programs for those unable to attend regular programs" (M = 3.55). This item also showed the highest standard deviation (SD = 1.22), suggesting disagreement among respondents about whether fee-based evening programs fall within the scope of SR.

These results emphasize the need for greater integration of SR into educational and research practices, ensuring that learning opportunities are equitable, inclusive, and responsive to societal needs. While Saudi universities are making strides toward expanding access and fostering lifelong learning, a gap persists in aligning academic programs, outreach efforts, and knowledge production with broader goals of social and educational equity. The findings thus highlight the importance of embedding SR into pedagogical frameworks, curriculum design, and academic development strategies to strengthen the university's transformative role in society.

4.2 Proposed Recommendations for Enhancing Universities' SR Roles

To address the second research question concerning proposed ways to enhance universities' SR—"What practical proposals can enhance the development of these prac-

Table 10. Descriptive statistics for the cognitive and educational dimension.

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The university fosters students' understanding of SR concepts.	3.60	0.98	7
2	The university organizes academic conferences to promote SR concepts.	3.64	1.03	5
3	The university adopts continuing education programs.	3.85	0.95	3
4	The university contributes to the development and support of the public education system.	3.65	0.99	4
5	The university promotes continuous professional training.	3.56	1.02	8
6	The university offers evening study programs for those unable to attend regular programs.	3.55	1.22	9
7	The university engages students in solving academic problems they face.	3.85	0.91	2
8	The university works to improve access to education across all disciplines.	3.98	0.81	1
9	The university balances its educational outcomes with development and labor market needs.	3.61	1.10	6
Overall mean		3.70	0.78	

tices in Saudi universities?"—responses to the open-ended question included at the end of the questionnaire were analyzed. A total of 19 respondents provided usable qualitative responses, and the study analyzed the participants' responses to the open-ended question included at the end of the questionnaire. The suggestions were categorized and ranked in descending order according to their frequency of mention, as follows:

1. Institutionalizing the concept of SR within the university by clearly defining its scope, which extends beyond community service, and fostering a comprehensive culture of SR among all university members.

2. Developing a clear and structured system for SR that outlines its practices and mechanisms of implementation, ensuring participation from all university sectors through an integrated approach that aligns with the institution's educational and research missions.

3. Allowing colleges and academic programs to actively engage in community service initiatives rather than restricting such activities to specific deanships or centers.

4. Linking SR performance to accreditation and quality assurance processes, including national and international standards such as those of the National Center for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation (NCAAA) and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) frameworks.

5. Integrating faculty members' community service efforts into evaluation and promotion criteria while providing incentives, recognition, and rewards for outstanding contributions by faculty, students, and administrative staff.

6. Designing and implementing media and awareness programs that address pressing social issues and enhance public understanding of the university's social role.

7. Establishing dedicated centers for research, thought, and opinion polling to study and address societal challenges through evidence-based planning and community partnerships.

8. Strengthening direct engagement with community institutions, including charities, neighborhood organizations, and civil society institutions, to enhance collaboration and outreach.

4.3 Findings Related to the Study Hypothesis

Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the mean scores of the study sample's estimations of the university's role in SR attributable to the variables of university, college type, academic rank, or administrative position.

One of the study's primary objectives was to determine whether differences exist in universities' performance regarding their SR roles and whether certain demographic or institutional factors influence participants' responses on the study scale. To address these questions, a one-way ANOVA was employed to examine differences across universities for all six dimensions.

4.3.1 Differences by University

The ANOVA results indicated that the significance level was below 0.05 across all dimensions, confirming statistically significant differences among universities. To identify the sources of these differences, the LSD post-hoc test was conducted. Results revealed significant differences between Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University and King Saud University across all dimensions in favor of Imam University, suggesting that respondents from Imam University perceived their institution as more effective in fulfilling its SR roles compared to respondents from King Saud University. No significant differences were found between King Saud University and Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University across all dimensions. However, significant differences were detected between Imam University and Princess Nourah University in all dimensions except the third (ethical and value-based), once again in favor of Imam University. These results may be attributed to the religious and jurisprudential orientation of Imam University, which is deeply integrated with societal and cultural values. Such orientation may naturally enhance the university's engagement with community-related initiatives compared to institutions with predominantly scientific or technical orientations.

4.3.2 Differences by College Type and Academic Rank

The results of the independent samples *t*-test for college type (scientific vs. humanities) and the one-way ANOVA for academic rank revealed no statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in any of the six dimensions. This consistency may be explained by the standardized administrative framework governing Saudi universities, which follows a unified system established by the Ministry of Higher Education. Consequently, the administrative roles and responsibilities of university leaders are largely similar regardless of their academic discipline or rank. As a result, neither specialization nor academic rank appeared to significantly influence perceptions of SR practices, given that most respondents occupy administrative roles not directly tied to their academic field.

4.3.3 Differences by Administrative Position

The one-way ANOVA results for the variable of administrative position revealed statistically significant differences across all six dimensions. The LSD post hoc test demonstrated that these differences were in favor of higher administrative positions, particularly vice-rectors and deans, compared with lower-level positions such as assistant deans or departmental administrators. This pattern suggests that the higher the administrative rank, the more positively respondents evaluated their universities' engagement in SR. This may be due to greater involvement and awareness among senior leaders of institutional initiatives, as well as their strategic proximity to decision-making and policy formulation. The results also imply that administrative hierarchy can influence perception bias, with higher-ranking officials tending to report more favorable evaluations of university performance.

Overall, the hypothesis of no significant differences was rejected for several variables (university, administrative position) and accepted for others (college type and academic rank).

Collectively, these findings indicate that:

- Institutional context (particularly the university's orientation and leadership culture) significantly affects how SR is perceived and practiced.
- Administrative hierarchy plays a major role in shaping perceptions of engagement and effectiveness.

Thus, the results highlight the importance of promoting inclusive administrative participation and enhancing institution-wide awareness to support the equitable and sustainable integration of SR within Saudi universities.

5. Discussion

The study's findings reveal that the institutional administrative practices of SR in Saudi public universities are generally rated at a good level; however, these practices are still undergoing a stage of institutional formation and have not yet achieved the desired level of systematic integration within governance and strategic planning. The ethical and value-based dimension ranked highest among all dimensions, reflecting the cultural and religious nature of Saudi universities, where moral responsibility is deeply embedded in institutional identity. Conversely, the administrative and procedural dimension ranked lowest, signaling a structural deficiency in the formal organization and management of SR initiatives, a finding consistent with those of Nardo et al. (2021), who emphasized that the absence of specialized administrative structures weakens the impact of SR in universities.

A notable observation is the persistent conceptual confusion between community service and SR. Several universities still treat SR as an auxiliary or voluntary activity assigned to specific deanships rather than as an integral part of institutional governance. This aligns with Mahmood (2023) and Al-Huwaish (2023), who noted that Arab universities often confine SR to volunteer activities, thereby limiting its institutional effectiveness. Such conceptual ambiguity restricts the scope of practice and hinders the development of a comprehensive administrative model that embeds SR into the university's daily operations. Overcoming this requires a redefinition of SR within institutional governance and academic accreditation frameworks. Additionally, the cognitive and educational dimension received lower-than-expected ratings despite its centrality to the university's core mission of teaching and learning. This result aligns with Alcota et al. (2013), who found that limited integration of SR into curricula reduces its long-term educational impact. The current findings underscore the need to transform SR from isolated volunteer activities into educational and research-based practices embedded in academic policies, a direction supported by Valencia-Arias et al. (2024) in their Latin American model of institutional university responsibility.

Another striking result is that 18% of university leaders responded "I don't know" to some questionnaire items, indicating a lack of organizational awareness of the concept of SR even among senior administrators. This points to an internal knowledge gap within universities and supports Fauzi et al. (2024), who identified the absence of administrative training and weak internal communication as major barriers to institutionalizing SR. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for awareness and training programs targeting academic and administrative leaders to build shared understanding and foster a participatory institutional culture. Differences among universities further highlight institutional variation. Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University showed higher engagement in SR practices, likely due to its religious and social academic orientation, which naturally promotes stronger community linkages. This is consistent with the findings of Vutsova et al. (2023), who found that programs emphasizing ethical and civic values contribute to higher awareness of SR among leaders and students.

The analysis of administrative position revealed that senior leaders, such as vice-rectors and deans, provided

higher ratings compared to lower-level administrators, which reflects differentiated institutional perceptions between administrative tiers, echoing Remišová et al. (2013), who emphasized the role of ethical and transformative leadership in translating societal principles into actionable policies.

Regarding the open-ended recommendations provided by university leaders, these responses constitute qualitative outcomes of substantial institutional significance. As they originate from leaders with administrative expertise and a deep understanding of university structures, they offer credible insights into practical needs for development. The leaders' consensus on the need to embed SR as an institutional culture, rather than as a set of community service activities, aligns with global trends toward transitioning from "voluntary responsibility" to "systematized institutional responsibility" (Nardo et al., 2021; Wigmore-Álvarez and Ruiz-Lozano, 2012). Furthermore, the call to develop a clear administrative system specifying authorities, responsibilities, and resources reflects an advanced understanding of university governance and sustainability requirements (Arias-Valle and Marimon, 2024). The emphasis on linking SR performance to accreditation and quality assurance standards underscores a movement toward integrating social accountability into institutional excellence frameworks. Similarly, the recommendation to reward faculty, students, and staff for their engagement signifies a shift toward fostering motivational leadership and behavioral commitment, which is consistent with the findings of Sasaki and Horng (2023), who found that motivational leadership enhances the internalization of social values in educational institutions.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that Saudi university leaders are increasingly aware of the need to re-engineer the university–society relationship through strategic, participatory, and sustainable approaches, positioning Saudi universities as regional models in institutionalizing SR and aligning it with Vision 2030's national development goals.

6. Conclusion

In line with the purpose identified in the Introduction, this research aimed to examine the institutional administrative practices of SR from the perspective of academic leaders and identify areas of strength and improvement in Saudi public universities. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study represents the first recent Arabic investigation to assess SR through a comprehensive institutional administrative framework encompassing ethical, national, environmental, and organizational dimensions. The findings affirm that strengthening SR in Saudi universities necessitates a transformational institutional shift that enhances transparency, clarifies roles, and integrates community performance with strategic objectives under the framework of Saudi Vision 2030. The discovery of conceptual overlap between community service and SR, coupled with limited awareness among leadership, reveals an urgent need to rebuild organizational culture so that universities internalize and operationalize this concept within their systems and policies.

Globally, these results contribute to ongoing academic discussions on university governance and sustainable responsibility, particularly amid efforts to integrate sustainability and responsible governance principles into higher education. The challenges identified in Saudi universities are consistent with patterns reported in international studies indicating that many higher education institutions are still transitioning from voluntary social initiatives toward more institutionalized and strategically governed SR practices (Arias-Valle and Marimon, 2024; Nardo et al., 2021; Valencia-Arias et al., 2024). Developing clear internal policies for SR will enable Saudi universities to emerge as regional leaders in institutional sustainability and national commitment, strengthening their international standing and solidifying the vision of the "responsible university"—one that balances education, research, and community service within a framework of effective governance and ethical leadership.

Availability of Data and Materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions

AAA designed the study, conducted the research, analysed the data, and wrote the manuscript. The author read and approved the final manuscript and is accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Appendix

Appendix A

Questionnaire: Institutional Administrative Practices of Social Responsibility in Universities: A Study from Academic Leaders' Perspective

Section A: Demographic Information

Please indicate your response by marking (✓) in the appropriate box:

● University:

☐ King Saud University

☐ Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University

Dimension 1: Administrative and Procedural	
1	The university designates a committee to oversee SR activities.
2	The university adopts a clear plan and system for SR.
3	The university allocates a clear and detailed budget for SR.
4	The university conducts evaluation studies on its SR performance.
5	The university organizes conferences that contribute to community development and problem-solving.
6	The university provides consulting services to various community institutions.
7	The university encourages the establishment of student associations related to community issues.
8	The university includes SR-related courses within its academic programs.
9	The university uses social media platforms to promote SR concepts.
10	The university offers community training courses in project and business management.
11	The university holds free workshops to raise awareness about SR.
12	The university issues periodic bulletins that enhance awareness of SR.
13	The university continuously sponsors cultural activities.
14	The university provides incentives and support to faculty members engaged in community service.
Dimension 2: Societal Dimension	
1	University leaders clearly understand their SR.
2	The university is committed to building strong relationships with community institutions.
3	The university supports exhibitions and seminars related to social services.
4	The university encourages community members to visit and benefit from its facilities.
5	The university participates in community events.
6	The university works to enhance its position and reputation within the community.
7	The university provides better opportunities for people with disabilities to promote social inclusion.
8	The university links academic research topics to community problems.
9	The university allows faculty members to engage in voluntary community service.
10	The university contributes to implementing social and developmental projects.
11	The university helps its students address their social problems.
12	The university contributes to student support funds for financially disadvantaged students.
Dimension 3: Ethical and Value-Based	
1	The university works to develop morally upright citizens who are proud of their country's religious values.
2	The university links SR to Islamic beliefs and values.
3	The university distinguishes between voluntary charitable work and SR.
4	The university combats unethical behaviors such as cheating and violence.
5	The university promotes a culture of integrity and anti-corruption.
6	The university promotes respect for laws and regulations.
7	The university reinforces values of participation, interaction, and dialogue.
8	The university provides various activities that help develop students' character.
9	The university contributes to promoting respect for and protection of human rights.
10	The university provides fair and transparent mechanisms for resolving issues of students and faculty members.
Dimension 4: Environmental and Health	
1	The university contributes to environmental protection programs.
2	The university participates in addressing emergencies such as disasters and crises.
3	The university links academic course content to environmental contexts.
4	The university launches initiatives that encourage greater responsibility toward the environment.
5	The university promotes the importance of preserving public property.
6	The university contributes to community health care programs.
7	The university promotes a culture of health awareness in the community.
8	The university conducts studies related to environment and health.
Dimension 5: National and Belonging	
1	The university views SR as a moral and national duty.
2	The university regards community service as a core value to be nurtured.
3	The university rejects practices based on geographic, sectarian, or other forms of discrimination.
4	The university reinforces values of good citizenship and virtuous behavior.

5	The university actively participates in national events.
6	The university regularly hosts officials and decision-makers to enhance students' awareness of national and global developments.
7	The university views SR as a beneficial investment for both the university and the nation.
8	The university considers SR an essential factor in its institutional success.
9	The university contributes effectively to raising awareness of political events.
10	The university contributes to protecting the cultural and civilizational heritage.
Dimension 6: Cognitive and Educational	
1	The university fosters students' understanding of SR concepts.
2	The university organizes academic conferences to promote SR concepts.
3	The university adopts continuing education programs.
4	The university contributes to the development and support of the public education system.
5	The university promotes continuous professional training.
6	The university offers evening study programs for those unable to attend regular programs.
7	The university engages students in solving academic problems they face.
8	The university works to improve access to education across all disciplines.
9	The university balances its educational outcomes with development and labor market needs.
Open-Ended Question	
1	In your opinion, What practical proposals can enhance the development of these practices in Saudi universities?

☐ Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University

● Type of College:

☐ Scientific

☐ Humanities

● Academic Rank:

☐ Professor

☐ Associate Professor

☐ Assistant Professor

● Administrative Position:

☐ Vice Rector

☐ Vice Rector Assistant

☐ Dean

☐ Vice Dean

☐ Other leadership position

Section B: Institutional Administrative Practices of Social Responsibility

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

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