

Linking Participation and Perception to Student Satisfaction: A Study of CSR Engagement in Universities

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigates the impact of student participation and perceived effectiveness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on overall satisfaction in UiTM Puncak Alam. As CSR gains prominence in the education sector, its influence on student engagement, institutional reputation, and academic experience becomes increasingly relevant. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected via surveys from undergraduate students across various disciplines. The findings reveal that 69.4% of respondents participated in CSR activities within the past year, indicating strong engagement. However, correlation and regression analyses show that perceived impact, rather than participation frequency, significantly predicts student satisfaction ($\rho = 0.605$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.609$, $p < 0.001$), while participation itself is not a significant predictor ($\beta = -0.070$, $p = 0.553$). These results suggest that students derive greater satisfaction from CSR initiatives they perceive as meaningful, authentic, and aligned with their values. Demographic analysis highlights a predominantly young (20–24 years) and female (79.6%) respondent base, indicating potential differences in CSR engagement across age and gender. The study underscores the strategic importance of designing impactful CSR programs and improving communication to enhance student satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term institutional value. Future research should explore additional factors such as cultural influences, institutional support, and the long-term academic and professional outcomes of CSR involvement.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Perception, Student Satisfaction, Perceived Impact, Higher Education, Student Engagement

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an essential element of organizational strategy, extending its influence beyond traditional business sectors to include educational institutions (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023; Akpan & Oluwagbade, 2023). Over the past few decades, CSR has evolved into a significant concept across various domains, including education (Zhao et al., 2023; Carroll, 2021). Traditionally associated with the corporate world, CSR embodies an organization's ethical commitment to the society and environment in which it operates (Singh & Misra, 2022; Sheehy & Farneti, 2021). According to Saaida (2023), although CSR was initially adopted to enhance corporate reputation, it has since transformed into a strategic approach aimed at fostering long-term value, building trust, and addressing global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and access to education.

In the context of higher education, CSR has gained prominence as a strategic priority for institutions striving to meet the evolving expectations of stakeholders—particularly students—who are increasingly conscious of the social and environmental implications of the organizations they engage with (Rodríguez-Gómez et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2021). Al Hassani & Wilkins (2022) emphasized that student satisfaction is widely recognized as a key determinant of institutional performance, influencing academic outcomes, retention rates, reputation, and

alumni engagement (Al Hassani & Wilkins, 2022; Drezner & Pizmony-Levy, 2021). As competition intensifies in the higher education sector and students' choices increasingly reflect their values, CSR initiatives have begun to play a pivotal role in shaping their overall satisfaction (Elareshi et al., 2024; Alghamdi, 2022). Students are no longer passive recipients of education; they actively seek alignment between their personal values and institutional practices (Cress et al., 2023; Winstone et al., 2022). Consequently, understanding the link between CSR initiatives and student satisfaction has become a growing concern for educators, administrators, and policymakers (Latif et al., 2024; Costa, 2022). CSR in higher education encompasses a broad spectrum of initiatives (Coelho & Menezes, 2022; Ali et al., 2021).

By addressing societal issues, institutions not only serve the public good but also enrich students' educational experiences (Smith, 2024; Jones et al., 2021). Community outreach fosters purpose and social responsibility (Cress et al., 2023). CSR's impact on student satisfaction depends on visibility, authenticity, and alignment with student values (Kalaiarasan, 2024; Azizi & Sassen, 2023; Xu, 2024). Genuine initiatives build pride and loyalty, while superficial efforts may reduce satisfaction (Kim et al., 2023; Costa, 2022). This study aims to explore two dimensions: students' involvement in CSR activities and their perceptions of its impact, examining how these factors collectively influence overall satisfaction (Elareshi et al., 2024; Sattayapanich et al., 2022). Latif et al. (2024) further suggest that the study investigates how satisfaction with CSR initiatives contributes to students' loyalty and continued engagement with their institution.

Higher education institutions are under increasing pressure to implement substantial CSR initiatives as sustainability and social responsibility gain prominence (Godonoga & Sporn, 2023; Tetreva et al., 2021). These efforts aim not only to address societal challenges but also to enhance student well-being (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023; Tabarés & Boni, 2023). Despite CSR's growing presence in academia, its impact on student satisfaction and engagement remains underexplored (Latif et al., 2024). While CSR is known to boost loyalty and reputation in business, its role in education—especially regarding student perceptions—is less understood (El-Kassar et al., 2023; Li, 2022).

Students engage with CSR differently; some actively participate in initiatives, gaining fulfillment, while others remain passive observers, leading to varied satisfaction levels (Cress et al., 2023; Pelikan et al., 2021). The perceived authenticity and alignment of CSR with student values are crucial (Wut & Ng, 2023; Safeer & Liu, 2023). Poorly executed or insincere efforts may harm trust and satisfaction (Tao, 2024; Abdelbadie et al., 2024). Diverse student backgrounds further complicate CSR's effectiveness (Waheed et al., 2022; Kim, 2024). This study investigates how student involvement and perception of CSR influence satisfaction, aiming to guide institutions in developing meaningful, student-centered CSR strategies (Latif et al., 2024; Cosa, 2024; El-Kassar et al., 2023). This study aims to examine the effects of student participation in CSR activities and their perceived impact on overall student satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Participation in CSR Activities

Participation in CSR activities involves students actively engaging in initiatives that address societal or environmental issues (Farina et al., 2024; Edward et al., 2024). Such involvement fosters a sense of purpose, emotional connection, and alignment with institutional values (Owais et al., 2020; Afzal & MD Abdul, 2021). Active engagement enhances satisfaction, loyalty, and skill development, including leadership and teamwork (Mohammad & Al-Baraa, 2023; Ejiro & Patrick, 2023). In contrast, passive exposure yields limited benefits (Felicia et al., 2022; Ahmad & Yusof, 2021). Institutions must ensure CSR initiatives are authentic, accessible, and aligned with student values to maximize impact (Gregor et al., 2022; Nitin et al., 2023).

CSR Activities' Perceived Impact

Perception of CSR activities refers to how students view the authenticity, effectiveness, and alignment of these initiatives with their personal values (Julie, 2024; Hussian et al., 2023). Authentic and impactful CSR efforts are more likely to enhance student satisfaction and support (Premendra et al., 2023; Tengku et al., 2023).

Conversely, poorly communicated or superficial initiatives may harm institutional reputation and reduce satisfaction (Benno & Thomas, 2022; Ali, 2024; Naomi & Tatiana, 2021). Integrating CSR with student values fosters shared purpose and institutional trust (Elareshi et al., 2024; Ammy et al., 2023). Effective CSR also boosts loyalty and advocacy (Ogunmokun & Seldjan, 2020; Smith, 2024). Institutions must prioritize student feedback and transparency to ensure CSR initiatives are meaningful and positively received (Oyindamola & Tsietsi, 2021; Branden et al., 2023).

Students' Satisfaction

Student satisfaction reflects how well institutional offerings meet students' expectations and experiences (Fawad et al., 2022; Lucia et al., 2024). It influences academic performance, retention, alumni engagement, and institutional reputation (Autoria et al., 2022; Wan & Elaine, 2022). CSR initiatives play a vital role in enhancing satisfaction when they align with institutional goals and benefit both students and the community (Tuan & Ha, 2023; Farina et al., 2024). Genuine and visible CSR efforts foster pride, belonging, and loyalty (Niksa et al., 2024; Julie, 2024). Conversely, superficial or misaligned programs may reduce satisfaction (Ali, 2024; Gregor et al., 2022). Effective communication and transparency are essential to build trust and increase perceived value (Chih-Cheng et al., 2021; Johnson, 2024). As competition intensifies, CSR-driven satisfaction can serve as a strategic advantage for institutions (Premendra et al., 2023; Thuy et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study employs a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationships between student satisfaction, participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, and perceived impact. As an exploratory study, it seeks to provide preliminary insights into how CSR engagement influences students' experiences and perceptions within the higher education context—an area that remains relatively underexplored in existing literature. The exploratory nature allows for the identification of emerging trends and patterns that can inform future in-depth investigations. A cross-sectional survey was administered to capture data at a single point in time, offering a representative snapshot of students' current attitudes toward CSR initiatives. This design ensures alignment with the research objectives by capturing relevant and timely insights into how CSR engagement influences student satisfaction.

Sampling and Population

This study focuses on undergraduate students in higher education institutions, as they are the primary participants in university-led CSR initiatives. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of student satisfaction with CSR programs, the survey includes students from various academic disciplines (Latif et al., 2021). A stratified random sampling method is employed to achieve balanced representation across key demographics such as academic year, field of study, and gender. This approach minimizes sampling bias and enhances the generalizability of the findings (Gregor et al., 2022). The sample size is determined based on the number of students actively involved in CSR activities. A total of 49 respondents is considered adequate to yield statistically meaningful insights into the relationship between CSR participation, perceived impact, and student satisfaction (Nitin et al., 2023).

Research Instrumentation and Scale

This study utilizes a structured questionnaire as its primary research instrument, comprising several sections. The initial part collects demographic data such as age, gender, academic year, and field of study. Subsequent sections assess key variables: participation in CSR activities, perceived impact, and student satisfaction. CSR participation is measured using a self-reported five-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" (1) to "Very Often" (5), capturing frequency and duration of involvement (Afzal & MD Abdul, 2021). Perceived impact is evaluated through a 10-item scale adapted from prior CSR research, covering personal growth, skill development, and community contribution, rated from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5).

(Premendra et al., 2023). Student satisfaction is assessed using a 12-item SERVQUAL-based scale across five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, rated from “Very Dissatisfied” (1) to “Very Satisfied” (5) (Julie, 2024). The questionnaire is designed for clarity and accessibility to encourage high response rates.

Collection of Data

Data was collected through an online survey platform to ensure convenience and accessibility for student participants. The survey link was distributed via Telegram, targeting individuals involved in CSR initiatives. To encourage participation, students were provided with a brief overview of the study’s purpose and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before survey completion. The data collection period extended beyond one week to allow sufficient time for responses, with reminders sent to non-respondents. At the end of the collection phase, a total of 49 valid responses were recorded.

Analysis of Data

Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS version 30. Descriptive statistics summarized demographics and key variables, while Cronbach’s alpha assessed reliability. Pearson’s correlation measured relationships between CSR participation, perceived impact, and student satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis evaluated the influence of CSR engagement and perception on satisfaction, controlling for gender, academic year, and field of study. Regression coefficients and significance levels determined the relative importance of each variable in explaining student satisfaction.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

To provide context for the study, the demographic profile of respondents was analyzed. The majority (87.8%) were aged between 20 and 24, followed by 8.2% aged 25–29, and 4.1% under 20, indicating that the sample primarily consisted of young adults typical of undergraduate populations. This supports the relevance of CSR initiatives targeted at this age group. In terms of gender, the sample was predominantly female (79.6%), with males representing 20.4%. This gender imbalance may influence interpretations of CSR engagement, as previous studies have noted gender-based differences in attitudes toward CSR. Academically, respondents came from diverse service-related fields, with most enrolled in Foodservice Management (53.1%), followed by Tourism Management (22.4%), Culinary Arts Management (14.3%), and Hotel Management (10.2%). This distribution suggests that students in these disciplines may have greater exposure to or interest in CSR activities, aligning with the practical and community-oriented nature of their studies.

A key focus of the study was assessing student participation in CSR activities. Results showed that 69.4% of respondents had engaged in CSR initiatives within the past year, while 30.6% had not. This high participation rate reflects a strong willingness among students to contribute to socially responsible efforts. However, the notable gap between participants and non-participants suggests that certain barriers may hinder involvement for some students. These barriers could include limited awareness of available programs, lack of interest, scheduling conflicts, or insufficient access to opportunities. Identifying and addressing these challenges is essential for institutions aiming to increase engagement. By improving communication, accessibility, and relevance of CSR activities, universities can foster broader participation and ensure that more students benefit from the personal and academic growth associated with CSR involvement.

The analysis of student satisfaction, perception, and participation levels offered valuable insights into their experiences with CSR initiatives. Satisfaction scores showed a strong positive trend, with the highest frequency (26.5%) recorded at a score of 45, indicating generally high satisfaction. Perception scores were similarly skewed positively, with 32.7% of respondents reaching the maximum score of 35, suggesting favorable views of CSR’s impact. In contrast, participation scores were more evenly distributed, peaking at 18 (28.6%), reflecting varied levels of engagement likely influenced by personal schedules, interests, or access to CSR

opportunities. While satisfaction and perception were concentrated at the higher end, participation demonstrated a broader range of involvement.

TABLE I CORRELATION ANALYSIS AMONG STUDENTS' SATISFACTION, PERCEPTION OF CSR IMPACT, AND PARTICIPATION IN CSR ACTIVITIES

	All Satisfaction	All Perception
<u>All Satisfaction</u> Pearson Correlation	1	.605 ^{**}
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	49	49
<u>All Perception</u> Pearson Correlation	.605 ^{**}	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	49	49

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis explored the relationships among student satisfaction, perception of CSR impact, and participation in CSR activities. A strong, statistically significant positive correlation was found between satisfaction and perception ($\rho = 0.605$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students who view CSR initiatives as meaningful and beneficial tend to report higher satisfaction levels. This highlights the critical role of perceived impact in shaping positive student experiences with CSR.

TABLE II CORRELATION BETWEEN SATISFACTION AND PARTICIPATION

	All Satisfaction	Participation
<u>All Satisfaction</u> Pearson Correlation	1	-.036
Sig. (2-tailed)		.808
N	49	49
<u>Participation</u> Pearson Correlation	-.036	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.808	
N	49	49

Conversely, the correlation between satisfaction and participation was weak and not statistically significant ($\rho = -0.036$, $p = 0.808$). This suggests that the frequency of participation alone does not substantially influence satisfaction. Instead, students may derive more value from the perceived quality, relevance, and authenticity of CSR activities than from how often they engage in them. These findings emphasize the importance of designing CSR programs that resonate with students' values and demonstrate clear, positive outcomes.

The regression analysis was conducted to identify key predictors of student satisfaction with CSR activities. The model accounted for 37.1% of the variance in satisfaction levels ($\Delta R^2 = 0.371$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a moderate explanatory power. Among the variables tested, perception of CSR impact emerged as a statistically significant predictor ($\beta = 0.609$, $p < 0.001$). This result underscores the critical role of perception in shaping how students evaluate their experiences with CSR initiatives. Specifically, students who perceive CSR efforts as relevant, impactful, and aligned with their personal values are significantly more likely to report higher satisfaction. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of CSR programs in higher education is not solely dependent on participation rates, but rather on how well the initiatives resonate with students' expectations and beliefs. Institutions aiming to enhance student satisfaction should therefore prioritize the authenticity, visibility, and meaningfulness of their CSR strategies.

TABLE III MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.609 ^a	.371	.344	3.31475

a. Predictors: (Constant), ~~All Perception~~, Participation

In contrast to perception, participation in CSR activities did not significantly predict student satisfaction ($\beta = -0.070$, $p = 0.553$). This result is consistent with the earlier correlation findings and suggests that the frequency or extent of participation alone does not have a meaningful impact on how satisfied students feel. It implies that simply being involved in CSR initiatives is not enough to enhance satisfaction unless those experiences are perceived as valuable, relevant, and impactful. The quality, authenticity, and alignment of CSR activities with students' personal values and expectations appear to play a more influential role than the quantity of engagement. This highlights the importance for institutions to focus not just on increasing participation rates, but also on designing CSR programs that resonate with students and deliver meaningful outcomes that foster emotional connection and satisfaction.

TABLE IV COEFFICIENTS^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.378	6.442	3.163	.003
	Participation	-.154	.258	-.070	.553
	All Perception	.710	.137	.609	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ~~All Satisfaction~~

The findings of this study emphasize the critical role of students' perceptions in shaping their satisfaction with CSR activities. When CSR initiatives are viewed as authentic, meaningful, and aligned with students' personal values and social concerns, they tend to foster higher levels of satisfaction and institutional loyalty (Rania & Leila, 2022; Poh et al., 2022). This supports previous research that highlights the importance of perceived authenticity in CSR programs as a key determinant of positive student outcomes (Azizi & Sassen, 2023; Xu, 2024).

Interestingly, the lack of a significant relationship between participation and satisfaction suggests that mere involvement in CSR activities is not sufficient to enhance student contentment (Gretta & Wilmar, 2022). This may be due to inconsistencies in the quality, relevance, or visibility of CSR efforts (Joanna et al., 2023; Costa, 2022). As Jucelia et al. (2024) and Zainee & Puteh (2020) argue, institutions must go beyond encouraging participation—they must design CSR initiatives that resonate with students' values and aspirations.

These insights carry practical implications for higher education institutions. To maximize the effectiveness of CSR programs, administrators should ensure transparent communication, align initiatives with student interests, and actively involve students in the planning and execution process (Julian, 2024; Farina et al., 2024). Doing so not only enhances the perceived value of CSR efforts but also strengthens emotional engagement, satisfaction, and long-term advocacy among students.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that students' perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives have a stronger and more meaningful influence on their overall satisfaction than the frequency of participation alone.

When students perceive CSR activities as genuine, purposeful, and aligned with their personal and social values, these experiences enhance their sense of belonging, trust, and loyalty toward the institution. In contrast, participation without meaningful impact or visibility does little to improve satisfaction. The findings emphasize the importance of designing CSR initiatives that are authentic, transparent, and relevant to students' interests and communities. Universities should therefore focus on communicating the value and outcomes of CSR efforts, encouraging student involvement in planning and execution, and fostering shared ownership. By doing so, institutions can strengthen student engagement, elevate satisfaction, and enhance long-term institutional reputation and advocacy within the higher education environment.

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