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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON MANAGEMENT ETHICS AND CSR IN LEBANESE HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into how Community Social Responsibility (CSR) impacts universities amidst the Covid 19 pandemic, driven by their influence, on the job market. The study explores how the pandemic has affected CSR practices through methods such as surveys and in-depth interviews. The results reveal a discovery; students actively engage in responsible initiatives and acknowledge their importance, yet they lack a complete grasp of CSR as a formal concept. The pandemic has intensified this involvement with students participating in health-related activities and volunteer work to combat isolation. However financial constraints hinder colleges from expanding their CSR efforts highlighting the necessity for government aid. Improved communication with stakeholders. Consequently, this study emphasizes the role of CSR in fostering behaviours and connections within education institutions during crises advocating for a holistic approach, to its implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

Business laws and ethics guide companies as they navigate the world of modern commerce outlining the framework, for their establishment and operational behaviour. These principles are not just ideas. These are core standards that businesses must adhere to. Going beyond formalities business ethics encompasses a spectrum of values that influence decision-making and shape the overall ethical direction of entire organizations. The ethical landscape extends into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which has seen growth and evolution over time. (Jain, Thomas, Gupta, Ossorio, & Porcheddu, 2022). The concepts of business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) have evolved to meet the demands of changing business environments. These changes have been instrumental in offering firms benefits, such as enhancing reputations fostering positive workplace environments and averting legal issues. Furthermore, implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) faces challenges during extraordinary events, like the COVID-19 pandemic. Such crises require a reevaluation of strategies and approaches (Nguyen, Doan, Minh Ho, & Phuong, 2021). In the context of universities, these challenges hold particular importance. The global health crisis has brought attention to the need, for a rounded social responsibility (CSR) strategy that addresses both short-term crisis management and long-term organizational resilience and reputation maintenance. In this environment upholding standards in business and actively practicing corporate social responsibility are crucial for

effectively navigating the current landscape. This highlights the necessity for educational institutions to adopt approaches and adapt their methods to address the prevailing conditions marked by uncertainty and change (El-Bassiouny, El-Bassiouny, Mohamed, & Basuony, 2020). The increasing focus on CSR is linked to its advantages, such as enhancing business reputation fostering a work environment and preventing legal issues. (Mohammadi, Shahram, & Golmohammadi, 2020). The shift of CSR from frameworks to strategies underscores the significance of a cohesive approach that not only ensures the effectiveness of CSR initiatives but also safeguards, against ethical breaches (De Cremer & Moore, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), in resilience combining it with consumer ethics and adaptive strategies (He & Harris 2020). In Lebanon's education sector, CSR transforms into University Social Responsibility (USR) encompassing responsibilities in teaching, research and administrative practices (Jesus & Macarena, 2019). Despite the existing discussions on the effectiveness of CSR in organizations Lebanese universities have not fully engaged in USR activities during the pandemic. This study focuses on exploring the significance of USR. How the pandemic has influenced these activities not only as crisis response measures but also to enhance reputation and financial stability. Ethics in management and CSR play a role in achieving business advantages beyond gains. Entrepreneurship should prioritize responsibility to nurture relationships with stakeholders that contribute to economic prosperity. However ethical principles face challenges during times of crisis. The repercussions of events like the 2008 crisis continue to

impact areas such, as accountability and fair value accounting within scholarly discussions. The COVID-19 outbreak has led businesses to adjust their strategies and ethical responsibilities towards the community indicating a change, in the realm of social responsibility (Ahmed, Quazi, Faroque, & Uddin, 2021).

Research Question: What is the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on Management Ethics and CSR in Lebanese universities?

Research Objectives

- Explore the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, on Management Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in institutions, in Lebanon.
- Determine the factors that promote or hinder the implementation of CSR during the crisis and provide recommendations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Defining Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) involves integrating values and standards, into business practices creating a structure for conduct within a company's goals, beliefs, skills and stakeholder concerns. Alongside their responsibilities, for products and services, businesses also have obligations that go beyond mere profitability to encompass the welfare of society and stakeholders. This dual focus forms the foundation of organizations (Ahmed, Quazi, Faroque, & Uddin, 2021).

Evolution of CSR Concept: CSR initially had a prescriptive approach. It was based on a rational decision which depicted that ethical actions were assigned to the people who do well in the world for the better. On the other hand, immoral actions were assigned to the people who did bad in the world. Professional people are also human beings, so they make mistakes. Therefore, it led to the descriptive method of CSR. It has now been described as a descriptive theory page. (De Cremer & Moore, 2020). The controversy over the core of CSR was prevalent in historical discourse. Friedman pushed for maximizing value through financial health rather than CSR (Ahmed, Quazi, Faroque, & Uddin, 2021), whereas Jones (1980) stressed stakeholder-centric decision-making and societal participation (Navickas, 2021). (Carroll, 1991) presented a comprehensive framework (see Figure 1) encompassing economic, legal, ethical, and charitable duties, challenging firms to reconcile profitability with legal compliance, ethical conduct, and societal benefits (Carroll, 2021).



CSR in Higher Education Amidst Pandemics: The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted an acute realization of the grave CSR concerns at HEIs. Academic programs and schedules were thrown into disarray. The need for a strong institutional health infrastructure emerged. Students experienced elevated levels of stress and anxiety. Such a situation called for a CSR method reevaluation at higher education institutions. Mental health difficulties, academic continuity, and the basic need for enhancing medical and campus support facilities, in particular, had to be tackled (Al Am, 2020).

CSR Frameworks and Applications: (Carroll, 1991) Corporate Social Responsibility Pyramid showcases the multifarious CSR activities (seen in Figure 1). Economic stability helps in fulfilling legal obligations, ethical responsibilities and philanthropic responsibilities. This model has been fruitful in creating Corporate Social Responsibility demands to ensure that corporations remain in the business while they follow the legal complications and the moral ones and the philanthropic ones too by contributing to the community (Carroll, 2021).

CSR Challenges and Opportunities in Lebanese Universities: This research gap identifies that more extensive research is needed to understand how businesses, especially academic institutions, use CSR to navigate through the pandemic, not only for crisis handling but also to enhance institutes' reputation and financial sustainability (Jamali, Hanin, & Matar, 2018). Amid the current epidemic, CSR is a critical component of corporate strategy, particularly in educational institutions. HEIs can design effective CSR strategies that resonate with both internal and external stakeholders, supporting sustainable educational environments and societal betterment, by understanding its historical underpinnings, theoretical frameworks, and present applications. During the ongoing epidemic, Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR, is a capstone of corporate strategy concerning educational institutions. Concerning the numerous historical events that are attached to CSR, HEIs can establish an effective corporate social responsibility that pleases the internal as well as the external stakeholders.

RESEARCH METHODS

A mixed method is used in this study because it is very beneficial for an in-depth analysis of students' and staff' views and experiences in connection with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and University Social Responsibility (USR) at universities in Lebanon. This method offers various advantages, the main one giving detailed insights and detailed narratives for instance COVID-19 has affected CSR practices and ethical behaviours at learning institutions and quantifiable data from students.

Research Design: The study based on a descriptive exploratory method was done. It is selected due to its ability to explore the complexities of the current situation concerning USR in Lebanon and, how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the USR programs. This design of the study is done to identify the present situations and attitudes, which shows the potential for strategic advances to be made in the future on CSR in higher learning.

Data Collection: 200 Students or recent pass-outs will be taken as respondents to take the primary data for this research. The data for the research will be collected with the help of one of the means which is online surveys. On the other hand, the other means for gathering primary data is done by way of conducting semi-structured interviews of personnel of service departments of 6 universities.

Sampling Design: The study conducted nonprobability sampling mainly focuses on convenience and purposive sampling. It means it included only those individuals who are available and meet the purpose of the study. Although it is not at all a random selection, the study utilized the available resources to study the landscape of CSR in Lebanese colleges during such difficult times across the globe.

RESULTS

Data Description

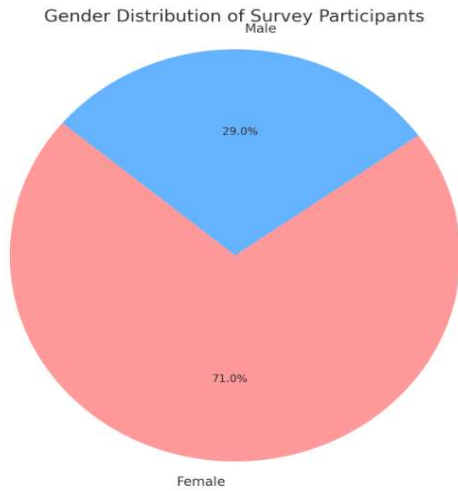


Figure 1. Gender Distribution

Table 1. Major Distribution

Description	Percentage (%)
Business	27.5
Biochemistry	7.5
Biology	7.5
Computer Science	6
Speech Therapy	5
Mathematics	2.5
Engineering	5

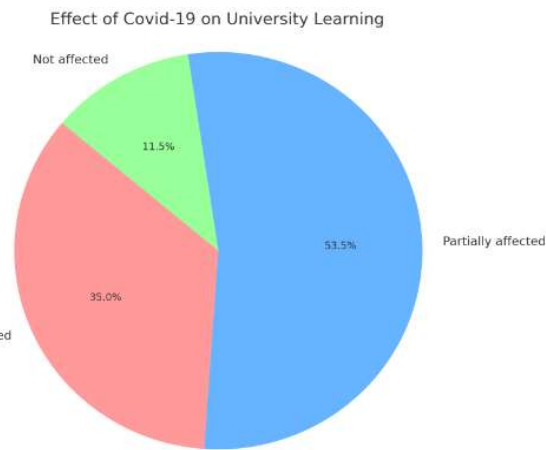


Figure 2. Effect of Covid-19 on Learning Experience

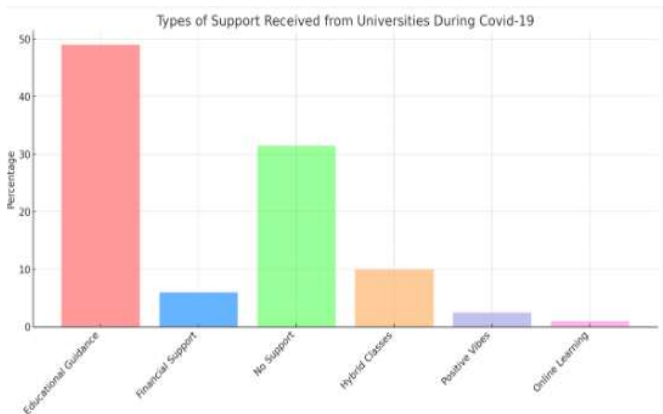


Figure 3. Type of University Support

Table 2. Assistance in Adapting to New Learning Norms

Type of Assistance	Percentage (%)
Innovative Methods by Instructors	38
Different Communication Channels	37.5
No Help Received	13.5
Difficulty in Understanding Courses	11

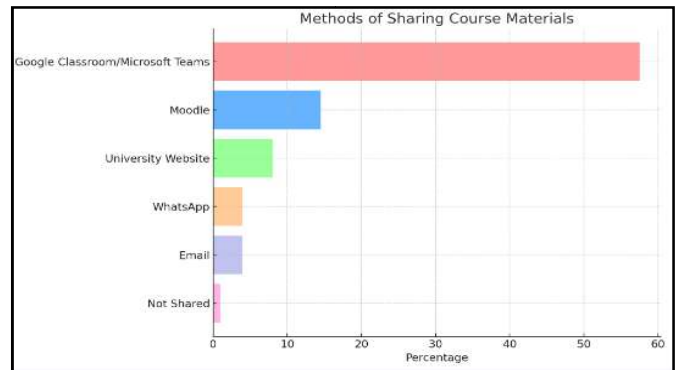


Figure 4. Engagement in Online Sessions

Table 3. Frequency of Contact with Professors for Support

Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rarely	25
When Having Questions	23
Weekly	18
During Online Sessions	26
Online Sessions and WhatsApp	4.5
Before Evaluations	3.5

Table 4. Help Received from Professors and Staff

Type of Help	Percentage (%)
Positive Atmosphere	42
Hotline for Problems	17
Training on Moodle	14
No Help	27

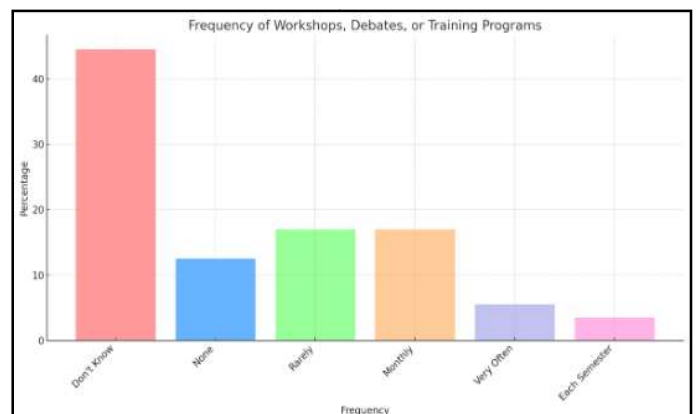


Figure 5. Frequency of Workshops, Debates, or Training Programs

Table 5. Participation in Volunteering Activities

Type of Activity	Percentage (%)
None	67.5
Fundraising	5.5
Tutoring	11
Helping Charitable Organizations	10
Campus Events	9.5
Arranging Sports Events	2.5

DISCUSSION

The study focuses on examining the level of awareness and perception among students regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Table 6. Awareness of CSR

Level of Awareness	Percentage (%)
No Idea	44.5
I heard it but Unsure of the Meaning	15.5
Basic Knowledge	22.5
Familiar with Concept and Effects	17.5

Table 7. Perceptions of Social Responsibility in Universities

Perceived Responsibilities	Percentage (%)
Commitment to Excellence	54.5
Responsible Research and Innovation	8.5
Providing Masks and Sanitizers	3.5
Recycling and Reusing Papers	2
Reducing Electricity Usage	2
Betterment for Instructors and Doctors	2
All of the Above	12.5
Unsure	7

The review of the literature demonstrated a distinct finding implying the absence of knowledge of around 70% of students about the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and awareness is present in only 30% of students. Among the students enrolled in the private universities, the awareness that was present in students enrolled in the 42 private universities, is absent in the students at the Lebanese University like the people of the public institutions (Al Am, 2020). According to this survey data, the lack of awareness or knowledge of 44.5% of students about the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) when students are engaged in undergraduate research (USR) tasks. Only 54.5% of students consider social responsibility and discipline to be out for devotion to excellence, accountable research and innovation, an initiative for health, preservation of the environment, etc. Only the minor figures that can picture the students will achieve across these proportions are to enclose the concept and approaches of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Educational Support and Student Engagement: Although a dearth of support has been experienced by 31.5% of students during the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting to a novel educational format has been assisted by a massive 75.5% of students. Based on the options provided, only 1% of students have reported to have not exchanged course materials and the recording of lectures. The fact that most universities have ensured continuing help in studies depicts how heavily they rely upon their students for cultivating a learning-friendly environment, hence depicting that the students are the primary beneficiaries of a university. Furthermore, the data in the present study adds to the fact that there is a significant level of student involvement and support from the professors. This is evident as only 17% of students have recorded that they have been disengaged in the online sessions. In addition, 73% of the total students have affirmed that they have got enough help to reduce pandemic-induced stress. Therefore, the teaching faculty of any university not only helps to maintain the standard of education but also plays a major role in building the reputation of their institutions to make the students satisfied.

Institutional endeavours encompass a range of activities, including workshops, debates, and volunteering opportunities: The data on extracurricular activities have elicited a disturbing result. 12% of students mentioned that there were no workshops, discussions or training programmes within their colleges. The absence of these fundamental segments indicates a missed chance of overall growth both among the students and the staff, partiality. And, at the same time, the influence of the pandemic shows in the mentioned percentage. A massive record of 67.5 % of students reported not involving themselves in voluntary work. The cause mostly dues to COVID-19 rules demanding face-to-face interaction of volunteers.

Insights Derived from Interviews: The Integration of Corporate Social Responsibility in Universities: Interviews yield many operative topics concerning the Corporate Social Responsibility operational

dimension within universities. Six main universities were the foundation of data collection. And though all six universities have decided to add CSR to their university's mission and vision, only half of them have come up with respective CSR-specific departments. This data shows a broader picture of the operational strategies of each university for the implementation of CSR. Universities with specialist CSR departments have a wider range of CSR initiatives. Hence, this growth concludes that universities need structural assistance for their control over implementing substantial CSR practices. The COVID-19 pandemic has acknowledged the operations of the interviews as they describe various types of perspectives and experiences. Many educational institutions faced trouble in continuing their lectures, but many others even conducted online classes using their pre-existing digital platforms for a seamless flow which made some important points on disaster management.

The financial considerations and support provided by governmental entities: Examination of financial matters has brought to light a situation ambiguous in nature and forms of expression, where the interviewee refrained from providing a well-defined budget for the company spent on CSR and other philanthropic activities. This has thereby raised questions in the transparency in laying down of the financial figures, and the determination of the order of preference of funds allocation. According to the piece of information, there has been a varied response when it comes to official involvement. Some responses state that there is no adequate support, some say it is quite moderate, while some suggest that it is quite generous, and some organizations in involved in scholarships. Therefore, it shows that the government lacks uniformity in the support of CSR in the education sector which tends to change over time.

The underlying strategic objectives driving corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices: Many educational institutions survive on the opinion that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is crucial, despite all the chaos in finance. It is said that a good CSR serves as an asset to maintain their name and generate happiness among students. The people affiliated with the educational institutions feel motivated to work with the corporate citizens. Furthermore, quite a few institutions have felt the need to evolve over and well CSR on a huge scale such as global sustainability and expansion. Things might take a dark turn if the universities can't reach the students when it comes to corporate social responsibility (CSR). An enormous percentage of undergraduate students have no idea about CSR like what exactly it is. All of this has proven the need for proper CSR communication with students. Besides, the ways of teaching and keeping CSR into consideration must be altered.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that the aforementioned points support the notion that the users: College or university reputation can be enhanced greatly by CSR, and social engagement will also be increased. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has a huge impact on educational experiences. Moreover, a grave discrepancy is present among college students in our knowledge of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Business schools also have to reassess their corporate social responsibility (CSR) attitudes. The COVID-19 pandemic has put several obstacles in front of colleges. Still, it has allowed colleges to improve their CSR policies, communicate with others better, and provide some creative input to contribute to the society around them. Besides, several discrepancies are present in the execution and revealing of the college projects. No financial sharing details and no government backing could be some of the main issues that these deficiencies or dropouts could have. The American Educational institution has to look after these deficits.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has escalated massively across all industries, including higher education institutions. While these academic institutions foster the future generation of business people, managers, and professionals, thus making a significant difference to society, they are considered the ones with the most obligation. The COVID-19 pandemic and the

economic challenges posed have thus made the incorporation of Corporate Social obligation (CSR) a crucial aspect in Lebanese colleges. The study thus highlights the most important driving factors to colleges becoming more socially oriented. These establishments further help in the betterment of society and, thus, sometimes become the market leader through integration. However, these universities encounter a myriad of hurdles as listed. Despite this, the outcomes have been quite evident in the enhancement of these establishments' perceptions and reputations. However, the study also faced many limitations necessitating the requirement for further extensive investigation. Alongside this even consider an evaluation of the various Lebanese universities. This examination will benefit in highlighting the various effects of the global health crisis and the initiative taken by these colleges in the realm of University Social Responsibility (USR). The data collected could prove beneficial in the long run to decide the fate of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in higher education. Donation and charity are not the only factors but embedding social responsibility in foundations' value system needs to be the focus rather than giving some donation. The forthcoming generations need to know business ethics and social responsibility as much as they know accounting basics.

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