

# Corporate Social Responsibility in Higher Education: A Study of Some Private Universities in Vietnam

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**ABSTRACT:** Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in education is an essential topic of dedicated researchers in many countries. However, it is a new and luxury topic in Vietnam. In this article, the authors explored CSR in higher education, especially the private universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The paper emphasized what goals, roles, responsibilities of the private universities towards society are and how they influence their members in a system like stakeholders, subordinates, students, and employers are. The research results brought practical values that there is a positive relationship between CSR of the private universities and CSR of these four members.

*Keywords:* Corporate ethics, Education, Social responsibility, Private universities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Guadamillas et al. 2010, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is nowadays recognized as a unique substance applied in many different fields. In education, particularly private universities must demonstrate genuine concern and evidence of long-term enhancement of CSR. CSR of universities is like an organ in a body as it creates an excellent reputation for educational quality that is evaluated by students, employers, subordinates, stakeholders, and so forth. Korschun et al. 2011 said that CSR is a value that organizations can leverage to reinforce relationships among organizational members, along with the organizational structure system. They committed to improving societal well-being through business activities and positive contributions towards members of an organization. Therefore, CSR positively influences relationships among all members. In this paper, we study CSR of the top ten private universities in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Vietnam, to see how these universities are evaluated by stakeholders, subordinates, students, and employers. In particular, we find out what CSR of the universities has done for their stakeholders. In fact, in a system, although the members have their own goals or standards, and those goals or standards are considered their social responsibilities, their goals or standards must have a close relationship to achieve good general results. The paper gives us a new window to study CSR of

private universities compared to CSR of their related members.

This paper is structured as follows: The first part of the article presents the review of CSR in theory and the conceptual model of the CSR in this paper. The second part discusses the findings of qualitative research methods, such as interviews by questionnaire with in-depth questions, secondary data analysis, and the outcomes of quantitative research methods, such as Descriptive, Cronbach Alpha, CFA, and SEM. The last part presents a general conclusion, limitation, and further research.

### 1.1. Literature review and research model CSR definition

CSR of private universities is a commitment to ethical conduct for economic development contribution as well as improving the quality of academic, spiritual, and material life for related members.

The definition of CSR is both complex and complicated. It is complex because of the nature and context of the problems. CSR is a form of business self-regulation (Sheehy 2015). Previously, this term was understood as an internal policy of an organization or a business ethics strategy, but this is no longer accurate because of the development of many international laws and regulations. A whole range of organizations has used their ability to take this term out of being just an initiative or ideal of some indi-

viduals or even a specific business line. The CSR was later regarded as a self-regulating enterprise, which was acknowledged as true in the last years, but later the term evolved. A new light when it is not only voluntary decisions under the level of an individual organization but also a core policy of any organization even at the regional level. It was remarkable that Carroll (1979) eschewed a concise definition in favor of a three-dimensional model, which consists of social responsibility categories, social issues, and philosophies of social responsiveness. Carroll (1979) expanded CSR from traditional economic and legal responsibilities to ethical and charitable duties in response to rising concerns about ethical issues in businesses. He also showed how several competing perspectives (economic responsibility, public responsibility, and social responsiveness) could be incorporated into this framework.

CSR is often associated with CSP (Corporate Social Performance). CSP is known as the theory of Miles (1987). When Miles researched the insurance industry, he recommended concepts from strategic management and organization theory to elicit a detailed midrange theory to explain corporate responsiveness. The two features of responsiveness are the firm's external affairs strategy and design. He called it a function of business exposure because CSP showed the firm's actions and outcomes.

In Vietnam higher education, CSR is shown in the following activities: reporting, publicizing, and explaining to the state agencies and other members about universities' performance of actions and outcomes in accordance with the regulation. Their performance is considered as a commitment towards their members, but the commitment has never been scientifically evaluated. Hence, people are still confused about the CSR's value of private universities in Vietnam. In this view, the main objective of the paper is to see how well the private universities' CSR is committed to their members, then we will recommend a more suitable CSR for private universities.

### 1.2. Conceptual model of the private universities; CSR

The CSR model of private universities in this paper is only limited by the evaluation of stakeholders, subordinates, students, and employers because these factors certainly govern the foundation of the social responsibility of the private universities. The study tested whether four members evaluated the core values, which they received from the CSR of private universities, and whether they evaluated its social performance positively or negatively.

The Conceptualization of the Research Model: CSR of private universities in Vietnam: Based on the study objective, we build hypotheses and the research model as follows. There are:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between university goals and stakeholder expectations.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between university goals and subordinate expectations.
- H3: There is a positive relationship between university goals and student expectations.
- H4: There is a positive relationship between university goals and employer expectations.

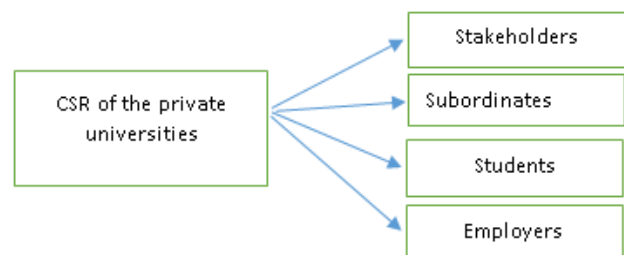


Figure 1. Authors' conceptualization

Three primary objectives evaluated CSR of the private universities: becoming multidisciplinary universities with internationally recognized education, educating the young generation of Vietnam to become global citizens, and providing the highest quality in education and research.

Stakeholders concentrate on how their University performs in its profits, achieving its primary objectives, and following the regulation.

Subordinates think that the University creates an excellent teaching and research environment, good income enough for living, and a fair judgment for them.

Students think that the University creates an excellent learning and research environment, an opportunity to find the right career, and both functional skills and qualifications when graduating for them.

Employers think that newly graduated students from the private University are able to meet the requirements of qualifications, skills, and ethics, and become reliable partners with the University.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1 Sample and procedure

The sample of the top 10 private universities for this study was randomly derived from a survey of dean2020.edu.vn in HCMC. Data constructs including CSR, vision, mission, and strategy of private

universities in a competitive environment were collected via the questionnaires delivered to 100 stakeholders, 100 students, 100 teachers, and 100 employers at ten private universities in HCMC, Vietnam. Data collection was conducted between March to November 2018. The questionnaire was divided into the followings sections:

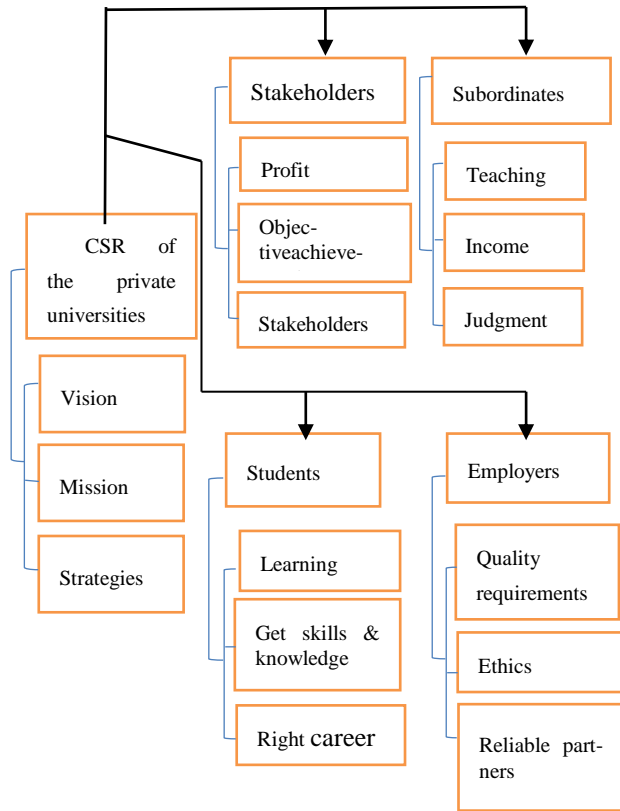


Figure 2. Authors' research aims

2.2 Questionnaire

Table 1. Questionnaire

Items	Samples	Questions
CSRS1	Stakeholders	You think you founded the University for profit.
CSRS2		The goal of your University is always working effectively.
CSRS3		You make a request to force your University to operate in accordance with the regulation and social needs.
CSRU1	Heads of the universities	You think you can make your university to be a multidisciplinary university with internationally recognized education.
CSRU2		You think you can educate the young generation of Vietnam to become global citizens.
CSRU3		You think you can provide the highest quality in education and

Cont.

CSRSUB1	Subordinates (teachers)	research for your students. Your University creates a good teaching and research environment for you.
CSRSUB2		You have a good income enough for living from a teaching career at your university.
CSRSUB3		You think your university judges fairly with what you perform.
CSRST1	Students	Your University provides you a good environment for learning and doing research.
CSRST2		You think that you will have the opportunity to find the right career.
CSRST3		You think your University will help you master the skills and qualifications when you graduate.
CSRE1	Employers	You think that new graduates from the private university meet the requirements of qualifications, skills, and ethics.
CSRE2		You receive the private university request form to declare the numbers of working criteria, position and employment that you need per year.
CSRE3		You think t private university is always a reliable partner.

2.3 Instruments

The quantitative approach utilized in this study does not allow for an analysis of the most profound level of the constructs, it, as a "journey of the facts", so we start investigating how respondents' perceptions about the private universities.

The 20 questions were used to measure CSR's private universities. The questionnaire was first examined and edited by numerous educators. We analyzed the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to measure four factors. Each CSR has four questions. The 20 statements of the questionnaire were measured with a five-point Likert-type scoring system applied to a scale anchored by "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.93 are higher than 0.70, as recommended by Nunnally's (1967).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The results showed that firstly, the stakeholders agree and strongly agree that their goals are sustainable development accounting for 88.5%, work following the regulation accounting for 85.3%, and

must be profitable accounting for 78.2%. Secondly, the heads of the private universities agree and strongly agree that they must build the university to be a multidisciplinary university with internationally recognized education accounting for 71.8%, then provide the highest quality in education and research accounting for 70.1%, and educate the young generation of Vietnam to become global citizens accounting for 55.7%. Thirdly, the subordinates at these universities agree and strongly agree that they create a good teaching and research environment accounting for 68.1%, an income good enough for living accounting for 55.7%, and a fair judgment accounting for 52.5%. Next, the students agree and strongly agree that the university provides a good learning and research environment for them accounting for 62.1%, an opportunity to find the right career accounting for 57.6%, and both good skills and qualifications when graduating accounting for 52%. Finally, the employers agree and strongly agree that they become reliable partners with the university accounting for 67.7%, new graduated students from the private university to meet the requirements of qualifications, skills and ethics accounting for 33.8%, and they agree and strongly agree they receive the private university request form to declare the numbers of working criteria, position and employment that they need per year accounting for 21%.

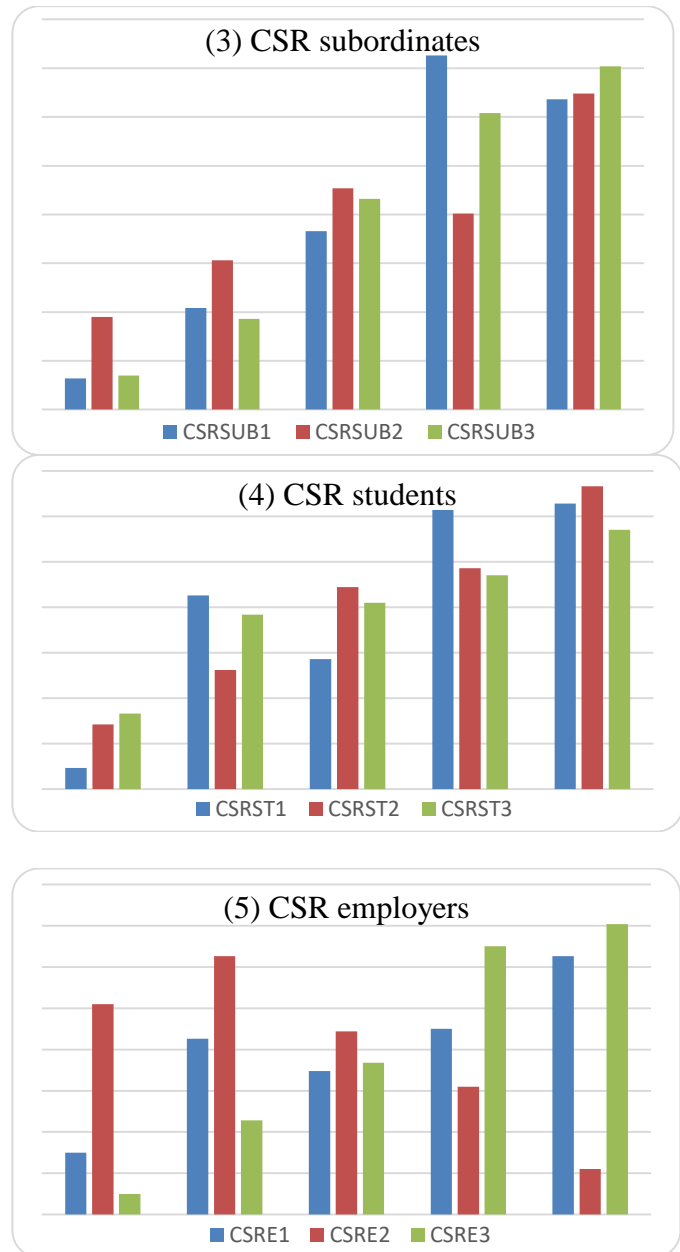
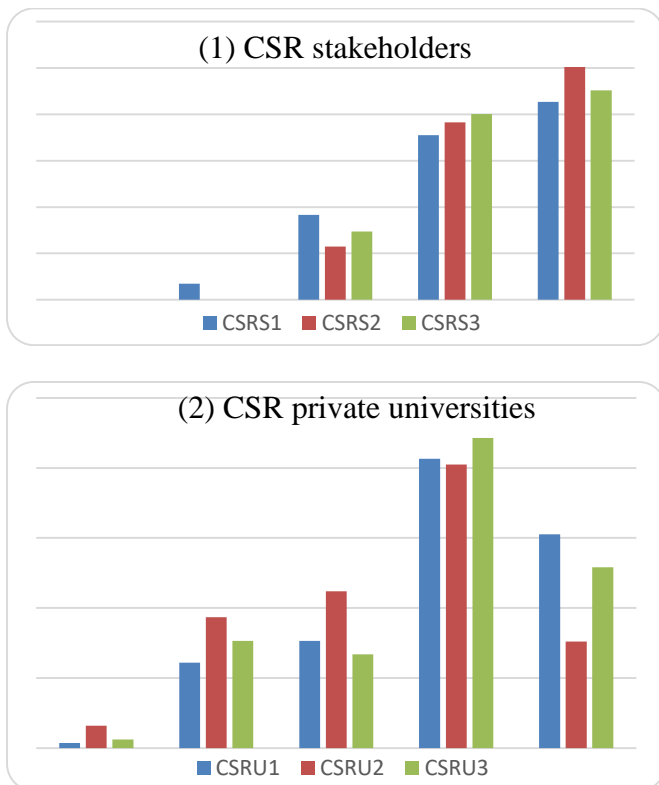


Figure 3. The results of frequencies

The findings showed that Sig. Value of the independent variables are all less than 0.05, so these independent variables have significant to explain the dependent variable, so none of them are excluded. VIF is less than 2, so there are no problems with multicollinearity.

Table 2. The results of coefficients

Model	Unst. Coeff.		Coefficients		Sig.	Collinear	
	B	Std. Er	St. Coe. Beta	T		Tol.	VIF
Const.	-.622	.213		-2.173	0.12		
CSRS	.243	.033	.343	5.387	.000	.823	1.033
CSRSUB	.241	.035	.243	5.439	.000	.890	1.083
CSRST	.214	.034	.296	6.127	.000	.854	1.074
CSRE	.213	.035	.297	6.235	.000	.913	1.093

a. Dependent Variable: CSRU

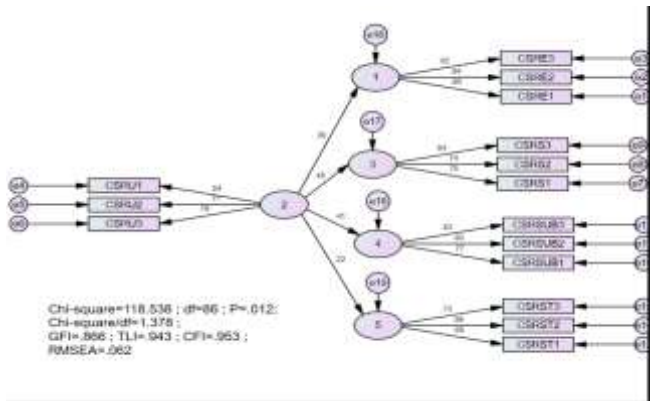


Figure 4. Structural Equation Model

The Estimate stated that CSR of the private university increased by 1, CSR of stakeholders increased to 0.448, CSR of subordinates increased to 0.346, CSR of students increased to 0.78, and CSR of employers increased to 0.418. Also, Sig. in P is less than 0.05, meaning all hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 affect CSR of the private universities.

Table 3. The results of SEM

		Est	S.E.	CR	P	Label
1	<-- 2	.418	.126	3.311	***	
3	<-- 2	.448	.116	3.860	***	
4	<-- 2	.346	.102	3.383	***	
5	<-- 2	.178	.095	3.882	***	
CSRE1	<-- 1	.321	.097	3.343	***	
CSRE2	<-- 1	.469	.096	3.049	***	
CSRE3	<-- 1	.402	.103	5.695	***	
CSRU1	<-- 2	.425	.126	.654	***	
CSRU2	<-- 2	.445	.122	7.753	***	
CSRU3	<-- 2	.435	.126	7.942	***	
CSRS1	<-- 3	.523	.102	.654	***	
CSRS2	<-- 3	.699	.150	6.680	***	
CSRS3	<-- 3	.489	.172	7.017	***	
CSRSUB1	<-- 4	.327	.112	.523	***	
CSRSUB2	<-- 4	.357	.147	7.353	***	
CSRSUB3	<-- 4	.383	.187	7.481	***	
CSRST1	<-- 5	.253	.165	.521	***	
CSRST2	<-- 5	.289	.196	6.748	***	
CSRST3	<-- 5	.261	.150	6.828	***	

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In theory, the results of the measurement model in this study contribute to motivating researchers in the field of behavioral sciences and CSR. The research hypotheses presented in this study are accepted and have significance for the CSR of the relevant subjects. A theoretical model of CSR of private universities can complement the theoretical system in the performance of private universities.

In practical, the research results provide essential information in reviewing CSR for private universities to improve their performance. Firstly, stakeholders need to understand the role of CSR when establishing a private University. When implementing CSR, stakeholders, on the one hand, must increase financial performance and on the other hand, must increase the values of responsibility for education. Secondly, the results show that employers have an important supporting role for universities in the appropriate training model. Finally, the results also present the central part of teachers and students in promoting educational values.

The study was conducted on the top 10 universities in HCMC. The research results showed a positive relationship between the private University's CSR and the related members' CSR in a system. The limitation of this study is the use of convenient sampling methods. Therefore, to generalize research issues on the impact of the private University's CSR on related members' CSR, the subsequent research needs to expand into other universities in other cities in Vietnam.

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