



## **The Place of Universities in the Field of Social Responsibility (A Comparison for Social Responsibility Practices of State and Foundation Universities)\***

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### **Abstract**

This study focuses on the relationship between social responsibility and universities. The place of the universities in the field of social responsibility and its relationship with the understanding of social responsibility, which is an important basis of social development, has been examined within the scope of the comparison of state universities and foundation universities.

Social responsibility activities and practices of universities in Turkey were compared under state and foundation universities category headings. The purpose of this study; to put forward the relations of universities and social responsibility and differences between the state and foundation universities in Turkey on this field.

Within the study in 2019, a questionnaire applied to all academics who work in the Faculty of Communication in all universities in Turkey. With the collected data, that is about social responsibility practices of universities in Turkey and practice differences between the state university and foundation university has been interpreted from the perspective of the mission of universities.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Corporate Social Responsibility**

The Turkish Language Institution defines the concept of responsibility as the responsibility of the person to undertake his or her own behaviour or the consequences of any event within his or her jurisdiction ([www.tdk.gov.tr](http://www.tdk.gov.tr), 2019). The main point in this definition is that one is aware of his / her own behaviors and he / she can perform his / her actions and own the results.

It is possible to express the responsibility by accepting the effects and results of the work or decision made. Both ethically and legally, individuals are expected to assume the consequences and effects of their own behaviour and events within their decisions (Glover, 1970:17). Another definition is to accept the existence of others and respect their values. (Özüpek, 2005:12-13). The common point in all

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these statements is that individuals fully assume the consequences of their decisions or actions and their effects, whether good or bad.

The concept of responsibility has started to socialize and institutionalize over time. The concept of corporate social responsibility was first used in 1953 by Howard R. Bowen in the book "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman". In his book, Bowen argued that businessmen should carry out social responsibility studies in accordance with the values of the society, make decisions with these values and shape their management policies accordingly (Aktan, 2007:12). Thus, social responsibility started to take place in the business world.

The concept of social responsibility, whose origins are based on philanthropic practices in the 19th century, has been used in business for the last thirty years (L'Etang and Pieczka, 2002:157). Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee emphasize that corporate social responsibility is based on voluntarism and that social responsibility is an obligation undertaken to contribute to the welfare of the society by using optional business activities and the resources of the institution (Kotler and Lee, 2008:2-3).

The concept of corporate social responsibility has been transformed since its inception. Initially, social responsibility is defined as the fact that only institutions and organizations make a profit. Today, the institution is defined not only for the legal necessity or for its own interests, but for the benefit and expectations of the society (Yamak, 2007:9).

## **1.2. Corporate Social Responsibility Approaches**

It is possible to divide the understanding of corporate social responsibility into two general frameworks. These; It is the classical approach that considers social responsibility as the only profit of commercial institutions and the modern approach that assumes that the corporation has the responsibility to the stakeholders besides making a profit.

In the classical approach, all kinds of responsibilities except profitability are considered unnecessary since it will create extra expense for the organization. Friedman is the foremost proponent of the classical approach. Friedman stated that, to assume other social responsibilities except legal responsibilities; it will provide less returns to investors and partners, will result in lower wages to employees and force consumers to pay higher prices.

The modern approach emerged because of the shortcomings of the classical approach. The modern approach based on the environment and stakeholders. Contrary to Friedman's view, it is accepted that institutions do not only have responsibilities towards shareholders but also to other groups such as employees, suppliers, customers and the society that the organization interacts with (Coşkun, 2010:49). What is emphasized here is that institutions are considered not only as economic units but also as social units.

It is argued that all kinds of socially responsible behaviors and initiatives to be realized for the society will provide long-term returns and this has a greater importance in terms of corporate existence and sustainability (Özüpek, 2005:38). Failure to understand the expectations of society may disrupt the social balance

between the society and the institution and lead to the exclusion of the institution. Therefore, corporations should take into consideration social expectations as well as commercial expectations.

### **1.3. Stakeholder Concept and Social Responsibility**

Freeman (1963) was the first to define the term stakeholder in terms of the relationship between the institution and consumption. Freeman defined the stakeholder concept as person or any group that affects or is influenced by an organization's achievement of its goals (Freeman, 1999). Similarly, the Baron expresses the concept of stakeholder as the social partners that the institution is in a relationship with, which is affected by the activities of the institution or vice versa (Aktan and Börü, 2007:14). Based on these definitions, all segments that affect each other positively or negatively with the institution, are influenced by each other's decisions and activities and are directly or indirectly in contact with institutions and organizations; people, institutions or structures are considered as stakeholders.

Grunig is defined as a group of people whose stakeholder is linked to the organization, in his book about excellent public relations and communication management. Stakeholders are all individuals and groups affected by all kinds of decisions and activities, policies and objectives of the institution (Grunig, 2005:101). Owners, managers, employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, public administrations etc. On the other hand, corporate social responsibility is considered as the responsibility of the organization towards all segments of both the internal and external environment (Aktan and Börü, 2007:41). Institutions that are in constant interaction with their stakeholders are responsible for all these groups.

To be identified as a stakeholder, a person or group must have the potential to influence or have the potential to be affected. Today's institutions are in complex relations both with the society they live in and with the international environment with increasing speed. Increased communication channels and interaction with various stakeholder groups, changed social expectations. This has forced institutions to engage in a more interactive process with their stakeholders. The ability of institutions to survive is now not only related to good management of economic processes, but also to establishing good and correct relationships with stakeholder groups. Institutions that identify their stakeholders correctly, know them well, are aware of their wishes and expectations, and do the right actions to meet these expectations will find a longer-term presence in the business world and will be more successful in terms of economic gain and profitability than others.

Institutions and organizations that exist in social life just like an individual are now considered as an institutional citizen. This causes institutions to communicate and interact with other people, institutions, groups and environments just like individuals. Stakeholder groups that are directly or indirectly influential on the company's existence and practices and are similarly affected by the company's decisions and practices are vital to the organizations. Although social responsibility becomes a sensibility in line with the developments in both the social and business world, it is very difficult to survive for institutions that do not

act socially towards their stakeholders. In this context, although social responsibility is accepted as sensitivity, it is possible to say that social responsibility should be an integral part of corporate management.

Each institution has a different understanding of social responsibility. This situation changes and shapes according to the physical and social environment of the institutions, culture, legal and economic system and political order etc. In today's world there is a fact that institutions have to accept that every institution has to take into account its stakeholders. This responsibility awareness towards the stakeholders forms the basis of the social responsibility approach.

## **2. Universities and Social Responsibility**

### **2.1. The Concept and the Missions of the University**

The word university comes from the Latin word “universitas”. This word means “all of them” and refers to communities that are independent of each other but have common interests (Antalyalı, 2007:25-26). In French, “université” is defined as an institution that is open to the whole community and teaches all knowledge.

In today's sense, universities have emerged in 11th and 12th century Medieval Europe. Called “Studium Generale” are considered the foundations of a modern university. It is the general name used for the universities of that period. The students who founded the guild were expressed as “universitasscholarium” and the teachers as “universitasmagistrorum et scholarium” (Antalyalı, 2007:26).

Universities are still the information centers of the society, although they have undergone changes both in terms of word and structure over time. Within the information society we live in, universities are considered as networks where universal knowledge is produced and managed (Uçkan, 2006:29).

University, according to Law No. 2547; has a high level of scientific autonomy and public legal personality, conducts high-level education and training, scientific research, publication and consultancy; It is a higher education institution consisting of faculties, institutes, colleges and similar institutions and units (Higher Education Law No. 2547, 1981).

Although the universities have undergone many structural changes, the main mission of the university has been teaching and research since its inception. Changes in every field in a long historical process have led to changes in the concept of the university. Over time, the function of serving the community was added to the mission of universities (Günay, 2004:12).

### **2.2. Social Responsibility and Universities**

When society is described as a community consisting of many intertwined and interacting units, it is seen that universities are one of the most important stakeholders that shape and develop this society. In this context, universities, which undertake important tasks in this context, are socially responsible institutions for providing the development of society. These institutions, which aim to contribute to both the individual and the society, are already fulfilling their basic responsibilities with their education, research and service missions.

The main social responsibility of the university is to take into account the expectations of all its stakeholders and to provide educational services in an ethical and transparent manner; contributing to sustainable development in society with its students, trainers and employees; exhibiting an equitable and fair attitude while realizing its existence goals; to follow the developments in the world and to support the progress of the society in which it is involved; to manage an interactive communication process with its stakeholders and to integrate its services and activities with the needs of the society. In addition to their educational and research functions, universities interact significantly with the society they live in. This interaction also leads to high expectations. Universities produce the latest information to solve global problems and benefit society in this way. They are not only the ones that produce theoretical knowledge but also the utilitarian use of the produced knowledge (Toker and Tat, 2013:40). Universities are both producers of both theoretical and usable knowledge and serve the community in these respects.

University education not only increases students' knowledge but also contributes to individual character development. In this period, creating awareness of social responsibility among students, making them interested in social problems and expecting to produce solutions to social problems will make an important contribution to students. Students who learn their social roles in this way are expected to continue these gains in their future lives. Thus, students will prepare for future adult roles (Koç and Palabıyık, 2012:325). The development of the society is closely related to all personality, character traits and education levels as well as their individual sensitivities.

Universities are valuable institutions of the society, contributing to making the country and the world a better, more developed and more sustainable place. This value is gained by adding value to society. The most effective way of adding value to society is that a socially responsible perspective is embedded in corporate culture and this sensitivity is reflected in all managerial processes and practices.

### **2.3. Social Responsibility and Universities in Turkey**

Considering the universities in Turkey, it is seen that the studies are about producing information and presenting this information to society mostly. In addition, universities are engaged in various social responsibility practices and initiatives on local development in their regions. They try to make positive contributions to the society through projects and practices in all areas from environmental, health, cultural and social life issues to the economy through technological support and scientific information consultancy.

Universities also have applications for students in the field of social responsibility. In recent years, the content of social responsibility and community service in the curriculum is important applications. The universities, which are aware of the fact that the theory is insufficient in this sense, support their activities in this field not only by giving lectures but also by having students practice. On the other hand, clubs and student communities are social responsibility units that act for project implementation at universities.

A popular and important concept of recent years is social entrepreneurship. This concept, which has increasing importance in line with changing social expectations and awareness, attracts the attention of university youth in particular. Although

universities have different applications in this field, it is possible to say that one of their most effective activities is techno-cities that have developed in the last decade. The number of these units is increasing day by day, not only for university students but also for all entrepreneurs who have an idea in the field of social entrepreneurship and many social enterprise projects are being implemented.

Another application of universities in the field of social responsibility is to encourage both students and industry employees and institutions through rewarding. In many universities, there are various social responsibility organizations every year and lots of awards are given to people and institutions for their social responsibility applications. In addition to these awards, competitions for university students are another important social responsibility activity. The project competitions, which have been popular especially for the last 5-6 years, both increase the interest of students in the field of social responsibility and social entrepreneurship and enable them to realize their dreams.

### **3. Research and Findings**

#### **3.1. Scope of Research**

The subject of this research is the place in the area of social responsibility of universities in Turkey. To reveal the concept of social responsibility by comparing the state and foundation universities; to determine the place of academicians and students in social responsibility practices in universities and to investigate the role of universities in the field of social responsibility are other subjects of the study.

The purpose of this study demonstrate and compare social responsibility practices in state and foundation universities in Turkey. In this context, it is aimed to determine whether there is a relationship between the type of university and the importance given to social responsibility practices in universities, and if so, what direction it is.

The universe of this research is academicians who work in all state and foundation universities in Turkey. The sample of the study consisted of academicians who work in the Faculty of Communication in all universities in Turkey.

The study is limited to academicians who work in the Faculty of Communication in Turkey.

Questionnaire method, one of the quantitative research techniques, was used in the study. Since face-to-face communication would be difficult in terms of both time and budget, online survey technique was used.

Purposive sampling method was chosen as one of the non-random sampling methods.

A questionnaire consisting of 22 questions was prepared for the research. Closed-ended question method was used for all questions. open-ended questions were asked to participants in some questions by "other" option

According to current data of Higher Education Institution on April 20, 2019, the total number of universities is 206; the total number of academicians working in universities is 167,901 in Turkey. The research was based on 41 state universities and 19 foundation universities with Faculty of Communication. An online survey

sent to 1837 academicians in total. As a result, the survey was completed with 303 participants.

For the analysis of the data, firstly, the data were subjected to normality test and it was checked whether they had normal distribution or not.

The questionnaire answers entered in SPSS 22 data analysis program. The sigma values of the questions in the questionnaire form were found to be less than 0.05 and the hypothesis that "the answers have a normal distribution" was rejected. For this reason, non-parametric tests were selected in the questionnaire.

In non-parametric tests, Pearson's chi-square test was applied because of the high number of participants (>25).

### **3.2. Research Findings**

303 participants participated in the survey and the data of 274 participants who completed the survey were used. The general frequency analysis with the data collected from the participants is as follows:

64.2% (176 people) of the respondents work in state universities and 35.8% (98 people) work in foundation universities.

57.3% (157 people) of the participants stated that they were involved in any social responsibility project implemented by another person or institution individually. 42.7% (117 people) stated that they were not individually involved in any social responsibility project implemented by another person or institution.

31.4% (86 people) of the participants implemented any social responsibility project they had planned. 68.6% (188 people) did not implement any social responsibility projects they planned.

The ratio of social responsibility projects in which the participants are involved or implemented are as follows; 16.8% (46) on environment, 19.7% (54) on culture and art, 33.2% (91) on education, 11.3% (31) on health, 4.7% (13) on sports, 30.3% (83) on social life, 3.3% (9) on regional development.

67.5% (185 people) of the participants stated that there is a social responsibility club or a club-like organization that deals with social responsibility projects in their university. 6.2% (17 people) stated that there is no social responsibility club or club-like organization that deals with social responsibility projects in their university. 26.3% (72 people) stated that they did not have any information about this subject.

19.3% (53 people) of the participants stated that the number of student members of the club or similar structure which conducts social responsibility studies of their universities is less than 100 people. 10.6% (29 people) stated that the number of students in these structures was more than 100. 70.1% (274 people) stated that they did not have any information about this subject.

63.5% (174 people) of the participants stated that their universities have implemented social responsibility projects planned by their team. 3.6% (10 people) stated that their universities did not implement social responsibility

projects planned by their team. 32.8% (90 people) stated that they did not have any information about this subject.

5.8% of the participants (16 people) stated that the maximum number of projects prepared by their own team in a year was 5. 9.5% (26 people) stated that the number of these projects was between 5-10, 10.6% (29 people) stated that the number of these projects was more than 10. 37.6% of the participants (103 people) stated that they did not have any information about this subject.

The participants stated the ratio of the projects implemented by their own team of universities according to the subjects as follows; 39.8 (109 people) of the projects are environmental-related, 35.4% (97 people) of culture and arts, 46.7% (128 people) of education, 30.7% (84 people) of health-related, 22.3% (61 people) on sports, 45.6% (125 people) on social topics, 13.1% (36 people) on regional development, 0.4% (1 person) on science.

55.5% (152 people) of the participants stated that their universities collaborated with other institutions while implementing social responsibility projects planned by their own team. 0.4% (1 person) stated that they did not cooperate with other institutions. 44.2% (121) of them stated that they do not have any information about this subject.

62.4% of the respondents (171 people) stated that the social responsibility projects planned or implemented by other institutions were supported by their universities. 2.9% (8 people) stated that social responsibility projects planned or implemented by other institutions were not supported by their universities. 34.7% (95 people) stated that they did not have any information about the subject.

According to the answers of the participants, the type and ratio of the institutions supported or cooperated by universities in social responsibility projects are as follows; 63.5% (174 people) were NGOs, 52.6% (144 people) were Local Authorities; 16.8% (46 people) are Local Private Businesses; 85.8% (235 people) are National Private Enterprises, 10.6% (29 people) are International Companies, 44.9% (123 people) are Educational Institutions, 0.4% (1 person) is International Institutions. With the "Other" option, 0.4% (1 person) of the respondents stated that they cooperated with Volunteers.

20.1 (55 people) of the participants stated that their university has allocated a special budget for social responsibility activities annually. 6.2% (17 people) stated that their universities do not allocate a special budget for social responsibility activities annually. 73.7% (202 people) stated that they did not have any information about the subject.

According to the answers of the participants, the annual budget average allocated to the social responsibility studies of their university is as follows; 0.4% (1 person) 3001-6000 TL, 0.4% (1 person) 6001-9000 TL, 1.8% (5 people) 9001-12000 TL, 17.5% of the participants (48 people) stated that they did not have any information about the subject.

87.2% (239 people) of the participants stated that they guide and encourage their students to implement social responsibility projects. 12.8% (35 people) said that they did not do anything about guiding and encouraging them.

83.6% (229 people) of the participants stated that social responsibility projects were prepared by students in their universities. 1.1% (3 people) stated that social responsibility projects were not prepared by students in their universities. 15.3% of the participants (42 people) stated that they did not have any information about the subject.

70.1% of the participants (192 people) stated that they have implemented social responsibility projects prepared by the students in their universities. 2.2% (6 people) stated that students in their universities did not implement social responsibility projects. 11.3% (31 people) stated that they did not have any information about the subject.

9.92% (27 people) of the respondents stated that their universities financially supported the students in implementing their social responsibility projects. 30.7% (84 people) stated that they officially let them use the name of the institution. 35% (96 people) said that they both provided financial support and allowed them to benefit from the name of the institution. 3.3% of the participants (3 people) stated that they did not have any information about the subject. 5.5% (15 people) of the participants who chose the "other" option stated that the students in their universities provided moral support and individual counselling while implementing their own social responsibility projects. 0.4% (1 person) stated that they provided space support. 0.4% (1 person) stated that they provided sponsorship and organization support. 0.4% (1 person) stated that they evaluated social responsibility projects within the scope of the course.

56.9% of the respondents (156 people) stated that they included their students in the social responsibility projects and activities of their universities. 1.1% (3 people) stated that they did not include their students in these activities. 42% (115 people) stated that they did not have any information about the subject.

46.4% of the participants (127 people) stated that they assigned their students to find the idea of the project in their social responsibility projects and activities. 39.4% (108 people) stated that they assigned the task of preparing and planning project files. 47.1% (129 people) stated that they assigned the task of project implementation. 42.3% (116 people) stated that they were actively involved in projects prepared by the management. 0.4% (1 person) of the participants who chose the "other" option stated that they assigned to represent the school.

### **3.3. Comparison of Social Responsibility Practices in State Universities and Foundation Universities in Turkey**

Of the 274 respondents, 176 (64.2%) were employed in public universities and 98 (35.8%) were employed in foundation universities. In the following, the data obtained from these participants were interpreted according to frequency analysis, crosstables and Chi-Square test analysis.

According to the results of the research, it is seen that academicians who have been working for a long time in foundation universities have realized more social responsibility projects than academicians in state universities.

If a general assessment is made, it can be said that most projects are carried out on social issues and education areas.

There was no relationship between the type of university and the participation in the social responsibility project of another institution. There was a significant relationship between the type of university and the social responsibility projects that academicians individually prepared. The ratio of academicians working at foundation universities to realize their individual projects is higher than the ratio of academicians working at state universities to realize their individual projects. The reasons why this ratio is higher in foundation universities are as follows: the fact that it has the power to allocate more budgets, the desire to gain prestige, the desire to be preferred and the excess of practical applications especially within the vocational schools.

The area in which academicians are most involved in social responsibility and the project implementation is the field of education with more than 50%. Again, in both university types, these areas are followed by social issues and culture and art fields in order of high ratio. Only the applications in the field of environment in the foundation universities are equal to the ratio of the applications in the field of culture and art. The rate of environmental practices in state university is low.

In the research, a significant relationship was found between the type of university and the presence of clubs working in the field of social responsibility in the universities. It can be concluded that the fact that foundation universities have more financial income sources and give more importance to practical applications cause the number of clubs working in the field of social responsibility to be higher than that of state universities.

In both universities, there was no difference between the number of members of these clubs. This can be interpreted as the students' level of interest in the subject is similar.

It was determined that social responsibility projects were carried out by the university's own team in both types of universities and there was no difference between them. Based on this result, it is possible to say that both universities are active in the field of social responsibility and their level of interest is similar.

According to the results of the research, there is no significant relationship between the type of university and the number of social responsibility projects carried out by the university's own team during the year. It is observed that the level of knowledge of academicians working in both universities is less than 50%. This means that academicians working in universities, in general, are not aware of university activities.

In both types of universities, it is seen that the university has carried out the most projects in the fields of education and social issues by its own team. It can be said that there is more interest in these fields, considering the fact that academicians are more focused on these issues individually.

There is no significant relationship between the types of universities in terms of whether or not the universities cooperate with other institutions while carrying out their own projects. It is seen that both university types cooperate with other institutions and organizations while carrying out social responsibility projects. In both types of universities, the most collaborated institutions are non-

governmental organizations, local governments and educational institutions, respectively.

There is a significant relationship between the type of university and the allocation of special budgets for social responsibility studies annually. When the crosstables are examined, it is seen that the rate of allocating a special budget for social responsibility projects annually is higher in foundation universities than in public universities. This can be explained by the fact that the financial income of the foundation universities is higher. In addition, it is possible to say that more attention is given to such studies aimed at gaining prestige and increasing the level of preference of students.

There is no significant relationship between the budget allocated to social responsibility studies and the type of university. When cross tables are examined, it is seen that the level of knowledge of academicians on the subject is very low. 96.2% of academicians in state universities and 79.3% of academicians in foundation universities are uninformed about the subject.

Both universities direct and encourage their students to carry out social responsibility projects. In this direction, it was seen that social responsibility projects were prepared on a file basis by the students at both universities and there was no difference between them. Similarly, there was no difference in the implementation of social responsibility projects by the students. It is seen that both university students have implemented similar amount of projects.

In the implementation of social responsibility projects of the students in state universities, it is seen that the support given by the university is to benefit formally from the name of the institution. In the foundation university, it is seen that there is both financial support and benefiting from the name of the institution.

In both types of universities, it is seen that students are included in the social responsibility projects of the institution at a rate of more than 50%. There was no significant difference between the two universities in this subject. The tasks assigned to students in these projects are approximately equal in both types of universities and these are as follows: Generating project idea, preparing project file - planning, implementing the project, taking active roles in the projects prepared by the management. In this respect, it is possible to say that students are involved in every phase of the project while participating in a social responsibility project. This situation can be interpreted as the importance given by universities to the students' experience in this field and at every stage of the project.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As a result of this study comparing the social responsibility practices of state universities and foundation universities in Turkey, the following results are seen; In both types of the university; social responsibility projects are carried out. The importance is given to social responsibility and students' interest in this field are similar. Academics encourage students to implement social responsibility projects. Universities cooperate with other institutions. Students take part in similar tasks. The applications are carried out in similar ways.

According to the results of the analysis obtained from the research data, the points that stand out in the comparison of state and foundation universities can be summarized as follows: The rate of academicians working in foundation universities to realize their own projects is higher than academicians in state universities. It was seen that most of the projects implemented by academicians were related to education and social issues. Social responsibility projects prepared by the institution in both university types are also related to these two areas. The existence of clubs related to social responsibility is higher in foundation universities than in state universities. The awareness of the number of social responsibility projects realized by universities is quite low in both types of universities. It is seen that while implementing social responsibility projects in both university types, cooperation with other institutions and organizations has been realized. Non-governmental organizations and educational institutions are the most cooperated institutions for both types of universities. The rate of foundation universities to allocate a special budget annually to social responsibility projects is higher than that of state universities. In both universities, students are involved in social responsibility projects and practices carried out in similar ways at every stage of the project from planning to implementation.

Although the studies on social responsibility have been increasing day by day, the social responsibility practices carried out with the university youth so far have not yet reached an adequate level. Even though the corporate social responsibility projects are generally carried out by institutions and organizations, the university youth, who have the power to create a great synergy by being included in these projects, have not achieved the position they deserve in this field. Although it is accepted that university students are an important social stakeholder for institutions, it is possible to say that their power in the field of social responsibility has not yet been fully discovered. In fact, it is observed that university youth has a great potential in the field of social responsibility and this potential has just been realized.

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