Article

CSR In Business School: Faculty's Perception of University/College Social Responsibility (USR) Initiatives in Nepal

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Abstract:

Universities and colleges must recognise that, in pursuit of their primary teaching and research goals, they must also consider their obligations to society and the environment. However, a detailed investigation of how faculties perceive their college/university social responsibility is still lacking. This research investigates the perceptions of faculty members in business schools regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR) endeavours. Gender, age, income, marital status, years of experience and education are the demographic variables considered in the study. The study was conducted among 298 faculty members from all over Nepal. The findings reveal that faculties generally have favourable attitudes towards their university social responsibility initiatives. At the same time, female faculty generally have more positive attitudes towards university social responsibility initiatives in Nepal than their male counterparts. Furthermore, the results demonstrate no significant difference in CSR perception among faculty members based on their length of service, income, age, education and marital status. The insights gained in this chapter shed light on how their staff perceive CSR within universities and colleges, offering a valuable starting point for defining or re-evaluating strategies related to CSR in business school settings.

Keywords: *Corporate social responsibility, Perception, faculties, sustainability, ethical decision making.*

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Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives have recently gained significant prominence as businesses recognise their responsibility to contribute positively to society and the environment (Matten & Moon, 2020). Given the financial crises, scandals, and the continuously intensifying competitive landscape, it has become essential for all organisations to engage in activities related to the environment, society and ethics (Kharabsheh, 2023; Ko, 2023). As organisations actively participate in CSR initiatives, the employees also engage in activities beyond their job responsibilities to contribute to their organisation's success and sustainability (Afridi, 2020). Businesses acting responsibly for a broader set of stakeholders and also for society is called CSR (Wang et al., 2016). This trend has extended to colleges and universities, with many institutions incorporating CSR initiatives into their academic and operational frameworks.

In recent years, the concept of CSR in academic institutions has garnered increasing attention, highlighting a shift in how universities are perceived in terms of their broader societal contributions. Traditionally, universities have been bastions of education and research, but their role has evolved to encompass a more active participation in social development and economic growth (Parsons, 2014). Universities began engaging in CSR endeavours by voluntarily incorporating social activities into their core policies and social performance metrics, thus aligning their key performance indicators with social responsibility goals (Gray, 2010). Many academicians believe that CSR should be strategically integrated into the very infrastructure of the universities, aligning strategy and resources to maximise their societal impact (Hayter & Cahoy, 2018). This change has led to a growing interest in understanding how these CSR initiatives are perceived by those within these institutions, particularly the faculty. As key stakeholders in the academic landscape, professors play a crucial role in shaping and implementing university policies and initiatives. Their perception of CSR efforts can significantly influence the effectiveness and direction of these programs.

However, the perception of CSR initiatives among university faculty is not monolithic and may vary based on several demographic factors. This study explores how age, gender, years of experience, income, and marital status influence professors' viewpoints on university-led CSR activities. This adds a new dimension to the existing literature, as earlier investigations focused on how employees perceive CSR, mostly in Western countries or within the setting of developed nations (Rupp et al., 2013). Very few studies have been conducted in underdeveloped economies like Nepal. Understanding these demographic influences is essential for developing more targeted and effective CSR strategies within academic settings. It helps create a more inclusive and responsive approach that resonates with the diverse needs and perspectives of the faculty. By exploring these demographic variables, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on CSR in higher education, offering insights into how universities can better align their social responsibility efforts with the expectations and values of their academic staff.

Literature Review

CSR in universities is an evolving concept that reflects the institution's commitment to positively impacting society and the environment. They lead research and innovation and encourage community involvement in sustainable development (Iqbal et al., 2022). As influential societal entities, universities increasingly recognise their role in contributing to the greater good beyond academic pursuits. CSR initiatives in universities encompass a wide range of activities, including sustainable campus practices, community engagement, ethical research practices, and fostering a culture of social responsibility among students and faculty. These efforts enhance the university's reputation and instil values of sustainability, ethics, and social consciousness in the next generation of leaders and citizens (Nejati, 2011). Moreover, CSR in universities aligns with the broader global goals of sustainability and social development, making higher education institutions key players in driving positive change on a societal level.

Professors play a pivotal role in promoting CSR within universities. As educators and thought leaders, they can instil CSR values and principles in their students, influencing the future generation of professionals and leaders (Singh, 2018). Professors can integrate CSR concepts into their courses, encouraging critical thinking and ethical decision-making. They

can also engage in research that addresses societal and environmental challenges, contributing to the university's CSR initiatives. Furthermore, professors can lead by example through their research practices, commitment to ethical conduct, and involvement in community outreach and sustainability efforts. Professors catalyse CSR awareness and action within the university ecosystem, fostering a culture of responsibility and social consciousness among students and colleagues.

Many professors view CSR as aligning academic institutions with broader societal and environmental goals. They see it as an opportunity to integrate real-world issues into their teaching, fostering a sense of purpose and social responsibility among students (Stadler et al., 2017). Additionally, professors engaged in CSR-related research often find that it enhances the relevance and impact of their work, leading to meaningful contributions to addressing pressing global challenges. However, challenges in balancing traditional academic pursuits with CSR activities may arise, leading to workload and resource allocation concerns.

CSR: The concept of social responsibility is connected with Bowen, often called the "father of CSR theory". Bowen's work laid the foundation for contemporary discussions on CSR (Bowen, 1953). Carroll's (1979) conceptual framework for CSR has significantly shaped the understanding of CSR in contemporary times. In his work, Carol outlined a comprehensive definition of CSR encompassing the company's various responsibilities towards society. These responsibilities can be grouped into four categories: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary. CSR is frequently seen as a self-regulatory strategy integrated into the operational frameworks of corporations and entities (Khanal, 2023). Engaging in CSR initiatives produces favourable effects on an organisation's performance, including financial and non-financial aspects (Javed et al., 2020; Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). CSR is perceived as a sign of moral identity, and increasingly, businesses have begun to focus on CSR matters and social responsibility concerns (Roberts, 2003; Zhang & Li, 2021).

CSR in Higher Education: CSR in higher education involves promoting and putting into practice a collection of principles, both broad and specific values, designed to address the educational and societal issues faced by the community through four different processes: teaching, management, research and extension. University Social Responsibility (USR), the academic counterpart to CSR, is a formal commitment by academic institutions to engage in activities that contribute positively to society, various stakeholders and the community (Gerholz & Heinemann, 2015). USR acts as a link between inside and outside stakeholders (Ali et al., 2020). USR goes beyond the traditional role of universities in teaching and research and extends into the realm of social impact. It involves universities proactively addressing pressing societal issues, promoting sustainability, and fostering community development. This can encompass various initiatives, including community outreach programs, environmental sustainability efforts, educational partnerships, and research projects that address critical societal challenges (Vasquez et al., 2015). By embracing USR, academic institutions can play a pivotal role in creating a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world while enriching their students' educational experience by connecting theory with real-world practice. To establish a clear context, it is crucial to define CSR in the context of higher education. In academia, CSR encompasses efforts made by colleges and universities to integrate social and environmental concerns into their core missions, including teaching, research, and community engagement. These initiatives can include sustainable campus practices, ethical investment strategies, and curriculum development that incorporates CSR principles. As Universities and Colleges play a pivotal role in shaping the social responsibility mindset of young people, their influence extends significantly to the communities they engage with (Söderbaum, 2009). Universities and Colleges are anticipated to play a crucial role in realising the 17 Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) outlined in the 2030 UN Agenda (De Lorio et al., 2022). As a result, universities have incorporated education on CSR and sustainability (Gorski et al., 2017). Not only are they incorporating CSR and Business ethics in their curriculum, but they are also actively engaging in CSR-related activities. The social responsibility of universities becomes immediately relevant when the theoretical assumptions taught in the classroom are connected to the real world outside. The linkage fosters a more authentic and dynamic relationship

between students' academic readings and the society of which they are a part. As the intricacies of higher education operations increasingly intersect with societal interests, higher education institutions face growing pressure to engage in responsible practices. Responsible practices within higher education contribute to the well-being of stakeholders and the public and serve as a long-term value proposition for the institution itself (Asemah, 2013).

The primary reason for advocating CSR initiatives within universities is rooted in the belief that education plays a pivotal role in students' moral and ethical development and that today's students will eventually assume leadership positions as top managers and policymakers in the future (Gates, 2018). Business schools, in particular, face an increasingly significant responsibility to graduate individuals who demonstrate ethical, transparent, and responsible behaviour and promote ethically sound practices when they enter or establish a business (Wymer & Rundle-Thiele, 2017).

Faculty Perceptions towards CSR Initiatives: Perceived CSR refers to how employees perceive and view CSR initiatives and engagements undertaken by an organisation (Akremi et al., 2018). Faculty members are the employees of a university/college involved in teaching, research and various academic activities within an institution. Employees' perception of CSR impacts their actions, developing favourable or unfavourable attitudes depending on their organisation's CSR initiatives (Stites & Michael, 2011; Gond et al., 2017). Many studies show the positive effects on institutions and employees who want to work for institutions engaged in CSR activities (Glavas, 2009). While actual CSR is important, employee's perception of these efforts can influence their engagement, loyalty, and overall well-being within an organisation (Rupp, 2013). Employees are always at the centre of academic research because several studies show the relationship between CSR perceptions and employee attitudes (Shen & Zhu, 2011).

Professors and Educators, in their role as architects of young minds, bear the heavy duty of guiding and instructing the upcoming generations (Gottardello & Pàmies, 2019). This occupation has a long-standing history and consistently holds a significant position in human history. Faculty and professors are valuable university employees who contribute their expertise and knowledge to the academic community. Faculties view these CSR initiatives as essential steps toward creating socially responsible future leaders, aligning with the values of many business schools. Even though there is recent compelling evidence regarding how employees' views of CSR can affect various job-related results, there has been a noticeable absence of research on how CSR impacts the attitudes and behaviours of faculty members.

CSR Perception and Demographic Variables: Employees' CSR perception and demographics are supported by stakeholder theory and ethical making theory. Stakeholder theory describes organisations' responsibilities to various stakeholders, including employees and shareholders (Voegeli & Finger, 2021). Regarding employee perception of CSR, this theory underscores the significance of considering their diverse demographics (Andre, 2013). Employees from different age groups, genders, educational backgrounds, and cultural settings may hold distinct values and expectations regarding CSR initiatives. Recognising and accommodating these differences is essential for organisations seeking to foster a more inclusive and engaged workforce through CSR efforts. Companies can enhance their overall reputation and social impact by aligning CSR practices with employee's demographic-specific concerns and preferences (Soni & Mehta, 2023).

Ethical decision-making theory focuses on how individuals make moral judgments and choices. In the context of CSR, this theory emphasises that employees' demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, education, and cultural background, can influence their ethical perspectives and perceptions of a company's CSR efforts (Rest, 1986; Cheah et al., 2011). For instance, younger employees may have more progressive ethical views, while those from diverse cultural backgrounds may interpret CSR actions differently based on their cultural norms. Understanding these demographic nuances in ethical decision-making is crucial for organisations aiming to implement CSR initiatives that resonate with their employee's diverse values and ethical considerations, ultimately fostering a more ethical and socially responsible workplace.

Gunawan and Putra (2014) indicated that elements related to demographics, such as age, gender, educational background, and professional experience, exert a noteworthy influence on how employees perceive CSR. Hur et al. (2015) conducted a study examining how gender influences the way stakeholders perceive social responsibility. Their research found that, in contrast to men, female employees exhibited a more favourable view of CSR. In line with that, another study found that females value CSR more than males (Titko et al., 2021). The presence of female directors on the board could contribute to increased emphasis on CSR (Nwude & Nwedu, 2021). Ali et al. (2010) show a positive correlation between age and stakeholder's perception of CSR. The older generation places greater importance on CSR than the younger generation (Titko et al., 2021). Another study by Haski-Leventhal et al. (2015) demonstrated that older students favour corporate social responsibility (CSR) more than the younger group's perceptions. Another study by Roberts (1996) also shows that income and economic status positively correlate with CSR perception. A study by Diamantopoulos et al. (2023) shows a positive relationship between education level and perception of CSR.

Objectives

1. To investigate the perceptions of faculties in the Business School regarding CSR activities

2. Do gender, age, income, education, and years of experience influence the perceptions of faculties towards CSR activities?

Research Methodology

Data collection process: A purposive sampling method was implemented to select the faculty respondents, and a questionnaire was distributed to faculty members from different Business schools in Nepal. 298 filled forms were received. Information about gender, age, income, education, and years of experience was collected from faculty members.

Research Instrument: The study uses 3-item scale adjusted by Wagner et al. (2009) and Hur et al. (2016) to measure faculty perception of CSR. This scale was utilised in various research studies (Vlachos et al., 2014; Ko et al., 2017) to measure the perception

of CSR. The initial part of the survey comprised questions concerning the participants' demographic details, such as their gender, age, education, income, and the number of years they have worked. The subsequent part of the survey contained a rating scale used to assess how faculty members perceive the CSR initiatives of the Business school. The reliability of the scale is 0.841. The English version of the questionnaire was used for data collection. Upon first contact with a small group of respondents, it was determined that they understood the questions adequately; therefore, a back-translation process was not necessary.

Data Analysis

ANOVA was utilised to analyse variations in faculty's perceptions of CSR initiatives based on different demographic factors. Subsequently, a post hoc test using the Least Square Difference (LSD), as shown in Table 3, was conducted following the ANOVA. Table 1 presents the aggregate mean score of the faculty's perceptions of CSR initiatives, segmented by demographic categories such as marital status, education, gender, age, experience, and monthly income. After calculating the mean scores for perceptions of CSR initiatives across these demographics, ANOVA was employed again to compare the overall mean scores of faculty's perceptions of CSR initiatives within each demographic variable's specific groups.

Table 1: Mean score of faculty perception towards CSR across the Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable		N	CSR		
			Mean Score	Mean Total	S. D
Gender	Male	174	3.87	4.13	0.83
	Female	120	4.50		0.56
	Other	4	4.42		0.42
Years of Experience	0-5 years	101	4.01	4.13	0.91
	6-10 years	74	4.13		0.74
	11-15 years	59	4.22		0.79
	15 years above	64	4.24		0.59
Age	20-25	50	3.97	4.130	0.93
	26-30	59	4.30		0.64
	31-35	86	4.07		0.81
	36-40	59	4.15		0.82
	Above 40	44	4.19		0.67

Education	Bachelor	37	4.22	4.13	0.13
	Master	242	4.17		0.05
	PhD	19	3.89		0.16
Marital Status	Single	105	4.05	4.13	0.87
	Married	186	4.16		0.75
	Other	7	4.48		0.54
Income Level	Below Rs. 30,000	24	4.15		0.67
	Rs. 30,001-45000	54	4.22		0.76
	Rs. 45001-60000	108	4.11		0.85
	Rs. 60001-75000	67	4.03		0.81
	Rs. Above 75000	45	4.20		0.69

Table 2: ANOVA of Faculty's perception towards CSR across Demographic variables

Demographic Variable	Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Score	F-value	p-value
Gender	Between Groups	28.54	2	14.27	27.06	0.000
	Within Groups	155.57	295	0.53		
	Total	94.540	297			
Years of Experience	Between Groups	2.78	3	0.074	1.504	0.214
	Within Groups	181.34	294	0.539		
	Total	184.12	297			
Age	Between Groups	3.51	4	0.878	1.424	0.226
	Within Groups	180.60	293	0.616		
	Total	184.11	297			
Education	Between Groups	1.336	2	0.668	1.078	0.342
	Within Groups	182.782	295	0.620		
	Total	184.118	297			
Marital Status	Between Groups	1.778	2	0.889	1.438	0.239
	Within Groups	182.341	295	0.618		
	Total	184.118	297			
Income Level	Between Groups	1.266	4	.317	0.507	0.730
	Within Groups	182.852	293	.624		
	Total	184.118	297			

Table 3: Post-Hoc Tests for Multiple comparisons applying Least Square Difference (LSD)

			Mean Difference		
	(I) Exp	(J) Exp	(I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Experience	0-5 years	6-10 years	-.11623	.12017	.334
		11-15 years	-.21044	.12869	.103
		15 Years above	-.23489	.12548	.062
	6-10 years	0-5 years	.11623	.12017	.334
		11-15 years	-.09421	.13707	.492
		15 Years above	-.11867	.13406	.377
	11-15 years	0-5 years	.21044	.12869	.103
		6-10 years	.09421	.13707	.492
		15 Years above	-.02445	.14174	.863
	15 Years above	0-5 years	.23489	.12548	.062
		6-10 years	.11867	.13406	.377
		11-15 years	.02445	.14174	.863
Age	20-25	26-30	-.33277*	.15092	.028
		31-35	-.10310	.13963	.461
		36-40	-.18023	.15092	.233
		Above 40	-.22273	.16229	.171
	26-30	20-25	.33277*	.15092	.028
		31-35	.22967	.13272	.085
		36-40	.15254	.14455	.292
		Above 40	.11004	.15639	.482
	31-35	20-25	.10310	.13963	.461
		26-30	-.22967	.13272	.085
		36-40	-.07713	.13272	.562
		Above 40	-.11963	.14552	.412
	36-40	20-25	.18023	.15092	.233
		26-30	-.15254	.14455	.292
		31-35	.07713	.13272	.562
		Above 40	-.04250	.15639	.786
	Above 40	20-25	.22273	.16229	.171
		26-30	-.11004	.15639	.482
		31-35	.11963	.14552	.412
		36-40	.04250	.15639	.786
Gender	Male	Female	-.63027*	.08617	.000
		Other	-.54693	.36725	.137
	Female	Male	.63027*	.08617	.000
		Other	.08333	.36910	.822
	Other	Male	.54693	.36725	.137
		Female	-.08333	.36910	.822
Education	Bachelor	Master	.07985	.13895	.566
		PhD	.32148	.22216	.149
	Master	Bachelor	-.07985	.13895	.566
		PhD	.24163	.18754	.199
	PhD	Bachelor	-.32148	.22216	.149
		Master	-.24163	.18754	.199

			Mean Diff	Std Error	Sig
Marital Status	Single	Married	-.11726	.09597	.223
		Other	-.42857	.30690	.164
	Married	Single	.11726	.09597	.223
		Other	-.31132	.30269	.305
	Other	Single	.42857	.30690	.164
		Married	.31132	.30269	.305
Income Level	Below Rs. 30,000	Rs. 30,001-45000	-.06327	.19380	.744
		Rs. 45001-60000	.03858	.17827	.829
		Rs. 60001-75000	.11795	.18793	.531
		Rs. Above 75000	-.04722	.19968	.813
	Rs. 30,001-45000	Below Rs. 30,000	.06327	.19380	.744
		Rs. 45001-60000	.10185	.13166	.440
		Rs. 60001-75000	.18122	.14447	.211
		Rs. Above 75000	.01605	.15945	.920
	Rs. 45001-60000	Below Rs. 30,000	-.03858	.17827	.829
		Rs. 30,001-45000	-.10185	.13166	.440
		Rs. 60001-75000	.07937	.12285	.519
		Rs. Above 75000	-.08580	.14017	.541
	Rs. 60001-75000	Below Rs. 30,000	-.11795	.18793	.531
		Rs. 30,001-45000	-.18122	.14447	.211
		Rs. 45001-60000	-.07937	.12285	.519
		Rs. Above 75000	-.16517	.15226	.279
	Rs. Above 75000	Below Rs. 30,000	.04722	.19968	.813
		Rs. 30,001-45000	-.01605	.15945	.920
		Rs. 45001-60000	.08580	.14017	.541
		Rs. 60001-75000	.16517	.15226	.279

Age: The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Gender: The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Results and Discussions

Our study estimated the mean scores of faculty members' perceptions towards CSR based on demographic variables, specifically age, gender, marital status, education, income and years of experience. This study found that faculty members generally have favourable perceptions towards CSR. The analysis revealed several other key insights:

Age-Related Differences in CSR Perception

The data indicated notable differences in CSR perceptions across various age groups. Faculty members aged 26-30 showed a significantly more favourable attitude towards CSR initiatives (mean score of 4.30) than those in the 20-25 age group (mean score of 3.97). On the other hand, faculty members above 40 exhibited a slightly higher perception score (mean score of 4.19) compared to the 31-35 age group (mean score of 4.07), indicating a nuanced understanding of CSR's role and impact in academic settings. Different age groups perceive CSR differently because these CSR initiatives cater to the emotional needs and goals that become more important as people perceive their remaining time decreases (Wisse et al., 2015).

Gender Dynamics and CSR Perception

Consistent with previous studies, female faculty members generally exhibited a more positive attitude towards CSR (mean score of 4.50) than male counterparts (mean score of 3.87). This aligns with the broader literature indicating women's greater inclination towards social and environmental issues (Lämsä et al., 2008). The significant p-value in the ANOVA analysis for gender further validates these differences. Incorporating more women into corporate environments has been linked to a boost in workplace philanthropy. Additionally, feminine characteristics like empathy and considerate financial decision-making are particularly beneficial in corporate social responsibility roles (Leslie et al., 2013). Female professors may be more inclined to support and engage in CSR initiatives, as research suggests that women, on average, tend to have a greater focus on social and environmental issues and may be more motivated by values related to sustainability and social responsibility (Calabrese et al., 2016).

Marital Status and CSR perception

The analysis indicated that marital status had a minimal impact on CSR perceptions. Both married and unmarried faculty members displayed similar attitudes towards CSR, suggesting that personal domestic circumstances influence professional views

regarding CSR less. A study by Hegde and Mishra (2019) showed that married CEOs tend to have considerably higher ratings on a well-known CSR Index.

Income and CSR Perception

The data from Table 2, as analysed through ANOVA, indicated no notable difference in the perceptions of faculties regarding CSR initiatives among the five different income groups (F= 0.570; P=0.370). This research contrasts with the finding that income can influence a person's readiness to engage in actions that benefit others (Çarkoğlu & Kentmen-Çin, 2015). Income is crucial in determining an employee's ability to meet fundamental needs (Diener et al., 1993). Consequently, lower-income employees might struggle to fully align with their organisation, preoccupied with their financial challenges. In contrast, those earning more can comfortably address their necessities, allowing them to focus less on financial worries and more on fulfilling higher aspirations, such as taking pride in being part of a company that contributes to societal good.

Experience and CSR Perception

Interestingly, the study found that years of experience had a less pronounced effect on CSR perception. The ANOVA results indicate that this difference is not statistically significant. This could imply that while experience enriches understanding, it does not significantly alter fundamental perceptions of CSR in academic settings. The results contrast a study by Eweje and Brunton (2010), which shows that working experience affects ethical attitudes as concerns about ethics increase with working experience.

Education and CSR perception

The findings from ANOVA in Table 2 showed no significant variation in faculty's perceptions of CSR initiatives when considering their educational qualification (F=1.070; P=0342). This could be because perceptions of CSR are more influenced by personal values, workplace culture, or individual experiences with the organisation rather than by the level of academic achievement. A prior Dellaportas (2006) study argues that prior education on ethics and CSR can influence CSR perception and attitudes. Studies have shown that individuals with higher education tend to form more elaborate attitudes toward

CSR initiatives (Quazi, 2003) and have a stronger orientation towards CSR than their less educated counterparts (Kelley et al., 1990). However, at the same time, another study argues that education level (like a Bachelor's or Master's) does not impact CSR perceptions (Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013).

Conclusions

The variations in perceptions of CSR based on demographic factors like age and gender highlight the need for tailored approaches to implementing and communicating CSR initiatives in academic institutions. Universities must consider these differences to effectively engage their faculty in CSR activities, ensuring that these initiatives resonate with diverse groups within the academic community. Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of fostering a culture of CSR from early career stages, as younger faculty members show a strong affinity towards CSR. Initiatives such as integrating CSR into faculty development programs and encouraging participation in CSR projects can be instrumental.

In conclusion, this study contributes to understanding how demographic factors influence faculty members' perceptions of CSR in business schools. By acknowledging and addressing these differences, academic institutions can develop more inclusive and effective CSR strategies that align with their diverse faculty's values and expectations. Universities/Colleges should focus more on their internal CSR initiatives, considering faculties are key internal stakeholders. CSR initiatives directly impact faculties, who in turn respond with positive actions. Therefore, senior management must have fair dealings with their faculties to create sustainable future Universities.

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