

## **Examining the Social Responsibility, Social Entrepreneurship, and Volunteering Levels of University Students**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between social responsibility, volunteering and social entrepreneurship of university students in Kazakhstan regarding various variables. In this context, the study was conducted with the comparative relational survey method, one of the descriptive survey models. The scope of the research consists of 317 students studying in different departments of three universities in Kazakhstan. The data collection process was carried out in January and February of 2025, over a total period of two months. An online survey form was prepared via Google Forms as a data collection tool and was delivered to the participants online. Data were collected through the Social Entrepreneurship Scale, Social Responsibility Scale, and Volunteerism Scale. Parametric tests such as the independent groups t-test, ANOVA, Pearson Correlation Analysis, and Regression Analysis were used in the analysis of the data. According to the research results, it was revealed that the volunteering, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship levels of university students were generally high. Female students scored higher in volunteering and social responsibility, while males outperformed in some social entrepreneurship sub-dimensions. Upper-year students scored higher across all scales than lower-year students. Volunteering and social entrepreneurship positively influenced social responsibility perceptions, explaining 28.5% of the variance. Future studies should explore these perceptions with larger, diverse samples using mixed methods, and universities could integrate related courses into curricula while recognizing students' competencies.

**Keywords:** *University students, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, volunteering.*

### **Introduction**

In today's rapidly changing societies, although universities constitute the most functional dimension of individualized education, it is questioned whether they fulfill the task of educating social individuals at the desired level. This situation arises from the fact that the contribution that social entrepreneurship can bring to the level of academic success cannot be measured or estimated (Erturgut & Soyseker, 2012). Universities emerge as an important center of social

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entrepreneurship that has the potential to produce solutions to social problems, act in line with social needs, and ensure social change (Coskun & Sarikaya, 2016; Sekerbayeva et al., 2023).

Although universities are increasingly recognized as centers of social responsibility and entrepreneurship, existing evidence indicates that students' positive perceptions of volunteering and social responsibility often do not translate into sustained social action (Cívico-Ariza et al., 2020). This mismatch raises the problem of understanding how volunteering, social entrepreneurship, and perceptions of responsibility interact in higher education contexts, especially given that the transformation of pro-social attitudes into social action remains unclear (Alfirević et al., 2023). Without clarifying this relationship, universities may not fully realize their "third mission" of promoting active citizenship, knowledge transfer, and regional development (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020).

Social entrepreneurship is taking shape as a new field of research, drawing on both the tradition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and volunteering, as well as the fields of business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (García-Jurado et al., 2021). Although the concept itself is not new, the term "social entrepreneurship" has increasingly ensured that innovative approaches and solution-oriented activities targeting social problems are recognized and attract academic attention (García-Jurado et al., 2021; Kırılmaz, 2012). Studies in this field generally address different levels of understanding, such as individual entrepreneurs (micro level), organizations (meso level), and economic/social context (macro level) (García-Jurado et al., 2021). In this context, examining individual social responsibility and social entrepreneurship tendencies among university students has the potential to positively contribute to social benefit and development (Sönmezoğlu, 2022). In this study, the social role of universities, the importance of volunteering, and the factors affecting the social entrepreneurship intentions of volunteer students are examined.

### **Research Gap and Significance of the Study**

Although various studies have examined social entrepreneurship and individual social responsibility, more specific contributions to the literature are needed (Sönmezoğlu, 2022). Though many social entrepreneurship centers established in universities provide discussion and development forums by creating virtual networks, questions about how much these activities reflect reality and whether they produce concrete results or not are still unanswered (Erturgut &

Soysekerici, 2012). There is no single definition of social entrepreneurship, which stands out as a significant problem affecting the field and causes its meaning to vary among different authors (García-Jurado et al., 2021). The precise definition and boundaries of social entrepreneurship still remain unclear, and it is often described as an "essentially contested concept" (García-Jurado et al., 2021).

However, little empirical research has simultaneously examined volunteering, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship within the Central Asian higher education context. Previous studies on social responsibility and social entrepreneurship have primarily focused on Western or general global settings (Silva et al., 2023; Trajano et al., 2023), while evidence from Kazakhstan and neighboring Central Asian countries remains scarce. Research also indicates that although universities increasingly promote volunteering and social engagement, students' perceptions of these activities do not consistently translate into sustained social action (Cívico-Ariza et al., 2020; Topaloğlu et al., 2023). This study contributes novelty by integrating these dimensions into a single model and testing them with data from Kazakhstani university students. In doing so, it extends existing literature and provides region-specific insights that have been largely overlooked (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022; Wang & Yee, 2023). This study, therefore, addresses both a contextual gap—namely, the lack of empirical research on the interplay between volunteering, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship within Central Asian higher education—and a practical gap, since previous studies have not explained how positive perceptions of volunteering can be effectively transformed into sustained participation, social engagement, and entrepreneurial action.

Although university students are encouraged to participate in volunteering activities and community services (Sönmezoğlu, 2022), it is not fully explained how and to what extent these participations translate into social entrepreneurship orientations. Research shows that university students have a positive perception of volunteering, but this perception often does not translate into active or sustained participation with volunteer organizations. Despite the high trust in volunteer organizations, the rate of active participation among students can remain significantly lower than the desire to participate (Cívico-Ariza et al., 2020). This disconnection highlights a gap in understanding how to translate pro-social awareness into genuine participation and sustainable

engagement. Moreover, universities, despite their critical role in social transformation, often fail to integrate social responsibility into their daily operations and core ethics (Peric, 2012).

While the existing literature focuses on the benefits of volunteering for personal and professional development (Liszt-Rohlf et al., 2021), specific, measurable outcomes are often not detailed in terms of a direct link to social entrepreneurial intention in the context of university programs (Sönmezoğlu, 2022). More structured projects and programs that strengthen relationships between universities and local communities are needed to truly promote social activism among young people (Peric, 2012). Concrete implications for practice are still under development, and more research is needed to provide a clearer picture of differences across countries and the capacity of volunteering to enhance business education (Liszt-Rohlf et al., 2021).

Addressing these gaps is critical to increasing the effectiveness of universities as regional development centers (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022). By better understanding the factors that influence social entrepreneurship intentions among students, universities can design more effective educational programs and initiatives (Aransyah et al., 2023; Wang & Yee, 2023; Sönmezoğlu, 2022). Enhancing students' individual social responsibility levels and fostering their social entrepreneurship orientations will positively contribute to social benefits and development (Sönmezoğlu, 2022). This equips young professionals with the competencies in demand and enhances their social responsibility, which is vital for socially responsible businesses and public sectors (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022; Ndlovu, 2024).

The increased participation of students in volunteering activities adds significant value to universities around the world, expands students' competencies, and helps with their professional self-determination and employability (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022). Such an understanding also supports the formation of "social capital" and the development of "new opinion leaders" among active youth, fostering creative self-actualization and community development (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022). Furthermore, effective integration of volunteering into business education leads to new insights, fosters social thinking and action, and supports diversity in the labor market. This integration helps balance academic rigor with practical relevance, preparing students not only for business careers but also as active participants in creating positive social change (Liszt-Rohlf et al., 2021; Peric, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to reveal the different forms of social entrepreneurship tendencies that emerge in universities and their various effects on educational activities. At the same time, it is aimed to characterize the volunteering experiences of students in the field of culture and to evaluate the cultural volunteering potential of young people in the context of solving the urgent problems of universities as regional development centers. In addition, the research aims to examine the individual social responsibility and social entrepreneurship levels of university students in terms of certain variables and to analyze the effects of individual social responsibility levels on social entrepreneurship orientations.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

In light of the identified problems and gaps, the present study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the scores of university students' volunteering, social responsibility perceptions, and social entrepreneurship as measured by validated scales?
  - a. Do these constructs (volunteering, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship) differ according to students' gender?
  - b. Do these constructs differ according to students' year of study (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior)?
2. To what extent do volunteering and social entrepreneurship predict students' perceptions of social responsibility?

### *Hypothesis*

H1. University students' social entrepreneurship and volunteering levels have a positive effect on their social responsibility perceptions.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Responsibility**

Today, with technological developments and cultural diversity in the global context, the sensitivity of individuals and organizations to social problems and their capacity to produce solutions are gaining importance. While aiming to eliminate social inequalities and build a more just and sustainable future, the concept of social responsibility is addressed in a wide range and includes

the duties of every actor, from individuals to institutions, from local communities to universities (Giotakou, 2024). In this context, social responsibility went beyond just legal and economic obligations and also included the mission of creating social benefit and improving the quality of life. Creating common good for social change and development is no longer seen as a duty of the state or volunteers alone, but rather is increasingly becoming a responsibility of all segments of society, including the private sector and educational institutions (Maurrasse, 2004). This understanding paves the way for the emergence of innovative approaches such as social entrepreneurship and necessitates the establishment of a balance among social, environmental and economic factors.

Individual social responsibility (ISR) refers to the state of being consciously aware of social problems in line with the demands and needs of the individual as a result of their interaction with the society they live in (Eraslan, 2011; Sonmezoglu, 2022). This understanding of responsibility reveals the sensitivity of individuals to social problems and the scope of these problems with a consciousness shaped according to the needs and demands of society. While carrying out ISR activities, individuals generally do not pursue any personal interests or benefits; on the contrary, they act in accordance with social norms and values (Urhan & Gumus, 2021). As stated by Hellison et al. (2025), it is of great importance for individuals to be willing to develop social responsibility and its awareness. Voluntarily becoming a member of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and taking an active role in different projects are considered as an indicator of the individual's social responsibility awareness (Goztas & Baytekin, 2009). While individuals with high ISR levels are expected to engage in activities that will benefit society, individuals with low ISR levels are expected to remain indifferent to social problems and social issues (Saran et al., 2011). Social responsibility activities in universities are generally carried out in the fields of education, environment and health (Kulekci & Ozgan, 2015). Such activities not only have a significant impact on the personal development, school, business and social lives of university students, but also help them be healthy, stay away from crime and contribute to society (Yetis & Aktas, 2021). Studies clearly show that as individual social responsibility levels increase, university students' social entrepreneurship orientations also increase. It is stated that individual social responsibility has a positive effect, especially in the sub-dimensions of social vision, innovation, sustainability, and social networks. Its explanatory power in these dimensions is determined as 25% in social networks, 19% in social vision, 18% in sustainability, and 6% in

innovation, respectively (Sonmezoglu, 2022). This shows that educating students with high ISR levels will contribute positively to social benefit and development (Paksoy et al., 2019; Sonmezoglu, 2022).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), on the other hand, is seen as an important lever in the process of creating social value for businesses and social purpose organizations (Austin et al., 2007; Austin et al., 2006; Austin et al., 2004; Austin, 2000; Urmanaviciene & Arachchi, 2020). It is a broad term and used in various ways (Mitra & Borza, 2010). The core value and purpose of CSR is to balance environmental and social factors while maintaining the economic aspects of the organization, that is, to create a positive impact on social, environmental and economic factors by acting as a socially responsible organization (Urmanaviciene & Arachchi, 2020). Universities were becoming increasingly important participants in the sustainable social development of the communities in which they were located (Odabas & Kahramanoglu, 2023; Peric, 2012). The ability to combine the learning process with economic activities influences the creation of sustainable dynamics of the economic and social development of the community in which the university operates (Etzkowitz, 2002; Peric, 2012). Through this "third mission", universities follow market trends, develop programs that meet the demands of the environment and focus on integrating their own characteristics and programs into the economy and society (Etzkowitz, 2002; Peric, 2012). The social responsibility of a university is defined by Jimenez de la Jara (2007) as the ability to disseminate and implement a set of principles and values through four main activities (administration, education, research and additional activities) (Peric, 2012). This responsibility has to be part of the personality, ethics and existence of the university and does not remain a simple extracurricular activity (Jimenez de la Jara, 2007; Peric, 2012). Universities can take the opportunity to be leaders by embracing the concept of CSR (Goossen, 2009), and through the implementation of CSR they ensure the development of social responsibility awareness among students, professors and the university's stakeholder network (Leitão & Silva, 2007). This complements the "technical training" and promotes the ability to act and the awareness of needs (Peric, 2012). However, many universities do not feel the pressure of institutional transformation brought by modern society (Albrecht, 2005), while some believe that they already behave as expected and that there is no room for new activities (Peric, 2012).

The importance of social responsibility of universities is increasing by educating students about values and norms, encouraging them to understand the needs of the communities they live in, teaching them their roles as democratic citizens, and including them in projects aimed at solving various community problems (Jimenez de la Jara, 2007). In the research conducted by Erturgut and Soyseker (2012) in Turkish universities, important information is revealed about the formation of social entrepreneurship groups and the possible effects of entrepreneurial activities carried out on educational processes. Student participation is especially successful in project or research-based studies, and such activities in universities feed students' innovative and creative thoughts, reduce exam stress, increase study efficiency, and encourage group-based positive or negative experiences. Recently, universities have been positioned as regional development centers and have begun to be involved in the socio-cultural development of regions within the scope of their "third mission". In these processes, student social initiatives and socio-cultural projects carried out with their participation play an increasingly important role both in terms of the students themselves and their personal development, and in increasing the sustainability of the regions. This reinforces the growing prestige of universities, since these characteristics of their graduates are important for socially responsible business and the public sphere of Russian regions (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022).

### **Social Entrepreneurship and Its Activities in Universities**

Social entrepreneurship aims to act in line with social needs and achieve social change by producing new and sustainable solutions to existing social problems (Coşkun & Sarıkaya, 2016; Sonmezoglu, 2022). This approach emphasizes the social vision and determination of the social entrepreneur in diagnosing and solving social problems (Denizalp, 2007; Sonmezoglu, 2022). Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurs are motivated by a social mission rather than primarily seeking to make profit (Bornstein, 2007; García-Jurado et al., 2021; Martin & Osberg, 2007; Thompson et al., 2000). London and Morfopoulos (2010) define social entrepreneurship as an "umbrella term" that encompasses social action initiatives that start in companies and communities and are motivated by a passion to help others and themselves, a belief in their ability to overcome obstacles, and motivate others to volunteer or contribute (London & Morfopoulos, 2010). Social entrepreneurship is applied in a practical way, especially by discovering social problems, developing strategies for them, and constantly redeveloping and

renewing these strategies. In this process, approaches such as innovation, proactivity, and risk taking are vital in creating a mission for social entrepreneurs (Erturgut & Soyseker, 2012).

While traditional entrepreneurship focuses more on profit maximization (Baumol, 1996; Kirzner, 2002; García-Jurado et al., 2021), social entrepreneurship goes beyond providing aid and strives to create sustainable change and authentic social transformation (Bornstein, 2004; Martin & Osberg, 2007; García-Jurado et al., 2021). This difference lies in the fact that it aims not only to solve a problem in a specific place, but also to create a scalable model that can be replicated in other contexts (Bornstein, 2004; Martin & Osberg, 2007; García-Jurado et al., 2021). It has been defined as a distinct field of study in its own right, characterized by the increasing blurring of lines between profit-oriented and non-profit organizations and between the private and public sectors (Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Defourny & Nyssens, 2006). This new field has emerged drawing on both the tradition of corporate social responsibility and business ethics, as well as the tradition of civil society organizations and volunteering (García-Jurado et al., 2021).

Although universities constitute the most functional dimension of today's individualized education, they cannot fulfill the task of raising social individuals at the desired level, and this is due to the fact that the difference that social entrepreneurship can bring to the level of school success cannot be measured or predicted (Topaloğlu et al., 2023). However, there is important information about the formation of social entrepreneurship groups in universities and the possible effects of entrepreneurial activities on educational processes. Instructors in universities need to provide maximum entrepreneurial capacity in social entrepreneurship, and it should not be forgotten that these activities should be carried out voluntarily (Erturgut & Soyseker, 2012).

One way of forming social entrepreneurship is through centers established for this purpose. For example, institutions such as the Center for Social Entrepreneurship Development at Duke University, the Center for Social Innovation at Stanford University, the Social Enterprise Program at Columbia University, and the Canadian Center for Social Entrepreneurship at the University of Alberta stand out (Erturgut & Soyseker, 2012). The common point of these social entrepreneurship centers is that they have created a virtual social entrepreneurship network based on collaborative work for academics, pragmatists from the sector, and students to develop social entrepreneurship as a business and to ensure that its principles are disseminated to other disciplines/sectors (Saran et al., 2011).

Social entrepreneurship activities feed students' innovative and creative thinking, increase study efficiency, and encourage group-based positive or negative experiences. Students who are especially successful in project- or research-based studies are primarily formed in groups regardless of their ethnic, regional, or income status (Erturgut & Soyseker, 2012). The increase in students' participation in volunteering is of particular value for universities in almost all parts of the world (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022). Volunteering experience expands the range of students' competences, helps to develop young people's professional self-efficacy in the field of education and to gain practical experience, which is important for the employment of young specialists (Starodubtsev & Rodionov, 2018; Zinevich & Melekhina, 2024). Students' volunteering in the cultural sphere provides long-term perspectives of social activity and determines the ability of universities to create and maintain an environment that shapes the culture of pro-social behavior of young people and the social responsibility of young professionals. Working in such projects increases students' professional competence, accumulates social capital, and allows them to create a portfolio. As in the School of State Administration and Entrepreneurship at the Ural Federal University, project-based learning allows students to reveal their creativity by solving research, organizational or informational tasks (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022). At the same time, university administrations can carry out studies that encourage students to participate in such activities through social responsibility and social entrepreneurship reports that they will publish every year (Sonmezoglu, 2022). This situation emphasizes the importance of universities keeping their social networks strong in order to cooperate with non-governmental organizations, public and private institutions, social, sports, cultural, and artistic associations, etc.

### **Volunteering**

Volunteering is increasingly important in finding solutions to complex social problems faced by contemporary societies, and it plays a key role in universities fulfilling their social responsibilities (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022). Universities directly affect the quality of life of societies through their education, research and social contribution performances. In this context, the concept of social entrepreneurship is also seen to be intertwined with volunteering activities, as social entrepreneurship is defined as a field born out of the tradition of NGOs and volunteering (García-Jurado et al., 2021). The participation of university students in volunteering activities makes significant contributions to both their individual development and social benefit. These activities

provide multifaceted benefits such as developing students' problem-solving skills, forming social networks, and increasing their professional competence, thus allowing universities to effectively implement their "third mission". Volunteering stands out as a mutually beneficial experience for both institutions and individuals in the process of creating social value, thus paving the way for young people to grow up as active and responsible citizens (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022).

Universities are positioned as centers in the development of the regions they are located in, and students' social initiatives and socio-cultural projects play an increasingly important role in terms of both students' self-realization and increasing the sustainability of regions (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022). Students' participation in social entrepreneurship activities contributes positively to educational activities and individual success, fosters innovative and creative thinking, reduces exam stress, increases work efficiency, and encourages group-based positive or negative experiences (Erturgut & Soysekerici, 2012). Students' previous participation in a social project positively affects their social entrepreneurship orientation and individual social responsibility levels, except for the financial return sub-dimension. Similarly, it is observed that university students who have taken a community service practice course have higher individual social responsibility levels and social visions from the social entrepreneurship dimension than students who have not taken it (Sonmezoglu, 2022). It is stated that social entrepreneurs must have social vision and determination to diagnose and solve social problems (Denizalp, 2007). Community service practice courses raise students' awareness of focusing on social problems and it is important that these courses are given in universities (Lopez-Caudana et al., 2024; Sonmezoglu, 2022).

Volunteering contributes to students' personal and professional development, increasing their ability to meet the demands of the future labor market (Liszt-Rohlf et al., 2021; Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022). However, a study conducted in Spain determined that although university students evaluated volunteering as a necessary task for social benefit, their active participation was low (Cívico-Ariza et al., 2020). It has also been determined that factors such as moral obligation, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and perceived social support positively affect university volunteers' social entrepreneurial intentions (Wang & Yee, 2023). University volunteers, especially those with higher education, have higher sensitivity and perception towards moral obligations, which leads them to develop a greater desire to act justly in the face of moral challenges (Wang & Yee, 2023).

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study is grounded in a quantitative research paradigm, aiming to test relationships between measurable constructs. The overall approach is descriptive and relational, as it seeks to clarify how volunteering and social entrepreneurship predict social responsibility among university students. The method employed is survey research, which is widely used to describe existing conditions and test relationships between variables in a population (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2019). Specifically, the study adopted a comparative relational survey design, one of the descriptive survey models. Such designs are frequently applied in educational and social sciences to illuminate a situation, make evaluations, and reveal possible relationships between constructs (Nardi, 2018). Within this design, the independent variables are students' volunteering and social entrepreneurship, while the dependent variable is their perception of social responsibility. Gender and study year were also included as control variables to examine possible group differences. This design was selected because it enables both the description of students' scores on validated scales and the testing of predictive relationships among constructs through parametric analyses (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2019).

### **Population and Sample**

The population of the study consists of university students enrolled in higher education institutions in Kazakhstan. From this population, a sample of 317 students from three universities was selected. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, and 317 were returned, yielding a response rate of 90.57%. This rate is considered sufficient for statistical analysis in social sciences (Cohen et al., 2018). Participants were selected using a combination of convenience and simple random sampling techniques. Convenience sampling was applied because the universities and participants were accessible to the researchers, making data collection feasible within time and resource constraints (Etikan et al., 2016). Within these accessible groups, simple random distribution of the questionnaires ensured that each student had an equal chance of participation, thereby reducing potential bias. This sample selection is appropriate for the study's objectives, as it reflects a diverse student population across multiple universities and disciplines, which enhances generalizability of the findings within the Kazakhstani higher education context.

## Data Collection Tools

In this study, the term ‘levels’ refers to students’ scores obtained from validated measurement instruments. Volunteering was measured using the Volunteering Intention Scale (X et al., year), social responsibility was measured by the Social Responsibility Scale (Y et al., year), and social entrepreneurship was assessed through the Social Entrepreneurship Scale (Z et al., year). Higher scores on these scales represent higher levels of the corresponding construct.

### *Social Entrepreneurship Scale*

The Social Entrepreneurship Scale developed by Nga and Shamuganathan (2010) was used to determine the levels of social entrepreneurship tendency. This scale was selected because it is one of the most widely used and validated instruments in the field, encompassing multiple dimensions of social entrepreneurship, including social vision, innovation, sustainability, and social networking. This scale consists of a total of 27 statements, including social vision (8 statements), innovation (8 statements), sustainability (6 statements), and social network (5 statements). A 5-point Likert Scale was used in this section of the survey form (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree). The reliability of the scale (Cronbach's Alpha) was determined as 0.90.

### *Social Responsibility Scale*

The original form of the scale, “Personal and Social Responsibility Questionnaire (PSRQ)”, was developed by Li et al (2008). The original language of the scale is English. This instrument was chosen because it specifically assesses both individual and social dimensions of responsibility, which directly aligns with the objectives of the present study. The original form of the scale includes a total of 14 statements related to individual and social responsibility behaviors. Each statement related to responsibility in the scale is scored as a 5-point Likert item from “Strongly Disagree (1)” to “Strongly Agree (5)”. 13 of the scale items are positive (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13) and 1 is a negative item (14). The original English form of the scale was applied to 253 students. As a result of the analyzes obtained, the factor loadings of each scale item were found to be between .42 and .80; The internal consistency coefficient was found to be .81. In addition, as a result of the CFA, it was stated that the fit index values were acceptable [ $\chi^2(76)=$

147.93,  $p < 0.01$ ; RMSEA = .06, NNFI = .92, CFI = .93] and the factor structure was compatible with the collected data (Li et al., 2008).

### *Volunteering Scale*

The theoretical framework within the scope of volunteering and volunteer motivations was researched using literature resources, and a question pool was created using these resources. In the development of the scale, Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Motivation Inventory, Çevik (2012), and Kang & Kahar (2022) were used as sources for the study's volunteering items. Expert opinions were obtained regarding the draft measurement tool consisting of 10 items. Some items were corrected in line with expert opinions. The measurement tool, which was finalized with the necessary adjustments as a result of expert opinions, was applied to university students. At this stage, it was determined that it was appropriate to conduct factor analysis of the items with the data obtained (Kaiser Meyer Olkin = .85, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity =  $X^2 = 2129.319$ ;  $p = .000$ ). Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the sub-dimensions of the scale. As a result of the EFA, it was seen that 10 items were collected in a single dimension. This single dimension explains 52.5% of the variance in the volunteering variable. In factor analysis, items with values between 0.53 and 0.82 are considered to be high-level magnitudes. Cronbach's Alpha value for the scale was obtained as .86.

### **Data Collection Process**

The data collection process was carried out in January and February of 2025, over a two-month period. An online survey was prepared via Google Forms and distributed to students by e-mail and social media channels through faculty members and student communities. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality was ensured, and students could withdraw at any time without obligation. Of the 350 questionnaires distributed, 317 were completed and included in the analysis. The survey form consisted of three validated measurement instruments corresponding to the study variables. Social responsibility was assessed through the Personal and Social Responsibility Questionnaire (Li et al., 2008), social entrepreneurship was measured by the Social Entrepreneurship Scale (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010), and volunteering was evaluated using a 10-item volunteering scale adapted from Clary et al. (1998), Çevik (2012), and Kang & Kahar (2022). Each instrument was presented as a separate section within the online form, allowing

students to respond on five-point Likert-type scales. Detailed information about the structure, dimensions, and reliability of these scales is provided in the Data Collection Tools section.

### **Data Analysis**

Before moving on to the analysis of the data, the skewness and kurtosis values were examined. Accordingly, the fact that these values are between -1.96 and +1.96 for skewness and between -3 and +3 for kurtosis (according to some authors, -2 and +2) is evidence of the normality of the distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). 95% of the values in a normal distribution are between +1.96 and -1.96 standard deviations from the mean. When the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of each statement are divided by their standard errors for the scales used in the study, the results are seen to be between -1.96 and +1.96. Therefore, it can be said that the data is distributed close to normal. Since the data showed normal distribution, parametric tests were applied. Specifically, independent samples t-test was used to analyze differences by gender, ANOVA (with Scheffe post-hoc) to examine differences by study year, Pearson correlation analysis to determine the relationships between variables, and multiple regression analysis to test the predictive power of volunteering and social entrepreneurship on social responsibility.

### **Findings**

As presented in the Data Analysis section, assumption tests confirmed that the data met the conditions for parametric analyses (normal distribution and homogeneity of variances). Accordingly, independent samples t-tests, ANOVA, correlation, and regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses of the study. The findings are reported in line with these analyses, and each hypothesis is explicitly addressed. To begin with, descriptive statistics were calculated to provide an overview of students' volunteering, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship levels before moving on to group comparisons and predictive analyses. These results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistical Analyses of University Students' Volunteering, Social Responsibility and Social Entrepreneurship Scale Scores*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Volunteering	315	2,30	5,00	4,04	0,63
Social Responsibility	315	2,00	5,00	3,85	0,71
Social Vision	315	2,75	5,00	4,16	0,67
Innovation	315	1,63	5,00	3,69	0,76
Sustainability	315	1,17	5,00	3,52	0,91
Social Network	315	2,40	5,00	4,26	0,74
Social GR Total	315	2,88	5,00	3,91	0,57

When Table 1 is examined, the average opinion score of university students regarding the volunteering scale is 4.04. It was observed that the university students included in the study had high and positive opinions about volunteering. The average opinion score of the participants regarding the social responsibility scale is 3.85. This finding shows that the students' perceptions of social responsibility are at high level. The average score of the opinions regarding the social vision sub-dimension of the social entrepreneurship scale is (X) 4.16. The average score of the same scale was (3.69) in the innovation dimension, (3.52) in the sustainability dimension, (4.26) in the social network dimension and (3.91) in the overall scale. The perceptions of the students participating in the study regarding social entrepreneurship are generally at high level.

**Table 2**

*University Students' Volunteering, Social Responsibility and Social Entrepreneurship Scale Scores Regarding Gender – t- Test Analysis Statistics*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Volunteering	Female	182	4,20	0,60	5,342	0,000*
	Male	133	3,83	0,61		
Social Responsibility	Female	182	4,01	0,72	4,593	0,000*
	Male	133	3,65	0,65		
Social Vision	Female	182	4,13	0,65	-0,872	0,384
	Male	133	4,20	0,71		

Innovation	Female	182	3,55	0,80	-3,871	0,000*
	Male	133	3,88	0,67		
Sustainability	Female	182	3,43	0,79	-2,195	0,029*
	Male	133	3,65	1,04		
Social Network	Female	182	4,24	0,73	-0,663	0,508
	Male	133	4,29	0,75		
Social GR Total	Female	182	3,84	0,53	-2,651	0,008*
	Male	133	4,01	0,60		

In the volunteering scale of the students included in the research, the average opinion score of the female participants is ( $X=4.20$ ), and the average score of the male participants is ( $X=3.83$ ). The t-test conducted to determine the difference between the means was significant ( $t(315)= 5.34$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). According to the findings, the volunteering of the female participants is significantly higher compared to their male peers. In the social responsibility subscale, the average score of the female participants is ( $X=4.01$ ), and the average score of the male participants is ( $X=3.65$ ). As a result of the t-test, it was seen that there was a significant difference between the groups ( $t(315)= 4.56$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). According to the average scores, the perception of social responsibility of the female participants is significantly higher compared to their male peers. No significant difference was found between the groups in terms of gender in the ‘social vision’ and ‘social network’ dimensions of the social entrepreneurship scale. However, significant differences were found in the sub-dimensions of ‘innovation’, ‘sustainability’ and the whole scale according to the gender of the students ( $p<0.05$ ). According to the average scores, male students achieved higher averages compared to their female peers in these two sub-scales and social entrepreneurship as a whole.

**Table 3**

*ANOVA Analysis Statistics of University Students' Volunteering, Social Responsibility and Social Entrepreneurship Scale Scores Regarding being a freshman (1), sophomore (2), junior (3) or senior (4)*

		N	Mean	SD	F	p
Volunteering	1	80	3,81	0,53	13,61	0,00*
	2	75	3,85	0,66		
	3	106	4,24	0,63		
	4	54	4,29	0,50		

Social Responsibility	1	80	3,75	0,62	11,14	0,00*
	2	75	3,53	0,62		
	3	106	4,03	0,81		
	4	54	4,11	0,52		
Social Vision	1	80	4,11	0,58	9,60	0,00*
	2	75	3,90	0,60		
	3	106	4,19	0,81		
	4	54	4,52	0,42		
Innovation	1	80	3,62	0,67	1,52	0,21*
	2	75	3,59	0,47		
	3	106	3,81	0,96		
	4	54	3,72	0,75		
Sustainability	1	80	3,36	1,08	3,07	0,03*
	2	75	3,44	0,61		
	3	106	3,56	1,00		
	4	54	3,81	0,73		
Social Network	1	80	4,33	0,55	1,95	0,09*
	2	75	4,20	0,69		
	3	106	4,21	0,92		
	4	54	4,38	0,60		
Social GR Total	1	80	3,85	0,52	5,19	0,00*
	2	75	3,76	0,46		
	3	106	3,94	0,68		
	4	54	4,13	0,43		

The variance analysis revealed a significant difference in the volunteering scale according to the study year of the students included in the study ( $F(315)=13.61$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). In order to determine between which groups was the difference, a Scheffe test was conducted. It was seen that being junior or senior students had a higher level of volunteering compared to being a freshman or sophomore participants. Similarly, a significant difference was found in the social responsibility scale regarding the study year ( $F(315)=13.61$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). According to the Scheffe test analyses, similarly, it was seen that junior or senior students had a high level of social responsibility perception. No significant difference was found in the ‘innovation’ and ‘social network’ dimensions of the social entrepreneurship scale in terms of study year ( $p>0.05$ ). On the other hand,

significant differences were found in the ‘social vision’, sustainability sub-dimensions and the entire social entrepreneurship scale regarding the study year. In these sub-dimensions and in social entrepreneurship in general, junior or senior students obtained higher averages compared to freshman or sophomore students.

**Table 4**

*Pearson Correlation Statistics of University Students’ Volunteering, Social Responsibility and Social Entrepreneurship Scale Scores*

			Social Volunteering	Social Responsibility	Social Vision	Innovation	Sustainability	Social Network	Social GR Total
Volunteering	r	1							
	p								
Social Responsibility	r	,523**	1						
	p	0,000							
Social Vision	r	,253**	,299**	1					
	p	0,000	0,000						
Innovation	r	,115*	,172**	,662**	1				
	p	0,041	0,002	0,000					
Sustainability	r	,213**	0,087	,272**	-0,044	1			
	p	0,000	0,122	0,000	0,439				
Social Network	r	,148**	,218**	,803**	,591**	,230**	1		
	p	0,009	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000			
Social GR Total	r	,248**	,253**	,891**	,708**	,543**	,856**	1	
	p	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000		

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

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

When the Pearson correlation analysis findings in Table 4 are examined, it is observed that there is a positive relationship between volunteering and social responsibility perception ( $r=0.52$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and on the other hand, with social entrepreneurship as a whole ( $r=0.25$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). In this respect, it can be said that the social responsibility and social entrepreneurship of students with high volunteering levels are also high and positive. A significant and positive relationship was found between university students' social responsibility perceptions and social entrepreneurship

( $r=0.25$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The regression analysis results on the effect of social entrepreneurship and volunteering levels on social responsibility are presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5**

*The Impact of Volunteering and Social Entrepreneurship on Social Responsibility*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	0,96	0,29		3,33	0,00
Volunteering	0,56	0,06	0,49	9,97	0,00
Social GR Total	0,16	0,06	0,13	2,67	0,01
Dependent Variable: Social Responsibility; $R=0,53,9$ ; $F= 63,72$ ; $R^2=28,5$ ; $p<0,05$					

Model I, in which social entrepreneurship and volunteering scale scores are independent and social responsibility perception is the dependent variable, was tested via multiple regression analysis. According to the findings, Model I appears to be statistically significant ( $R^2=0.285$ ;  $F(315)=63.72$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Social entrepreneurship and volunteering, which are the determining variables in the model, explain 28.5% of the variance in the dependent variable (social responsibility). These findings show that H1 hypothesis was accepted. In addition, social entrepreneurship ( $\beta=.13$ ;  $t(315)=2.67$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and volunteering ( $\beta=.49$ ;  $t(315)=9.97$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) positively and significantly affect the perception of social responsibility.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between university students' perceptions of volunteering, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship tendencies, and it aimed to reveal whether students differed based on demographic characteristics such as gender and year of study. Social entrepreneurship tendencies were addressed through dimensions of social vision, innovation, sustainability, and social network, while volunteering and social responsibility perceptions were evaluated based on social responsibility awareness and voluntary participation levels. In addition, the predictive effects of volunteering and social entrepreneurship on social responsibility were analyzed. The findings revealed that students generally exhibited high levels of volunteering,

social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship. Female students scored higher in volunteering and social responsibility, whereas male students outperformed in sub-dimensions of social entrepreneurship such as innovation and sustainability. Upper-year students demonstrated higher levels across all scales compared to lower-year students. Regression analyses further showed that volunteering and social entrepreneurship significantly predicted social responsibility perceptions.

The study primarily examines the extent to which university students perceive volunteering, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship. The findings show that university students have a very positive perception of volunteering. This reveals that they have a strong desire to help others and provide social benefit (Liszt-Rohlf et al., 2021). In addition, it is determined that students' perceptions of social responsibility are also high, which is an indicator of developed sensitivity to the society and a consciousness of producing solutions to problems (Eraslan, 2011; Sonmezoglu, 2022). In general, it is determined that their perceptions of social entrepreneurship are also high, showing that students think they have the potential to find innovative and sustainable solutions to social problems (Coskun & Sarikaya, 2016). The high perception, especially in the social networks dimension, reflects how much importance students give to cooperation and connection. These findings, although partially differing from those in the study conducted by Cívico-Ariza et al. (2020), which suggest that positive perceptions towards volunteering do not always translate into active participation, emphasize that the current potential is high. It is seen that dimensions of social entrepreneurship, such as social vision, innovation, and sustainability, are also considered important by students. They have desire to be pioneers of social change in the future. These high perceptions of students suggest that universities have the potential to fulfill their mission of raising social individuals more effectively (Erturgut & Soyseker, 2012).

The study examines whether university students' perceptions of volunteering, social responsibility, and their levels of social entrepreneurship differ according to their gender. The results show that female students' perceptions of volunteering and social responsibility are significantly higher than male ones and girls tend to volunteer activities more (Droms Hatch & Stephan, 2015). However, it is noteworthy that male students have higher averages in the innovation and sustainability sub-dimensions of social entrepreneurship and in the general perception of social entrepreneurship. This suggests that they tend to focus on more innovative and long-term approaches in finding solutions to social problems. Although these findings partially overlap with the results of studies

such as Wang and Yee (2023) that examine the effects of gender on social entrepreneurship intentions, the differences in certain dimensions reveal the need to deeply examine gender-based motivation and approach differences. The prominence of men, especially in areas such as innovation and sustainability, indicates that gender-specific approaches can be developed in social entrepreneurship training. Women's higher general perception of volunteering and social responsibility shows that they provide a strong foundation for social benefit-oriented initiatives.

When the findings of the study are examined regarding whether the volunteering and social responsibility perceptions and social entrepreneurship levels of university students differ regarding class year; the analyses reveal that the volunteering and social responsibility perceptions of third and fourth year students are higher than those of first and second year ones. This suggests that as students progress in their university life, they are more exposed to social issues, their awareness increases and their sense of personal responsibility develops. It is stated in the literature that university education, especially courses such as community service practices, positively affect students' individual social responsibility levels and social visions (Sonmezoglu, 2022). This shows that the university environment contributes to the maturation of students and increases their social sensitivity. It is determined that upper class students have higher averages in the social vision and sustainability sub-dimensions of social entrepreneurship and in general social entrepreneurship perception. This means that the accumulation of experience and academic knowledge strengthens students' social entrepreneurship orientations (Starodubtsev & Rodionov, 2018; Zinevich & Melekhina, 2024). Similarly, in the study conducted by Pevnaya and Drozdova (2022), they stated that students with cultural volunteering experience show more interest and participation in cultural life.

Finally, in the context of the study hypothesis, it tests whether university students' social entrepreneurship and volunteering levels have a positive effect on their perception of social responsibility. The regression analysis results definitely reveal that both social entrepreneurship and volunteering positively and significantly affect individual social responsibility perception. Students who participate in volunteering activities or have social entrepreneurship potential develop a more sensitive and solution-oriented perspective towards social problems (Paksoy et al., 2019; Sonmezoglu, 2022). In particular, it is determined that volunteering has a stronger effect on social responsibility perception than social entrepreneurship. This finding suggests that the

experience of providing direct social benefit shapes the individual's social responsibility awareness more deeply (Liszt-Rohlf et al., 2021). The study conducted by Wang and Yee (2023) also states that moral obligation, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, perceived social support and attitude towards behavior positively affect social entrepreneurship intentions. This research suggests that programs that encourage students' community involvement are a critical tool for strengthening their sense of social responsibility. Social entrepreneurship activities also contribute to this process, but volunteering appears to have a more direct impact through personal experience.

These findings offer important theoretical and practical implications in the fields of social sciences and education. From a theoretical perspective, the complex relationships between volunteering, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship among university students are revealed more clearly. In particular, the finding that volunteering experience directly and strongly affects individual perceptions of social responsibility adds a new dimension to motivation and behavioral theory in these areas. Beyond factors such as moral obligation and perceived social support emphasized by Wang and Yee (2023), the present study shows that volunteering experience itself forms the basis of social responsibility awareness. In addition, the emergence of gender differences in dimensions of social entrepreneurship such as innovation and sustainability provides an original contribution to the literature on how social entrepreneurship motivations and competencies are shaped by gender and experience. Within the framework of the "third mission" of universities, a solid theoretical basis is being established for the design of programs that support students' active roles in regional development and social transformation (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022; Peric, 2012; Phan et al. 2024). This reinforces the idea that universities should take on the responsibility of educating individuals who are sensitive to social problems and produce solutions, rather than simply being institutions that transfer knowledge (Ajaps & Obiagu, 2020; Du Toit, 2023).

In terms of practice, the findings provide concrete recommendations for university administrations and educators. The fact that students' perceptions of volunteering and social responsibility are high, but their active participation being low sometimes (Cívico-Ariza et al., 2020) indicates that mechanisms should be developed to transform these perceptions into real action. Universities should increase students' social responsibility awareness and social entrepreneurship potential by expanding compulsory community service practices or academic service learning courses in all faculties (Sonmezoglu, 2022; Peric, 2012). Such courses help students develop their skills to focus

on social problems and produce solutions (Elma et al., 2010). In addition, customized social entrepreneurship training and mentoring programs can be designed by considering gender and class level differences. The fact that upper-class students, in particular, have higher perceptions suggests that it may be beneficial to intensify such training in later periods. Universities should support projects that provide students with real-life experiences by strengthening their collaborations with civil society organizations and local communities (Sonmezoglu, 2022; Peric, 2012). These projects increase students' professional competencies and allow them to accumulate social capital (Pevnaya & Drozdova, 2022).

Eventhough the present study provides important findings, it has some limitations. The research sample included students from only three universities in Kazakhstan, which limits the generalizability of the results to the entire university student population. In addition, the data collection process was carried out only through a survey technique, which ignores the potential benefits of using qualitative methods (e.g., interviews or focus groups) to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions and intentions. The scales used in the study are based on students' statements, which can be affected by factors such as social desirability. The different definitions of the concept of social entrepreneurship and the vagueness of its boundaries (García-Jurado et al., 2021) can make it difficult to fully capture the meanings that students attribute to this concept. Finally, while this study examines the relationship between individual social responsibility and social entrepreneurship, it does not address other potential relationships such as leadership, life satisfaction, or levels of socialization (Sonmezoglu, 2022). These limitations, on the other hand, are presenting important opportunities for future researches.

This study provides valuable contributions to the literature by revealing the significant relationships between university students' volunteering, individual social responsibility and social entrepreneurship tendencies. The findings clearly show that students' perceptions of volunteering and social responsibility are high and that these areas positively affect their social entrepreneurship tendencies. In particular, the fact that female students are more prominent in volunteering and social responsibility, while male students are stronger in the innovation and sustainability dimensions of social entrepreneurship, emphasizes the importance of gender-specific approaches in these areas (Daliman et al., 2019). The increasing sensitivity and entrepreneurship tendencies junior (3) or senior (4) students reinforce the role of university education in the development of

social awareness. These findings strengthen the potential of universities to fulfill their "third mission" as regional development centers more effectively. It is understood that universities should focus on educating students not only for professional careers but also as active and responsible world citizens. Through structured programs such as community service practices and social entrepreneurship training, social thought and action are encouraged in students, enabling them to focus on projects that create social benefit. In this way, young people, who are future leaders and innovators, are equipped with the ability to bring positive change to the society they live in.

For future researches, it is recommended that studies be conducted that address the limitations of this study and extend the findings to broader contexts. First, similar studies should be conducted with larger samples of university students from different geographic regions and different faculties. This will increase the generalizability of the findings and help reveal cultural and regional differences in perceptions of volunteering, social responsibility and social entrepreneurship. Second, it is recommended to use mixed method approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative research methods. Data obtained through surveys can be supported by in-depth interviews or focus group discussions to obtain richer and more detailed information about students' motivations, experiences and challenges. Such qualitative data are critical to comprehend the reasons hidden behind the quantitative findings.

In addition, the integration of compulsory courses and applied projects focused on social responsibility and social entrepreneurship into the curriculum of university programs should be examined in depth. These courses allow students to develop their ability to solve social problems by combining their theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Universities should provide the necessary mentoring and resources for students to implement their social entrepreneurship ideas by supporting structures such as social entrepreneurship incubators or acceleration programs. Mechanisms should be developed to officially recognize and document the competencies that students gain from volunteering activities. This will increase students' competitiveness in the labor market and emphasize the value of volunteering. Finally, the relationships between individual social responsibility and social entrepreneurship and other individual and institutional factors such as leadership skills, ethical decision-making or career development should be the focus of future researches.

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