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From Social Responsibility To Social Distance: Northern Cyprus Universities in The Pandemic

Abstract

Universities are seen as key drivers of social change and development in their local surroundings as well as the society itself. The social responsibility of the universities is regarded as their third mission after research and instruction duties all over the world. This third mission is accomplished through a variety of actions and dissemination of information through official websites as online disclosure is one way to accomplish corporate communication This research has the purpose to examine the news, activities and announcement links to the websites of 24 universities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus regarding their corporate communication issues in terms universities social responsibilities during the first year of the pandemic. A qualitative document analysis was conducted to gather data from the universities' websites and content analysis was applied to the data obtained. Codes are generated under categories in three themes. Findings revealed that universities use three different links for a variety of information disseminated through the websites interchangeably. News links are generally used for various notifications and information about covid effects mostly. Institutional contacts, official meetings and gatherings, and Covid based educational issues, conferences and seminars were posted through the activity links of the universities. Announcement links were generally used to inform students about the semester issues and distance education information were posted by the universities.

Keywords: *Higher education, social responsibility, corporate communication, qualitative research, pancemic*

Öz

Üniversiteler, hem yerel çevrelerinde hem de toplumun kendisinde sosyal değişim ve gelişmenin temel itici güçleri olarak görülmektedir. Üniversitelerin sosyal sorumluluğu olgusu, tüm dünyada araştırma ve öğretim görevlerinden sonar üniversitelerin üçüncü misyonu olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu üçüncü misyon, çeşitli eylemler ve resmi web siteleri aracılığıyla bilgi yayımı yoluyla gerçekleştirilir; çevrimiçi açıklama, kurumsal iletişimi sağlamanın bir yoludur. Bu araştırmanın amacı, Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'ndeki 24 üniversitenin web sitelerindeki haber, etkinlik ve duyuru bağlantılarını, pandeminin ilk yılında üniversitelerin sosyal sorumlulukları bağlamında kurumsal iletişim konuları açısından incelemektir. Üniversitelerin web sitelerinden veri toplamak için nitel bir belge analizi yapılmış ve elde edilen verilere içerik analizi uygulanmıştır. Üç tema altında kategoriler halinde kodlar oluşturulmuştur. Bulgular, üniversitelerin web siteleri aracılığıyla yayımlanan çeşitli bilgiler için üç farklı bağlantıyı dönüşümlü olarak kullandığını ortaya koymuştur. Haber bağlantıları genellikle çeşitli bildirimler ve çoğunlukla Covid etkileri hakkında bilgiler için kullanılmaktadır. Kurumsal iletişimler, resmi toplantılar ve etkinlikler ile Covid temelli eğitim konuları, konferanslar ve seminerler, üniversitelerin etkinlik bağlantıları aracılığıyla yayınlanmıştır. Duyuru bağlantıları genellikle öğrencileri dönemle ilgili konular hakkında bilgilendirmek için kullanılırken, üniversiteler tarafından uzaktan eğitim bilgileri de yayınlanmak olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Yükseköğretim, sosyal sorumluluk, kurumsal iletişim, nitel araştırma, pandemi*

INTRODUCTION

Social responsibility (SR) phenomenon gained importance after the Magna Charta of European universities signed in 1988 (Hrubos, 2011), and these social challenges lead universities to play a critical role in society, being their actions essential in its development (UNESCO, 1998). Universities' status in the society plays an important role due to their duties to accomplish as instruction, research and social responsibilities through generating knowledge (Perkmanna et al., 2013) with the objective to help individuals gain desired intellectual, ethical and moral character (AACU, 2008). Definitions of universities' social responsibilities (USR) may vary so that researchers focus on different features of the phenomenon (Reiser, 2008), and generally expressed as the university's usage of resources effectively and responsibility towards society with activities and projects carried out in addition to its current activities. SR is broadly defined as pro-social behavior (Bierhoff, 2002) that seeks to advance and promote community among the broad spectrum of society (Starrett, 1996). Colby et al. (2003) mentioned that SR is based on two responsibilities as moral and ethical which are considered as 'inseparable.' SR in public administration (Hernández 2007; Navarro et al. 2010), and particularly in the universities (Atakan & Eker 2007; Brown & Cloke 2009; Vasilescu et al., 2010; Burguete et al.,2016) has been under examination not so long. Scholars mention that universities have a major duty to promote SR in their local surroundings and in the society by means of adjusting SR into three dimensioned roles as research, instructive operations and their strategic corporate actions (Hopkinson et al., 2008; Sanchez et al., 2013). SR today; contributes to the business world by going far beyond the "philanthropy" perception of the past is directly related to sustainable development and creating active solutions to social and environmental challenges (Hrubos, 2011; Vasilescu et al., 2010). This is explained by the internalization of universities by corporate governance mechanisms, their inclusion in the teaching plans and research agendas, and the design of their services and social projects for the betterment of society (Shek, 2021).

SR is the major term for organizations that have a focus on society and the environment, but its implementation requires technical differences between a commercial corporation and a university (Kouatli, 2019, p. 890). The application of the phenomenon into university administrative issues in the way to supply the needs of the society is still under examination due to its social inherent engagement (Barrena Martinez et al., 2019; Brown & Cloke 2009; Hernández 2007; Navarro et al., 2010; Vasilescu et al. 2010). Corporate social responsibility (CSR), also stated to have two categories; (a) implicit-that represents the norms and values of the institution, and (b) explicit- that uses the language of CSR in communicating the corporation's policies and practices to stakeholders (Matten & Moon, 2008; Plungpongpan et al., 2014). The explicit USR usually comes from a deliberate strategic planning process such as offering CSR courses to their students and promoting their explicit USR activities to their local communities (Plungpongpan et al., 2014). Explicit USR needs to be communicated to all stakeholders by being aware of the different types of controllable communication such as traditional media communication and websites, as well as non-controllable communication such as word-of-mouth and media commentary (Balmer & Greyser, 2002 as cited by Plungpongpan et al., 2014). USR communications are conducted in a variety of ways; (a) traditional-advertising, sponsorship, public relations, and (b) online-websites, social media and communication as a tool to improve a USR or CSR actor's reputation and legitimacy (Allen & Craig, 2010; Durkin et al., 2012). Moreover, corporate communication is believed to be pragmatic when it educates alerts, persuades and helps people enact sustainability initiatives within and between organizations (Cox, 2013).

Research conducted on communicative issues related to corporate and university social responsibilities before, during and after the pandemic. Gomez & Chalmeta (2011) examined top 50 American corporations' communicating their CSR initiatives to different stakeholders through websites and found that the majority (80%) have effective websites and the rest were not commonly displayed,

and the social media stands as a great source for CSR communication. Sanchezet al. (2013) examined private and public sector universities of Unites States and found out that SR internalization status regarding the university accountability, information transparency, and the use of the internet was not strongly committed online disclosure of SR information and SR was not used as a differentiating factor between the two types of the universities in the state. Same authors in the same year with a different order and title, Bolivar, Sanchez & Lopez-Hernandez (2013) focused on disclosing CSR information and communication policies on the internet in the leading Anglo-American universities and found out that universities pay little attention to CSR disclosure and it is not regarded as a fundamental element of communication policy regarding the webometrics which measures online disclosure of information. As a different country example; Tetrevova, et al. (2021) analyzed the scope and the structure of SR activities communicated on the websites of public universities in the Czech Republic and found that the universities level of communication is low and the majority of the communicated SR involves economic and social issues but environmental responsibilities have a low level of communication reflected the universities' websites. A group of scholars, Rababah et al. (2021) conducted research on BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) Countries' universities to analyze the impact of the pandemic on the university activity directions in the framework of USR strategies and findings revealed that effective communication with the stakeholders, educational quality, and scientific activities directly stimulate USR. There are more examples of comparative research like Sumlut et al.(2022) who examined 12 universities in US and Japan during the pandemic regarding their communication strategies on the situational crisis communication theory and found out that universities' responses to the pandemic relate to instructing information, adjusting information, managing reputation in the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, Shcherbak et al.(2022), examined 50 Ukrainian universities' social responsibility of distance education during the pandemic and found

out that both students and teachers have low levels of SR due to the effect of heavy workload, unsatisfactory salaries, and most of the universities (27 out of 50) have low levels of SR.

Purpose of the research

This research focuses on web based information, reflected through the web sites of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Universities during the first year of the pandemic. The fundamental focus of the research is to examine the SR accomplishment status of the TRNC universities via their major communication source, which is their website during the pandemic. The gates of the universities were closed due to the effect of the virus, but the educational agenda had to continue whether the university is already prepared for this distance education process with all its features. In order to reach relevant data regarding the research objective, the web sites of the stated universities' announcements, news and activity links were systematically examined and analyzed in a qualitative manner. The lack of the existence of a similar research in the island and to gather the information related to the subject stands for the significance of the research and it aims to fulfill this gap by the answers of the following research questions;

1. What are the contents of the news that are shared by the universities' official web sites?

2. What are the contents of the activities that are shared by the universities' official web sites?

3. What are the contents of the announcements that are shared by the universities' official web sites?

METHOD

Qualitative document analysis is applied in this research in order to collect web based data. Strauss & Corbin (1998) describe qualitative research as a "type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of

quantification. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating print and electronic documents (computer-based and Internet-transmitted and the data is examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007). Atkinson & Coffey (1997) refer to documents as 'social facts', which are produced, shared, and used in socially organized ways (p. 47). Furthermore, Merriam (1988) states that, 'Documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem' (p. 118), by following the steps as skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation.

So that this research collected data via the web sites of the stated universities no Ethics Committee approval was taken.

Population and Research Group

The data for the research is obtained from the web sites of the universities currently established in TRNC which are presented in Table 1. So that there were 23 active universities, no sampling method is utilized and all of the web sites of the universities are examined.

Table1. The research group information

	Name	Date	District	Type	Web site
FU1	Eastern Mediterranean University	1979	Famagusta	Public/ TRNC	https://www.emu. edu.tr/en/

FU2	Istanbul Technical University TRNC	2011	Famagusta	Private	https://kktc.itu.edu.tr/index.php/tr/
FU3	Cyprus West University	2015	Famagusta	Private	https://www.cwu.edu.tr/
FU4	University of City Island	2016	Famagusta	Private	https://adakent.edu.tr/
GU1	Middle East Technical University TRNC	2005	Guzelyurt	Public/ TR	https://ncc.metu.edu.tr/tr/
GU2	Cyprus Health and Social Sciences University	2016	Guzelyurt	Private	https://kstu.edu.tr/
KU1	Girne American University	1985	Kyrenia	Private	https://www.gau.edu.tr/
KU2	University of Kyrenia	2013	Kyrenia	Private	https://kyrenia.edu.tr/
KU3	Cyprus Science University	2013	Kyrenia	Private	https://www.csu.edu.tr/
KU4	Final International University	2015	Kyrenia	Private	https://www.final.edu.tr/
KU5	Arkın University of Creative Arts and Design	2017	Kyrenia	Private	https://arucad.edu.tr/
LU1	European University of Lefke	1989	Lefke	Public/ TRNC	https://www.eul.edu.tr/
NU1	Atatürk Teacher Training Acad.	1937	Nicosia	Public/ TRNC	http://www.aoa.edu.tr/
NU2	Cyprus International University	1997	Nicosia	Private	https://www.ciu.edu.tr/tr
NU3	Anadolu University,	1982	Nicosia	Public/ TR	https://www.anadolu.edu.tr/

	Nicosia Campus				
NU4	Near East University	1988	Nicosia	Private	https://www.neu.edu.tr/
NU5	University of Mediterranean Karpasia	2012	Nicosia	Private	https://www.akun.edu.tr/tr-tr
NU6	American University of Cyprus	2014	Nicosia	Private	https://auc.edu.tr/
NU7	Netkent Mediterranean Research and Science University	2014	Nicosia	Private	https://www.netkent.edu.tr/
NU8	Ankara TRNC Social Sciences University	2015	Nicosia	Public/ TR	https://kktc.asbu.edu.tr/
NU9	Cyprus Bahçeşehir University	2017	Nicosia	Private	https://baucyprus.edu.tr/
NU 10	Rauf Denktaş University	2015	Nicosia	Private	https://rdu.edu.tr/
NU 11	15 Kasım University	2014	Nicosia	Private	https://www.onbeskku.edu.tr/

Table 1 reflects the list of the higher education institutions established in the TRNC from 1937 up to this date which forms the research group.

The universities are listed according the districts they are in and regarding their establishment date. A pseudonym is assigned to each university and the web sites are provided in the table. Famagusta district has one public and four private universities, Guzelyurt has one public as a branch of a well-known university from Turkey, Kyrenia five private universities, Lefke one public university founded by TRNC officials. Nicosia, which is the only divided capital city in Europe, has 11 universities scattered in different sections of the district.

Data collection process and data analysis

Universities were determined on district basis from the YÖK Atlas and Wikipedia links. The web pages of the universities are examined regarding the announcements, news and events sections which are accepted as public records in document analysis (O'Leary, 2014). The research covers the period between March 10, 2020 and March 13, 2021. All announcements/news/events on web pages are recorded on a daily basis. The content analysis, which is a technique for replicable and valid inferences from texts in the contexts (Krippendorff, 2004) that systematically describes and specifies a phenomenon (Downe-wambolt, 1992), was applied. Data is analyzed with NVivo 10 software for qualitative research. The coding process is cross analyzed by the researchers and peers. For reliability analysis, Miles & Huberman's (1994) formula [$G=A\div(A+B)\times100$] was applied to the data set and the reliability scores are presented with the related table in the results section.

RESULTS

The data were collected from the official web sites of the universities presented in Table 1. The content analysis of the research is reflected

by means of tables involving codes as repeated news, activities and announcements of the research group universities which fall into categories assigned by the researchers. The themes are assigned regarding the research questions and objectives as; "News, Activities, and Announcements." The analysis of the website news link of the research group, which is the first research objective, is presented in Table 2. The reliability score for the "News" theme is measured to be 0.83 regarding the Huberman's formula [$0.83=10\div(10+2)\times100$] which can be regarded as a high level of reliability (Patton, 2002).

Table 2. TRNC universities' website news link content analysis

Theme	Categories	Codes	Universities (f)	Total
News	**Distance Education**	Special needs & aids	NU2(1), FU1(1)	2

Table 2. TRNC universities' website news link content analysis

Theme	Categories	Codes	Universities (f)	Total
News	**Distance Education**	Special needs & aids	NU2(1), FU1(1)	2
		Outbreak of Covid	NU8(1), FU1(3), KU4(1), KU1(1), NU4(1), KU3(2), NU9(1), FU3(2), NU10(2), NU11(2)	16
		Continuity of distance education	FU1(2), KU4(2), KU1(1), KU2(2), NU6(2), KU3(1)	10
		Information for technical issues	FU1(4), KU4(2), KU1(3), KU2(1), NU2(1), NU4(3), KU3(2), NU9(1), NU5(1), NU10(1)	19
	Health	Mask obligation	NU2(1)	1
		Vaccination info.	GU1(1), NU2(2)	3
		Information about Covid effects	FU1(4), KU4(1), KU2(1), GU1(5), NU2(5), NU4(1), LU1(1), KU3(2), NU11(2), NU5(2)	24
	Casual	Protocols	NU8(4), FU1(1), KU1(1), KU4(1), KU2(2), GU2(4)	14
		Official ceremonies	KU1(1), NU8(2), GU2(2), NU7(1), GU1(1), NU4(1)	8
		Education	NU8(4), FU1(1), KU1(1), KU4(1), KU2(2), GU2(4)	13
		Notification	KU1(3), FU1(5), NU6(5), NU2(5), KU2(8), GU2(11), KU4(14), NU4(23), GU1(49), KU3(29), NU5(19), NU3(21), FU3(11)	152
	Grand Total			**252**

As reflected in Table 2, 10 codes were generated under three categories in the "News" theme. "Distance Education" category involves "Special needs & aids" code with two universities and two news, "Outbreak of Covid" code with 10 universities and 16 news, "Continuity of distance education" code with six universities and 19 news, and "Information for technical issues" code involves 10 universities and 19 related news. This category involves 51 news directly related to distance education on the web sites of the universities.

"Health" category involves three codes as "Mask obligation" with one university and one news, "Vaccination information" with two universities and three news, and "Information about Covid effects" involves 10 universities with 26 news shared by the universities in terms of news about health issues during the pandemic. This category involves 28 news shared by the universities through their websites.

There were a variety of news that were shared on the website of the universities which were gathered under "Casual" category with four codes containing 187 news. "Protocols" code involves 14 news by six universities and, "Education" code involves 13 news shared by six universities, and "Notification" code involves 152 news shared by 13 universities.

Beneath the "News" theme, 254 different news were found on the web sites of the universities under examination. It was found that universities generally posted notifications (f=152) through their official website news link followed by information about Covid effects (f=24) and information about technical issues (f=19). The "Notification" code involves many different casual news shared by the universities varies from directly student based information like;

"*About students taking advantage of the Meal Package*" (KU1), and "*Ottoman Library Catalog and Works Dictionary Project Comes to Life*" (NU6) or directly related to institutional issues like, "*….University Visited the Minister of Health*" (GU2) and "*…. University Engineers Produced Alternative Support Respirators*" (NU4). Within the "Health" code it was also possible to find different news related directly to covid process like *"PDRAM provided Psychological Support to Employees and Students Due to the Coronavirus Outbreak"* (FU1), and *"A member of the University of … Science Board and … Hospital Infectious Diseases Specialist informed our students about what needs to be done to protect themselves from the new type of corona virus*" (KU2). News about special needs education students and mask obligation are found to be the least shared topics from the websites of the universities. The former one was underlined as;

The educational process of children with special needs within the scope of Covid-19 measures:…. Faculty of Education, Head of Special Education Department .. stated that new conditions are in question due to the Covid-19 epidemic, and that the education, which is carried out in teacher-student cooperation at school, is now carried out in the teacher-student-parent triangle, and this process is a little more difficult for children with special needs (NU2).

And the latter one was mentioned by the same university as;

Those who do not wear masks commit a crime: …. Law Faculty Deputy Dean pointed out that the Covid-19 epidemic has completely affected our lives, and stated that it is a human duty to take the necessary precautions to prevent the disease and to wear a mask (NU2).

The second research objective was to examine the activities conducted and shared by the universities in the research group and the findings are presented in Table 3. The reliability score for the "Activities" theme is measured as 0.85 regarding the Huberman's formula [$0.85=6÷(6+1)×100$] which is again considered as a high level of reliability.

Table 3. TRNC universities' website activity link content analysis

Theme	Categories	Codes	Universities (f)	Total
Activities	Educational	Conferences & seminars	NU11(1), KU3(3), NU8(2), KU1(5), KU2(5), FU2(4), NU7(6), GU1(2), NU2(2), NU4(2), FU3(2), NU9(2), KU3(2)	36
		Related to C19	KU5(1), FU1(4), KU1(3), KU2(3), LU1(6), NU7(1), NU2(6), NU4(7), KU3(2), NU10(2)	33
		Art exhibition	NU1(1), KU5(3), KU2(2), FU2(2), NU6(1), LU1(1), NU7(2), NU4(4)	16
		Meetings & gatherings	NU11(1), KU1(18), LU1(4), NU7(19), NU2(8), NU2(7)	57
	Casual	Official ceremonies	KU5(1), KU2(3), NU7(1), GU1(1), NU4(1), KU3(2)	9
		Specific days & weeks	NU11(1), KU2(2), NU2(1), NU4(1), NU9(3), KU3(2)	10
		Grand Total		**158**

As Table 3 represents, six codes were generated under two categories in the "Activities" theme. "Educational" category involves "Conferences & seminars" code with 13 universities and 36 activities, "Related to C19" code with 10 universities and 33 activities, and "Art Exhibition" code with eight universities and 16 activities. This category involves 85 activities related to educational content that were conducted by the universities and reflected on their websites during the first year of the pandemic.

"Casual" category involves three codes as "Meetings & gatherings" with six universities and 57 activities, "Official ceremonies" with six universities and nine activities, and "Specific days & weeks" with six universities and 10 activities shared by the universities. This category involves 76 activities shared by the universities through their websites.

Beneath the "Activities" theme 158 different activities were found on the web sites of the research group universities. They generally posted meetings and gatherings (f=57) through their official website activities link followed by conferences and seminars (f=36) and educational activities related to Covid (f=33). Within the "Meetings and gatherings" code, as the most posted event information, NU7 which advertises itself as the first online university established in the nation, was found to be the most activity conductor compared to other universities in the district. One of the post as an example of the variety informing a local authority's participation; *"Our University's Business Development Consultant, attended the … Digital World program, which will be held for the first time this week, with our Board of Trustees*

Member." to an international (Turkey) authority participation as *".... World live broadcast program today, Microsoft Turkey, Deputy General Manager is attending."* It is also possible to find conferences and seminars conducted by various universities in the research group under "Educational" activities category with contents raging from departmental organizations like, *"Maritime Faculty Online Seminar titled Drowning in Water and Basic Life Support"* was held" by GU2 or sociological issues like, *"Violence Against Women and Its Psychological Dimensions" Assist. Assoc. Dr. Interview with M.M.A."* shared by NU7. There were also activities posted by universities regarding sessions with phenomenon people like, *"Musical interview with E., Gündüz"* by KU1 or some gatherings for global issues as;

.... University .... Institute is starting to organize 'Global Agenda' seminars on international relations and developments in the world agenda. Senior bureaucrats, diplomats and academics who are experts in their fields will discuss global issues in the seminars that will be held online during the Fall semester of the 2020-2021 Academic Year.

There were also universities which conducted art based events and activities (f=16) whether online, especially at the very beginning of the pandemic process, or face to face, underlining that all the sensitive precautions were taken in order to conduct the activity some of which as, *".... Academy Virtual Exhibition"* by NU1, or *"An online painting exhibition and game display event was organized"* by KU2. Official ceremonies were found to be the least announced event for the "Activity" theme, but it would be fair to think that this kind of activities is also posted in other channels and links like news and announcements.

The third research objective was to examine the announcements shared by the universities in the research group and the findings are presented in Table 4. The

reliability score for the "Announcements" theme is measured as 0.83, regarding the Huberman's formula [0.83=20÷(20+4)×100], which is also considered as a high level of reliability.

Table 4. TRNC universities' website announcement link content analysis

Theme	Categories	Codes	Universities (f)	Total
Announcements	Semester Issues	Payments & registration	NU1(1), FU1(2), KU4(1), KU1(2), KU2(2), LU1(3), GU1(1), NU2(1), NU8(2), FU3 (2), NU5(1), N10(2)	20
		Scholarships & rankings	FU4(2), NU1(3), KU5(1), NU8(2), FU1(2), KU5(1), KU1(3), FU2(1), NU7(1), NU4(3), N10(2), NU9(2)	23

	Education models & programs	FU5(1), NU8(2), KU4(2), KU1(3), KU2(4), GU2(2), LU1(3), NU7(2), NU2(3), NU4(2), NU9(1), N10(1)	26
	Exam & assessment information	FU4(1), KU1(1), LU1(1), NU1(3), KU5(3), KU8(4), FU1(4), KU4(3), KU1(8), KU2(1), GU2(3), NU7(1), GU1(1), NU2(1), NU4(1), NU5(2), NU9(2), NU10(2), NU3(1)	42
	Shuttle information	KU4(1), KU1(1), LU1(1)	3
	Graduation	FU1(1), KU4(1), KU1(1), KU2(2), GU1(2), NU2(1), NU4(1), KU3(2),	11

Official Informations	Curfews	NU5(2), FU1(1), KU4(1), KU1(6), KU2(1), LU1(3), NU2(2), NU4(1), KU3(2), NU5(1), NU3(1), NU10(1), NU11(2)	24
	Travel restrictions	FU1(2), KU4(1), KU2(1), LU1(1)	5
	Mask obligation	FU1(1), KU4(1), LU(1), NU2(1),	4
	Quarantine rules	NU8(1), KU4(1), KU2(2), LU1(3)	7
	Covid-19 link	FU4(1), FU2(1), FU1(1)	3
	Start up	FU5(1), KU4(1), KU1(1), KU2(1), LU1(1), GU2(1), NU2(1), NU2(1), NU3(1), KU3(2) NU5(1), NU10(1)	13
Distance Education	Virtual tools & platforms information	FU4(1), FU1(1), GU2(2), LU1(3),	9

			NU2(1), NU4(1)	
		Applied courses information	KU5(1), FU1(2), KU4(2), GU2(2)	7
		Internship information	KU2(2), LU1(1), NU2(1)	4
		Abroad students'	KU1(1), KU2(1)	2
	Casual	Protocols	NU11(11), FU2(2)	13
		Sports, travel & art information	FU5(4), KU5(4), KU3(2)	10
		Academic & admin. information	NU8(7), LU1(2), NU3(3)	12
		Official information	FU2(6), NU7(1), KU3(2)	9
		Grand Total		**234**

As reflected in Table 4, 20 codes were gathered under four categories. "Semester issues" category involves "Payments & registration" code with 12 universities and 20 announcements, "Scholarships & rankings" code with 12 universities and 23

announcements, "Education models & programs," code with 12 universities and 16 announcements, "Exam & assessment information" code involves 19 universities and 42 announcements, "Shuttle information" code involves three universities and three announcements, and "Graduation" code involves eight universities and 11 announcements. This category involves 127 announcements related to semester issues of the universities in the way they reflected on their websites.

"Official information" category involves five codes as "Curfews" with 15 universities and 24 announcements, "Travel restrictions" code with four universities and five announcements, "Mask obligation" code involves four universities with four announcements, "Quarantine rules" involves four universities with seven announcements, and "Covid-19 link" involves three universities with three announcements shared by the universities in terms of announcements about Covid related contents. This category involves 43 announcements shared by the universities through their websites.

"Distance education" category involves four codes as; "Startup" code with 12 universities and 13 announcements, "Virtual tools & platforms information" with six universities and nine announcements, "Applied courses information" code with four universities and seven announcements, and "Internship information" code with three universities and four announcements, and "Abroad students" code involves two universities with two announcements shared by the universities in the research group. This category involves 22 announcements shared by the universities through their websites.

There were a variety of announcements that were shared on the website of the universities which were gathered under "Casual" category with four codes containing 49 announcements. "Protocols" code involves 13 announcements by two universities, "Sports, travel & art information" code involves 10 announcements shared by six universities, "Academic & administrative

information" code involves 12 announcements, and "Official information" code involves nine announcements shared by three universities.

Beneath the "Announcements" theme, 234 different announcements were found on the web sites of the universities under examination. It was found that universities generally posted exam and assessment information (f=42) through their official website announcement links followed by education models and programs (f=26), curfews (f=24), scholarship and rankings (f=23), and payments and registration (f=20) that creates the majority of announcements shared by the universities. Due to the effect of the pandemic most of the universities declared some temporary adjustments in their exam and assessment procedures and FU1 shared a detailed information like many universities did through their official website declaring the change as;

…2019-2020 Academic Year Successful/Unsuccessful (CS/CU) Grading System to be Implemented: During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are going through, the psychological trauma caused by the process, as well as the technical difficulties related to the courses we have to continue online outside of our usual education system, may arise. It is possible to experience student grievances. In order to prevent or minimize such grievances that may arise, various universities in many countries have decided to apply the SUCCESSFUL/FAILED (CS/CU) system to be implemented only in this period.

Followed by other universities that also posted information related to the assessment criteria which have been adjusted to their systems as;

If you participate in at least 5 of the online event programs (with quizzes), you will be entitled to +1 credit. If you participate and answer the pop-up quizzes that will appear in online social events by adding your student numbers on our official website, your attendance will be determined (KU1).

Starting from the first declaration of the pandemic and the fast shift from traditional instructional classrooms to virtual ones, forced universities to arrange educational models and programs in order to help the students to reach the desired outcomes planned for the courses that are suitable to apply such as hybrid models posted by GU2 as an example; *"Important Announcement for the 2020-2021 Academic Year: In the Fall semester, 40% of the courses in all programs will be taught online in digital environment using distance education methods. 60% of the courses will be given through face-to-face teaching."* or another university as; Information on the *"2020-2021 Fall Semester Educational Model: Hybrid"* (LU1).

Many universities posted information related to the official curfews (f=24) announced by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health from TRNC public channels either as links of the announcement (KU5) or shared with institutional information (KU1). Likewise, universities conducted a different variety of graduation ceremonies like online by FU1 as; *"… 2020-2021 Academic Year Fall Semester Graduation Ceremony will be held online on February 15-16."* It is possible to find more detailed announcements on the websites of the universities as;

With the decision to suspend education taken by YÖK, YODAK, TRNC Ministry of National Education and Culture and TRNC Council of Ministers due to the new type of coronavirus, the Near East University, which completed the spring semester of the 2019-2020 Academic Year with distance education, will organize a distance/online graduation ceremony for Spring Term Graduates (FU1).

While the new type of educational applications was on the run throughout the first and second periods of Covid, universities also posted their official agreements and protocols (f=13) that were signed with different authorities both in the public and the private sector stakeholders and local authorities like; *"A protocol*

agreement was signed between … University and the Cyprus Turkish Orthopedic Disability Association (NU11)." or "

Universities also posted academic and administrative information (f=12) as well as other subjects through their websites like academic recruitment by NU8 on different dates as 12.06.2020 and 29.12.2020, or official contacts as; *"New Karpaz Association President T.Ö. will meet with the … Rector on Wednesday, 29 July 2020"* (FU2).

Shuttle information (f=3), internship information (f=4), and abroad students' online education back up programming was found to be least information shared through the web sites of the universities in the research group during the first year of the pandemic. During the data collection process of the research, it was detected that most of the universities shared applied courses information and internship information during the first phase of Covid within their posts related to the subject but some others shared specific information for these items as; *"April 8, 2020: Announcement about Teaching Practice: Completion of the lesson with video shooting as a project"* (KU2), or; *"29 June 2020: Important Announcement: '2020 Summer Term Internships': You can complete your internships according to the epidemic and health conditions"* by LU1. One other university posted information for the students who has to complete their education abroad was shared as; *"April 17: Summer school opportunity for students who have to take a break from their education abroad"* by KU1 and as; *"April 22,2020: Announcement of Free Course Opportunity from University of … for TRNC Citizen Students Who Have to Suspend their Education Abroad due to the Covid-19 Pandemic"* by KU2.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was conducted as a qualitative document analysis through the data gathered from the websites of the universities stated in the research group. The fundamental focus of the research is on the information shared by the universities through their official websites' news, activities and announcement links during the first year of the pandemic in terms of the reflection of social responsibilities of the universities which had to preserve a

social distance with the students due to the infection prevention precautions. The research objectives rely on the examination of the contents and the frequency status of the news, activities and announcement links of the universities in terms corporate communication as a way to fulfill the social responsibility duties of the universities during the unexpected worldwide virus effect. Content analysis was applied to the data obtained from the websites of the universities. Codes are generated regarding the information shared from news, activity and announcement links of the universities. Codes are then grouped into categories assigned by the researchers under major themes. The findings are grouped regarding the research objectives as news, activities and announcements of the universities in the research group as the thematic findings.

The findings of the research clarified that universities have shared information via their official websites' news links under three categories and the first one is distance education in which possible to find information about how it is going to be conducted through software and applications, mostly clarified by the universities, whether as separate link or under other related information posted to supply the information needs of the students about the distance education and it's all related features for the upcoming semesters. These findings are in line with Tetrevova, Vavra & Munzarova's (2021) research. News links also used as a way to disseminate knowledge about some health topics, forming the second category in the news theme, as mask obligation, vaccination information, information about covid effects by the universities which could be regarded as a reflection of their responsibilities with the ambition to fulfill by posting updated health documents to inform the students and the stakeholders. News links is also used by various universities to post information about education based news and outgoing protocols that they sign with the public and private sector representatives which were categorized as casuals, which coincides with Sumlut, Sakurai & Lee's (2022) comparative research of the US and Japan in which the steps taken to manage corporate reputation during the pandemic were examined.

Universities also did not fall behind to post official celebrations and ceremonies through their websites, as well as education based information involving seminars and conferences, projects and departmental issues. Within the casual theme, notifications are found to be the most shared information in the new links of the universities in which a variety of information from institutional operations to student leisure activities.

The second objective of the research is to examine the universities' links for activities in their websites. It was found that most of the universities conducted activities under two categories and the first one are education in which activities related to Covid, as well as conferences and seminars on various subjects, and art exhibitions were conducted through the first year of the pandemic, whether online or face to face by the universities under examination. Rababh et al.'S (2021) research complies with these findings in which BRICS countries were found to post activity information to stimulate USR. Activity links of the universities were found to be used mostly for posting meetings and gathering in a range from cultural days to official visits planned and informed to the students of the universities. Through this communication channel, universities preferred to post official ceremonies and specific national celebration days. This finding asserts that it is possible to see some specific titles containing the same information, but shared through a different link depending on the preference or the webpage set up of the university. Ceremonies and official celebration were also found to be posted in the news links of some universities in the research group. It is possible to state that educational information was also shared by both news and activity links of some universities.

Announcement theme contains four categories and the first one is semester issues in which information related to registration and payment procedures for older students, rankings and scholarship for the new ones at the beginning of the semesters in the announcements of the universities. Education models and program were found to be one of the most shared information in this theme

as well as exam and assessment procedures, in which a considerable adjustments were made in the favor of the students in terms of application of the exams and the contents as projects or virtual presentations as an effect of the pandemic. As an example of the fast adjustment of the universities to virtual platforms from the traditional ones, it was possible to find announcements made for the graduation ceremony to be arranged virtually by a considerable number of universities. The other category in which Covid based information was mostly posted by the universities involves subjects as curfews, travel restrictions, quarantine rules that was also possible to find in the news links of many universities, some of which created a separate link for Covid 19, in the research group shared for the purpose to take attention to specific topics.

Universities also used announcement links of their official web sites as well as the news link to post information related to distance education, as the third category arranged in the theme, consisted of information about virtual tools to be downloaded and registered for the follow up process of the online courses conducted due to pandemic. There were a plenty of information shared by various universities stating the process to be followed to complete the duties of applied courses and internship practices which were postponed for a shorter future time or converted to projects mostly in the social sciences.

Likewise the former two categories formed by the researcher by means of the data collection process throughout the research, announcement theme also had a category named as casuals consisted of different information about the ongoing protocols assigned by the university officials with the private and public sector representatives involving many different projects and partnerships were also posted by the universities in terms of institutional reputation. Via these links, universities also posted information related to academic and administrative issues through their websites varies from recruitments, leisure activity posts to official institutional information. This finding complies with Bolivar, Sanchez & Lopez-Hernandez's (2013) research in which Anglo-

American universities are found to pay little attention to CSR/USR disclosure which is not seen a crucial element of communication policy regarding the webometrics which measures online disclosure of information. Sanchez, Bolivar & Lopez-Hernandez's (2013) research also underlined that in the US private or public sector universities accountability, information transparency, and the use of the internet was not strongly committed online disclosure of SR information and SR was not used as a differentiating factor between the two types of the universities in the US.

The overall findings of the research assert that universities in the research group used different channels for the dissemination of knowledge to their stakeholders (mostly undergraduates) during the first year of the pandemic in terms of corporate communication under the framework of universities social responsibilities. Universities' links of news, activities and announcements were used to inform students about institutional operations, health issues related to Covid, and educational information interchangeably but effectively. This could be interpreted as regardless of the compulsory social distance due to the effect of the virus, universities had the intention to accomplish their duties of social responsibilities mostly by sharing required information and to manage and sustain a reputation through their online disclosures and posts during the first year of the pandemic.

During the data collection and data analysis process, researchers found the chance to compare the technical structure of the websites of the universities in the research group. Naturally, it was possible to find websites in different forms and fast accessible content through the links supplied. Most of the universities supplied separate links for new, announcements and activities some were practical to chase information, but some others required patience to reach data (especially old date ones) whereas it was considerably easy and practical to find information for some universities. Pandemic proved us that a fast change could be a part of our lives, even if we are prepared or not. Universities also had this fast shift from traditional educational operations to virtual ones and websites stood for the

fundamental tool to communicate and disseminate the required information that the stakeholders of the university will be in need. And to do that, a well-organized and easy to access web link of a university could possibly play a critical role. Depending on this, it is fair to recommend that websites of the universities must be in a practical format to help an individual reach the data easily which is chased depending on a specific purpose. Moreover, it must be possible for a researcher to chase old date data and universities must arrange their links to enable the dissemination knowledge and information regardless of the date and time. The separation of the information shared through the related links could also help the students and the researchers to chase information they need faster and easier, that the research group universities have to consider as one e leading result of this research.

This research is conducted in a qualitative manner to find out the content of the news, activities and announcements of the universities posted during the first year of the pandemic. It was possible to see many different research that had diverse methodological approaches in the field of literature, but more research must be conducted to analyze the corporate communication issues of the universities in terms of their social responsibilities. A meta-analysis could be conducted to gather and analyze all data related to this topic. By this way, it would be possible to analyze a vast range of research conducted about online disclosures and implementations of social responsibilities. So that students are the major stakeholders of the operations of the universities, website effectiveness, technical quality, and content based research must be conducted with the students of the universities. By this way, the universities would have the chance to update and upgrade their communication tools, level up their status to reach the stakeholders and foremost conduct more social responsibility projects and operations with the participation of the stakeholders which wind up with social engagement and development.

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