

# Stakeholders' University Social Responsibility Awareness and Intervention within Host Communities in English-Speaking Cameroon

**Ngong Peter Tonain**

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, University of Buea, Cameroon

**Emmanuel Yenshu Vubo**

Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, University of Buea, Cameroon

**Abstract:** The study assessed the extent to which tertiary education institutions stakeholders are aware and have been up to the task in fulfilling their social responsibility interventions on Host communities within the English-Speaking regions of Cameroon. Two research questions were answered and two hypotheses tested. The research adopted the evaluative and sample survey research designs, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Higher Education Institution/Host Community Stakeholders' Questionnaire –HEI/HCS-Q and a focus group discussion guide) to collect data from stratified and purposively sampled 630 joined higher education stakeholders from the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon. After employing descriptive and inferential statistics (frequencies, percentages, and chi-square statistics) for data analysis, the findings of this study on a whole revealed the followings: 58% stakeholders expressed awareness of university social responsibility within host communities as opposed to 42% who are and were unaware. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected as there was a significant relationships between higher education stakeholders and their awareness level of university social responsibility on their host communities ( $\chi^2(9, N = 600) = 92.95, p = 0.000$ ). 63.1% of stakeholders were of the opinion that higher education institutions do not offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities as against 36.9% of stakeholders who agreed. The null hypothesis was rejected as there was a significant relationship between higher education institutions and stakeholders opinions on the extent to which free University education is offered to qualified but socially marginalised members of host communities ( $\chi^2(4, N = 600) = 65.55, p = 0.000$ ). The fundamental recommendation was on the need for intentional concrete policy measures within Cameroon's current decentralization adventure to create increased awareness, fully introduce and guide the practice of University social responsibility interventions by higher education institutions on their host communities.

**Key points:** Stakeholders, University Social Responsibility, Awareness, Intervention, Host communities, and English-Speaking Cameroon.

## INTRODUCTION

University social responsibility (USR) can be seen as an alternative version of the common practice of corporate social responsibility - CSR practiced by companies and other business on their host communities; wherein USR is taking into cognizant the ethical and moral nature of services an educational institution delivers to the society aside teaching-learning and research (Alshuwaikhat & Abubakar, 2008). In addition, USR stresses on the need for any university to be accountable to its

host society outside routine university functions; this is accentuated on the moral and ethical standpoints of the universities (Bernardo et al., 2012). Meagher (2002) while looking into university social responsibility (USR) argued strongly that one of the roles of any university in present-day world is to go outside its renowned duties of producing and disseminating knowledge limited to students and other intellectual members, to engaging substantial benefits to the outside members of the communities where these universities are found. There is therefore need for universities to take up the greater responsibility of either directly or indirectly providing for the needs of individuals as well as those of the society where they are found. Meagher, further posited that the body of knowledge is intensifying as researchers from various works of life continue to investigate the contributions of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) towards the development of their respective communities.

Esfijani et al., (2012) gave a possibility of terms or options that are related to university social responsibility which are better expressed in different milieus as; community engagement, community outreach programs, civic engagement, public engagement, and society university stakeholdership. USR is out to portray the outdoor duties of HEIs to the society or community as a moral engagement of internal stakeholders who are working together with their outside stakeholders like the host societies and communities to ensure their advancement as well (Peña et al., 2018). In effect, Păunescu et al., (2017a), say it all that social responsibility is an all-encompassing line of thought to be practiced by all organizations and institutions whether they are social or business oriented. Social responsibility is the kind of a business judgment that is not certainly tied down to any specific organization or institution since it deals with moral and legal responsibilities that result from organizational interactions with the general public, economy, and environment (Păunescu et al., 2017b).

When putting USR into practice, universities or HEIs are likely to be answerable to assorted groups of stakeholders like students, staff, alumni, and to all those external community structures to the universities as a result of the working relationship that they are sharing together in one way or the other. Besides the role of instructive teaching, universities are obliged to take on an additional role of upholding moral and ethical values, providing guidelines for reasonable workplace solutions, transparency, and paying attention to the protection of the human rights of their relevant stakeholders. Universities do play a special role in every society or community considering the sustainable attachment they have with regards to production and dissemination of knowledge (Esfijani & Chang, 2012). Still within this concept of USR, universities are charged with developing socially responsible human resources amongst the various stakeholders with knowledge and reasonable practices that can serve for the future enhancement of their abilities to gauge and adopt practices for personal and social satisfaction (Belyaeva et al., 2018).

Therefore, there is need for full engagement of universities into developing dependable leaders of tomorrow - ones who can assume the responsibility of societal development and guarantee a sustainable future. However, it is found wanting that USR practices in many universities around the world are yet to be explored. Apart from the quality of workforce distributions and numbers of students enrolled, the social engagement and sustainability issues could project them more to prominence within the global scenery of improvement on mankind (Sánchez et al., 2013). Quezada (2012) while emphasizing on its importance opines that the practice of USR is different from CSR in that it brings into effect clear issues that can only be handled and conveyed by HEIs on society that will help in administration, instructive, psychological, and social or community outreach. Moreover, Ting et al., (2012) propose that universities could strategize, create, communicate, and measure their USR works on the following four main working ideas of: dependable grounds, social learning and management, proficient instruction, and social cooperation which are corresponding to administration, instruction, research and outreach.

In Cameroon, the multiple higher education institutions particularly in the English-Speaking regions as of the time of this study are observably not fully in consonance with their host communities so far as contributing and serving the needs of these host societies are concerned. Prior to the

introduction of the 1993 higher education reforms which subsequently led to the ups-hoot of many a public and private higher education institutions across the board in Cameroon, the host towns were said to be experiencing a boom in the multiple influx of students, workers and many other onlookers who streamed into the then new university areas for manifold reasons: either for studies, to serve the state to seek for employment opportunities, to expand on and exploit business opportunities, or others who simply converged merely to indulge in the businesses of the underground economy. The presence of the tertiary institutions and new members amongst the host communities were of mixed blessings to the indigenous populations and to the new comers as well; though with heavier damages on the former considering that there was the absence of a standardized but formal state policy to control the mechanisms of social interaction between the tertiary institutions and their host communities. Despite the 1993 reforms in this sector, the system was still characterized by many limitations as was the case before, mindful of the fact that clear regulations were not yet defined to regulate the social cohesion between these social classes who will be compelled to live together and for the mutual benefits of all.

Worthy to note is the fact that, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been an age-old practice of giving back to the local or host communities after ploughing back some huge benefits from them, and which is carried out mostly by companies, corporate bodies and big organizations noted for running businesses and other extensive activities affecting their host communities in one way or the other. Apart from the four main university functions of management, teaching, research, and outreach or extension (Giuffré & Ratto 2014), the universities directly or indirectly are carrying out some forms of businesses either through small or large scales. Hence, this explains why most university chancelleries and rectorates are usually tagged with the division of Research and Corporation with the Business world (RCB). In this light, there is the absolute need to usher in another dimension of social responsibility in order to verify what people and other stakeholders stand to benefit as a result of the localization of these higher education institutions among them.

According to Workforce Management (2003), there is supposed to be community involvement which includes raising money for local charities, providing volunteers, sponsoring local events, employing local workers, supporting local economic growth, engaging in fair trade practices, etc. Moreover, the private higher education institutions in effect run corporate services as they charge relatively high tuition fees from the students, operate on-campus businesses with partnership opened to local business people, build and rent out hostels, just to mention these few. Unlike the public higher education institutions, the students are charged just with a meagre registration fee, meanwhile the highest bulk of sponsorship and responsibilities rest on the shoulders of the government or state. Nonetheless, the former and the latter still run multiple but petty businesses like documentation services, printing press services, and canteen and restaurant services, etc with resultant profits that will warrant the social interests of the local populace to be prioritized at the end as well. Considering that these universities and/or higher education institutions came in to the communities to meet the people and not the other way round in addition to the environmental advantages from the host communities, there is need for us to examine stakeholders' University Social Responsibility (USR) awareness and intervention within host communities, with particular focus the on level of awareness of stakeholders and the extent to which these institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from host communities.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The 1993 University reforms in Cameroon witnessed the decentralization of public universities in the country; whereby originally from one state university—the University of Yaoundé created in 1961 as the then federal university, thereafter, witnessed a rapid explosion to eight state universities by 2010. Out of these eight public universities in the Country, the two Anglophone regions (the North West and South West Regions) happen to be host to two of these eight state universities with the duo though independent of one another are currently operating largely on the Anglo-Saxon traditions of education. In addition to these two public tertiary institutions, the liberalization of the

country's Higher Education sector has resulted in the manifestation of Private Higher Education institutions (PHEIs) who are operating typically on the Anglo-Saxon inherited style of education.

Though the coming of the many tertiary education institutions in these two English-speaking regions may be good for education and community development, they have however brought some negative operational impacts on their host communities which demand some level of social responsiveness on their part as a way of cushioning some of these negative impacts. Some of these negative impacts include the fact that these host communities may have to live with increase in crime rates, estranged behavioural patterns and youth cultism; compulsory acquisition of community land without adequate compensation and increase in the cost of living due to higher demand pull. There are also the gradual, but sustained erosion of highly cherished community social values, above all the depletion or disintegration of aboriginal cultural norms, and the continuous threat to community security amongst others.

It is expected that these Higher Education Institutions, as part of their corporate social responsibilities and a fulfilment of their third function which is outreach, are supposed to reach out to their society or host communities in different ways in order to cushion the negative effects of their presence in these communities to the host populations. Some of the areas of social responsiveness expected from these tertiary institutions to host communities as outlined by different scholars include; offering free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from the host communities, among many others.

Despite the many years of operation by these public, private and confessional tertiary institutions in English-speaking Cameroon, seemingly not much is known or has been observed as products of the corporate or university social responsibilities of these institutions on their host communities. Consequently, this researcher out of academic anxiety and a necessity to contribute to empirical research and knowledge in this domain, and a viable but sustainable social interactionism amongst dwellers of an identical settlement has found the need to assess the level of awareness of stakeholders about USR and the extent to which these institutions offer free university education to the socially marginalized within the communities.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study generally seeks to assess the level of university stakeholders' awareness of USR and the extent of tertiary institutions interventions through USR on their host communities in English-Speaking Cameroon.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Assess stakeholders' awareness of University Social Responsibility interventions on their host communities within English-Speaking regions of Cameroon.
- Examine the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities within the English-Speaking regions of Cameroon.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What is the level of stakeholders' awareness of University Social Responsibility interventions on host communities within the English-Speaking regions of Cameroon?
- To what extent do university institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from host communities within the English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon?

## **HYPOTHESES**

1. **H<sub>0</sub>:** there is no level of awareness of University Social Responsibility by university stakeholders on their host communities within the English-Speaking regions of Cameroon

2. **Ho:** there is no significant relationship between the higher education institutions offering free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities within North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was a positivist and post-positivist (quantitative and qualitative) research that adopted the descriptive research design – notably the evaluation study and sample survey designs. The study area exclusively consisted of the two English-speaking regions of the Republic of Cameroon; simply known as North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

The Parent population for the study was made up of all stakeholders of HEIs in the area of study (both public and private institutions); alongside stakeholders from the host communities represented by members of the municipal councils. The accessible population of this study took into consideration all the stakeholders of the state and private university institutes for USR interventions in the four municipal council areas of the HEIs in the two major English-speaking cities of Buea and Bamenda.

A convenient sample size of 630 joined stakeholders were purposively selected from the different subgroups of stakeholders and justifiably spread across the various University communities under consideration, respective of their population sizes and representations. Considering that the total size of the accessible population was not defined to allow for a 10 or 30 percent sample (as the case may be), the researcher decided to choose a manageable sample size of 630 in line with the advice of (Awotunde and Ugodulunwa, 2004; Ali, 2006 and Babin, 2015). They argue that, a researcher, in a situation where the population size is not defined so as to allow for a 10 or 30 percent sample; may choose a reasonable and manageable representative sample size depending on the study and the resources at his/her disposal. Among the 630 sampled stakeholders, 600 of them responded to the stakeholder-questionnaire; meanwhile the remaining 30 participated in the focus group discussion sessions.

The purposive sampling technique (Stratified-Purposive sampling technique) was adopted for the study to ensure that the subgroups (strata) of the stakeholders were each adequately represented in the study. The sampled stakeholders were disproportionately distributed according to the two different Anglophone regions of Cameroon and within the different public and private HEIs. The instruments for data collection were a 15 items, four likert-scale structured questionnaire tagged University Social Responsibility/Host Community Stakeholders' Questionnaire (USR/HCS-Q) and a focused group discussion guide. The instruments were administered through face to face interactions, use of a field assistant and by email. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics - frequencies and percentages for descriptive statistics and the chi-square test of association for inferential statistics.

## **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Objective 1:** Assess stakeholders' awareness of University Social Responsibility interventions on their host communities within English-Speaking regions of Cameroon.

Generally, respondents showed awareness of University Social Responsibility on their host communities as indicated by the opinion of 58% of respondents as oppose to 42% of respondents who opined otherwise. Specifically, majority (62.3%) of respondents expressed awareness of the fact that there are state laws and university measures which give preferential treatment to locals when recruiting university staffs while few (37.7%) of the respondents expressed ignorance of this fact. As oppose to 36.6% of respondents, 63.4% of respondents were aware that there are quite a significant number of staffs who are members of the host community. Based on the view of 64.3% of respondents and contrary to the view of 35.7% of respondents, respondents were aware that there are some forms of free university education incentives like scholarships, work, etc. within the university in their communities. Most (63.1%) of the respondents expressed ignorance of the fact that there are majority of the free university education incentives which are offered to socially marginalized students of the host community while a few were aware. Unlike 48.4% of

respondents, 52.6% of respondents were aware that there is a strong collaboration between the higher educational institution and the host community. Contrary to the view of 43.4% of respondents, 56.6% of respondents expressed unawareness of the fact that there are formal/informal forums where representatives of the two social groups meet to discuss mutual development especially for the benefit of the host community. As oppose to 11.4% of the respondents, 88.6% of respondents expressed awareness of the fact that there are institutional social amenities in this university such as a health unit, library, playground, restaurant, transportation services, etc. More than half (53.1%) of the respondents were aware that some of the on and off campus institutional social amenities which are opened to members of the community while 46.9% of respondents were unaware.

**Table 1: Respondents’ opinion on awareness level of University Social Responsibility interventions amongst university stakeholders in their host communities**

Item	Stretched				Collapsed		Decision
	VA	A	U	VU	VA/A	VU/U	
There are university measures which give preferential treatment to locals when recruiting university staffs	158 (26.3%)	214 (35.7%)	204 (34%)	21 (3.5%)	372 (62.3%)	225 (37.7%)	Aware
There are quite a significant number of staffs who are members of the host community	123 (20.5%)	254 (42.3%)	182 (30.3%)	36 (6%)	377 (63.4%)	218 (36.6%)	Aware
There are some forms of free university education incentives like scholarships, work, etc. within the university in this community	204 (34%)	181 (30.2%)	172 (28.7%)	42 (7%)	385 (64.3%)	214 (35.7%)	Aware
There are majority of the free university education incentives which are offered to socially marginalized students of the host community	31 (10%)	190 (16.7%)	261 (30%)	117 (43.3%)	221 (36.9%)	378 (63.1%)	Unaware
There is a strong collaboration between this higher educational institution and the host community	89 (14.8%)	220 (36.7%)	231 (38.5%)	59 (9.8%)	309 (51.6%)	290 (48.4%)	Aware
There are formal/informal forums where representatives of the two social groups meet to discuss mutual development especially for the benefit of the host community	111 (18.5%)	148 (24.7%)	275 (45.8%)	63 (10.5%)	259 (43.4%)	338 (56.6%)	Unaware
There are institutional social amenities in this university such as a health unit, library, playground, restaurant, transportation services, etc.	367 (61.2%)	162 (27%)	59 (9.8%)	9 (1.5%)	529 (88.6%)	68 (11.4%)	Aware
There are some of the on and off campus institutional social amenities which are opened to members of the community	144 (24%)	169 (28.2%)	220 (36.7%)	56 (9.3%)	313 (53.1%)	276 (46.9%)	Aware
<b>Multiple response set</b>	<b>1227 (25.7%)</b>	<b>1538 (32.2%)</b>	<b>1604 (33.6%)</b>	<b>403 (8.4%)</b>	<b>2765 (58%)</b>	<b>2007 (42%)</b>	<b>Aware</b>

Source: Fieldwork

The above findings from stakeholders who responded to the questionnaire were supported by the views expressed by majority of stakeholders during the four focus group discussions conducted by the researcher. Stakeholders generally expressed approval of the fact that there are individual institutional measures which are supposed to be put in place to promote university social responsibility intervention within host communities. However, they weren't aware if there existed government legislations in support of such USR interventions. They confirmed their awareness of the need for the presence of members of host communities as staffs of the institutions, and also the need for the existence of some education incentives for marginalised members of host communities. The stakeholders also said they were aware of the fact that a strong collaborative relationship is supposed to exist between the universities and their host communities. This is because, it is thanks to the host communities that the universities have been sighted in their various locations, and so there is no way the institutions can successfully operate without being able to collaborate with members of the host communities. According to the stakeholders, this should make the management of these higher education institutions to understand that there are social responsibilities such as the provision of some basic amenities within the host communities amongst others which they must perform. The table below is a thematic summary of the views expressed by stakeholders to this regard during the focus group discussion

**Table 2: Thematic summary of focus group discussions on the awareness level of members of host communities about university social responsibility interventions**

Focus Group Participants	Description		
	Theme of Discussion	Key Response Themes	Striking Statements made during discussion
Selected University Stakeholders	Awareness level about university social responsibility interventions within host communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collective awareness</li> <li>- No government legislation</li> <li>- Obligation of USR</li> <li>- Collective collaboration</li> <li>- No formal relationship</li> <li>- Mutual relationship</li> <li>- Availability of a market</li> <li>- Nearness to education</li> <li>- Harmony</li> <li>- Misunderstanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ... The council cannot succeed as an institution without the university and vice versa</li> <li>- ... there is no formal partnership or agreement that was ever signed to say that they will be doing this or that within this particular timeframe</li> <li>- I don't know about such laws. But I wish they could have been in existence even though for now we are faring well with the university</li> <li>- I've never heard of any law that talks of universities recruiting indigenes. But if such a regulatory mechanism were there, it could have been good ...</li> <li>- I have not seen any formal gathering where members of the university and those of the community do come together.</li> <li>- Throughout my stay in the university I never heard that there were laws governing special recruitment into the universities.</li> <li>- I have never heard throughout my</li> </ul>

			<p>studies that these institutions honour any legal engagements from the state of Cameroon. And so, I assume there are no such state laws and policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no formal agreement between us and any higher institution of learning here. But for now, we are really contented that the institutions are positively affixed towards the informal rules.</li> <li>- the university has not penetrated the community to say they want to be part and parcel of this project or initiated any to help the community.</li> <li>- I wished a thing like an MOU; that's a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the council and the higher education institutions, laying down obligations between the institutions and their host communities</li> </ul>
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Source: Fieldwork

### Test of Association

At the University of Buea (UB), 63.5% of the respondents showed awareness of university social responsibility while 36.5% were unaware. Biaka University Institute Buea (BUIB) recorded an awareness level 83.8% and an unawareness level of 16.2%. University of Bamenda (UBa) showed an awareness level of university social responsibility interventions of 65.4% and an unawareness level of 34.6%. Majority (60%) of the respondents in National Polytechnic University Institute (NPUI) Bamenda weren't aware of university social responsibility interventions while 40% of the respondents were aware. Most (63.0%) of the respondents in the Catholic University of Cameroon (CATUC) Bamenda were aware of university social responsibility interventions while 37% of the respondents were unaware (Table 3). A test of association between higher education institutions and respondents' level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions showed that there is a significant relationship between higher education institutions and respondents' level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions ( $\chi^2(4, N = 600) = 20.86, p = 0.000$ ). The strength of this relationship was low as indicated by an effect size of 0.2. Therefore, level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions varied significantly with higher education institution. BUIB was most likely to express awareness of university social responsibility interventions followed by UBa, UB, CATUC Bamenda and NPUI Bamenda in that order (83.8%, 65.4%, 63.5%, 63% and 40% respectively). Details of the test of association between higher education institution and respondents' level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions are presented on table 3.

**Table 3: Association between higher education institution and respondents' level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions**

		Awareness level		Total	
		Unaware	Aware		
	UB	Count	65	113	178
		Expected Count	59.0	119.0	178.0

Institution	BUIB	% within University	36.5%	63.5%	100.0%
		Count	16	83	99
		Expected Count	32.8	66.2	99.0
	UBa	% within University	16.2%	83.8%	100.0%
		Count	89	168	257
		Expected Count	85.2	171.8	257.0
	NPUI Bamenda	% within University	34.6%	65.4%	100.0%
		Count	12	8	20
		Expected Count	6.6	13.4	20.0
	CATUC Bamenda	% within University	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
		Count	17	29	46
		Expected Count	15.3	30.7	46.0
		% within University	37.0%	63.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 20.86, df = 4, p = 0.000, \text{Effect size} = 0.2$

With respect to gender, 67.5% of males showed awareness of university social responsibility interventions while 32.5% of the respondents were unaware. On the other hand, 66.1% of females showed awareness of university social responsibility interventions while 33.9% of females were unaware (Table 6).

A test of association between gender and respondents' level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions revealed that there is no significant relationship between gender and respondents' level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions ( $X^2(1, N = 600) = 0.138, p = 0.869$ ). Hence level of awareness didn't vary significantly with gender. Details of the test of association between gender and respondents' level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions are presented on table 4.

**Table 4: Association between gender and respondents' level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions**

			Awareness level		Total
			Unaware	Aware	
Gender	Male	Count	103	214	317
		Expected Count	105.1	211.9	317.0
		% within Gender	32.5%	67.5%	100.0%
	Female	Count	96	187	283
		Expected Count	93.9	189.1	283.0
		% within Gender	33.9%	66.1%	100.0%

$X^2 = 0.138, df = 1, p = 0.869$

**Testing of hypothesis 1:**

**There is no significant relationship between higher education stakeholders and awareness level of university social responsibilities on their host communities**

Majority (74.2%) of students' demonstrated awareness of university social responsibilities on their host communities while a few (25.8%) of them were unaware. Most (64.1%) of the Municipal/traditional councilors showed awareness of university social responsibilities on their host communities while 35.9% were unaware. The lecturers demonstrated a 62.9% level of awareness and 37.1% level of unawareness. A compelling majority (82.2%) of administrative staff demonstrated awareness of university social responsibilities on their host communities while 17.8% were unaware. Members of the support staff showed 63.6% and 36.4% levels of awareness and

unawareness of university social responsibilities on their host communities respectively. Most (67.1%) of the University alumni were unaware of university social responsibilities on their host communities while 32.9% of the aware. Regarding the influential indigenes, 71.1% of them were aware of university social responsibilities on their host communities while 28.9% were unaware. Civil/traditional leaders demonstrated 100% level of awareness and 0% level of unawareness. Most (63.6%) of the members of the VDA were unaware of university social responsibilities on their host communities while 36.4% of them were aware. A landslide majority (95%) of CSO members’ demonstrated awareness of university social responsibilities on their host communities while very few (5%) of them were unaware (Table 5).

A test of association between higher education institution/host communities’ stakeholders and awareness level of university social responsibilities on their host communities revealed that there is a significant relationship between higher education stakeholders and awareness level of university social responsibilities on their host communities ( $\chi^2(9, N = 600) = 92.95, p = 0.000$ ). Hence level of awareness of university social responsibilities on their host communities varied significantly with higher education stakeholders. The strength of this relationship was low as indicated by an effect size of 0.4. The highest level of awareness was recorded by Civil/traditional leaders, followed by CSO members, Administrative staff, Students, Influential indigene, Municipal/traditional councilors, Support staff, Lecturers, Members of VDA and University alumni in that order (100%, 95%, 82.2%, 74.2%, 71.1%, 64.1%, 63.6%, 62.9%, 36.4% and 32.9% respectively). Details of the test of association between higher education stakeholders and respondents’ level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions are presented on table 5.

**Table 5: Chi Square test of association between higher education stakeholders and respondents’ level of awareness of university social responsibility interventions**

		Count	Awareness level		Total
			Unaware	Aware	
Higher Education Stakeholders	Students	Count	41	118	159
		Expected Count	52.7	106.3	159.0
		% within Stakeholder	25.8%	74.2%	100.0%
	Municipal/traditional councilor	Count	14	25	39
		Expected Count	12.9	26.1	39.0
		% within Stakeholder	35.9%	64.1%	100.0%
	Lecturers	Count	23	39	62
		Expected Count	20.6	41.4	62.0
		% within Stakeholder	37.1%	62.9%	100.0%
	Administrative staff	Count	8	37	45
		Expected Count	14.9	30.1	45.0
		% within Stakeholder	17.8%	82.2%	100.0%
	Support staff	Count	28	49	77
		Expected Count	25.5	51.5	77.0
		% within Stakeholder	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
	University alumni	Count	51	25	76
		Expected Count	25.2	50.8	76.0
		% within Stakeholder	67.1%	32.9%	100.0%
	Influential indigene	Count	11	27	38
		Expected Count	12.6	25.4	38.0
		% within Stakeholder	28.9%	71.1%	100.0%
Civil/traditional leader	Count	0	31	31	
	Expected Count	10.3	20.7	31.0	
	% within Stakeholder	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Member of VDA	Count	21	12	33	
	Expected Count	10.9	22.1	33.0	

	CSO member	% within Stakeholder	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%
		Count	2	38	40
		Expected Count	13.3	26.7	40.0
		% within Stakeholder	5.0%	95.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 92.95, df = 9, p = 0.000, effect\ size = 0.4$

**Objectives 2:** Examine the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities within the English-Speaking regions of Cameroon.

In all, higher education institutions didn't offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities as indicated by the opinion of 63.1% of respondents as oppose to 36.9% of respondents who thought otherwise. Contrary to the opinion of 39.2% of respondents, 60.8% of respondents reported that higher education institutions don't put in place special measures to identify the needy children of the community right from the application processes to enter the university. Going by the view of 69.7% of respondents, higher education institutions don't give reasonable considerations like waiver in university cut off points to children of the community who might have not had a favourable study atmosphere during their high school days; this opinion was however opposed by 30.3% of respondents. Unlike 30.9% of respondents, 69.1% of respondents opined that higher education institutions don't admit and sign engagements with intelligent but needy students of the community to study for free so they can later work and compensate the university upon graduation. As oppose to 20.1% of respondents, majority (79.9%) of the respondents were of the opinion that higher education institutions don't deceive fees in kind; like self-cultivated food stuffs and cash crops from needy parents who may desire their children to attain university education. According to majority (70%) of the respondents, higher education institutions don't identify and give preference to the work study programs mostly to the students from needy and poor backgrounds of the community; 30% of respondents however thought otherwise. Most (58.1%) of the respondents were of the view that higher education institutions don't offer free university education to outstanding students from very poor backgrounds in the community while 41.9% of respondents held the contrary view. Contrary to the view of 31.3% of respondents, 68.7% of respondents were of the view that higher education institutions work in collaboration with government, goodwill individuals and other multi-national companies like MTN, Orange, etc. to offer scholarships to qualified students from socially excluded /marginalized backgrounds e.g. (students with special needs, etc.). Details of respondents' opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities

**Table 6: Respondents' opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities**

Item	Stretched				Collapsed		Decision
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	SD/D	
Put in place special measures to identify the needy children of the community right from the application processes to enter the university	100 (16.7%)	131 (21.8%)	242 (40.3%)	117 (19.5%)	231 (39.2%)	359 (60.8%)	Disagree
Give reasonable considerations like waiver in university cut off points to children of the community who	35 (5.8%)	141 (23.5%)	260 (43.3%)	145 (24.2%)	176 (30.3%)	405 (69.7%)	Disagree

might have not had a favourable study atmosphere during their high school days							
Admit and sign engagements with intelligent but needy students of the community to study for free so they can later work and compensate the university upon graduation	80 (13.3%)	99 (16.5%)	226 (37.7%)	174 (29%)	179 (30.9%)	400 (69.1%)	Disagree
Receive fees in kind like self-cultivated food stuffs and cash crops from needy parents who may desire their children to attain university education	56 (9.3%)	61 (10.2%)	246 (41%)	218 (36.3%)	117 (20.1%)	464 (79.9%)	Disagree
Identify and give preference to the work study programs mostly to the students from needy and poor backgrounds of the community	46 (7.7%)	129 (21.5%)	264 (44%)	145 (24.2%)	175 (30%)	409 (70%)	Disagree
Offering free university education to <b>OUTSTANDING</b> students from very poor backgrounds in the community	94 (15.7%)	151 (25.2%)	177 (29.5%)	163 (27.2%)	245 (41.9%)	340 (58.1%)	Disagree
Working in collaboration with government, goodwill individuals and other multi-national companies like MTN, Orange, etc. to offer scholarships to qualified students from socially excluded /marginalized backgrounds e.g. (students with special needs, etc.)	173 (28.8%)	195 (32.5%)	128 (21.3%)	40 (6.7%)	368 (68.7%)	168 (31.3%)	Agree
<b>Multiple response set</b>	<b>584</b> <b>(14.5%)</b>	<b>907</b> <b>(22.5%)</b>	<b>1543</b> <b>(38.2%)</b>	<b>1002</b> <b>(24.8%)</b>	<b>1491</b> <b>(37%)</b>	<b>2545</b> <b>(63%)</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

The findings above were further supported by their counterparts in the four focused group discussions when they strongly agreed to the fact and held strong to their respective opinions that higher education institutions did not offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities. Hence, very little or nothing was done to this effect so as to favour the academic prosperity of these intellectually sound but socially

disadvantaged students. Nonetheless, interviewed stakeholders from two of the municipal councils that is Tubah and Buea that play host to the two state Anglo-Saxon Universities of Bamenda and Buea respectively attested to the fact that either currently or in the past the councils have just begun a scholarship scheme or ran one before that selected some qualified but socially marginalized students from their communities, gave them partial scholarships in terms of paying for their university registration fees and provision of books and other didactic materials for them to study in the universities. Worthy to note was the fact that this gesture was accorded merely to students who have been enlisted to study in their host universities. The University of Buea could only boast of a onetime partnership where she works diligently with a multi-national company like MTN Cameroon to offer scholarships to qualified students from socially excluded/marginalized backgrounds e.g. (students with special needs, etc.). Still, with the exceptionality of the aforementioned state universities of Bamenda and Buea, socially marginalized students like students with special needs (the disabled) are having the leverage to benefit from free University education, an outcome of the 2010 law on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities; alongside its promulgated 2018 text of application. Notably, this is only possible upon a recommendation from the regional Delegation of Social Affairs for candidates from the University of Bamenda prior to an application from the student with a disability or from one of the parents of a student with a disability. In the case of the disabled students from the University of Buea, the individual candidates with the supportive documents of the 2010 disability law and the 2018 text of application are expected to apply and submit their requests to the registry of the university in anticipation of a favourable response or not. It was detected and strongly agreed that the private universities in either of the two regions offered no form of free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students within their host communities.

Absolutely, whether be it in the private or public higher education institutions, they are yet to begin putting in place special measures to identify the needy children of the community right from the application processes to enter the university, they don't yet give reasonable considerations like waiver in university cut off points to children of the community who might have not had a favourable study atmosphere during their high school days; they don't also admit and sign engagements with intelligent but needy students of the community to study for free so they can later work and compensate the university upon graduation. Moreover, higher education institutions don't receive fees in kind; like self-cultivated food stuffs and cash crops from needy parents who may desire their children to attain university education; and again, they don't identify and give preference to the work study programs mostly to the students from needy and poor backgrounds of the community; they don't offer free university education to outstanding students from very poor backgrounds in the community. The table below is a thematic summary of the views expressed by stakeholders to this regard during the focus group discussion

**Table 7: Thematic summary of focus group discussion on Free University Education for host communities**

Focus Group Participants	Description		
	Theme of Discussion	Key Response Theme	Striking Statements made during discussion
Selected University stakeholders	Free University Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion</li> <li>- Positive discrimination</li> <li>- Fee waiver</li> <li>- Community initiative</li> <li>- Absence of university</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With the proximity of the university here the council has been giving scholarships to some needy and disabled children;</li> <li>- all students with disabilities who must have applied for fees exoneration through the regional delegation of social affairs for the North West are usually given a waiver by the university</li> <li>- The universities have not been offering free</li> </ul>

		<p>scholarship for indigenes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- External collaboration</li> <li>- Scholarship from MTN</li> <li>- Scholarship for disabled student</li> <li>- Council provides scholarship to needy indigenes in the university</li> </ul>	<p>scholarship to indigenous children per say.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I can remember just some ten years ago that MTN Cameroon through the university was offering scholarship to some needy children of the community and not just indigenes.</li> <li>- Now that we have this government's concept of decentralization, there are certain workshops and issues that certain university staff facilitates for us.</li> <li>- The relationship between the university and the council and community is one-sided. However, whenever we approach them for anything they usually collaborate in their own little ways.</li> <li>- I do not think the universities around us here have deliberately decided to help us. How I wished the universities had as policy and as a matter of obligation to be helping us in the regard of community development</li> <li>- I do not think the university has ever sent any development experts to help us in our village development issues. Maybe because we have never asked or they too they don't know they can be helping us in such issues</li> <li>- The university is like a country on its own. Those resources have not been able to serve them talk less of serving the outside or general public and community.</li> </ul>
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### Test of Association

A test of association between higher education stakeholders and respondents' opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities revealed that there is a significant relationship between higher education stakeholders and respondents' opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities ( $\chi^2(9, N = 600) = 128.50, p = 0.000$ ). Hence respondents' opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities varied significantly with higher education stakeholders. The strength of this relationship was moderate as indicated by an effect size of 0.5. Civil/traditional leaders were most likely to opine that higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities, followed by influential indigenes, Lecturers, administrative staff, CSO member, Students, Member of VDA, Municipal/traditional councillor, Support staff and University alumni in that order (96.8%, 92.1%, 40.3%, 40%, 37.7,35%, 33.3%, 25.6%, 22.1% and 10.5% respectively). Details of the test of association between higher education stakeholders and respondents' opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities are presented on table 8.

**Table 8: Association between higher education stakeholders and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities**

		Education			Total
		Disagree	Agree		
Stakeholder	Students	Count	99	60	159
		Expected Count	98.6	60.4	159.0
		% within Stakeholder	62.3%	37.7%	100.0%
	Municipal/traditional councillor	Count	29	10	39
		Expected Count	24.2	14.8	39.0
		% within Stakeholder	74.4%	25.6%	100.0%
	Lecturers	Count	37	25	62
		Expected Count	38.4	23.6	62.0
		% within Stakeholder	59.7%	40.3%	100.0%
	Administrative staff	Count	27	18	45
		Expected Count	27.9	17.1	45.0
		% within Stakeholder	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	Support staff	Count	60	17	77
		Expected Count	47.7	29.3	77.0
		% within Stakeholder	77.9%	22.1%	100.0%
	University alumni	Count	68	8	76
		Expected Count	47.1	28.9	76.0
		% within Stakeholder	89.5%	10.5%	100.0%
	Influential indigene	Count	3	35	38
		Expected Count	23.6	14.4	38.0
		% within Stakeholder	7.9%	92.1%	100.0%
Civil/traditional leader	Count	1	30	31	
	Expected Count	19.2	11.8	31.0	
	% within Stakeholder	3.2%	96.8%	100.0%	
Member of VDA	Count	22	11	33	
	Expected Count	20.5	12.5	33.0	
	% within Stakeholder	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%	
CSO member	Count	26	14	40	
	Expected Count	24.8	15.2	40.0	
	% within Stakeholder	65.0%	35.0%	100.0%	

**$X^2 = 128.50, df = 9, p = 0.000, effect size = 0.5$**

Majority (54.6%) of males disagreed that employment opportunities are set aside for qualified members of their host communities while 45.4% of them agreed. Majority (70.3%) of the males disagreed that employment opportunities are set aside for qualified members of their host communities while 29.7% of them agreed (Table 16).

A test of association between gender and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities showed that there is a significant relationship between gender and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities ( $X^2(1, N = 600) = 15.73, p = 0.000$ ). Hence, respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities varied significantly with gender. The strength of this relationship was small as indicated by an effect size of 0.2. Male were more likely to opine that higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host

communities than females (45.4% to 29.7% respectively). Details of the test of association between gender and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities are presented on table 16.

**Table 9: Association between gender and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities**

			Offer free university education		Total
			Disagree	Agree	
Gender	Male	Count	173	144	317
		Expected Count	196.5	120.5	317.0
		% within Gender	54.6%	45.4%	100.0%
	Female	Count	199	84	283
		Expected Count	175.5	107.5	283.0
		% within Gender	70.3%	29.7%	100.0%

$$X^2 = 15.73, df = 1, p = 0.000, \text{ effect size} = 0.2$$

**Testing of hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between higher education institutions and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities**

Majority (68%) of the respondents in UB disagreed that employment opportunities are set aside for qualified members of their host communities while 32% of them agreed. In BUIB, 73.7% of the respondents agreed that employment opportunities are set aside for qualified members of their host communities while 26.3% of them disagreed. In UBa, 68.5% of the respondents disagreed that employment opportunities are set aside for qualified members of their host communities while 31.5% of them agreed. Regarding NPUI Bamenda, 80% of the respondents disagreed that employment opportunities are set aside for qualified members of their host communities while 20% of them agreed. In CATUC Bamenda, 71.7% of the respondents disagreed that employment opportunities are set aside for qualified members of their host communities while 28.3% of them agreed (Table 10).

A Chi Square test of association between higher education institutions and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities showed that there is a significant relationship between higher education institutions and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities ( $X^2(4, N = 600) = 65.55, p = 0.000$ ). Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and uphold the alternate hypothesis. Therefore, respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities varied significantly with higher education institutions. The strength of this relationship was small as indicated by an effect size of 0.3. BUIB was most likely to opine that higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities followed by UB, UBa, CATUC Bamenda, and NPUI Bamenda in that order (73.7%, 32%, 31.5%, 28.3% and 20% respectively). Details of the test of association between higher education institution and respondents’ opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities are presented on table 10.

**Table 10 Chi Square test of association between higher education institutions and respondents opinion of the extent to which the higher education institutions offer free university education to qualified but socially marginalized students from their host communities**

			Offer free university education		Total
			Disagree	Agree	
University	UB	Count	121	57	178
		Expected Count	110.4	67.6	178.0
		% within University	68.0%	32.0%	100.0%
	BUIB	Count	26	73	99
		Expected Count	61.4	37.6	99.0
		% within University	26.3%	73.7%	100.0%
	UBa	Count	176	81	257
		Expected Count	159.3	97.7	257.0
		% within University	68.5%	31.5%	100.0%
	NPUI Bamenda	Count	16	4	20
		Expected Count	12.4	7.6	20.0
		% within University	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	CATUC Bamenda	Count	33	13	46
		Expected Count	28.5	17.5	46.0
		% within University	71.7%	28.3%	100.0%

$X^2 = 65.55, df = 4, p = 0.000, \text{effect size} = 0.3$

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

From the findings, recommendations have been put forth on how to create more awareness, explore the current prevailing consciousness on USR interventions akin to HCs implementation in North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, which could possibly be extended to the entire country; and how to use the outcomes of these USR interventions in order to improve on the social relationship between the two social groups/communities as they are ostensibly bound to live together:

Even though there was a strong awareness on the existence of USR interventions on host communities, there is still the need for government policy makers such as members of the Regional Assemblies, parliamentarians, and senators to revisit the documents and legislations guiding the practice of USR interventions in the country, if at all, there are any of them in actuality, mindful of the varying opinions that kept recurring among the respective stakeholders and social groups. This might only help in preparing further ground works towards a more and stronger consciousness on USR interventions. For that moment these legislative bodies append their possible signatures on documents and issues as such, it is only then that implementing partners in the society may know and take them serious, cognizant of the fact that “ignorant of the law is no excuse”.

Any Act of senate, parliament or regional assembly of the two English-speaking regions giving legal justification to the process of university compulsory engagement in host communities by laying down modalities such as effective communication with the local structures in the name of municipal councils and traditional leaders where they could be invited even occasionally to participate in the highest decision-making bodies of the universities like in the congress and senate so as to pass across the impressions and viewpoints of the local communities will only go a long way to consolidate and solidify the social relationship and living together between the two communities.

Mindful of the fact that massive awareness and implementation of USR interventions are already workable and successful ventures in some African countries, it is very clear that these institutions are set up by law to moderate the excesses and reinforce the social relationship between the two social groups. The Anglophone universities in particular and the rest of the universities in Cameroon could adopt the contextual policy borrowing strategy by using the services of Research

and Co-operation with the Business world (RCB) of their respective universities to either study online or visit external/friendly universities where the practice of USR interventions on host communities is fully operational. And thereafter, they will bring back propositions on how they could be adopted within the context at home.

It is true that a significant number of HEIs in North West and South West Regions of Cameroon are aware of a good number of social responsibilities to be accomplished on their host communities; and a multitude of them have been doing so in the past; but a good number of measures need to be taken by the regional and state hierarchies in order to reinforce this awareness and to ensure that the effective but full implementation of measures on USR interventions become final law in the country. One of the most thoughtful measures that need to be taken by the two autonomous Regional Assemblies of North West and South West Regions of Cameroon as stipulated in the Anglophone special status statutes creating these parallel structures and by the central government so that the higher education institutions can effectively beware and continuously take giant strides to ensure the implementation of USR interventions on their host communities is the enactment and promulgation of concrete policies within the process of decentralization to be guiding the practice of USR interventions on these institutions.

The over centralization of education related policies just in the hands of these HEIs and the absence of check mechanisms to police and moderate the manner in which they operate within host communities are some of the hindrances to which they have not been fully up-to-task in fulfilling their USR interventions on host communities; as the communities are often left at the mercy of the universities with the latter often treating the former as they like. Consequently, if there must be a successful creation of an awareness and implementation of USR interventions on host communities, the autonomous Regional Assemblies under the canopy of decentralization alongside the state of Cameroon must as a matter of urgency emerge with concrete regional and state policies to be translated into legislation that could begin compelling higher education institutions as to their obligations and social responsibilities to their host communities; and then always work in close collaboration with the two social groups towards the effective implementation of these responsibilities. It is perpendicularly clear that some of the authorities of HEIs in North West and South West Regions of Cameroon are deeply aware of their social responsibilities to their host populations but they are however addicted to administrative bottle necks and bureaucracies that have been fashioned by the *laissez-faire* and over centralization of social policies in the hands of the university in the country.

During the focus group discussions, some of the stakeholders looking at how decentralization could help step up USR interventions in the country maintain that “We pray that this your research should serve like a wakeup call to the authorities of the university so for them to know the real powers of the council and how powerful this concept of decentralization can be effectively put in place if anyone conscious person gives the council the powers that it deserves

*“...within the context of decentralization which is now a sing song in the country, the Regional Assemblies and Regional Councils could be empowered to enact policing mechanisms to cause our universities to begin compulsory collaborations with the local councils...whether through decentralization as preached by the government on paper or via federation and confederation as trumpeted by some disgruntled Anglophones, the autonomy of such structures will be able to create a smooth compendium of a good working social relationship between universities and host communities.”*

The government of Cameroon, through the ministries of Higher Education, Employment and Vocational Training, Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS), Arts and Culture, Decentralization and Local Administration, Sports and Physical Education; just to mention these few at the meantime may consider creating a consortium of collaborative stakeholders both at the regional and state levels that have some influence on USR interventions and host communities so that from time to time they might step into the universities or communities as a collectively or as individual bodies in order for them to advise, moderate, and/or caution some effects on issues of their respective areas of

influence that could be igniting some controversies between the two social groups. For instance, the Ministry of Social Affairs known by its French acronym, MINAS (Ministère des Affaires Sociales) could be given access to work with the universities in the formulation and operationalization of their social policies and reforms like in the selection of intelligent but underprivileged children from the communities through the local government structures.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Arts and Culture (MINCUL) could frequently be invited or given a leeway through which they could work with the integral members of the universities and host communities by means of seminars, workshops, conferences and in other social gatherings to discuss on salient issues that should not tamper so much into the cultural aspects of the indigenes like stopping the infiltration and fast erosion of their local languages which do serve as the greatest vector to the transmission of their various cultures. If these strategies, measures and policies are prudently adopted and implemented to reawake the consciousness in the universities, there is no doubt to the fact that social responsibility interventions on host communities in North West and South West Regions of Cameroon and the entire Cameroon polity shall catapult the social relationship, social cohesion and living together amongst the two social groups to a higher level as compared to the current dispensation; and consequently, a smooth engagement of the National Development Strategy (2030) and the sustainable development of Cameroon.

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