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Impact of university social responsibility and university image on teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors among chinese higher vocational colleges

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Abstract: Grounded in Social Identity Theory, this study investigates the impact of university social responsibility (USR) on teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province of China, with a particular focus on the mediating role of university image. The growing emphasis on social responsibility in higher education institutions has drawn attention to teachers' attitudes and behaviors in educational management and human resource development. Using convenience sampling, this study collected survey data from 630 instructors employed at 15 public and private vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province. Quantitative analysis was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings reveal that USR has a significant positive effect on teachers' OCB. Simultaneously, USR significantly enhances university image, which in turn positively predicts teachers' OCB. Furthermore, university image partially mediates the relationship between USR and teachers' OCB, which suggests that socially responsible university practices foster positive teacher behaviors both directly and indirectly by strengthening university image. This study enriches the theoretical interface between USR and OCB. It could provide practical insights for university administrators striving to boost teacher engagement, institutional reputation, and enhance organizational impact through management practices of social responsibility.

Keywords: higher vocational colleges, university social responsibility, teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors, university image

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

Education plays a vital role in cultivating talents, which meets the nation's development needs, possesses the requisite professional skills, and maintains a systematic knowledge structure [1]. Currently, China is undergoing a critical "dual transformation," in which high-quality education and the cultivation of high-caliber talents constitute the core of Chinese-style educational modernization [2]. Sun et al. [3] reported that enhancing teachers' professional behaviors and development is crucial for improving educational quality, and serves as a vital foundation for promoting sustainable school development and fostering a cohesive organizational community.

The teaching profession is characterized by significant autonomy, limited direct oversight, and a substantial time lag between pedagogical actions and their measurable outcomes. Consequently, the dedication and ethical conduct exhibited by teachers constitute a critical but often intangible driver of a school's long-term vitality and strategic development. When teachers actively engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), they not only enhance collective faculty morale but also

serve as a powerful catalyst for organizational innovation [4].

Based on social identity theory, Bizri et al. [5] argued that when teachers perceive schools actively fulfilling their social responsibilities, they reconstruct their perception of the school and activate a social comparison mechanism. Zhu [6] found that teachers' satisfaction with the school's organizational culture and social influence further enhances their sense of identification with the institution. This satisfaction prompts them to provide positive evaluations and exhibit greater OCB. In recent years, Yang [7] mentioned that some universities have paid excessive attention on quantitative indicators such as rankings and institutional performance, neglecting their social service functions. Moreover, issues such as the decrease in the number of students and difficulties in advancing professional titles have further weakened teachers' motivation [8]. More importantly, Liang [9] argued that problems in internal teacher management can lead to an unclear division of labor among teachers and a lack of effective collaboration. For instance, some faculty members complain that additional tasks beyond regular teaching consume excessive time and energy [10].

The above negative situations make teachers feel insecure and reshape their values. In this situation, teachers will demonstrate greater self-interest, adhere to the principle of matching salary with workload, and have a strong sense of urgency to seek better employment opportunities. These factors collectively lead to a decline in OCB among most university faculty and staff [11]. Therefore, fostering and enhancing teachers' OCB has become a key approach for effective university management and innovative team building [4].

OCB refers to spontaneous actions that are not formally recognized by reward systems but contribute to the efficient functioning of an organization [12]. Teachers' OCB covers multiple dimensions, including altruistic actions, interpersonal coordination, and professional ethics and conduct [13]. In terms of education and teaching, although students are the core subjects of schools. Teachers, as the key determinants of student learning outcomes and institutional performance, play an important role in facilitating effective student learning through their demonstrated OCB [14].

Siregar and Hermawan [15] found that teachers' OCB stems from their emotional identification and their sense of belonging to the school. Teachers expect their school to achieve more significant developments. This finding further confirms that enhancing teachers' OCB in education is an important approach for school advancement and teaching construction, which also contributes to increasing competitiveness [16]. Thus, encouraging teachers' civic participation not only improves the general educational level in schools but also provides a solid foundation for their future development.

Song [17] pointed out that the current educational philosophies place greater social responsibilities on higher education institutions while also setting higher work expectations for faculty members. Nazir et al. [18] found that by performing social responsibilities, universities could promote the development of internal organizational culture, thereby enhancing teacher engagement and job performance. Alghamdi [19] emphasizes that the social responsibility of university means participating in community projects in a transparent manner, fulfilling obligations ethically, aiming to meet the needs of all stakeholders, and aligning its functions with social needs. In the current ever-changing educational landscape, higher education institutions are placing greater focus on initiatives related to university social responsibility (USR). The university gradually recognizes its pivotal role in shaping institution's external

image, optimizing internal operational mechanisms, and fostering faculty engagement in civic responsibilities [20].

However, prior researches focus on the concept of USR and its importance at policy level, with relatively little empirical studies, especially on its specific impact on teacher's OCB [21]. Therefore, this study aims to explore the factors influencing the OCB of teachers in higher vocational colleges and enhance teachers' OCB to create a better learning environment for students [22]. Moreover, this study aims to provide empirical evidence for universities to implement effective management and enhance high-quality competitiveness when facing growing multifaceted demands [23].

This study employs social identity theory to examine how faculty members' perceptions of USR in Shaanxi's higher vocational colleges influence their OCB. Meanwhile, this study analyzes the impact of university image on faculty OCB and further explores the potential mediating role of university image in how USR influences such behavior.

1.2. Research questions

In recent years, China has actively promoted the "Double High Plan" (High-Level Higher Vocational Schools and Professional Programs Construction Plan) to improve the quality, governance, and competitiveness of higher vocational education. As an important province in western China, Shaanxi has actively implemented this strategy by strengthening the development of higher vocational colleges and cultivating high-skilled talents. Under such a political environment, higher vocational colleges not only need to improve educational quality but also need to fulfill greater social responsibilities and enhance their university image. Therefore, promoting teachers' OCB is increasingly important for supporting institutional development and achieving the goals of the "Double High Plan". Based on the above research gaps, this study explores the following research questions:

RQ1: Does perceived USR significantly influence teachers' OCB in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province, China?

RQ2: Does perceived USR significantly influence university image?

RQ3: Does university image significantly influence teachers' OCB?

RQ4: Does university image play a mediating role between USR and teachers' OCB?

2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

2.1. Social identity theory

Social identity refers to an individual's perception of belonging to a particular social group, which influences their emotions, values, attitudes, and behaviors [24]. According to Tajfel [25], Social Identity Theory explains how individuals define themselves based on their group memberships. This theory proposes that individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity because it enhances their self-esteem and shapes their behavioral intentions. This process is supported by four interrelated psychological mechanisms: social categorization, social comparison, social identification, and positive self-esteem [26].

First of all, social categorization enables individuals to classify themselves as members of a particular organization. Teachers not only see themselves as employees, but also as representatives of their universities. This categorization lays the cognitive foundation for organizational identification and influences teachers' understanding of organizational practices [27].

Secondly, social comparison occurs when teachers compare their university with other educational institutions. When universities actively fulfill their social responsibilities through educational services, community engagement, environmental protection, and public welfare initiatives, teachers are more inclined to believe that their schools have advantages and are respected by society. These comparisons contribute to a more positive evaluation of university image.

Thirdly, these positive evaluations help promote social identity and enable teachers to internalize the values and achievements of the university as part of their own identity. When organizational goals align with personal values, teachers develop a stronger sense of belonging, pride, and emotional attachment to the institution [28].

Finally, a positive sense of organizational identity can enhance teachers' self-esteem because being in a socially respected institution helps to form positive self-awareness. In order to maintain and strengthen this positive sense of identity, teachers are more willing to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization such as helping colleagues, participating in institutional activities, and undertaking responsibilities beyond formal job requirements. These behaviors all reflect OCB.

Based on this theoretical perspective, USR, as an important organizational signal, is able to strengthen teachers' positive evaluation of universities, enhance their organizational identity by shaping a good university image, and ultimately promote their OCB. Therefore, Social Identity Theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for explaining the relationships among USR, university image, and teachers' OCB in this study. This theoretical logic is also supported by previous studies, which shows that teachers' organizational identification promotes OCB [29], and that OCB reflects teachers' recognition of and commitment to their institutions [13]. The proposed theoretical framework is based on Social Identity Theory, as shown in **Figure 1**.

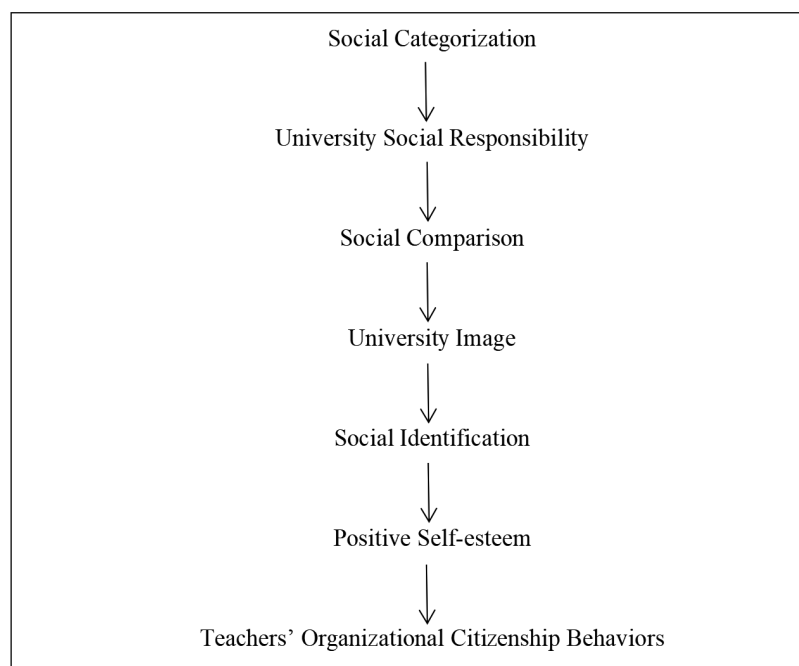


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

2.2. The relationship between university social responsibility and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors

Grant [30] pointed out that contemporary educational philosophies require

higher education institutions to undertake more pronounced social responsibility. In addition to the function of talent training, higher education also shoulders missions such as promoting social change and economic growth [31]. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [32] also stressed that higher education institutions should participate in local service work. Those institutions play an important role in economic and social development. Higher education should be seen as a key way to achieve sustainable development. To adapt to the current situation, universities should actively communicate with society and local communities so that they could recognize the needs and expectations of society, and coordinate their development with the progress of society at a faster pace [33].

In terms of social responsibility practices, Vallaeys et al. [34] classified the social impact of higher education institutions into four aspects: educational impact, cognitive impact, organizational impact, and social impact, which indicates that universities' fulfillment of social responsibilities profoundly influences individual behaviors within the organization [35]. In the higher education context, the attitude and cognition of faculty and staff towards institutional social responsibility directly affect the implementation of their social responsibility and sustainable development strategies, which ultimately manifests in specific participation behaviors [36]. Among these, voluntary behaviors which are beneficial to the organization's well-being and development are defined as OCB. Prempeh and Dzansi [37] stated that USR is reflected in the high consistency demonstrated by faculty and staff in emotional identification, cognitive acceptance, and action commitment, characterized by enthusiasm and dedication. Santos et al. [38] pointed out that USR is significant to their members' sense of identity and satisfaction, which also shapes members' behavioral attitudes and performances. Overall, USR not only reflects the external mission of institutions to serve society and promote sustainable development, but also influences organizational behavior and actual performance by shaping the cognitive and emotional attitudes of faculty and staff. Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: USR has a significant positive influence on teachers' OCB among Chinese higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

2.3. The relationship between university social responsibility and university image

Djaelani et al. [39] specified that the university image is the overall impression and evaluation made by internal stakeholders, such as students, teachers and administrators, regarding the educational standard, service specifications, campus atmosphere and social benefits of the institution. Thus, the university image is in fact a comprehensive assessment based on multi-dimensional perceptions.

Based on the theoretical foundation, this research investigates the connection between USR and university image. Phan et al. [40] indicated that USR has a direct effect on university image. As the concept of sustainable education continues to evolve, universities' proactive fulfillment of social responsibilities and enhanced information transparency contribute to strengthening their global image and competitive edge in an increasingly globalized and fiercely competitive environment. Conversely, the absence of transparent mechanisms and effective controls related to sustainable development concepts and their management would adversely affect university development [41]. Therefore, universities are supposed to constantly re-examine their academic mission, development plans, and strategic positioning in light of social changes to ensure the effectiveness of social responsibility practices, gain

recognition from stakeholders, and maintain an advantage in market competition [19]. Furthermore, Khanal [36] argued that USR can positively shape public perception and evaluation of universities. In summary, the social responsibility of universities significantly shapes the image of universities by influencing the cognitive judgments of stakeholders and the public. Based on this, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: USR has a significant positive influence on university image among Chinese higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

2.4. The relationship between university image and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors

Djaelani et al. [39] argued that the image of a university reflects the collective cognition and evaluation of its internal stakeholders towards the institution, not only reflecting its external reputation, but also profoundly influencing the psychological and behavioral characteristics of its members. Frandsen [42] pointed out that organizational image not only contributes to shaping organizational identity but also influences members' individual social identity. When an organization maintains a positive image, its members are more likely to derive positive social recognition from their organizational identity, thereby strengthening the sense of organizational belonging. In the context of higher education, Tanyıldız and Serin [43] found that university image is reflected through faculty and staff behavior, making it particularly significant to foster teachers' OCB. Amna and Obaid [44] further indicated that a positive organizational image strengthens members' sense of identity and self-affirmation, leading them to perceive the organization as a community with a shared future and thereby enhancing their OCB.

Tanyıldız and Huseyin [43] found that there is a positive correlation between university faculty's perceived university image and their OCB: the more positive faculty evaluations of the university image, the higher their levels of OCB behavior. This indicates that university image positively influences faculty OCB by shaping organizational and self-identity. Consequently, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: University image has a significant positive influence on teachers' OCB among Chinese higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

2.5. The mediating role of university image

Djaelani et al. [39] defined university image as the perception and evaluation of an organization by its internal stakeholders. USR has a positive impact on the image of universities by promoting educational sustainability and increasing information transparency [40, 41]. Frandsen [42] found that a positive image fosters the development of organizational culture and strengthens members' organizational identity.

Furthermore, Tanyıldız and Serin [43] noted that the image of higher education institutions is reflected in teacher behavior, and cultivating OCB within these institutions is considered crucial. Tanyıldız and Serin [43] found that university image has a significant positive impact on teachers' OCB: the better university teachers perceive their university image, the higher their level of OCB tends to be. Alghamdi [19] stated that fulfilling universities' social responsibilities is a core manifestation of the internal culture. By participating in the community in an ethical and transparent manner, universities integrate all their tasks and actions with the needs of society, thereby serving society. In the current changing educational situation, higher education institutions have paid more attention to the USR programs. They

have a clearer understanding of its important position in establishing the reputation of the institution, improving the internal operation mechanisms and fostering faculty involvement in civic responsibilities [19].

Luu [45] studies how an organization's social responsibility and the efforts made in this regard can affect the emotions and behaviors of its members. Proactively fulfilling social responsibility will enhance the OCB of its members. Cek and Eyupoglu's [46] study suggests that when organizations are perceived as having a sense of social responsibility or when teachers observe universities actively fulfilling their social responsibilities, they exhibit positive organizational behavior towards these institutions. This perception of USR influences teachers' voluntary actions in a positive way, thereby contributing to the overall development of the universities. Phan et al. [40] emphasized that by actively engaging in social activities, organizations can fully fulfill universities' social responsibilities, thereby enhancing their reputation and image. Turgut and Akbolat [47] found that as the organizational image of universities improved positively, the level of OCB among university faculty also increased. Aghaz et al. [48] examined how personality traits predict OCB among faculty members. They found that positive evaluations of the university's image by teachers positively influence their OCB.

In conclusion, USR could have an impact on both university image and faculty members' OCB. Besides, the quality of the university image in turn affects the level of faculty members' OCB. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: University image plays a mediating role in the influence of USR on teachers' OCB among Chinese higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

3. Method

3.1. Research framework

This study takes USR as the independent variable, with teachers' OCB as the dependent variable, and university image as the mediating variable, aiming to investigate the current status of USR, university image, and teachers' OCB in higher vocational colleges in China's Shaanxi Province. Moreover, this study aims to explore the influence of USR and university image on teachers' OCB. This study proposed four hypotheses, as illustrated in **Figure 2**.

H1: USR has a significant positive influence on teachers' OCB among Chinese higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

H2: USR has a significant positive influence on university image among Chinese higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

H3: University image has a significant positive influence on teachers' OCB among Chinese higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

H4: University image plays a mediating role in the influence of USR on teachers' OCB among Chinese higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

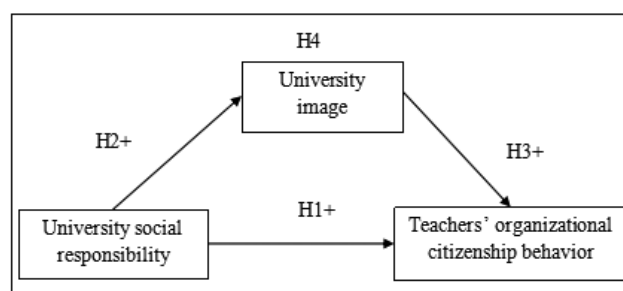


Figure 2. Research framework. Source: Own elaboration.

3.2. Participants and sampling

This study focuses on teachers from higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province, China. There are a total of 37 public and private higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi, of which two have launched pilot projects for undergraduate vocational education, making Shaanxi one of the six pilot provinces in China. Eight of these colleges are part of the National Double High Plan (High-Level Vocational Schools and High-Level Professional Clusters). Among these colleges, 27 are public colleges and 10 are private colleges [49]. Based on the proportional distribution of institutional types, this study selected 10 public and 5 private higher vocational colleges, for a total of 15 institutions, as the research sites.

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed during the pilot survey, with 137 valid responses collected. For the formal survey, 50 teachers were randomly selected from each institution, resulting in the distribution of 750 questionnaires and the collection of 667 valid responses. According to the criteria proposed by Moser and Kalton [50], 37 incomplete or outlier questionnaires were excluded, leaving a total of 630 valid questionnaires. The gender distribution consisted of 322 females (51.111%) and 308 males (48.889%). In terms of teaching experience, 168 teachers (26.667%) have less than 5 years of experience, 145 teachers (23.016%) have 6-10 years, 130 teachers (20.635%) have 11-15 years, 86 teachers (13.651%) have 16-20 years, and 101 teachers (16.032%) have more than 21 years of teaching experience. As for the institutional type, 445 teachers (70.635%) are employed in public universities, and 185 teachers (29.365%) work in private universities.

3.3. Research tools

Since the original instruments were developed in English, all three scales were translated into Chinese using the back-translation procedure recommended by Brislin [51] to ensure linguistic and conceptual equivalence. Subsequently, a group of five experts from China and Thailand reviewed the translated version, evaluating the clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness of each project using the Project Objective Consistency (IOC) index. Based on their feedback, several items have been improved to enhance the applicability of wording and context to the Chinese higher education setting. Meanwhile, the original scale structure and item content were retained. The final versions were then used in both the pilot study and the formal survey.

3.3.1. University social responsibility scale

This study employed the USR scale developed by Villamizar-Gomez et al. [52], which comprises four dimensions: operational responsibility (7 items), legal responsibility (7 items), voluntary responsibility (5 items) and community responsibility (6 items). The scale is scored on a 5-point Likert scale. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each dimension ranged from 0.872 to 0.900, with an overall coefficient of 0.931.

The confirmatory factor analysis for the USR scale showed $\chi^2/df = 1.405$, RMR (Root Mean Square Residual) = 0.021, GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index) = 0.949, AGFI (Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index) = 0.938, IFI (Incremental Fit Index) = 0.988, TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) = 0.995, CFI (Comparative Fit Index) = 0.987, RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) = 0.025. All fit indices met the reference values, indicating a good model fit. The USR scale shows that: the operational responsibility dimension has a critical ratio (CR) value of 0.900 and an average variance (AVE) value of 0.563; the legal responsibility dimension has a CR

value of 0.910 and an AVE value of 0.591; the voluntary responsibility dimension has a CR value of 0.873 and an AVE value of 0.580; and the community responsibility dimension has a CR value of 0.893 and an AVE value of 0.581, all being greater than the reference value of 0.500 and conforming to the standard requirements [53]. These metrics confirm that the scale possesses satisfactory reliability and validity.

3.3.2. University image scale

This study adopted the university image scale set by Patlán and Martínez [54], which includes four elements: university positioning, university image, institutional maturity, and emotional image, containing 14 items in all. Each item was evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of each category range from 0.805 to 0.872, showing an overall coefficient of 0.894.

The confirmatory factor analysis for the university image scale showed $\chi^2/df = 1.690$, RMR = 0.020, GFI = 0.973, AGFI = 0.960, IFI = 0.988, TLI = 0.990, CFI = 0.988, RMSEA = 0.033. All the fit indices meet the reference values, indicating a good model fit. In the university image scale, the CR value of the university positioning dimension is 0.873 with an AVE of 0.580; the institutional image dimension has a CR value of 0.848 and an AVE of 0.582; the institutional maturity dimension obtains a CR value of 0.807 and an AVE of 0.584; however, the emotional image dimension has a CR value of 0.837 and an AVE of 0.720, all being greater than the reference value of 0.500 and satisfying the standard requirements [53]. These results indicate that the scale possesses good reliability and validity.

3.3.3. Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors scale

This study employed the teachers' OCB scale established by Li et al. [55], including two dimensions: helping behavior (7 items) and moral behavior (3 items). Both dimensions were assessed by a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each dimension were ranged from 0.820 to 0.889, with an overall coefficient of 0.872.

The confirmatory factor analysis of the teachers' OCB scale shows the following results: $c^2/df = 1.948$; RMR = 0.026; GFI = 0.980; AGFI = 0.967; IFI = 0.989; TLI = 0.986; CFI = 0.989; RMSEA = 0.039. All the fit indices meet the reference values, indicating a good model fit. The CR value for the helping behavior dimension is 0.891 with an AVE of 0.538; the CR value for the moral behavior dimension is 0.825 with an AVE of 0.611, both being greater than the reference value of 0.500 and satisfying the standard requirements [53]. Thus, the scale demonstrated adequate reliability.

4. Results

4.1. Common method bias test

To examine the potential influence of common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted by entering all measurement items from the USR, university image, and teachers' OCB scales into an unrotated exploratory factor analysis [56]. Prior to factor extraction, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.966, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.800. Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the data were appropriate for exploratory factor analysis [57].

Results showed that 11 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, which explains a cumulative variance of 65.491%. Notably, the first unrotated factor accounted for 33.292% of the total variance, which was below the recommended threshold of 40% [56]. These indicate that there is no single factor accounted for the

majority of the covariance among the measurement items. Thus common method bias was not a serious concern in this study. In addition, the extracted factors exhibited good construct validity. Detailed results are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Harman's single-factor test results.

Component	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	21.640	33.292	33.292
2	3.994	6.144	39.436
3	3.043	4.681	44.117
4	2.567	3.950	48.067
5	2.237	3.441	51.508
6	2.052	3.157	54.665
7	1.851	2.847	57.512
8	1.623	2.497	60.009
9	1.338	2.059	62.068
10	1.198	1.843	63.911
11	1.027	1.580	65.491

4.2. Descriptive analysis

In order to understand the overall trends of the major variables, this study conducted a descriptive analysis. As shown in **Table 2**, the average score for the USR scale was 3.618 (SD = 0.537), indicating a moderate level of perceived USR. Among the four dimensions, voluntary responsibility received the highest mean score (M = 3.681, SD = 0.695), followed by legal responsibility (M = 3.627, SD = 0.710), operational responsibility (M = 3.614, SD = 0.706), and community responsibility recorded the lowest mean score (M = 3.550, SD = 0.699). The average score of the university image scale was 3.409 (SD = 0.601), which also reflected a moderate level. For this dimension, emotional image got the highest mean score (M = 3.613, SD = 0.889), followed by institutional maturity (M = 3.401, SD = 0.789). Institutional image (M = 3.312, SD = 0.727) and university positioning (M = 3.311, SD = 0.739) received relatively lower ratings. Teachers' OCB got the lowest score among the three variables, with a mean score of 3.273 (SD = 0.658). The two dimensions of OCB showed similar levels, with moral behavior (M = 3.278, SD = 0.846) scoring slightly higher than helping behavior (M = 3.268, SD = 0.737). All the variables were at a moderate level. Among them, teachers' OCB had the lowest mean score. Therefore, there is still room for improvement in the level of OCB among teachers in higher vocational colleges.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis.

	M	SD
University social responsibility	3.618	0.537
Operational responsibility	3.614	0.706

Continuation Table:

	M	SD
Legal responsibility	3.627	0.710
Voluntary responsibility	3.681	0.695
Community responsibility	3.550	0.699
Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors	3.273	0.658
Helping behavior	3.268	0.737
Moral behavior	3.278	0.846
University image	3.409	0.601
University positioning	3.311	0.739
Institutional image	3.312	0.727
Institutional maturity	3.401	0.789
Emotional image	3.613	0.889

4.3. Correlation analysis

As shown in **Table 3**, the analysis was conducted by using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient between USR and university image is 0.742 ($p < 0.001$). The correlation coefficient between USR and teachers' OCB is 0.682 ($p < 0.001$), and the correlation between university image and teachers' OCB is 0.681 ($p < 0.001$). All correlation coefficients are below .800, suggesting that there is no high correlation between variables.

Table 3. Correlation analysis.

	University social responsibility	Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors	University image
University social responsibility	1		
Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors	0.682***	1	
University image	0.742***	0.681***	1

Note: *** $p < 0.001$.

4.4. The impact of university social responsibility on teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors

A regression analysis was conducted on USR and teachers' OCB. After controlling for demographic variables, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.062 to 2.102, which were all below 10. There is no significant multicollinearity among the variables. USR has a significant positive impact on teachers' OCB ($b = 0.083$, $p < 0.010$). It indicates that the greater the fulfillment of USR is, the higher the level of teachers' OCB will be. Therefore, hypothesis 1 could be supported. Details are shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. The regression analysis on USR and teachers' OCB.

Variable	Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors			
	b	Standard error	t	VIF
Gender_male	- 0.064	0.038	-1.683	1.065
Teaching experience_6-10 years	- 0.062	0.053	-1.171	1.476
Teaching experience_11-15 years	0.041	0.059	0.683	1.733
Teaching experience_16-20 years	0.031	0.072	0.437	1.811
Teaching experience_over 21 years	0.164	0.072	2.274*	2.102
Institutional type_private university	- 0.311	0.041	-7.532***	1.062
University social responsibility	0.803	0.046	17.298***	1.857
R ²	0.519			
Adj. R ²	0.513			
F	95.829***			

Note 1: *p < 0.050, ***p < 0.001.

Note 2: Female, teaching experience of less than 5 years, and public universities, served as the reference group.

4.5. The impact of university social responsibility on the university image

As shown in **Table 5**, a regression analysis of USR and university image yielded VIF values ranging from 1.062 to 2.102, all of which were below 10. Apparently, there is no significant multicollinearity among the variables. It is obvious that USR has a positive impact on university image (b = 0.842, p < 0.001). Therefore, hypothesis 2 could be validated as well.

Table 5. The regression analysis on university social responsibility and university image.

Variable	University image			
	b	Standard error	t	VIF
Gender_male	0.007	0.033	0.199	1.065
Teaching experience_6-10 years	- 0.012	0.046	-0.264	1.476
Teaching experience_11-15 years	- 0.049	0.052	-0.929	1.733
Teaching experience_16-20 years	- 0.014	0.063	-0.228	1.811
Teaching experience_over 21 years	0.015	0.064	0.232	2.102
Institutional type_private university	- 0.065	0.036	-1.790	1.062
University social responsibility	0.842	0.041	20.629***	1.857
R ²	0.554			
Adj. R ²	0.549			
F	110.477***			

Note 1: ***p < 0.001.

Note 2: Female, teaching experience of less than 5 years, and public universities, served as the reference group.

4.6. The impact of university image on teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors

The regression analysis of university image and teachers' OCB, controlling for background variables, showed VIF values ranging from 1.042 to 1.677, all below 10, indicating no significant multicollinearity among the variables. University image has a significant positive impact on teachers' OCB ($b = 0.626$, $p < 0.001$). It shows that the higher the teachers' identification with the university image, the higher their level of OCB. This analysis provides evidence for hypothesis 3. As shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6. The regression analysis on university image and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors.

Variable	Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors			
	β	Standard error	t	VIF
Gender_male	-0.109	0.037	-2.975**	1.042
Teaching experience_6-10 years	-0.009	0.052	-.178	1.456
Teaching experience_11-15 years	0.219	0.055	3.990***	1.526
Teaching experience_16-20 years	0.247	0.065	3.785***	1.550
Teaching experience_over 21 years	0.409	0.064	6.434***	1.677
Institutional type_private university	-.254	0.041	-6.256***	1.057
University image	0.626	0.035	18.081***	1.332
R ²	0.533			
Adj. R ²	0.528			
F	101.382***			

Note 1: ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Note 2: Female, teaching experience of less than 5 years, and public universities, served as the reference group.

4.7. The mediating role of university image

This study employed PROCESS analysis through SPSS to validate the model and examine the mediating role of university image. The VIF values for all variables ranged from 1.065 to 3.127, and there is no significant multicollinearity among the variables.

Following the procedure of Baron and Kenny [58], Model 1 was constructed by incorporating control variables. The USR and teachers' OCB were included in the regression equation. The results showed that USR exerted a significant positive effect on teachers' OCB ($b = 0.803$, $p < 0.001$).

Model 2, with control variables and USR predicting university image, revealed that USR significantly and positively influenced university image ($b = 0.842$, $p < 0.001$).

In Model 3, control variables, USR, university image, and teachers' OCB were included. It shows that USR ($b = 0.465$, $p < 0.001$) and university image $b = 0.402$, $p < 0.001$) have positive impact on teachers' OCB. Comparing Model 3 with Model 1, the b value of USR decreased from 0.803 to 0.465, indicating that university image partially mediated the relationship between USR and teachers' OCB (see **Table 7** for detailed results).

To further verify this mediating effect, a non parametric percentile Bootstrap

method was applied with 5,000 resamples to construct 95% confidence intervals, as shown in **Table 8**. The indirect effect of university image on the relationship between USR and teachers' OCB is 0.338 (95% CI = 0.204~0.355). Since the confidence interval did not include zero, the partial mediating role of university image was confirmed.

Table 7. PROCESS analysis.

Variable	Model 1 Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors			Model 2 University image			Model 3 Teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors		
	β	t	VIF	β	t	VIF	β	t	VIF
Gender_male	-0.064	-1.683	1.065	0.007	0.199	1.065	-0.066	-1.873	1.065
Teaching experience_6-10 years	-0.062	-1.171	1.476	-0.012	-0.264	1.476	-0.057	-1.151	1.476
Teaching experience_11-15 years	0.041	0.683	1.733	-0.049	-0.929	1.733	0.060	1.079	1.735
Teaching experience_16-20 years	0.031	0.437	1.811	-0.014	-0.228	1.811	0.037	0.553	1.811
Teaching experience_over 21 years	0.164*	2.274	2.102	0.015	0.232	2.102	0.158*	2.341	2.102
Institutional type_ private university	-0.311***	-7.532	1.062	-0.065	-1.790	1.062	-0.285***	-7.350	1.060
University social responsibility	0.803***	17.298	1.857	0.842***	20.629	1.857	0.465***	8.238	3.127
University image							0.402***	9.412	2.243
R ²	0.519			0.554			0.579		
Adj. R ²	0.513			0.549			0.574		
F	95.829***			110.477***			106.729***		

Note 1: * $p < 0.050$, ** $p < 0.010$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Note 2: Female, teaching experience of less than 5 years, and public universities, served as the reference group.

Table 8. The mediating effect of university image.

Path	Effect value	95%CI	
		Lower limit	Upper limit
Total effect	0.803	0.712	0.894
Direct effect	0.465	0.354	0.575
Indirect effect	0.338	0.204	0.355

Note: Direct effect = university social responsibility→Teachers' organizational citizenship behavior; Indirect effect = university social responsibility→University image→Teachers' OCB.

5. Discussion

5.1. University social responsibility and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors

The results show that the sense of social responsibility among faculty members in higher vocational colleges in China's Shaanxi Province plays a remarkable role in their OCB. This suggests that the stronger the faculty's perception of USR is, the higher the level of OCB would be. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported. The findings are also consistent with previous studies [59, 60], which similarly demonstrated that organizational social responsibility positively promotes employees' discretionary behaviors beyond formal job requirements. These studies suggested that socially responsible organizations strengthen employees' emotional attachment and sense of responsibility, thereby encouraging them to voluntarily contribute to organizational development.

The present findings further extend previous research by confirming that this positive relationship also exists in the context of Chinese higher vocational colleges. Unlike enterprises, universities have dual responsibilities for talent cultivation and public service. In particular, higher vocational colleges are expected to support regional economic development, industry collaboration, and community engagement. Consequently, teachers may perceive university social responsibility not merely as an institutional strategy but also as an important reflection of the university's educational mission and social values. This stronger value congruence may explain why teachers are more willing to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors when they perceive their institutions as socially responsible.

Hofman and Newman [61] proposed that schools fostering a sense of identity and belonging among faculty and staff generally perform better in fulfilling social responsibilities. Most teachers in vocational colleges may believe that their institutions have demonstrated a sense of social responsibility by actively participating in local services, social practices, and community initiatives to enhance their own image and reputation. Some educators argue that social responsibility activities have little relevance to promotion evaluations or performance rewards and may even occupy teachers' regular working time. Therefore, Carmeli et al. [62] reported that universities should not only fulfill their social responsibilities by actively engaging in social services and environmental protection but also strengthen faculty identification through supportive human resource practices, such as improving salaries, benefits, and career development opportunities. Such measures could further motivate teachers to make additional efforts and voluntarily engage in organizational citizenship behaviors. Collectively, these findings suggest that both institutional social responsibility and internal organizational support are important conditions for stimulating teachers' extra-role behaviors.

5.2. University social responsibility and university image

The findings indicate that university social responsibility significantly enhances university image, supporting Hypothesis 2. This result is consistent with Chan et al. [63], who contended that, as non-profit educational institutions centered on public service, universities should attach equal importance to ethical and legal responsibilities. Such measures not only align with societal expectations regarding the public welfare function of universities but also effectively convey positive institutional values and ultimately strengthen university image.

The present findings are also in agreement with previous studies suggesting

that stakeholders often evaluate universities not only by their academic performance but also by their contributions to society. Universities that actively participate in community development, environmental protection, and public welfare activities are generally perceived as more trustworthy, responsible, and reputable institutions. These socially responsible practices therefore become important signals that enhance institutional legitimacy and public recognition.

Higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province provide a representative example. By actively fulfilling their educational responsibilities, serving local industries, and participating in community development initiatives, these institutions not only meet public expectations but also send positive signals to teachers, students, parents, employers, and the broader community. Compared with comprehensive universities, higher vocational colleges often rely more heavily on close collaboration with local governments and industries. Therefore, their social responsibility initiatives may have a stronger influence on institutional reputation because they directly demonstrate the colleges' contributions to regional economic and social development. Through sustained engagement in education, social services, and community partnerships, these institutions continuously improve their public image and strengthen their overall reputation.

5.3. University image and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors

The findings reveal that university image has a significant positive effect on teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors, supporting Hypothesis 3. This result is consistent with Tessema [64], who noted that when academic staff hold positive perceptions of their university, they demonstrate higher engagement and dedication in teaching, research, and community service. Furthermore, positive perceptions of university image encourage faculty members to comply with institutional regulations, safeguard collective interests, and voluntarily undertake responsibilities beyond their formal job requirements.

The present findings further support previous organizational behavior research indicating that organizational reputation is an important antecedent of employees' positive work attitudes and discretionary behaviors. However, whereas many previous studies have primarily examined the influence of university image on external stakeholders, such as prospective students, parents, or employers, the current study demonstrates that university image also serves as an important motivational resource for internal stakeholders, particularly teachers. This finding highlights that university image not only attracts external recognition but also shapes teachers' psychological attachment and behavioral responses.

For faculty members in vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province, recognizing that their institutions enjoy favorable reputations and positive social images naturally generates stronger professional pride, organizational identification, and a greater sense of belonging. These psychological benefits encourage teachers to devote additional effort to institutional development and voluntarily participate in activities beyond their prescribed responsibilities. Therefore, cultivating a positive university image can simultaneously enhance external competitiveness and stimulate teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors.

5.4. The mediating role of university image

The above findings indicate that university image mediates the relationship between university social responsibility and teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors, thereby supporting Hypothesis 4. This result is generally consistent with

the findings of Khanal and Arora [36], who reported that when colleges actively fulfill their social responsibilities, teachers are more likely to recognize the institution's positive social image. The present findings further suggest that university image is not merely an outcome of socially responsible practices but also an important psychological mechanism through which social responsibility influences teachers' voluntary workplace behaviors.

According to Social Identity Theory [65], individuals derive an important part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups. When teachers perceive that their university actively fulfills its social responsibilities, they are more likely to regard the institution as socially respected and morally responsible. This favorable evaluation strengthens organizational identification and emotional attachment, thereby encouraging teachers to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors. This explanation is also supported by Dutton et al. [66], who argued that positive organizational image enhances members' identification with the organization and motivates them to contribute beyond formal role expectations.

Compared with previous studies, which mainly focused on the direct influence of university social responsibility on teachers' attitudes or organizational outcomes, the current study further demonstrates that university image serves as a key mediating mechanism linking university social responsibility to teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors. This finding enriches the application of Social Identity Theory in higher education by explaining how socially responsible university practices are translated into teachers' voluntary behaviors through enhanced perceptions of institutional image.

Higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province not only directly encourage teachers' proactivity and organizational citizenship behaviors through socially responsible practices but also indirectly cultivate more positive work attitudes by strengthening university image. When teachers perceive their institution as socially responsible, they tend to hold it in high esteem and develop stronger organizational identification and a greater sense of belonging, which ultimately motivates them to exert greater effort for organizational success.

5.5. Theoretical contributions

Beyond the empirical findings, this study makes several theoretical contributions by extending the application of Social Identity Theory in the context of higher vocational education. First, Social Identity Theory is commonly applied to explain employees' attitudes and behaviors in business organizations. Its application in higher education, especially in higher vocational colleges in developing countries, remains limited. This study extends the explanatory scope of the theory by demonstrating that teachers' perceptions of USR can strengthen their OCB within educational institutions, thus broadening the theory's applicability to higher education.

Secondly, this study advances social identity theory by positioning university image as a key mechanism linking USR and teachers' OCB. Previous studies mainly focused on the direct effect of organizational social responsibility. This encourages teachers to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit the institution. By revealing the mediating process, this study clarifies how USR influences employee behaviors via identity based appraisals.

Finally, this study integrates organizational and individual perspectives within a unified framework to show that USR, as an organizational strategy, affects teachers' extra-role behaviors both directly and indirectly via university image. This finding enriches existing research on Social Identity Theory by clarifying how organizational

characteristics are internalized and transformed into voluntary OCB. Thereby providing deeper insights into the mechanisms through which socially responsible institutions foster positive faculty behaviors.

5.6. Research implications

As for higher vocational colleges, they should integrate USR into the implementation of the Double High Plan and development strategies. Collaborations with local governments, enterprises, and communities through regular community services, industry academia partnerships, technical training, and rural revitalization projects are supposed to be strengthened as well. Teachers' involvement in these activities should be formally incorporated into the performance appraisal system, promotion criteria, annual evaluations, and professional title assessments, with corresponding workload credits, financial incentives, and recognition awards provided to encourage sustained active participation.

To improve the university image, unnecessary administrative burdens and non-teaching tasks need to be reduced and streamlined. Professional development programs should be provided, aligning with the needs of the Double High Plan. Colleges should also leverage Shaanxi's industrial strengths such as advanced manufacturing, cultural tourism, and intelligent equipment to build a distinctive vocational education brand. Meanwhile, they could strengthen collaboration with leading local enterprises through internship bases, joint research centers, and talent cultivation mechanisms. These initiatives would help improve institutional reputation and strengthen teachers' identification.

Furthermore, higher vocational colleges should establish sustainable government-enterprise cooperation platforms with dedicated funds and policy incentives. For instance, Double High colleges may set up faculty social responsibility innovation projects, community service studios, or industry collaboration centers, allowing teachers to participate in technology transfer, vocational training, and community development projects. Such practical engagement enables teachers to recognize institutional social value, strengthen identification, and ultimately promote OCB.

5.7. Limitations and future research

Generalizability is limited by the exclusive focus on higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province and the use of convenience sampling, which may compromise representativeness. Furthermore, the study employed a cross-sectional research design. Therefore, although significant associations among the variables were identified, causal relationships cannot be established. In addition, all variables were measured using self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to common method bias and social desirability bias. As a result, the observed relationships should be interpreted with caution. Moreover, the study did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the differential impacts arising from factors such as faculty professional titles and disciplinary backgrounds.

Future research could expand the research scope by comparing higher vocational colleges across different regions and institutional types to improve the generalizability of the findings. Teachers' job satisfaction and organizational identity may also be incorporated into the research framework as potential mediating or moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms. Furthermore, longitudinal research designs are recommended to examine the dynamic relationships between USR and teachers' OCB over time,

thereby providing stronger evidence regarding causal relationships. Multi-source data, such as evaluations from supervisors or colleagues, could also be incorporated to reduce the potential bias associated with self-reported data. These efforts would provide more robust empirical evidence for improving university human resource management, promoting faculty development, and supporting the sustainable development of higher vocational institutions.

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