

The University Perception in the Context of University-City Interaction and its Management

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ABSTRACT: The role of universities is gradually changing in our modern world of globalization. First of all, universities have recently stood out as important actors in the economic, cultural, and social transformation of the city they are located in. Therefore, universities are important social actors and play a key role in the development of their cities. Despite the increase in the number of universities in Kazakhstan, the limited number of studies on university-city interaction necessitated field research that would provide quantitative and qualitative information on the subject. In addition, they aim to present scientific information that will enable the formation of meaningful social, cultural, and economic policies to parties such as central government and local government. Therefore, local and central administrators, non-governmental and professional organizations responsible for the development of both the city and higher education institutions, as well as the people of the city of Turkistan, are included in the fieldwork. The results showed that the Akhmet Yassawi University is one of the important factors influencing the social, economic, and cultural development of the city and that the people of Turkistan think that the University has a positive impact on their city. Therefore, it was concluded that there is a mutual and strong interaction between Akhmet Yassawi University and the people of Turkistan.

Keywords: university-city interaction, university-city relationship, university perception, perception research, institutional image, socio-economic change, socio-cultural change.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, the rapidly developing technology and the opportunities it offers provide countless benefits to human life. These benefits facilitate competition both in the world and in Kazakhstan. In an environment where it is very easy to access information thanks to technology, communication opportunities have reached a superior level, and people are aware of all events no matter where they are in the world, universities offer very important opportunities in business, information, education, culture, social services and economic development to the cities they are located in. In addition, they affect the formation and later development of the city values. From this perspective, changing and diversifying expectations and needs in line with world trends lay great duties to universities. Universities, on the other hand, work hard to fulfill their duties to their cities [1]. They fulfill their responsibilities with services such as education, research, projects, social responsibility activities, community service practices, and employment creation.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

As higher education institutions become more and more integrated with their cities and regions, cities are also looking for ways to activate the potential of their universities by enabling them to contribute to their economic, social and cultural development. While higher education institutions aim to provide education and training

services, to conduct scientific research, to provide qualified human resources, and to use their knowledge for the benefit of society, they are also expected to serve their cities by raising well-qualified individuals, giving more graduates, produce technology, offering life-long learning opportunities and providing social services [2].

In parallel with the expansion of regional policies, the expectations of cities from universities have also increased [3]. With the developments in information technology, the effects of globalization, and the increasing importance of regional specialization, these demands are increasing day by day. These expectations arise from national, supranational, and global competition as well as from the national macroeconomic situation. At this point, the local socio-economic potential of the region becomes as important as the physical infrastructure and universities emerge as key actors in terms of economic development [4].

The increase in the number of universities in Kazakhstan and the low number of studies on university-city interaction necessitated field research that would provide a wide range of quantitative and qualitative information. This research aims to determine how the contribution of the university to the economic, social, and cultural life of the city is perceived by the people in the region by using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. For this purpose, Akhmet Yassawi University (AYU), one of the young universities of Kazakhstan [5], and the city of Turkistan are chosen as the sample universe. This study researches the cultural, social, and economic impact of the university, as well as research on public relations. The effects of AYU on the city are not unidirectional but emerge as a result of a mutual relationship. Therefore, we aim to determine how the interaction of the university with the city and its economic, social, and cultural contributions to Turkistan are perceived by the people of the city. The main research problem is determined as follows: What are the contributions of AYU to Turkistan and how are they perceived? To solve the research problem, a field study was carried out using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods [6]. With the increase in the number of universities, the interest in the subject of city-university interaction is on the rise in Kazakhstan. However, there are very few studies on this subject in the literature. However, recently, new studies began to emerge that focus on the relations of newly established universities with the city they are established in. Among these, we only included those which are important for this study.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS.

The study of the socio-cultural and economic effects of universities began with a report published by the American Education Council in 1971 [7]. The following studies generally focused on the economic effects of universities and the results showed that universities contribute positively to the urban economies [7]. In addition, the number of studies measuring the effects of universities on urbanization, their socio-cultural contributions, and the perception of urban people have begun to increase [8,9]. Universities provide many benefits in areas that can be categorized as "other benefits", in addition to their contributions in education, research, and technology. For example, Boucher, Conway, and Van Der Meer drew attention to features such as 'entrepreneurship promotion, regional consortium formation, cultural networks, regional promotion, city renewal' in the category of 'other benefits' and suggested that city-university interaction occurs both in a wide area and at different levels [10].

Bruning determined the purpose of their research as to explain the relationship of the university with the society and to make suggestions to expand the ways of making this relationship functional. In this study, the university-society relationship was examined from the perspective of community members. They used questionnaires for data collection. They used a systematic sampling method and analyzed 194 questionnaires. Statistical evaluation is performed using the t-test and cross-tabulation analysis. The results showed that the majority of the participants thought that the university is important for society.

Brandt and Mortanges, on the other hand, aimed to investigate the effect of the city's history, heritage, and cultural characteristics on shaping the perceptions of university students and whether the city brand is applicable. In other words, the relationship between the university preferences of the students and the city brand image was examined [12].

The goal of Sankır and Gürdal was to provide Bülent Ecevit University with the basic data necessary for integration with the city and to contribute to the literature. The research determined that the city of Zonguldak and the university have a mutual interaction in terms of growth and development.

Gümüş [11] aimed to learn how Kastamonu University is perceived by the people of Kastamonu. They identified the dimensions of perception and examined the difference between the participants in terms of demographic variables. It showed that people's perceptions can be grouped under seven factors, namely local support, commercial influence, cultural cohesion, local image, recognition, local communication, and economic contribution.

Uygun [13] aimed to examine the perception of the local people about the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental effects of the university and university students on the city, depending on personal characteristics. The research was based on the quantitative method, research type was "relational research" and the "field research" design was used. The results showed that local people's perceptions of the effects of the university and students can be grouped into three dimensions: economic, social-cultural, and environmental. It has also been determined that the perceptions are mostly positive and can differ according to personal characteristics such as gender, age, educational status.

The literature review revealed that studies on university-city interaction mainly focus on economic and social dimensions. There are also studies on socio-economic, socio-spatial, and spatial interactions. Thus, although there are few perception studies on university-city interaction, these studies investigated the economic and socio-cultural effects of the university and its students on the city, as well as the contribution of the university to regional equality of opportunity. As Arap states, while most of the studies on university-city interaction examine the interaction of newly established universities with the city, few studies are examining the interaction of old universities with their cities [14].

1. DATA COLLECTION

This study deals with the perception of the dimensions of university-city interaction and uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Although these two approaches differ, both can be used in complementary ways. The use of qualitative and quantitative approaches together, instead of just one, allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem [13]. While quantitative data techniques are useful for seeing the big picture and summarizing data, qualitative methods can be considered best as data multipliers. When data size increases, it is possible to see key aspects of events [15]. For this reason, the questionnaire technique was used as a quantitative data collection method and the interview technique was used as a qualitative data collection method to collect general data and to enrich the study with key and original data in a complementary way.

The survey was applied face to face to a total of 105 people. For the selection of the regions to be surveyed, the campus areas where the university-city interaction is intense and the neighborhoods where the students live intensely were taken into consideration. The survey questions are composed of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was a socio-demographic information form consisting of questions such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, and income. The second part of the questionnaire aims to examine the interaction between the people of the city and the university and consists of questions that measure the widespread economic, social, and cultural effects of the university. To develop the questionnaire, the literature on university-city perception was examined. In the survey, university-city interaction was evaluated from three different perspectives: 'economic', 'social' and 'cultural'. The questionnaire consisted of 50 questions, 14 of which were open-ended, and all 50 questions were asked to the participants. The level of agreement with the statements was measured with three options as "I disagree", "I am undecided" and "I agree". The reliability analysis of the perception study found the Cronbach alpha value above 0.65.

The analyzes of the quantitative data collected from the survey application were carried out in SPSS under two headings, descriptive and explanatory. Frequency tables were taken for descriptive analysis. In the explanatory part of the study, the relationship between views, attitudes, and perceptions about AYU and demographic-socio-economic variables was analyzed with the chi-square test and cross tables.

The semi-structured interview form used for the qualitative dimension was composed of local actors' communication with AYU, their cooperation, their thoughts on university-city interaction, and their expectations from the university. Qualitative research aims to analyze a situation or event in depth and detail, rather than generalizing. For this reason, purposive sampling methods are used to determine the study group in qualitative studies [16]. Therefore, the study group was formed from a sample with maximum diversity. Face-to-face interviews were held with city representatives, consisting of non-governmental organizations, press organizations, chambers, and local governments, which have an impact on the economy and management of the city. The interviews lasted a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 90 minutes. The questions in the semi-structured interview form were used as the main categories, and the answers established the subcategories. In this context, firstly, open coding was done and first-level concepts were created from the data. In the next stage of the analysis, the first level categories were linked to each other and a more abstract level of categorization was achieved. In the final stage, the abstraction was taken one step further and the categories were reorganized around the theoretical concepts of university-city interaction and the data were integrated. Thus, selective coding was performed, in which the basic categories were produced. In short, data analysis has shown a progression from data to initial concepts with a three-stage two-level abstraction process. Qualitative data are presented together

with quantitative data under the appropriate headings. In this way, quantitative findings on university-city interaction were supported by qualitative findings and specific examples were obtained at the same time [17].

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.

1. DATA ANALYSIS

The distribution of the participants by gender was 66.9% male and 33.1% female. Regarding the educational background of the participants, the majority (61%) were university and graduate graduates, followed by high school graduates with 21.1% and college graduates with 16.1%. Considering the age distribution, 25% of the sample is in the 18-28 age group, 25% in the 29-39 age group, 25% in the 40-50 age group, 18.1% in the 51-61 age group, and 7.5% in the 62+ age group. Considering the occupational groups of the participants, 12% of the sample is housewife, 12% is retired, 12% is tradesman, 11.2% is self-employed, 9.3% is driver, 8.4% is students, 5.9% is workers and 5.5% had professional occupations. Considering the duration of residence of the participants, the majority (83.3%) had lived in Turkistan for more than 30 years. Therefore, we can say that the age group of the sample can observe the contribution of AYU, which dates back to 1991, to the social, economic, and cultural change and transformation of the city. Here is a table summarizing the distribution of participants by gender, educational background, age group, occupational group, and duration of residence (Table 1):

Table 1. This table presents the demographic distribution of the sample population, which helps in understanding their potential to observe the influence of AYU on the city's transformation.

Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	66.9
	Female	33.1
Educational Background	University and Graduate	61.0
	High School Graduate	21.1
	College Graduate	16.1
Age Group	18-28 years	25.0
	29-39 years	25.0
	40-50 years	25.0
	51-61 years	18.1
	62+ years	7.5
Occupational Group	Housewife	12.0
	Retired	12.0
	Tradesman	12.0
	Self-employed	11.2
	Driver	9.3
	Student	8.4
	Worker	5.9
	Professional Occupation	5.5
Duration of Residence	More than 30 years	83.3

2. FINDINGS REGARDING THE INTERACTION OF URBAN PEOPLE AND UNIVERSITY

Findings regarding the interaction of the participants with the university generally include the status of being on the campus or facilities of the university, benefiting from the university facilities, and participating in university activities. Just over half (56%) of the participants stated that they had been to any of the campuses or facilities of AYU, while nearly half (44%) stated that they had never been. Considering the situation of benefiting from the facilities of AYU (social events, concerts, sports competitions, scientific meetings, conferences, etc.), it has been determined that more than half of the participants (54%) have not participated in any activities of the university so far. Most of the participants attended the concerts (36%), followed by those who attended scientific

meetings such as conferences, panels, symposiums (13%), those who attended theater and cinema screenings (8%), and those who attended national and international sports events (6%). A similar picture emerged in the interviews with the participants in the qualitative research section. It has been learned that the participants, who are from the civil administration services, have very intense communication with the university and fulfill the incoming requests together with the university. Similar views were shared by the chamber, union, and local press representatives. A local newspaper representative stated that they have a strong interaction with the university and mentioned that there is a need for intermediate staff at the university for communication and coordination with the media.

From the interviews, it was revealed that joint projects with the university were carried out, congresses and symposiums were organized, the sector was informed about the activities of the university, and in this sense, the university was in intense interaction and communication with the sector representatives. On the other hand, it has been observed that some sectors have expectations from the university and these expectations differ between sectors.

2.1 Hypothesis testing.

We can say that the participants have a positive perception of the contribution of the university to the city. First of all, almost all of the participants (95%) stated that they think that university students have positive contributions to Turkistan. Of those, 81% stated that this contribution is mostly in the economic field, followed by those who think that they contribute to the cultural, social, urban development, and population areas, respectively. In addition, some participants stated that they thought that the university contributed to the development of the city (55.1%) and its national and international promotion (63.2%) with scientific studies. However, a large part of the participants (74.8%) stated that the city also grew and developed thanks to the growth of the university. In support of the above idea, 72.4% agreed with the proposition that the university gave the city a modern look with the landscaping on the campuses, while 15.2% disagreed and 12.5% were undecided.

In addition, 63.6% of the participants agreed with the statement "AYU is a rapidly developing university in every aspect", 22.2% were undecided and 14.2% did not agree. "Would you like your child or a relative to study at AYU?" The question is one of the important indicators of adopting the university, and the rate of those who answered "yes" was high (80%), while the rate of those who answered "no" was low (20%). Similar results were obtained from the interviews conducted in the qualitative research part. One of the interview participants, a local newspaper representative, stated that the university contributes to the needs of the city by developing projects. The interviews show that the university is seen as one of the powerful actors that contribute to the economic, cultural, social, and environmental development of Turkestan.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSITY

In this section, the relationship between socio-demographic variables (gender, age, education level, average monthly income, and duration of residence in Turkestan) and the public's perception of the university was analyzed by using chi-square analysis.

Relationship analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between the proposition that the university contributes to the domestic and international promotion of the city and the education level of the participants ($\chi^2=30.217$, $p=0.000$). As the level of education increases, the number of those who agree that the university contributes to the national and international promotion of the city decreases. In addition, a significant relationship was found between this thought and income ($\chi^2=30.214$, $p=0.000$). As the monthly income decreases (60 000 tenge and below), the tendency to agree with this proposition increases, while as the monthly income increases (60,000 tenges and above), the tendency to agree with this proposition decreases.

A significant relationship was found between age groups and the rate of participation in the idea that the university is outside the city ($\chi^2=44.390$, $p=0.000$). As the age increased, the rate of those who agreed with the proposition increased, while the rate of agreement among young people decreased.

A significant relationship was found between 'gender' and the thought that 'the people of Turkistan are not aware of the economic contribution of the university to the city' ($\chi^2=16.191$, $p=0.000$). Male participants agreed with this proposition more than female participants.

A significant relationship was found between the monthly income of the participants and their presence in the campus and facilities ($\chi^2=24.443$, $p=0.000$). The number of those who stated that they went to university campuses and facilities was higher in high-income groups (68.5%). In other words, as the monthly income increased, the rate of being present in university campuses and facilities also increased.

A significant relationship was found between using the facilities of the university (social events, concerts, sports competitions, scientific meetings, conferences, etc.) and the age variable ($\chi^2=91.628$, $p=0.000$). Accordingly, 19% of the older age groups (60 and over) stated that they benefited from university opportunities, while this rate was 70% among the 18-28 age groups.

When the level of benefiting from the social, cultural, sportive, or scientific opportunities of the people of Turkistan is analyzed within the framework of their monthly income, a similar picture emerges ($\chi^2=18.891$, $p=0.001$). As the monthly income increased (100,000 tenges and above), the rate of benefiting from university opportunities increased (60%), while the rate of using university facilities decreased (40%) as the monthly income decreased (100,000 tenges and below).

Significant differences were found between age groups in the rate of participation in the statement that the university hospital meets the health needs of the city ($\chi^2=26.657$, $p=0.001$). The rate of agreement with this statement was 67.3%, 86.3%, and 88.9% in the 18-28, 51-60, and 60+ age groups, respectively.

A significant relationship was found between residence time and agreeing with the proposition that AYU is a developing university ($\chi^2=33.556$, $p=0.000$). The longer the residence time, the higher the level of participation in this proposition. In addition, a significant relationship was found between this proposition and the education variable ($\chi^2=23.857$, $p=0.001$). While the rate of proposition with this statement was 53.5% at the university and higher level, it was 70% at the high school and college level. In other words, as the level of education increased, the level of participation in this proposition decreased.

3.1 Hypothesis testing.

The economic contributions of universities to the regions and cities where they are located have been shown very well in the literature. The increasing importance of universities in regional development has been demonstrated within the framework of the changing roles of universities (Sungur, 2015), but it has been stated that this relationship is more in need of systematic support mechanisms because many universities operating in developing or underdeveloped regions face problems such as information and human resources [18]. Many studies analyzed the consumption expenditures of universities and students and tried to determine the effects of these expenditures on urban economies. Finally, perception studies have shown that the people of the region think that the existence of the university contributes positively to the investment decisions of commercial enterprises such as entertainment venues and shopping centers [18,29,20]. In this study, we saw that the participants, who think that the contribution of the university to the city is mostly in the economic field, evaluated this effect in terms of the revival of economic life, the formation of new workplaces and occupations, and the decrease in unemployment. A high majority of the participants thought that AYU had reversed immigration and was happy to be called a university city.

There have been many studies that draw attention to the contribution of universities to social and cultural development. Universities interact in many ways with their regions beyond economic development and creating new jobs. Education and research activities of universities, sharing information with the public, and other things arising from the living of students and employees in that city can be given as an example of this interaction. Higher education institutions leave their traces in all social areas with their employees, buildings, symbols [21]. For example, studies have shown that the people believe that the university revitalizes the region, accelerates social and cultural change and development, contributes to the increase of the living standard [22], contributes to the promotion of the history and culture of the region through history and culture symposiums, and reveals the social skills of the young people [23]. Goddard also stated that increasing population and specialization cause changes in social relations. This study showed that participants who perceive AYU positively in terms of the economy also have a positive perception in social and cultural areas. It has been seen that the contribution in this area is mostly observed as the increase in social spaces (resting, catering, socializing), multiculturalism, and contribution to democratic life. In addition, the participants stated that the social structure has changed, new social sharing areas and spaces have been opened, and the university itself has increased the quality of life. Some participants said that the university contributed to the city's transformation into a center of attraction and reversed migration. We have seen that this change in social and cultural values was perceived positively by the majority of the participants. In this sense, the positive changes in the idea of being neighbors with students and renting a house are proof of a strong integration. Finally, another study shows that universities have an important role in changing the face of the city [24]. Our findings also showed that in terms of environmental change, most of the participants thought that the city gained a modern appearance with the landscaping on the campuses and that the university grew in the city as it grew.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Universities can be important to local economies because they employ local people, buy local goods and services, contribute to cultural life and transform the urban landscape. Even if universities do not actively support regional development, they can have a "passive regional multiplier effect" thanks to their infrastructure investments in research and education, which are their main fields of activity. For this reason, due to the increasing importance of higher education, universities are working to fulfill their duties and responsibilities towards the cities where they are established. The fact that some universities have limited connection with their surroundings due to their geopolitical location, that they are not very suitable for agriculture due to geographical conditions, that the industry sector is almost non-existent, and that the service sector has a high share in the local economy has made the impact of universities on the city and society important.

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the contribution of AYU to the economic, social, and cultural development of Turkistan and how this contribution is perceived. We also tried to determine the relationship between the perception of AYU's contribution and the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. The results revealed important findings. First of all, a strong mutual interaction was detected between the city of Turkestan and AYU. The rate of those who think that the university has positive contributions to Turkistan is very high (90%). Participation in the proposition that the university contributes to the promotion of the city decreased as the level of education increased and income increased. Participation in the opinion that the public is not aware of the economic contribution of the university to the city was slightly different for men and women. The rate of presence in campuses and facilities has increased towards higher-income groups. As the participants get younger and their monthly income increases, the level of benefiting from university opportunities (social events, concerts, sports competitions, scientific meetings, conferences, etc.) also increases.

In summary, we saw that the citizens, who are aware of the future potential of the university, have a positive perception towards AYU. However, the city has important expectations and needs, and some of them require the joint efforts of the local government, the central administration, and the university. These solutions will further increase the interaction between AYU and the city and strengthen it as a regional and international actor.

Finally, this study was carried out in the city of Turkistan, the center of the Turkistan province and the largest city in Kazakhstan. Since AYU is a young university and the city of Turkestan has become a provincial center soon, its effects may be different compared to universities established in big cities. It is known that a significant part of the Turkestan economy operates around the university. Therefore, the expectations of the city of Turkestan from the university are equally great. This can be considered as one of the main limitations of the study. For this reason, our results may differ from studies conducted in big cities and may reveal more important results.

Our suggestion is to develop positive interaction between the city and the university to increase the contribution of universities to the city. Universities should contribute "with information and technology-based research for the development and development of the city and region, taking into account the needs of the city and the cultural, economic and social assets of the city, instead of unilaterally transferring information to the city they are in and producing projects". On the other hand, society and the city should also contribute to the development of universities. The process of establishing and developing mutual relations is the key to overall development. Otherwise, in the case of disconnection, many positive processes will end before they even begin.

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Author Contribution

All authors made an equal contribution to the development and planning of the study.

Conflict of Interest

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