



Alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship: The influence of social norms

Kesaobaka Dephney Nemakhavhani¹, Jacob Mwathi Mati¹

¹Centre for African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI),
Wits Business School, The University of the Witwatersrand

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of Ubuntu-embedded social norms –social identity, social responsibility, and obligation– on South African alumni’s giving behaviour as an expression of active citizenship. Drawing on social identity theory and a quantitative survey of alumni from two South African universities, the study employs multiple regression analysis to assess the impact of these norms on alumni giving behaviour. Findings reveal that a heightened sense of social identity and responsibility significantly predicts alumni giving, while a sense of obligation has a weaker influence. Additionally, alumni’s student experience positively affect their future intention to give. The study concludes that in addition to establishing sustainable alumni engagement initiatives, universities should invest in programs for fostering social responsibility and identity among their current students with a view to cultivating values of active citizenship as these can enhance future alumni giving behaviours, especially in the context of ongoing trends in reductions in state funding.

Keywords: *Alumni Giving, Ubuntu, Social Norms, Active Citizenship, Social Identity, Social Responsibility, Social Obligation, South Africa*

Introduction and background

This paper assesses the influence of Ubuntu-embedded social norms (social identity, social responsibility, and sense of obligation) on South African alumni’s giving behaviour as an expression of active citizenship. The paper draws from a quantitative survey of alumni of two South African universities and is inspired by assertions that giving is part of every African’s DNA (Conteh, 2022). The specific questions pursued are first, to what extent does social identity, social responsibility

*Corresponding author. E-mail address: kesaobakanemakhavhani30@gmail.com

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and social obligation, explain South African alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship? Second, to what extent do these Ubuntu-embedded social norms positively or negatively impact the likelihood of alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship in the two South African universities?

In 1994, democracy ushered in an era of new possibilities that granted every South African the opportunity to become an active citizen (Arendse, 2014), thereby reframing citizenship (Buire & Staeheli, 2017). This move also included the integration of moral values of citizenship as well as the centring of citizen participation in social and political processes through the national policy on public participation (Arendse, 2014, p. 38). According to this policy, the promotion of active citizenship requires providing education and resources (Arendse, 2014). Consequently, South Africa is one of the few countries that have developed a formal curriculum for citizenship education (Preece, 2008) and integrated the same into the education system as Life Orientation. The curriculum is inspired by Ubuntu worldviews and aims at cultivating a population of compassionate individuals with the capacity to contribute meaningfully to society (Smith & Arendse, 2016).

This commitment is visible at all levels of education, including at higher education institutions (HEIs) that have developed and integrated community service into their curriculum, and therefore foster active citizenship values in both pre- and post-graduation students (Dorasamy & Pillay, 2010). This is informed by the expectation that HEIs and their graduates must demonstrate heightened responsiveness towards societal interests and developmental requirements (Dorasamy & Pillay, 2010). Consequently, Ubuntu philosophy, especially due to its centring of a sense of belonging, mutual responsibility, obligations and a communitarian wellbeing, has gained significant recognition in citizenship education and training programmes as a unique African approach (Buire & Staeheli, 2017).

Before proceeding further, it is important to clarify both concepts and theories employed in this paper, and especially with a view to demonstrating how social identity theory and Ubuntu influence actions and behaviour of alumni of HEIs and manifest as active citizenship. This is the focus of the next section, followed by a presentation of the methodology employed. Thereafter, we present the analysis and results, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

Citizenship and alumni as active citizens: Conceptual parameters

Citizenship is a complex contested concept, with diverse applications, appropriations and interpretations (Isin & Turner, 2007; Kerber, 1997; Staeheli et al., 2016). For instance, in its traditional conception, citizenship is claimed through descent and autochthony where an individual typically becomes a citizen of a particular polity by being born on its soil (Kerber, 1997), and is automatically a citizen by being born of parents who are citizens of a particular country (Vink & Bauböck, 2013). In some instances, citizenship can be granted or withheld by an attestation of a traditional leader (Hunter, 2016). Citizenship can also be acquired by naturalisation.

At its core though, citizenship pertains to fundamental questions of belonging and exclusion, participation, societal membership, identities and affiliations, as well as the obligations and responsibilities associated with it (Manby, 2018; Vink & Bauböck, 2013). Specifically, by defining parameters for belonging, citizenship confers an individual with a public identity (Turner, 2017), while also helping establish mutual relationships, moral obligations and capabilities, as well as rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizens towards each other (Hunter, 2016; Isin & Turner, 2007; Isin & Nyers, 2014; Vink & Bauböck, 2023). Vink and Bauböck (2013) further contend that citizenship status imposes a legally binding relationship defined by duties, rights and responsibilities between citizens and their government. Some scholars describe this as a social contract, meaning a set of important voluntary agreements that are implicitly acknowledged and honoured among people who belong, or identify as belonging to a society, even while these may not be stated in writing (Binmore, 2001).

Through this social contract, citizens develop a set of shared identity and values that form the core of the sought-for moral compass despite notable differences and conflicts that may be prevalent (van der Walt, 2019). These values typically include a commitment to the common good of a particular community (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006) and serve as bonds between citizens, resulting in unity and strong norms that promote reciprocity and collaboration, highlighting the significance of interdependence between citizens (Mati, 2024).

While citizenship is traditionally understood to be the status given to individuals to empower them with rights as bona fide members of a community, there has been a growing trend in depoliticising "citizenship" by applying it in a broader sense, to encompass individual's membership to any human association who actively employ their rights to belonging in a manner that benefits the collective (Smith, 2002). In this regard, membership to any human association –a political community, a local community, gym, university, etc– is a form of citizenship (Smith, 2002). For this reason, we take belonging and actively participating in alumni associations as an expression and a form of active citizenship for university graduates.

Citizenship is brought to life by active participation. This suggests a performative nature through which we can distinguish between active and passive citizenship (Isin & Nyers, 2014), with active citizens seen as those who actively participate in their communities to promote the collective welfare and common good (Buire & Staeheli, 2017). In contemporary politico-economic neo-liberal contexts, active citizenship entails greater social responsibility in contributing to citizenry's self-sufficiency and reducing their dependency on state welfare (Verhoeven & Tonkens, 2013). In this context, active citizenship is also a behaviour influenced by state (in)actions and whose side effects are societal actions (Kruks-Wisner, 2018). Further, active citizenship primarily involves and contributes to civil society/civic space (Nelson & Kerr, 2006). Active citizenship is also shaped by, but also shapes the moral obligations of citizens to support their communities (Buire & Staeheli, 2017). Such obligations are dispensed through both formal and informal civic engagement in political activism, community self-help and mutual aid assistance and support, volunteering and neighbourhood associations, etc. (Johansson & Hvinden, 2007).

While values of active citizenship may be inherent for some individuals, for others, it is a product of (re)constructive training, development, encouragement, and practice, with a view to crafting, or changing mindsets from apathetic and/or opposed status to one consistently inclined to actively engage in collaborative endeavours with fellow citizens in contributing towards the collective resolution of societal challenges (Chando, 2021). From this framing, it follows that educational and public sphere practices may contribute to advancing active citizenship practices such as community engagement and voluntary services (Davies & Evans, 2002; Jansen et al., 2006). Such engagement, especially by alumni, can foster mutuality, reciprocity, commitment, and compassion, which are fundamental aspects of 'Ubuntu' (Dorasamy & Pillay, 2010).

Research problem

In pursuit of diversifying funding streams and reducing reliance on government funding, South African universities have refocused efforts on third-stream sources such as alumni giving. By being a part of the university community, alumni are viewed in this study as active citizens possessing a mindset of actively employing their rights and responsibilities of their belonging, in a manner that benefits the collective well-being of the university (Raheja & Khatri, 2018) through gifts that are likely to reduce universities' dependence on state funding.

Such gifts take various forms, including taking leadership roles at the university, serving as alumni associations board members, trustees, ambassadors, mentoring recent graduates and much more, which collectively demonstrate an inclusive approach that fosters a sense of belonging, affiliation, and identity (Amani, 2022; Gaier, 2005; Raheja & Khatri, 2018; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Combined, these forms of engagement, Weerts and Ronca (2008) argue, deepen alumni commitment to their alma mater and may lead to increased levels of financial contributions. For this paper, we concentrate on alumni's financial contributions. We do so by examining the role Ubuntu-embedded norms play in shaping both the identity and social norms of alumni and, therefore, influencing their pro-sociality and citizenship performance in their alma mater.

Various studies on alumni giving provide compelling evidence that alumni support for their alma mater is an untapped resource (Beamon, 2017; Skari, 2014). Additionally, studies argue that identity, a sense of belonging, and alumni engagement, influence alumni contributions to their alma mater (Aslinger, 2018; Drezner & Pizmony-Levy, 2021). Alumni are significant contributors to financial sustenance of their alma mater, thereby rendering them a crucial source of resources. However, the Annual Survey of Philanthropy in Higher Education (2020) (ASPIHE) by Inyathelo¹

¹Inyathelo was founded in October 2002 as a non-profit Trust with the aim of fostering a thriving democracy in South Africa. This vision includes the development of a resilient and enduring civil society and higher education

reveals extremely low participation rates, with a median of 0.32 % and a maximum of 2.23% of six South African universities surveyed (Thaver & Abrahams, 2020), and it is not clear why this is the case, especially given the prevalent culture of generalised giving in South Africa (Habib & Maharaj, 2008). Additionally, while there are many studies focusing on citizenship as a concept in South African contexts (see for example, Arendse, 2014), and alumni engagement with their alma mater, little is known about alumni motivation for giving as an expression of active citizenship, especially in South African universities' context.

This study attempts to bridge these gaps by contributing to the intersections of these two issues by infusing Ubuntu-embedded values in its analysis, and in part to bring to the fore, Africa's underrepresented experiences in existing theory and understanding of philanthropic practices (Fowler & Mati, 2019). The poorly chronicled experiences of the continent may result in missed fundraising opportunities, squandered resources, inefficient resource mobilisation techniques, and a lack of understanding of alumni donors' motivations and preferences. By surfacing the value of emotional and social ties alumni have with their alma mater, and how these relationships influence their giving behaviour, we hope that insights from this study can potentially assist the universities in crafting effective strategies for engaging their alumni in resource mobilisation.

Social Identity Theory and Ubuntu

Our interest in Ubuntu-embedded social norms focuses on three core elements (social identity, social responsibility and obligation) and their influence on South African alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship. In what follows, we unpack these concepts with a view to demonstrating their utility in the current study. This is followed by laying out the conceptual framework guiding the analysis.

As already noted, literature on citizenship as a concept and practice, revolves around the core significance of belonging and involvement in the formation of connections and shared identities, and from that, a sense of mutual obligations and responsibilities (Flippen et al., 1996; Penner et al., 2005). Collectively, the sense of belonging, mutual responsibility, obligations and a communitarian wellbeing are the core elements of Ubuntu as an African philosophy of life, which, by extension, define Africans and their giving behaviour (Venter, 2004). The cognitive process through which these Ubuntu-embedded group norms develop, how, and why they are adhered to, and the circumstances in which they lead to collective action, are explained through social identity theory.

Social identity theory argues that the emergence of group norms starts with the identification of self and others into categories of in-groups and out-groups. Individuals who strongly identify with a certain group and share emotional bonds within the group are more likely to show preferential treatment towards others who share the same identity (in-group) than those with different identities (out-group) (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). This categorisation into collectives creates distinctive stereotyped normative perceptions and behaviours of individuals in a group, including a desire for self-enhancement and reinforcement of in-group norms. This, in turn, leads to the development of a sense of need to engage and care for other in-group members, even when they lack a close personal relationship (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). In essence, this stereotypical favouring of in-group members shapes group members' behaviours towards a positive social identity (Fowler & Kam, 2007; Hogg et al., 1995). These subjective systems influence individuals' behavioural actions and involvement in activities that match their social identity and supporting institutions representing them (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). An individual's concern and responsiveness to group challenges is therefore a key aspect of social identity and self-categorisation as a member of a group, ensuring group loyalty, collaboration and trading of personal interests for group interest (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

These norms are well captured under Ubuntu, which stresses fundamental human interdependence in African contexts (Fowler & Mati, 2019). Specifically, Ubuntu is traditionally practised as is a form of economies of affection (Hyden, 1983), by those whose collective identity is built on blood, ethnicity, and kinship affinities. Citizenship in such collectives calls for mutual responsibility and obligation, sharing, obedience to group norms, solidarity, compassion, interdependence, and reciprocity (Chigangaidze et al., 2022; Nussbaum, 2003; Waghid, 2020).

sector, which is underpinned by a robust local philanthropic movement. The Trust is guided by the African cultural tradition of sharing.

Studies applying social identity theory in alumni gifting have emphasised norms, such as a sense of obligation and social responsibility as key determinants of giving behaviour (Coulter, 2014; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Shea Jr, 2018; Stokes III, 2022). In tandem, Ubuntu expresses the fundamental value of respect for human beings, human dignity and existence, collective sharing, obedience, humility, solidarity, social responsibility, compassion, hospitality, interdependence, communalism, reciprocity, altruism, generosity, stewardship-sustainability, social and emotional intelligence, peace and harmony in the construction and maintenance of community (Chigangaidze et al., 2022; Nussbaum, 2003). Essentially, the sense of community, reciprocity, and human bonds associated with Ubuntu, which induce the obligation to give back, intersect with social identity’s framing of the stereotypical obligation and responsibility for individuals to engage and care for others in their in-group, and by extension, to their alma mater. Through this intersection, we suggest that alumni giving is a socially embedded on behaviours pivoted on a sense of obligation and social responsibility, which, in turn, strengthens alumni’s identity and bonds with their alma mater. Below, we explain, in detail, the two concepts and their relevance to the current study.

Sense of obligation

Often seen as external stimuli that motivate individuals to act, regardless of their desires or preferences (Miller, 2006), social obligation is sometimes also perceived as a burden. However, it is a rewarding behaviour that demonstrates and deepens an individual’s connections to others (Janoff-Bulman & Leggatt, 2002). This is because, in its basic nature, a sense of obligation is inherently reciprocal; individuals are usually prepared to limit their self-interest and collaborate for a common benefit, provided others also collaborate (Tomasello, 2020). In this regard, obligations and rights are interdependent; when someone has an obligation, another individual possesses corresponding rights but also counter-obligations (Veitch, 2017). In the context of Ubuntu and citizenship, people feel a sense of moral obligation to be involved in the causes they care about or identify with (Awaliah Kasri, 2013; Everatt et al., 2005). Consequently, we argue that alumni are primarily motivated to give by a sense of obligation to help their alma mater as a result of their identification with the collective community.

Social responsibility

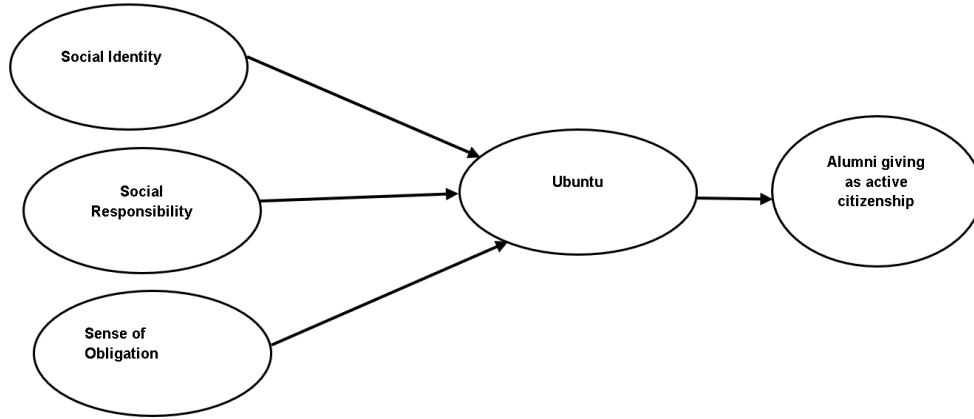
Social responsibility encompasses a set of values that inspire specific civic behaviour and an ethical duty towards self and society. Social responsibility depends on virtues such as integrity, self-control, esteem, allegiance, empathy, fairness and inclusivity (Hersh & Schneider, 2005; Schaps & Solomon, 1990). Although its primary objective is to establish a self-sufficient community, reciprocal collaboration between all members of society is critical to achieving this goal (Vallaey, 2018). Within higher education institutions, social responsibility encompasses enhancing civic ideals, fostering a dedication to community service, and promoting active citizenship by encouraging individuals to participate in community engagement initiatives (Kibona & Woldegiorgis, 2023).

Of significance to the current study is the concept of individual social responsibility, which is a key predictor of alumni-giving behaviour. In this regard, Snyder et al. (2011) note that alumni actively participate in acts of giving and community projects as a genuine manifestation of their social responsibility and duty to advance the well-being of the societies to which they belong. We therefore argue that fostering a sense of community among students can promote social responsibility and increase alumni gift rates (Leak & Reid, 2010).

Conceptual framework and hypothesis

Following the extensive background and literature review above, we present the conceptual framework that guided the study. Our conceptualisation of active citizenship in this study involved the future intention to give; we hypothesise that this is influenced by Ubuntu-embedded norms –social identity, social responsibility, and social obligation– as represented in Figure 1 below. This formulation is also partly informed, as we have already seen, by the broader definition of active citizenship, which places a moral obligation on the citizens to act responsibly towards one another and the communities they identify with or belong to.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



From the discussion and the conceptual framework above, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Ubuntu-embedded social norms –social identity, social responsibility and obligation– strongly predicts alumni giving behaviour as an expression of active citizenship.

H2: There is a strong positive relationship between alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship and a heightened sense of the Ubuntu-embedded social norms –social identity, social responsibility and obligation.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach, which included a survey of alumni of two South African universities. The survey contained a series of seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 for strongly agree to 7 for strongly disagree) measures of the core concepts (social identity, social responsibility, and obligation). Data was analysed first through descriptive and correlations analysis, then inferential (factor analysis and multiple regression) statistics to quantify the degree to which the Ubuntu-embedded factors account for alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship at the two South African universities. This is because the study adopted a deductive (the verification of hypothesis) approach as its logic of inquiry, encompassing a theoretical framework that guided hypotheses development, data collection and analysis, as well as hypotheses testing (Walliman, 2021).

Sampling

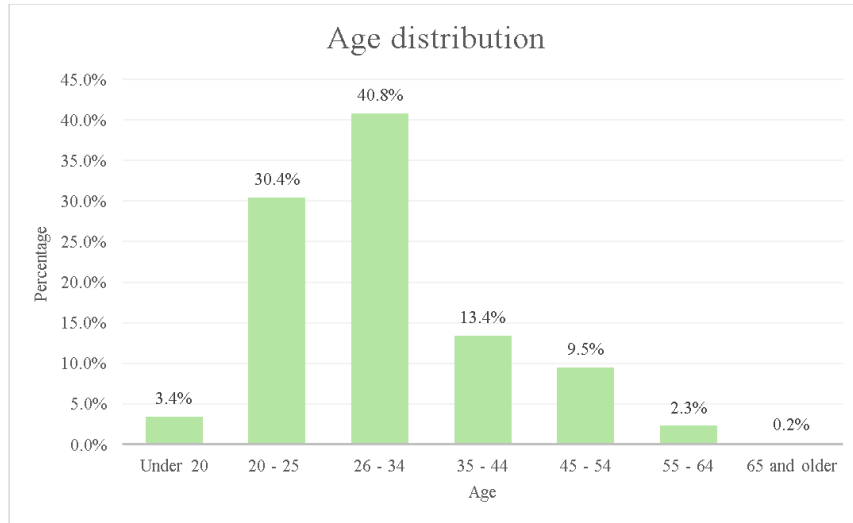
A non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience, was used as it is less costly and time-consuming. This strategy entailed recruiting participants based on their accessibility, availability, and willingness to participate (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This sampling method was also affordable, practical and easily implementable (Adeoye, 2023; Jager et al., 2017). However, as Jager et al. (2017) caution, due to inaccurate sample estimates, this technique is vulnerable to biases and lacks clear generalisability, and the sample might not reflect the actual effects on target population.

The study targeted alumni from two South African universities in Gauteng province, renowned for their unique attributes and endeavours to foster connections with their alumni. One of the universities is over hundred years old, while the other is a product of the post-apartheid merger of public universities, suggesting distinct alumni identities, which we contend, play a vital role in the formation of personality traits and emotional connections to institutions (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). Additionally, social identity theory suggests that geographical location is a good proxy for common behavioural traits (Muller et al., 2014). Therefore, the shared location of the two

universities provides a comparable environment for measuring alumni-giving behaviours (Wong, 2021).

Data was collected using Qualtrics' online survey tool, with a survey link shared through the alumni relations offices of these universities between 31st January and 06 March 2023. The survey received responses from 441 respondents, with 57.8% (255) identifying as female and 42.2% (186) as male and the age distribution spanning 20 to above 65 years of age. Figure 2 below summarises the age distribution of participants.

Figure 2. Age distribution of the sample.



Before delving into findings and analysis, it is important to note that due to its reliance on alumni of only two academic institutions in Gauteng, South Africa, the study findings are limited in their generalisability. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the survey means that it did not capture “a definitive time order of causes and outcomes [and therefore] limits the provision of definite information about causal relationships” (Cummings, 2018, p. 2). Furthermore, the self-reported data has potential information or selection bias. In addition, the use of a survey as the primary data collection instrument precluded the possibility of clarifying any questions that respondents may not have fully comprehended. However, these methods and techniques were deemed sufficient for exploring alumni-giving behaviours and the relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Cummings, 2018).

Data analysis and results

Descriptive and correlation analysis was done to measure the data's central tendencies and spread and to assess the association between the variables, followed by inferential (factor analysis and multiple regressions). Because a larger number of independent variables may result in reduced predictive power, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was performed as a data reduction technique. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis, specifically, stepwise regression was performed to determine the extent to which predictor variables account for the variance in the criterion variable (Almquist et al., 2020). In what follows, we first present results of descriptive analysis, before delving into results of inferential statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistics

The results of descriptive analysis of the 12 items used to measure the three Ubuntu-embedded norms are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the measure of factors.

Items	Mean	Median	Mode	Sts. Deviation
Social Identity (SI)				
SI1: I feel connected to my alma mater	3.45	3.00	1	2.051
SI2: I identify with my alma mater	3.35	3.00	1	2.034
SI3: Being associated with my alma mater as an alumnus boosts my self-confidence	3.4	3.00	1	2.073
SI4: I feel a strong connection to my alma mater because of its mission and vision	3.51	3.00	1	2.011
SI5: I am likely to donate to my alma mater because I have a favourable institutional identity	3.56	4.00	4	1.863
Social Responsibility (SR)				
SR1: I believe that we have a responsibility to help our universities to be more financially stable for the future generation	3.75	4.00	6	2.023
SR2: I consider giving back to my alma mater to be a form of social responsibility	3.45	3.00	1	2.029
SR3: I am likely to donate to my alma mater due to the fact that the current challenges necessitate active citizenry	3.5	3.00	1	2.024
SR4: I believe it is a societal responsibility to ensure the well-being and welfare of all individuals	3.58	4.00	1	2.158
Sense of Obligation (SO)				
SO1: I have a moral obligation to give back to my alma mater	3.51	3.00	1	1.978
SO2: I am likely to donate to my alma mater due to a feeling of social obligation to a larger group	3.53	3.00	1	1.986
SO3: I am likely to donate to my alma mater despite my socioeconomic status	3.71	3.00	1	2.022

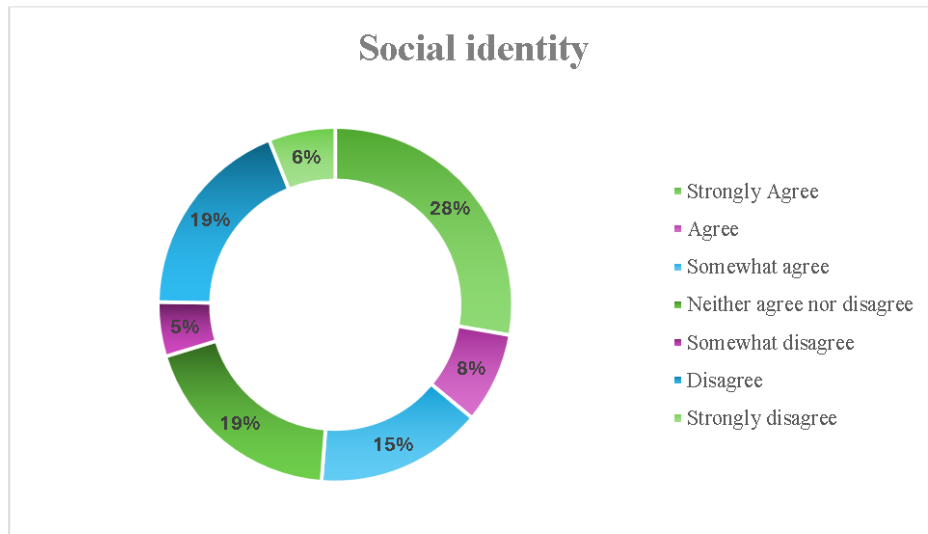
Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each question by selecting a corresponding response on a seven-point Likert scale of multiple items, ranging from one (strongly agree) to seven (strongly disagree). The level of agreement was represented by response selections of one to three (1-3), and the level of disagreement was shown by the response selection of five to seven (5-7). Neutrality was represented by a selection of four (4). We present the summary of the responses below.

Social identity

As shown in Table 1 above, five items were used to measure this factor. Results, as shown in Figure 3 below, indicate that cumulatively, 51% of the respondents agreed (strongly agree – somewhat agree) with social identity statements, while 19% were neutral and 30% disagreed (strongly disagree – somewhat disagree).

The mean values for SI, S2 and SI3 were below 3.5 and closer to 3, indicating respondents somewhat agreed with the questions. The mean values of SI4 and SI5 (mission and vision, and favourable institutional identity), were above closer to 4, a neutral response (neither agree nor disagree). The most frequent response selected (mode) though was 1, indicating strong agreement with the statement items, except SI5 (which measured respondents' favourable identification with their alma mater) whose frequently selected response was neutral (4). Likewise, a median score of 3 indicates that half of the responses leaned towards agreement with the question, except for SI5, which leaned towards neutrality. The frequency distribution was generally symmetric around the mean. These findings suggest that alumni strongly identify with their alma mater and are likely to participate in activities such as gifting. This is consistent with studies that suggest that individuals participate in activities of institutions that they identify with (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

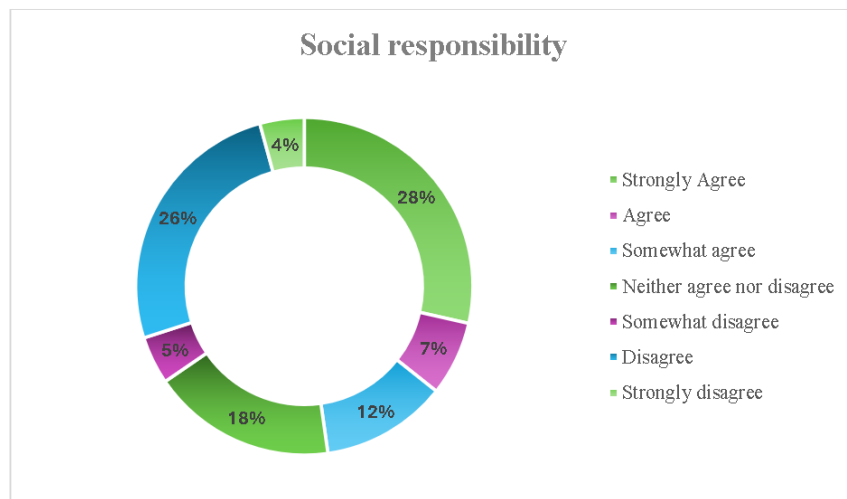
Figure 3. Summary of responses on social identity measures



Social responsibility

This factor was assessed using four items. Results, as shown in Figure 4, indicate that a combined 47% of respondents had some level of agreement with the statements, 18% were neutral, and 35% disagreed.

Figure 4. Summary of responses on social responsibility measures

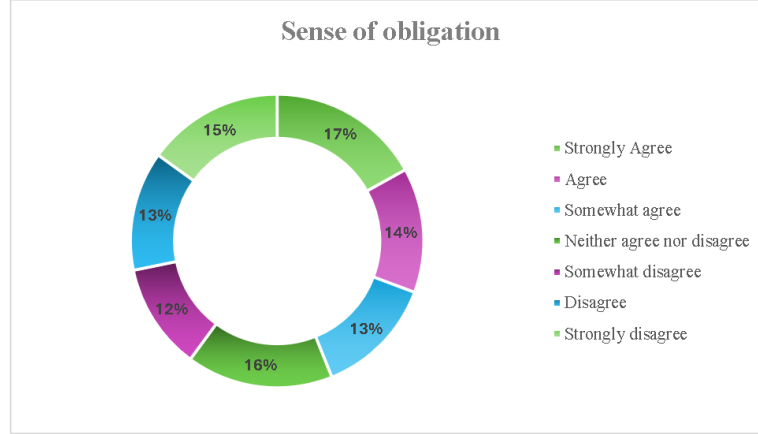


The mean values for the different measures, as shown in Table 1 above, ranged between 3.45 and 3.75 and therefore leaning towards neutrality. Furthermore, the median value for most statements was mostly 4.0, except for SR2, "I consider giving back to my alma mater to be a form of social responsibility", and SR3, "I am likely to give to my alma mater because the current challenges necessitate an active citizenry" that recorded the median of 3.0. Responses for most statements (mode) were 1, except for SR2, which was 6, indicating a strong disagreement with the statement. Skewness values varied between -0.076 and 0.200, suggesting relative normality in the distribution of responses. These findings resonate with Snyder et al. (2011), assertion that alumni actively participate in acts of gifting and community service as a manifestation of their social responsibility to advance the well-being of the societies to which they belong.

Sense of obligation

This factor was assessed using three items. Results, as shown in Figure 5 below, indicate 44% of the respondents positively responded to the sense of obligation statements, while 16% were neutral, and 40% disagreed.

Figure 5. Summary of responses on social responsibility measures



The mean values ranged from 3.51 to 3.71 on the seven-point scale, suggesting overall neutrality of respondent's sense of obligation to giving to their alma mater. The median response of 3.00 for all the statements means a moderate agreement among half of the respondents regarding different aspects of gifting based on a sense of obligation. Further, a mode of 1 means that respondents frequently agreed with the statements. These findings suggest that most of the respondents feel a sense of moral obligation to give back to their alma mater; however, a neutral response on SO3 suggests a degree of uncertainty among respondents.

These findings are explainable given that over 70% of the surveyed alumni are between the ages of 20 and 34 and have graduated within the past five years. In an economy with high youth unemployment, it is possible that many are yet to get stable jobs and income.

Correlation analysis

Pearson correlation analysis (as shown in Table 2 below) was used to test the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. The strength of a relationship between two variables, given as a coefficient (Pearson's r), is anything between -1 and 1. Therefore, the direction of the relationship is represented by either being negative or positive, denoting that when one factor increases, the other decreases in a negative relationship or when one factor increases, so does the other factor in a positive relationship. Typically, the strength of the relationship is deemed either perfect (-1 and 1), strong (-0.9 to -0.7 and 0.7 to 0.9), moderate (-0.6 to -0.4 and 0.4 to 0.6), or weak (-0.3 to -0.1 and 0.1 to 0.3)(Almquist et al., 2020).

Table 2. Results of Pearson Correlations analysis for the study variables

Active Citizenship	SenseOb	SocialID	Socialresp	
Active Citizenship	1.000	0.233**	0.424**	0.575**
SenseOb	0.233**	1.000	0.284**	0.168**
SocialID	0.424**	0.284**	1.000	0.442**
Socialresp	0.575**	0.168**	0.442**	1.000

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

Table 2 reveals a statistically significant positive but moderate relationship between social responsibility and social identity ($r = 0.442$; $p < 0.01$), followed by a statistically significant positive but weak relationship between social identity and sense of obligation ($r = 0.284$; $p < 0.01$). Similarly, social responsibility and sense of obligation were statistically significant but weak ($r = 0.168$; $p < 0.01$). Notably, of all the predictor variables, social responsibility recorded the highest correlation with giving as an expression of active citizenship ($r = 0.575$; $p < 0.01$), followed by social identity ($r = 0.424$; $p < 0.01$). This suggests that a greater sense of social responsibility among the alumni correlates with an increased propensity to contribute as an expression of active citizenship.

Principal component analysis

In this study, the questionnaire contained three constructs with 12 measurable items of predictor variables which, due to the larger number of measures, could decrease the model's predictive power (Sun et al. 2007, p.315). Therefore, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with an oblique (promax)² rotation method was performed to reduce substantial variables into fewer components. The data's factorability was measured using KMO and Bartlett's sphericity test, which was found to be 0.847 and therefore significant ($p < 0.001$), as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	.847
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	1,605,085
df	55
Sig	<.001

In deciding on the number of factors to be retained, the study adopted Kaiser's criterion of retaining factors with eigenvalues higher than 1.0. As seen in Table 4 below, the study adopted the 4-component solution as a better approach to overcome some weaknesses observed in a 5-component model, such as high cross-loadings³ for a few variables and a few higher factor correlations. The adopted solution provides the communalities (h^2) on the highs of .4s and fewer cross-loadings. Further, Table 4 shows that the four factors component solution accounted for a combined 59.1% of the data, which is an adequate proportion given that at least a minimum of 50% of the proportion of the total variance explained by the retained factors should be retained (Shrestha, 2019).

Reliability measure

The internal consistency of the indicators for each construct was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum threshold of 0.70 deemed satisfactory (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The results of this evaluation were found to be satisfactory for the sense of social identity and social responsibility variables, but not for the sense of obligation, which produced a questionable alpha, as illustrated by Table 5.

The constructs social responsibility, and sense of social identity produced a reliable scale of 0.773 and 0.810, respectively. Furthermore, one item under the sense of obligation construct exhibited a negative correlation and was re-coded to ensure that all items were oriented in the same direction of the construct before measurability (Meyers et al., 2013). Following the re-coding, sense of obligation produced a questionable alpha of 0.554. The scale's dependability was largely determined by the number of items it contained (DeCoster & Claypool, 2004).

²Oblique rotation is preferred because the correlation between factors exceeds 0.2.

³High communalities (preferably above 0.4) suggested the effectiveness of the analysis results in accounting for the variance within the variable.

Table 4. Variable reliabilities measures

Construct	No of items used in computing	Rating Scale	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Social responsibility	4	1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree)	.773
Sense of social identity	5	1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree)	.810
Sense of obligation	3	1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree)	.554

In this regard, the sense of obligation construct contained only three items and therefore, the weak alpha (0.554) did not invalidate results obtained from the scale. In articulating such scores, DeCoster and Claypool (2004) contend that low reliability cannot lead to obtaining false significance, although it affects the likelihood of obtaining significant results. They therefore argue that discovering meaningful results with an unreliable scale suggests a strong effect that surpasses the limitations of the scale.

Regression analysis

To confirm or refute the two hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was used to examine how different variables predicted alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship. The use of multiple regression was deemed appropriate as it typically enables the prediction of the criterion variable value based on the values of multiple predictor variables (DeCoster & Claypool, 2004). Table 6 below summarises the results of the test of the proposed hypotheses to answer the research question "What is the extent to which Ubuntu-embedded social norms – i.e. social identity, social responsibility and obligation explain South African alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship?"

Table 5. Summary of the multiple regression analysis results

Hypothesis	Research questions	Standard coefficient beta	p-value	Results
H1 Ubuntu-embedded social norms – i.e., social identity, social responsibility, and obligation have a significant explanatory power in predicting alumni giving behaviour as an expression of active citizenship.	What is the extent to which Ubuntu embedded social norms – i.e., social identity, social responsibility, and obligation explain South African Alumni giving behaviour as an expression of active citizenship?			
Social identity		0.185	<0.001	Accepted
Social responsibility		0.477	<0.001	Accepted
Sense of Obligation		0.100	<0.011	Accepted

To test H1, we used the R-squared (R^2) value, the beta (β) value and the sig (p-value). The R^2 value explains the part of the variable in the criterion "alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship," which is accounted for by the predictor variables: social responsibility, social identity and sense of obligation, while the (β) value indicates how much influence these predictor variables possessed. The p-value below 0.05 reveals statistical significance (Shrestha, 2019). The beta (β) value (0.477) shown in Table 6 reveals that the variable "social responsibility" has a stronger causal effect than the other two variables in the model. Therefore, the study results fail to reject hypothesis H1. These results are discussed further in the section below.

Discussion

To answer the two research questions, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to test the strength and the direction of Ubuntu-embedded factors on alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship, while multiple regression analysis was conducted to measure how much of the variation in alumni giving is explained by Ubuntu-embedded factors.

As seen in Table 6, this study's findings fail to reject H1 (Ubuntu-embedded social norms – social identity, social responsibility and obligation – strongly predicts alumni giving behaviour as

an expression of active citizenship) as confirmed by beta ($\beta = 0.185$, <0.001) for social identity, beta ($\beta = 0.477$, <0.001) for social responsibility, and ($\beta = 0.100$, <0.011) for a sense of obligation. Furthermore, to test H2 (there is a strong positive relationship between alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship and the heightened sense of the Ubuntu-embedded social norms – social identity, social responsibility and obligation), Pearson correlation analysis was performed. Based on the results of this analysis, the study fails to reject H2. As seen in Table 2, the predictor variable, social responsibility, recorded a statistically significant positive correlation with giving as an expression of active citizenship ($r = 0.575$; $p < 001$), followed by social identity ($r = 0.424$; $p < 001$) and sense of obligation ($r = 0.233$; $p < 001$).

Findings for social identity resonate with Fowler and Kam (2007), who found that social identity drives individuals to aspire to enhance the well-being of specific societal groups to which they belong, potentially at the exclusion of other groups. In the current study, social identity is likely to induce active citizenship behaviour when alumni believe that the outcome of their participation positively affects their alma mater community. These findings are consistent with studies that suggest economies of affection, such as Ubuntu, are significant drivers of mutual aid among those who share identity as they collaborate to address deficiencies in service provision by the state (Conteh, 2022; Hyden, 1983). In our case, alumni are likely to be involved in such behaviours as acts of active citizenship (Shaari et al., 2016).

Our findings further reveal that social responsibility accounts for 47,7% explanatory power of the criterion variable. This means that social responsibility has a strong causal effect ($\beta = 0.477$, <0.001) on alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship. This is consistent with studies showing that individuals with social responsibility beliefs are more likely to engage in behaviours that involve assisting others and contributing to society (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011).

For the sense of obligation ($\beta = 0.100$, <0.011), our study findings are consistent with other studies that indicate that individuals who volunteered their time as an act of active citizenship cited a sense of obligation as their motivation (Omoto et al., 2018). These findings are consistent with studies reporting that students are happy to participate in university projects as a way to pay it forward and therefore see their participation as an obligation (Drezner, 2010). While philanthropy is generally voluntary, we note that African philanthropic giving is informed by culture or social norms and, thus a moral obligation influenced by shared identity and obligation which pushes many to give, even when reporting being too impoverished (Atibil, 2014; Wilkinson-Maposa et al., 2005). This obligation to participate is an expression of active citizenship.

Though sense of obligation has the weakest explanatory power compared to the other two variables, a study by Wilkinson-Maposa et al. (2005) reveals that crisis and urgency induce the obligation to give. We argue, therefore, that a sense of obligation may be stronger in conjunction with other interventions to raise awareness of the crisis faced by universities and create urgency. Once an individual is made aware of a need, their perception of the severity or urgency of the problem is the most critical factor in determining whether or not they would take any action to address it (Drezner, 2018). Furthermore, other studies found that factors such as age, income, and financial support to other organisations are significant predictors of alumni giving to community colleges (Skari, 2014). In the current study, we observed neutral responses regarding the likelihood to give despite socioeconomic status, indicating a certain level of ambivalence among the respondents. This is explained by the age and income levels of the households that the survey respondents come from, as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 6. Monthly household income (ZAR)

Age	No income	Less than R5 000	R5 000 - R9 999	R10 000 - R19 999	R20 000 - R29 999	R30 000 - R39 999	R40 000 - R49 999	More than - R50 000	Total
Under 20	0.4%	1.1%	0.2%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	2.9%
20 - 25	4.9%	6.3%	4.7%	4.0%	4.0%	2.0%	1.3%	3.8%	31.0%
26 -34	2.0%	4.7%	3.6%	6.3%	6.9%	4.7%	2.0%	10.5%	40.6%
35 -44	0.2%	0.2%	1.1%	0.9%	1.1%	1.8%	0.9%	7.1%	13.4%
45 - 54	0.7%	0.0%	0.2%	0.7%	1.3%	0.9%	2.2%	3.6%	9.6%
55 - 64	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.2%	0.9%	2.2%
65 and older	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
% of Total	8.3%	12.3%	10.0%	12.7%	13.4%	10.3%	6.7%	26.3%	100.0%

Specifically, 74.8% of the respondents were under 35 years. The results of the analysis of their household income levels reveals that 7.3% of those under 34 years had no income, while 12.1% earn less than R5000 per month. Additionally, close to a third of the sample (30.6%) had a household income of less than R10 000.00, suggesting that they struggle with meeting even their basic survival needs. The implication here is that income is a major factor influencing alumni gifting even for those alumni with a developed sense of obligation (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Drew-Branch, 2011; Weerts & Ronca, 2009).

Practical and policy implications

The results of this study provide useful insight into motivations behind alumni giving for the two South African universities which can empower fundraising professionals and higher education administrators in formulating targeted approaches to enhance alumni giving. For example, universities may consider using this knowledge to improve their policies. As the findings of this study reveal, the Ubuntu-embedded social norms (social responsibility, social identity, and sense of obligation) possess significant explanatory power in the future intention of alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship. As such, policies incorporating African giving practices and behaviours can enhance alumni's giving. Specifically, to ensure successful alumni engagement, there is the need to establish and implement policies and processes that bolster trust in the university's financial management as these exhibit accountability and integrity (Rohayati et al., 2016). There is therefore need for gift policies that demonstrate accountability and integrity, encompassing ethical fundraising practices that respect the preferences of alumni donors and protect the integrity of the beneficiaries. These policies could particularly appeal to alumni with a heightened sense of social responsibility.

Second, there is need for a robust engagement policy by universities to guide the alumni solicitation process, including tailored communication that promotes awareness of the need to create urgency, thus inducing a sense of obligation. Last but not least, such policies ought to include guidelines for pre-alumni capacitation as active citizens, which can help shape their experience. Pre-alumni experience, as research shows (Zabatta, 2017), has the potential to induce a sense of social responsibility and influence their future giving behaviour and their ability to interpret their experiences in a manner that aligns with their own identity and values, leading them to engage in behaviours that feel authentic and consistent with their sense of identity.

Recommendations for future research

This study was conducted at only two out of 26 public universities in South Africa. There is, therefore, a need to conduct further research at other universities and even potentially expand the study scope across African universities. This broader approach will contribute to a better comprehension of African alumni giving behaviour as an expression of active citizenship. Future research may adopt a mixed-method research design, using probability and quota sampling, which could assist in generating comparative qualitative and quantitative data valuable to the continent. Furthermore, future research should explore the explanatory power of a sense of obligation which showed a weaker influence compared to other variables.

Further studies should also pursue other alumni gifting forms since monetary gifting depends on the financial capability. The lack of financial capability likely bars the unemployed, those with no income, and those with competing priorities from giving. Alumni gifting, particularly in the African context, takes many different forms and are not limited to to monetary gifts.

Conclusion

This study aimed to test the explanatory power and the strength, and the direction of Ubuntu-embedded social norms – social identity, social responsibility, and sense of obligation – on alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship. To achieve this, the study developed two hypotheses to answer two research questions: What is the extent to which Ubuntu-embedded social norms – i.e. social identity, social responsibility and obligation explain South African alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship? And to what extent do these social norms positively or negatively impact the likelihood of alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship in the two South

African universities? Social identity theory which, in the context of Ubuntu, primarily involves mutual aid and reciprocal practices of those whose collective identity is built on affinities (blood, ethnicity, kinship) (Fowler & Mati, 2019), guided the study. The study findings suggest that social responsibility has the highest explanatory power for alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship, followed by social identity and sense of obligation. Below, we provide a summary of these findings.

Social responsibility: Nearly half (47%) of alumni who participated in the study believe that they have a responsibility to ensure that their alma mater remains financially sustainable to cater for the needs of present and future generations. The implication here is that active citizenship can be induced by instilling social responsibility values in students (Joseph & Carolissen, 2019). This can result in individuals assuming greater responsibility towards their alma mater's well-being and, therefore, ensuring their sustainability for the greater good of society. In view of this, it is recommended that universities invest resources in developing socially responsible alumni who are likely to express their active citizenship by giving back. As noted by Zabatta (2017), active citizenship experience may be acquired pre-graduation through involvement in extracurricular activities that equip their students to be socially responsible citizens. This can range from compulsory massive online courses that give credits to students as well as community engagement projects in collaboration with civil society organisations with a focus on solving societal challenges so as to equip students with the necessary exposure and experience. In this regard, a study on Kenyan students' perception of community service programs revealed that students who participated in this program developed a philanthropic mindset and compassion towards those in need (Odongo, 2018).

Social identity: Our results indicate that social identity is a strong predictor of alumni giving to their alma mater as active citizenship. As noted earlier, alumni citizenship revolves around membership and the formation of identities and connections, which creates a sense of belonging and interdependence, which is likely to influence alumni giving because, as Ashforth and Mael (1989) note, alumni who strongly identify with their alma mater are likely to contribute financially. Alumni identification is influenced by factors such as the university's tradition and prestige, the duration of time spent at the institution, mentorship, overall contentment, and the graduate's sentimental rating of their time at the university. This means that universities should formulate and execute strategies that cultivate emotional connections with their alumni, establish themselves as preferred employers, generate favourable publicity, and validate the worthiness of alumni support.

Sense of obligation: Our findings suggest that a sense of obligation is one of the predictors of alumni giving as an expression of active citizenship, albeit a weak one. This is consistent with studies suggesting that individuals feel morally obliged to give to the causes close to them (Everatt et al., 2005; Muzondidya & Chiroro, 2008). Individuals with a heightened sense of obligation are usually prepared to limit their self-interest and collaborate for a common benefit, provided others also collaborate (Tomasello, 2020). A sense of obligation is influenced by many other motivations, including university solicitation efforts, altruism, efficacy, awareness of needs, reciprocity and alumni attachment to their alma mater (Diamond & Kashyap, 1997). Based on this, it is recommended that to induce a sense of obligation, universities should ensure that they improve their solicitation efforts with a solid strategy that guides solicitation. Additionally, universities should develop alumni engagement strategies that include storyboards to inform alumni of university's needs and report on the impact. Furthermore, drawing from Tomasello's (2020) contention, the university may consider matching gifts to the alumni donors.

Ethics Declaration

The research upon which this paper is based was granted research ethics clearance by the Wits Business School on December 03, 2022, protocol number: WBS/AP1294214/973. The authors have no conflict of interest on any other issue in this study.

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