



THE IMPACT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERSONAL VALUES AND MORAL COGNITION ON THEIR PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract:

In the context of growing global attention to social responsibility, understanding the factors that shape university students' sense of social responsibility has become increasingly important. This study aims to examine the influence of personal values and moral cognition on students' perceptions of social responsibility and to explore the mediating role of ethical orientation. Using a quantitative approach supported by qualitative insights, data were collected from full-time university students through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, and analyzed using statistical techniques. The findings reveal that multiple dimensions of personal values significantly influence idealism and are strongly correlated with relativism. Furthermore, idealism, relativism, and ethical orientation significantly affect social responsibility cognition, with ethical orientation strengthening the influence of moral cognition on perceptions of social responsibility. This study contributes a comprehensive analytical framework linking personal values, moral cognition, and social responsibility, offering empirical evidence that enriches moral psychology and educational research. The results suggest that universities should integrate value education and ethical reasoning into curricula to foster socially responsible attitudes and support the development of morally grounded future professionals.

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid digital transformation, social responsibility has emerged as a fundamental value shaping societal sustainability worldwide. As economic, technological, and social interactions become increasingly interconnected, individual behavior and ethical decision-making play a decisive role in addressing global challenges, including social inequality, environmental degradation, and ethical governance (Abbas et al., 2024; Le et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024). University students, as future leaders and professionals, play a strategic role in advancing social responsibility across sectors. Empirical evidence indicates that societies with greater ethical awareness among young adults tend to exhibit higher levels of civic engagement and social cohesion. Reports from international organizations consistently highlight the importance of value-based education in fostering responsible citizenship (Ashimkhanova et al., 2025; Vivar et

al., 2024). However, social responsibility is not merely an institutional obligation but a cognitive and moral disposition shaped by personal values and ethical reasoning. Therefore, understanding the internal factors that influence students' perceptions of social responsibility is essential (Krishnamoorthi et al., 2025; Singh, 2025). This research is vital because it provides insights into how moral cognition and personal values contribute to socially responsible behavior, offering benefits not only to educational institutions but also to society at large.

Despite the growing recognition of social responsibility as a societal imperative, many contemporary societies face challenges in cultivating socially responsible individuals. Rapid modernization and individualistic orientations often prioritize personal achievement over collective well-being, thereby weakening moral sensitivity and social engagement (Kislyakov et al., 2024; Meo et al., 2025). Among university students, this problem is particularly evident, as academic success and career competitiveness frequently overshadow ethical reflection and civic responsibility. Moral education programs in higher education often remain abstract, normative, and detached from students' lived experiences, reducing their effectiveness (Aziz, 2025; Zvereva, 2023). As a result, students may possess surface-level knowledge of social responsibility without internalizing its ethical significance. This gap between moral knowledge and moral practice creates inconsistencies in attitudes and behavior. The lack of systematic understanding regarding how personal values and moral cognition interact to shape social responsibility further exacerbates the issue (Luthfi et al., 2025; Usman et al., 2025). Consequently, addressing this problem requires empirical investigation into the psychological and ethical foundations of students' perceptions of social responsibility.

In practical contexts, university students exhibit diverse, sometimes contradictory attitudes toward social responsibility. While many students express concern for social and environmental issues, their actual engagement in socially responsible actions remains limited (Ivleva et al., 2025; Nurim et al., 2024). When personal interests conflict with collective or societal goals, students often prioritize self-interest, reflecting a strong individualistic tendency. There are also notable differences in students' depth of moral reasoning and ethical judgment, leading to unequal levels of social responsibility cognition. Furthermore, limited exposure to real-world ethical dilemmas and insufficient opportunities for reflective practice hinder students' moral development. Service-learning programs and community engagement initiatives are prevalent across many institutions, yet participation is often superficial or compliance-driven rather than value-driven (Mthanti, 2023; Syaiful, 2020; Southern et al., 2020). These phenomena indicate that external educational interventions alone may not be sufficient. Instead, internal psychological factors such as personal values, idealism, and moral relativism play a crucial role in shaping how students perceive and enact social responsibility.

Previous studies have examined social responsibility from various theoretical perspectives. Jali (2025) and Widiyari (2024) emphasized that moral values significantly influence individual ethical behavior, whereas Reig-Aleixandre et al. (2024) and Zhang et al. (2023) highlighted the role of education in shaping students' civic responsibility. Dhungel (2025), Rathakrishnan et al. (2025), and Zhang et al. (2025) argued that ethical orientation mediates the relationship between values and social behavior. Similarly, Williams et al. (2024) and Jacobsen et al. (2024) also argue that moral development theory and value-based frameworks underscore the importance of moral cognition in responsible conduct. However, most existing research remains conceptual or relies on

case-based analyses, with limited empirical validation. Moreover, studies often examine personal values or moral cognition in isolation, neglecting their interactive effects on social responsibility cognition. Research explicitly focusing on university students as a distinct group is still scarce. This lack of integrated empirical models constitutes a significant research gap that necessitates systematic investigation.

This study advances the state of the art by proposing and empirically testing an integrated framework that links personal values, moral cognition, and social responsibility cognition among university students. Unlike previous studies that focus on single-variable relationships, this research examines the mediating role of moral cognition, specifically idealism and relativism, in shaping social responsibility perceptions. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analytical approach, combining value theory and moral psychology within an empirical model supported by quantitative and qualitative data. By operationalizing moral cognition as a dynamic mediator rather than a static trait, this research offers a more nuanced understanding of ethical development. Addressing this issue is crucial, as it addresses contemporary educational challenges and provides evidence-based insights to improve moral and civic education in higher education institutions.

Based on the identified gaps, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: How do personal values influence university students' perceptions of social responsibility? What role does moral cognition play in mediating this relationship? The central argument of this research is that personal values significantly shape social responsibility cognition through moral reasoning processes, particularly idealism and relativism. This study offers original contributions by providing empirical evidence for a structured relationship model among these variables. The findings are expected to enrich theoretical discussions in moral psychology and educational ethics and to offer practical implications for curriculum design and moral education strategies. By strengthening students' internal value systems and ethical awareness, this research contributes to the development of socially responsible individuals and supports broader societal progress.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among university students' personal values, moral cognition, and social responsibility cognition. The mixed-methods approach was selected because it enables the integration of quantitative measurement of variable relationships with qualitative exploration of underlying meanings and mechanisms (Lee, 2024). Specifically, a sequential explanatory design was adopted, in which quantitative data serve as the primary source of analysis and qualitative data are used to explain, deepen, and validate the quantitative findings.

The quantitative component involved undergraduate students from three comprehensive universities, selected due to their diverse academic disciplines, large student populations, and representativeness of contemporary higher education contexts (Salimi et al., 2021). The total student populations of the selected institutions exceed 120,000 students, providing a broad basis for sampling. The qualitative component involved five expert informants drawn from the fields of education, psychology, sociology, ethics, and management. These informants were purposively selected for their academic expertise and professional experience in youth development, moral

psychology, social responsibility, and value education, thereby ensuring rich and relevant insights aligned with the research focus.

Data collection techniques included structured questionnaires and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The questionnaire was designed to measure personal values, moral cognition (idealism and relativism), and social responsibility cognition using multi-item indicators rated on a five-point Likert scale. Before distribution, the instrument underwent expert validation to ensure its content was relevant and clear. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews guided by an interview protocol covering themes such as value orientation, moral reasoning processes, ethical judgment, and educational interventions related to social responsibility.

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical techniques to test relationships among variables (Love et al., 2023). In contrast, qualitative data were analyzed using the systematic procedures of data condensation, data reduction, data display, and data verification. Interview transcripts were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and explanatory themes that complemented the quantitative results. The integration of findings was conducted through comparative analysis to examine convergence and divergence between the two data sources. To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, multiple strategies were employed, including expert review of instruments, triangulation between quantitative and qualitative data, and consistency checks across data sources. These procedures enhanced the credibility, reliability, and rigor of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the results of the data analysis examining university students' personal values, moral cognition, and social responsibility cognition. The findings are organized into descriptive and inferential analyses, followed by regression and qualitative studies, to provide a comprehensive understanding of variable distributions, relationships, and underlying explanatory patterns that support the proposed research framework.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are presented to provide an overview of the respondents' characteristics and to establish a contextual foundation for subsequent analyses. This section summarizes the distribution of respondents across key demographic variables, providing an initial understanding of the sample composition. Such information is essential for assessing the representativeness of the data and for supporting the interpretation of inferential statistical results.

Demographic Factors

The demographic profile of the respondents includes gender, age, and academic grade, which are relevant variables for understanding differences in personal values, moral cognition, and perceptions of social responsibility. These factors are considered necessary because demographic variations may influence students' ethical orientations and social awareness.

Table 1: The Frequency and Percent Frequency Classified by Demographic Factor

Question	Option	Frequency	Percentage
1. Gender	Male	122	30.5
	Female	278	69.5
	Total	400	100.0
2. Age	18-20 years	116	29.0
	20-22 years old	133	33.3
	22-24 years old	101	25.3
	Over 24 years old	50	12.5
	Total	400	100.0
3. Grade	Freshman	40	10.0
	Sophomore	124	31.0
	Junior	133	33.3
	Senior	103	25.8
	Total	400	100.0

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the 400 participants. In terms of gender, the sample is predominantly female (69.5%; 278 participants), whereas males comprise 30.5% (122 participants). Regarding age, the largest group falls within the 20-22 years range (33.3%, 133 participants), followed by 22-24 years (25.3%, 101 participants), 18-20 years (29.0%, 116 participants), and those over 24 years (12.5%, 50 participants). By academic grade, juniors constitute the most significant proportion (33.3%, 133 participants), followed by sophomores (31.0%, 124 participants), seniors (25.8%, 103 participants), and first-year students (10.0%, 40 participants). This distribution reflects a diverse age and grade composition, with a noticeable female majority.

Personal Values

This section presents descriptive statistics on respondents' personal values to illustrate the overall value orientation of university students. The analysis focuses on four value dimensions: altruism, conservatism, self-enhancement, and openness to change, which are considered central to understanding students' ethical perspectives and social orientations. Descriptive measures, including mean scores and standard deviations, are used to indicate the tendency and variability of each value dimension.

Table 2: The Descriptive Statistics of Personal Values

	N	Mean	Standard	Meaning	RANK
Altruism	400	3.617	0.730	Agree	4
Conservatism	400	3.838	0.989	Agree	1
Self-enhancement	400	3.906	0.921	Agree	3
Openness to change	400	3.857	0.983	Agree	2
Personal Values	400	3.804	0.666	Agree	

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics for personal values among the 400 participants. All dimensions of personal values received mean scores above 3.6, indicating an overall "Agree" response. Self-enhancement ranks highest among the subdimensions

with a mean of 3.906 (SD = 0.921), followed by openness to change (mean = 3.857, SD = 0.983), conservatism (mean = 3.838, SD = 0.989), and altruism (mean = 3.617, SD = 0.730). The overall mean for personal values is 3.804 (SD = 0.666), confirming a general tendency toward agreement across all measured value dimensions.

Moral Cognition

This section presents descriptive statistics on respondents' moral cognition, encompassing the dimensions of idealism and relativism. These dimensions reflect students' moral reasoning patterns and ethical judgment tendencies, providing insight into how individuals evaluate moral issues and social responsibility.

Table 3: The Descriptive Statistics of Moral Cognition

	N	Mean	Standard	Meaning	RANK
Idealism	400	3.843	0.738	Agree	2
Relativism	400	3.869	0.949	Agree	1
Moral Cognition	400	3.856	0.795		

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for moral cognition, based on data from 400 participants. Both subdimensions, relativism and idealism, yield mean scores above 3.8, reflecting an "Agree" response. Relativism ranks first with a slightly higher mean (3.869, SD = 0.949) compared to idealism (3.843, SD = 0.738). The overall mean for moral cognition is 3.856 (SD = 0.795), indicating consistent agreement among participants regarding these constructs.

Social Responsibility Cognition

This section presents a descriptive statistical analysis of respondents' social responsibility cognition, reflecting students' awareness, attitudes, and understanding of their responsibilities toward society and the community. The study focuses on two main dimensions, namely social responsibility and civic responsibility, to capture both general social awareness and engagement in civic life.

Table 4: The Descriptive Statistics of Social Responsibility Cognition

	N	Mean	Standard	Meaning	RANK
Social Responsibility	400	3.887	0.856	Agree	1
Civic Responsibility	400	3.687	0.804	Agree	2
Social Responsibility Cognition	400	3.787	0.727		

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for social responsibility cognition among 400 participants. Social responsibility scores highest, with a mean of 3.887 (SD = 0.856) and classified as "Agree," while civic responsibility follows closely, with a mean of 3.687 (SD = 0.804), also receiving an "Agree" rating. The overall mean for social responsibility

cognition is 3.787 (SD = 0.727), suggesting that participants generally hold positive attitudes toward both social and civic responsibilities.

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistical analysis was conducted to examine whether differences in demographic factors were associated with significant variation in social responsibility cognition. This analysis enables the identification of statistically meaningful differences between groups and provides empirical evidence to support or refute assumptions regarding demographic influences.

Differences in Demographic Factors Generate Differences in Social Responsibility Cognition

This subsection focuses on the impact of demographic characteristics, particularly gender, on social responsibility cognition. By comparing mean scores across demographic groups, the analysis aims to determine whether observed differences reflect statistically significant patterns rather than random variation.

Table 5: The Independent Samples t-test of the Gender Factor

Items	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value
Social Responsibility Cognition	Male	122	3.544	0.779	9.895	0.002
	Female	278	3.893	0.678		

Table 5 reports the results of an independent samples t-test examining gender differences in social responsibility cognition. The analysis includes 122 male participants (mean = 3.544, SD = 0.779) and 278 female participants (mean = 3.893, SD = 0.678). With a t-value of 9.895 and a p-value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis ($H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$) is rejected. This indicates a statistically significant difference in social responsibility cognition between males and females, with females scoring higher on average.

Table 6: The One-way ANOVA of Age

Social Responsibility Cognition		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Marital Status	Between Groups	6.499	3	2.166	4.194	0.006
	Within Groups	204.546	396	0.517		
Total		211.045	399			

Table 6 presents the one-way ANOVA results for age differences in social responsibility cognition. The test reveals a significant overall effect ($F = 4.194$, $p = 0.006$, $p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis ($H_0: \mu_i = \mu_j$ for all $i \neq j$). The between-groups sum of squares is 6.499 ($df = 3$, mean square = 2.166), while the within-groups sum of squares is 204.546 ($df = 396$, mean square = 0.517). This suggests that age is a factor contributing to differences in social responsibility cognition among participants.

Table 7: The One-way ANOVA of Grade

Items	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value
Social Responsibility Cognition	University	5.493	3	1.831	3.528	0.015
	Graduate school or above	205.552	396	0.519		

Table 7 shows the one-way ANOVA results for grade differences in social responsibility cognition. The analysis yields an F-value of 3.528 and a p-value of 0.015 ($p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis ($H_0: \mu_i = \mu_j$ for all $i \neq j$). The between-groups sum of squares is 5.493 ($df = 3$, mean square = 1.831), and the within-groups sum of squares is 205.552 ($df = 396$, mean square = 0.519). This indicates statistically significant differences in social responsibility cognition across grade levels.

Personal Values Influence on Social Responsibility Cognition

This section examines the influence of personal values on social responsibility cognition using multiple linear regression analysis. The analysis aims to identify which dimensions of personal values significantly predict students’ perceptions of social responsibility and to assess the relative strength of each predictor.

Table 8: The Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Personal Values

Model	Coefficienta			t-value	p-value
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta		
	B	Std.Error			
Constant	0.620	0.110		5.647	0.000
X1 = Altruism	0.044	0.022	0.044	1.945	0.052
X2 = Conservatism	0.190	0.025	0.259	7.481	0.000
X3 = Self-enhancement	0.396	0.024	0.502	16.647	0.000
X4 = openness to change	0.190	0.024	0.256	7.831	0.000

Dependent Variable: Social Responsibility Cognition

Table 8 presents the multiple linear regression results examining the impact of personal values (altruism, conservatism, self-enhancement, and openness to change) on social responsibility cognition. The regression Equation is $\hat{Y} = 0.62 + 0.044X_1 + 0.19X_2 + 0.396X_3 + 0.519X_4$, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.895, indicating that these variables explain 89.5% of the variance in social responsibility cognition. Conservatism ($\beta = 0.190$, $p = 0.000$), self-enhancement ($\beta = 0.396$, $p = 0.000$), and openness to change ($\beta = 0.190$, $p = 0.000$) are statistically significant predictors, with openness to change exhibiting the most substantial effect. Altruism ($\beta = 0.044$, $p = 0.052$) approaches significance but does not

meet the conventional 0.05 threshold. Overall, the model supports that personal values significantly influence social responsibility cognition.

Moral Cognition Influence on Social Responsibility Cognition

This section analyzes the effect of moral cognition on social responsibility cognition using multiple linear regression analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to determine the extent to which moral reasoning dimensions, idealism, and relativism predict students' perceptions of social responsibility.

Table 9. The Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Moral Cognition

Model	Coefficients ^a			t-value	p-value
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta		
	B	Std.Error			
Constant	0.974	0.102		9.577	0.000
X1 = Idealism	0.213	0.041	0.216	5.191	0.000
X2 = Relativism	0.516	0.032	0.673	16.172	0.000

Dependent Variable: Social Responsibility Cognition

Table 9 displays the multiple linear regression results for the impact of moral cognition (idealism and relativism) on social responsibility cognition. The regression Equation is $\hat{Y} = 0.974 + 0.213X_1 + 0.516X_2$, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.851, meaning 85.1% of the variance in social responsibility cognition is accounted for by these variables. Both idealism ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.000$) and relativism ($\beta = 0.516$, $p = 0.000$) are significant predictors, with relativism having a stronger standardized coefficient. This indicates that higher levels of both moral cognition dimensions are associated with greater social responsibility cognition, with relativism playing a more prominent role.

Personal Values, Moral Cognition, and Influence on Social Responsibility Cognition

This section examines the combined influence of personal values and moral cognition on social responsibility cognition using multiple linear regression. The analysis aims to assess the relative and joint contributions of these two predictors in explaining variations in students' perceptions of social responsibility.

Table 10. The Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Personal Values, Moral Cognition, and Social Responsibility Cognition

Model	Coefficients ^a			t-value	p-value	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta			
	B	Std.Error				
1	Constant	0.297	0.105		2.830	0.005
	X ₁ =Personal Values	0.603	0.066	0.552	9.172	0.000
	X ₂ =Moral Cognition	0.310	0.055	0.339	5.631	0.000

Dependent Variable: Social Responsibility Cognition

Table 10 reports the results of a multiple linear regression investigating the combined effect of personal values and moral cognition on social responsibility cognition. The regression Equation is $\hat{Y} = 0.297 + 0.603X_1 + 0.31X_2$, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.872, indicating that the model accounts for 87.2% of the variance in social responsibility cognition. Both personal values ($\beta = 0.603$, $p = 0.000$) and moral cognition ($\beta = 0.310$, $p = 0.000$) are significant predictors, with personal values exerting a greater influence. This confirms that together, personal values and moral cognition contribute substantially to social responsibility cognition, with individual values playing a more dominant role.

Interview Result

Using NVivo 12 to code and analyze interview texts, three core themes and eight sub-themes were extracted through a three-level coding process (open coding → axial coding → selective coding). Analysis showed that “the directional role of values in moral cognition,” “the regulatory role of moral cognition in responsible behavior,” and “conditions for the effectiveness of educational intervention” were high-frequency topics in expert discussions, accounting for 67% of total coding mentions, reflecting their status as core in the research.

In Theme 1, “Interaction between Values and Moral Cognition,” experts’ views showed obvious correspondences: altruistic values were positively correlated with idealistic cognition (e.g., “Students who enjoy helping others are more likely to believe in universal moral rules”), while self-enhancement values were positively correlated with relativistic cognition (e.g., “Students pursuing personal achievement tend to judge moral situations flexibly”). This finding is highly consistent with the “self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement” dimension in Schwartz’s value theory, providing qualitative support for the quantitative hypotheses.

In Theme 2, “Practical Insights for Educational Intervention,” experts emphasized that “professional integration” and “depth of practice” are key influencing factors. For example, a psychology expert noted, “When responsibility education is integrated with majors such as ‘engineering ethics’ courses for engineering students, student participation increases by over 30%.” A sociology expert added, “Short-term volunteer activities are far less effective than long-term community service, as the latter allows students to understand the complexity of responsibility better.” These views provide specific references for universities to design responsible education programs.

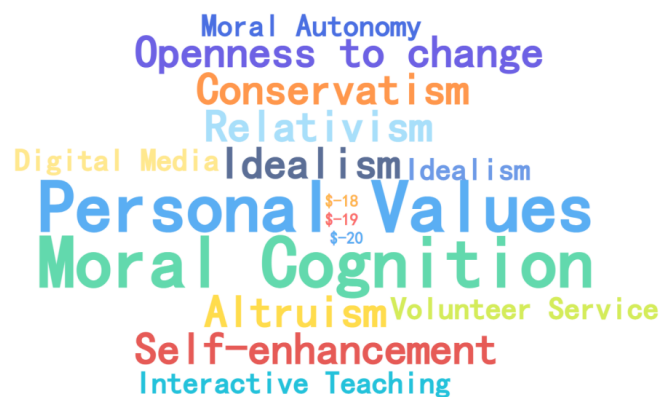


Figure 1. Word Cloud of Semi-Structured Interview Qualitative Analysis

Experts agreed that college students' personal values, moral cognition, and social responsibility cognition do not exist in isolation but form an interactive dynamic system. Personal values provide the underlying logic for moral judgment. For example, students with strong altruistic tendencies are more likely to regard "not harming others" as an absolute moral principle. In contrast, students with a strong self-enhancement orientation are more likely to focus on the practical utility of behavioral outcomes. These differences in values directly affect moral cognition: the former readily develops idealistic cognition, whereas the latter tends toward relativism. Meanwhile, social responsibility cognition, as the final manifestation, is both deeply driven by values and directly regulated by moral cognition, forming a transmission chain of "values → moral cognition → social responsibility cognition."

Second, experts generally noted that college students' social responsibility cognition shows significant "plasticity." Compared with working professionals, college students are not yet fully constrained by fixed social roles, and their values and moral cognition are still in a period of adjustment, providing a window for educational intervention. For example, through interdisciplinary public welfare practices, the technical-rational thinking of science and engineering students can be integrated with humanistic care, and the idealistic cognition of liberal arts students can be better aligned with practical needs. Many experts emphasized, "Responsibility education in college is not about 'indoctrination' but about enabling students to construct value judgment standards through situational experiences independently."

Finally, experts agreed that educational intervention must balance the dual paths of "value guidance" and "cognitive training." At the value level, positive values such as altruism and collective awareness should be strengthened through the collaboration of family, school, and society. At the cognitive level, students' moral reasoning abilities need to be improved through methods such as moral dilemma simulations and discussions of social responsibility cases. In particular, intervention effects are more significant when educational content is integrated into students' professional contexts (e.g., discussions of doctor-patient responsibility in medical ethics courses). Simple theoretical lectures are unlikely to change behavior; only by allowing students to experience the significance of fulfilling responsibilities in practice can the transformation from cognition to action be achieved.

The findings are presented in full and are aligned with the research scope established beforehand. The findings can be completed with tables, graphs, and/or charts. The tables and pictures are assigned numbers and titles. The results of the data analysis are explained correctly in the article. The discussion logically explains the findings and their association with the relevant sources. You may discuss each aspect of the issue separately. It is necessary to build an argument and to provide original data, which are discussed and compared with the research and works of other scholars. The way to discuss an issue here is by combining the data and the discussion.

Discussion

Descriptive statistics indicate that participants generally hold positive attitudes toward personal values (mean = 3.804), moral cognition (mean = 3.856), and social responsibility cognition (mean = 3.787), with all dimensions exceeding the "Agree" threshold. Inferential statistics further confirm that demographic factors, gender, age, grade, personal values (conservatism, self-enhancement, openness to change, and

marginal altruism), and moral cognition (idealism, relativism) significantly influence social responsibility cognition. The combined effects of personal values and moral cognition explain 87.2% of the variance in social responsibility cognition. This divergence may reflect contemporary social contexts in which individual achievement and adaptability coexist with, rather than replace, collective concerns, supporting the arguments of Bednářová (2025) and Cui et al. that social responsibility is shaped by evolving social roles and experiences.

Impact of Demographic Differences on Social Responsibility Cognition: Demographic factors significantly affect social responsibility cognition (He et al., 2021; Patel, 2022). Specifically, females exhibit higher social responsibility cognition than males ($p = 0.002$); older age groups (juniors, seniors, and those over 24 years) score higher than younger groups (first-year, second-year students, and 18-22 years old) ($p = 0.006$). Higher-grade levels (juniors and seniors) show greater social responsibility cognition than lower-grade levels (first- and second-year students), $p = 0.015$. Expert interviews further explain the causes of these differences: in the process of gender socialization, women are more often guided to focus on others' needs e.g., "care-oriented roles emphasized in families"; while increasing age and grade are accompanied by accumulated social practice experience e.g., internships, community service, enabling students to shift their understanding of social responsibility from abstract concepts to concrete actions e.g., "seniors pay more attention to corporate social responsibility performance during job searches".

Impact of Personal Values on Social Responsibility Cognition: Personal values significantly predict social responsibility cognition, with all dimensions exerting positive effects: conservatism $\beta = 0.190$, $p = 0.000$, self-enhancement $\beta = 0.396$, $p = 0.000$, openness to change $\beta = 0.190$, $p = 0.000$; and altruism $\beta = 0.044$, $p = 0.052$. The overall model explains 89.5% of the variance, indicating that personal values are strong predictors of social responsibility cognition. In interviews, experts noted that this influence is directional: altruistic values drive students to regard "helping others" as the core of responsibility, e.g., long-term participation in public welfare, while self-enhancement values prompt students to fulfill responsibilities through "capacity contribution," e.g., using professional skills to solve social problems. These two are not opposites; instead, they reflect a sense of responsibility through different paths (Duan, 2024; Kaur et al., 2024; Vancea, 2024). These results reinforce the notion that social responsibility cognition is not static but evolves through educational exposure and socialization processes, underscoring the importance of longitudinal, developmentally sensitive approaches in moral education research.

Impact of Moral Cognition on Social Responsibility Cognition: Moral cognition significantly influences social responsibility cognition, with both relativism ($\beta = 0.516$, $p = 0.000$) and idealism ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.000$) contributing positively. The model accounts for 85.1% of the variance, highlighting the key role of moral cognition in shaping social responsibility cognition. Qualitative analysis complements this mechanism: idealists tend to "fulfill responsibilities unconditionally," for example, persisting in weekly volunteer service, whereas relativists excel at "contextualized responsibility judgment," for instance, choosing online public welfare when academic pressure is high. Experts emphasize that balancing these two tendencies is the goal of education through "moral dilemma simulations," e.g., "time conflicts between personal career Development and community service," helping students find a balance between principle and flexibility. The

high explanatory power of the model suggests that students' social responsibility cognition is deeply rooted in value orientations that balance personal goals with societal expectations, offering a more nuanced understanding of how values operate in contemporary student populations (Bokhonkova et al., 2024; Jin, 2022).

Furthermore, moral cognition, particularly relativism, exerts a greater influence on social responsibility cognition than idealism (Gallardo et al., 2024; Lorente et al., 2024). This result aligns with recent studies emphasizing contextual moral reasoning in complex social environments, where individuals must navigate competing values and situational constraints. Unlike traditional moral education models that prioritize absolute principles, these findings suggest that flexible moral reasoning enables students to respond more effectively to real-world social responsibilities (Deng et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025; Yamani et al., 2023). The qualitative interview data strongly support this interpretation, as experts emphasized that students who engage in situational moral judgment tend to demonstrate higher levels of practical responsibility. This convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings strengthens the theoretical argument that moral cognition functions as a regulatory mechanism that links values to responsible behavior.

When examined jointly, personal values and moral cognition significantly and complementarily influence social responsibility cognition, with individual values exerting a more dominant effect. This supports the proposed transmission model of "values → moral cognition → social responsibility cognition," which is further validated by expert insights. Theoretically, this study contributes an integrated framework that bridges value theory and moral psychology, addressing gaps in prior research that examined these constructs separately. In practice, the findings imply that university responsibility education should not rely solely on normative instruction but should integrate value guidance with training in moral reasoning. Educational interventions should be embedded within disciplinary contexts and experiential learning to enhance effectiveness. By doing so, universities can better cultivate socially responsible graduates who are ethically grounded, cognitively flexible, and capable of translating awareness of responsibility into action.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that university students generally demonstrate positive orientations toward personal values, moral cognition, and social responsibility cognition, and that these constructs are strongly interconnected. The most important finding is that social responsibility cognition is not merely shaped by external norms or institutional expectations, but is deeply rooted in students' internal value systems and moral reasoning processes. Personal values emerge as the most influential predictor, whereas moral cognition, particularly relativism, functions as a critical regulatory mechanism that translates values into socially responsible judgments. Demographic differences further highlight that social responsibility cognition develops alongside social experience and educational exposure. These findings offer an important lesson: social responsibility among students is not fixed, but highly malleable and responsive to targeted educational interventions that integrate value guidance, ethical reasoning, and real-life practice.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the literature by integrating value theory and moral cognition into a unified explanatory framework for social responsibility cognition. By combining quantitative modeling with qualitative expert insights, the research strengthens theoretical validity and provides a more

nuanced understanding of how responsibility is formed. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation, and the reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, experimental interventions, and broader cultural comparisons to examine how personal values and moral cognition evolve and how educational strategies can sustainably enhance social responsibility cognition.

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