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Original Article

The Relationship between Liberalism and Human Values Based on Public Interest: Moral Understanding of Social Responsibility

Shiva Yousefi [1], Bahman Banimahd [2*], Hashem Nikoomaram [2]

1. Ph.D. Student, Department of Accounting, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.
2. Department of Accounting, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

Corresponding Author: Bahman Banimahd, Department of Accounting, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: dr.banimahd@gmail.com

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Abstract

Introduction: Social responsibility from an ethical point of view includes the obligations and duties of natural and legal persons towards society and the environment. The moral behavior of people, like understanding of social responsibility, depends on their liberal ideology, beliefs and human values. Therefore, the aim of the current research is to study the relationship between liberalism and human values with the moral understanding of social responsibility.
Material & Methods: The research method is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational survey. The statistical population includes the financial managers of the companies admitted to the stock exchange, and the questionnaire was randomly distributed among them and 110 questionnaires were received. The sampling method is random. The research tool is a questionnaire and multivariate regression using SPSS software was used to analyze the data.
Results: The research results show that human values based on public interest have a significant and positive relationship with the moral understanding of social responsibility. But the thinking of liberalism does not have a meaningful relationship with the moral understanding of social responsibility.
Conclusion: Based on the findings of this research, human values based on public interest can be considered as a tool to strengthen the moral behavior of company managers regarding corporate social responsibility. Also, improving the thinking of liberalism in managers can strengthen their social responsibility. In this case, the policy makers of Stock Exchange can direct the managers of the listed companies to comply more with the social responsibility of the company, through teaching human values and strengthening those values, as well as monitoring the implementation of ethical regulations.
Keywords: *Human values, Public interest, Social responsibility, Liberalism, Ethics.*

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INTRODUCTION

Social responsibility is an ethical theory and includes the obligations and duties that business units have towards the economy, society, environment, improving the life and health of citizens and other stakeholders. Issues such as environmental pollution control, safety and health of the workplace, creating equal job opportunities for minorities and women, improving the quality of the company's products, respecting human rights are among the expectations that have been raised in recent decades as the social responsibility of companies towards The community has received attention from legal authorities and stakeholders. The increasing complexity of the business environment, the globalization of the economy and the emergence of multinational companies, the demand for business transparency, the political pressures of governments, the

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emergence of social and environmental crises, etc. are among the things that make research about social responsibility important [1].

From a theoretical point of view, companies, like any social group or any other person, should act in line with the general good of society. In this view, the company's activity should not be harmful to the society, but its activity should be beneficial to the society. In fact, living and working together for the benefit of the public should be in line with the concept of human dignity [2]. For this purpose, managers of business units should always improve themselves with human values so that they can act in line with the public interest. These values are beliefs that guide people to perform desirable and valuable tasks and actions. In other words, human values shape social beliefs and behaviors. Human values include ten structures that can be divided into two groups: individual interests and public interests. Table 1 lists these two groups of human values [3]. In this research, among the mentioned values, values based on public interest have been selected. According to the authors of this article, the human values of managers play an important role in their behavior regarding corporate social responsibility.

Table 1: Human values

Values based on public interests	Characteristics
Generalism	Understanding, respecting and supporting the well-being of all people
Benevolence	Maintaining and promoting people's welfare
Coordination	Controlling actions and behaviors that cause harm to others and violate social norms
Tradition	Respect for customs, religious and cultural beliefs
Security	Safety and harmony in social relations
Values based on individual interests	**Characteristics**
Self-governance	Independent thinking and action
Power	Promotion of social status, and credibility, control and domination over people
Development	Acquiring personal success within the framework of social norms
Welfarism	Satisfaction, physical pleasure and spiritual interests
Motivation	Excitement and novelty and facing the challenges of life

In examining the relationship between human values and social participation, researchers showed that there is a significant relationship between the human value of altruism and the attitude and behavior of people in social participation [4]. Despite the fact that some studies showed that there is no significant relationship between individual values and corporate social responsibility [5], some other researchers concluded that there is a direct relationship between human values and corporate social responsibility [6, 7]. Also, in another research, it was shown that there is a direct relationship between the values of benevolence, globalism, security and compliance, with the acceptance of corporate social responsibility [8]. Studies in the field of social accountability show that values based on public interest, such as security and tradition, have a significant relationship with the understanding of social accountability [9]. During a study in France and Brazil, researchers found that conservatism, as one of the traditional values, has a significant impact on corporate social responsibility [10].

In Iran, in the study of human values and fraud warning, it was shown that by strengthening

human values based on public interest, auditors' willingness to report fraud will increase [3]. In examining the relationship between people's ideology and corporate social responsibility, it was shown that people with conservative and idealistic ideology are more willing to participate in corporate social responsibility activities [11]. In another study, it was concluded that the perceived social responsibility along with the moral atmosphere of the organization creates emotional commitment in employees towards the organization and this emotional commitment creates responsibility of employees towards the environment [12]. Studies in the field of ethics and gender also show that women observe more moral duties and social responsibility compared to men [13]. Also, in another study, it was shown that gender and age variables moderate the relationship between professional commitment and the level of ethical disclosure of independent auditors [14]. In another study, it was confirmed that age has a significant relationship with moral decision-making. Also, age as one of the most important demographic factors has an important effect on moral cognition [15]. In relation to the level of education, it was also shown that with the increase in the level of education, the responsibility and moral behavior of people are strengthened [16]. People who have liberal views are interested in civil rights and social issues such as social justice and solving environmental problems. This category of people considers climate and environmental changes to be a social issue and for them, environmental care and social responsibility is an important issue [17]. In this regard, researches have shown that the liberal view has a positive and significant effect by supporting social and environmental activities [18]. Also, the researchers found that in companies where the members of the board of directors have liberal thinking, social responsibility is observed more in those companies [19]. In another study, it was shown that the social responsibility of the company is in line with the political pressures of the government and parliament. In times when liberal parties have the largest majority in the government or parliament, companies observe more social responsibility [20]. During a survey, it was confirmed that corporate social responsibility and corporate reputation are stronger when companies are led by liberal CEOs or those companies are headquartered in liberal democratic countries [21]. Also, the researchers came to the conclusion that liberal thinking in CEOs increases the social responsibility of the companies under their management. This issue is more visible in liberal-democratic governments [22]. Research in the field of investors' behavior shows that compared to traditional and conservative investors, investors who have a liberal mindset invest more in public welfare [23]. The purpose of this article is to study the relationship between human values based on public interest and liberalism thinking with moral understanding of social responsibility. Based on what was said above, it can be argued that human values based on public interests and liberalism thinking can promote moral behavior in the field of social responsibility. Therefore, the main question of this research is to what extent human values based on public interest and liberalism thinking have a meaningful relationship with the moral understanding of social responsibility.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In terms of purpose, the current research is applied and among descriptive-correlation researches. The statistical population consists of the financial managers of the companies admitted to the stock exchange. Based on Cochran's formula, the number of samples was estimated to be 96 at the 10% error level, and finally, 110 financial managers were selected for data collection using random sampling.

According to surveys, 35% of the statistical sample are women and 65% are men. Also, about 56% of the participants in the present study had a bachelor's degree, and 32% had a master's degree, and the rest were doctoral or doctoral students. The main tools used in this research are the following three questionnaires.

1) In order to measure the human values of the participants, a standard questionnaire was used [24].

This questionnaire contains ten questions about human values, five of which are related to values based on individual interests and five questions are related to values based on public interests. The respondents should indicate their level of agreement with each item based on the structure and the Likert scale from zero to eight.

2) Ethical understanding of social responsibility was also measured through a twenty-question questionnaire [25]. Questions are graded on a Likert scale from one to five.

3) A standard five-question questionnaire has been used to measure liberalism thinking. This questionnaire is scored on a Likert scale from zero to ten [26]. All questionnaires are standard and have been used in previous researches; Therefore, they have content validity. The validity of the research instrument was measured and confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis. The factor loadings related to the questions of the questionnaires based on the average variance extracted should be higher than 0.4 in order to have convergent validity. In this research, the average variance extracted for the liberalism thinking questionnaire is equal to 0.51, the human values questionnaire based on public interests is equal to 0.43, and the moral understanding of social responsibility questionnaire is calculated to be equal to 0.46. Also, the reliability of the questionnaires was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha for the liberalism thinking question is 0.75, the human values questionnaire based on public interests is 0.78, and the moral understanding of social responsibility questionnaire is 0.77. Considering that the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all questionnaires is more than 0.7, it can be said that the reliability of the research tool is confirmed. Finally, in this research, SPSS software was used to analyze the data obtained from the samples. In the descriptive statistics section, mean and standard deviation indicators were used, and in the inferential statistics section, regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of research variables including mean, median, standard deviation, minimum and maximum are presented in table number two. According to the results of this table and based on the closeness of the median and mean values, it can be stated that the variables have a normal distribution. Since the social responsibility questionnaire has twenty questions, its maximum score will be 100 and its average will be 50. The results of Table 2 show that the perception of social responsibility is equal to 78 and much more than its average; This shows that the perception of social responsibility is above average. Also, the results of this table show that human values based on public interests are higher than the average with an average of 34. Because the questionnaire of human values based on public interests has five questions in the eight-point Likert scale and its maximum score is 40 and its average is 20. Also, liberalism thinking is measured through five questions on the Likert scale, meaning each question has a maximum of 10 points for a total of 50 points. The level of liberal thinking will be equal to 25. Since the average of liberalism thinking is approximately equal to 30, it can be concluded that the level of liberalism thinking in the research sample is higher than its average.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Description	Perception of Social responsibility	Liberalism	Human values based on public interests	Age
Mean	78.33	29.66	33.97	39.87
Median	78	30	35	38
SD	8.906	5.191	5.479	8.795
Min.	56	11	14	22
Max	100	49	40	65

Table number 3 also shows the regression results. The evidence of this table shows that at the 95% confidence level, human values based on public interest have a significant and positive relationship with the moral understanding of social responsibility. In other words, with the increase of human values based on public interest, financial managers' moral understanding of the company's social responsibility also improves and increases. But the results of this table show that liberalism thinking has no significant relationship with moral understanding of social responsibility at the 95% confidence level. Also, the results of the multivariate regression test show that there is no significant relationship between the variables of gender, age and education with financial managers' moral understanding of social responsibility. This means that there is no significant difference in the moral understanding of social responsibility in male and female financial managers in different age and education categories. For further analysis, Table No. 4, based on the non-parametric Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests, shows that there is no significant difference in the moral understanding of social responsibility between women and men, as well as different educational levels. Because the significance level is above 5%.

Table 3: Regression results

Description	Coefficient	SE	t-value	Sig.	VIF
confidence coefficient	50.686	5.077	9.984	0.000	-
Human values	0.602	0.103	5.864	0.000	1.047
Liberalism	0.168	0.109	1.548	0.123	1.052
Gender	-0.504	1.220	-0.413	0.680	1.114
Age	0.037	0.067	0.557	0.578	1.143
Education	0.201	0.432	0.472	0.637	1.011
F value	8.706	The whole model is statistically significant			
Sig	0.000				
$R^2_{adjusted}$: 0.147		Durbin-Watson: 2.066			

Table 4: Non-parametric tests

Gender		Education	
Mann-Whitney	5493	Kruskal-Wallis	7.762
Wilcoxon value	8696	df.	6
Z value	-0.443	Sig.	0.256

Sig.	0.658		

There are defaults for the multivariate regression test. In this research, these presuppositions have been observed. For this purpose, Table 5 shows that there is no strong movement among the explanatory variables. Because the correlation level of explanatory variables is less than 50%. The results of Variance Inflation Factor according to Table 3 also confirm that there is no strong correlation between explanatory variables of the model. Because all the variance inflation factors are smaller than 5 and close to one.

Table 5: Co-movement between explanatory variables

	Human values	Liberalism	Gender	Age	Education
Human values	1	0.173*	0.049	0.146*	0.008
Liberalism		1	0.060	0.148*	0.061
Gender			1	0.309*	0.083
Age				1	0.005
Education					1

Table 3 also shows that there is no autocorrelation between the error values of the model. Because Durbin-Watson's value is equal to 2.066. This statistic should be between 1.7 and 2.3. Table number 6 also shows the normality test of the dependent variable and the error values of the regression model, the evidence of this table also shows that the distribution of the dependent variable and the error values of the regression model is normal. Because the significance level of non-parametric Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is greater than 5%.

Table 6: Normality test of dependent variable and regression model error

Description	Regression model error	Dependent variable
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.040	0.057
Sig.	0.200	0.076

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research show that human values based on public interest have a significant and positive relationship with the moral understanding of social responsibility. In other words, by promoting and improving human values based on public interests in financial managers, their social responsibility can be increased. This finding of the present study is consistent with the results of previous studies [6-8]. But the thinking of liberalism has no significant relationship with social responsibility. This result is inconsistent with previous studies. In previous researches, it was shown that there is a significant relationship between managers' liberal thinking and their level of social responsibility [22-24]. Probably the reason for this issue is the cultural and political differences governing the thinking of the country's managers. Based on the results of the current research, it can be said that individual and human values based on public interest are one of the motivational values, a driver for moral behavior. This research emphasizes that human values based on the public interest can promote the managers of business units in order to protect the public interest to carry out desirable and valuable tasks and acts of guidance and social welfare.

Since, based on the concept of sustainable development, improving social responsibility leads to the development of a society. Therefore, the more the human values based on public interests improve in the society, the more sensitive and responsible the people of that society will be towards the society and its problems. The results of this article show that people's participation in social responsibility and doing public benefit work alone does not improve social responsibility; Rather, this issue should arise from a person's inner and human values and every person should implement it in his life.

The results of research conducted in the field of social responsibility of companies indicate that about 75% of companies admitted to the stock exchange do not have adequate disclosure about their social responsibility [27]. Also, the objective evidence in the context of the society shows that the social responsibility in the individual dimension is not in the right condition. The reason for this issue from the point of view of sociological studies is the decrease in the level of social trust and social indifference and the resulting moral and social damages. Therefore, paying attention to social responsibility and institutionalizing it in the public mind is more important than in the past. This issue needs to be cultured and become a public concern so that its positive effects in the field of ethics spread in the society. Also, the results of this research show that there is no significant relationship between education level, age and gender with the perception of social responsibility. This shows that the importance of social responsibility is the same from the point of view of men and women, with different educations and in different age groups. Based on the findings of the research, it is suggested that policy makers in the field of education include the issue of social responsibility in education courses as well as in various fields in universities and higher education centers. This issue will strengthen the concept of social responsibility in society. It is also suggested for future research to examine human values based on individual interests with an understanding of social responsibility.

Finally, the main limitation in relation to the current research was the use of a questionnaire tool, which is an inherent limitation for reasons such as the researcher's lack of control over the answers. Therefore, the generalization of the results of this research to other statistical samples in future time periods should be done with caution.

CONCLUSION

Social ethics is a very important issue in society. Weakness of morals in various economic, social, and cultural fields will decrease trust and social capital, and as a result, decrease social responsibility. Paying attention to human values based on public interests will cause satisfaction and moral self-fulfillment in society and will strengthen social responsibility in people. In this research, it was shown that social ethics governing human values can improve ethical behaviors in the field of corporate social responsibility. This will present a positive image of company managers and will create new opportunities to attract capital and ultimately increase the profitability of the company. According to the authors of the article, the results of this research can provide useful information to the legislators in the field of capital market as well as policy makers in the field of social ethics. They can use the findings of this research in their plans and actions in order to improve the social responsibility of company managers.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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