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## Moral Values as Mediators in the Relationship between Prosocial Behaviour and Social Responsibility among University Students

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### Abstract

Universities must confront social challenges and prepare their students to be future socially responsible professionals. This research considers social responsibility in depth and examines how it can be promoted among university students. Specifically, it analyses whether prosocial behaviour and moral values are predictor variables, and to study whether moral values are a mediator variable between prosocial behaviour and university student social responsibility. Non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used in a Spanish university ( $N = 193$ ; 115 females;  $M_{age} = 19$ ). Three scales were applied: the University Student Social Responsibility scale, the Prosocial Tendencies Measures scale and the Importance of Personal and Professional Values scale. The results of the regression models showed that prosocial behaviour and moral values both contributed significantly to the model ( $F_{(2,196)} = 41.979$ ;  $p < .001$ ), predicting 30.2% of university student social responsibility. In the mediation model, total effects between the variables were observed, as was an indirect effect of prosocial behaviour on social responsibility mediated by moral values ( $\beta = .07$ ;  $t = 3.80$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This suggests that university programmes that seek to help the community and enable people to discover values will more effectively be able to develop social responsibility.

### Keywords

Social education, student social responsibility, prosocial behaviour, moral values, higher education, social responsibility

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## Los Valores Morales como Mediadores de la Relación entre la Conducta Prosocial y la Responsabilidad Social en el/la Universitario/a

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### Resumen

La universidad debe asumir los retos sociales y preparar a sus estudiantes como futuros/as profesionales socialmente responsables. Esta investigación tiene el objetivo de profundizar en la responsabilidad social y estudiar cómo se puede promover en los/las universitarios/as. En concreto, pretende analizar si la conducta prosocial y los valores morales son variables predictoras, así como estudiar si los valores morales son una variable mediadora entre la conducta prosocial y la responsabilidad social del/la estudiante universitario/a. Se accedió a una muestra (N = 193; 115 mujeres; M<sub>edad</sub> = 19) a través de un muestreo no probabilístico incidental en una universidad española. Se les aplicó tres escalas: la escala Responsabilidad Social del Estudiante Universitario, la escala Medida de Tendencias Prosociales y la escala Importancia de los Valores Personales y Profesionales. Los resultados de los modelos de regresión mostraron que tanto la conducta prosocial como los valores morales aportan significativamente al modelo ( $F_{(2,196)} = 41.979$ ;  $p < .001$ ), prediciendo un 30.2% de la responsabilidad social del/la universitario/a. En el modelo de mediación se observaron efectos totales entre las variables, así como un efecto indirecto de la conducta prosocial sobre la responsabilidad social mediado por los valores morales ( $\beta = .07$ ;  $t = 3.80$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Esto lleva a pensar que los programas de la Universidad que busquen la ayuda a la comunidad y permitan el descubrimiento de los valores conseguirán desarrollar más eficazmente la responsabilidad social.

### Palabras clave

Educación social, responsabilidad social del universitario, conducta prosocial, valores morales, educación superior, responsabilidad social

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Higher education should offer students a profound understanding of the social challenges that occur in their close environment and internationally. Far from turning its back on these situations, it must accept the position of leadership that falls on it in order to confront global challenges: climate change, international peace, public health and dialogue between cultures. UNESCO at the World Conference on Higher Education (2009) noted the university's role of serving the community, encouraging it to focus on interdisciplinary aspects and promote active citizenship among its students to contribute towards consolidation of human rights, peace, and sustainability. The third World Higher Education Conference (2022) recognises young people at university as agents of social change in their student stage and in their future as professionals.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, social responsibility has become an even more necessary and unavoidable topic. During the pandemic, being responsible in following the rules of the World Health Organization and national rules not only guaranteed individual's own health, but also had a notable impact on society. This experience has elicited reflections on the important role of individual responsibility for society as a whole.

Higher education has a prominent role in the education of more responsible citizens. De la Calle et al. (2020) studied university student social responsibility (USSR) with the aim of analysing the efficacy of programmes that promote this attitude-behaviour in students.

With the aim of studying in depth what it means to be socially responsible, the present article proposes an analysis of the possible relationship with other variables such as moral values or prosocial behaviour. It seeks to clarify the foundations of social responsibility in university students, what favours it, what is an obstacle to it and what blocks it. This will provide help for higher-education institutes, especially university extension ones, to implement and evaluate projects that have this goal.

Moral values are qualities that are embedded in things, people, and actions. They have a cognitive aspect, given that people are capable of recognising them and differentiating them, and an affective aspect, as they are immediately admired and, even, embraced (Obispo-Díaz, 2022). Ultimately, they are a yardstick when choosing and directing our actions. Values are not studied or learned but rather are discovered personally and experientially (López-Quintás, 2017). Education must foster the discovery of values in all of its stages (Ruiz-Massieu, 2017), especially higher education, which is a special space for it (Colina-Gonzalvo & Delgado-Freire, 2018; Gibbs, 2019). Obispo-Díaz (2022) offers a scale that rigorously condenses the diversity of values.

Prosocial behaviour can be understood as the set of voluntary behaviours that seek to benefit others or society as a whole, such as helping, donating, cooperation, and volunteering, among other types of behaviour (Schroeder & Graziano, 2015; Pfattheicher et al., 2022). It appears to be established that these behaviours reduce aggressiveness and antisocial behaviour (Carlo, et al., 2010; Hoffman, 2000). They are desirable and beneficial for society (Eisenberg et al., 2006), and they provide a feeling of gratification for those who do them, indeed these people often also have better health (Yang et al., 2020).

The ontological concept of responsibility refers to how a person takes responsibility for her actions. It is moral because it questions the values or antivalues that the individual questions when deciding to perform a given action. Responsibility is based on an individual's capacity to decide freely and with reflection. It relates to factors such as will and

ethical principles but also to variables such as space and time (Jonas, 1995). A responsible person must become aware of the importance of her actions, not just in the present but also for the future, to be able to answer for the impact of her actions and for their impact on nature and society in three senses: social, economic and environmental (De Dios, 2018).

The analysis proposed in this research defines social responsibility as a person's commitment to the global society she is part of in respect to her decisions and actions. Various previous studies have considered how university student social responsibility is shaped (García-Ramos et al., 2016a; García-Ramos et al., 2016b). We start from the results obtained in them to undertake an investigation that aims to analyse whether moral values are mediators of the relationship between prosocial behaviour and student social responsibility. In so doing, we seek to provide help for higher-education institutions and, in particular university extension departments, when they develop their training and community-help programmes.

### **Background to the Research**

Thus far, we have not found any studies that analyse the foundations of social responsibility: what makes one young university student more responsible than another and how moral values or prosocial behaviour influence this. Nor have we found studies that connect these three variables.

- Nonetheless, scientific evidence can be found that considers
- the relationship between moral values and prosocial behaviour,
- the relationship between the sense of responsibility and prosocial behaviour.

### **The Relationship Between Moral Values and Prosocial Behaviour**

A variety of factors explain prosocial behaviour, and empathy is one of the most studied of them. This directly affects behaviour and social interaction. The capacity for empathy is a positive predictor of an individual's prosocial behaviour. Highly empathetic individuals display more prosocial behaviour. They are more attentive to the feelings and needs of others, which is also closely linked to avoiding feelings of guilt (Dovidio et al., 2017). However, empathy is not enough to explain the complexity of prosocial behaviour. Some theoretical models go further and postulate that this behaviour is also the consequence of the internalised moral value that one should help others, especially those who are in need (principle of care) (Bekkers & Ottoni-Wilhelm, 2016). Theoretical analysis predicts that empathy is more strongly associated with help in response to the needs of close people such as family members and members of one's group, while values are associated with the help response for more distant people, such as individuals from a larger group or even strangers (Stürmer et al., 2005). The study by Bekkers and Ottoni-Wilhelm (2016) corroborates this hypothesis: when prosocial behaviour benefits distant people and helping them requires planning, this planning is put in motion by values and the principle of care.

Some studies have suggested that while it seems clear that a lack of self-control can facilitate a tendency to transgress social norms, it has been proven that people who have a high moral identity display fewer egotistical impulses when they cannot exercise self-control

(Muraven & Slessareva, 2003). These findings suggest that working on moral values might be an effective way to improve prosocial behaviour (Joosten et al., 2015). In this way, it has been confirmed that inducing moral values in employees can improve their prosocial behaviour (Joosten et al., 2015). Other studies have found that while anxiety or social threats (Karakashian et al., 2006) reduce the will to help, having a clear moral identity increases help (Reed & Aquino, 2003).

Süssenbach et al. (2019) investigate the relationship between moral foundations (Haidt, 2007) and prosocial behaviour, regarding these foundations as the content of individuals' morality (Graham et al., 2013). They identify three binding foundations (loyalty, authority and purity) and three individualising foundations (care, justice and liberty). Their research confronted participants with suffering and unjust living conditions and analysed how this inspired prosocial behavioural tendencies. They found that not only empathy but also values such as caring for others and defending justice led individuals towards prosocial behaviour, both in their intention to help and in the specific search for how to do so. On this basis, we could assume that people who emphasise questions of harm and equity in their moral judgements are more prosocial in general than people who see these problems as less important.

Finally, Shields et al. (2018), reversing the order of the relationship, in other words, considering how prosocial behaviour relates to moral values, researched the relationship between prosocial behaviour and appreciation of moral values in a population of athletes from the USA. They found that prosocial behaviour correlates positively with a greater appreciation of values and antisocial behaviour correlates negatively with appreciation of them.

### **The Relationship Between Responsibility and Prosocial Behaviour**

Ramey et al. (2022), in a longitudinal study over a period of 15 years, analysed the relationship of social responsibility in the potential shaping of community-help behaviour and its development in the different stages of life. Their findings help to understand the role of social responsibility and moral influences on the formation of attitudes and community-help behaviours.

Jiang et al. (2021) analysed the mediating role of social responsibility with the aim of investigating how prosocial behaviour has helped improve the mental health of young people in China in the difficult situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. When people are threatened by natural disasters or health crises, prosocial behaviour can be a positive factor in improving individual mental health. Prosocial behaviour can promote individual satisfaction with life, happiness, mental health and other psychological states. As well as promoting individual mental health, prosocial behaviour can also reduce individual levels of depression and anxiety. The first studies show that in the context of the pandemic, prosocial behaviour can be positively predicted (Ding & Liu, 2016). The higher the level of empathy, the more prosocial a person's behaviour will be. According to the empathy–altruism hypothesis, when an individual empathises with others, she experiences emotions that awaken her pure altruistic motivation, animating her to help others regardless of the cost. People can also display prosocial behaviour to avoid feelings of guilt when they encounter the suffering of

others (Stilwell & Thomas, 2001). However, empathy is insufficient to explain prosocial behaviour during the pandemic, and so we analyse the role of social responsibility as a mediator between empathy and this behaviour. Jiang et al. (2021) showed that social responsibility plays a mediating role in the influence of empathy on prosocial behaviour. People who feel the pain of the victim and also feel a responsibility to the group or the person in need display more prosocial behaviour than others.

Research from Germany has analysed how prosocial behaviour increases when people perceive a high degree of moral obligation or personal responsibility to help others. It shows that the people who value responsibility more and attribute this value to themselves not only have the intention to help but also that these desires translate into real prosocial behaviour (Hellmann et al., 2021). In this sense, there is a large amount of literature that shows a relationship between an individual's perceived responsibility and her prosocial behaviour (Bruttel & Stolley, 2018; Erlandsson et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2020).

## **In Conclusion**

Numerous studies analyse the relationship between moral values and prosocial behaviour. Values explain certain community-help behaviours that empathy could not explain sufficiently (Bekkers & Ottoni-Wilhelm, 2016). Moral identity helps to strengthen this behaviour when faced with the internal or external difficulties that the subject might experience (Muraven & Slessareva, 2003). Values such as justice and care stand out above other values (Süssenbach et al., 2019). There is also considerable research that analyses the relationship between social responsibility and prosocial behaviour. There are several pieces of evidence showing that prosocial behaviour and community help increase as the perception of one's own responsibility increases (Hellmann et al., 2021). Furthermore, the role of responsibility in mediating between empathy and prosocial behaviour has been considered in depth (Jiang et al., 2021). Both lines of research belong to social psychology. Our study relates to the field of education. It derives from the experience of promoting social responsibility in university students over more than two decades and from the need to find new pedagogical pathways. Hence the need to analyse values and prosocial behaviour as possible variables that explain responsibility.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to analyse, at least in an exploratory way, whether moral values mediate in the relationship between prosocial behaviour and university student social responsibility. To do so, we set the following specific objectives:

1. To analyse whether social responsibility is related to prosocial behaviour and values;
2. To determine whether prosocial behaviour and moral values to some extent explain social responsibility, and finally;
3. To determine whether moral values mediate the relationship between prosocial behaviour and social responsibility.

In addition, and with the aim of evaluating the effect of gender as a variable on these objectives, we performed analyses taking into account whether the participants were male or female.

## Method

### Participants

The research population consisted of university students from the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria (Madrid). Non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used to select the sample. Teachers on the Social Responsibility module (a core second-year module in all of the university degrees of the university where the study was carried out) collaborated to facilitate access to the sample.

The final sample comprised 193 students from the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria. Of the total sample, 59.6% were women and 40.4% men. The mean age of the sample was 19.27 years (*SD*: 1.07). In addition, students from the faculty of Law, Business and Government (76.7%) were predominant, followed by ones from the faculty of Communication Sciences (18.7%), and finally, the faculties of Experimental Sciences (5%) and from the Higher Polytechnic School (4%). Furthermore, 97.4% of the students were in the second year, and 2.6% from the third, fourth and sixth years. Finally, 95.3% had completed a period of volunteering before taking the Social Responsibility module.

The inclusion criteria were being enrolled at the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria during the 2021–2022 academic year and having taken the Social Responsibility module. The principal exclusion criterion was that the students were in the first year or were from higher years but had not completed the Social Responsibility module.

### Instrument and Variables

To evaluate the degree of social responsibility, the University Student Social Responsibility (USSR) scale, validated by García-Ramos et al. (2016a), was used. This scale originally displayed adequate internal consistency values ( $\alpha$ : .923). It comprises 10 items evaluated on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being the lowest level of agreement and 6 the highest. In the sample from the present study, a slightly lower value than the original scale was obtained, although the consistency is considered adequate ( $\alpha$ : .851;  $\omega$ : .865).

Prosocial behaviour was evaluated using the Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM) scale, created and validated by Carlo and Randall (2002). This features 23 items in six sub-scales: public prosocial behaviour (4 items), emotional prosocial behaviour (4 items), emergency prosocial behaviour (3 items), altruistic prosocial behaviour (5 items), anonymous prosocial behaviour (5 items) and compliant or obedient prosocial behaviour (2 items). The scale has good reliability ( $\alpha$ : .73). The answer scale ranged from 1 (does not describe me at all) to 5 (describes me a lot). Carlo and Randall (2002) created this multidimensional scale because they were unconvinced that prosocial behaviour was an overarching behavioural category (Rodrigues et al. 2017). The PTM was translated into Spanish and validated by Richaud et al.

(2012). We found the following indicators of reliability in the study sample:  $\alpha$ : .637 and  $\omega$ : .756.

The Importance of Personal and Professional Values (IPPV) scale, designed and validated by Obispo-Díaz (2022), was also used. This scale comprises fourteen items and two criterion items. Its aim is to evaluate the importance university students place on moral values. Responses to the items were given using a Likert-type scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being not at all important and 6 very important. The original version of the scale displayed adequate internal consistency ( $\alpha$ : .884). Similar values were obtained with the study sample ( $\alpha$ : .893;  $\omega$ : .897).

It should be noted that a dimension was included that collected sociodemographic data from the students, such as: gender (male or female), age, the faculty in which they were studying (Experimental Sciences, Communication Science, Law, Business and Government, and the Higher Polytechnic School), their year (first, second, third and fourth) and, finally, whether they had done a period of volunteering prior to the application of the scale. These variables allowed for the description of the sample.

## Procedure

Data collection took place in April and May 2022. Students filled in the complete research protocol through a link to the Jotform online platform. They had all previously given informed consent after being informed of the research objectives.

## Data Analysis

The reliability of the scales used in this study was estimated. Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and Omega ( $\omega$ ) statistics were used to estimate the internal consistency of the scales used. Alpha was used as a traditional psychometric statistic and Omega was used as a statistic that provides a value not influenced by the sample size. For the analysis and interpretation of these data, we based ourselves on the indications given by George and Mallery (2003), Abad, et al. (2011) and García Ramos (2012). The Pearson correlation coefficient test, multiple linear regression analysis and a causal model for mediation were performed to respond to the specific objectives. The normality of the variables was estimated. Significant values were obtained in the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests. However, given the sample size and the minimal effect of non-normality (Tejedor, 1979), the use of parametric tests was considered appropriate. Regarding linear regression, the assumptions were tested using the Durbin–Watson, VIF and Tolerance tests. With regards to the mediation model, the structure of Model 4 was defined with 10,000 bootstrap samples and a confidence interval of 95%. The assumptions had previously been tested. To interpret the model, we followed the directions given by Fernández-Muñoz and García-González (2017). Furthermore, all of these analyses were replicated with both men and women.

## Results

In general, in the whole sample, a significant and positive relationship was observed between social responsibility and prosocial behaviour ( $R_{xy} = .331$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and with the importance of moral values ( $R_{xy} = .498$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This correlation was also significant and positive when prosocial behaviour was related to moral values ( $R_{xy} = .217$ ;  $p < .001$ ) albeit to a lesser extent.

In women, a significant and positive relationship was also observed between social responsibility and prosocial behaviour ( $R_{xy} = .198$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and with the importance of moral values ( $R_{xy} = .331$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In contrast, there was no significant and positive relationship between prosocial behaviour and values ( $p = .153$ ). In men, as with the sample as a whole, all of the relationships were significant and positive. Specifically, between social responsibility and prosocial behaviour ( $R_{xy} = .517$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and importance of moral values ( $R_{xy} = .575$ ;  $p < .001$ ), there was a moderate but relevant relationship and between prosocial behaviour and moral values ( $R_{xy} = .287$ ;  $p < .05$ ) it was significant and medium.

In the results of the regression models, we observed that both in the sample as a whole ( $F_{(2,196)} = 41.979$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and by gender (women:  $F_{(2,114)} = 8.473$ ;  $p < .001$ ; men:  $F_{(2,77)} = 32.755$ ;  $p < .001$ ) prosocial behaviour and moral values both contributed significantly to the model. Table 1 displays the information from the proposed regression models.

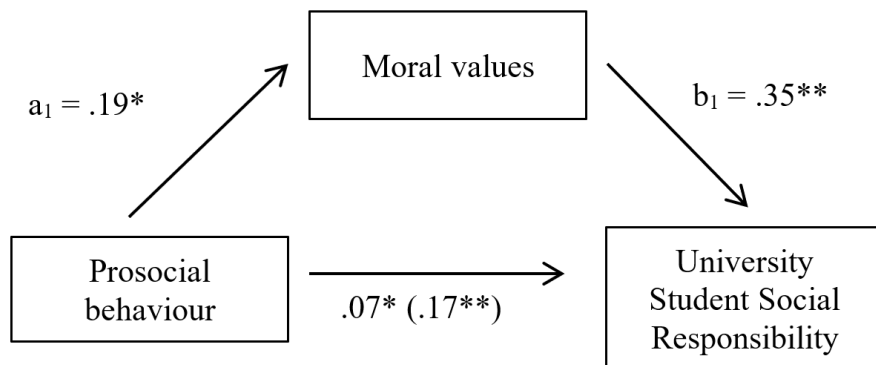
**Table 1**  
*Results of the regression models*

Sample	Variable	$R^2$	$R^2$ changes	Beta	Tolerance	VIF	Durbin-Watson
Total	Prosocial behaviour	.302	.107**	.173	.957	1.045	2.034
	Moral values		.195**	.358			
Female	Prosocial behaviour	.116	.039*	.103	.977	1.024	2.213
	Moral values		.092**	.286			
Male	Prosocial behaviour	.466	.268**	.294	.918	1.090	1.800
	Moral values		.199**	.334			

Note. \*\* Significant at .01; \* Significant at .05

In the sample as a whole, prosocial behaviour and moral values explain 30.2% of university student social responsibility. Their contribution is slightly lower with women, explaining only 11.6%. In contrast, for men, the contribution of prosocial behaviour and moral values is higher than for the sample as a whole (46.6%). In the three models, it was apparent that moral values contribute more to the models than prosocial behaviour does.

Finally, and taking the information above as a reference point, the results of the analysed mediation models are presented. The first model, shown in Figure 1, corresponds to the total sample. Figure 2 shows the model for the sample of women and, finally, despite the limitation of the sample size, the model for the sample of men was estimated as a pilot test (Figure 3)

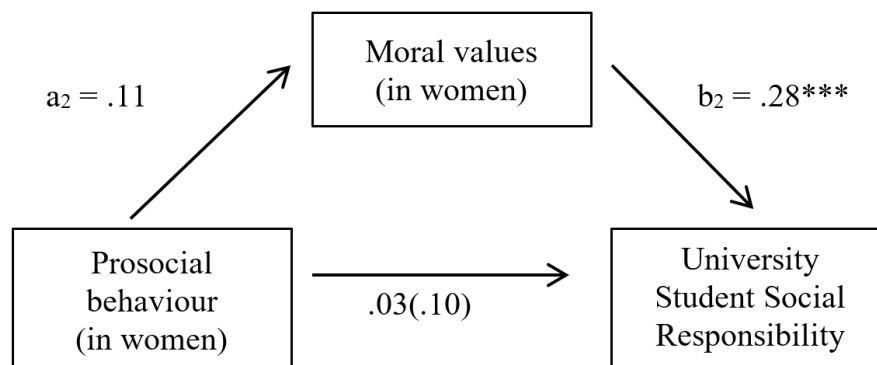
**Figure 1***Estimated mediation model in the whole sample*

In the previous model, a significant total effect of prosocial behaviour on university student social responsibility could be observed ( $\beta = .24$ ;  $t = 4.82$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

In addition, there was a significant direct effect of the prosocial behaviour and moral values variables on university student social responsibility ( $\beta = .17$ ;  $t = 3.80$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

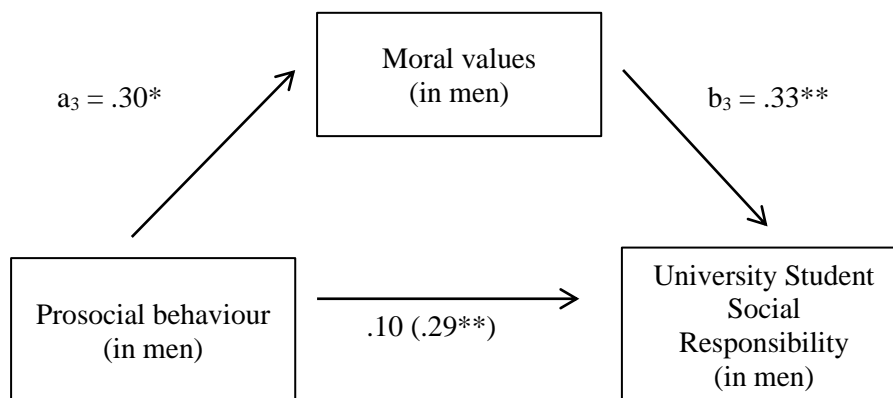
Finally, an indirect effect of prosocial behaviour on university student social responsibility mediated by moral values was observed ( $\beta = .07$ ;  $t = 3.80$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The results of the Sobel test were also presented, according to which the proposed mediation model was partial and significant ( $z = 2.72$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

The second mediation model presented only considered the sample of women.

**Figure 2***Estimated mediation model in women*

In this case, only one direct significant effect was found. This was the effect of moral values on university student social responsibility ( $\beta = .29$ ;  $t = 3.45$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Consequently, the mediation model was not significant.

Finally, the third mediation model only took into account the opinions of men.

**Figure 3***Estimated mediation model in men*

In model three, a significant total effect of prosocial behaviour on university student social responsibility could be observed ( $\beta = .39$ ;  $t = 5.27$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

In addition, there was a significant direct effect of prosocial behaviour and moral values on university student social responsibility ( $\beta = .29$ ;  $t = 4.35$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

Finally, an indirect effect of prosocial behaviour on university student social responsibility mediated by moral values was observed ( $\beta = .10$ ;  $t = 4.35$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The results of the Sobel test were also presented, according to which the proposed mediation model was partial and significant ( $z = 2.30$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

### Discussion

The principal conclusions in relation to the proposed objectives are set out below.

With regards to the first specific objective, significant relationships between the variables used were observed. These showed that the greater the level of prosocial behaviour, the greater the social responsibility and the greater the importance placed on moral values. It should be noted that the correlations were more intense in men. Regarding the second objective, it was found that prosocial behaviour and moral values explain university student social responsibility. In the three models appraised, it can be seen that the importance placed on moral values makes a greater contribution to the models than prosocial behaviour does. Moreover, the weight of the variables for men is slightly greater than it is for women. The lower weight of these variables in women could be due to the weight of other variables of an emotional nature (identification, empathy, self-care and care). Finally, regarding the third objective, a partial mediation of moral values in the relationship between prosocial behaviour and social responsibility of university students was observed. This model changes according to gender. In women, we only found that moral values influence social responsibility; we did not observe any mediation by them in the relationship between prosocial behaviour and social responsibility. However, in men the model is significant. That is to say, in men social responsibility is greater when it is influenced by prosocial behaviour and the importance of

moral values. Specifically, as the level of prosocial behaviour increase and the level of importance placed on moral values increases, their level of social responsibility rises.

In relation to the first and second conclusion, our results agree with those of Bekkers et al. (2016) who conclude that empathy does not imply suffering to explain prosocial behaviour, but that appreciation of the moral value of help plays an important role when developing this type of behaviour. Our results also agree with the results of Muraven and Slessareva (2003), which confirm that moral values help people have prosocial behaviour when circumstances impede or hinder the exercise of suitable self-control in their own behaviour.

Our results also ratify the conclusions of Süsssenbach et al. (2019) by affirming that the appreciation of values (especially those of caring and of defence of justice) not only leads people to have the intention to help, but they also put into action the specific form of doing so. Shields et al. (2018) find in a population of athletes that there is a positive correlation between appreciation of values and prosocial behaviour. In this sense, our study confirms their results in a general university population.

From a pedagogical position, we can affirm, like Joosten et al. (2015), that supporting the discovery and entrenchment of moral values results in acquisition of prosocial behaviour, in other words, a series of behaviours that benefit the social fabric one way or another.

The present study also backs the results of Hellman et al. (2021), as it finds that social responsibility not only translates into a prosocial attitude, but that it also leads to the formation of behaviours that help the community. At the same time, it corroborates the conclusions of Bruttel and Stolley (2018) and Yang et al. (2020), in which there is also a significant and positive correlation between these two variables.

This research is innovative because of its finding that 30.2% of university student social responsibility can be explained by prosocial behaviour and moral values. And also, its conclusion that moral values partially mediate the relationship between prosocial behaviour and social responsibility. These results are of interest for social psychology when studying the relationship between these three variables, as they explain a significant percentage of social responsibility and, in particular, they confirm the mediating role of moral values. All of this paves the way for subsequent research into the relationship between socialisation variables in the field of positive psychology. In particular we emphasise that the conclusions of this study offer numerous pedagogical clues for training professionals with a social and civic commitment.

The complementary studies, which analyse the effect of gender as a variable, are surprising as the results for women and men have differed from the start. For women, there is no significant correlation between prosocial behaviour and moral values. And, while, it can be appreciated that moral values influence social responsibility for men and women alike, no mediation by values in the relationship between prosocial behaviour and social responsibility is observed in women. These data were not predictable from other results, which show a higher level of social responsibility in women than in men (Bustamante & Navarro, 2007; Navarro et al., 2010; Reig-Aleixandre et al., 2021). Women also displayed a greater concern for values than men did (Beltrán et al., 2005; Villa & Villa, 2007). This means that while women have greater social responsibility, it is minimally explained by prosocial behaviour and values. However, 46.6% of social responsibility in men is explained by these two variables. This leads us to ask: What variables can predict social responsibility in women?

Why is there such a difference between the results for men and for women? Could empathy be a strong predictor variable for social responsibility in women (Sommerlad et al., 2021)? These questions place us at the starting point for further research.

### **Conclusion**

There is deep reflection on how universities should be outstanding agents in knowledge and actions to tackle the social ills that afflict our time, not just through their participation as institutions, but also in forming a socially responsible citizenry. This study is in response to the need to analyse what social responsibility comprises and what the predictor variables and mediator variables might be. As a result of doing this, appropriate educational interventions could be incentivised and the already existing initiatives could be evaluated.

The results of this research show that both prosocial behaviour and the importance placed on values are predictor variables for social responsibility. Moral values are also a mediator variable between prosocial behaviour and social responsibility that we attempt to transmit to university students.

This study has a number of pedagogical implications. The volunteering and social cooperation programmes, initiatives to help those at risk of social exclusion, programmes to care for the environment, etc. that many universities have are undoubtedly an expression of prosocial behaviour and directly promote university student social responsibility. Formative interventions (modules, programmes, university extension initiatives) that are aimed at enabling students to discover the importance of moral values also increase their social responsibility. The community-help programmes that are run in universities are predicted to boost student social responsibility more when they are supported by interventions that promote the discovery of values. Similarly, the programmes that in themselves provide a space for the discovery of values are predicted to be more successful in the development of university student social responsibility. These programmes and interventions all generally involve a significant investment of time and money in higher-education institutions and are implemented with the desire to benefit society and improve the social conscience of the students.

The limitations of this research include the need for a larger and more representative sample that would allow us to generalise the results to the population. However, this research is an interesting exploratory study that should be followed up in greater depth.

Future studies could include empathy as another variable in the study of these three variables, given its important role in relation to prosocial behaviour and social responsibility. It would also be of interest to carry out studies with the aim of analysing the differences observed between women and men in relation to the mediating role of values. Similarly, it would be important to investigate other variables that might mediate between prosocial behaviour and social responsibility.

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