UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AWARENESS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study is to try to understand to what extent do demographic factors including gender, age, marital status, educational level, university year, major course, internship experience and country influence students' social responsibility awareness.

Methods: Data was collected from three different countries in the Middle East, namely United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Egypt. Descriptive analysis was conducted on a sample of 533 students registered in graduate and undergraduate programs at different universities.

Results: The findings of the study reveal a relationship between some demographic characteristics and student social responsibility awareness.

Originality/Value: The paper unravels the level of students’ awareness on social responsibility in three different countries and offers several practical recommendations for both higher education institutions and corporations are presented accordingly.

Keywords: social responsibility awareness, demographic factors, higher education, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia.

COMPREENDENDO A CONSCIÊNCIA DE RESPONSABILIDADE SOCIAL ENTRE ESTUDANTES UNIVERSITÁRIOS

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo deste estudo é tentar entender até que ponto fatores demográficos, incluindo gênero, idade, estado civil, nível educacional, ano universitário, curso principal,
experiência de estágio e país, influenciam a conscientização dos alunos em relação à responsabilidade social.

**Métodos:** Foram coletados dados de três diferentes países do Oriente Médio, nomeadamente Emirados Árabes Unidos (Emirados Árabes Unidos), Reino da Arábia Saudita (KSA) e Egito. A análise descritiva foi realizada em uma amostra de 533 estudantes matriculados em programas de pós-graduação e graduação em diferentes universidades.

**Resultados:** Os resultados do estudo revelam uma relação entre algumas características demográficas e a consciência da responsabilidade social do aluno.

**Originalidade/valor:** o documento revela o nível de consciência dos alunos sobre a responsabilidade social em três países diferentes e oferece várias recomendações práticas para instituições de ensino superior e empresas são apresentadas em conformidade.

**Palavras-chave:** consciência de responsabilidade social, fatores demográficos, educação superior, Emirados Árabes Unidos, Egito, Reino da Arábia Saudita.

**1 INTRODUCTION**

In June 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro, attended by 178 countries. The conference adopted Agenda 21 that contained an ambitious action plan for human progress towards sustainable development in the 21st century. Chapter 36 in the agenda explains the importance of environmental and development education in sustainable development. It also stressed that social responsibility should be integrated and efficiently communicated across disciplines using academic and non-academic methods at universities (United Nations Agenda, 1992).

Since the celebration of this and other subsequent summits, international conferences and declarations have highlighted the urgent need for a reorientation towards sustainability in development model across societies (Madime and Gonçalves, 2022). In 2015, the United Nations restarted the global agenda for the transition to sustainable development by 2030. The agenda defined 17 goals referred to as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It reiterated the significant role that universities around the world play in helping society find practical solutions to achieve these goals (Sach, 2015).

Social Responsibility can be defined as an ethical model where people are responsible for working and collaborating with others as well as corporate entities for the benefit of the community that will inherit the world that people leave behind (Derrick, 2006). Social responsibility is considered each person’s duty towards keeping a balance between the economy and the ecosystem that they live within (Anheier and Toepler,
Social responsibility relates not only to corporations but to everyone whose actions affect the environment (Palmer, 1995).

Social responsibility is the element of economic, environmental and social sustainability that affects the quality of life within a community. It is influenced by public attitudes and behavior and support for building stable societies. Therefore, individuals are the starting point, as they are involved in solving social problems that lead to the development of social responsibility (Boping et al., 2017; Peric, 2012). Organizations by prioritizing the community’s stake based on solidarity and responsibility values are able to overcome environmental, social and market challenges (González-Rodríguez, 2013).

Accordingly, universities have a critical role and are considered agents of social change since they link academia and practical life. Social responsibility values and beliefs communicated to students tend to have tremendous effect on the latter’s social responsibility awareness. Taking a proactive stance and ensuring awareness on social responsibility aspects among the student body will give such universities a competitive advantage compared to others (Bisogno et al., 2014; Jordaan and Jordaan, 2020). This paper argues that it is imperative to understand the degree of SR awareness among university students who are the main actors throughout the educational process and potential future leaders in the workplace (Martí-Noguera et al., 2014). Various scholars have indicated that variations in behavior among youth is much influenced by their social context (Carratalà et al., 2011; García-Moya et al., 2012). Due to the importance of adolescent life stage in developing learning behavior and awareness, several theories have been presented in the literature. This paper uses three major theories to try to understand the effect of several demographic variables such as gender, marital status, educational level, university year, major course, internship experience, country, and age on social responsibility awareness. Starting with the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) which deposits that individuals learn certain behaviors from observing others act as role models and from the consequences resulting from their own initial experiences of a certain behavior. This paper also builds on Kohlberg’s Theory of stages of moral development (Grusec and Hustings, 2007) that states that ethical conduct is a consequence of the interaction between the person and the context. Finally, the paper uses the Social-Psychological approach (Vallerand and Losier, 1994; Vallerand et al., 1996) that highlights the importance of individual differences as well as reinforcement/punishment in the process of moral behavior. The theory also explains that attributing meaning and
labels to a specific situation or behavior are learned through interpersonal relationships that comprise individuals and contextual factors.

Therefore, the research question for this study is as follows: To what extent do demographic factors including gender, age, marital status, educational level, university year, major course, internship experience and country influence students’ social responsibility awareness?

The paper is outlined as follows: the methodology section is presented next, and it includes details about the sample, data collection and measures in addition to the data analysis and the results. This is followed by the Discussion then the Practical Implications and Future Research Directions.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Social responsibility is receiving increased importance as a factor of corporate conduct in the business world (Madaan et al., 2023). The context of this study focuses on three main countries, namely UAE, KSA and Egypt where attempts are being done to further enhance and develop social responsibility. As discussed earlier, SR pertains to the ethical and voluntary actions taken by corporations to enhance society’s welfare beyond their main economic objectives. It includes many aspects such as charity, ethical business conduct, engaging with the community and being environmentally friendly. Therefore, SR is not considered by many countries as a moral obligation, but rather as a tool to maintain trust and advance long-term sustainability (Khoruzhy et al., 2023).

The government of UAE for instance has showcased a proactive stance with regards to SR. This is clearly reflected in the UAE Vision 2021 initiative that presents the country’s aspirations for sustainable advancement on the economic, social and environmental levels (UAE Committee on SDGS, 2017). In addition, UAE-based companies such as Emirates Airlines has implemented several environmentally friendly programs for reducing carbon emissions and investing in renewable energy sources (Zamoum and Gorpe, 2020). Likewise, Majid Al-Futtaim, a leading conglomerate in the Middle East region, is committed to reducing the company’s carbon footprint and implementing LEED certification for its buildings (Saundalkar, 2022). In recent years, similar initiatives have started taking place in KSA and Egypt. KSA started the Saudi Vision 2024, a national developmental plan that focuses on sustainable growth and ethical
business practices (Alghazo and Al-Anzi, 2016). This plan has encouraged many KSA-based companies to embrace SR. For example, Saudi Aramco, the national oil corporation started investing in renewable energy technologies (Abro et al., 2016). Finally, the Egyptian Corporate Responsibility Centre (ECRC) was created in the aim of promoting ethical business practices and facilitating collaborations between firms, governmental agencies and civil society organizations (Elkington et al., 2017). In addition, several corporations have implemented national programs that promote health, education and conservation of the environment like the Egyptian telecom Vodafone Egypt (Nassar, 2018).

Adapting a proactive strategy towards SR results in many societal and corporate benefits. Engaging in SR improves a firm’s reputation and brand image that can result in increased customer loyalty and trust. It enhances employees’ organizational pride and organizational citizenship behavior (Ismail et al., 2022). Finally, such initiatives may lead to favorable effects on the local community and result in creating job opportunities, enhancing the development of infrastructure and improving quality of life (Asemah et al., 2013).

However, despite the significant progress that is being made, countries still face challenges when implementing SR. Such challenges can include the limited resources and the need for capacity building plans. The concept of engaging in SR is considered relatively new in some regions in the Middle East compared to other parts of the world, thus, insufficient awareness and understanding of the core concepts of SR among firms is an obstacle for their participation in such practices.

3 METHOD
3.1 SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

A total of 570 questionnaires were distributed among different private and public university students in three countries UAE, KSA, and Egypt. The survey was distributed using a convenient sampling technique, as it was distributed in universities that the researchers had access to. Convenient sampling as a data collection technique is becoming increasingly popular because it facilitates faster access to the data compared to random sampling (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2008). Since the data for this study were collected from the Middle East region where gathering data in many cases is difficult due
to a prevailing culture of secrecy, convenient sampling method is deemed a good alternate (Blaique et al., 2022a).

A total of 533 surveys were collected. The response rate was 93.5% which is considered a good rate given the difficulty in reaching the target population. This study presents a descriptive analysis that aims to identify the relationship between 8 different demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, educational level, university year, major course, internship experience and country) and students’ social responsibility awareness.

Table 1 presents the collected data from three different countries: UAE (n=173, 32.27%), Egypt (n=194, 36.40%), and KSA (n=166, 31.14%). These three countries account for a total of 533 valid respondents. Among the respondents, 39.77% identify as females, while 60.23% identify as males. The majority of respondents (93.43%) are single, while a smaller percentage (6.57%) indicate other marital statuses such as being married or divorced. The age distribution is as follows: 17-20 years (54.97%), 21-24 years (37.90%), and above 25 years (7.13%). In terms of educational level, 96.44% are pursuing an undergraduate bachelor's degree, while 3.56% are pursuing higher degrees such as master's or Ph.D. The distribution of university years is as follows: First year (39.02%), second year (25.70%), third year (12.95%), fourth year (18.95%), and other (3.38%). The most common major among respondents is Business Administration (74.30%), followed by Computer Science and IT (11.07%), Engineering (10.51%), and other fields like Design, Law, or Media (4.13%). Lastly, regarding internship experience, the majority of the respondents (60.04%) have no work experience, followed by those with 1-5 years of experience (35.46%), and a smaller percentage (4.50%) with above 6 years of experience.

Furthermore, Table 1 provides detailed numbers and percentages for each demographic variable across the three countries.

Table 1. Socio-demographics across three countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>KSA</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>39.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>60.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>93.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Married, divorced)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>54.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>37.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 MEASURES

3.2.1 Independent variables

The study uses eight social demographic categorical variables that are coded as follows: Gender (1=female, 2=male), Age (1=17-20, 2=21-24, 3= above 25), Marital status (1=single, 2= others), Educational level (1=undergraduate bachelor, 2=others), Year at university (1= first year, 2 = second year, 3= third year, 4= fourth year, 5= others), Major course (1= business school, 2= computer science and IT, 3= engineering, 4= others), Internship experience (1= no work experience, 2= 1-5 years of experience, 3= above 6 years of experience, and Country coded (1=UAE, Egypt=2, 3= KSA).

3.2.2 Dependent variable

Students’ awareness of social responsibility was measured using was measured using The Social Responsibility scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the scale in this study was calculated as .902. The original questionnaire was designed by García Ramos et al. (2016a), and was applied in Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Spain (García Ramos et al., 2016b; García Ramos et al., 2018c; Fonseca et al., 2019; Severino-González et al., 2019). The scale consists of 18 items. Items are measured using a 6-point Likert scale where 1 is the minimum agreement value and 6 is the maximum agreement value. All dimensions have a Cronbach’s alpha greater than 0.8.
4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 displays the average Social Responsibility Awareness (SRA) scores for each item across three countries. Notably, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) exhibits the highest SRA (84.33%) compared to Egypt (81.56%) and King Saudi Arabia (KSA) (81.28%). Interestingly, item number 15, which states 'I believe that good personal practices imply commitment, teamwork, perseverance, empathy, tolerance, honesty, and respect', reports the highest score across all three countries: UAE (90.81%), Egypt (87.31%), and KSA (88.02%). On the other hand, item number 3 reports the lowest score across the three countries, which is ‘I question what my personal position is in the face of social injustices, and in the face of other people’s pain’. The scores for this item are as follows: UAE (79.42%), Egypt (77.46%), and KSA (78.02%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items- Social Responsibility Awareness 'SRA'</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>KSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>‘I have a global vision of the current situation in the world, and I am aware of the urgent need for sustainable development.’</td>
<td>85.35%</td>
<td>80.61%</td>
<td>81.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘This awareness increases my interest as a university student in contributing to the improvement of my closest environment.’</td>
<td>82.44%</td>
<td>79.29%</td>
<td>81.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘I question what my personal position is in the face of social injustices, and in the face of other people’s pain.’</td>
<td>79.42%</td>
<td>77.46%</td>
<td>78.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘I consider that one of my obligations as a person is to help others from social commitment.’</td>
<td>84.88%</td>
<td>83.15%</td>
<td>80.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>‘I believe that social commitment is based on the recognition and respect of every person’s dignity.’</td>
<td>86.16%</td>
<td>85.58%</td>
<td>85.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>‘I recognize the need to open up to others, put myself in their place, and seek a common good above individualistic interest.’</td>
<td>83.14%</td>
<td>82.44%</td>
<td>78.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>‘I consider that personal change to be a previous and necessary step to change the reality around me.’</td>
<td>84.77%</td>
<td>81.22%</td>
<td>81.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>‘I have experienced in first person the happiness that comes from service and solidarity.’</td>
<td>82.67%</td>
<td>79.19%</td>
<td>78.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>‘I consider that the experience of giving oneself to others is beneficial to discover personal values.’</td>
<td>83.95%</td>
<td>82.03%</td>
<td>80.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>‘I think that being a university student helps to become aware of the importance of social responsibility.’</td>
<td>84.42%</td>
<td>81.73%</td>
<td>81.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>‘I believe that I study and prepare thoroughly for college, I will be able to bare more social change.’</td>
<td>80.93%</td>
<td>78.27%</td>
<td>80.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>‘The training I will receive at college will contribute in practice to increase my social responsibility level.’</td>
<td>82.44%</td>
<td>77.66%</td>
<td>79.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>‘I believe that social responsibility is a skill that must be worked on at college.’</td>
<td>85.12%</td>
<td>83.05%</td>
<td>81.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I consider the work of my future profession will be oriented to the common good</td>
<td>85.12%</td>
<td>82.03%</td>
<td>80.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>‘I believe that good personal practices imply commitment, teamwork, perseverance, empathy, tolerance, honesty, and respect.’</td>
<td>90.81%</td>
<td>87.31%</td>
<td>88.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>‘I believe that my personal fulfilment and my happiness go through being a professional committed to society’s improvement as a whole.’</td>
<td>83.26%</td>
<td>80.10%</td>
<td>79.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>‘I believe that the action of a good professional has an impact on their immediate surroundings and on other is of great importance.’</td>
<td>86.40%</td>
<td>84.37%</td>
<td>83.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>‘I think it is realistic to say that it is possible to practice social commitment.’</td>
<td>86.74%</td>
<td>82.64%</td>
<td>82.22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 presents the results pertaining to whether any demographic variables have an impact on students' Social Responsibility Awareness (SRA). The results indicate that only internship experience demonstrates a positive and significant correlation with SRA (r = .112, p > .01). Additionally, gender shows a significant correlation with SRA, even though with a negative sign (r = -.105, p > .05).

Table 3. Pearson's Correlation (r)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>University Year</th>
<th>Major course</th>
<th>Internship experience</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>SRA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.235**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Level</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.235**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Year</td>
<td>.209**</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.097*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major course</td>
<td>.198**</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>-.101*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship experience</td>
<td>.147**</td>
<td>.254**</td>
<td>.184**</td>
<td>.211**</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>.323**</td>
<td>.128**</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.379**</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.227**</td>
<td>.212**</td>
<td>.561**</td>
<td>.098*</td>
<td>.415**</td>
<td>.367**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRA</td>
<td>-.105*</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>.112**</td>
<td>-.138**</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own creation.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The main purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between different demographic variables and social responsibility awareness of university students in KSA, UAE, and Egypt. The results indicated that there is a relationship between gender and SRA with r = -.105. The results also show that female students have higher social responsibility awareness than male students with average of 83.5% and 81.6% respectively. These findings are aligned with the previous studies which indicated that female students tend to score higher in sustainability awareness than male students (Ridwan et al., 2021). This may be due the fact that females are more concerned about the environment and have better knowledge in this area. The results of the study also indicate that there is a correlation between internship experience and the level of student awareness with r = .112. This is similar to previous studies where Ali et al. (2012) concluded that the awareness level of MBA students with work and internship experience is higher than the students with less work experience. Corporate life is expected to expose individuals to different sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) dilemmas.
that may increase the awareness of the latter. Moreover, the findings of the study also reveal that the level of students’ social responsibility awareness was higher in the UAE compared to the two other countries included in this study. UAE scored higher than Egypt and KSA on all the items measuring SRA. The difference between the countries could be explained through the fact that UAE government initiated different CSR and sustainability programs and committed to the achievement of the SDG by 2030. Some of those initiatives are the UAE green agenda, the climate change plan, and the national programs of happiness and wellbeing. Also, most of the universities in the UAE started to include different sustainability goals and allow their students to participate and volunteer in social responsibility practices (UAE National Committee on SDGs, 2017). However, the policies regarding social responsibility in the KSA and Egypt are still in the developmental stage (Ali et al., 2012). Finally, the results reveal that the other demographic variables including age, marital status, educational level, and major study have an insignificant relationship with the students’ social responsibility awareness. Similar results were found by Am (2020) that indicated that educational level does not have an impact on social responsibility practices of university students.

5 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES (HEIs)

      It is very important for HEIs in the UAE, KSA, and Egypt to understand the factors influencing students’ social responsibility awareness, hence, they can create a more effective learning environment (Wakefield and Grace, 2020). The following are some recommendations for students’ awareness.

      It is recommended that universities include sustainable development and social responsibility concepts in different courses taught across majors. As mentioned previously, the results of this study indicate that students in Egypt and KSA lack a proper understanding of SR and sustainable development, therefore including some concepts and highlighting the importance of SR is mandatory in this case. The introduction of these concepts should start in freshman and junior years. To support and enhance students’ comprehension, professors are advised to integrate SR in practical projects and assignments within the courses being taught.

      Developing volunteering and charitable programs is another recommendation that could help increase the awareness of students. HEIs are recommended to provide
opportunities for cooperations with charitable and non-profitable organizations would allow students to participate in charitable events and support social causes. Creating fun competitions between students for supporting social causes and drawing awareness on a certain social responsibility aspect is another method that would encourage students to volunteer. Universities are advised to develop social campaigns that will allow students to advance their knowledge and skills in areas of social responsibility. For example, a campaign developed by business students to support small business owners in marketing and selling their products may be an effective method that would not only increase awareness but also support what the students learn in their major.

Promoting sustainable development practices and integrating sustainability in daily activities would also help in increasing awareness. Linking sustainability to the university’s culture and core values is very important in shaping students’ behaviors. Using recycling bins and eliminating or reducing the use of plastic and paper, using renewable energy sources, and providing quality education are all examples of practices that could be adopted by universities to support sustainable development and indirectly educate the students.

5.1.2 implications for future employers

Many corporations in different countries started to understand the strategic importance of integrating CSR activities in their business goals and strategies. Being socially and ethically responsible is essential not only for society and environmental sustainability but also for business success. CSR helps in creating better relationships among different stakeholders, improves the business’s image and reputation, and provides a competitive advantage which is much needed in a dynamic market (Blaique et al., 2022b, 2023; Ganescu, 2012).

The following are some recommendations for employers to help them increase SR awareness among their current and potential employees. Organizations in UAE, KSA, and Egypt should consider integrating social and ethical values in their mission statement, core objectives, and daily business activities. For instance, honesty, integrity, employees’ health and safety, privacy issues, customers’ safety, and sustainable development should be part of the organization’s code of conduct and culture. Leaders are considered to be the main initiators and dissimilators of social responsibility across the organization. The adoption of a socially responsible stance should be clearly communicated via the visions
and goals of organization leaders and decision makers (Alghazo and Al-Anazi, 2016; Ismail et al., 2022). As discussed in the previous sections of this study, and according to the Social Learning theory, individuals tend to learn different behaviors by observing the actions of others. Therefore, business managers are expected to act as role models and ensure that those ethical and social values are implemented properly and followed by everyone.

The results of the study indicate that internship is the variable with the greatest effect on the SR awareness of university students. Thus, employers in United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia should consider creating CSR training sessions and workshops for the newly hired employees and interns. Those sessions will help in increasing employees’ awareness about CSR in addition to understanding how different CSR activities are integrated in the organization’s strategies and contribute to the organization’s overall success. Also offering internship programs to senior university students and allowing them to take part in different SR activities will increase their awareness and comprehension of the importance of CSR, thus helping them in becoming better future employees.

6 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has several limitations, one of which is the use of a convenience sample and the cross-sectional design, that prevent the establishment of causal relationships. To obtain more robust findings, future research should select participants randomly, while also considering the impact of recent social responsibility policy changes in universities across UAE, KSA, and Egypt. Another limitation of the study is the sole examination of demographic variables. Enhancing the study by incorporating continuous measures, expanding the scope to include other organizational variables such as responsible management and education programs, as well as personal variables like self-efficacy, would yield more dependable results. Additionally, conducting an in-depth analysis of training plans and teaching guides pertaining to the education degree in relation to social responsibility would be beneficial. There is a great need to further study and analyze the factors influencing the students’ social responsibility awareness. This research studied the relationship between different demographic variables and the students’ social responsibility awareness. The results indicated that only internship experience was correlated positively with students’ awareness. Thus, future research could study the
influence of other social or psychographic factors on students’ social responsibility awareness. Students’ lifestyle, norms, traits, interests, and goals can contribute to their SR awareness and understanding. Future studies could test the similar demographic factors on different target populations in other geographical regions.

7 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between different demographic variables and social responsibility awareness of university students in KSA, UAE, and Egypt. The results indicate that there is a relationship between gender and SRA. The results also show that female students have higher social responsibility awareness than male students. The results of the study indicate that internship is the variable with the greatest effect on the SR awareness of university students. Moreover, the findings of the study also reveal that the level of student’s social responsibility awareness was higher in the UAE. In an attempt to widen the knowledge on social responsibility, additional research could investigate the influence of other social or psychographic factors on the students’ social responsibility awareness.

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