
The Relationship between Conspicuous Consumption and Ethical Behaviors of College Students: Value Orientation as the Mediator

Abstract:

Young college students are the pillar of the development of the state and society, and their growth concerns the future of the state. However, with the further development of the Chinese economy, college students' consumption awareness has shifted from initial need-based consumption to sociative and conspicuous consumption, which could possibly result in non-ethical consumption behaviors. For this reason, to study the relationship between conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors, as well as the interference factors impacting such relationship is of great significance for the healthy growth of college students. This study examined the relationship between conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors of college students, and added collectivism and individualism, the most important factors affecting personal value orientation in Chinese society to the research model as moderating variables for verification. It was found that conspicuous consumption was negatively correlated with college students' ethical behaviors. Collectivist values can weaken the relationship between them, while individualist values strengthened it. Finally, possible factors contributing to this relationship were proposed in the conclusion part, and then some suggestions were given on how to reduce the non-ethical behaviors of college students.

Keywords: ethical behaviors; conspicuous consumption; collectivism;
individualism

I. Introduction

With the rapid development of global economy and the advent of consumption upgrading, conspicuous consumption has become increasingly prevalent. The original definition for conspicuous consumption given by Veblen was limited to buying expensive and publicly visible products to display social status. Especially with the expansion of people's social needs, conspicuous consumption has been found to satisfy more individual needs, such as social needs, improving self-esteem, and enhancing social status (Christen & Morgan, 2005; Frank, 1985; Gurzki&Woisetschläger, 2017; Kastanakis&Balabanis, 2014; Kaus, 2013). According to Festinger's theory of social comparison (1954), individuals tended to compare themselves with others subconsciously, and college students especially shared a "youth circle culture." That is, among college students, their social circles had the same or similar preferences, so it would be easier for them to keep up with the Joneses in such kind of social circles, thus giving birth to consumers who engage in conspicuous consumption. For example, Tang Tuhong (2011) investigated the post-90s college students in China, and discovered that post-90s college students in China generally had the mentality of comparison and hedonism, and their consumption concept also changed with the mind of comparison, such as spending beyond their means, buying luxury goods and branded products. However, the antecedent of such kind of spending beyond one's means and luxury consumption is exactly the existence of conspicuous consumption behavior. For example, out of the mind of comparison, a student from the School of Finance and Economics of a given university borrowed 100,000 yuan through campus loans to purchase luxury goods and overconsume. As a consequence, he was unable to repay the debt, and continue with academic studies. This issue arising from the psychology of conspicuous consumption not only affected college students themselves but also possibly led to non-ethical behaviors in people with such conspicuous consumption behaviors.

Numerous studies have supported the existence of this causality (Amatulli et al., 2018; Dutt, 2019; Zheng, Baskin, & Peng, 2018). For instance, Peattie (2010) found that individuals who tended to be wasteful in daily life would not prioritize green products when shopping. Choi & Lee (2021) discovered that individuals who were enthusiastic about buying high-end animal leather products exhibited lower desire for environmental protection than those who used artificial leather products. Nevertheless, there are many factors affecting ethical behaviors. Personal value orientation, in particular, is a very important factor that affects ethical behaviors. Value orientation includes the value orientation towards interpersonal relationship, the value orientation towards the internal features of humanity, and the value orientation towards natural relationships, but generally specially, value orientation refers to an individual's viewpoints on **external** things or behaviors (Murphy, Ackermann, & Handgraaf, 2011). For example, people with a hedonistic orientation may have more destructive non-ethical behaviors (Metin-Orta & Demirutku, 2020). On the other hand, Bailey & Scheepers (2022) found in a workplace survey that prosocially oriented people paid more attention to the growth of employees or subordinates. With this consideration, we believe that in personal value orientation, people who are overly focused on their own value orientation tend to prioritize their own interests when encountering conflicts between self-interests and group interests. While those with a collectivist tendency will pay more attention to external interests, which has similar connotations to traditional Chinese Confucian culture. In Hofstede's (1991) theory of cultural dimensions, collectivism and individualism were regarded as the key dimensions of personal value orientation for the first time.

Collectivism and individualism touched upon the degree to which an individual identified with and showed concern for the external society (Li, Wang, & Kashyap, 2019). Especially in China, the cradle of Confucian culture, the values of Confucian culture have long influenced the behaviors of Chinese people, and are the mainstream of the potential cultural and psychological characteristics of Chinese and overseas Chinese (Lew, 1979). The most important value in Confucian culture is collectivism, which has long affected on the Chinese society. (Lu & Lu, 2010). On personal

behaviors, group-oriented people tend to prioritize the feelings of their group and are more willing to engage in prosocial behaviors.

The purpose of this study is primarily to deal with the moderating effect of collectivism and individualism in individual values on the relationship between conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors. Although many studies at home and abroad have discussed the relationship between collectivism and ethical behaviors, as an example, Guo Shenghao and Xiao Mingzheng (2017) found that people with a collectivist orientation had a stronger sense of moral identity. In a study on consumption of organic food, Baumann et al (2017) found that group-oriented people were more inclined to consume organic food, because they thought consuming organic food can help protect the environment and support the development of local economy. Most of the existing studies focus on exploring the direct effect of value orientation on ethical behaviors. By contrast, our study is interested in the moderating effect of different value orientations on ethical behaviors. This kind of individualist orientation and collectivist orientation may have different impacts on the relationship between conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors, that is, how different value orientations affect the relationship between conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors is one of the main topics this study seeks to address.

Thus, based on Hofstede's (1991) theory of cultural dimensions and Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison, this paper set up a research model to address the effect of collectivism and individualism in personal value orientation on conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors. The main issues to be solved in this study are:

1. The impact of conspicuous consumption of college students on ethical behaviors;
2. How collectivism/individualism moderated the relationship between conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors.

II. Research Hypotheses

(I) The relationship between conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors

Today, the living standards of college students have gradually been risen. Due to excessive dotage from their parents, students' demands are mostly met without hesitation, which can easily result in the mentality of comparison among them. According to the theory of social comparison, individuals subconsciously compare themselves with others. If they perceive themselves as inferior to those that are compared, they may experience dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and jealousy (Buunk, 1991). It is precisely because of the existence of the theory of social comparison that individual vanity arises. Netemeyer, Burton, & Lichtenstein (1995) noted that vanity can affect consumption behaviors and there was a close relationship between them. In other words, individuals with a higher level of vanity are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption. Everyone contends for "vanity" and "face" in such a "circle", precisely because of the existence of "college students' circle culture". This kind of "vanity" and "face" is derived from the assessment from the external society, which have a significant impact on personal feelings (Young et al., 2010). For this reason, from the perspective of materialism, individuals pursue happiness and gain social status through money and finance. These individuals with materialistic values place a strong emphasis on material possession and seek satisfaction in life through overconsumption (Kasser, 1991).

In the current economic context, the prevalence of conspicuous consumption driven by this peer chest-beating psychology has led to a large amount of waste in the society. According to Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption, individuals purposefully consume luxury goods in public to enhance or maintain their social status. Such type of consumption poses a wide range of ecological hazards, particularly the widespread belief in academia that conspicuous consumption is a

major contributor to the ecological collapse today (Barnosky et al., 2012; Andreotti, 2021). It generates unnecessary ecological collapse and consumption unfairness. The excessive acquisition and destruction of the natural environment by conspicuous consumption can lead to the decline of ecological environment and do harm to the environment. Furthermore, individuals who adhere to the ideology of conspicuous consumption are less likely to be passionately interested in ethical consumption behaviors and may even engage in non-ethical consumption behaviors.

Therefore, based on the above discussion, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H1: There was a positive correlation between conspicuous consumption psychology and non-ethical consumption behaviors of college students

(II) The moderating effect of collectivism/individualism

By inferring from the above hypothesis, we found that a person's conspicuous consumption psychology can influence his ethical behaviors. However, they can also be interfered by other factors, especially in China, which has long been affected by Confucian thoughts (Li Xianghai, 2006). Such kind of Confucian thoughts will have long-term effects on our personal behaviors. For example, Lu et al. (2013) found through their survey of Taiwanese consumers that individuals with higher Confucian motivation had lower tolerance for immoral behaviors. The Confucian motivation here refers to the long-term orientation in Hofstede's (1991) theory of cultural dimension, and this kind of long-term orientation is similar to collectivist orientation described in our study, as both of them emphasize social benefits and sustainable development of society (Wang Haizhong, Fan Xiaowen and Ouyang Jianying, 2017). People with conspicuous consumption psychology tend to value hedonic consumption, that is, immediate gratification (Beall et al., 2021; Corneo & Jeanne, 1997).

Especially with regard to personal value orientation, the most important ones are collectivism and individualism orientations. Those with an individualistic orientation tend to perceive themselves as autonomous and independent entities, while those with

a collectivistic orientation view themselves as interconnected with the larger whole (Hwang, 2000). For this reason, collectivism emphasizes the interconnection between individuals and the outside world, considering individuals as part of the outside world, thus obeying rules and the importance of virtue (Triandis, 1995). In view of different expectations of moral behaviors, consumers with a higher collectivist tendency may be more sensitive to ethical issues than those with an individualist tendency (Farrukh, 2019). On these grounds, we inferred that groups with a higher collectivist tendency were more sensitive to moral issues.

Therefore, based on the above discussion, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H2a: Collectivist orientation negatively moderated the relationship between conspicuous consumption psychology and non-ethical consumption behaviors

H2b: Individualist orientation positively moderated the relationship between conspicuous consumption psychology and non-ethical consumption behaviors.

By inferring from the above hypothesis, we came up with the relationship between conspicuous consumption psychology and ethical behaviors, and how this relationship was affected by value orientation (collectivism and individualism). To ensure the effectiveness of questionnaire items, the design of questionnaire mainly drew lessons from predecessors' introduction to relevant concepts. For items related to conspicuous consumption psychology, we primarily adopted Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption. For items on value orientations, we mainly referred to Hofstede's (1991) theories related to collectivism and individualism. For items on ethical behaviors, we employed the connotations of ethical model proposed by Hunt & Vitell (1986).

The following figure shows the research model proposed in this study.

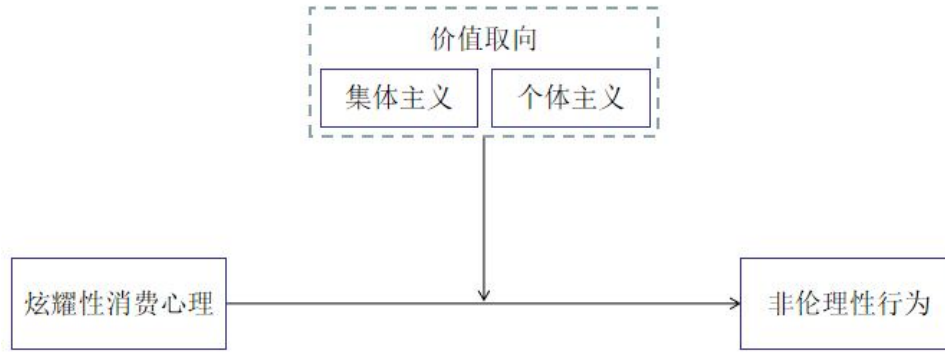


Figure 1 Research Model

4.2 Sampling Method

The design of questionnaire items drew upon mature questionnaires and related theories of predecessors, and the questionnaire was designed based on a 7-point Likert scale. We conducted sampling survey at three universities: Zhejiang University of Technology, Zhejiang Sci-tech University and Zhejiang Gongshang University. The sampling method was systematic random sampling, that is, to select every N-th passerby for survey, where N was randomly selected by a trained investigator. The main reason for choosing these three universities for survey was that these universities were key universities in Zhejiang Province, and students from such key universities may have a stronger awareness of ethical consumption.

A total of 466 questionnaires were collected, after eliminating 21 invalid questionnaires, 445 valid questionnaires remained. The main analytical methods adopted in our study were as follows: First of all, a descriptive analysis was performed to analyze the overall questionnaire samples. After that, reliability and validity analyses were carried out to analyze the reliability of the questionnaire design and items. And then confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were employed to analyze whether the samples fulfilled the hypothesized conditions empirically.

V. Model Analysis

In this study, the questionnaires collected were analyzed by means of AMOS24 and SPSS22, and the following figure shows the results of data analysis.

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	215	48.3
	Female	230	51.7
Educational attainment	Freshman	23	5.1
	Sophomore	131	29.4
	Junior	263	59.1
	Senior	21	4.7
	Postgraduate or above	7	1.5
Monthly living expense	Below 1,500	123	27.6
	1,500-3,000	231	51.8
	3,000-4,000	61	13.7
	More than 4,000	30	6.6
Occupation of parents	Civil servant	54	12.1
	Science, education, culture and health	145	32.5
	Business owner	24	5.3
	Company employee and worker	181	40.6
	Others	25	5.6
	Freelancer	16	3.5

From the descriptive analysis shown in Table 1, most of the respondents in this questionnaire had an educational attainment of sophomore or junior, and the monthly living expenses were mostly below 1,500 and between 1,500 and 3,000. The occupations of parents were mainly about science, education, culture and health and company employees. This study mainly dealt with the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors. From the living expense of respondents and proportion of occupation of parents, the samples were deemed suitable for the purpose of study. So in the next stage, we began to analyze the reliability and validity of samples to determine whether the questionnaire satisfied

requirements of further analysis.

5.1 Common Method Variance Analysis

Common method variance (CMV) may occur for data from a single source. CMV has the potential to introduce systematic measurement errors, and influence the estimation of the relationship between theoretical results and reality, thus leading to inflation or underestimation, which is particularly relevant when all variables are measured on a similar scale (Podsakoff, et al., 2003). For this reason, it is necessary to examine CMV in this work. At present, the common method for detecting CMV is ULMC (Richardson, Simmering, & Sturman, 2009).

On the examination of CMV, we utilized Harman's One Factor and Single Method-Factor Approaches to detect CMV. With respect to Harman's One Factor approach, when the extracted factors were not rotated, the variance explained by the first factor was 35.461%, which reached the acceptable level declared by Podsakoff & Organ (1986). As for the detection of various constructs, we found that their correlations were all lower than 0.9 (Bagoizzi et al., 1991). But Harman's One Factor approach was a relatively rough detection method, we incorporated the effect of CMV into the model as a latent variable and examined CMV by comparing the fitting degree between two models. The results showed that the model incorporating the latent variable of CMV performed well in various fitting indices: $\chi^2/df=2.157$, CFI=0.906, IFI=0.958, RMSEA=0.059. However, through a comparison of the difference between two models in degree of freedom and chi-square value, we found that compared with the model incorporating CMV, the df of the original model grew by 11, while χ^2 only fell by 17.129. From here we see that compared with the original model, the fitting degree of the model incorporating the latent variable of CMV was not significantly improved, which partly indicated that the CMV existing in the measurement of this study was not so serious.

5.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability analysis is a primary method for testing the reliability and stability of

a scale. The most commonly used method for reliability analysis is Cronbach's α . Empirically, if Cronbach's α is greater than 0.9, then it is considered that the internal reliability of the scale is very high. If Cronbach α coefficient is less than 0.7, it is considered that the scale design is highly problematic and preferably redesigned.

Table 2 Reliability Analysis of the Scale

Scale	Cronbach's α	Number of Items
Conspicuous consumption psychology	0.819	6
Value orientation	0.873	6
Non-ethical behaviors	0.909	6

It can be learned from Table 2 that the values of Cronbach's α in the scale of conspicuous consumption psychology, value orientation and ethical behaviors were 0.819 at the lowest and all greater than 0.8, with good internal reliability. On the whole, the reliability of dimensions of the questionnaire was very good. In the following part of the study, a validity analysis would be performed on each scale. The validity analysis of the scale was done with a confirmatory factor analysis. The results are as follows:

Table 3 Validity Analysis of the Study

Scale	Item	p	Standardized Factor Loading	C.R	AVE
Conspicuous consumption psychology	A1	***	0.780	0.840	0.569
	A2	***	0.757		
	A3	***	0.755		
	A4	***	0.720		
	A5	***	0.735		
	A6	***	0.791		
Value orientation	B1	***	0.764	0.861	0.608
	B2	***	0.808		
	B3	***	0.788		
	B4	***	0.764		
	B5	***	0.821		
	B6	**	0.811		
Non-ethical behaviors	C1	***	0.768	0.847	0.580
	C2	***	0.781		
	C3	***	0.745		
	C4	***	0.751		
	C5	***	0.797		
	C6	***	0.802		

Indices of goodness-of-fit: CMIN/DF=1.830; RMSA=0.050; CFI=0.902

Note: ***represented $P < 0.01$ and ** represented $P < 0.05$

It can be learned from Table 3 that the absolute fitting coefficient CMIN/DF was 1.830, less than 3.0, and the relative fitting coefficients CFI=0.902, RMSA=0.050, all of which met acceptable criteria. On the whole, the model factors fitted well. From the factor analysis results of items in each scale, it was found that all items were above 0.720, greater than the required values, and all of the C.R values of four variables of the model were above 0.7.

The researcher then tested whether there was a discriminant validity among the variables by using discriminant validity. For discriminant validity, it was generally evaluated by the average variance extracted (AVE) of each variable. The following table shows an analysis of discriminant validity in this study.

Table 4 Discriminant Validity Test

Variable	1	2	3
Conspicuous consumption psychology	0.835		
Value orientation	0.322	0.854	
Non-ethical behaviors	0.598	0.531	0.847

From the results in Table 4, all latent variables exhibited good discriminant validity. Through a comprehensive analysis of different tools mentioned above, it can be concluded that the scale of this study had good reliability and validity, and further analysis was possible. Before testing the hypotheses, we first carried out a correlation analysis to examine whether there was correlation among major variables. In addition, collinearity diagnostics with VIF was used to determine whether there was a collinearity problem with the variables. The following table shows the correlation analysis of this study.

Table 5 Correlation Analysis and Collinearity Diagnostics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Conspicuous consumption psychology	4.622	1.421	1						
2 Value orientation	4.231	1.732	-0.237***	1					
3 Non-ethical behaviors	3.695	1.358	-0.191**	0.258***	1				
4 Gender	1.465	0.611	0.073	-0.061	-0.162***	1			
5 Educational attainment	2.557	1.216	-0.103	-0.173**	-0.057	0.151***	1		
6 Monthly living expense	3.368	1.579	0.367***	-0.162**	-0.037	0.251***	0.161***	1	
7 Occupation of parents	3.315	0.835	0.256**	-0.021	-0.089	0.031	0.421***	0.122**	1
Collinearity diagnostics with VIF				1.373	1.428	1.104	1.721	1.326	1.321

Note: ***represented P<0.01 and ** represented P<0.05

From the correlation analysis and collinearity diagnostics with VIF in the above table, most of the correlation between variables was significant at the level of $P < 0.05$, and suitable for further regression analysis. Furthermore, it was found through the VIF test of all variables that none of the VIFs of variables exceeded 2, indicating that there was no collinearity problem with the variables (Zhu Yu, Zheng Yiran and Yin Mo, 2020). Next, path analysis would be used for each variable to verify the hypothesis.

5.3 Confirmatory Analysis of the Hypothesis

Our study carried out a confirmatory analysis on the research hypotheses through AMOS24 software and drew a path diagram of structural equation based on the above-mentioned hypothesis model. We sought to examine the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors, but to guarantee the reliability of data, we designed the dimension of non-ethical behaviors as negatively worded items when carrying out the questionnaire survey.

The results of analysis are as follows:

Table 6 Path Analysis

Path	Path	Coefficient (Estimate)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Standardized Coefficient (β)
Non-ethical behaviors	<--- Conspicuous consumption	0.527	0.065	8.086	***	0.568
Non-ethical behaviors	<--- Value orientation	-0.462	0.053	-8.721	***	-0.581
Conspicuous consumption	<--- Value orientation	-0.217	0.069	-3.129	0.002	-0.249

Note: ***, ** and * represented the levels of significance of 1%, 5% and 10% respectively

From the results of path analysis in Table 6, we can learn that the value of standardized coefficient β in the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors in H1 was 0.568 and the positive correlation between conspicuous consumption psychology and non-ethical behaviors held true. The value of β in H2 was -0.581, that is to say, the more people were inclined to collectivist values, the less likely they would be engaged in non-ethical behaviors.

5.4 Analysis of Moderating Effect

Through the above path analysis, we considered analyzing the moderating degree of the model by taking value orientation as the moderating variable between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors. Existing methods to test moderation analysis mainly include hierarchical regression analysis and multivariate analysis, etc. But given the fact that our analysis of direct effect was done with path analysis, we employed multi-group analysis, which was relatively mature so far, for analysis, to guarantee the consistency of research. We divided the moderating dimension into collectivist value and individualist value through the mean of moderating dimension. By calculating the data, we found that in the value orientation variable, AVG was 2.6901. Thus, those with an AVG below 2.6901 were regarded as with individualist orientation, while those with an AVG above 2.6901 were named as with collectivist orientation.

After that, AMOS was adopted to test the moderating effect of value orientation on the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors. The results of analysis are shown in the following table:

Table 7 The Moderating Effect of Value Orientation on the Relationship between Conspicuous Consumption and Non-ethical Behaviors

Model	$\chi^2(d.f.)$	$\Delta\chi^2(p\text{-value})$	Standardized Coefficient	
			Collectivist orientation (N=272)	Individualist orientation(N=183)
Model C ¹	1693(922)			
Model D ²	1700(924)	14.319 (.014)	-.587**	.101 (p=.256)

Note: ***, ** and * represented the levels of significance of 1%, 5% and 10% respectively

Table 7 shows the analysis of the moderating effect of value orientation on the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors. Through an analysis of the moderating effect of value orientation on the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors through multi-group analysis in AMOS, it can be found that based on grouping by level of value orientation, there

¹ Model C was the baseline model that was not controlled in AMOS

² Model D was the model that was controlled for value orientation and ethical behavior path in AMOS

were significant changes in the relationship between two dimensions, i.e., value orientation and non-ethical behaviors ($\Delta\chi^2=14.319, P=.014$).

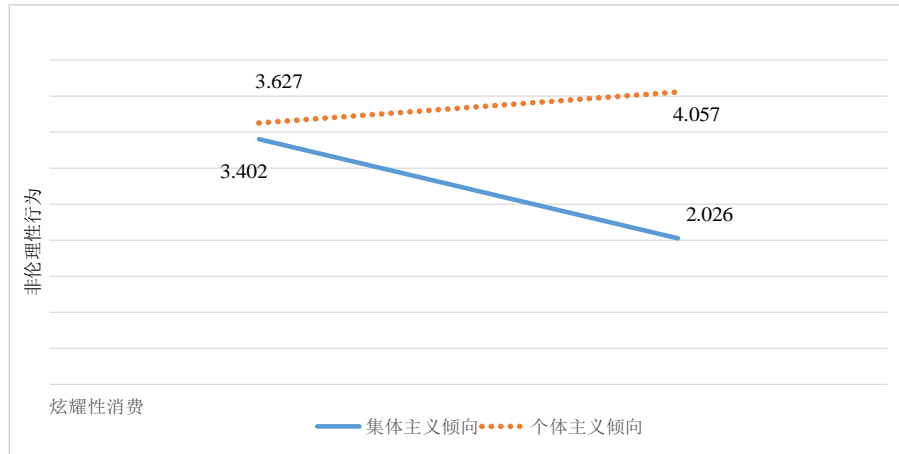


Fig. 2 Simple Slope Analysis of Value Orientation on the Relationship between Conspicuous Consumption Psychology and Non-Ethical Behaviors

According to moderation results of two groups, it can be seen from the standardized coefficient that under the collectivist orientation, the standardized coefficient of conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors was -0.587, which reached the level of significance. Under individualist orientation, the standardized coefficient of conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors was 0.101, which was not significant. In addition, by taking the value $\pm 1SD$, we divided conspicuous consumption psychology into high conspicuous consumption psychology and low conspicuous consumption psychology for simple slope analysis. The simple slope analysis showed that in different value orientations, the impacts of conspicuous consumer psychology on non-ethical behaviors were different. Combined with the above table and the analysis in Figure 2, collectivist orientation would negatively moderate the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors. The collectivist orientation in H2a negatively moderated the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors, while the individualist orientation in H2b positively moderated the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors.

VI. Discussion about the Results and Shortcomings of the Study

6.1 Discussion about the Results

Due to the rapid development of the current society and economy, there has been a rise in hedonistic consumerism, especially college students who are the pillar of our future society. Their consumption concept affects their future life planning. For this reason, the influence of consumption concept on their behaviors and how to change their consumption concept are something that student administrators need to be engaged in so far.

Therefore, based on the above consideration, our study designed a model regarding the relationship between conspicuous consumption concept and non-ethical behaviors, and discussed the relationship among college students' conspicuous consumption concept, value orientation (collectivism and individualism) and ethical behaviors, with an emphasis on the moderating effect of value orientation (collectivism and individualism) on the conspicuous consumption concept and non-ethical behaviors of college students.

I. As manifested by the research, conspicuous consumption concept can significantly influence the ethical behaviors of college students, that is, the stronger conspicuous consumption concept of college students, the more likely they are engaged in some non-ethical behaviors. This study drew on previous studies on conspicuous consumption, and the results coincided with predecessors' studies (O'cass & McEwen, 2004; Bronner & de Hoog, 2018; Neave, Tzemou, & Fastoso, 2020). However, previous studies mainly focused on the direct impact of conspicuous consumption on related ethical behaviors. A very important internal factor affecting consumer behavior was personal value orientation, especially in China, which is the birthplace of Confucian thoughts. Thus, it was necessary for us to inquire into the effect of collectivism on the relationship between conspicuous consumption and

non-ethical behaviors.

To this end, in the research that followed, we took Hofstede (1991)'s value orientation (collectivism and individualism) as an important moderating variable of research to examine its impact on conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors. According to the analysis, even if college students with a collectivist tendency had conspicuous consumption psychology, they were less willing to engage in non-ethical behaviors. This result was probably attributed to the fact that people with a collectivist tendency believed that external interests outweighed their own, so they wouldn't do anything detrimental to external interests.

While for college students with an individualist tendency, the moderating effect was not distinct, that is to say, individualist tendency wouldn't affect the relationship between conspicuous consumption and non-ethical behaviors, which was inconsistent with our hypothesis. The possible reason for this result was that most of the colleges and universities placed great emphasis on moral education and the cultivation of humanistic quality. Even if college students had an individualistic tendency, they wouldn't engage in non-ethical behaviors after being trained through related quality courses.

6.2 Research Recommendations

At present, some non-ethical consumption behaviors (hedonic consumption, conspicuous consumption) that have emerged behind the rapid economic development in China are to be reckoned with. And the biggest economic problem brought by non-ethical consumption behaviors is the wastage of social resources.

According to Marxist value theory, the true value and meaning of life lies in its contribution to the collective and society. Under the background of collectivist culture, specific individual behaviors will encourage others to emulate them, and especially evoke repercussions from individuals with a strong collectivist tendency. As a crucial battlefield for nurturing people, colleges and universities play an important part in promoting college students to form a scientific view of consumption. So based on

Marxist value theory and the conclusion of our findings, the following recommendations are given:

To begin with, we should strengthen moral education based on the traditional value system, deepen the education of collectivist value, ideal and belief, guide and help college students to correctly recognize and deal with various issues in life, correctly understand and analyze current social phenomena, boycott the erosion of decadent ideas, such as money worship and materialism, promote their ethical judgment and moral self-discipline and reduce the cost incurred by irrational consumption behaviors. Secondly, the environment of colleges and universities have a subtle impact on college students, creating a public opinion field for healthy consumption, and giving free rein to the “explicit” and “implicit” effects of static and dynamic campus cultural activities. The major role of a college student in social and economic life is always that of a consumer, and they don’t have production capacity. Schools should intensify the education of consumption economy and consumer ethics for college students, utilize mainstream media to step up the publicity of moral concepts such as diligence, thrift and hard work, set an example, advocate rational consumption and “moderate” consumption, guide college students to build the concept of rational consumption, oppose and do away with bad spending habits, avoid moral decline resulting from unhealthy consumption culture, and create an upbeat group culture and forming a scientific and healthy consumption culture. Lastly, colleges and universities should play the role of educating people through practice, carry out a wide variety of social practice activities, infect and motivate college students to heighten their sense of duty and mission, guide students to understand the national conditions and popular sentiment in China, strengthen the assumption of responsibility in practice, and take concrete actions to practice the concepts of gratitude and accountability, green environmental protection and green consumption, thereby effectively preventing irrational consumption behaviors.

From the results of this study, it is recommended that the departments concerned should vigorously advocate observance to traditional morality and publicity of the “Chinese Dream”. The administrative department of universities should encourage

college students to set up the concepts of long-term development and green consumption, therefore reducing the non-ethical behaviors of college students. At the same time, it is also essential to emphasize the abandonment of traditional face concepts and promote a correct consumption concept among college students through publicity and guidance.

6.3 Conclusion and Future Direction

In this study, we analyze conspicuous consumption psychology and its impact on non-ethical behaviors, based on the moderating effect of value orientation. The results generally support some of the hypotheses proposed earlier. Since this study is based on samples from universities in Zhejiang Province, the sample data are mainly collected from key universities in Zhejiang Province. Nevertheless, there is a huge gap between the eastern and western parts of China and different provinces on development level, and the ethical consumption behaviors of college students are closely related to their own income. Therefore, the research based on samples from universities in Zhejiang alone may not effectively represent of the data of the whole China. In the future research direction, we may consider expanding the sample size. What's more, we can also make a comparative study based on the gap in the level of economic development.

The main focus of this study is to examine the impact of value orientations on conspicuous consumption and ethical behaviors of college students. There are, however, many factors affecting college students' behaviors, such as guanxi culture and publicity orientation. In the subsequent research, it would be beneficial to incorporate such kind of culture to the discussion to enhance the depth and breadth of research.

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Appendix:

Scale	Item
Conspicuous consumption concept	I hope that the products that I buy are unique and not owned by others.
	I hope to own a luxurious mobile phone.
	I like buying branded products.
	Among classmates, I consider face to be very important.
	If I lose face, I will feel very frustrated.
	If my classmates admire me, I will be very happy.
	Individuals should sacrifice their own interests for the sake of the group.
	Individuals should stick to teamwork even when they have a hard time.
	Collective interests outweigh individual interests
	While contributing to the team, I don't expect anything in return.
Value orientation	I will prioritize eco-friendly products even if comparable products are priced higher.
	I will make some efforts to protect the environment.
	I will try to persuade people around me to commit to environmental protection.
Ethical behaviors (Negatively worded items)	If there is litter lying around, I will pick it up and throw it into the trash can
	If I find someone stealing, I will stop him

I often care for solitary old people in the society.

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