



# A Study of the Moral Behavior of Fujian Province University Lecturers Based on Traditional Chinese Cultural Identity

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## Abstract

**Background and Aim:** This research aimed to understand the current situation of moral behavior (which was believed to have been molded by Chinese cultural identity) among university lecturers in Fujian Province, explore its constituent factors, and propose guidelines based on its influence on their moral behavior.

**Materials and Methods:** The study was conducted at nine universities across provincial capitals, special economic zones, and prefecture-level cities. Using a mixed-methods approach, it adopted life story interviews, focus group discussions, and quantitative questionnaires to explore lecturers' cultural identities, moral values, and teaching practices. Quantitative data from 397 lecturers were collected using stratified random sampling and analyzed through descriptive statistics, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

**Results:** The findings revealed that traditional Chinese cultural identity, rooted in values such as benevolence, integrity, harmony, and justice, significantly influenced lecturers' moral behavior and professional practices. Key factors included self-cultivation, social responsibility, and student-centered education. Among these, Integrity was the most influential factor ( $\beta = 0.304$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by Harmony ( $\beta = 0.266$ ), Justice ( $\beta = 0.239$ ), and Benevolence ( $\beta = 0.169$ ), indicating strong statistical support for their impact.

**Conclusion:** The study proposes guidelines for integrating traditional Chinese cultural values into institutional strategies, professional training, and lecturer performance evaluations, offering practical recommendations to enhance China's educational system and strengthen lecturers' moral integrity.

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity; Moral Behavior; University Lecturers; Fujian Province; Traditional Chinese Culture

## Introduction

Education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but also a cultural and social practice. In recent years, ethical controversies involving educators—ranging from misconduct to value confusion—have sparked global concern over teacher morality (Tirri, 2019). Against this backdrop, China's educational system faces unique tensions between preserving traditional moral frameworks and adapting to modern challenges.

Traditional Chinese Cultural Identity, shaped over thousands of years, plays a central role in educators' ethical behavior. It is typically expressed through values such as benevolence (仁), integrity (信), harmony (和), and justice (义), which offer both moral guidance and behavioral standards. In the context of higher education, lecturers are not only responsible for imparting knowledge but also for guiding students to think independently, distinguish between right and wrong, and develop their outlook on life and values.

In the rapidly evolving digital age, lecturers face ongoing challenges in adapting and enhancing their skills to meet the changing needs of students and the educational environment (Szulevicz & Pedersen, 2020). Weak moral behavior and neglect of traditional Chinese cultural identity among lecturers at different levels in the current university environment are prevalent in many countries and societies (Tirri, 2019). Although extensive research exists on lecturer professionalism and ethics, few studies have specifically examined how deeply-rooted cultural identity influences their moral behavior, particularly in the Chinese university setting. This forms a critical gap in the current scholarship.

As of 2023, the Chinese Ministry of Education officially reported a total of 68 typical cases of misconduct across nine batches. Among these, 24 cases involved sexual harassment, molestation of students, and inappropriate relationships; 11 cases involved corporal punishment and abuse of students; 8 cases involved academic misconduct; 6 cases involved paid tutoring; 5 cases involved falsehoods; 4 cases





involved the illegal acceptance of gifts from students' parents; and 10 cases involved other forms of moral misconduct (Ministry of Education of China, 2023).

In the face of this problem, the Ministry of Education has shown a high sense of responsibility and a decisive attitude. They have not only deterred bad behaviors by constantly publicizing and dealing with typical cases, but also strengthened publicity and education on lecturers' professional morality through various means, striving to create a healthier and more harmonious educational environment. This bad information can easily mislead the public's perception of the image of lecturers, leading to misunderstanding and even prejudice towards the teaching community. This phenomenon shows that the bad behavior of violating lecturers' professional morality is not only a concern of the education sector, but also has become a common problem for the whole society to explore and solve (Hu and Shen, 2020). Understanding how cultural identity mechanisms influence lecturer morality is not only of academic significance but also of practical value for improving moral training programs and educational policy-making (Buxarrais, 2021).

## Objectives

This study was designed with the following research objectives:

- 1) To explore the key factors that constitute the traditional Chinese cultural identity of university lecturers in Fujian Province
- 2) To understand the current situation of traditional Chinese cultural identity among university lecturers in Fujian Province
- 3) To propose the guidelines based on the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province

## Literature review

This study explores the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province. Through an extensive review of relevant literature, it clarifies the interconnections between key concepts such as traditional Chinese culture, cultural identity, and lecturer moral behavior, establishing a solid theoretical foundation and rich contextual background for the research.

### 1. Traditional Chinese Culture

Traditional Chinese culture, shaped over thousands of years, has profoundly influenced the thought processes, value systems, and social behaviors of the Chinese nation. It encompasses various domains, including philosophy, art, and social norms, with Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism being its most significant components. Confucianism emphasizes moral cultivation, social harmony, and hierarchical order, advocating core values such as "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness," and has a particularly profound impact on the field of education (An, 2024). Taoism advocates for living by nature, simplicity, and non-action, offering individuals a spiritual pursuit beyond the mundane (Chen & Wu, 2021). Buddhism focuses on the purification of the soul and inner enlightenment, with its compassion contributing positively to societal moral standards (Xu et al., 2023).

### 2. Lecturer's Moral Behavior

Lecturers play a pivotal role in education, shaping not only students' knowledge but also their moral development and values. Research highlights that a lecturer's moral behavior includes fairness towards students, academic integrity, continuous self-improvement, respect for student opinions, and maintaining professionalism outside the classroom (Fallona, 2019). In China's education system, lecturer morality has always been a priority, with the government and institutions employing various means to enhance the overall quality of the teaching profession (Hu & Shen, 2020).

### 3. The Relationship Between Traditional Chinese Culture and Lecturer's Moral Behavior

Traditional Chinese culture emphasizes self-cultivation, believing that individuals can better fulfill their social responsibilities through moral and ethical refinement (Li & Xue, 2023). This philosophy holds significant implications for university lecturers, who are not only knowledge disseminators but also moral guides. Their cultural identity profoundly shapes their educational philosophies, professional dignity, and





sense of social responsibility. The concept of family and nation within traditional Chinese culture further drives lecturers to emphasize students' social responsibility and collective consciousness (Xu et al., 2023).

#### 4. Components of Traditional Chinese Cultural Identity

Traditional Chinese cultural identity comprises multiple elements, primarily including benevolence, integrity, harmony, and justice. Benevolence emphasizes care and compassion for others, advocating for friendly, tolerant, and generous interpersonal relationships (Lin, Yan & Hu, 2022). Integrity stresses honesty and trustworthiness in actions and social interactions, serving as the foundation for building trust (Xu et al., 2023). Harmony advocates for balance between humans and nature, as well as in social relationships, promoting stability and peaceful coexistence (Chen & Wu, 2021). Justice involves principles of fairness, equity, and reasonableness, underpinning social order and legal systems (Ye & Law, 2019).

#### 5. The Influence of Traditional Chinese Cultural Identity on Moral Behavior

Research demonstrates that traditional Chinese cultural identity significantly impacts the moral behavior of university lecturers. Using grounded theory to analyze interview data, the study reveals that the values of benevolence, integrity, harmony, and justice within cultural identity serve as crucial guides for lecturers' moral behavior. Benevolence encourages lecturers to focus on students' holistic development, provide emotional support, and create positive learning environments (Fallona, 2019). Integrity demands honesty and transparency in teaching and research, setting a moral example for students (Buxarrais, 2021). Harmony fosters inclusive and supportive classroom atmospheres, strengthening emotional connections between teachers and students (Xu et al., 2023). Justice ensures fairness in student assessment and management, preventing favoritism and discrimination (Ye & Law, 2019).

#### 6. Theoretical Foundations of Lecturer Moral Behavior

This study employs cultural identity theory and cognitive behavioral theory to construct its theoretical framework. Cultural identity theory posits that individuals' sense of belonging to their culture influences their attitudes, values, and behaviors (Li & Xue, 2023). Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) examines the interplay between individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, suggesting that altering cognitive patterns can improve behavior and emotional states (Ruggiero et al., 2018).

In summary, this study systematically reviews relevant literature to clarify the significant impact of traditional Chinese cultural identity on university lecturers' moral behavior. It reveals the components and mechanisms of this influence, laying a solid theoretical and empirical groundwork for integrating traditional cultural values into lecturer professional development.

### Methodology

#### 1. Research Related Theories

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Cultural Identity Theory and Cognitive Behavioral Theory. Cultural identity refers to the social psychological process in which an individual internalizes and develops a sense of belonging to the culture and cultural group to which they belong, which may help to understand lecturers' identification with traditional Chinese culture. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy designed to help people change their thinking, feelings, and behaviors to overcome problems. Therefore, CBT theory may help understand lecturers' perceptions, ways of thinking, and behavioral patterns related to moral behaviors.

#### 2. Research Scope

##### 1) Research Site

The research site for this study was nine universities in Fujian Province (Fuzhou University, Xiamen University, Huaqiao University, Minnan Normal University, Wuyi University, Longyan University, Ningde Normal University, Putian University, Sanming University). These universities are located in different geographic regions of Fujian Province and have their own unique cultural backgrounds and educational systems.

##### 2) Population and Samples





According to publicly available data from the Education Department in Fujian Province, China, there were 57,117 university lecturers in Fujian Province in 2024. Based on the Yamane formula ( $n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$ ), 397 research samples are needed for this study within 5% error. 397 is sufficient to meet the 95% confidence level, which is the standard for social science research and the basic sample size in the Krejcie and Morgan sampling table.

This study adopted a multi-phase mixed-methods research design. It followed a sequential explanatory approach, in which qualitative findings from life story interviews were used to inform questionnaire construction, and quantitative results were interpreted with the support of qualitative data. Details of the research framework are shown below.

**Table 1** Research Framework

| Phase | Research Question  | Instrument   | Participants   | Data Collection                                | Data Analysis   |
|-------|--|--|--|--|---|
| 1     | 1) What are the constituent factors that constitute the traditional Chinese cultural identity of university lecturers in Fujian Province?                    | Interviews (life story interview, qualitative analysis)  | 9 university lecturers from Fujian Province, selected through purposive sampling       | In-depth interviews, recording of life stories | Thematic coding approach, identification of keywords, dimensions, and factors from interviews, and comparison with the literature |
| 2     | 2) What is the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the perceived moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province?                | Questionnaire (Traditional Chinese culture, covering benevolence, integrity, harmony, and justice and lecturers' moral behavior) | 397 university lecturers from Fujian Province, selected via stratified random sampling | Online survey via Questionnaire Star Platform  | Correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis to test hypotheses, and model fit parameters (R-squared, F-test, etc.)         |
| 3     | 3) What are the guidelines based on the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province? | Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on survey responses   | 397 university lecturers from Fujian Province, selected via stratified random sampling | Online survey via Questionnaire Star Platform  | SEM to assess model fit and the relationship between variables  |
|       |  | Focus group interview  | 5 university experts selected from Fujian Province                                     | Recorded discussions, transcriptions           | Thematic coding approach, qualitative content analysis  |

The research was conducted at nine universities across Fujian Province, selected to ensure diversity in geographic location and institutional type. The total number of participants included 9 for life story interviews (one from each university), 5 for the focus group discussion (senior experts in higher education), and 397 for the questionnaire survey.





Purposive sampling was used to select the 9 interview participants based on gender (balanced), teaching experience (ranging from junior to senior faculty), and academic discipline (arts, sciences, education, law, and engineering). The interview protocol included open-ended questions such as “Can you share a personal teaching experience that reflects your values?” and “How do traditional Chinese values such as *ren*, *yi*, or *he* influence your classroom decisions?” These questions elicited narratives related to cultural identity and moral decision-making.

To ensure content validity, the initial questionnaire items were reviewed and validated by a panel of five experts in educational psychology, ethics, and cultural studies. Based on their feedback, ambiguous items were revised, and redundant items were removed. The design of this scale allowed the researcher to quantify the respondents' views numerically, thus assessing their opinions more accurately. Focus group interviews were employed to facilitate a more interactive discussion among a group of university experts. Qualitative data were analyzed using Grounded Theory, following three distinct phases: (1) Open coding, where key concepts were identified and labeled; (2) Axial coding, where connections among codes were grouped into categories; and (3) Selective coding, where a core category was developed to integrate and explain all findings. This process helped extract the key cultural identity dimensions—benevolence, integrity, harmony, and justice—and their links to moral behavior.

The questionnaire sample size was calculated using the Yamane formula ( $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$ ) with a 5% margin of error. For a total population of 57,000 lecturers in Fujian Province, the resulting sample size of 397 ensures a 95% confidence level. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation across university types and disciplines. After the data collection period, SPSS 27 was used to assist in analyzing the dataset (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS 24.0 (IBM Corp.), which allowed for the assessment of latent variables and model fit.

Comments and suggestions from the experts were used to polish the model that was initially drafted by the researchers from the questionnaire responses. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional ethics committee before data collection. All participants provided informed consent, were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Care was taken to minimize power imbalances, especially during interviews, by adopting a respectful and non-hierarchical tone. This study adhered to the ethical principles outlined in the APA Ethical Guidelines (2020 Edition) and the National Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants in China. Ethical approval was granted by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and all participants provided informed consent. Special care was taken to maintain participant anonymity, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage.

## Results

In Phase 1, the life story interviews revealed six key dimensions of traditional Chinese cultural identity and morality, supported by frequency coding. The three most frequently occurring themes were self-cultivation (23 references), social responsibility (19 references), and student-centered education (17 references). These data were integrated with the literature review and used to construct the questionnaire.

For instance, a participant shared, “Only through constant reflection and self-discipline can I uphold my integrity in front of students.” Another remarked, “My responsibility extends beyond the classroom—I guide students not just academically, but morally.” A third noted, “If we only teach knowledge without values, we are failing our duty.”

In the second part, the descriptive analysis statistics for each scale item in the questionnaire are shown in Tables 2 and 3. To improve clarity, the overall mean and standard deviation values for each key dimension are summarized in Table 2 and Table 3, focusing on six key dimensions: Traditional Chinese culture Identify Benevolence (CIB), Integrity (CII), Harmony (CIH), Justice (CIJ), Lecturers' Morality Behavior Professional Integrity (MBP), and Moral Teaching Practices (MTP).





**Table 2** Summary of Key Constructs

| Construct                     | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Benevolence (CIB)             | 3.206 | 1.183          |
| Integrity (CII)               | 3.316 | 1.493          |
| Harmony (CIH)                 | 3.287 | 1.319          |
| Justice (CIJ)                 | 3.242 | 1.286          |
| Professional Integrity (MBP)  | 3.221 | 1.261          |
| Moral Teaching Practice (MTP) | 3.098 | 1.043          |

**Table 3** Descriptive Statistical Analysis of All Items

| Variable                 | No      | Item  | Mean  | Std. Error of Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis | Coefficient of variation (CV) |
|--------------------------|---------|-------|-------|--------------------|----------------|----------|----------|-------------------------------|
| Benevolence              | 8       | CIB-1 | 3.202 | 1.073              | 1.151          | -0.483   | -0.335   | 0.335                         |
|                          | 9       | CIB-2 | 3.189 | 1.06               | 1.123          | -0.358   | -0.32    | 0.332                         |
|                          | 10      | CIB-3 | 3.227 | 1.114              | 1.241          | -0.479   | -0.394   | 0.345                         |
|                          | 11      | CIB-4 | 3.194 | 1.096              | 1.202          | -0.506   | -0.364   | 0.343                         |
|                          | 12      | CIB-5 | 3.217 | 1.096              | 1.2            | -0.438   | -0.368   | 0.341                         |
|                          | Average |       | 3.206 | 1.088              | 1.183          | -0.453   | -0.356   | 0.339                         |
| Integrity                | 13      | CII-1 | 3.325 | 1.19               | 1.417          | -0.18    | -0.736   | 0.358                         |
|                          | 14      | CII-2 | 3.239 | 1.211              | 1.465          | -0.193   | -0.669   | 0.374                         |
|                          | 15      | CII-3 | 3.315 | 1.235              | 1.524          | -0.245   | -0.767   | 0.372                         |
|                          | 16      | CII-4 | 3.355 | 1.211              | 1.467          | -0.177   | -0.82    | 0.361                         |
|                          | 17      | CII-5 | 3.345 | 1.261              | 1.59           | -0.262   | -0.829   | 0.377                         |
|                          | Average |       | 3.316 | 1.222              | 1.493          | -0.211   | -0.764   | 0.368                         |
| Harmony                  | 18      | CIH-1 | 3.29  | 1.152              | 1.327          | -0.414   | -0.52    | 0.35                          |
|                          | 19      | CIH-2 | 3.259 | 1.153              | 1.329          | -0.35    | -0.523   | 0.354                         |
|                          | 20      | CIH-3 | 3.307 | 1.17               | 1.37           | -0.332   | -0.598   | 0.354                         |
|                          | 21      | CIH-4 | 3.315 | 1.137              | 1.292          | -0.454   | -0.483   | 0.343                         |
|                          | 22      | CIH-5 | 3.264 | 1.13               | 1.276          | -0.312   | -0.505   | 0.344                         |
|                          | Average |       | 3.287 | 1.148              | 1.319          | -0.372   | -0.526   | 0.349                         |
| Justice                  | 23      | CIJ-1 | 3.247 | 1.117              | 1.247          | -0.346   | -0.459   | 0.344                         |
|                          | 24      | CIJ-2 | 3.214 | 1.106              | 1.224          | -0.252   | -0.43    | 0.355                         |
|                          | 25      | CIJ-3 | 3.259 | 1.157              | 1.339          | -0.302   | -0.546   | 0.346                         |
|                          | 26      | CIJ-4 | 3.224 | 1.116              | 1.245          | -0.342   | -0.438   | 0.346                         |
|                          | 27      | CIJ-5 | 3.249 | 1.155              | 1.334          | -0.37    | -0.513   | 0.355                         |
|                          | 28      | CIJ-6 | 3.259 | 1.151              | 1.324          | -0.33    | -0.526   | 0.353                         |
| Professional Integrity   | Average |       | 3.242 | 1.134              | 1.286          | -0.324   | -0.485   | 0.350                         |
|                          | 29      | MBP-1 | 3.212 | 1.104              | 1.218          | -0.302   | -0.428   | 0.344                         |
|                          | 30      | MBP-2 | 3.244 | 1.136              | 1.291          | -0.293   | -0.513   | 0.35                          |
|                          | 31      | MBP-3 | 3.234 | 1.123              | 1.261          | -0.224   | -0.499   | 0.347                         |
|                          | 32      | MBP-4 | 3.194 | 1.128              | 1.273          | -0.324   | -0.449   | 0.353                         |
|                          | Average |       | 3.221 | 1.123              | 1.261          | -0.286   | -0.472   | 0.349                         |
| Moral Teaching Practices | 33      | MTP-1 | 3.083 | 1.042              | 1.087          | -0.046   | -0.048   | 0.388                         |
|                          | 34      | MTP-2 | 3.116 | 1.036              | 1.072          | 0.027    | -0.093   | 0.332                         |
|                          | 35      | MTP-3 | 3.083 | 0.948              | 0.9            | 0.03     | 0.148    | 0.308                         |
|                          | 36      | MTP-4 | 3.106 | 1.007              | 1.014          | -0.079   | -0.04    | 0.324                         |
|                          | Average |       | 3.097 | 1.008              | 1.018          | -0.017   | -0.008   | 0.338                         |

Finding 1: What were the constituent factors that constituted the traditional Chinese cultural identity of university lecturers in Fujian Province?

The study identified four core dimensions of traditional Chinese cultural identity among university lecturers: Benevolence, Integrity, Harmony, and Justice. These dimensions were consistently highlighted in both qualitative and quantitative analyses, reflecting their centrality in shaping lecturers' professional morality and practices.

Quantitative analysis through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validated these dimensions, with strong factor loadings for each: Integrity (0.735–0.794), Harmony (0.646–0.744), Justice (0.682–0.704), and Benevolence (0.649–0.721). These values confirm the theoretical relevance and empirical reliability of these factors in defining traditional Chinese cultural identity.

Qualitative findings provided a deeper context, illustrating how these dimensions manifest in teaching practices. Benevolence was reflected in participants' focus on empathy and care, with lecturers frequently describing efforts to address students' emotional needs and adapt teaching methods to diverse learning styles. Integrity emerged as a cornerstone of professional morality, with lecturers emphasizing their commitment to honesty and moral conduct. Harmony was highlighted through narratives about creating inclusive environments and fostering trust, while Justice was demonstrated through fairness in evaluations and ensuring equal opportunities for all students.

**Table 4** Reliability Test of Questionnaire Items

| Variable               | Item  | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Benevolence            | CIB-1 | 0.709                            | 0.964                            | 0.964            |
|                        | CIB-2 | 0.705                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CIB-3 | 0.738                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CIB-4 | 0.724                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CIB-5 | 0.71                             | 0.964                            |                  |
| Integrity              | CII-1 | 0.666                            | 0.965                            | 0.964            |
|                        | CII-2 | 0.69                             | 0.965                            |                  |
|                        | CII-3 | 0.697                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CII-4 | 0.65                             | 0.965                            |                  |
|                        | CII-5 | 0.698                            | 0.964                            |                  |
| Harmony                | CIH-1 | 0.702                            | 0.964                            | 0.964            |
|                        | CIH-2 | 0.727                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CIH-3 | 0.703                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CIH-4 | 0.714                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CIH-5 | 0.687                            | 0.965                            |                  |
| Justice                | CIJ-1 | 0.707                            | 0.964                            | 0.964            |
|                        | CIJ-2 | 0.686                            | 0.965                            |                  |
|                        | CIJ-3 | 0.706                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CIJ-4 | 0.704                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | CIJ-5 | 0.708                            | 0.964                            |                  |
| Professional Integrity | CIJ-6 | 0.703                            | 0.964                            | 0.965            |
|                        | MBP-1 | 0.694                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | MBP-2 | 0.668                            | 0.965                            |                  |
|                        | MBP-3 | 0.652                            | 0.965                            |                  |
|                        | MBP-4 | 0.699                            | 0.964                            |                  |
|                        | MTP-1 | 0.653                            | 0.965                            | 0.965            |



| Variable  | Item  | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------|-------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Moral     | MTP-2 | 0.625                            | 0.965                            |                  |
| Teaching  | MTP-3 | 0.649                            | 0.965                            |                  |
| Practices | MTP-4 | 0.635                            | 0.965                            |                  |

**Table 5** KMO Test and Bartlett's Test

| KMO and Bartlett est |         |          |
|----------------------|---------|----------|
| KMO                  |         | 0.973    |
| Approx. Chi-Square   |         | 7849.563 |
| Bartlett test        | Df      | 406      |
|                      | p value | 0.000*** |

\*P< 0.05; \*\*P<0.01; \*\*\*P<0.001

**Table 6** Variance Explained Summary

| Factor | Total Variance Explained |               |                    | % of variance (Rotated) |               |                    |
|--------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
|        | Eigen                    | % of Variance | Cum. % of Variance | Eigen                   | % of Variance | Cum. % of Variance |
| 1      | 14.838                   | 51.17%        | 51.17%             | 4.217                   | 14.54%        | 14.54%             |
| 2      | 1.329                    | 4.58%         | 55.75%             | 3.584                   | 12.36%        | 26.90%             |
| 3      | 1.153                    | 3.98%         | 59.72%             | 3.5                     | 12.07%        | 38.97%             |
| 4      | 1.135                    | 3.91%         | 63.64%             | 3.454                   | 11.91%        | 50.88%             |
| 5      | 1.032                    | 3.56%         | 67.20%             | 2.942                   | 10.15%        | 61.03%             |
| 6      | 1.019                    | 3.51%         | 70.71%             | 2.809                   | 9.69%         | 70.71%             |
| 7      | 0.568                    | 1.96%         | 72.67%             |                         |               |                    |
| 8      | 0.529                    | 1.83%         | 74.50%             |                         |               |                    |
| 9      | 0.503                    | 1.74%         | 76.23%             |                         |               |                    |
| 10     | 0.475                    | 1.64%         | 77.87%             |                         |               |                    |
| 11     | 0.461                    | 1.59%         | 79.46%             |                         |               |                    |
| 12     | 0.449                    | 1.55%         | 81.00%             |                         |               |                    |
| 13     | 0.429                    | 1.48%         | 82.48%             |                         |               |                    |
| 14     | 0.406                    | 1.40%         | 83.88%             |                         |               |                    |
| 15     | 0.4                      | 1.38%         | 85.26%             |                         |               |                    |
| 16     | 0.384                    | 1.33%         | 86.59%             |                         |               |                    |
| 17     | 0.372                    | 1.28%         | 87.87%             |                         |               |                    |
| 18     | 0.362                    | 1.25%         | 89.12%             |                         |               |                    |
| 19     | 0.346                    | 1.19%         | 90.31%             |                         |               |                    |
| 20     | 0.338                    | 1.17%         | 91.48%             |                         |               |                    |
| 21     | 0.327                    | 1.13%         | 92.60%             |                         |               |                    |
| 22     | 0.307                    | 1.06%         | 93.66%             |                         |               |                    |
| 23     | 0.294                    | 1.01%         | 94.68%             |                         |               |                    |
| 24     | 0.285                    | 0.98%         | 95.66%             |                         |               |                    |
| 25     | 0.27                     | 0.93%         | 96.59%             |                         |               |                    |
| 26     | 0.267                    | 0.92%         | 97.51%             |                         |               |                    |
| 27     | 0.248                    | 0.85%         | 98.37%             |                         |               |                    |
| 28     | 0.242                    | 0.84%         | 99.20%             |                         |               |                    |

| Factor | Total Variance Explained |               |                    |                         |               |                    |
|--------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
|        | % of variance (Initial)  |               |                    | % of variance (Rotated) |               |                    |
|        | Eigen                    | % of Variance | Cum. % of Variance | Eigen                   | % of Variance | Cum. % of Variance |
| 29     | 0.232                    | 0.80%         | 100%               |                         |               |                    |

The factor loadings revealed that Integrity had the highest standardized loading ( $\lambda = 0.72$ ), which indicates that respondents who scored high on this factor were strongly associated with honest and transparent behaviors, such as “being truthful in grading” and “avoiding plagiarism.”

This demonstrates that Integrity serves as a foundational trait in guiding lecturers' ethical choices.

**Table 7** Factor Loading Summary

| Item  | Factor loading (Rotated) |          |          |          |          |          | Communalities |
|-------|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|
|       | Factor 1                 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 | Factor 6 |               |
| CIB-1 | 0.255                    | 0.291    | 0.704    | 0.197    | 0.123    | 0.207    | 0.742         |
| CIB-2 | 0.255                    | 0.154    | 0.721    | 0.27     | 0.236    | 0.137    | 0.756         |
| CIB-3 | 0.329                    | 0.226    | 0.649    | 0.263    | 0.189    | 0.185    | 0.72          |
| CIB-4 | 0.23                     | 0.28     | 0.687    | 0.183    | 0.21     | 0.241    | 0.738         |
| CIB-5 | 0.22                     | 0.252    | 0.689    | 0.223    | 0.225    | 0.184    | 0.721         |
| CII-1 | 0.222                    | 0.701    | 0.183    | 0.173    | 0.205    | 0.188    | 0.682         |
| CII-2 | 0.224                    | 0.686    | 0.19     | 0.241    | 0.161    | 0.228    | 0.692         |
| CII-3 | 0.215                    | 0.674    | 0.255    | 0.244    | 0.225    | 0.127    | 0.691         |
| CII-4 | 0.168                    | 0.649    | 0.205    | 0.182    | 0.273    | 0.172    | 0.629         |
| CII-5 | 0.264                    | 0.686    | 0.252    | 0.191    | 0.162    | 0.183    | 0.7           |
| CIH-1 | 0.197                    | 0.24     | 0.255    | 0.658    | 0.201    | 0.23     | 0.688         |
| CIH-2 | 0.322                    | 0.257    | 0.24     | 0.646    | 0.16     | 0.188    | 0.706         |
| CIH-3 | 0.183                    | 0.296    | 0.247    | 0.698    | 0.189    | 0.159    | 0.73          |
| CIH-4 | 0.234                    | 0.233    | 0.184    | 0.663    | 0.229    | 0.271    | 0.708         |
| CIH-5 | 0.293                    | 0.123    | 0.198    | 0.744    | 0.202    | 0.171    | 0.764         |
| CIJ-1 | 0.706                    | 0.199    | 0.211    | 0.268    | 0.243    | 0.087    | 0.722         |
| CIJ-2 | 0.69                     | 0.293    | 0.212    | 0.17     | 0.113    | 0.189    | 0.684         |
| CIJ-3 | 0.69                     | 0.194    | 0.271    | 0.236    | 0.137    | 0.192    | 0.698         |
| CIJ-4 | 0.682                    | 0.225    | 0.247    | 0.113    | 0.213    | 0.25     | 0.698         |
| CIJ-5 | 0.704                    | 0.217    | 0.164    | 0.237    | 0.224    | 0.185    | 0.71          |
| CIJ-6 | 0.7                      | 0.12     | 0.204    | 0.246    | 0.216    | 0.243    | 0.712         |
| MBP-1 | 0.244                    | 0.24     | 0.216    | 0.228    | 0.686    | 0.187    | 0.722         |
| MBP-2 | 0.23                     | 0.269    | 0.197    | 0.152    | 0.711    | 0.183    | 0.726         |
| MBP-3 | 0.254                    | 0.192    | 0.174    | 0.209    | 0.699    | 0.178    | 0.695         |
| MBP-4 | 0.183                    | 0.231    | 0.234    | 0.252    | 0.69     | 0.239    | 0.739         |
| MTP-1 | 0.203                    | 0.304    | 0.18     | 0.242    | 0.107    | 0.681    | 0.699         |
| MTP-2 | 0.212                    | 0.083    | 0.275    | 0.213    | 0.208    | 0.678    | 0.675         |
| MTP-3 | 0.184                    | 0.252    | 0.152    | 0.224    | 0.226    | 0.684    | 0.69          |
| MTP-4 | 0.293                    | 0.189    | 0.161    | 0.143    | 0.217    | 0.673    | 0.669         |

Finding 2: What was the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the perceived moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province?



The findings revealed a significant influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the perceived moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province. The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) indicate that the dimensions of Benevolence (CIB), Integrity (CII), Harmony (CIH), and Justice (CIJ) play distinct yet meaningful roles in shaping moral behavior. Among these dimensions, Integrity emerged as the most influential factor, with a standardized factor loading of 0.304 and a critical ratio (C.R.) of 4.454 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This highlights that professional honesty, moral responsibility, and trustworthiness are central to lecturers' moral conduct. Harmony, with a standardized factor loading of 0.266 (C.R. = 3.877,  $p < 0.001$ ), emphasizes the importance of balanced relationships and an emotionally supportive classroom environment. Justice, with a standardized factor loading of 0.239 (C.R. = 3.705,  $p < 0.001$ ), reflects the significance of fairness and equity in classroom management and student assessments. Lastly, Benevolence, with a standardized factor loading of 0.169 (C.R. = 2.438,  $p < 0.01$ ), highlights the role of care and compassion in fostering a student-centered approach to teaching. These quantitative insights are further reinforced by qualitative findings, where lecturers shared personal stories that emphasized the importance of integrity in maintaining trust, harmony in reducing classroom anxiety, justice in ensuring fair evaluations, and benevolence in supporting students' growth. Together, these dimensions form a culturally grounded framework for understanding moral behavior among university lecturers in Fujian Province.

**Table 8** Convergent Validity Summary

| Validation factor analysis |       |              |       |                   |     |           |       |       |
|----------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------------------|-----|-----------|-------|-------|
| Construct                  | Item  | Usted. F. L. | S.E.  | C.R.<br>(t-value) | p   | Std. F.L. | CR    | AVE   |
| Benevolence                | CIB-1 | 1            | -     | -                 | -   | 0.81      | 0.662 | 0.907 |
|                            | CIB-2 | 0.988        | 0.054 | 18.379            | *** | 0.81      |       |       |
|                            | CIB-3 | 1.054        | 0.056 | 18.755            | *** | 0.822     |       |       |
|                            | CIB-4 | 1.034        | 0.055 | 18.681            | *** | 0.819     |       |       |
|                            | CIB-5 | 1.016        | 0.056 | 18.25             | *** | 0.806     |       |       |
| Integrity                  | CII-1 | 1            | -     | -                 | -   | 0.764     | 0.599 | 0.882 |
|                            | CII-2 | 1.043        | 0.065 | 16.062            | *** | 0.783     |       |       |
|                            | CII-3 | 1.072        | 0.066 | 16.199            | *** | 0.789     |       |       |
|                            | CII-4 | 0.979        | 0.066 | 14.935            | *** | 0.735     |       |       |
|                            | CII-5 | 1.101        | 0.068 | 16.316            | *** | 0.794     |       |       |
| Harmony                    | CIH-1 | 1            | -     | -                 | -   | 0.785     | 0.639 | 0.899 |
|                            | CIH-2 | 1.024        | 0.059 | 17.373            | *** | 0.804     |       |       |
|                            | CIH-3 | 1.035        | 0.06  | 17.258            | *** | 0.8       |       |       |
|                            | CIH-4 | 1.012        | 0.058 | 17.409            | *** | 0.805     |       |       |
|                            | CIH-5 | 1.002        | 0.058 | 17.325            | *** | 0.802     |       |       |
| Justice                    | CIJ-1 | 1            | -     | -                 | -   | 0.803     | 0.633 | 0.912 |
|                            | CIJ-2 | 0.954        | 0.056 | 17.131            | *** | 0.774     |       |       |
|                            | CIJ-3 | 1.03         | 0.058 | 17.865            | *** | 0.798     |       |       |
|                            | CIJ-4 | 0.986        | 0.056 | 17.68             | *** | 0.792     |       |       |
|                            | CIJ-5 | 1.036        | 0.057 | 18.052            | *** | 0.804     |       |       |
|                            | CIJ-6 | 1.027        | 0.057 | 17.937            | *** | 0.801     |       |       |
| Professional Integrity     | MBP-1 | 1            | -     | -                 | -   | 0.809     | 0.628 | 0.871 |
|                            | MBP-2 | 1            | 0.059 | 17.076            | *** | 0.785     |       |       |
|                            | MBP-3 | 0.952        | 0.058 | 16.286            | *** | 0.757     |       |       |
|                            | MBP-4 | 1.034        | 0.057 | 17.988            | *** | 0.818     |       |       |
| Moral Behavior             | MTP-1 | 1            | -     | -                 | -   | 0.766     | 0.563 | 0.837 |
|                            | MTP-2 | 0.947        | 0.066 | 14.436            | *** | 0.731     |       |       |





| Validation factor analysis |       |              |       |                   |     |           |    |     |
|----------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------------------|-----|-----------|----|-----|
| Construct                  | Item  | Usted. F. L. | S.E.  | C.R.<br>(t-value) | p   | Std. F.L. | CR | AVE |
| Moral                      | MTP-3 | 0.908        | 0.06  | 15.159            | *** | 0.765     |    |     |
| Teaching Practices         | MTP-4 | 0.933        | 0.064 | 14.629            | *** | 0.74      |    |     |

**Table 9** Discriminant Validity Summary

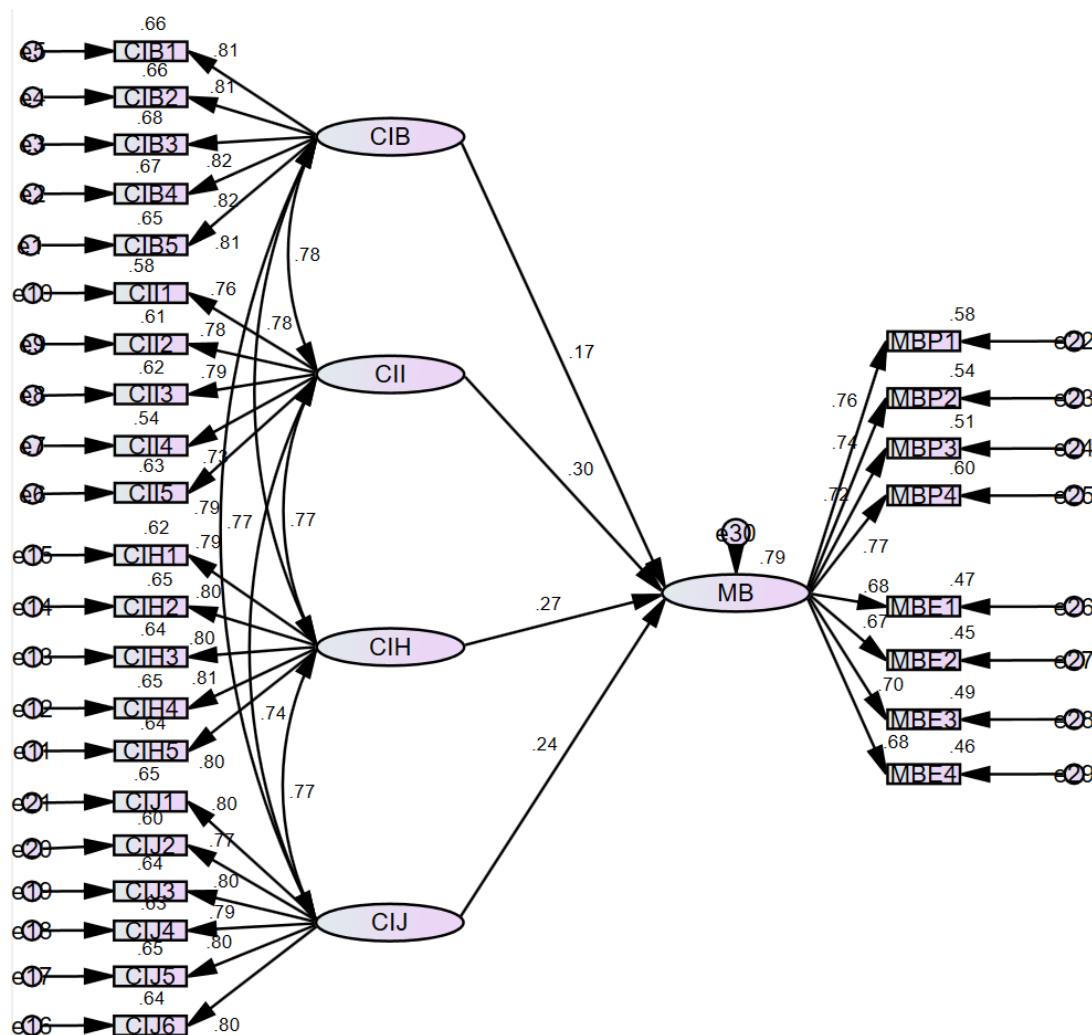
|        | Discriminant Validity |       |       |       |       |      |
|--------|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
|        | 1                     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6    |
| 1. CIB | 0.814                 |       |       |       |       |      |
| 2. CII | 0.697                 | 0.774 |       |       |       |      |
| 3. CIH | 0.703                 | 0.684 | 0.799 |       |       |      |
| 4. CIJ | 0.705                 | 0.666 | 0.695 | 0.796 |       |      |
| 5. MBP | 0.66                  | 0.674 | 0.664 | 0.659 | 0.792 |      |
| 6. MTP | 0.647                 | 0.643 | 0.665 | 0.657 | 0.641 | 0.75 |

\*: The diagonal bolded value is the square root of the AVE value

The SEM model confirmed that traditional cultural values positively predict moral behavior with strong model fit indices (CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.048). Among the four core values, Integrity exerted the strongest influence ( $\beta = 0.304$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

This suggests that lecturers who identify more deeply with traditional values like Integrity are more likely to demonstrate ethical conduct in areas such as student fairness, respect, and professional responsibility.





**Figure 1** CFA SEM Model

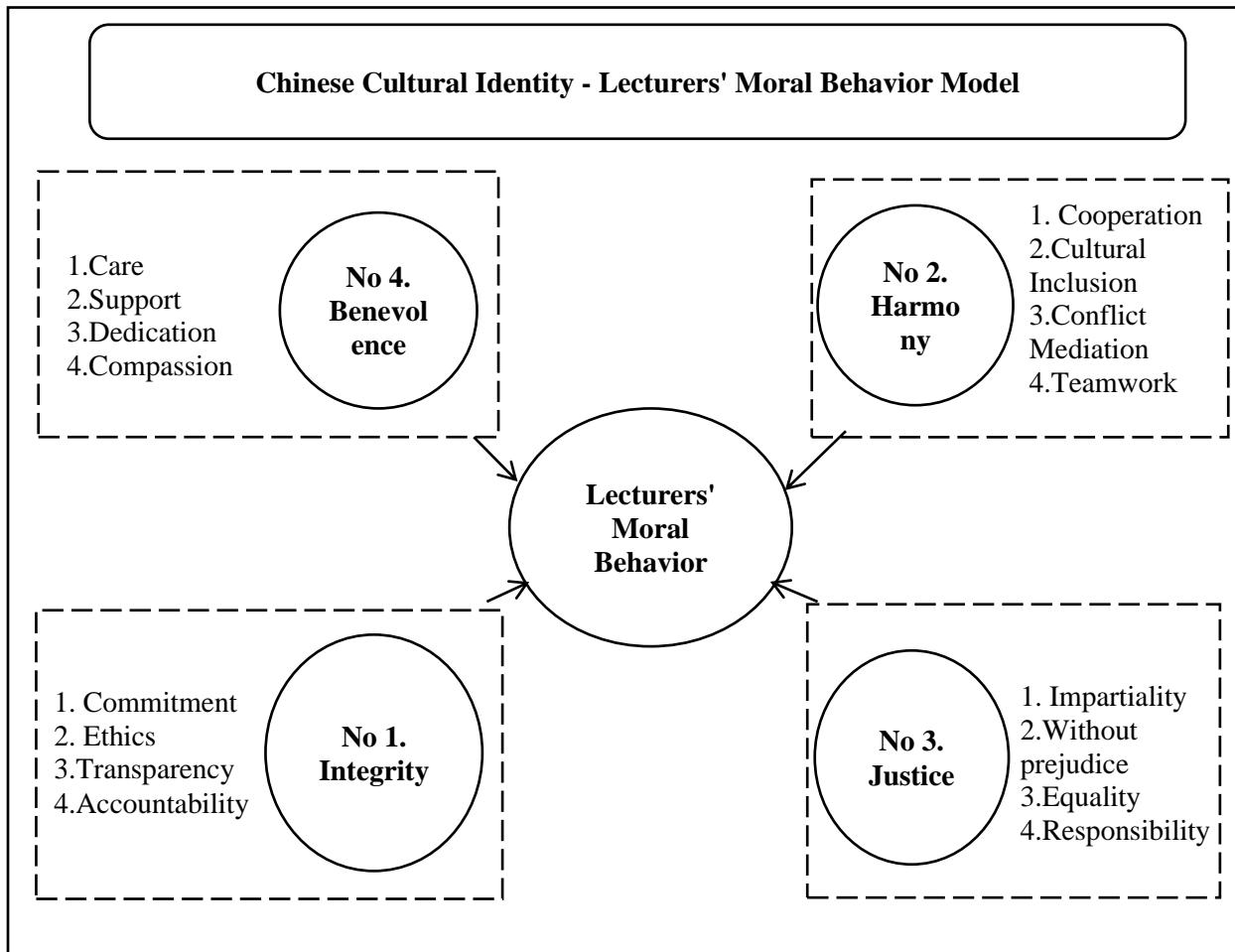
**Table 10** The Goodness-of-Fit Index of the CFA Model

| Table 10 The Goodness of Fit Index of the CFA Model |          |             |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|---|----------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Fit indices   | $\chi^2$ | $\chi^2/df$ | GFI   | AGFI  | IFI   | TLI   | CFI   | RMSEA |
| Result  | 552.637  | 1.500       | 0.903 | 0.885 | 0.976 | 0.973 | 0.976 | 0.036 |
|   | <3       | >0.8        | >0.8  | >0.9  | >0.9  | >0.9  | >0.9  | <0.08 |

**Table 11** Parameter Estimation of CFA Model

|    |      | Ustd. | S. F. L. | S.E.  | C.R.  | P     |
|----|------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| MB | <--- | CIB   | 0.161    | 0.169 | 0.066 | 2.438 |
| MB | <--- | CII   | 0.255    | 0.304 | 0.057 | 4.454 |
| MB | <--- | CIH   | 0.246    | 0.266 | 0.064 | 3.877 |
| MB | <--- | CIJ   | 0.217    | 0.239 | 0.059 | 3.705 |

Finally, a model that is derived from the data analysis in steps is presented below.



**Figure 2** Proposed Model of Cultural Identity and Moral Behavior

**Finding 3:** What should be the guidelines based on the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province?

These guidelines aim to enhance the moral and professional practices of university lecturers through the integration of Benevolence, Integrity, Harmony, and Justice into educational policies and training programs.

**Integrity:** Training programs should prioritize professional morality, honesty, and trust. Institutions should incorporate integrity-related criteria into performance evaluations and lecturer development plans.

**Harmony:** Universities should promote emotionally supportive classrooms through mentorship programs, emotional intelligence training, and stress management workshops.

**Justice:** Transparent evaluation mechanisms and moral conflict resolution workshops should be mandatory. Policies ensuring equal opportunities for all students should be institutionalized.

**Benevolence:** Student-centered pedagogies and personalized teaching strategies should be encouraged. Workshops can equip lecturers with tools to build emotional connections with students and address their well-being.

**Institutionalization:** Universities should embed these cultural values into their mission statements, strategic plans, and evaluation frameworks. Recognizing and rewarding lecturers who exemplify these values can further promote their adoption.



## Discussion

This study aimed to explore the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province. The findings revealed that traditional Chinese cultural identity, rooted in values such as benevolence, integrity, harmony, and justice, significantly shapes the moral behavior of university lecturers. These values serve not only as the foundation for lecturers' ethical frameworks but also as dynamic agents that interact with professional identity and institutional expectations. This echoes Xu et al. (2023), who emphasized that cultural identity provides internalized moral boundaries for professional practice.

Importantly, the study provides evidence that "Integrity" emerged as the most dominant influence ( $\beta = 0.304$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding aligns with Fallona (2019), who argued that moral teaching hinges on transparency and accountability. In the Chinese cultural context, however, "Integrity" (信) is not only an individual virtue but also a societal expectation deeply embedded in Confucian ethics. This dual source of reinforcement may explain why Integrity had the strongest impact among the four values. The qualitative interviews support this: lecturers repeatedly referenced "self-discipline," "being truthful," and "avoiding shame," all rooted in culturally coded norms. In contrast, while Western ethics (e.g., King et al., 2017) often emphasize fairness or justice as primary teaching values, the current study highlights a more collectivist prioritization, placing interpersonal harmony and trust before justice enforcement. This may represent a divergence from King's findings, suggesting that professional morality in collectivist societies is more relationally anchored than principle-driven.

The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) confirmed that Integrity is the most influential dimension, followed by Harmony, Justice, and Benevolence. This hierarchy reflects the Confucian moral order, where self-regulation (修身) is foundational to public virtue. It also supports Li and Xue's (2023) notion that teachers' moral responsibility stems from their role as moral exemplars in society.

However, an intriguing inconsistency emerged. In quantitative analysis, Harmony scored higher than Benevolence, yet in qualitative data, narratives around empathy and care appeared more frequently. This suggests that while lecturers internalize harmony as a normative ideal, benevolence manifests more readily in day-to-day pedagogical practices. Such differences between perceived values and enacted behavior warrant further investigation.

The study's findings have several implications for educational policy and practice. The strong influence of Integrity implies that moral education and evaluation systems should prioritize honesty, responsibility, and ethical decision-making. Institutions should design training workshops centered on moral dilemmas, encourage peer-review mechanisms, and provide platforms to reflect on ethical challenges. Moreover, these values can be selectively adapted to other East Asian or Confucian-influenced educational systems. However, the strong reliance on culturally specific concepts like "ren" and "li" may limit their applicability in Western, individualistic contexts. Policymakers should therefore consider cultural translatability when applying such frameworks beyond China.

The theoretical contributions of this study refine Cultural Identity Theory by demonstrating how embedded values not only shape belief systems but also operationalize into specific professional behaviors. Moreover, this study suggests that Cognitive Behavioral Theory can be culturally extended—thoughts and emotions are influenced not only by personal cognition but by deep-seated cultural narratives. Its contextual specificity to Fujian Province, for instance, means the results reflect regional interpretations of cultural values. Provinces with greater exposure to globalization or minority populations may yield different ethical hierarchies.

Future longitudinal or ethnographic studies could explore how deeply cultural identity evolves across different career stages of lecturers, or how institutional environments may mediate cultural-moral alignment.





## Conclusion

This study explored the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity on the moral behavior of university lecturers in Fujian Province, identified its core dimensions, and proposed guidelines to integrate cultural values into educational practices. The findings revealed that Benevolence, Integrity, Harmony, and Justice are central to lecturers' cultural identity and play a pivotal role in shaping their moral and professional behavior. The proposed guidelines emphasize the importance of embedding cultural values into institutional policies, professional development programs, and teaching practices. These strategies aim to enhance moral behavior, promote inclusivity, and foster moral teaching in higher education.

## Recommendation

To promote the moral behavior of university lecturers based on the influence of traditional Chinese cultural identity, the following recommendations are proposed.

First, universities should embed traditional Chinese cultural values—Benevolence, Integrity, Harmony, and Justice—into their institutional structures and daily practices. This can be achieved by incorporating these values into mission statements, strategic plans, and policy documents to ensure they are consistently reflected in academic and administrative practices. Specifically, universities should revise their lecturer evaluation and promotion criteria to include ethical conduct indicators such as fairness in student assessment, honesty in research, and commitment to student well-being. Practical mechanisms such as “Ethical Teaching Awards” or annual moral performance appraisals can be introduced to reinforce these values. Transparent evaluation systems should also be established to promote fairness in assessments for both students and lecturers, reinforcing Justice as a core principle. Universities can also allocate funds for ethics-related workshops, interdisciplinary research projects on morality, and the development of culture-based teaching curricula.

Second, targeted professional development programs should be offered to lecturers to enhance their understanding and application of cultural values in classroom settings. Comprehensive training programs should emphasize Integrity through moral decision-making workshops and explore strategies for fostering Harmony in classrooms through emotional intelligence and stress management sessions. Training modules should be practical and culturally grounded. For instance, lecturers may participate in case-based simulations on resolving ethical dilemmas, peer feedback sessions, and classroom scenario analysis that highlight benevolence and justice. Universities should also provide curriculum development support to help lecturers incorporate Benevolence and Justice into their teaching, such as through modules on moral leadership, social responsibility, and collaborative learning. Furthermore, universities should encourage lecturers to participate in interdisciplinary moral education communities that foster collaborative innovation and reflective practice.

Third, the Ministry of Education should play an active leadership role in setting nationwide ethical teaching standards and providing policy support. It is recommended that the Ministry design a national framework for evaluating teacher ethics, including standardized assessment tools and rubrics aligned with cultural values. Moreover, the Ministry should mandate ethics education as a core requirement in teacher qualification and training programs. For example, pre-service teacher certification should include courses on Confucian moral concepts and their application in contemporary teaching, while in-service programs should focus on moral responsibility in digital and globalized learning contexts. To sustain such initiatives, government funding can be directed toward moral education research, curriculum reform projects, and national campaigns on moral teaching.

Fourth, professional associations such as national lecturer unions or educational ethics committees should be mobilized to establish sector-wide guidelines and foster a professional ethics culture. These organizations can create a national database of recognized ethical educators, host ethics symposia, and formulate a shared professional code informed by traditional culture. They can also facilitate institutional exchanges and mentoring programs to promote the diffusion of exemplary moral practices.





Lastly, students should also be regarded as important stakeholders in promoting moral education. Student feedback mechanisms can be refined to include evaluations of lecturers' moral behaviors, such as fairness, respect, and empathy. Encouraging student participation in campus ethics initiatives—for example, student-led seminars on integrity or classroom code-of-conduct co-drafting—can enhance their moral awareness and strengthen reciprocal moral development between lecturers and learners.

In sum, enhancing moral behavior among university lecturers requires the collaborative efforts of universities, lecturers, the Ministry of Education, professional associations, and students. These recommendations, grounded in the empirical findings of this study, provide actionable strategies to institutionalize traditional cultural values in educational settings. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration among lecturers can further inspire innovative approaches to integrating cultural values, particularly by combining cultural education with technology or other academic fields. Such a multi-level, stakeholder-inclusive approach is essential to ensure the sustainable cultivation of ethical integrity in higher education.

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