

Confucius Educational Philosophy and Implication for Contemporary Nigerian University Students

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Abstract

In recent times, Nigerian University students have been facing many moral and academic challenges during their learning endeavors. Therefore, this paper focuses on addressing these challenges and helping Nigerian students to be more ethical and moral when engaging in academic activities. The study employed the Confucius educational philosophy to frame the analysis and discussion. Methodically, the study adopted a review of secondary data, which involves "The Analects," as the embodiment of Confucian ideas, which include self-reflection, lifelong learning, and the promotion of harmony. The results indicate that Nigerian students should contemplate their behavior in accordance with the principles of Confucius. The study determined that to enhance students' academic excellence and moral and ethical standards, university management, instructors, and students should base their actions on Confucius's teachings.

Keywords: Confucius; Confucius Philosophy; Confucianism; Confucius Educational Philosophy; Nigerian University students

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the minds and character of individuals, particularly in a rapidly changing and challenging world. In recent times, Nigerian university students have been grappling with various obstacles that hinder their educational journey and overall development. Scholarly findings show the presence of student unrest and cultism (Ige, 2014; Igodo, 2002), posing serious threats to campus safety and the overall well-being of students. Additionally, there is a noted lack of enthusiasm and engagement among students towards the learning process, as evidenced by poor academic performance and attitudes towards education (Birabil & Ogeh, 2020; Iroegbu et al., 2021). Moreover, exam malpractices, moral decadence, and the debasement of virtue have raised significant ethical concerns within academic institutions (Omebe & Omebe, 2015). Furthermore, academic corruption and the provision of poor academic services have further exacerbated the challenges faced by Nigerian university students (Ogunode, 2020; Chinyere & Chukwuma, 2017; Ige & Olowolabi, 2010; Ogunode, 2020; Ogunode, 2014). Multiple studies have been carried out to investigate the root cause of the issue (Ukata & Okeke, 2023; Amalu, et al., 2022; Jacob et al., 2022; Ovute & Ovute, 2021; Ekechukwu, 2021). However, the existing evidence reported various approaches to salvaging these menace, such as applying civic education and effective leadership (Obiukwu & Chukwu, 2019), home training and social studies education (Adeyemi & Onigiobi, 2020; Ayanwale, 2015), educational philosophy and management (Iloanya & Nzeako, 2017), and so on.

Considering this challenge, there is a pressing need to explore different philosophies and approaches that can guide students toward holistic development, addressing academic concerns and fostering moral development, ethical conduct, and social responsibility among students. One such approach worthy of examination is Confucius' educational philosophy, which has endured for centuries and continues to influence educational practices and moral values in various cultures. This study explores the implications of Confucius' educational philosophy for contemporary Nigerian university students amidst the prevailing challenges facing higher education in Nigeria. By examining Confucian principles within the Nigerian context, this research aims to shed light on how Confucian ethics can inform educational practices, promote moral development, and address the ethical challenges confronting Nigerian university students today. Through analysis of Confucius' educational philosophy and its implications, this study offers insights and recommendations for educational reforms and practices that align with Confucian values and principles, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the holistic development and well-being of Nigerian university students. By exploring the intersection of Confucian ethics and contemporary Nigerian higher education, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on ethical education and moral cultivation in a globalized world.

Literature Review

Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism are three well-known schools of thought that originated in China during the Zhou era (Guo, 2009). These schools of thought were highly regarded for their effectiveness in establishing, acquiring, and preserving order in society at the time they were developed. The three different schools of thought originated in Ancient China during the "Warring States Time" when small feudalistic kingdoms, sometimes known as fiefdoms, fought with one another for control of the land throughout this period (Bartle, 2016). Confucianism, which is not a religion (Gan & Zhou, 2013; Huang, 2006), although it

plays a religious role (Tang, 1995), is a socio-political theory that affects all aspects of social life and holds a significant influence on the education of people in feudal society (Vu, 2022). Confucianism had a strong influence, at times deepening to complete domination, over many aspects of Chinese society (Taylor & Arbuckle, 1995), influencing the thinking and behavior of over one billion East Asians (Tan, 2021), becoming values of relationship, business, leadership (Ratnapuri, 2020). It is customary practice to refer to followers of Confucius as “Rújiā 儒家” (Rosenlee, 2006), and Confucius's philosophical school of thoughts is often referred to as “rú jiā sī xiǎng 儒家思想” (Rosenlee 2006). This school of thought emphasizes the inherent virtue in all people (Koller, 1997; Huang, 2014). Confucius (kǒngqiū 孔丘 or kǒngzǐ 孔子), also known as Kongzi, occupied a prominent position within the philosophical, political, and educational traditions of ancient China. An educated guess is that he was born in or around 551 BC in the municipality of Qufu, located in Lu. Despite the financial challenges faced by his parents at the time of his birth, he managed to finance his education through bookkeeping and labor at a stable. He established a prosperous teaching profession in his thirties due to his profound understanding of the “six arts” (liù yì 六藝), encompassing ritual, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics. According to Confucius, the principal objective of education was to cultivate noblemen; furthermore, it ought to be regarded as a continuous journey toward individual development. Additionally, he believed that education ought to be considered a long-term endeavor. A resilient teacher, Confucius achieved unparalleled achievement in the field of education despite his personal hardships. Although Confucius worked as an educator, his essential character remains unchanged by the various ups and downs he encounters in life (Wang & Wang, 2008). Confucius recognized the difficulties involved in attaining the status of a flawless noble individual which he referred as Junzi “君子”. Junzi is an exemplar in moral and character education was mentioned not just by Confucius, but also Mencius and Xunzi, for their students to emulate and aspire to be attain (Lee, 2021). Therefore, he believed that there were some behaviors that, at the at least, may guide someone in the correct path of becoming junzi. These encompassed activities like as engaging with works of canonical literature, exhibiting proper conduct, demonstrating loyalty to one's family and friends, and exemplifying trustworthiness. His purpose was to rejuvenate China's social structures, such as the home, school, community, state, and kingdom. He brings such energy and excitement to both his academic pursuits and his teaching responsibilities. Yijie & Xin (2008) classify Confucianism from different perspectives: political Confucianism, orthodox Confucianism, and academic Confucianism. Political Confucianism often intersects with governance, political legitimacy, and social order discussions. Confucians often moralized politics and glorified political rule; they also politicized morality, making it an instrument of politics. Although some of the political philosophies in Confucianism limit dictatorship, however when politicians manipulate Confucianism, many problems arise (Yijie & Xin, 2008). Orthodox Confucianism represents a traditional and conservative interpretation of Confucian philosophy, adhering closely to the teachings of Confucius and his classical texts. Orthodox Confucianism upholds Confucius as the exemplary sage and venerates the Confucian canon as the authoritative source of wisdom and ethical guidance. This study will focus on academic Confucianism (Confucius's educational philosophy), which is about the learning and academic ideals of Confucius, and discuss Confucius' views on education, including his emphasis on moral character, self-improvement, and the cultivation of virtue.

Philosophical Assumption of Confucianism in Education

The history of Confucian philosophy is vast, including a wide range of depth and richness, along with a multitude of diverse and bountiful meanings. Although traditional Confucian philosophy was formed almost 2,000 years ago, certain components of it have not aged well because of historical limitations. However, its core ideas have stayed unchanged. The Chinese population possesses a substantial cultural heritage, with Confucian philosophy as a prominent aspect of this history. This work is abundant with enduring concepts crucial for advancing human society and remains relevant in contemporary times despite their age. Moreover, it is a crucial approach and topic for imparting essential life principles to youngsters within a moral and ethical framework. Education and public indoctrination are mainly dominated by Confucian concepts (Taylor & Arbuckle, 1995). Confucius's philosophy, the prevailing ideology of China's educational system, and the theory of talent nurturing serve the purpose of inculcating a sense of responsibility and active participation in society and the nation from an early age. According to Cheng and Wong (1996), the decline in morals and the quality of education is even less visible in more traditional Confucian systems such as those in Korea and Japan. Confucius's philosophy highly values the significance of education in both social and family life and places substantial emphasis on the education of young individuals. Although some elements of Confucius's philosophy could be politicized, the positive aspect of Confucius's philosophy can be seen, and Confucius's philosophy can offer significant resources for human society (Yijie & Xin, 2008). Below are his perspectives on many facets of the topic in education:

Need for Education: Confucius believed that education was essential for effective management and that individuals needed to improve their skills through education to govern others effectively. According to Confucius's philosophy, education is seen as a transformative process that enables individuals to become gentlemen (Vu, 2022). To be considered a gentleman, one must possess virtue, defined by actions that benefit others. A certain level of talent is also required (Brindley, 2010). Confucius viewed education as a means of self-transformation and personal fulfillment. In the Analects, “教诲不严，其何以及人: if you do not teach them, how can they understand?” stresses the idea that without proper education and guidance, people would lack the foundational knowledge and moral principles necessary for societal harmony and personal growth.

Education for all: Confucius's philosophy advocates for equal educational opportunities for all children, emphasizing that no child should be neglected or excluded by introducing the enduring concept of “有教无类” (education without discrimination) (Confucius, 1980), which had a profound impact on the field of education. The underlying principle is that individuals, regardless of their financial status, should have access to educational programs that meet a certain standard. A significant proportion of Confucius's student body comprises children and grandchildren of socioeconomically disadvantaged social classes. Confucius consistently maintained an undifferentiated teaching approach based on students' socioeconomic statuses, which concealed the values that form the basis of public education, ensuring that everyone in society, not just a select few, has the right and opportunity to seek higher education (Guo, 2009; Tan, 2017). The “no class disparity in education” principle has catalyzed a notable shift in traditional educational theories (Phuc et al, 2021), thus making education available to many people. Consequently, there has been an increase in the establishment of Confucius institutes worldwide. This was inspired by Confucius's philosophy of education for all and no discrimination in education. Confucius Scholarship and the Chinese Government Scholarship are among the many scholarships offered in China. According to Bahtilla and Xu (2021), these scholarships were created to enable international students of any race, culture, or religion to study in China.

Self-cultivation and self-reflection: Confucius stressed the importance of self-improvement via learning and introspection (Cheng, 2011). He believed that humans should continuously endeavor to enhance themselves, emphasizing the significance of self-reflection and self-consciousness (Nivison, 1996). The primary objective of engaging in self-cultivation is to enhance one's overall human excellence through practice of self-respect and self-care (修己以敬，修己以安 (Confucius, 1980). It does not only emphasizes the importance of personal moral development, but also advocates for a humble and respectful attitude towards others. Self-cultivation should imbibe the acquisition of knowledge on effective governance and maintaining social harmony, with the ultimate goal of promoting happiness among individuals and enhancing societal well-being. Confucian self-cultivation emphasizes autonomy, authentic moral motivation, and self-actualization through self-reflection, self-evaluation, and self-creation, requiring constant honest examination of one's thoughts and conduct (Tan, 2021).

Lifelong learning: One of the character of a person who is eager to learn is long-life learning (Dai et al., 2020). This includes learning from others' virtues (Lau, 1979, p. 88), eager to ask questions, explore new problems, and not feel ashamed to seek advice of those beneath his social status (Lau, 1979, p. 78). This educational philosophy encompasses social education, self-education, and education of others, in addition to formal education, with an emphasis on lifelong learning. Confucius philosophy assigns considerable value to the acquisition and maintenance of an education throughout one's lifetime. Confucianism particularly emphasizes the development of the drive and capability to engage in self-directed learning as a pathway to personal growth and self-improvement. According to Confucius philosophy, education is not a finite endeavor but rather a perpetual pursuit that should continue throughout one's life. According to the Analects, Confucius said “At the age of ten, I am resolute in my commitment to learn. At thirty, I am determined and decisive. At forty, I am free from confusion. At fifty I have clear understanding of my destiny. At sixty, I am obedient and compliant. At seventy, I pursue my heart without exceeding the rules. 吾十有五而志于学，三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命，六十而耳顺，七十而从心所欲不逾矩”. This clearly demonstrates that the sole recourse for individuals to continuously enhance and advance themselves throughout their entire lifespan is to actively participate in lifelong learning. Confucius philosophy not only prioritizes lifelong learning, but also aims to bridge the gap between different types of education by integrating formal and non-formal education, with the goal of motivating individuals to improve themselves.

Humanistic approach: Confucian educational philosophy embraces a humanistic perspective, emphasizing the intrinsic value of individuals. It posits that while all things have their origins, humans hold unparalleled value: “All things have their beginnings, but humans are paramount; 天生万物，唯人为贵” (Confucius, 1980). This humanistic view underscores the importance of nurturing human values, unlocking potential,

and cultivating individuality. Moreover, it prioritizes people over the state and monarch, as reflected in the saying, “The people hold the highest value, followed by the state; the monarch is of lesser significance 民为贵，社稷次之，君为轻”. This method prioritizes the worth of students and positions them at the core of the learning process. This fosters a sense of social responsibility among students in the contemporary day. Confucius recognized the inherent variations in people's intellectual capacities, and he advocated for tailoring education to students according to their individual levels of intelligence. He had a deep understanding of his disciples' aspirations, wisdom, and abilities, recognizing the unique characteristics of each individual, thus provided a diverse education by instructing students according to their individual aptitudes “因材施教”. According to Xiang (2023), humaneness can also be understood from a practical perspective and is associated with five virtues: respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness, diligence, and generosity.

Moral Education and Moral Cultivation: The core focus of Confucian education lies in the development of ethical qualities such as benevolence or humaneness. (ren 仁), righteousness or justice or integrity (yi 义), benefits or gain or profit (li 利), wisdom (zhi 智), and trustworthiness or faith (xin 信) (Ames & Rosemont, 1998; Brooks & Johnson, 2018). Confucius believed that genuine education focused on cultivating individuals who could make valuable contributions to society by practicing ethical behavior (Huang & Wang, 2019). In moral education, Confucius advocates for honesty and trustworthiness as an important code of conduct in life and interpersonal communication, a prerequisite for the existence of social interpersonal relationships, and also a basic moral criterion for people to be famous in society. Furthermore, honesty and trustworthiness are regarded as essential attributes for fostering social and interpersonal relationships. Confucius philosophy holds that sincerity is the fundamental quality that defines a person, encourages the behavior of treating other people with honesty, being honest and dedicated, adhering to credit, and attempting to develop trustworthiness as a virtue. Confucius philosophy believed that to deal with the relationship between moral integrity (义) and practical benefits or gains (利), was the top priority of moral education and moral cultivation. In the view of moral integrity and benefits, Confucius philosophy values integrity over benefits, emphasizing the importance of being just, sacrificing life for a just course, and acting bravely for justice “When you see a chance for profits, think about what is right. 见利思义”. In areas with a significant influence of Confucian values, adhering to principles such as “righteousness and profit” and “faith and righteousness” can contribute to establishing a favorable reputation (Wei et al., 2023).

Harmony: One of the fundamental tenets of Confucius philosophy is the belief that education should prioritize the cultivation of harmony. Confucius advocated for the adherence to natural law and the harmonious coexistence and progress of humans and all other entities during his tenure as a teacher. The concept of harmony in Confucianism serves a positive role in developing the coordination of interpersonal connections, social stability and development, ecological balance, and sustainable development. Confucius philosophy is in agreement with the golden rule which states, “Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you. 己所不欲，勿施于人” (Confucius, 1980). It is therefore imperative that we respect one another, act civilly toward one another, and consider one another's best interests. According to Confucius, there is co-existence, unity and harmony between heaven, earth and human “天人合一”，“天地与我 共生，万物与我为一” (Confucius, 1980). The emphasis on harmony can foster a positive learning environment and enhance students' overall well-being (Littlejohn & Twiss, 2017).

Benevolence and Love: The concept of benevolence in Confucius philosophy, which is written as the character “ren 仁”, supports loving others, showing kindness and compassion toward others, treating them with respect and understanding, while practicing self-control. According to Li & Xing (2006), the idea of containing oneself sets an emphasis on the notion of restraining oneself with civility and cultivating oneself with respect. It is based on the principles of connecting with individuals, expanding one's influence among individuals, showing love towards others, and providing charitable assistance to people. In the phrase “立人、达人、爱人、博施于民而能济众 establish individuals, reach out to them, love them, and generously be of benefit to the people by helping the masses.” “立人 emphasizes the importance of nurturing individuals to their fullest potential.” “达人” signifies the effort to reach out and connect with others. “爱人” underscores the necessity of genuine care and compassion for people. “博施于民而能济众” emphasizes the act of generously being beneficial to the broader community and uplifting society as a whole. In an educational context, this reflects a holistic approach where teachers and educational leaders are encouraged to nurture, connect with, care for, and benefit individuals and communities, aiming for the greater good of society. In Confucius's philosophy, it is highly advised to prioritize the cultivation of love towards one's family and friends (Xiao 孝) before extending that love to encompass others, such as one's country, society, and humanity.

Methods

This study employed a documentary review in collecting textual evidence from the Analects (论语 Lunyu), which is a compilation of the sayings and actions of Confucius and his disciples, authored posthumously with translated text from (Lau, 1979; Waley, 1938 Leys, 1997; Slingerland, 2003). The Analects encompass various subjects, including ethics, morality, politics, education, and personal behavior. It further consists of dialogues and anecdotes between Confucius and his disciples, exemplifying Confucius's teachings through practical instances and philosophical discussions, and holds significant importance in Chinese philosophy and Confucianism. Using this secondary data, the study analyzed Confucius's education philosophy and Confucian principles in line with the implications for contemporary Nigerian university students.

Findings

Table 1.

Extracts from Analects of Confucius and significance to education

	Extract from Analects			Significance
	pinyin	Chinese Character	English Translation	
i.	Xué ér shí xí zhī, bù yì yuè hū Chapter 1, Section 1.	学而时习之，不亦说乎？	Is it not a pleasure, having learned something, to try it out at due intervals?	Continuous learning and knowledge application
ii.	Bù huàn rén zhī bù jǐ zhī, huàn bù zhī rén yě Chapter 4, Section 15.	不患人之不己知，患不知人也。	I am not concerned that others do not know me; I seek to understand myself.	Self-awareness and introspection.
iii.	Zhī zhī wéi zhī zhī, bù zhī wéi bù zhī, shì zhī yě Chapter 2, Section 17.	知之为知之，不知为不知，是知也。	To know when you know, and to know when you do not know; that is wisdom.	Recognizing one's knowledge and limitations. Seeking knowledge earnestly.
iv.	Wēn gù ér zhī xīn, kě yǐ wéi shī yǐ. Chapter 2, Section 11.	温故而知新，可以为师矣。	If you review the old and know the new, you can be a teacher.	underscores the value of both traditional and innovative learning
v.	Jiào wú lèi Chapter 15, Section 38.	教无类。	Teaching without discrimination.	inclusive education
vi.	Sān rén xíng, bì yǒu wǒ shī yān Chapter 7, Section 22.	三人行，必有我师焉。	In a group of three, there is always someone I can learn from.	lifelong learning and the potential for knowledge exchange
vii.	Zé qí shàn zhě ér cóng zhī, qí bù shàn zhě ér gǎi zhī. Chapter 7, Section 33.	择其善者而从之，其不善者而改之。	I will learn their good qualities and follow them and avoid their bad qualities.	Discernment in choosing positive influences and avoiding negative ones.
viii.	Bù chǐ xià wèn. Chapter 15, Section 20.	不耻下问	Do not hesitate to ask questions from those who know.	Curiosity and active engagement in the learning process.
ix.	Wú rì sān xǐng wú shēn Chapter 1, Section 4.	吾日三省吾身。	I examine myself daily on three points.	Self-reflection and introspection in the learning journey
x.	Jǐ suǒ bù yù, wù shī yú rén Chapter 15, Section 24.	己所不欲，勿施于人	Do not do unto others what you do not want done to yourself.	Moral education and cultivation.
xi.	Rén ér wú xìn, bù zhī qí kě Chapter 4, Section 24.	人而无信，不知其可	If a person lacks trustworthiness, what can they achieve	Integrity and trustworthiness in one's character.

xii. Xué ér bù sī zé wǎng, sī ér bù xué zé dài Chapter 2, Section 15.	学而不思则罔, 思而不学则殆	Learning without thought is a waste; thought without learning is perilous	highlighting the interplay between acquiring knowledge and critically reflecting upon it
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Table 1 above highlights the key sayings from the Analects of Confucius related to education, along with their translations and significance. The significance of Confucius' educational philosophy includes continuous learning, self-awareness, and the integration of traditional and innovative approaches to knowledge. It promotes inclusive education, lifelong learning, and discernment in choosing positive influences. Confucian philosophy stresses moral education, integrity, and the interplay between acquiring knowledge and self-reflection.

Discussion

The extract from Confucius Analects, as shown in Table 1(i & vi), proves that Confucian educational philosophy is rooted in the belief that education should be a continuous process and should be a lifelong process of self-improvement and intellectual advancement, as acknowledged by Dai et al. (2020), where Confucius is not ashamed of exploring problems and ideas, learning from oneself and others regardless of social status (Lau, 1979). Nigerian university students must be curious and committed to learning outside the classroom, fostering practical application that enhances concept understanding and mastery.

In Table 1(ii & iii), Confucius's philosophy emphasizes self-reflection, values curiosity and active learning, acknowledges knowledge and limitations, and encourages students to ask questions, investigate new ideas, and actively participate. Engaging in new experiences and obtaining new knowledge can be a valuable opportunity for self-reflection and introspection, as it encourages intellectual curiosity and passion for learning that drives academic studies. This is in line with Confucius's practice of emphasizing the significance of self-reflection and self-consciousness (Cheng, 2011; Nivison, 1996) by enhancing one's overall excellence through self-respect and self-care (Confucius, 1980). Confucius advised people to own their intellectual limits and approach learning with humility and openness. This principle emphasizes the importance of seeking knowledge and being open to new ideas in Nigerian universities, as Nigerian students should be encouraged to regularly reflect on their academic, personal, and ethical advancement as self-awareness helps students grow and transform their lives. According to Confucius and Confucian education, as seen in Table 1(iv&v), education could improve people's lives and society, value both traditional and modern learning methods, and promote innovation and creativity. An inclusive education that blends traditional and modern methods can provide a dynamic learning environment that values diversity and innovation for Nigerian university students. Inclusive education also supports the idea of education for all and education without discrimination, as championed by Confucius's educational ideology (Guo, 2009; Tan, 2017).

From the Confucian idea in Table 1(vi & vii), Nigerian students should be encouraged to pursue lifelong learning and share ideas with peers, professors, and society, fostering intellectual growth and mutual assistance, as a growth mentality helps students discover new ideas and overcome academic obstacles. Confucius is of the idea that “If you want to raise, lift others up; if you want to reach a goal, help others reach their goal 己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人。” In other words, we raise by lifting others up, which underscores the idea of collective growth and mutual benefit in education. True education is about individual advancement and fostering a community of learners where everyone supports each other's growth and success. This can further promote a positive learning environment and enhance students' overall well-being (Littlejohn & Twiss, 2017). However, students' intellectual and moral development requires careful selection of positive and negative influences. Nigerian university students are advised to choose positive role models and influences that match their values and objectives and be aware of distractions and harmful influences that may impair their education.

Furthermore, Confucian education promotes morality and virtue (Table 1(x)), emphasizing moral education and the cultivation of integrity, compassion, and sincerity. Thus, Confucius believed that genuine education focused on cultivating individuals who could make valuable contributions to society by practicing ethical behavior (Huang & Wang, 2019; Ames & Rosemont, 1998; Brooks & Johnson, 2018). Nigerian university students are expected to act ethically and academically, building trust and respect, and fostering greater kindness towards both others and oneself. Students' behavior should be in line with moral integrity as the standard, and people should learn to seek benefits under the guidance of moral integrity and should not

disregard integrity simply for personal gains. Confucianism is a philosophical tradition that asserts that persons can be educated and shaped by moral principles, irrespective of the inherent moral essence of human beings.

Confucius emphasized the concept of integrity (Table 1(xi)), which is the sequel to his concept of honor and disgrace that is of great significance to the shaping of today's Nigerian university students to understand “不知荣辱乃不能成人，宁可穷而有志，不可富而失节 You cannot be an adult without knowing honor or disgrace, It is better to be poor and ambitious than rich and dishonorable”. Enhancing students' self-discipline can develop a deep regard for themselves and cultivate a strong sense of shame, self-esteem, and self-care in their conscience. This will enable them to deliberately perform their moral responsibilities and protect their dignity, honor, and humanity. Lastly, in Table 1(xii) as noted by Cheng (2011), Confucius stressed the importance of self-improvement via learning and introspection. Confucian educational philosophy emphasizes knowledge acquisition and critical reflection, which can change students' beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions. Critical thinking is essential for intellectual growth and ethical decision-making in academia and beyond.

Conclusion

From the existing literature, it was confirmed that Nigerian university students are facing mitigating issues such as student unrest, cultism, as reported by Ige (2014) and Igodo (2002). Moreover, students exhibit a lack of passion and involvement in the learning process, as indicated by their low academic performance and attitudes towards education (Birabil & Ogeh, 2020; Iroegbu et al., 2021). Furthermore, they engage in exam malpractices, moral decay, and the erosion of virtue (Omebe & Omebe, 2015). Academic corruption as highlighted by several studies (Ogunode, 2020; Chinyere & Chukwuma, 2017; Ige & Olowolabi, 2010; Ogunode, 2020; Ogunode, 2014). The mentioned challenges suggest a deficiency in moral teachings and a solid philosophical foundation that offers a clear path for educational delivery in Nigerian universities. This study revealed that there is a need of incorporating Confucian philosophy and principles into the educational system of Nigerian universities to instill strong ethical and moral values in students and institutions, ultimately benefiting both students and the entire contemporary society. This finding implies that Confucian educational philosophy emphasizes moral cultivation and social harmony, promoting values like benevolence, righteousness, and morality. Universities can reduce student unrest and cultism by fostering a culture of respect, tolerance, and non-violence. They can also improve attitudes towards learning by creating engaging and interactive educational experiences that encourage active engagement. Integrating ethics education into the curriculum and promoting ethical conduct among students can create a culture of academic integrity and honesty. Universities can combat academic corruption by promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership among faculty and administrators. They can enhance academic services by soliciting student feedback, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing reforms that improve the quality and accessibility of educational resources and support services. According to Woods & Lamond (2011), Confucian approach to self-regulation in management ethics focuses on virtues such as compassion, righteousness, wisdom, trustworthiness, ritual propriety, and filial piety. By incorporating these values, universities can create a culture of trust and integrity within the academic community.

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