

## Moral Education for International Students: Institutional Insight from China

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### ABSTRACT

Institutional research provides objective, systematic, and thorough research for university administrative offices to make educational plans and decisions. As an indispensable part of higher education in China, international students play an essential role in national diplomacy and cultural exchanges. As such, moral education has become an integral component for international students, which helps cultivate students with ideals and responsibilities, guides students worldwide to look at the world from the perspective of appreciation, mutual learning, and sharing, and promotes exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations. However, studies on international students' status of moral education are rather limited. Hence, a quantitative research method was adopted on 64 international students from a university in China to find out the current status of moral education among international students in China. The questionnaire survey showed that international students' moral education level is generally good. Furthermore, no significant differences were recorded in their moral education with different genders, length of study/stay in China, educational background, and Chinese language proficiency. However, in contrast, some students expressed problems such as shallow moral awareness, weak moral emotion and will, and poor moral behavior. It is therefore suggested that students raise their moral education awareness, higher education institutions strengthen the connotation construction of moral education, improve the structure of instructors for moral education, and guide students in establishing correct values in addition to excavating moral education factors in teaching materials.

**Keywords:** International students in China, Personal morality, Family virtues, Professional, Social morality

## **Introduction**

Institutional research focuses on students' moral education to provide objective, systematic, and thorough research for the university administrative office to make educational plans and decisions. The findings of such 'institutional research' can assist institutional leaders (in both academic and administrative domains) by informing their planning and decision-making (Zimmer, 1995). As is known, moral education plays a vital role in an individual's growth, which is also an essential part of ideological and political education in universities. In the report of the 18th CPC (Communist Party of China) National Congress, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed to take "fostering virtue through education" as the fundamental task of education, and classroom teaching in the new era should educate people in the whole process and in all directions (as cited in Li, 2020). China's Education Modernization 2035 also clearly puts forward eight concepts to promote the modernization of education, the first of which is to attach importance to morality; thereby, the role of moral education is getting increasingly significant (Wang, 2022). Similarly, moral education is regarded as an important topic in some Western countries, which has been believed to be a national teaching about students' spiritual and moral values (Nargiza, 2022) and also as much as in the policies of governments and international institutions (García-Moriyón et al., 2020). Hence, moral education plays a significant role in human beings in different countries.

In the backdrop of an increasingly open educational environment, the university, as a higher institution, is responsible for 'vigorously cultivate international talents who understand China's national conditions and culture, and to play a more active role in promoting the mutual bond between the peoples of all countries', as reported in Xi Jinping's reply to the international students at Peking University (2021). As an important group in spreading China's voice to the world, international students have been cultural ambassadors for cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries (Li et al., 2023). Thence, it has become one of the priority works of international education in China that attaching importance to the moral education work of international students, cultivating international students who can do a better job of telling China's stories and conveying China's voice, constantly strengthening the construction of international communication capacity. Given this situation, it is an unavoidable new task to carry out ideological and moral education for international students in China, which is also meaningful in international talent training (Wang, 2022; Yang, 2022). Further, more scholars have argued the necessity and importance for educational institutions to conduct systematic moral education (Wong, 2020; Sison & Redín, 2022). The related research can support teachers or researchers in understanding students' perceptions of the quality of institutional governance and administration, and the more institutional resources for teachers, the higher the productivity can be created in higher institutions (Cheng et al., 2022).

Therefore, carrying out moral education for international students is a requirement of relevant national policy documents. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China has promulgated many policies and regulations regarding the education and management of international students. Higher Education Quality Standards for International Students in China (Trial) (2018) mentions that higher education institutions should continuously improve international students' education quality. Administrative Measures for the Enrollment and Training of International Students in Higher Education Institutions (2017) proposes that institutions educate international students regarding Chinese laws and regulations, school discipline and rules, national conditions, and

excellent Chinese traditional culture and customs. Guiding Outline for the Ideological and Political Construction of Colleges and Universities (2020) points out that the comprehensive promotion of the ideological and political construction of the curriculum is a strategic measure to implement the fundamental task of cultivating people with morality. Because of this fact, helping students to shape a correct worldview and outlook on life and values and cultivate a good personality is the proper meaning of talent training, which is a new development in the education of international students in China (Ye, 2020).

However, with the expansion of international students, many problems of moral education appear in international students' teaching and management work. For example, moral education for international students is generally not highly valued and systematically studied (Li et al., 2023); most universities do not have a deep understanding of the situation of moral education of international students under the current education management level, which is not conducive to promoting the sustainable development of international students' education and also not conducive to promoting the internationalization of higher education in China (Li, 2022; Yang, 2022). As a result, administrative teachers encountered many difficulties caused by moral issues in international students' management work. Moreover, international students have a biased understanding of the Chinese social system due to the differences between China and their native country concerning social development, political and economic culture, and cultural environment, leading to low morale levels, weak moral will, personal value bias, inappropriate speech and behavior, and even disregarding the Chinese social morality and disturbing the public order. It is encouraging that carrying out moral education can help and guide international students to have a deeper understanding of China's system, culture, and development achievements, cultivate their correct moral character and cultural concepts, and form an objective, accurate, and comprehensive understanding of China's history and current national conditions.

As such, it is apparent that moral education is vital for international students, which is beneficial to help them establish a correct view and promote the development of comprehensive quality. Successful moral education can promote students' language and professional learning and enhance communication between China and foreign countries. Therefore, it is urgent to study moral education for international students and consciously guide them to cultivate a rational, peaceful, healthy attitude and build a bridge between humanistic care and psychological counseling. Thus, this study investigates the current status of moral education for international students, aiming to improve the moral education work of higher institutions, guide further and help them lay a scientific, ideological foundation, establish a correct value orientation, and provide references for teachers and researchers. The following research questions are made to guide the inquiry:

- (1) What is the current status of moral education for international students in China?
- (2) Are there differences in moral education for international students of different genders, studying time in China, educational background, and Chinese language proficiency?

## **Literature Review**

Moral education is a great concept that comprises many disciplines (Kristjánsson, 2021). Researchers generally believe moral education is formed between the 1770s and the

1780s (Wang, 2022), covering both broad and narrow moral education. In a broad sense, moral education refers to ideological, moral, political, legal, and psychological education. In a narrow sense, it specifically refers to moral education in school, which is about students' moral education and cultivation (Li et al., 2023). Frisancho and Delgado (2018) proposed that moral education should reflect peoples' social, cultural, political, and spiritual dilemmas and their communities in a diverse country such as Peru to improve understanding and respect among people from different sociocultural backgrounds. The classifications have revealed moral education's value and connotation and increased scholars' importance on moral education (Lee, 2022).

Regarding moral education for international students, many people think it is a special and sensitive topic because they consider it ideological and political; it is not like this. The moral education work of universities in China essentially lets students become talents with both ability and political integrity and overall development as the reference goal (Xi, 2017). While influenced by different times, nationalities, and cultural traditions, moral education has the characteristics of history, nationality, class characteristics, and inheritance. This study is about the restraint and norm of moral behavior, which is a kind of education to cultivate a sound personality, focusing on morality in the narrow sense, which is more accordant with the moral education for international students and is not easy to cause misunderstanding and cultural conflicts.

In recent years, moral education for international students has gradually attracted attention from academic circles. Scholars in Western and some European and American countries have done much theoretical and experimental research on ideological and moral education in schools, mainly focusing on character education (Li, 2022). García-Moriyón et al.'s (2020) research shows that moral education and growth are central themes within the educational proposal of Philosophy for Children, which is necessary to start from a more global approach to moral growth. Bazarova (2019) discussed the spiritual and moral education of students in a technical university and presented the positive implementation of spiritual and moral education of students.

In converse, research on moral education for international students in China is in the initial stage, with limited research depth and breadth (Li, 2021). The current research primarily focus on 1) the content of moral education, as suggested by Liu and Wu (2018) to not forcibly instilling political ideology and socialist core values in international students but respecting the moral values formed before coming to China, as well as strengthening the moral education to further improve international students' management, promote their learning motivation, improve their Chinese cultural identity and quality (Wang et al., 2021); 2) the objectives and pathways of moral education, for example, the Chinese international education goal is believed to determine that international students should be cultivated into all-around talents with academic success (Dai, 2015) and strengthening moral education for international students should be combined with classroom teaching and clarify the specific implementation path with the critical link to actively integrate moral education into cultural teaching (Wang, 2022); 3) the principles and methods for moral education, for instance, Wang and Wang (2019) stated that choosing the correct method and approach could assist to solve problems and promote the effective implementation of moral education.

The above research provides theoretical guidance for moral education for international students. Given that moral education has shown a common trend worldwide in the 21st century and plays an irreplaceable role in the overall development of people, social development, and national stability, more and more countries and regions have begun to

take the needs of society and human development in formulating the goals and contents of moral education into account (Li, 2021). Whereas the current research has apparent limitations, such as limited empirical studies (especially research on the status of moral education for international students), fewer researchers are studying it, and also limited research achievements.

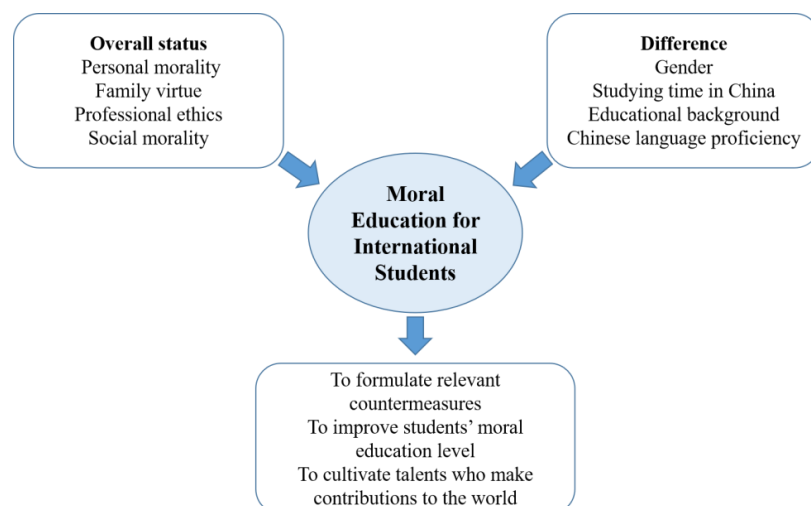
Therefore, given the limitations in the present research on moral education, this study attempts to find out international students' status of moral education, which will enrich the scope of research participants and make up for the shortcomings of the lack of empirical research, further formulate relevant countermeasures accordingly, improve students' moral education level, and cultivate talents who contribute to the world.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study applied a quantitative descriptive survey design to investigate moral education for international students from personal morality, family virtues, professional ethics, and social morality. A survey design assists researchers in answering descriptive questions, which are frequently used in social science research and especially in survey studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on a survey, the research questions in this study were set. The gender differences, studying time in China, educational background, and Chinese language proficiency, which may affect moral education, were surveyed to improve further research on moral education for international students in China, such as formulating relevant countermeasures, improving students' moral education level, and cultivating talents.

Given this matter, a questionnaire survey was developed to investigate international students' current moral education status and the differences in their moral education with genders, studying times, educational backgrounds, and Chinese language proficiency levels. A research model was drawn to help better understand the current moral education research (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Research Model**

### **Instrument**

The questionnaire employed in this study adapted to Li's (2021) survey on moral education for international students from Laos, comprised two parts with the participants' demographic information and a survey. The basic information was to understand the international student's gender, educational background, Chinese language proficiency level, and studying time in China. The survey on moral education was mainly based on four dimensions of personal morality (moral cognition, moral emotion, moral will, and moral behavior), family virtue, professional ethics, and social morality.

The questionnaire contained ten items: items 1 to 4 were to investigate personal morality, items 5 to 6 were about family virtues, items 7 to 8 were to know professional ethics, and items 9 to 10 were related to social ethics. A five Likert-type scale was used and rated as (1) not important at all, (2) unimportant, (3) general, (4) important, and (5) very important. The participants were expected to make adequate evaluations according to the brief statement of the relevant items.

The researchers tested the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The reliability analysis was carried out using Cronbach  $\alpha$ ; the coefficient value was  $0.736 > 0.7$ , which meant the questionnaire was reliable. The validity analysis was carried out using the KMO and Bartlett test, which was  $0.731 > 0.5$ , and the p-value of the Bartlett test was  $0.000 < 0.05$ , indicating the questionnaire had good validity.

### Participants

According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), the selection of research participants should be emphasized on the scope, sample size, and sampling strategy. A large population of international students in China is distributed in different universities, and they can be distinguished from some common characteristics such as educational background and Chinese language proficiency. A proportional sampling method was used to get the number of samples for the questionnaire survey. There are a total of 380 international students at X University, China. About 15% of them were willing to answer the questionnaire. According to the sampling formula, about 57 students wished to know their moral education status. Taking the 10% to 15% dropout rate and sampling error into account, the sample size of the questionnaire was expanded to 66. Finally, 63 international students from X University, China, were randomly selected as the representatives to participate in this research, with different genders, studying time in China, educational background, and HSK (a Chinese language proficiency test) levels. The specific information is as in Table 1.

Table 1: Basic Information about International Students

Gender	Male	34	54.0%
	Female	29	46.0%
Duration in China	Less than 1 year	13	20.7%
	2 to 3 years	29	46.0%
	3 to 4 years	15	23.8%
	More than 5 years	6	9.5%
Educational background	Undergraduate	56	88.9%
	Postgraduate	7	11.1%



	HSK-1	2	3.2%
	HSK-2	3	4.8%
HSK level	HSK-3	20	31.7%
	HSK-4	38	58.7%
	HSK-6	1	1.6%

There were 34 male students and 29 female students participating in this study. 50 (79.3%) international students studied in China for over two years, and 13 (20.7%) were less than one year old. The participants were mainly undergraduates, accounting for 88.9%. 58 (92%) students had a Chinese language proficiency level above HSK-3 and primarily concentrated in HSK-3 and HSK-4.

Furthermore, WJX (a Chinese data collection instrument) was used to issue the questionnaire. The data recorded were analyzed statistically with SPSS26.0 through models of descriptive statistics, independent sample T-test, and one-way analysis of variance.

## Results and Discussion

### Overall Status of Moral Education for International Students

Descriptive statistics were obtained to understand the fundamental status of moral education for international students and to test the students' moral status in personal morality, family virtue, professional ethics, and social morality. Moral cognition, emotion, will, and behavior comprised personal morality were analyzed.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Moral Education for International Students

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal morality	Moral cognition					
	Moral emotion					
	Moral will					
	Moral behavior					
Family virtue	Respecting parents					
	Helping family members					
Professional ethics	Completing assignments or tasks on time					
	The importance of honesty					
Social morality	Saying thanks to whom providing help					
	Giving up a seat to others on the bus					

The average values of international students' personal morality, family virtue, professional ethics, and social morality are 4.02, 4.44, 4.67, and 4.77, respectively. From the perspective of personal morality, the average value is 4.02, indicating that students have demonstrated the importance of moral cultivation in all aspects of their lives. Concerning family virtues, the mean value is 4.44, which means students have a strong sense of family virtues. Regarding professional ethics, the mean value of 4.67 states that students can complete the homework or tasks assigned by teachers earnestly and believe that honesty is more important in future work. Moreover, the average value of social morality is 4.77, demonstrating that students often thank those who assist them. Besides, they often give up their seats to the elderly, the sick, the disabled, and pregnant women on the bus. Therefore, the status of moral education for international students is generally in a good state, consistent with Li's (2021) study on 80 international students from Laos, which showed that most international students have good moral education.

From the above analysis, we can see that international students' moral education could be affected by individual, family, college, and societal factors, which indicates that they should endeavor to enhance their moral education. Nevertheless, the mean value of personal morality is the minimum among the four values, reflecting that international students' moral character needs to be improved in some sense. The specific status of moral education is presented in four sections below.

### Personal Morality

Personal morality is a person's most basic moral character, which can be deeply revealed from a person's moral cognition, emotion, will, and behavior in daily life.

Table 3: Statistics of Personal Morality

	Moral cognition		Moral emotions		Moral will		Moral behavior	
Scale	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	27	42.9	3	4.8	1	1.6	0	0
2	2	3.2	4	6.3	6	9.5	1	1.6
3	4	6.3	6	9.5	10	15.9	1	1.6
4	9	14.3	19	30.2	12	19.0	2	3.2
5	21	33.3	31	49.2	34	54.0	59	93.6

For moral cognition, 47.6% of the students held that moral character was important to their development. Conversely, 52.4% of the students believed that character was unimportant or general to a person, indicating insufficient cognition of moral character. Given such matters, their parents and educational institutions must teach them rich moral knowledge to help them better grow up and integrate into society.

Regarding moral emotion, 79.4% of them were disgusted and very annoyed by uncivilized behavior, which meant they had a strong moral consciousness. In comparison, 20.6% ignored uncivilized behaviors, showing poor moral awareness. Hence, more importance should be attached to improving international students' awareness by conducting different activities.

As for the moral will, 73% thought they could always bravely face difficulties and setbacks in their study and life. It showed they had a strong moral will and could resist frustration. Besides, 15.9% of the students indicated their ability to cope with setbacks was general. In comparison, 10.1% stated they would never or rarely choose to face difficulties and frustration due to their weak will. As such, it is clear that some



international students are afraid to encounter trouble, and some even escape from difficulties. Hence, education in moral will should be strengthened to enhance students' willpower.

For moral behavior, 96.8% said they rarely or never smoked or littered in public, which showed that most had good moral awareness and behavior. Another 3.2% of them behaved uncivilized in public, indicating their moral behavior was not sound. Therefore, during the education process, a lifelong education system should be built to guide international students in developing correct values, which should be accomplished by different roles, such as teachers, families, and educational institutions.

In summary, it was found that some international students did not have profound moral knowledge and rich moral emotions but had weak moral will and passive moral behavior, lacking specific moral cognitive abilities and moral judgment abilities. A similar result is found by Wang (2021) that different living customs, cognition, and value orientation lead to a lack of awareness of moral quality, mainly reflected in poor self-discipline, disorganized behavior, poor learning style, easy satisfaction, lack of learning initiative, and even integrity problems. Given this fact, international students should be guided to have correct moral cognition, rational moral emotion, strong moral will, and good moral behavior. Hence, the students need to pay attention to the development of morality in their growth and development because there are certain defects in their thought and behavior, especially in moral cognition.

### **Family Virtues**

To better understand the status of international students' family virtues, the survey and statistics were conducted on respecting parents and helping family members.

Table 4: Statistics of Family Virtues

Scale	Respecting parents		Helping family members	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	2	3.2	0	0
2	1	1.6	2	3.2
3	5	7.9	4	6.3
4	20	31.7	16	25.4
5	35	55.6	41	65.1

Regarding family virtue, 87.3% of the students thought they were doing good or very good in respecting parents, 7.9% thought they were doing generally, and another 4.8% thought they did poor or very bad. Conversely, 90.5% of them often or had always helped their families, and 9.5% rarely helped their families.

It was apparent that most students did well in family virtues; they respected their parents and would do some assistance to the family. However, there were still a few numbers of students who showed disrespect to their fathers and mothers, and some of them seldom aided their families, indicating the poor moral literacy of some international students and also their deficiency of family virtues.

As is known, the family is a basic unit of society and the first school for each person. Hence, family virtue plays a vital role in family construction, which affects every family member's healthy development. As such, students need to be correctly educated in knowledge and moral education to know more about family virtues to do better in families and make their families more harmonious. Moreover, the principal responsible

unit for family virtue education should be family owing to its role in lifelong education; the educational institutions also significantly influence students' virtue building because students spend much time receiving education from them.

### **Professional Ethics**

Professional ethics were surveyed on completing assignments on time and the importance of honesty.

Table 5: Statistics of Professional Ethics

Scale	Completing assignments on time		Importance of honesty	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0
3	8	12.7	1	1.6
4	14	22.2	10	15.9
5	41	65.1	52	82.5

Regarding professional ethics, completing assignments on time is the student's responsibility, where 87.3% believed that they would often or had always completed assignments arranged by the teacher within the prescribed time. However, 12.7% showed they sometimes could not complete the assignments or tasks, which has been found in their studying on majors and minors, indicating they still lacked professional ethics. Because of this problem, teachers in higher educational institutions can adopt some measures to urge students to submit their work on time, such as sending reminders, checking their submissions, and rewarding good assignments.

Secondly, honesty, the most crucial quality in professional ethics, was believed important or very important in work by 98.4% of the students. Only a few of them held general ideas on it. It can be seen that honesty is considered very important in future work and an essential criterion for getting along with people. In the current study, most international students thought honesty was critical. At the same time, one student still believed honesty played an ordinary role in professional ethics. Hence, it is essential to cultivate students with integrity education, and educational institutions have to accomplish this task.

### **Social Morality**

Social morality was discussed by saying thanks to those providing help and giving up a seat to others on the bus.

Table 6: Statistics of Social Morality

Scale	Saying thanks to those who provide help		Giving up a seat on the bus	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	0	0	1	1.6
2	0	0	2	3.2
3	1	1.6	1	1.6
4	7	11.1	8	12.7
5	55	87.3	51	81.0

As for social morality, 98.4% of students would often thank those who helped them, revealing that most international students maintained the principles of politeness in

interpersonal social relationships and established good interpersonal relationships and a harmonious atmosphere between people. Only a few students thought it did not matter to appreciate people who provided help for them, revealing their indifference to others.

On the other hand, 93.7% of students often or always took the initiative to give seats to the old, weak, sick, and disabled on the bus. Nevertheless, there were still 6.3% of the students who may or rarely took the initiative to give up their seats to those needed, indicating that they lacked benevolent love and sympathy, and the social morality awareness was relatively weak. As such, it indicates that international students' social morality education should be strengthened further, which can be conducted by teachers, parents, and social communities.

The above analysis shows that most international students have good personal moral performance, with correct moral cognition, rational moral emotion, strong moral will, and good moral behavior. At home, they respect their parents, often help their parents with things, and pay attention to family virtues. In their studies, they can earnestly complete the tasks and affirm the importance of honesty in professional ethics. In society, they are willing to be a polite and virtuous person.

Besides, it was apparent that various factors affected international students' moral education, such as family, society, higher educational institutions, and individuals. All of these elements are jointly devoted to students' moral development. Therefore, moral education can not be carried out in isolation but in mutual efforts.

As a result, some defects need to be perfected, and teachers should let international students realize the importance of moral education in their personal growth and development, as Zheng (2018) confirmed. Meanwhile, it is also found that organizing students to participate in meaningful social practice activities in line with the purpose of ideological education can bring students together with the same identity and affect their ideological understanding and behavioral norms (Zheng, 2020). Hence, it is vital to make international students develop better and healthier through comprehensive education and cultivate talents who come to China with high cultural literacy.

### **Differences in Moral Education for International Students**

The factors of gender, studying time in China, educational background, and Chinese language proficiency level, which may affect moral education for international students, were analyzed respectively to find out the relationship between them and moral education.

#### ***Gender***

An independent sample T-test was used to analyze the differences in the current status of moral education for international students of different genders to understand whether there was gender discrimination or inequality between male and female students in the process of receiving moral education.

Table 7: Results of Different Genders

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Male	35	4.403	.413	.000	.994
Female	28	4.357	.414		

From Table 7, it can be seen that there is no significant difference ( $p = 0.994 > 0.05$ ) in the current status of moral education for international students of different genders. This result is consistent with the findings of Li (2021), who demonstrated that no significant difference was found in moral education on the gender factor among international students. As such, the moral education status of international students has nothing to do with gender, revealing that in the process of receiving moral education, there is also no gender discrimination or gender inequality between male students and their female peers, which also shows that teachers have the concept of treating students equally in teaching, which significantly shows the professional philosophy of teachers in the new era.

### ***Length of Study Time in China***

A one-way analysis of variance was applied to analyze the differences and better understand whether students have various moral quality problems due to studying time in China.

Table 8: Results of Length of Study Time

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Less than 1 year	13	4.431	.4715	1.071	.368
2 to 3 years	29	4.286	.4051		
3 to 4 years	15	4.467	.3904		
More than 5 years	6	4.533	.3327		
Total	63	4.383	.4113		

The one-way analysis of variance of the current status of the moral education for international students in different studying times shows the p-value is  $0.240 > 0.05$ , indicating no significant difference is recorded in different periods of studying time in China. This result is also proved by Li (2021), who found that studying time did not affect international students' moral education. Given this matter, whether studying time in China is short or long, it plays a small role in international students' moral education. On the other hand, studying time in China does not affect international students' moral education status. Although this result indicates that international students' moral education is relatively less influenced in China, teachers should also educate them on morality and wisdom to improve their moral education level because moral development is a process of social and psychological development that begins at a very early age and continues throughout life (Turiel, 1998).

### ***Educational Background***

Furthermore, to clearly understand whether students have various moral quality problems because of their educational levels, an independent sample T-test was used to analyze their differences with different educational backgrounds.

Table 9: Results of Different Educational Backgrounds

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Undergraduate	56	4.368	.421	1.703	.197
Postgraduate	7	4.500	.316		

Table 9 reflects the current status of moral education of international students with different educational backgrounds. The p-value is  $0.197 > 0.05$ , meaning no significant difference exists between educational backgrounds. A similar result was found in Li's (2021) research that no statistical significance was found in international students' educational backgrounds. It also reveals that moral education for international students has little to do with the level of education, no matter postgraduates or undergraduates. However, the research results show that students' moral development continues during their early years at university; thereby, moral education should be an important aspect of university life (Silay, 2016). Because of this, higher educational institutions should attach more importance to international students' moral education.

### **HSK Level**

HSK is a test to prove an international student's Chinese language proficiency level. To further understand whether students have various moral quality problems due to the level of HSK, a one-way analysis of variance was applied to analyze the differences in the current status of moral education for international students with different HSK levels.

Table 10: Results of Different HSK Levels

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
HSK-1	2	4.950	.070	2.511	.051
HSK-2	3	4.600	.173		
HSK-3	20	4.245	.354		
HSK-4	37	4.392	.424		
HSK-6	1	5.000	.000		
Total	63	4.383	.411		

The p-value of the one-way analysis of variance of international students with different HSK levels is  $0.051 > 0.05$ , indicating no significant difference in the status of moral education for international students with different HSK levels. Because of this matter, the moral education status of international students is not affected by the students' HSK levels, indicating that HSK levels do not affect the moral education of international students either. On the other hand, the level of Chinese proficiency is only a test of language ability, which does not have a specific impact on the moral education of international students. A high academic grade does not mean students' moral literacy is also high, and a low grade does not mean that the students' moral literacy is low either.

### **Implications**

The study of moral history informs us that it concerns society, teachers, and parents, and there is no exclusive role to any of these (Kumari & Kachoor, 2018). Moral education is going through the whole process of education. It is a fundamental task to foster virtue through education so that international students' education should be included in moral education because they are an organic component of higher educational institutions. As is found previously, moral education for international students, which refers to different aspects, is a long-term work. Thereby, it is implied to be strengthened through various methods.

A moral education community composed of society, family, university, and individuals for international students in China should be built. Universities should formulate systematic and reasonable moral education policies and construct campus moral education and cultural environments to strengthen the moral system for students. The family should also pay attention to students' moral cultivation because parents play a critical role in their learning and moral cultivation process. Besides, students should constantly improve their moral education ability, taking the initiative to strengthen self-moral education and actively accept moral education. Society should also assist in enhancing moral education for students. Moreover, universities can cooperate with the government and social units to carry out moral education practice activities and organize international students to participate in various social activities such as China's national conditions experience activities, social public welfare activities, and professional practice.

It should be valued for achieving long-term dynamic moral education according to students' different training stages. Attention should be paid to moral education for international students from the beginning of their enrollment, and timely psychological construction and humanistic care should also be given. Then, it is necessary to conduct moral education in their whole studying process and daily management and carry out social practice, volunteer service, and group visits combined with Chinese traditional festivals and national security education. Lastly, social ethics education and professional ethics education in graduation should be conducted to cultivate their moral character of abiding by social order and maintaining the public environment and also guide them to transform the moral theory knowledge into moral practice activities.

It is urgent to combine kinds of education to improve international students' moral education effect comprehensively. As essential members of Chinese higher educational institutions, international students' cognition and compliance with the laws will directly affect the harmony and stability of universities and society; thereby, strengthening legal education for international students is an indispensable part of moral education. Besides, mental health education is integral to moral education for international students in China. Due to the cultural shock, international students will inevitably encounter psychological problems after coming to China. Universities must carry out mental health education, such as psychological and frustration education, to cultivate their optimistic psychological attitude and sound personality characteristics. Therefore, it is urgent and necessary to strengthen moral education from different aspects to promote students' healthy and stable development.

## **Recommendations**

Moral education for international students is a complex and arduous task, requiring not only education from universities and families but also operational improvement of students. Hence, related support could be arranged, and the weight of teaching resources could be modified in the institutional planning.

The first is to raise international students' awareness of moral education. The survey result showed that some international students did not have a profound moral understanding, rich moral emotion, firm moral will, and active moral behavior, and also lacked specific moral cognition abilities and moral judgment abilities. Therefore, the instructors should first guide them to have correct personal morality and, in the meantime, let them realize the importance of moral education in their personal growth and development. This is because the individuals who wish to be taught about morality



occupy a significant position. Moral culture publicity and moral practice experience can strengthen their personal experience; societies, social welfare activities, or social practices can enhance their sense of moral responsibility; discussing what kind of influence people who ignore the development of their moral character will influence themselves, their family, career, and society. By conducting such activities, students can further increase their moral awareness.

Next, it is to guide students in establishing correct values. Some students have problems such as incorrect attitude, not being honest enough, not noble enough, and impolite conduct, which may affect their future development if they do not carry out moral education, timely operational guidance, and correction. As such, in guiding international students, the instructors should constantly carry forward positive energy, effectively help them find the moral benchmark, improve moral sentiment, and assist them in establishing a correct outlook on life, world outlook, and values.

Then, it is to strengthen the connotation construction of moral education effectively. In the cultivation of international students' moral quality, enriching the content of moral education and broadening the channels can effectively improve their self-discipline, reduce the incidence of all kinds of emergencies, and form a synergistic effect with professional education, enhance the joint force of education, to effectively improve the quality of talent training and enhance the connotation of construction of the university.

The fourth is to deeply excavate the moral education factors in the teaching materials and consciously infiltrate moral education knowledge into the classroom to cultivate students into talents with overall development. As teaching materials are suitable for all students, they can learn something from them as long as they use them.

Another is to strengthen the construction of teachers for moral education. Teachers' knowledge of cross-cultural and moral education should be strengthened in moral education for international students to better provide them with rich experience in teaching students. In addition, the scale of Chinese language teachers with high cultural quality should be expanded, establishing professional international teacher teams.

## **Conclusions**

It is concluded that moral education for most international students is sound. In contrast, some students perform poorly in personal moral cognition, emotion, will, and behavior, mainly reflected in shallow moral consciousness, weak moral emotion, and poor moral behavior. Besides, no significant differences are recorded in the current status of their moral education with different genders, studying time in China, educational backgrounds, and Chinese language proficiency levels. Hence, it is apparent that gender, duration of study time in China, educational background, and HSK level do not greatly impact international students' moral education status.

It should be mentioned that limited experimental research on moral education for international students in China is recorded in the current literature, which makes the results of this study difficult to compare with the previous studies. Given more and more moral education problems produced by international students in China, such as skipping classes, skipping assignments, dishonesty, bad faith, and disrespect with teachers, this study can reflect international students' true beliefs and their actual status of moral education, which will not only provide references for international education of higher educational institutions but also help administrative managers to formulate corresponding measures and assist teachers to adjust their teaching methods. Besides,

this study will also guide international students to improve their moral education level, helping them discover their moral problems and further enhance their self-cultivation. Moreover, it will help international students' families understand the current situation of their family education and thus provide references for improving family virtue education. Therefore, this study will not only enrich the scope of research participants but also make up for the shortcomings of the lack of empirical research, which will provide references for further research.

It is acknowledged that these results were from a relatively small sample of participants in one university and cannot be generalized to the general population of international students in China in some sense. Nevertheless, several previous studies with larger samples have yielded similar results on international students' moral education status. For instance, Li (2021) and Zheng (2020) obtained similar research results in their studies. As more international students come to China for further study, moral education has become essential to college education, requiring more and more importance. Hence, more participants from different universities in China can be organized to better participate in future studies to reflect international students' situations for moral education, which may provide much more comprehensive guidance for college educators in management work references for researchers.

To summarise, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasizes fostering virtues through education, so all universities should stay engaged in this fundamental task. As a form of special education in higher education, international students' educational content is not related to politics, the education methods are exotic, and the educated are different; such education requires moral education to be generally accepted and abided by the social and moral code of conduct in education. Further, the population of international students in China is large, and high-quality education and teaching are required to help them develop holistically with strong cultural literacy.

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