

# **Understanding Moral Dilemmas And Contradictions In Higher Education**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The review looked at the diverse and complex contradictions and moral dilemmas that students and teachers encounter in the diverse society. By performing the search in the databases, 8 studies were identified as relevant. It was found that students struggled with issues of faith and tolerance, competing paradigms, and personal/self/collective dilemma. Some of the challenges that educators grappled with included balancing on academic standards and diversity, handling of contentious issues, culture vs policies, and representational crisis. Interventions that were made included; encouraging dialogue, cultural competence training, use of diversity curriculum, and giving equal opportunities. Implications of present study indicate that professional development, ethics, and ways of learning that allow free flow of ideas must be encouraged. Solutions proposed include developing guidelines for ethical conduct within the academic community, integrating ethics into a curriculum and specific courses, and offering education in ethical decision making. Therefore, this review offers the needed comprehension of the hurdles of diversity and integrity promotion in HE and will be informative for future practice and policy developments.

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of diversity in higher education institutions is conceptualized as a rather multifaceted concept that encompasses a wide variety of aspects and characteristics. Even though it has been acknowledged that it is possible and desirable to create diverse environments in higher education institutions, the process is often labeled as problematic and deserves further discussion of the moral stakes and contradictions that its implementation entails (Chun & Evans, 2023). This perspective implies that each university could be different, but there are certain similarities and trends in the general higher education environment. The general research issue that my study is designed to solve is the complex moral dilemmas that learners and teachers face in diversity in a college learning environment. In particular, I aim at identifying and analyzing the contradictions and moral dilemmas associated with the principles of diversity at the cost of academic integrity. The primary objective of my project was to perform a systematic review of the literature pertaining to moral dilemmas and contradictions in higher education. With this in mind, I sought to reveal the intricate experiences of ethical dilemmas and their resolutions within academia. I aim to contribute to the ongoing and progressive dialogue in academia by integrating the knowledge gathered from the sources and contribute towards the continued development of research, educational practices, and guides as well as the formulation of inclusive policies and practices.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Higher education is experiencing significant transformations due to new technologies, globalization, and increased mobility (Van der Zwaan, 2017). These changes are reshaping our thinking, expectations from educational systems, and requirements for new-generation professionals. Therefore, higher learning institutions encounter significant challenges, especially in cases of moral reasoning difficulties and dilemmas within higher learning institutions (Arar & Saiti, 2022).

### **Moral Dilemmas in Higher Learning Institution**

Ethical issues are evident when learners or faculty members are in a dilemma and are stuck between two or more moral theories. Such decisions usually occur where there are conflicts of ethical values, concerning the self or others . Such dilemmas may arise in collaborative work, communication with people with different personalities, choosing a curriculum, content, and practices in the classroom (Zubiri-Esnaola et al. , 2020). Some of the most acknowledged moral dilemmas in postsecondary education are the academic misconduct situations such as cheating, plagiarism, or data manipulation. The challenges faced by the students include: conflict between academic achievement and academic integrity and the one faced by faculty and administrators which is to address cheating and prevent it at the same time without infringing on the students' rights (Prisacariu & Shah., 2016). The ethical issues in research are not without challenges concerning the treatment of participants, data handling as well as the reporting of the findings.

Moral issues and paradoxes should be addressed for several reasons:

1. Maintaining high personal and professional standards to uphold institutional reputation
2. Preserving the integrity of academic relationships and achievements
3. Ensuring learning fairness and appropriateness
4. Developing ethical consciousness and accountability
5. Fostering the ability to make moral judgments and contribute to societal advancement

## Diversity in Higher Education

Diversity in higher education encompasses the characteristics distinguishing students, faculty, and staff in terms of demographics, culture, and experience (Tamunomiebi & Ehior, 2019). It extends beyond physical aspects to include viewpoints, opinions, ethics, and disabilities. Cultural sensitivity involves acknowledging and appreciating societal differences to ensure equal opportunities, understanding, and respect. The promise of diversity in colleges and universities recognizes changing student enrollment characteristics and the need for education enriched by various cultural backgrounds. Diversity manifests in collaborative work, peer relations, teaching and learning materials, and approaches to managing opportunities and complexities found in schools (Leask & Carroll, 2011).

Key dimensions of diversity in higher education include:

1. **Demographic and Cultural Diversity:** This encompasses race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, class, and other social identities. Cultural understanding is promoted through activities like Cultural Weeks and initiatives fostering cultural competence and equality (Civitillo et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2018).
2. **Academic Program Diversity:** This includes the variety of courses, curricula, and educational models offered. It covers fields of study, degree programs, specializations, and interdisciplinary offerings that meet students' interests and career aspirations (Zerwic et al., 2018).
3. **Structural Diversity:** This relates to the representation of diverse individuals in leadership, governance, and administrative positions within the institution. It involves promoting ethnically diverse people to strategic roles and implementing diversity and equity organizational strategies (Bowman, 2012; Brown, 2004).

Cultural diversity promotes learning in the sense that it fosters problem-solving and creativity through the observation of various experiences and attitudes. It helps in identity development, as well as cognitive advancement as people interact with diverse people, which in turn enhances their observation of the self and others.

## **Contradictions in Higher Education**

In the context of the present work, contradictions in higher education are defined as major antitheses or dissimilarities between system components that hamper the system's performance and objective accomplishment (Dzelzkalēja et al., 2018). These paradoxes include:

1. Lack of congruence between the educational programs offered in the institutions and the needs of employers.
2. Theoretical learning as opposed to practical wisdom or practical training.
3. Transmission of knowledge approaches versus multiple learners' ways.
4. Therefore, achieving an optimal ratio of educational quality and accessibility is the main idea.
5. Globalization of education versus cultural peculiarities of the region

These contradictions pose difficulties for the higher education institutions as they try to fulfill students' needs and provide an adequate response to all the requirements.

## **Interplay between Moral Dilemmas, Diversity, and Contradictions**

The combination of moral issues, diversity, and contradictions plays a major role in forming the educational processes and instituting in higher education. The attempts to diversity generally result in the creation of moral dilemmas because people with different cultural, ideological, and ethical backgrounds are involved. For example, students from different cultures working in groups are likely to encounter ethical issues in conflict resolution of the conflicting values while looking for a compromise (Noonan, 2013). Diversity practices can also expand on existing tensions in the educational system. As such, although these efforts help to spread information and knowledge about institutional designs that give rise to social injustice and marginalization, they might also generate new forms of conflict. For instance, efforts to enhance the diversity at the faculty level may be thwarted by existing administrative cultures, drawing out political conflicts that belie change processes (Burke et al., 2016).

To manage these relations, HEIs need to expand mere diversity practices. It should provide a climate in which students with varied experiences can fully participate and learn together (Catacutan & de Guzman, 2015). This entails the encouragement of equality, participation, and integration on the other hand negation of discrimination and marginalization.

Teachers need to recognize and explain moral concerns related to diversity in education and come up with culturally sensitive and ethically sound learning environments (Chambers & Ransom, 2015). Thus, knowing the relationships between an individual, culture, and social relations is crucial to grasp how diversity impacts identity and learning (Clark, 2012).

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

Thus, my study is planned to cover this gap by using a systematic literature review that would conduct a critical evaluation of the current literature on moral tension and paradox of diversity in higher learning institutions. In this way, the research intends to add to the knowledge on ethical issues in creation of inclusive spaces and provide suggestions to policies and practices among the higher learning institutions. There is also the reason why this literature review is crucial: First, it offers the current literature a more contemporary approach in an effort to discuss the moral issues that the stakeholders of the higher education institutions encounter in matters of diversity. Second, as more educational institutions embrace the idea of creating inclusive settings, an analysis of such moral concerns becomes the relevant topic for further practice development. This literature review would help in accumulating knowledge, identifying similarities, disparities, and missed areas within the literature.

This literature review seeks to provide the critical analysis of the available literature on moral dilemmas and contradictions in various perspectives in higher learning institutions. In this light, the review aims at identifying patterns, differences, and missed areas in the existing literature based on both students' and teachers' accounts. The overarching goal is to promote a synthesis for explaining knowledge and for shaping policies and practices for inclusion.

**RQ1:** What moral dilemmas/contradictions are students facing in dealing with diversity within higher education?

**RQ2:** How do teachers experience moral dilemmas/contradiction in promoting diversity within the educational landscape?

**RQ3:** How do students and educators address contradictions and moral dilemmas related to diversity in academic settings, and what impact do these responses have on the overall learning environment?

## METHOD

This literature review was built on guidelines provided in methodological manuals and the literature on systematic reviews, and therefore is methodologically sound in terms of best practice. Moreover, the methodology follows the systematic review guidelines as defined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. This approach offers a systematized approach for conducting the review, thus improving credibility, replicability and quality of the activity.

### Search Strategy

The search strategy was broad and iterative as described in the SPIDER method to enhance the likelihood of identifying all relevant articles. This type of method entails the identification of certain parameters such as Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, and Research Type to guide and enhance the search process. With the help of this approach, the review tried to conduct the least bias and identify all the relevant studies.

- **Sample (population):** The target population for this review is the population in the higher education settings including students and teachers.
- **Phenomenon of Interest:** In this review, the author's main interest is the contradictions and moral dilemmas regarding diversity in higher learning institutions. Diversity can be defined along a number of diversity dimensions, although they are not exhaustive: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and culture. The review discusses the nature of diversity work as multifaceted within higher education institutions highlighting some of the challenges, tensions as well as ethical dilemmas that arise.
- **Design (Study Types):** In order to ensure the comprehensiveness of the findings of this review, the studies included in the review are only empirical studies. Such an approach makes it possible to integrate various approaches and perspectives in establishing a holistic understanding of moral dilemmas and paradoxes in higher learning institutions. Besides, different types of research methods that include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods are used to have a rich understanding of the phenomenon.



- Evaluation (Outcomes): Therefore, the purpose of this review is to assess and consolidate knowledge about moral dilemmas and paradoxes of diversity in higher education settings. Outcomes that should be achieved include the ability to compare and contrast common themes, patterns and disparities that are evident in the literature. As a result, the review sought to synthesize the available evidence concerning the factors that may be seen to influence moral decision making and ethical dilemmas in various forms of learning environments.
- Research Type: The sources for the search are limited to academic databases containing information in educational sciences, which guarantee the access to the scholarly production.

The databases used are ERIC, Web of Science, Psycinfo, SAGE, Elsevier, Cambridge, Semantic Scholar, Google Scholar and Education Source. Moreover, bibliographic databases and other sources were searched manually to obtain seminal articles and systematic reviews of the field in addition to the targeted databases to find other relevant studies.

Search terms were carefully selected to capture the key concepts central to the review, including "moral dilemmas," "contradictions," "diversity," "higher education," "students," OR "teachers." The major keywords were expanded by using other names and related terms to capture all possible variations. This was an iterative process of fine tuning the keywords and using the information specialists to increase the recall of the research studies.

Category	Search Terms
Moral dilemmas	ethical dilemmas, moral conflicts, ethical challenges, value conflicts, conscience challenges, moral quandaries, ethical predicaments, value dilemmas, moral conundrums, ethical debates, conscience dilemmas, moral struggles
Contradictions	inconsistencies, paradoxes, discrepancies,

	anomalies, conflicts, divergences, discrepancies, paradoxes, oppositions, incongruities, irregularities, contrarities
Diversity	inclusivity, cultural differences, pluralism, multiformity, heterogeneity, variety, multiplicity, divergence, inclusivity, assortment, range, differentiation
Higher education	Higher education, tertiary education, university education, advanced education, college education, academic education, further education, adult education, institutional education, advanced learning
Students	Learners, undergraduates, pupils, scholars, trainees, attendees, apprentices, disciples, academic individuals, educational participants, knowledge seekers
Teachers	Educators, instructors, professors, mentors, tutors, facilitators, pedagogues, lecturers, coaches, guides

### **Inclusion and Exclusion**

The review only included relevant research articles published in peer-reviewed journals within the period of 2002-2023. This time frame makes sure that the review brings in current development and current trends in the field while at the same time giving a historical look at the field. Any study that addresses moral dilemmas, paradoxes and/or differences within the framework of higher learning institutions were considered regardless of the methodological orientation of the research. This inclusive approach aims to capture a diverse range of

perspectives and methodologies, contributing to a robust synthesis of literature. Additionally, studies were included in the systematic review if they were published in the English language. Reviews, theoretical papers, and conceptual studies without empirical data or findings related to the research questions were excluded.

### **Screening Procedure**

The screening process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The initial search across the selected databases (ERIC, Web of Science, and PsycInfo) yielded a total of  $n = 1872$  potentially relevant records. After removing duplicates,  $n = 1841$  unique records remained.

In the first stage of screening, the titles and abstracts of these records were reviewed to assess their eligibility based on the following criteria:

- Studies published in peer-reviewed journals between 2002 and 2023
- Focus on moral dilemmas, contradictions, and diversity within higher education settings
- Inclusion of student and/or teacher perspectives

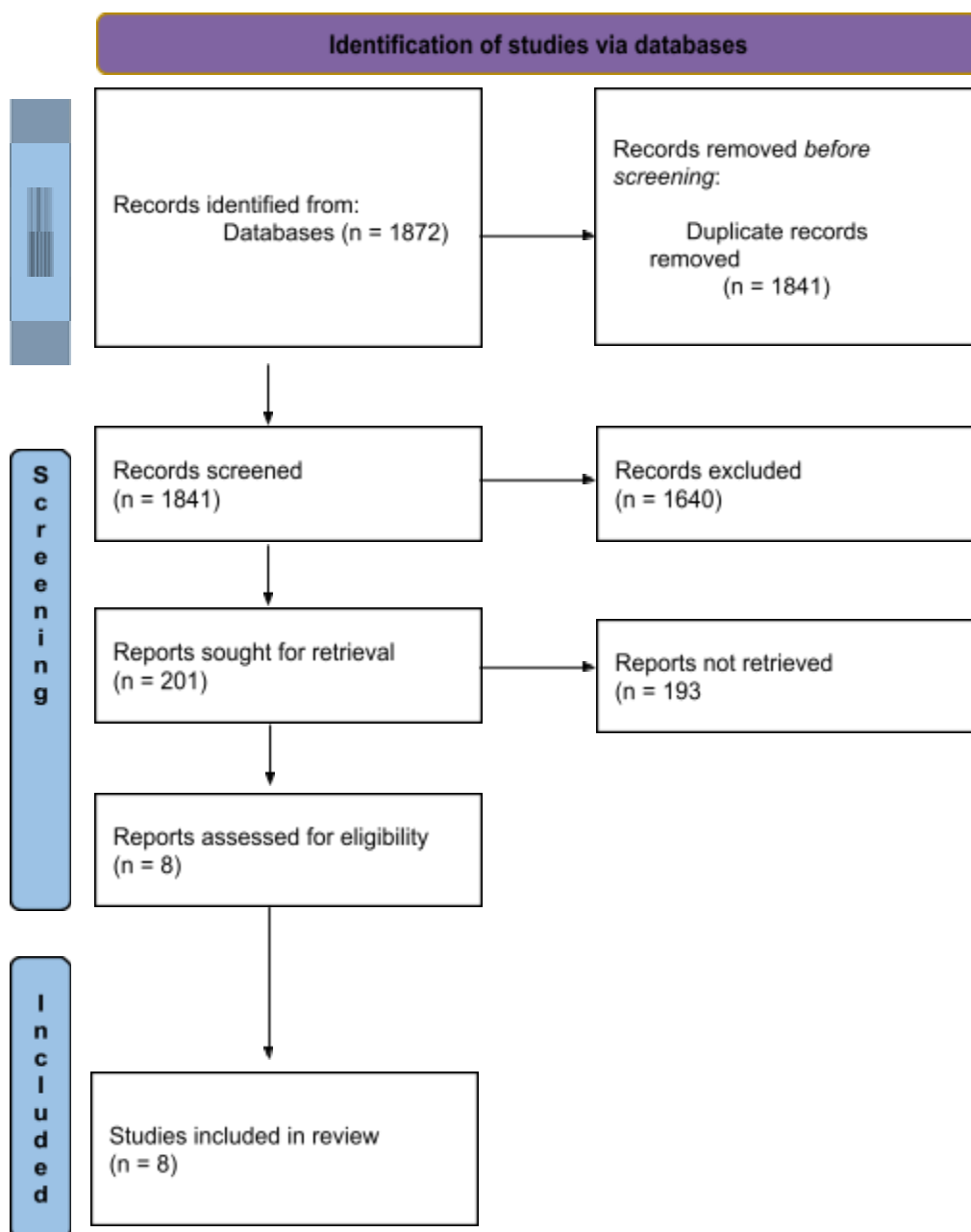
This initial screening resulted in the exclusion of  $n = 1640$  records, leaving  $n = 201$  potentially relevant studies for full-text review.

In the second stage, the full texts of the remaining  $n = 201$  studies were carefully examined to ensure they met the inclusion criteria and addressed the research questions. During this process, an additional  $n = 193$  studies were excluded for the following reason:

- Studies were theoretical or conceptual in nature and did not include empirical data or findings related to the research questions ( $n = 193$  studies)

After the full-text screening, a total of 8 studies were deemed eligible for inclusion in the systematic review. These studies formed the basis for data extraction and synthesis.

## Flow Diagram



## **Data Extraction**

A standardized data extraction form was developed based on SPIDER elements to systematically extract relevant information from selected articles (see Appendix 1). The extraction form included fields for recording details such as author(s), publication year, research design, participant characteristics, key findings, and themes related to moral dilemmas and contradictions in diversity perspectives within higher education. This structured approach ensures consistency in data extraction and facilitates the synthesis of findings across studies, enhancing the reliability and validity of the review.

## **Synthesis Procedures**

Based on the synthesis of the included studies, the following steps were taken: The material gathered from the studies was analyzed employing a method of thematic analysis that includes search for themes, coding, analyzing, and reporting. This approach served as a way of discerning the themes and antitheses of diversity perspectives concerning higher learning institutions and the ethical implications.

- Familiarization with the data: The procedure of repeated reading of the extracted data from the included studies enables going beyond the mass of information received.
- Searching for themes: The data was also reviewed while looking for any themes that would describe the growing trend or the most significant issues about moral issues, paradoxes, and diversity in the contexts of higher learning institutions.
- Reviewing themes: The identified themes were validated through scrutiny to see whether or not they coherently make sense, are unique and whether or not they represent the data gathered. Thus, themes may be made more precise, or they may be merged or split during the process.
- Defining and naming themes: Each theme was given concise labels and names that reflect the nature of the moral dilemmas, paradoxes and diversity experiences depicted in the data.
- Producing the report: The final step involves synthesizing the findings into a coherent and insightful narrative, highlighting the key themes, moral dilemmas,

contradictions, and their implications for diversity perspectives in higher education.

- Throughout the synthesis process, particular attention was given to exploring potential contradictions or tensions within and across the identified themes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

As this is a systematic literature review, ethical approval is not required. However, ethical considerations guided the inclusion of studies, ensuring that selected research aligns with ethical standards and principles.

## **RESULTS**

### **Description of the Included Studies**

The search yielded 8 studies. The main characteristics of the included studies are presented in the overview table below.

## Overview Table of Studies

Authors	Study Design	Study Characteristics	Setting	Main Results
Lister et al. (2020)	Mixed-methods survey study	To investigate students' language preferences regarding disability-related communications in higher education	Large UK distance learning university	Students with disabilities used different languages in different situations. Majority did not feel comfortable with terms like 'disabled student' and preferred 'additional study requirements'. Three clusters of preferences were distinguished, implying universities need better policies for language around disability.
Anicha et al. (2017)	Descriptive study	To describe efforts of a Midwestern US land-grant research university to address root causes of gendered inequities.	A Midwestern US land-grant research university	The FORWARD Initiative at North Dakota State University enhanced women faculty representation through structural, human, and cultural capital interventions,

				leading to gender-sensitive policy transformations.
Museus et al. (2018)	Quantitative survey study	To examine the relationship between culturally engaging campus environments and sense of belonging among White students and students of color.	Survey data from 870 students at an urban public research university on the East Coast	Culturally engaging environments significantly influenced the sense of belonging for both White students and students of color.
Cabrera (2012)	Qualitative study using semi-structured interviews	To examine the racial views and experiences of white male college students.	Single higher education institution with 12 white male students	White male students viewed racism personally rather than structurally, downplayed present-day racism, felt oppressed by multiculturalism and 'reverse racism,' assigned racial issues to minorities, and noted no change in racial attitudes during college, promoting racism and segregation.



Gurin et al. (2002)	Multi-institutional quantitative study	To explore the relationship between students' experiences with diverse peers and their educational outcomes, particularly learning and democracy outcomes.	Colleges and universities in the US, data from the University of Michigan and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program	Cross-racial and ethnic contact in informal settings during college years is educationally and civically relevant.
Desivilya et al. (2017)	Qualitative study using grounded theory methodology	To examine academic staff perspectives on diversity and social schisms, capturing perceptions and educational practices.	A college in northern Israel, involving faculty from different departments	Two main themes: "Diversity awareness" (understanding multicultural reality and approaches to it) and "Practices" (implementation of diversity tenets in teaching). Faculty opinions varied within these themes.
Clark et al. (2012)	Quantitative survey study	To examine barriers to success for ethnic minority graduate	Graduate programs in school psychology, surveying ethnic	Ethnic minority graduate students reported more negative race-related experiences and higher levels of emotional distress

		students in school psychology programs.	minority and majority students	compared to ethnic majority students.
Arday (2018)	Qualitative study using focus groups and semi-structured interviews	To examine the impact of racial inequality and discrimination on mental health of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students.	14 universities in the UK, involving undergraduate and postgraduate BME students	Ethnic minority service users faced racism and were denied sensitive services, affecting their mental health and sense of belonging.

## **RQ1: Moral Dilemmas Encountered by Students in Learning Institutions**

The analysis of the included studies reveals that different moral conflicts and paradoxes emerge when students of higher education institutions engage in diversity. The first of these is the question of the relative importance of identity and individuality. According to Cabrera (2014) in her article, students from diverse backgrounds may be confronted with conflicts of identity between self- or personal goals and cultural or social group expectations. This duality can be expressed in terms of the conflict between the social pressure to follow the trend and the personal need to be different while respecting the roots of one's culture (Cabrera, 2014). Another concern can be attributed to freedom of speech or lack thereof. There is always a dilemma of how to encourage free speech while at the same time acknowledging the rights of people with different diversities. As for the rights and freedoms of the academic environment, freedom of speech is one of the most crucial aspects, however, some learners might find that some words or opinions may be potentially violating the rights of minorities. This is an issue that brings into question where the boundaries are when it comes to free speech and fairness.

Moreover, students may have an engaged conflict with themselves as to how receptive they are to diversity and inclusion. Although as a rule, higher education institutions are concerned with the principles of diversity, some learners may possibly feel that the institution they attend has failed to act in line with these principles. For example, Museus et al. (2018) noted in a study that students of color might feel the absence of cultural representation, inadequate resources, or perceiving microaggressions that are in contrast with the college's diversity policy. Another one of the moral problems pertains to the relationship between diversity and academic success. According to the article by Gurin et al. (2002) some students may have a perception that the goal of increasing diversity and the goal of increasing achievement are mutually exclusive. This perception may develop from the thought that the admission of students from diverse backgrounds may dilute the standard of education or the quality of students (Gurin et al., 2002). But studies have found that diversity may in fact improve creativity, cognitive skills, and academic achievement.

While working through the outlined moral dilemmas and ambivalences, the students might face difficulties in connecting/not connecting their own values, beliefs, and experiences

with various values, beliefs, and experiences that the higher education environment offers. Institutions need to encourage students, staff, and faculty to freely discuss these matters, offer services for those affected, and recognize that these issues exist on their campuses.

### **RQ2: Moral Dilemmas Experienced by Teachers**

Teaching in the diverse context of higher education offers a range of paradoxes and dilemmas to teachers. Such issues may arise out of the complicated balance between the attempts to integrate equals, ensure academic achievement, and recognize cultural differences.

#### **Balancing Inclusivity and Academic Rigor**

Another important ethical consideration that teachers experience in their practice is the tension between the inclusion of culturally diverse learners and academic performance standards. Teachers always find themselves in positions where catering for students' learning differences may be viewed as lowering standards or diluting curriculum content. For example, when developing formative or summative assessments or when assigning grades to students, teachers may face such a trade-off as how to accommodate the cultural differences, language proficiency, and preferred learning modalities of their students (Clark et al. , 2012). This tension between integration and academic standards can produce difficult choices concerning how much or how often the college has to modify the curriculum or make adjustments for the students, with potential consequences concerning equity and honesty.

#### **Navigating Sensitive Topics and Diverse Perspectives**

The second major ethical issue becomes pertinent when the teachers cross the line and teach contentious issues or work with different opinions and stances. It is not easy to moderate contentious topics that might incite heated debate among participants, including race, gender, or political affiliation. Ethical dilemmas can be seen in the efforts made by teachers to provide equal opportunities for all students while also promoting an environment that supports free

speech. This is a problem of the protection of free speech and prevention of offenses or exclusion of particular communities.

### **Respecting Cultural Differences and Institutional Policies**

Cultural conflicts also pose moral challenges to the teachers especially in cases whereby the cultural practices are in conflict with the organizational rules or teaching practices. Teachers may at some time be faced with a scenario where the students' cultural practices or beliefs conflict with those of the academic community. For instance, a teacher may encounter an ethical issue when a learner's culture does not support policies such as cheating or certain behavior in class. Solving such contradictions means knowing how to navigate cultural competency and diversity, on the one hand, and maintaining organizational standards and ethical principles, on the other.

### **Representation and Power Dynamics**

Other sources of moral conflict affecting teachers pertain to representation and power relations within academic settings. According to Arday (2018), educators who belong to underrepresented or marginalized groups may experience some form of identity crisis in terms of: positionality, authority, and credibility in managing class. Students may encounter difficulties in how to deal with tokenism, microaggression, or even implicit biases from students or colleagues while at the same time, working to organize an environment that enhances students' learning and potential for all students.

A number of research papers have been conducted to explore the teachers' attitudes and roles in respect to the ethical issues and paradoxes concerning diversity in Higher education institutions. Desivilya et al. (2020) in a qualitative study with university faculty used interviews

and established the various dynamics that teachers go through in an effort to accommodate various students' characteristics while at the same time implementing the rules and regulations of the institution and academic standards. They identified emotional work and ethical dilemmas – managing multiple responsibilities and power relations in the classroom. There also exists emotional consequences and teaching difficulties in dealing with the discussion of such topics and with the conflicting opinions that students may have.

Collectively these works demonstrate that moral tensions and paradoxes exist in the effort to diversify teacher education for higher education. They both explain the pressure teachers face in their careers and their everyday struggles, together with the processes involved in achieving a workable compromise while understanding the other's point of view, the necessity of maintaining and asserting the principles of academic ethics, and the organization's values.

### **RQ3: Strategies Employed by Students and Educators to Address Ethical Challenges Related to Diversity in Academic Settings**

Responding to ethical issues of diversity in academic contexts is a process that is both difficult and many faceted, as it often involves the use of policies, educational programs, and personal actions. Another is the need to ensure that the society is sensitive to the diversity of people and welcomes everyone irrespective of their background. This can be done by the educators to ensure that they adopt different ways, views, and ideas in their curriculum and class materials. This not only helps in enhancing the learning process of all learners but also brings out a representation of underrepresented groups. Also, state and local policies against discrimination, harassment, and microaggression as well as cultural competence and implicit bias training can assist in changing the campus culture for the better. The other factor that needs to be considered is the fairness of the distribution of educational resources and opportunities. It may mean having separate arrangements for disabled learners, having language assistance for learners with English as their second language and tackling issues like poverty that affect the learners' performance in class (Lister et al., 2020). Teachers can also

attempt to eliminate possible prejudice in the ways of evaluating students and grading their performances.

It is also crucial to encourage people to speak about diversity issues politely and to listen to each other without prejudice. Discussions that may take place in a classroom or other campus forums which allow students and faculty to express their views, ideas and issues, as well as to listen, can increase both the level of social justice and level of empathy. However, it is necessary that a discussion could be conducted in such a way that dialogues do not lead to stereotyping or marginalization of other people. Moreover, in terms of diversity and ethical practice in the context of the academic institutions, it is possible to increase the number of faculty and staff from the under-represented group by identifying the corresponding ways. Minorities in the academic setting, including the types of students in this paper, can serve as the role models and resources to the students of the same background and can thus contribute to equality of minority in the academic setting.

In addition, Anicha et al. (2017) examined the extent of diversity promotion initiatives on the status of the campus climate. This quantitative and qualitative study revealed that institutions that engage in the consideration of moral tensions and paradoxes concerning diversity through cultural competence training, curricular and co-curricular diversity support services that attend to the needs of historically marginalized students foster a welcoming climate for all students.

## DISCUSSION

### Introduction

In this section, I plan to attempt a connection between the theory and practice by analyzing how the results obtained from my literature review can be applied in teaching and learning practice in higher learning institutions. The conclusions derived from the literature review have valuable practical consequences for educational practice mostly concerning inclusive learning environments and ethical awareness among educators and learners. Therefore, through understanding the issues arising from diversity and the ethical questions it poses, faculty can apply measures to foster cultures that accept and appreciate the diversity of students. The focus on professional learning in Diversity Equity and Inclusion can provide teachers with the right approach to minimize prejudices in learning and create awareness on how to discuss controversial issues. Also, educational institutions should encourage people to express opinions and engage in critical discussions about ethical problems in order to improve the individual's ability to make a proper choice and become a responsible member of society. Such efforts can improve the participation, performance, and overall well-being of students, thus providing a more inclusive education to everyone.

This study aimed to explore moral dilemmas and contradictions related to diversity in higher education settings, focusing on the experiences of both students and educators.

The research questions guiding this investigation were:

- RQ1: What moral dilemmas/contradictions are students facing in dealing with diversity within higher education?
- RQ2: How do teachers experience moral dilemmas/contradiction in promoting diversity within the educational landscape?
- RQ3: How do students and educators address contradictions and moral dilemmas related to diversity in academic settings, and what impact do these responses have on the overall learning environment?

### **RQ1: Student Experiences with Moral Dilemmas**

Addressing this research question, the findings reveal that students in higher education encounter several key moral dilemmas when engaging with diversity. A primary tension exists



between maintaining individual identity and conforming to cultural or social group expectations (Cabrera, 2014). Students struggle to balance personal goals and cultural roots with social pressures. Further, the principle of free speech sometimes interferes with the rights and the self-assertion of other groups of people. According to Museus et al., (2018) some students feel that there is a disconnect between the diversity policies in the institution and their realities; they report matters such as underrepresentation or microaggression. There is also the perceived clash between diversity objectives and academic integrity, mostly because evidence shows that diversity actually can improve academic performance (Gurin et al., 2002).

These results are consistent with the general theories concerning the moral dilemmas in education. Referring to Van der Zwaan (2017), the author underlines that globalization and the technological changes influence the expectations regarding education and generate new ethical issues. The issues that students experience can be regarded as the outcomes of negotiations of moralities and norms in academic contexts, as Arar & Saiti (2022) have noted. The struggle between the freedom of person and consideration of others' feelings can be seen as a reflection of the discussions regarding the conflict between cultural diversity and unity in multicultural societies.

## **RQ2: Educator Experiences with Moral Dilemmas**

As for the second research question, several ethical dilemmas are relevant to educators when implementing the concept of diversity. One of the central challenges is how to ensure learners' equality alongside the academic standard (Gillborn, 2008). Teachers have difficulties integrating students with learning difficulties in their lessons without lowering the level of education. Another difficulty is the discussion of the topics that are considered to be sensitive; educators want students to be free and open in their speech, but they do not want to make somebody feel uncomfortable or unaccepted (Apfelbaum et al. , 2010). Cultural tensions arising from the student practices and organizational norms/procedures add other layers of ethical considerations (Cushner & Mahon, 2009). Arday (2018) has also pointed out that teachers from minorities may also face questions concerning their legitimacy.

The above experiences of educators' support Kozleski and Waitoller's premise (2010) that teachers are confronted with ethical dilemmas in curriculum choices and instruction when

attempting to include diversity without lowering standards. The dilemmas are indicative of the contradictions in higher education pointed out by Dzelzkalēja et al. (2018) including contradiction between the academic and the pragmatic or between bureaucratic and learner-centered approaches.

### **RQ3: Addressing Dilemmas and Impact on Learning Environment**

The results reveal that learners and teachers use different approaches to address ethical issues arising from diversity. There are policies against discrimination in institutions and cultural competence is trained (Posselt, 2020). Teachers need to make an effort to expand the scopes of knowledge and approaches to delivering lessons. Hurtado, (2007) explained that organized discussions on campus foster the advocacy of various opinions while at the same time cautioning that stereotype is likely to be enhanced. Another strategy is to increase the recruitment and retention of minorities in faculty and staff positions.

These strategies correspond to theories focusing on structural approaches and cultural diversity in the context of the university. In Tienda's (2013) words, it is necessary to challenge how institutions maintain social inequalities in order to address the issue of diversity properly. The strategies mentioned above are manifestations of efforts to progress from mere diversity to diversity with an aim of improving fairness in learning institutions.

The consequences of these responses are therefore varied. They may help create awareness and inclusion, but, at the same time, they can bring to light latent tensions. According to Burke et al. (2016), the interventions in diversity management often result in resistance or emergence of new conflicts. Yet, when they are effective, the strategies improve the learning environment by diversifying the viewpoints of students and helping them become ready for the multicultural world, according to Gurin et al. (2002).

### **Limitations**

The following limitations are worth considering in relation to this study. Firstly, this analysis lacks primary data collection whereby the author conducted his research by collecting new data. This approach confines the analysis of students' and educators' experiences in the context to a few aspects, excluding a detailed investigation of the context's impact on them. Also, the studies selected for the review may not be diverse in terms of the geographical context

of higher education. This could lead to a situation where general problems faced in some parts of the world are not even considered. Another weakness that can be attributed to this study is that the various diversity issues in the society are dynamic and keep changing at an alarming rate. Due to the dynamic changes in the social relations our findings may not reflect the most contemporary issues related to diversity in higher education. Moreover, the study is somewhat narrow in its focus on intersectionality; thus, it may be missing some of the ways in which diversity-related moral dilemmas are impacted by the interaction of multiple, overlapping identities in higher education contexts. These limitations must be remembered when evaluating the findings of this research and when applying its conclusions to future disputes over diversity in higher education.

### **Implications for Practice and Research**

From the analysis of the results of this study, there are some implications for practice and for future research. In order to improve the inclusiveness and ethical literacy of higher education, it is useful to understand how students and educators solve ethical problems in different learning contexts. Teachers should make sure that they attend professional development to assist them in identifying bias and minimizing the same in their practice. That is why, such activities as workshops, seminars, and training programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion can help educators to equip themselves with the necessary tools and methods that allow them to build an inclusive learning environment. Students can take part in cultural sensitivity programs and activities which make them analyze prejudiced thoughts and use tolerant language. Ethics can be taught as a separate subject and students should have possibilities to rehearse and discuss some ethical dilemmas.

Many of the above efforts have been appreciated for enhancing the quality of learning for marginalized students. Gurin et al. (2002) employed a longitudinal study to determine the impact of diversity experiences on students' learning and development. The authors explained that their study showed that getting students exposed to the diversity of opinions and participating in the resolution of ethical issues in relation to diversity contributed to the development of students' critical thinking, cognitive development, academic, and personal success.

Based on the aforementioned implications, the following recommendations for tackling ethical dilemmas in higher learning institutions are made: Some of these are: establishing and promoting specific ethical standards and principles for educators and scholars in academic settings, incorporating ethics into course and program curriculums across various disciplines, and establishing ethical literacy as a lifelong learning process through continuous professional development for educators. It is possible to continue the analysis of the issue, and focus on the efficacy of certain concepts and approaches to the actual ethical concerns concerning diversity in academia. Future studies could focus on understanding the effects of ethics training on students' ethical thinking and the ways to foster equal opportunities for learning. Expanding research to incorporate multiple dimensions of diversity, including race, gender, and class, could further help elucidate the multifaceted nature of the ethical challenges student and educator participants experience.

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## Appendix X: Data Extraction Form

Study Identification:
Article Title:
Publication Year:
Journal/Source:
Study Design:

Study Characteristics:
Study Aim/Objective:
Study Setting:
Study Duration:
Sample Size:
Participant Demographics:
Age:
Gender: Ethnicity/Cultural Background:
Other Relevant Characteristics:

Outcome Measures:
Outcome(s):
Measurement Tools/Instruments:
Timing of Outcome Assessment:

Results:
Summary of Main Findings:
Statistical Analysis:
Limitations/Challenges:

Quality Assessment:
Methodological Quality/Risk of Bias Assessment:
Tool/Framework Used:
Key Findings from Quality Assessment:

Additional Notes/Comments:
Any Additional Information Relevant to the Study: