The correlation between university students' interactions and their character development in Morocco

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ABSTRACT

In higher education, students' interactions are crucial to their learning in general and to their character development in particular for various reasons. Students' interactions can be at different levels such as student-students' interactions, student-teachers' interactions and student-faculty interactions. Knowing the importance of students' interaction, the aim of this study is to investigate the correlation between students' interactions and their character in Moroccan higher education. Student's interactions, in this study, refer to students' interactions with their friends and classmates, teachers and the administrative staff while students' character is defined in this study as their morals, ethics, values and citizenship. The main research question answers the question if there is a statistically significant relationship between students' interactions and their character. 220 students filled in the online questionnaires to study the targeted correlations in addition to 17 students participated in the focus groups to elicit their opinions about their interactions among themselves, with their teachers and the administrative staff in relation to their character as well as the underlying correlations. This study is mixed methods research in that both questionnaires and focus groups are implemented to answer the aforementioned research question. The quantitative data revealed a positive correlation between students' interactions and their character while the qualitative date confirmed previous quantitative results concerning such correlations. The results suggested that university presidents, deans, faculty staff, teachers and policy makers have to be cautious about the importance of students' interactions in developing students' character as well as the positive correlation students' interactions have with their morals, ethics, values and citizenship.

INTRODUCTION

The two main goals of education are educating people to be intellectual and people of good morals (Lickona, 1991). The status of education today is challenging, as the emphasis is on scientific skills to prepare graduates to a global, technological market place. Moroccan higher education is no exception in that although many initiatives and reforms have been taken since independence in 1956 to make the university a better place for students' success and development, the focus is still on language learning, digital technology and skills required in the job market.

One of the main reasons that inspired this study is the researcher's motivation to understand the motives why some students do not exhibit good character in that we hear many incidents like cheating, plagiarism and sexual harassment taking place in Moroccan universities. In fact, Moroccan students plagiarize deliberately and sometimes by mistake (Ennam, 2017). The House of Representatives in Morocco conducted research in 2023 and shed light on the internal issues Moroccan universities are facing like fraud, sexual harassment and the discrepancy in personal values (House of Representatives, 2023).

Higher education is supposed to help students foster their intellectual growth along with their character development. In fact, Moroccan tertiary education has not taken students' character development into serious consideration, as no effective approaches, methods, programs to incorporate character education were implemented. In addition, Moroccan higher education has not considered students' various interactions within the university milieu as well as the correlation these interactions have with students' character development.

In this study, students' interactions are limited to student-student, student-teacher and student-faculty interactions in tertiary level. Many studies studied the correlation between such interactions and students' character development in universities: Astin & Antonio (2004), Kim & Sax (2009), Komarraju, Musulkin & Bhattacharya (2010) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005). Astin & Antonio's (op. cit.) results confirmed that engagement with specific interactions and experiences lead to important contributions to students' character. Kim & Sax (op. cit.) noted that students-teachers' interactions, whether in the classroom or outside, are inextricably linked with students' growth and their social development. Komarraju, Musulkin & Bhattacharya (op. cit.) stated that interactions enhance character, mainly motivation, achievement as well as intellectual and professional development. Pascarella and Terenzini (op. cit.) demonstrate that student–faculty interaction positively affects various student aspects, such as cognitive skills, intellectual growth in addition to values and attitudes. Other studies include Resnikoff and Jennings' (1980), Dalton's (1985), Heath's (1968), Meyer's (1980) and Kuh (2005). All these studies confirmed the positive impact of various interactions students have in universities on their character development, moral growth and civic skills.

This study tries to answer if students' interactions have any significant correlation with students' character development in the Moroccan post-secondary education. This article starts with a summary of the methods used in this study, then, presents the results and discussions of the findings and ends with the main conclusions and recommendations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The participants are basically students who pursue their higher education in the English departments in different universities across the country in addition to some students who are from Al Akhawayn University (an independent, coeducational university in which English is the only medium of instruction) and a few other higher education institutions (02%). The universities were chosen based on their accessibility via Facebook platform in that the universities which have Facebook groups and pages, their students could fill in the online questionnaire easily. The participants are from 12 Moroccan universities: Mohammed V University-Souissi, Rabat (08 participants), Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez (42 participants), Moulay Ismail University, Meknès (22 participants), Abdelmalek Essaâdi University, Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima (82 participants), Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane (25 participants), Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakesh (04 participants), Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida (01

participant), Hassan II Mohammedia University, Mohammedia (01 participant), Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra (20 participants), Ibn Zohr University, Agadir (07 participants), Mohamed Premier University, Oujda (02 participants) and, finally, University of Hassan II Casablanca Ain Chok, Casablanca (01 participant). The Moroccan universities which were not accessible either because they do not have Facebook pages and groups or their students do not keep in touch with these platforms are Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal (no participant), Mohammed V University-Agdal, Rabat (no participant), and Hassan Premier University, Settat (no participant).

The students participated in this study are from different university levels: Undergraduate, M.A. and Ph.D. Respondents who participated in the focus groups were students from Abdelmalek Essaâdi University in Tetouan city and *Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah* University in Fez city. The first university was chosen because it is situated in the city where the researcher lives while the second one is the institution under which the researcher was conducting the study. The focus groups participants were accessible thanks to some university students who are also the researcher's friends.

The strategy used in this study was non-probability sampling, particularly convenience sampling, volunteer sampling and snowball sampling. The rationale behind choosing non-probability sampling is the fact that it is easier, faster and economical. The researcher opted for non-probability sampling because the study objective is to examine the correlation between to variables: students' interactions and character development, without any aim to generalize the findings to the whole population of university students worldwide. The researcher relied basically on participants who have intrinsic motives to be part of the research sample. The students who volunteered in the study were motivated to participate because they wanted to help the researcher in the data collection.

Although it was difficult to reach a large number of participants to assist in the study, the researcher could collect questionnaires from 220 students and conduct three focus groups with 17 students. It is important to mention that there were no incentives for requesting students' participation in filling out the research questionnaires. The participants chose to get involved in this study voluntarily and were very helpful because they responded quickly, filled in and sent back the online questionnaires in a short period of time.

Instruments

This section offers a rationale for and description of implementing and administering each data collection instrument.

Questionnaire Survey

Most studies about the impact of higher education in general and college experiences in particular on students' character development employ questionnaires to collect data. This research is no exception in that a self-administered questionnaire was used to study students' character, their interactions and the correlation between students' character and their university experiences in the Moroccan university context. The researcher opted for questionnaires because they are widely used and useful instruments for collecting survey information.

In this research, the questionnaire was used to measure students' character mainly morals, values, ethics and citizenship in addition to students' college interactions primarily (their classmates, friends, teachers and administrative staff) as well as the correlations among the underlying sub-variables. It contains 71 closed-ended items in the form of statements grouped into two main parts: students' character (morals, ethics, values and citizenship) and students' college experiences (curricular activities, students' interactions, extra-curricular activities). Examples of the questionnaire's items are:

- Please circle the answer that best describes your opinion using the following scale:

1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Agree, and 4: Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
*I feel that **self-esteem** is part of my character.*	1	2	3	4

- Please choose the answer that best describes your opinion using the following scale:
1: Never, 2: Rarely, 3: Sometimes, 4: Often and 5: Always

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
*I feel myself **engaged** in the classroom activities.*	1	2	3	4	5

The questionnaire is pre-coded in that the respondents choose the answer that describes best their opinion. This is practical for collecting and analyzing data, as students express their opinions merely via choosing from a variety of options offered by the researcher himself. Instead of thinking of how to express their opinions, which is time-consuming and sometimes frustrating, the respondents just circle one number in the scale given to them for each statement.

Focus Group

Given the complex nature of students' character and their college interactions, it would have been impossible to have a comprehensive and deep understanding of the variables under study as well as the relationship between them based on recording students' views and opinions on Likert and Frequency Scales only. Thus, the researcher conducted three focus groups to collect qualitative data about students' experiences, their character and the correlation between them.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section presents the measures taken to code and analyze the data gathered via questionnaires and focus groups for the ultimate aim of answering the research question and testing the research hypothesis set at the beginning of this study.

Questionnaire Survey Data

Thanks to online Google Forms questionnaires, the researchers collected data and then downloaded them as an Excel file. After that, he used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to import the data from the Excel file. Next, the researcher run Pearson correlation procedure, an SPSS statistical tool, to analyze data quantitatively, choosing a *p*-value of .01, one-tailed. Correlation analysis identifies and measures the linear correlations between the underlying variables. The data points on the scale for students' character range from strongly disagree, disagree, agree to strongly agree while the data points for students' interaction range from always, often, sometimes, rarely to never.

Focus Group Data

Dealing with focus group data, the researcher's overall aim was to generate natural units of meaning; then, classify, categorize and order these units of meaning. To this end, the researcher structured narratives and described the focus groups contents to achieve the last goal, interpreting the interview data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Results (Pearson's Correlation Analysis)

The researcher used SPSS to run a Pearson's correlation coefficient test to find the correlation between students' interactions and their morals, values, ethics and citizenship. Besides, Pearson correlation was employed to test the null hypotheses:

H_0: *There is no correlation between students' interactions and students' character.*

Table 1. *Pearson Correlations for Students' Interactions and Morals, Values, Ethics and Citizenship*

Correlations						
		Students' interactions	Morals	Values	Ethics	Citizenship
Students' interactions	Pearson Correlation	1	.238**	.268**	.355**	.367**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	220	220	220	220	220
Morals	Pearson Correlation	.238**	1	.624**	.474**	.409**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	220	220	220	220	220
Values	Pearson Correlation	.268**	.624**	1	.435**	.380**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	220	220	220	220	220
Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.355**	.474**	.435**	1	.540**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	220	220	220	220	220
Citizenship	Pearson Correlation	.367**	.409**	.380**	.540**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	220	220	220	220	220

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

A Pearson correlation analysis was employed to test the linear relationship between (1) students' interactions and morals, (2) students' interactions and values, (3) students' interactions and ethics and (4) students' interactions and citizenship. A correlation coefficient (r) refers to a number between -1 and 1 that shows the strength of a relationship between two variables. The strength of the correlation coefficient can be very weak, weak, moderate, strong or very strong. In fact, the correlation coefficient (r) is very strong if it is between 0.90 and 1, strong if it is between 0.70 and 0.89, moderate if it is between 0.40 and 0.69, weak if it is between 0.10 and 0.39, and very weak if it is between 0.00 and 0.10.

The output in Table 1 shows that the correlation revealed a weak positive relationship between *students' interactions* and *morals*, *r*=.23, a weak positive relationship between *students' interactions* and values, *r*=.26, a moderate positive relationship between *students' interactions* and *ethics*, *r*=.35 and a strong positive relationship between *students' interactions* and *citizenship*, *r*=.36.

It is crucial to mention that in Pearson correlations, P value is referred to the level of significance which can be either statistically significant as $p < 0.05$ or statistically very significant as $p < .01$, or statistically highly significant as $p < 0.001$. Moreover, researchers can reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is sufficient evidence to accept that the alternative hypothesis is true if the p-value of the hypothesis test is less than some significance level (e.g. p = .01). In this study, the quantitative results provided evidence that the correlation coefficient was statistically very significant, $p < .01$.

On the basis of the correlational results, the null hypothesis (*There is no correlation between students' interactions and students' character*) was rejected, meaning that the alternative hypothesis (*There is a correlation*

between *students' interactions and students' character*) was accepted as true. This implies that when the students' interaction with their friends, classmates, teachers and others in the university increase, their morals, values, ethics and citizenship increase as well.

Qualitative results (focus group)

'*Morals*' is one of the main subthemes emerging in the analysis. Most respondents believed that students, at university, demonstrate high degree of *responsibility*, *respect*, *self-esteem*, *honesty* and *trustworthiness*. One participant admitted:

> "… this is the best think have ever happened to me. I was so happy. I feel like I'm being more into myself. There is no fear. My self-esteem and my self-confidence are just going up…"

A few respondents, however, disagreed about some values like *trustworthy*, *honesty*, *kindness* and *hard work*. They believe that not all students are *wise* or possess *positive attitudes*, but they are hypocrite at times. One of them stated: "I may disagree with (student y). I don't think that all university students are hard workers. I think they rely on… they don't make a good effort in their study." Another participant claimed that the value of *trustworthiness* is not apparent among university students. She said that "*For trustworthy, it's very difficult to find someone who is trustworthy maybe in the university.*" It is important to mention that some unexpected subthemes appearing in the focus group data are *acceptance, help*, *justice*, *maturity*, *care*, *not judging others* and *being passionate*.

'*Ethics*' is another subtheme emerging in the data. Most participants agreed that *accepting criticism*, *generosity*, and *self-independence* are there major ethics which college students possess. They also mentioned that university students that, in addition to being *self-disciplined*, they possess other ethics like *courage*, *positive attitudes*, *courage* and *willing to learn from failure* is part of students' ethics. One of the respondents admitted that *"Without courage you cannot come here [university]."* Concerning learning from failure and having a positive attitude towards life, a participant commented:

> "… Whenever somebody of us or a classmate is feeling weak or he is about to fail, you will find at least 3 or 4 other students rather than his close friends, you will find them helping him and motivating him just because this language gives us a positive life."

A few respondents, however, had different opinions about the idea of *students' discipline and acceptance of criticism*. Not only that, some of them believed that university students are *undisciplined* (not respecting time and not working hard). One respondent said: *"Taking into consideration the majority yes [not hard working]."* Last but not least, three emerging subthemes in the data are *motivation*, *open-mindedness* and *acceptance*.

'*Values*' is the third subtheme in that respondents agreed that university student possess many values like *hard work*, *kindness*, and *love*. One participant said that she, *at the university, experiences a huge amount of kindness as students who are younger took care of me, times and times and times and to that I am so glad."* Other values mentioned in the data are *gratitude*, *humility* and *positive attitudes*.

Another subtheme appearing in the analysis of the focus group data is '*citizenship*'. Most respondents asserted that they had negative attitudes towards *civic behavior and civic skills*. One respondent noted: *"I will have a different view than you have so I will start. When it comes to civic behaviors, they are names, they are taking care of their personal staff and … I think these kinds of things."* Similarly, most respondents had negative attitudes towards *citizenship*, *community service* and *voluntary work* as well. Actually, in addition to being unmotivated, students do not find service learning opportunities at university. One of the participants argued: *"We love our country and we want the best for it, but when you want to change or do anything good, you won't find anything, and when we want to talk about making this country better, a lot of them go to jail."*Respondents also had negative

attitudes towards *political life* and *political activism* at university because they are, according to them, a failure, a waste of time and full of hidden agendas. One participant mentioned that "*politics is a failure right now [His words]."*

'Students' interactions' is another major theme in the data analysis. Most respondents agreed that the interactions among themselves (friends and classmates) are very good and that they have excellent brotherly relationships as well. Based on the focus group data, students interact effectively and daily about different subjects in the curriculum, social issues and their personal lives. These interactions and relationships are more than mere conversation; they are sources of friendship and comfort which leads to more motivation, hard work and success. In addition, most respondents believed that these interactions with their friends and classmates affect their character. Therefore, they have to be aware of the kind of these relationships, negative or positive are they, and be decisive about them.

When discussing their interactions with their teachers, nearly all respondents report that they have outstanding relationships with their teachers, characterized with mutual respect and love. Students not only share their opinions freely with their teachers, but also interact with them inside and outside the classroom if they need to. Moreover, respondents believed that most teachers work hard and love their teaching job which they consider a passion. One respondent said: *"I just want to agree with my friends view as our own professors they say to us every single time that they don't take their job as a job they take it as a passion. They love what they do."* Not only that, respondent reported that their teachers are friendly and humane, making students feel that they are close to them. A participant said: *"He is not making you feel that he is the professor and we are the students and that's it. He is more close."* Furthermore, students learn from their teachers what is related to the curriculum in addition to other values, ethics and morals like respect, kindness and accepting criticism. A participant commented*: "Yes, it is about that, for example if a professor comes always on time you as a student you cannot come late…Yes, you should respect him and come before he comes to the class, so automatically you are influenced by his values."* Thanks to interacting with their teachers, students get positive energy, constant motivation and good advice. Overall, most respondents agreed that their positive interaction with their teachers has a positive impact on their character.

Concerning students' interaction with faculty staff and administrators, however, nearly all respondents in the three focus groups had negative attitudes towards them. Most respondents did not describe their interactions with the faculty staff and administrators as good as their interactions with their teachers. Indeed, most respondents did not affirm the importance of the administrators' presence. Besides, some respondents said that they do not see them in the university complex while others confessed that they do not even know them. Sometimes, there is some sort of dislike between students and administration as one respondent noted that *"There is always some kind of hostility between the students and the administration."* Besides, students do not feel that they are valuable when they interact with the administrators; on the contrary, they feel ignored and neglected. Respondents do not like the administration bureaucracy, since they feel they waste a lot of their time and energy if they want to get any of their administrative documents. One respondent explained: *"It is common like when we want an administrative paper or document we go to the office and we want to have the paper they come to office at 8 [a.m.] or 9 [a.m.] and tell you to come back late 12 [a.m.]."*

All in all, the three focus groups highlighted the nature of students' character and their various interactions within the Moroccan university. Based on focus groups' data, the university is a place where character development happens due to different factors. In fact, it is not only a place where students learn academic knowledge and skills, but also develop their character thanks to interacting with friends, classmates and teachers. Respondents believed that university students show a number of ethics, morals and values to varying degrees. Data revealed that students do not care much about citizenship, community service and voluntary work as well as political life and activism. Moreover, data from the three focus groups revealed that university students have good interactions and relationships with their friends, classmates and teachers, but not with faculty staff and administrators. These constructive, effective interactions students have at university have a positive impact on their character, mainly their morals, ethics and values.

Discussions

The purpose of this correlational study was to test the relation between students' interactions and their character, mainly their morals, ethics, values and citizenship in Moroccan tertiary level and to answer one main question:

RQ: Is there a statistically significant relationship between students' interactions and their character?

The quantitative and qualitative output reveals interesting results regarding the correlation between students' interactions and their character. The quantitative statistical results provided evidence that the correlation coefficient was statistically very significant, $p<.01$. Pearson's correlation test provided statistical evidence that the students' interactions correlate positively with their character and character development.

On the basis of these results, it can be concluded when students interact with their friends, classmates, teachers and other faculty staff, their character develops as well. In fact, an increase in students' interactions means a positive increase in their morals, ethics values and citizenship.

However, and more critical, the qualitative results reveal in-depth data about the nature and quality of students' interactions at university. The output suggests that most the interactions among students themselves are very good. These effective interactions yield excellent long-term relationships among them. As a matter of fact, students interact effectively and daily about different subjects concerning the curriculum, social issues and even their personal lives. These interactions and relationships are more than mere conversation; they are sources of friendship and comfort which result in additional motivation, hard work and success. Furthermore, students' interactions with their friends and classmates affect their character positively. A participant confirmed:

> "I think that when you surround yourself with, you know, we talk about classmates, you surround yourself with classmates who are motivated, who work hard, hard workers and they have this passion for success, you know, you will be like them, they will affect you positively."

Therefore, university students have to be aware of the nature of these relationships, negative or positive they are, and be decisive about them.

Concerning their interactions with teachers, students create and maintain excellent relationships with them, characterized with mutual respect and love. Students not only share freely their opinions with their teachers, but also interact with them inside and outside the classroom whenever they please. Moreover, the majority of respondents believed that most teachers work hard and love their teaching job which they consider a passion. Not only that, teachers are friendly and humane, making students feel safe and close to them. Thanks to interacting with their teachers, students learn not only what is related to the curriculum, but also other values, ethics and morals like respect, kindness and accepting criticism. Furthermore, students get positive energy, constant motivation and advice. One of the participants remarked: *"The interaction with teachers outside the class, the conversation, the hallway, the professors can help you in anything in your life. Yeah good [interactions with professors], there are some professors who wish to be like them in everything."* Thus, interacting with their teachers has a positive impact on students' character.

The research outcome about students' interactions with faculty staff and administrators are different from the outcome about their interactions with friends, classmates and professors. Indeed, nearly all respondents have negative attitudes towards faculty staff and administrators and do not describe their interactions as positive and effective as their interactions with their teachers. Besides, in addition to not seeing the faculty staff and administrators at university, some students do not even know them. Students do not recognize their presence as really important. What is more, sometimes, the interviewees report that there seems to be some hostility between students and the administrative staff. When they interact with administrators, students do not feel valuable, but worthless, ignored and neglected. Students also dislike the administration bureaucracy, as they feel that they waste

a great deal of time, sometimes hours, to get one administrative document as one of the participants explained: *"Here, if you need something, they won't give it you until a lot of time and you become angry and stressed. You have to be tough with them to get what you need… They will give you what you need till they make you sick."*

The research results are supported by the aforementioned studies by Astin & Antonio (2004), Kim & Sax (2009), Komarraju, Musulkin & Bhattacharya (2010) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) which all confirmed the correlation between students' interactions and their character growth and development. Furthermore, the qualitative data in this study is corroborated by a number of studies which confirm the importance of students' interactions in college. The research findings are in line with Resnikoff and Jennings' (1980) study results which reveal that students' experiences, through interactions with other students who have different values and beliefs, lead to development in moral reasoning. Furthermore, the findings support Dalton's (1985) argument that interacting with people of differing values and viewpoints is one of the main factors encouraging moral development in higher education. The focus group output is supported by Heath's (1968) findings which show that students who are challenged by other students' values, opinions and lifestyles thanks to interaction, their values understanding and development are also enhanced. As mentioned by Heath, students who are introverted, avoiding meeting other students with different values may be empty-headed and self-centered. Last but not least, the research findings are in argument with Meyer's (1980) conclusion that interacting with other people with different values seems to be an important factor in developing a more multifaceted assemblage of personal values. Not only that, the qualitative findings are in line with Astin & Antonio' (2004) suggestion that the faculty and the peer group interaction do influence students' character and values during the college years. Moreover, the focus group data are supported by Kuh (2005) who believes that although administrators' contact and interaction with university students are somehow limited, they influence students' behavior and play an important role in developing students' ethics and morality

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

During the process of collecting and analyzing data to answer the research question, a number of conclusions and results emerged. Firstly, the university is a place of character development and growth. In fact, the university is a place where students learn morals, ethics and values thanks to some curricular activities and interacting mainly with their teachers, friends and classmates. Secondly, the participants believe that they are not good citizens, lacking basic civic skills and behavior, community service and political interest as well as participation in political life and activism. Thirdly, the participants mentioned that their interactions with friends, classmates and professors are positive, contributing to their character growth to a great extent. However, the participants pointed out that their interactions with the administrative staff are not as positive as their interactions with their friends, classmates and teachers, and, thus, not contributing in their character development. Finally, concerning the university administrative staff, the respondents not only reported that they have negative attitudes towards them, but do not describe their interactions with them as good and effective as their interactions with their teachers.

Implications and Recommendations

The present study has numerous implications and recommendations for Moroccan professors, faculty staff, deans and policy makers concerning the importance of students' interactions and the positive correlation these interactions have with their character. Indeed, the failure to take into consideration, incorporate effectively and benefit from the various interactions students have during college years will squander many opportunities to help them in their character growth which, in the end, will positively impact students and society at large.

Moroccan higher education has to implement *multidimensional approaches and non-traditional approaches* to learning such as inquiry-based learning experiential pedagogies, especially those addressing

community concerns, active pedagogies. In addition to that, Moroccan tertiary level should implement *programs, methods and techniques* to facilitate students' growth and character development. These special programs are to be identified with prevalent practices which include professional development, mission-driven initiative, social emotional skill training, role modeling, intrinsic motivation, serving others, nurturing relationships, high expectations and a pedagogy of empowerment. Examples of these programs are *leadership programs* which help students in the development of social concerns and values, making them aware of the importance of participating in these activities and its positive effects on the gradual transformation in students' goals and motives as well as moral values and beliefs.

Various *methods and techniques*, such as codes of ethics and academic integrity initiatives, are to be implemented to foster character, morals, values and ethics in higher education. In fact, Moroccan universities should stress core ethical principles and promote ethical teaching practices via starting and encouraging student affairs professionals because of its importance in fostering students' growth and assisting students' academic and character development. In fact, it is necessary to start a character development office to help students develop sound and mature moral reason. Honor codes ought to be implemented, as they have an effect on students' moral development and because they are part of the environmental factors affecting students' behavior and morality. Finally, governing boards within Moroccan universities should not only establish clear standards for ethical behavior, encourage honesty and academic integrity, but also provide funding for ethics education.

University *deans, administrators and teachers* have a big and paramount role in helping students in their character development as well. Indeed, professors, deans and policy makers have to follow a comprehensive holistic approach, design syllabi and incorporate activities aiming at helping students in their character growth. They should be aware that they influence students' behavior and play an important role in developing students' ethics and morality. Furthermore, they should not only inform the campus community about what is acceptable as moral behavior, but provide education regarding policies, procedures and appropriate actions for developing a strong ethical environment as well.

University *teachers* have to give importance to role modeling, establish morally acceptable social norms, create rewards and educate about the negative consequences of dishonest behavior. Besides, they should not only create a democratic teaching and learning environment, introduce values and encourage cooperative learning in the classroom, but also develop, push students to reflect on moral conflicts and resolution. University teachers should take advantage of opening classroom discussions about challenging moral issues and classroom activities requiring opinion conflict resolution to contribute immensely to the maturity of students' moral judgment. Moroccan tertiary teachers have to make their classes personalized, individualized and more appealing and satisfying.

All in all, this study examines students' interactions and their character as well as the correlation between the two at the Moroccan tertiary level. It establishes new research venues in the Moroccan higher education by generating data on the correlation between students' interactions and their character development, mainly ethics, morals, values and citizenship. Interest in focusing on students' character development and their experiences at university is prompted by a concern to make these interactions at the benefits of students to help them promote their character growth. Moreover, this study has some limitations like the big number of sub-variables (values, ethics, morals, citizenship, and interactions) and the limited number of participants. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the findings to the whole population of Moroccan university students, but it proved, statistically, that there is a positive correlation between students' interactions and their character. Also, despite these limitations, the results are important to the Moroccan ministry of higher education, presidents, deans and professors who aspire to make the university a place for the development of students' character, mainly morals, ethics, values and citizenship thanks to many channels one of which is students' interactions.

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