



Confucianism and the Political Economy of Nigeria: Exploring Cultural Influences on Economic Development and Governance

Lawal, Abubakar¹

abuhumairah03@gmail.com

Goni, Lawan Malami¹

malamilawan@gmail.com

Usman, Suleiman²

mmodoji@gmail.com

¹Department of Political Science, Federal University, Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State

²Department of Economics, Dr Yusufu Bala Usman College, Katsina State

Abstract

This study investigates the profound influence of Confucianism on Nigeria's political economy, delving into the interplay between cultural values and their implications for economic development and governance. By examining the intricate relationships between Confucian principles and the Nigerian context, this research sheds light on the cultural dynamics shaping the nation's socioeconomic landscape. Findings indicate that Confucianism's impact is limited and indirect. While some similarities exist in moral values and respect for authority, Nigeria's historical, cultural, and regional contexts differ significantly from Confucian-influenced societies. Nigeria's economic development is shaped by indigenous cultures, colonial history, and democratic principles. Various factors, including traditions, resources, investments, and global markets, contribute to unique approaches in economic development and governance. Confucian ideals have an indirect influence, mediated by Nigeria's own cultural and historical contexts. Nigeria's economic institutions are rooted in democracy, markets, and pluralism, distinguishing them from Confucian-influenced models. Recognizing Nigeria's distinct political economy is crucial for tailored approaches that address challenges and capitalize on strengths. Through a comprehensive analysis of Confucian tenets and their potential applicability in Nigeria, this paper offers valuable insights into the transformative potential of cultural influences on the country's political economy. Again, Policymakers must leverage cultural influences to align strategies with Nigeria's specific needs and aspirations.

Keywords: Confucianism; political economy; governance; cultural influences

Introduction

Nigeria, a culturally diverse and historically rich nation, grapples with the challenge of achieving sustainable economic development and effective governance. As scholars and policymakers aim to comprehend the intricate dynamics shaping Nigeria's political economy, the role of cultural influences becomes increasingly significant (Udoh, 2020). This study explores the potential impact of Confucianism, an ancient Chinese philosophical and ethical system, on Nigeria's socioeconomic landscape. Confucianism, emphasizing moral values, social harmony, and hierarchical relationships, transcends geographical boundaries, influencing societies beyond East Asia and leaving lasting imprints on cultural norms, values, and institutions (Ohere, 2021).

Examining the interplay between Confucianism and Nigeria's political economy, this research seeks to uncover the extent to which Confucian values have shaped economic development and governance



practices. Nigeria grapples with challenges like corruption, political instability, infrastructure deficits, and socioeconomic inequalities on its path to sustainable development, requiring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches for inclusive growth and effective governance (Igwedibia, 2022). Exploring the cultural underpinnings of Nigeria's political economy provides an opportunity to harness cultural heritage in addressing these challenges. Through analyzing the compatibility between Confucian values and Nigerian cultural norms, this study aims to identify avenues for leveraging cultural influences to foster economic growth, enhance governance practices, and promote social cohesion. Recognizing and understanding the potential role of Confucianism within Nigeria's unique cultural context can help policymakers develop strategies resonating with the nation's cultural heritage, facilitating inclusive development.

Background

Confucianism, an ancient Chinese philosophical and ethical system, has garnered scholarly attention for its profound impact on societies and socio-economic structures. This research aims to explore the intricate relationship between Confucianism and Nigeria's political economy, shedding light on cultural factors shaping economic development and governance. Nigeria, a populous African nation, has undergone significant economic growth and political transformations in recent decades (Edeh & Hua, 2020). However, the understudied aspect of cultural dynamics, including the influence of Confucian values, remains crucial in understanding Nigeria's political economy. Examining these cultural influences on economic development and governance provides valuable insights into the mechanisms contributing to the country's successes and challenges. Confucianism, encompassing ethical principles, social hierarchies, and familial obligations, traditionally emphasizes harmony, social order, and moral rectitude (Gonondo, 2021). These principles can significantly impact governance structures, business practices, and social cohesion within a nation's political and economic landscape.

Investigating the presence and influence of Confucian values in the Nigerian context deepens our understanding of how cultural factors shape economic policies, institutional frameworks, and societal norms. This research seeks to contribute to the broader academic discourse on the cultural determinants of economic development and governance. While existing literature extensively examines the impact of cultural factors on economic outcomes in diverse contexts, the specific influence of Confucianism within the Nigerian political economy is underexplored (Student et al., 2021).

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous country and a significant economic player, has witnessed remarkable growth and political transitions. The Nigerian political economy, marked by cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, contributes to complex socio-political dynamics. Exploring Confucianism's influence within this context offers insights into cultural determinants shaping economic policies, institutional frameworks, and governance practices. Existing literature on cultural determinants has predominantly focused on Western values, lacking nuance in understanding non-Western societies (Dasi, 2019). Therefore, exploring Confucianism in the Nigerian political economy bridges this knowledge gap. Given Nigeria's aspirations for sustainable development and effective governance, understanding how Confucian values interact with the Nigerian context informs policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners, facilitating inclusive development, social cohesion, and effective governance in Nigeria and culturally diverse countries (Repnikova, 2022).

A Gap – Basis for the Study

The influence of cultural factors on economic development and governance has been extensively studied. However, in the specific context of Nigeria's political economy, the role of Confucianism and its



cultural influences remains largely unexplored. This research aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating the cultural determinants of economic development and governance in Nigeria, focusing on the potential impact of Confucian values. Despite Nigeria's significant economic growth and political transformations, the intricate interplay of cultural dynamics and their implications for economic development and governance are poorly understood. The Nigerian political economy reflects a diverse cultural landscape, shaped by various ethnic groups, religious beliefs, and traditional practices (Xu et al., 2020). In this context, the presence and influence of Confucian values, emphasizing social order, harmony, and moral rectitude, may have significant implications for economic policies, institutional frameworks, and governance practices. Understanding Confucianism's influence within the Nigerian political economy is essential for several reasons. First, it provides a deeper comprehension of the cultural factors shaping economic development, societal norms, and governance practices in Nigeria. Second, it sheds light on the interactions between Confucian values and the diverse cultural fabric of Nigeria, contributing to a broader understanding of how cultural influences manifest in non-Western contexts. Third, it offers valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners aiming to promote sustainable development and effective governance in Nigeria. By addressing these gaps, we can enhance our understanding of the nuanced relationships between culture, economics, and governance, potentially generating practical implications for policymakers and development practitioners in Nigeria and beyond.

Institutional Frameworks: Confucianism and Nigerian Economy

This dimension investigates the institutional frameworks shaping Nigeria's political economy, encompassing legal systems, government policies, regulatory bodies, and economic institutions. The exploration examines how Confucian cultural influences interact with these structures, assessing alignment or conflict with Confucian values and potential implications for economic development and governance. To investigate the cultural influences of Confucianism on Nigeria's economic development and governance, a comprehensive framework integrates multiple dimensions, including cultural values, economic indicators, institutional frameworks, and governance structures. The proposed framework components are as follows:

Economic Development Indicators in Nigeria: How Confucianism Relates?

This dimension focuses on economic development indicators, analysing Nigeria's progress. Key indicators include gross domestic product (GDP), poverty rates, income inequality, employment levels, and sectoral contributions. By comparing these indicators, potential correlations between Confucian cultural influences and economic development outcomes can be identified. It's crucial to consider that Confucianism is not indigenous to Nigeria, and any correlations are likely indirect, influenced by historical interactions and cross-cultural exchanges. General aspects relevant to both Confucianism and Nigerian culture include:

1. **Emphasis on Education:** Both value education for personal and societal improvement.
2. **Work Ethic and Discipline:** Both emphasize the value of hard work, discipline, and perseverance.
3. **Respect for Authority and Social Harmony:** Both stress the importance of respecting authority and maintaining social harmony.
4. **Long-Term Perspective:** Both encourage a long-term perspective, fostering investment in education and institutions with long-term benefits.

While these aspects may overlap conceptually, Nigeria's economic development is influenced by various factors beyond Confucianism, such as historical, political, social, and geographical elements, as well as global economic forces.



Additionally, significant disparities exist between Confucian cultural influences and Nigerian economic development outcomes, arising from historical, cultural, and institutional differences. These disparities include:

1. **Historical and Cultural Context:** Confucianism developed in East Asia, while Nigeria's cultural context is shaped by indigenous African traditions, colonial influences, and regional diversity.
2. **Governance and Institutional Factors:** Confucianism historically emphasizes hierarchical social order, contrasting with Nigeria's diverse governance trajectory influenced by colonial rule, ethnic diversity, and democratic governance.
3. **Economic Structures and Systems:** Confucian-influenced societies often follow state-led capitalism, while Nigeria's economic structures are shaped by factors like colonial legacy, resource dependence, and market-oriented reforms.

Cultural Values and Beliefs: Confucian Elements in Nigeria

This dimension explores Confucian values and beliefs present or permeated in Nigerian society. It involves an analysis of cultural practices, norms, and ethical principles influenced by Confucianism, including concepts like social order, hierarchy, harmony, filial piety, and moral rectitude. Noting that Confucianism is not indigenous to Nigeria, potential Confucian influences in Nigerian society are examined, such as respect for elders, emphasis on education, social harmony, ethical conduct and virtues, ancestral worship, moral leadership, focus on social harmony and stability, respect for authority and hierarchy, ethical conduct and public service delivery, and emphasis on education and meritocracy.

It's crucial to approach this analysis with caution, recognizing that the influence of Confucianism on Nigerian cultural practices is likely indirect, mediated through historical interactions and cultural diffusion rather than direct adoption of Confucian principles. Nigerian cultural practices have diverse origins, encompassing indigenous African traditions, religious beliefs, and external influences from various sources.

Comparative Analysis between Confucian Theory and Nigerian Practices

This dimension conducts a comparative analysis with countries or regions influenced by Confucianism, such as China or South Korea, to identify similarities, differences, and potential lessons for understanding Confucian cultural influences on economic development and governance in Nigeria. While there may be limited indirect influences of Confucianism on Nigerian economic development and governance, it's crucial to acknowledge the distinct cultural and historical contexts of Nigeria and East Asia. Recognizing both potential overlaps and disparities is essential, as discussed by Xu et al., (2020).

1. **Religious and Spiritual Beliefs:** Nigerian cultural practices encompass diverse religious beliefs, including indigenous African religions, Christianity, Islam, and others. In contrast, Confucianism is primarily a philosophical and ethical system, lacking religious traditions. The diversity of religious beliefs in Nigeria shapes cultural practices, norms, and ethical principles uniquely, diverging from Confucian ideals.
2. **Individualism vs. Collectivism:** Confucianism emphasizes the collective over the individual, focusing on social roles and hierarchical relationships. Nigerian cultural practices, while valuing community and social connections, often express a greater degree of individualism. Nigerian society recognizes individual achievements and personal aspirations, emphasizing personal agency and autonomy.
3. **Gender Roles:** Nigerian cultural practices exhibit distinct gender roles and expectations influenced by indigenous traditions and external factors. Confucianism also has traditional gender roles, but Nigerian



societies may display more diverse gender roles and greater gender equality compared to Confucian-influenced societies.

4. **Concept of Family:** Confucianism places great importance on the family as the foundation of society, emphasizing filial piety and hierarchical relationships. In Nigeria, the family is highly valued, but the structure and dynamics vary across ethnic groups, incorporating extended family systems and communal relationships beyond the nuclear unit.
5. **Rituals and Ceremonies:** Nigerian cultural practices involve diverse rituals and ceremonies influenced by local customs, religions, and traditions. Confucianism also emphasizes rituals, but the forms and content differ significantly. Nigerian rituals are rooted in indigenous beliefs, religious practices, and historical traditions specific to each ethnic group.

It's crucial to recognize that Nigerian cultural practices are shaped by multiple factors, including indigenous African traditions, religious beliefs, colonial influences, and regional diversity. While there may be some incidental parallels or influences, understanding the unique characteristics and disparities between Nigerian culture and Confucianism is essential.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the influence of Confucianism on the political economy of Nigeria, specifically its economic development and governance, is limited and indirect. Confucianism, as an ancient Chinese philosophical and ethical system, has shaped East Asian societies in profound ways but has had minimal direct impact on Nigerian culture and institutions. While there may be some broad similarities, such as the emphasis on moral values and respect for authority, the historical, cultural, institutional, and regional contexts of Nigeria differ significantly from those of Confucian-influenced societies. Nigeria's economic development and governance are primarily shaped by its own indigenous cultures, colonial history, and contemporary democratic principles. The country's diverse cultural and historical influences have given rise to unique approaches in economic development and governance, which reflect the complex interplay of factors specific to Nigeria. These include indigenous traditions, regional dynamics, natural resource wealth, foreign investments, and global market forces. While Confucian ideals of moral leadership, respect for authority, and education may resonate in Nigerian society to some extent, their impact is indirect and shaped by Nigeria's own cultural and historical contexts. Nigerian economic institutions and governance structures are built upon democratic principles, market dynamics, and a pluralistic society, distinct from the state-led models often associated with Confucian-influenced economies. It is essential to understand and appreciate Nigeria's distinct political economy and the multitude of factors that shape its economic development and governance. By recognizing the unique cultural influences on Nigeria's political economy, policymakers and scholars can develop context-specific approaches that effectively address the country's challenges and capitalize on its strengths.

Recommendations

Based on the understanding that Confucianism has limited direct influence on the political economy of Nigeria, the following recommendations can be made to promote sustainable economic development and effective governance:

1. **Embrace Cultural Diversity:** Nigeria is a culturally diverse nation with multiple influences shaping its political economy. It is crucial to acknowledge and embrace this diversity in economic and governance policies. By valuing and incorporating various cultural perspectives, Nigeria can foster inclusivity and harness the strengths of different communities to drive economic growth and improve governance.



2. Strengthen Ethical Frameworks: While not directly tied to Confucianism, promoting ethical conduct and integrity in economic and governance practices is vital. Implement and reinforce strong ethical frameworks, codes of conduct, and anti-corruption measures to foster accountability and transparency. Promote values such as honesty, fairness, and social responsibility across all levels of society.
3. Enhance Education and Human Capital: Education plays a critical role in economic development and governance. Improve access to quality education and skills training programs to equip Nigerians with the knowledge and capabilities needed for sustainable economic growth. Invest in educational institutions, vocational training, and continuous learning opportunities to develop a skilled and adaptable workforce.
4. Strengthen Institutions: Build robust institutions that can effectively regulate economic activities, enforce laws, and provide efficient public services. Strengthen governance structures, enhance capacity building efforts, and establish clear accountability mechanisms to ensure the rule of law, promote transparency, and enable effective public service delivery.
5. Foster Collaboration and Partnerships: Encourage collaboration between the public sector, private sector, civil society organizations, and international partners. Facilitate dialogue, information sharing, and cooperation to leverage diverse expertise, resources, and experiences. By fostering partnerships, Nigeria can benefit from best practices, innovation, and investment to drive sustainable economic development and improve governance practices.
6. Prioritize Inclusive Growth: Promote policies that prioritize inclusive economic growth, poverty reduction, and reducing inequality. Address socio-economic disparities by implementing targeted interventions, improving access to basic services, and creating opportunities for marginalized groups. By ensuring that the benefits of economic development reach all segments of society, Nigeria can foster social cohesion and stability.
7. Continuously Adapt and Learn: The political economy of Nigeria is dynamic and constantly evolving. Embrace a culture of learning, adaptability, and evidence-based decision-making. Regularly evaluate policies and their impact, gather data, and conduct research to inform informed policy choices and improve governance practices.

References

- Dasi, E. A. (2019). Revisiting Post-Independence Leadership in Alobwed' Epie's The Death Certificate. *International Journal of Language & Literature*, 7(1), 6–13. <https://doi.org/10.15640/ijll.v7n1a2>
- Edeh, E. C., & Hua, X. L. (2020). Growing influence of Chinese language in Nigeria can impact the socio-economic development. *Growing influence of Chinese language in Nigeria can impact the socio-economic development*. January, 184–191.
- Gonondo, J. (2021). Confucius Institute and the Development of Chinese Language Teaching in Cameroon. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 12(3), 34–39. <https://doi.org/10.7176/jep/12-3-05>
- Igwedibia, A. (2022). Interdisciplinary journal of african & asian studies (ijaas). *Interdisciplinary Journal of African & Asian Studies*, 8(1), 29–39.
- Ohere, A. P. (2021). *Peace as an Authentic Foundation of Education from the Confucian Perspective : A Nigerian Situation*. 14(1), 55–61.
- Repnikova, M. (2022). Rethinking China's Soft Power: Pragmatic Enticement of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia. *China Quarterly*, 250(April), 440–463. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741022000340>
- S, M. T., Kumar, R. R., Ommets, R. E. C., Prajapati, A., Blockchain, T.-A., MI, A. I., Randive, P. S. N., Chaudhari, S., Barde, S., Devices, E., Mittal, S., Schmidt, M. W. M., Id, S. N. A., PREISER, W. F. E., OSTROFF, E., Choudhary, R., Bit-cell, M., In, S. S., Fullfillment, P., ... Fellowship, W. (2021). Title.



MAAUN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATIONS (MIMJRI)

A Publication of the Institute of Africa Higher Education Research and Innovations (IAHERI)
in Collaboration with

Maryam Abacha American University of Niger (MAAUN) Maradi, Niger Republic

Maiden Edition/Volume 1, October, 2023

ISSN: 3027 – 0294

DOI: <https://10.59479/jiaheri.v1i001.36>



Frontiers in Neuroscience, 14(1), 1–13.

Udoh, E. W. (2020). Appropriating the Ethos of Confucius for the Rebuilding of the Nigerian Commonwealth. *PINISI Discretion Review*, 4(1), 103. <https://doi.org/10.26858/pdr.v4i1.14794>

Xu, Zhang, F., & Wang, Y. (2020). An investigation of Confucius Institute's effects on China's OFDI via cultural difference and institutional quality. *Journal of Asia Business Studies*, 14(3), 241–263. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JABS-10-2016-0145>

Yoon, Y. (2020). An Exercise on Human Values, Ethics, and Political Economy. *Journal of Accounting, Ethics and Public Policy*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3520814