Int J Ethics Soc 2026; 7(4): 22-33

10.22034/ijethics.7.4.364

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF Ethics & Society

Review Article

Educational Analysis of Moral Virtues in Higher Education from the Perspective of John Nixon

Faramarz Muhammadi Pouya[1*], Fatemeh Biklarey[2]

1. Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran.
2. M.A Student, History and Philosophy of Education, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran.

Corresponding Author: Faramarz Muhammadi Pouya, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran. E-mail: muhammadipouya@basu.ac.ir

Received 23 May 2025 **Accepted** 02 Jul 2025 **Online Published** 04 Jan 2026

Abstract

Introduction: The primary aim of this article is to explicate the key role of universities in cultivating moral virtues and promoting a moral culture within society. Nixon believes that universities ought to become environments for nurturing human virtues such as social justice, civic responsibility, honesty, authenticity, and magnanimity.

Material and Methods: This study adopts a qualitative approach to the educational analysis of moral virtues in higher education from John Nixon's perspective. To elucidate moral virtues from Nixon's viewpoint, the "conceptual analysis method" is employed. The textual corpus of the present study is Nixon's book Towards a Virtuous University. In addition, sources related to the ethical conditions of higher education systems - such as scholarly articles and research reports - are examined. Data collection tools include library resources, academic documents, and Nixon's works.

Conclusion: The findings emphasize the importance of promoting these virtues within higher education and creating ethically oriented learning environments. This can lead to the cultivation of committed and responsible individuals capable of active participation in building a more ethical society. Overall, the study underscores the significance of fostering moral virtues in universities and academic environments, as well as the role of these institutions in enhancing the moral culture of society.

Keywords: *Ethics, Higher Education, Virtuous University, John Nixon*

How to Cite: Muhammadi Pouya F, Biklarey F. Educational Analysis of Moral Virtues in Higher Education from the Perspective of John Nixon, Int J Ethics Soc. 2026;7(4): 22-33. doi: 10.22034/ijethics.7.4.364

INTRODUCTION

Ethics is one of the fundamental human needs [1]. The field of ethics is among the most prominent and active areas of philosophy in the contemporary era, and this significance is primarily due to its breadth and inclusivity. All individuals, regardless of the way of life they choose, inevitably interact with moral concepts. Therefore, ethics is an essential component of daily life with which people widely engage [2]. Linguistically, "ethics" denotes habit, principles, methods, etc. In terminology, it refers to those positive traits that conform to societal norms. At times, we think of ethics as a description of a state or behavior, and at other times, we refer to it as systematic knowledge [3]. Given the vital role of moral values and principles in achieving individual and social well-being, ethical concerns have long drawn the attention of scholars, educators, and social reformers. The complexity of the nature of moral behavior, and consequently the scarcity of effective models and methods for moral education, has led to a global rise in ethical challenges in recent years. To

Copyright © 2026 Muhammadi Pouya F & Biklarey F. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License(http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

address such issues, there is no alternative but to strengthen the moral foundation of new generations through more effective moral education programs [4]. Today, moral education, as a fundamental dimension of teaching and learning, holds a special position and has become one of the central topics in educational sciences [5].

The rapid expansion of higher education at national and international levels, along with the growth of scientific and technological collaborations between universities and their engagement with industry and society, has made the need for a shared language to uphold ethical principles in knowledge, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship inescapable. The realization of such a framework requires revisiting and reforming the structures, processes, regulations, and prevailing attitudes within universities and higher education systems [6]. Professional ethics refers to a set of principles and criteria governing human behavior that defines the conduct of individuals and groups. It is a rational process of determining which values should be preserved and disseminated within an organization [7]. Ethics in the workplace refers to the set of principles and values that regulate individuals' professional behavior and relationships, guiding professional interactions. Undoubtedly, professional ethics - at personal, social, communicative, and value-based levels - strengthens workplace relationships, promotes cooperation and engagement, enhances trust, and preserves the credibility and reputation of academic institutions [3]. The foundation of ethics in higher education stems from the collective understanding of academic communities regarding their professional responsibilities. In other words, a university community will gain a profound understanding of ethics in higher education once it forms a clear and accurate perception of its professional activities, their underlying rationale, and its responsibilities toward society [8]. Ethics in higher education, by delineating the boundaries of appropriate or inappropriate behavior among administrators and faculty members, safeguards the interests of multiple groups within the field [1]. Adherence to academic and professional ethical standards enables the realization of the lofty goals of higher education [9].

Ethics in higher education focuses on universities' responsibility to educate committed and morally grounded human beings. Universities must become spaces for cultivating human virtues. Ethics should not be viewed merely as a set of rules, but as an inseparable part of the identity and mission of universities. The primary mission of universities is learning, and they must act accordingly [10]. Reconstructing professional ethics is essential for any serious institutional reform; without such commitment, institutional change lacks substance [11]. Universities must develop an inclusive public language of education that reflects moral academic goals and aspirations [10]. The current dominant discourse does not lead toward the aims of teaching and learning; therefore, universities must reopen discussions regarding the purposes of education, create civic learning spaces, and acknowledge human diversity [10]. Several virtues are proposed for ethics in higher education. These goods and virtues - though rooted in traditional methods of teaching and research - can foster new insights, understandings, and approaches for collaboration. They provide a framework of virtue-based capabilities within which individuals can act and, through their actions, move unpredictably beyond their current state of knowledge and understanding [12]. These virtues are not predefined; rather, they emerge through teaching, research, scholarship, and academic collaboration, and they are interdependent [13]. Such virtues are essential for maintaining the moral integrity of research, scholarship, and

teaching. They enable universities to function as civic spaces in which learning and teaching flourish [11].

Higher education provides conditions conducive to the emergence of ethical challenges, and ethical principles hold a vital role across all its domains and activities [14]. The gradual spread of capitalist ideology and the transformation of universities into instruments for meeting the increasing economic, technical, political, and military demands of the modern world have contributed to the declining attention paid to the ethical functions of universities [9]. Despite the richness of religious and cultural sources, the topic of "ethics in university education," particularly "ethics in academic teaching and research," has not received adequate attention. Ethics in teaching has been largely overlooked, and extensive research in this area is lacking [1]. Moreover, despite the indispensable role of faculty members in the educational process and the importance of their ethical responsibilities, few studies have been conducted to develop conceptual models of faculty professional ethics [15]. Meanwhile, examining the status of professional ethical standards in the national higher education system can help policymakers, administrators, and planners formulate effective strategies to reduce the gap between the current state and the desired state, ultimately improving these standards [16].

It appears that further attention to ethics in higher education is necessary. Increasing concerns about the erosion of ethical boundaries in higher education institutions have challenged and influenced many activities within the field. Therefore, given the importance of ethics across all dimensions of life - especially in educational systems responsible for cultivating morally grounded individuals - this study seeks to analyze moral virtues in higher education from John Nixon's perspective. In other words, it aims to elucidate the key role of universities in cultivating moral virtues and enhancing the moral culture of society.

Previous studies indicate that the weakening of universities' ethical functions has shifted their orientation away from fostering spiritual and moral development toward merely producing technically skilled labor. This underscores that reviving the ethical functions of universities - indeed one of their most fundamental missions - is not optional but necessary [9]. By strengthening moral and value-based education, one can contribute to developing a society composed of ethical, valuable, and responsible individuals [17]. University administrators and staff must recognize that institutionalizing virtuous behaviors within the university leads to improved service quality and long-term competitive advantage [18]. Likewise, ethical qualities among faculty members can ensure heightened effectiveness and quality within the higher education system [19]. Virtues shape the moral culture of a university and foster an environment that values honesty, care, and responsible ethical conduct in research [20]. Virtues are crucial in forming the ethical culture of universities. By instilling high moral values and practices among students, they help prepare them for a desirable future and create a responsible academic environment [21]. Virtues - especially honesty - shape the ethical culture of universities by fostering admirable traits among teachers and students. These virtues enhance educational outcomes by strengthening critical thinking, autonomy, and moral sensitivity, and they contribute to societal development by cultivating independent and integrated personalities [22]. To better understand social and civic goods, one must attend to the virtues and moral values that emerge within social interactions and associations. Nixon concludes that strengthening such virtues can improve social life and reinforce solidarity within communities [23].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study aims to analyze and examine moral virtues in higher education from John Nixon's perspective and investigate the various dimensions of these virtues within universities. A qualitative research approach has been employed. Qualitative studies, through deep and structured conceptual analysis and inferential examination of relationships among concepts, provide opportunities for new and deeper insights [24]. Given the philosophical and educational nature of the research topic and the need for precise conceptual analysis, this method is appropriate for answering the research question. To clarify moral virtues from Nixon's viewpoint, the conceptual analysis method is utilized. Conceptual analysis is a common qualitative research method used to identify, define, and accurately describe concepts and their key components. Additionally, the document analysis method is employed to advance the study. Document analysis entails descriptive and analytical inquiry, with the aim of extracting the underlying purposes and motivations within texts, documents, or interpretive analyses. These analyses are accepted as the author's written language and discursive expression [25]. The statistical population of this research is the book Towards a Virtuous University. Related sources such as academic articles and research reports concerning ethics in higher education are also examined. Data collection tools include library resources, academic documents, and Nixon's works. Data were gathered through the study of books, scholarly articles, and research reports relevant to the topic.

DISCUSSION

Today, values such as efficiency, control, and profitability alone are not sufficient to guide organizations toward a sustainable future. In this context, higher-order values - namely moral virtues - come into focus, as they can help organizations achieve meaningful and valuable outcomes that transcend financial success [26]. Virtue signifies perfection, knowledge, superiority, and moral excellences, and its opposite is vice [27]. In contemporary times, organizational and professional ethics play a highly significant role in the world and within organizations; ethics and related issues such as justice, fairness, commitment, and individual and organizational rights have gained an important and prominent place. Therefore, managers and employees, in addition to organizational and legal regulations, require a set of ethical and value-based principles to guide their organizational affairs. Such principles assist them in organizational behaviors and procedures and make possible a form of coherence in organizational ethics [3]. Today, universities, as educational organizations, must become environments for cultivating human virtues. From Nixon's perspective, virtues such as social justice, civic responsibility, and honesty constitute the foundations of ethics in higher education and can contribute to redefining universities as civil and morally oriented institutions. Universities, as centers of knowledge and culture production, must take their social responsibilities seriously. Ethics must be manifested not only in theory but also in practice. According to Nixon, four virtues exist within academic activities, and through them one can generate new insights, understandings, and ways of working together. They offer a framework of virtue-based capabilities within which individuals may act, and through practice move in unpredictable ways beyond the current state of their knowledge and understanding [12]. These four virtues are examined below.

Honesty

The term Sedq (honesty) has multiple meanings, the opposite of which is Kezb (falsehood). Some scholars believe honesty means the correspondence of speech with reality, while

others hold that it refers to the alignment of speech with the speaker's beliefs, or a combination of both; falsehood, by contrast, signifies deviation from such correspondences [28]. Honesty means the absence of contradiction between thoughts, words, and actions. An individual who exhibits no explicit or implicit inconsistency in speech and behavior is considered honest. Honesty must first emerge within the individual and then be displayed to others. The lack of honesty manifests as falsehood and deficiency in the path of truthfulness, leading the individual toward lying and concealing the truth [29]. Honesty is a form of trustworthiness especially associated with speech. Honest behavior entails both awareness of the standards by which truthfulness is assessed and acting in accordance with the provisional and contestable norms of the community within which the individual functions as a moral agent. On this basis, truth is a prerequisite for social stability and must be identifiable, understandable, and intelligible [12]. Although the alignment of speech with truth and reality is a condition of honesty, it is not sufficient; a truthful person is one who believes in what they say [12]. For establishing understanding and agreement in modern, democratic, and complex societies, the statements or claims expressed in discourse must correspond to reality. When a person puts forward a claim in a communicative act, they implicitly or explicitly assert that their claim aligns with existing reality [12].

Academic work must be founded upon honesty and the virtues of truth, and this honesty plays a key role in all academic activities - from teaching to research and scholarly collaboration. Without these virtues, the moral foundations of academic endeavors will collapse [12]. Academic dishonesty has become one of the most contentious challenges in higher education and poses a serious threat to educational systems in both instructional and research domains. Violations of academic honesty undermine fair competition within educational environments and, as a significant harm to the educational system, negatively affect the scientific growth and development of the country [30]. Academic dishonesty (such as lying, concealing the truth, cheating, and deception) is recognized as unethical behavior in educational environments that helps individuals achieve unfair, illegal, and inappropriate outcomes [31].

In recent years, with the expansion of higher education and the increase in articles and theses, academic fraud and dishonesty have become critical concerns within academic communities. Thus, examining the factors influencing such phenomena holds special importance [32]. Research and scholarship in universities, due to increasing external dependency, have become increasingly policy-oriented. Various government agencies, commercial and industrial sectors, charitable organizations, and relatively independent research councils shape research programs across academic fields. Sponsors and independent reviewers expect relevant and application-oriented research and emphasize interdisciplinary research proposals as instruments to realize their aims. Research proposals are evaluated based on their capacity to make a difference within specific policy and practical domains. Conceptual focus, problem definition, research methodology, and even the presentation of findings become subjects of negotiation. The skills and knowledge required for such negotiation now constitute the core of research and scholarship [12]. Scientists are obligated to avoid fabrication, falsification, or misinterpretation of data and results, and must maintain an objective and unbiased stance throughout the research process. They must minimize experimental, methodological, and human errors and avoid bias, self-deception, and conflicts of interest in order to preserve scientific integrity [33].

Respect

Respect means consideration of the feelings, desires, rights, or traditions of others [12]. The term "Ehteram" derives from the root Haram and signifies honoring and valuing [34]. Respect means assigning value to a person or matter, reflected in the behavior of the one showing respect. The respecting individual perceives certain qualities or merits in the person or object and judges that they deserve attention, response, and appreciation; they recognize the legitimacy of the person's claims. Respect is always accompanied by attention, which often requires the expenditure of energy or acceptance of certain responsibilities [35]. Respect signifies acknowledgment of personal boundaries, autonomy, privacy, and distinctions between the self and the other [36]. Respect and the recognition of equal value in social relationships are crucial. They facilitate the creation of healthy and respectful interactions and reinforce the virtues of respect and autonomy. To cultivate such relationships, one must identify practices of respect within relational contexts that are increasingly characterized by transience, contingency, and inequality. Respect holds a special place in social relations, and its absence obstructs the development of healthy and advanced social structures; hence mutual respect is a key element in building healthy societies [37].

For many years, educational systems and related policies were influenced primarily by positivist and foundationalist perspectives, in which educational goals and curricular content were stable and certain. However, by the late twentieth century, new perspectives emphasizing plurality and diversity replaced these traditional orientations [38]. Studies have shown that perceived ethical behavior in teaching can influence students' academic enthusiasm [39]. Attending to the individual needs of students is one of the most important factors in education and has a significant impact on their cognitive development. This importance arises from the fact that each individual has unique needs, preferences, and characteristics that must be addressed in the teaching–learning process. Neglecting these needs can reduce students' motivation and performance. Educational planning should be designed to respect and attend to the individual needs of each student so that they may realize their full potential and experience optimal cognitive growth [40]. Traditionally, pedagogy emphasized the importance of students respecting teachers. However, the need for mutual respect as an essential component of the teacher-student relationship is now increasingly recognized. Students must pay attention to their teachers, but teachers must likewise attend to the educational development of their students. Both parties should contribute attentively and sincerely to their shared commitment to a specific field of study [12]. Mutual respect safeguards the rights and personal boundaries of both sides; maintaining these boundaries fosters positive and constructive interactions. Families and educational institutions bear primary responsibility for teaching and internalizing these concepts [37].

Respecting students means recognizing them as persons with equal value. This does not entail treating all students identically; rather, it implies acknowledging diverse educational needs, abilities, preferences, interests, pathways, and programs. Teaching based on the recognition of equal value aims to ensure the continuity of equal opportunities for students. Thus, differentiation should focus on enhancing students' agency rather than prematurely limiting their rights or freedoms [12]. A key form of moral resistance consists in practicing attentiveness to others - or to students - and asserting within one's institution that such attentiveness constitutes the principal criterion of excellence in all aspects of

academic activity [12]. In neoliberal logic, schools and universities, as formal educational institutions, function as though they offer education as a commodity. In this framework, students and their parents are treated as customers, and their relationships with educational institutions mirror those between customers and commercial entities [41]. Under current conditions, universities have largely lost their ideal and even traditional conception centered on serving humanity and humanism. They have become extensions of advanced training and of forms of lifelong learning oriented solely toward meeting the demands of the global economic system, serving primarily to produce specialized labor for production and profit [9].

Humanistic traditions of research and scholarship oblige us to take research subjects seriously, avoiding the imposition of our own assumptions upon them [12]. Scientific activity must be conducted impartially; a researcher must be able to remain neutral, remain open to unexpected occurrences, and maintain breadth of perspective and avoidance of bias when evaluating the work of others [33]. Special attention must always be given to the integrity of the research subject and to honesty in reporting methods and analytical findings. Researchers must exercise moral judgment regarding the use of their sources and information [12]. Ethical principles in research fall into two categories: first, principles related to titles and findings, rooted in matters of conscience; and second, ethical principles concerning scientific methods and processes, grounded in fidelity and responsibility, manifested in concepts such as honesty, impartiality, scientific skepticism, and collaboration in research teams. These principles indicate the extent to which the creator of a work has maintained trustworthiness regarding what they have produced and the sources attributed to it, and has properly honored the rights associated with authorship [42]. Central to such moral judgment is the question of how sources are analyzed and reported without distortion or manipulation within a structured analytical framework [12]. Plagiarism in proposing, conducting, reviewing, or reporting research constitutes scientific misconduct [33].

Authenticity

Authenticity pertains to emotional styles and modes of conduct that are appropriate, meaningful, purposeful, and responsive in human life, or denotes such qualities [12]. An authentic person is one who remains faithful to themselves and to their ideals, and whose behavior originates from the depths of their being. When individuals act on the basis of their own decisions and beliefs, the truth of life reveals its meaning [43]. Taylor, in his interpretation of the ethics of authenticity, identifies three malaises of modernity: first, individualism, which refers to the freedom of self-determination without which a social model of human flourishing is not possible. Individualism signifies the independence of the individual from society, while selfish individualism is characterized by a form of social solidarity that relies on the egoism or self-indulgence of its members [44]. Second is the dominance of instrumental reason, which leads to atomism and an instrumental outlook on life and the surrounding environment. This mode of reasoning, with its restrictive assumptions that structure human rationality, limits our capacity for recognition and reflection, constraining our choices. Instrumental rationality underlies all forms of oppression and enslavement of humans by humans, the exploitation of humans by humans, and the excessive exploitation of nature [45]. The third malaise is the distortion of the culture of authenticity and the limitation of choice imposed by the institutions of modernity. Taylor argues that the concept of authenticity must be revitalized and directed toward recognition, reflection, and organizational engagement so that authenticity can positively

influence identity and social interactions. Another dimension of authenticity relates to the recognition of emotions. Emotions are not alien or hostile forces that must be tamed, endured, or suppressed; rather, they are highly precise responses to the values and preferences of the agent who experiences them [12]. Recently, emotional experiences in the workplace have attracted increased scholarly attention. Likewise, the key role emotions play in leadership processes has been widely recognized [46]. Emotions constitute an integral part of human life, to the extent that imagining life without them is difficult. Emotional characteristics and changes, the ways in which emotional communication is established, and the ability to understand and interpret the emotions of others play a fundamental role in personality organization, moral development, social relationships, identity formation, and the construction of self-concept [47]. Meeting the material and spiritual needs of faculty members and creating a suitable emotional climate in the workplace - an environment that can potentially contribute to the university's scientific development and increase its effectiveness - constitute some of the most important responsibilities of academic administrators and leaders [48].

Both research and scholarship require that researchers and scholars adopt a rational stance toward their studies. They do so by evaluating evidence, making inferences, engaging in reasoning and analysis, interpreting, and drawing provisional conclusions, among other practices. Such activities require courage, for despite the complementary requirement of constant self-questioning, they also involve a form of self-affirmation [12]. The specific authenticity of research and scholarship can only be realized through attention to the orientation toward courage and compassion inherent in research [12]. Assertiveness refers to encouraging others to express their views, desires, and feelings honestly and openly, enabling both parties to behave appropriately [49]. Various psychological and philosophical approaches to assertiveness emphasize concepts such as responsibility, mutual respect, recognition of the human dignity of the interlocutor, the desire for human rights for oneself and others, and the avoidance of flattery, excessive politeness, and appeasement [50]. Compassion refers to a set of skills and characteristics oriented toward attending to the needs and difficulties of others, fostering greater solidarity and concern for one another's well-being and liberation from misguidance. Thus, compassion is one of the key themes in education and plays a vital role in cultivating personal and social relationships grounded in kindness toward oneself and others [51].

In high power-distance cultures, the degree of respect individuals receive depends on their status and position within the socio-cultural hierarchy [52]. In such societies, individuals are deemed worthy of respect not by virtue of being human but due to their status and position. In contexts marked by disparities in power, social prestige, wealth, age, beauty, and acquired competencies, respect implies acknowledging these various dimensions of individuals' status [52]. The virtues of courage and compassion require us to recognize the capacity for human agency in ourselves and in others despite power differences. In doing so, they compel us to acknowledge one another as sentient beings who actively strive to integrate personal and professional, private and public matters, inward-facing and outward-facing concerns [12]. Human values must manifest both in speech and in action; one important arena for this is honoring the human dignity of students regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. Observing human values enables faculty members to regulate and manage their behavior in specific situations based on benevolence and justice [53].

Magnanimity

Magnanimity is associated with dimensions of generosity, humility, kindness, and benevolence in human beings. Magnanimous academic action can be described as the practice of cultivating qualities such as generosity, altruism, kindness, and goodwill among academic actors. Academic work inherently involves attending to new ways of understanding diverse perspectives of students, colleagues, audiences, and emerging media, as well as new modes of expressing ideas [12]. Magnanimity requires a calm and focused spirit capable of recognizing the desires and agency of others, being outward-looking, tolerant, and broad-minded [12]. Diversity and multiplicity in educational environments can offer teachers and learners opportunities for deeper learning. For such diversity to lead to significant and equitable learning outcomes, education must be intentionally and broadly inclusive [54]. Teaching students whose backgrounds differ entirely from that of the instructor is both challenging and valuable, as it requires greater magnanimity to understand the distinct contexts to which learners belong [12]. Teachers' perceptions of diversity and multiplicity are a critical factor in how they teach. If a teacher regards diversity in the classroom as something positive and a valuable resource for enriching learning, they will embrace it with enthusiasm. Conversely, if they have a negative view of diversity, they may respond with denial, avoidance, stress, or even fear [55]. Magnanimity entails working with colleagues and students whose cultural and geographical backgrounds differ significantly from one's own - students who work in a second or even third language and possess religious and cultural backgrounds very different from ours [12]. Understanding learners' interests and cognitive abilities is among the most important cognitive competencies of teachers [9]. Competent teachers possess professional knowledge that enables them to respond effectively to learners' educational needs. They hold a precise understanding of their learners, including awareness of their diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. They understand how the individual experiences learners bring to the classroom influence their learning and know how to structure lessons in ways that promote learners' physical, social, and intellectual development and foster desirable traits [9].

The failure to acknowledge research collaborators in doctoral or postdoctoral projects, visiting researchers, contracted researchers, and newly appointed faculty members is an issue that occurs and recurs. Whenever and wherever this happens, it signals a lack of magnanimity and a deviation from desirable standards of research and scholarship. One meaning of academic collaboration is understanding the concerns and interests of academic colleagues. Academic collaboration entails listening to and attending to colleagues' interests and work, including reading their published studies and, when appropriate, engaging with their ongoing research projects. Magnanimity involves recognizing colleagues' scholarly achievements and supporting one another in gaining recognition and achieving further success [12]. Planning to mentor students - and in some cases, colleagues - toward academic advancement, especially by cultivating scientific and academic thinking, is one of the professional responsibilities of faculty members [53]. Respect for colleagues includes preserving the dignity of oneself and others and avoiding behaviors that undermine one another in pursuit of enhancing students' abilities. Collaboration and exchange of ideas with colleagues are among the most effective ways to improve teaching quality. Observing respect for colleagues in the academic setting creates a positive atmosphere, honors senior members, provides opportunities for new members, utilizes the full intellectual capacity of the institution, and ultimately enhances student learning and benefits society [56].

CONCLUSION

This review demonstrated that, from John Nixon's perspective, moral virtues play a fundamental role in enhancing the quality of higher education and in cultivating a generation that is responsible and committed. In comparison with traditional approaches that focus primarily on the cognitive and skill-based dimensions of education, Nixon, with a more comprehensive outlook, emphasizes the importance of fostering the moral and character dimensions of both students and faculty members. Nevertheless, it should be noted that implementing this perspective in practice faces several challenges. The limitations of this review include the inability to empirically examine the direct impact of moral virtues on the performance of students and faculty. Moreover, cultural and value diversity across different societies may influence the interpretation and implementation of these virtues.

By moving beyond traditional approaches to ethics, Nixon argues that universities should function as dynamic and purposive ecosystems for cultivating human virtues. This view transforms the university from merely a site for the transmission of technical and specialized knowledge into a context for the growth and flourishing of the character of students and faculty. The findings of this study highlight that virtues such as honesty, respect, authenticity, and magnanimity are regarded as foundational principles for personal and social development. Honesty ensures academic credibility and public trust in universities; respect lays the groundwork for constructive interactions and collaboration among individuals; authenticity enables individuals to remain faithful to their beliefs and values; and magnanimity strengthens empathy and attentiveness to the needs of others within society. Accordingly, universities should prioritize promoting these virtues by creating morally grounded learning environments. This requires designing appropriate educational programs, organizing professional ethics workshops, providing open spaces for dialogue, and encouraging ethical behavior within academic settings. Furthermore, universities must act with transparency and accountability in their own operations so as to serve as role models for society, and, through collaboration with civil and governmental institutions, take essential steps toward promoting an ethical culture. Ultimately, it can be argued that investing in the cultivation of moral virtues in higher education constitutes a strategic necessity for both developing and advanced societies. Such investment not only leads to the formation of ethical and effective leaders but also contributes positively to strengthening democratic institutions, reducing corruption, increasing public trust, and improving overall quality of life. As vital pillars of society, universities bear a significant responsibility in this regard and must proceed with careful planning and firm resolve to achieve this important goal.

.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, all ethical considerations - including adherence to academic integrity, accurate citation of sources, and avoidance of any distortion or misinterpretation of John Nixon's views - were observed. Additionally, efforts were made to avoid any personal bias in the interpretation and analysis of concepts related to moral virtues in higher education, and the findings were presented on the basis of credible evidence and logical reasoning.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

FUNDING DECLARATION

This research did not receive any grant from

funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

REFERENCES

1. Arianpour M, Mehrabi N. Obligations & strategies of professional ethic in higher education system. Ethics in Science and Technology 2017; 11 (4) :17-23. (In Persian). https://dor.isc.ac/dor/20.1001.1.22517634.1395.11.4.3.7
2. Peikani, J. From Folk Morality to Moral Philosophy. *Metaphysics*, 2014; 5(16): 129-142. (In Persian). https://dor.isc.ac/dor/20.1001.1.20088086.1392.5.16.8.6
3. Maalmir M I, Malmir A. Realization of professional ethics among employees of scientific and educational centers (case study of Razi University, Kermanshah). International Journal of Ethics and Society, 2025; 6 (4):70-74. http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/ijethics.6.4.70
4. Vejdani F. A critical review of the integrated moral education model based on the idea of moral expertise. Journal of Philosophy of Education, 2017; 2(1): 115-143. (In Persian).
5. Mehrjou P. An Exploration of the Concept of Pathology in the Moral Education of Humans in Surah Al-Ma'un. Quranic Studies, 2023; 14(54): 41–56. (In Persian). https://doi.org/10.30495/qsf.2023.1963304.2901
6. Keshavarz A, Ghaderi M, Sadeghi T. The role of high human morality and the role of control and monitoring, the improvement of university research morality. Pouyesh in Humanities Education, 2016; 1(1): 18-25. (In Persian). https://dor.isc.ac/dor/20.1001.1.27172260.1394.1.1.3.7
7. Alharabi M, Alghamdi A, Alghatani L. The relationship between personality traits of temperament and character and professional ethics: the mediating role of psychological defense mechanisms. International Journal of Ethics and Society, 2025; 6 (4): 64-69. http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/ijethics.6.4.64
8. Nemati M A, Mohseni H. Ethics in higher education; components, requirements and strategies. Ethics in Higher Education, 2009; 63: 9-46 (In Persian).
9. Rezaie M. An analysis and explanation of the ethical functions of university in contemporary era. Strategy for Culture, 2019; 12(47): 109-126. https://doi.org/10.22034/jsfc.2019.103791
10. Nixon J. Education for the good society: the integrity of academic practice. London Review of Education, 2004; 2(3): 245-252. https://doi.org/10.1080/1474846042000302861
11. Nixon J. Relationships of virtue: rethinking the goods of civil association. Ethics and Education, 2007; 1(2): 149-161. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449640600950766
12. Nixon J. Towards a University with Virtue: The Ethical Foundations of Academic Activities, translated by Bakhtiar Shabani Varaki, edited byGhadimi S, Shahid Beheshti University, Publications of the Supreme Council of Cultural Transfer: Iranian Education Philosophy Association. 2017. (In Persian).
13. Nixon J. Towards the Virtuous University: The Moral Bases of Academic Practice. 1st ed. London: Taylor & Francis e-Library. 2008. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203415979
14. Matlabi Fard A, Naveh Ebrahim A, Mohsenzadeh F. Investigation and identification of professional and ethical indicators in education and teaching from the point of view of master's students: a qualitative study, Ethics in Science and Technology, 2012; 6(4). 9-17. (In Persian). https://dor.isc.ac/dor/20.1001.1.22517634.1390.6.4.2.1
15. Abbasi R, Taheri G, Babashahi J. Investigating faculty members' professional ethics in view of students. Ethics in Science and Technology 2018; 12 (4) :60-69 (In Persian). https://dor.isc.ac/dor/20.1001.1.22517634.1396.12.4.7.8
16. Azizi N. Professional ethics in higher education; a reflection on strategy of improvement of ethical standards in university education. Strategy for Culture, 2010; 3(Issue 8-9): 173-201. (In Persian).
17. Yazdan Dost H, Yazdan Dost S. The importance of teaching ethics and values in the educational environment. 1st International Conference of Psychology, Social Sciences, Educational Sciences and Philosophy, Babol. 2023. (In Persian).
18. Dehghanizadeh M, Zainabadi H R, Arasteh H R, Naveh Ebrahim A (2022), designing and explaining the model of university consequences as a virtuous organization; Subject of study: State universities affiliated to the Ministry of Science. New Approach in Educational Management, 2022; 12(2): 54-75. (In Persian). https://doi.org/10.30495/jedu.2021.24453.4906
19. Ghanbari S, Ardalan M R, Beheshti Rad R, Sultanzadeh V (2014), Professional ethics of faculty members and its relationship with the quality of higher education. Ethics in Science and Technology Quarterly, 2014; 10 (2). (In Persian).
20. Banks J S. (2018), Virtue Ethics in the Conduct and Governance of Social Science Research. 1st ed. Emerald. 2018. https://doi.org/10.1108/S2398-601820180000003002
21. Nair R S. Ethics in Higher Education. 1st ed. Information Science Reference (An Imprint of IGI Global). 2014. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-6198-1.ch011
22. Chapfika B. The role of integrity in higher education. International Journal for Educational Integrity 2008; 4(1). https://doi.org/10.21913/IJEI.v4i1.192
23. Nixon J. Relationships of virtue: rethinking the goods of civil association. Ethics and Education, 2007; 1(2): 149-161. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449640600950766
24. Creswell J W. Five qualitative approaches to inquiry. SAGE Publication. 2007.
25. Sadeghi Fasai S, Irfan Manesh I. Methodological foundations of documentary research in social sciences, case study: the effects of modernization on the Iranian family. Culture Strategy, 2014; 8(29): 61-91. (In Persian).
26. Tanha L, Sadeh E, Amini Sabegh Z, Afsharnezhad A. Organizational virtue modeling in service organizations with the approach of promoting organizational innovation. Innovation Management in Defense Organizations, 2025; 7(23): 133-154. (In Persian).
27. Merriam Webster. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. USA: Merriam-Webster Mass Market. 2022.
28. Irvani J. The principle of honesty in the Qur'an and the analysis of cases of perjury. Quranic Teachings, 2012; 10(13). (In Persian).
29. Ayazi A N. Examining the weakness of honesty (lying) in the Quranic teachings. Quranic Teachings, 2023; 35: 59-80, (In Persian).
30. Nemati M R, Reshadat Jo H, Arasteh H R. Designing a comprehensive model to improve the scientific integrity of Azad University students. Iranian Political Sociology, 2019; 3(3): 442-467. (In Persian). https://doi.org/10.30510/psi.2021.302549.2235
31. Fouladchang M, Derakhshan M, Barani H, The relationship between mindfulness and academic dishonesty: the mediating role of academic hope. Education and Learning Studies, 2018; 77: 50-70. (In Persian).
32. Nazemi R, Imani H R. The relationship between the moral components of personal interest and concern for others

with scientific dishonesty. Ethics in Science and Technology, 2017; 13(2): 61-68. (In Persian). https://dor.isc.ac/dor/20.1001.1.22517634.1397.13.2.8.2
33. Norouzi F, Bakhtiari M. The level of students' adherence to the student norms of scientific ethics and academic factors affecting it. Journal of Social Analysis of Social Order and Inequality, 2014; 7(1). (In Persian).
34. Dehkhoda A A, et al. Dehkhoda dictionary. 1st ed. Tehran University Press. 1952. (In Persian).
35. Ketabi S. How to teach practical mutual respect to students. 9th Scientific Research Conference on the Development and Promotion of Management and Accounting Sciences. Iran: Tehran. 2023. (In Persian).
36. Hosseini M. The dialectic of intimacy and respect in a television conversation. Researches in Linguistic, 2023; 14(2): 131-152. (In Persian). https://doi.org/10.22108/jrl.2023.137291.1746
37. Ghorbanejad M, Habibi M, Habibi H. How the quality of mutual respect between teacher and student and the rights of each of them from the perspective of verses and traditions. 2nd International Conference on Psychology, Educational Sciences and Lifestyle, Mashhad. 2014. (In Persian).
38. Tavasli T. Cultural pluralism and its impact on educational systems. The Journal of Philosophical Theological Research, 2017; 20(78). (In Persian).
39. Kazem Al-Adi H A, Ghalavandi H, Mohajeran B. Analyzing the relationship between perceived educational ethics and thinking styles of students with academic enthusiasm: the mediating role of academic engagement. International Journal of Ethics and Society, 2024; 6 (3) :36-46. http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/ijethics.6.3.36
40. Soltani A M, Khosravi D, Berkoie M, RazPenhan M. The importance of paying attention to students' individual needs and its impact on students' cognitive development. Conference on Management and Humanities Researches in Iran. Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Management and Humanities Researches in Iran. Tehran. 2024. (In Persian).
41. Tabatabai Hosna M. Criticism of the foundations of neoliberalism epistemology in education from the perspective of Islamic education. Marifat, 2024; 312: 31-36. (In Persian). https://doi.org/10.22034/marifat.2023.2021382
42. Mahmoudi A. A philosophical approach to ethics in research. Epistemological Studies in Islamic University, 2008; 11 (4): 129-150. (In Persian).
43. Ashabi A. The existentialist thoughts of Jean-Paul Sartre with an emphasis on the book "Criticism of Dialectical Wisdom". metaphysical researches, 2023; 3(1): 243-268. (In Persian).
44. Asghari A (2019). The concept of individualism in Iran and its relationship with classical concepts of individualism. Sociology of Social Institutions, 2019; 7(15): 9-30. (In Persian).
45. Mokhles S, Najati H M, Ahmadi O A. Theory of culture and rationality in the thought of Herbert Marcuse. International Political Economy Studies, 2024; 6(1): 165-191. (In Persian). https://doi.org/10.22126/ipes.2022.7990.1486
46. Aghighi A. The role of ethical leadership and proactive personality on organizational citizenship behaviors: explaining the mediating effect of positive and negative emotions. International Journal of Ethics and Society, 2020; 2 (2): 11-18. https://dor.isc.ac/dor/20.1001.1.26763338.2020.2.2.2.5
47. Alizadeh F, Sharfi M R (2013), managing emotions from the perspective of Nahj al-Balagheh. Kitab and Sunnah, 2013; 2(3): 7-28. (In Persian).
48. Ghurchian N, Mohammadkhani K. Academic leadership based on emotional intelligence and faculty effectiveness (FEMEIL model). Cultural Management, 2011; 4(8): 121-137. (In Persian).
49. Rajabi F. Courage and its role in life. 3rd International Conference of Psychology, Educational Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, Tehran. 2019. (In Persian).
50. Aj A, Ishani F, Edizadeh M, Bayleri A, Jahedi H, Iri M, et.al. The relationship between assertiveness and academic performance of students. International Conference in Engineering, Science and Technology, Tehran. 2015. (In Persian).
51. Jabervarazneh A, Mir Jalili A M, Falah M H. The educational effects of compassion in the individual and social spheres from the perspective of the Qur'an and hadiths. Educational Teachings in Quran and Hadith, 2017; 4(2): 99-120. (In Persian).
52. Moghaddasi Z, Hosseini S M. A corpus-based study of the concept of ehteram ("respect") in the Iranian culture. Linguistic Studies: Theory and Practice, 2023; 2(1): 65-84. (In Persian). https://doi.org/10.22034/jls.2023.140073.1049
53. Ahanchian M R, Soleimani E. Faculty members' understanding of professionalism in Iran's higher education system. Quarterly Journal of Research and Planning in Higher Education, 2016; 84: 1-24. (In Persian)
54. Sanger C S. Diversity, Inclusion, and Context in Asian Higher Education. In: Sanger, C., Gleason, N. (eds.) Diversity and Inclusion in Global Higher Education. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan. 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1628-3_1
55. Izadpanah A. A critical analysis of the opportunities and possibilities of education and education in the theoretical foundations of formal education in Iran. Journal of Curriculum Researches, 2023, 2: 256-278. (In Persian). https://doi.org/10.22099/jcr.2023.6964
56. Matlabi Fard A, Naveh Ebrahim A, Mohsenzadeh F. Recognizing professional and ethical indicators in education and teaching. Ethics in Science and Technology 2012; 6 (4) :9-17. https://dor.isc.ac/dor/20.1001.1.22517634.1390.6.4.2.1