

Enhancing Interior Design Education: The Role of the King Salman Urban Charter in Cultural Heritage Understanding

Faten Yanksari

Assistant Professor of Interior Design, College of Design and Applied Arts, Taif University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
f.yanksari@tu.edu.sa

Sadeem Qumsani, Reem Alsharif, Joory Al-Qurashi, Shahad Al-Harthi, Ghala Al Faqeeh, Lama Alsulami

Bachelor of Interior Design, Department of Interior Design, Taif University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Cultural heritage transcends mere material legacy from the past, serving as a crucial component that reflects a society's identity and cultural values. Educational institutions, particularly in the fields of interior architecture and design, play a pivotal role in cultivating this understanding among future generations. However, challenges such as inadequate integration of theoretical and practical aspects in teaching cultural heritage concepts can diminish students' awareness of their significance and application in professional contexts.

This study aims to investigate the impact of varied educational methods on enhancing interior design students' comprehension of architectural and cultural heritage concepts. It also evaluates the effectiveness of these methods in conveying values and knowledge supportive of cultural identity preservation. The findings of this research hold practical implications for educators in the field of interior design, providing insights into effective strategies for teaching cultural heritage concepts.

A sample comprising third-level female students from the Department of Interior Design at Taif University (n=55) was selected. The authors employed a classic experimental design framework, facilitating comparison between experimental and control groups via pre- and post-measurements. A two-hour experimental workshop was conducted to introduce the King Salman Urban Charter for Architecture and Urbanism through two distinct methodologies: one that utilized an experimental approach incorporating brainstorming, practical education, and technology, specifically artificial intelligence; and the other that adopted a traditional lecture-based approach.

The findings revealed that the effective teaching strategy for architecture and design involves combining traditional lectures, which enhance knowledge and understanding, with experimental methods that promote creativity and engagement. This integrated approach significantly improves students' comprehension and application of cultural heritage concepts.

Keywords: King Salman Urban Charter for Architecture and Urbanism, Cultural heritage, Educational methods, Artificial intelligence.

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage transcends being merely a physical remnant of the past; it embodies societal identity and civilizational values (Ministry of Culture, 2023). Therefore, educational institutions—especially those focused on interior architecture and design—play a crucial role in fostering this understanding among future generations. However, a significant challenge persists: the insufficient integration of theoretical and practical components in teaching cultural heritage concepts, resulting in students' limited awareness of the significance and application of these concepts in their professional endeavors.

This study aims to review and analyze the current academic methodologies employed in design education, focusing on those that enhance students' understanding of

cultural heritage preservation. It seeks to identify gaps in existing curricula and evaluate their effectiveness in connecting students to various aspects of heritage by analyzing the impact of both theoretical and practical education on students' comprehension and application of these concepts in future projects.

The research evaluates the outcomes of different educational curricula applied to students in the Department of Interior Design at Taif University during the 2024 academic year. It compares traditional lecture-based methods with experimental practical education approaches, providing recommendations to improve heritage teaching methods. This aim is to balance heritage preservation with contemporary urban development needs, thereby enhancing students' ability to devise innovative solutions that integrate authenticity and modernity.

1.1 Research Problem:

Despite growing interest in cultural heritage preservation, a disconnect remains between academic education in interior architecture and design and efforts to revive cultural heritage in local communities (Al-Masry, 2013). Many educational programs lack the integration of traditional and architectural elements within curricula, leading to a loss of knowledge and connection to architectural cultural heritage among new generations (Al-Masry, 2013). This gap risks eroding cultural identity and neglecting traditional urban planning methods reflecting historical and civilizational narratives.

1.2 Research Objectives:

- Evaluate Methods of Cultural Heritage Integration: Assess the effectiveness of various educational methods in integrating cultural heritage into the curriculum to strengthen students' connections to their heritage and aid in preserving cultural identity across generations.
- Enhance Creative Abilities through Cultural Heritage Integration: Foster students' creative abilities by exposing them to traditional architectural

principles and practices, incorporating cultural heritage into their design education through diverse ideas and methodologies relevant to future design projects.

1.3 Importance of the Research:

Revitalizing cultural heritage through design education enhances current and future generations' understanding of the cultural identity and historical values shaping societies over time. The research raises awareness of the importance of cultural heritage preservation. Additionally, it aims to improve the quality of academic education by identifying effective methods for conveying cultural heritage concepts, assisting academic institutions in enhancing their programs and training students more effectively.

1.4 Research Questions:

Primary Research Question: What are the most effective teaching methods for communicating concepts of architecture and design concerning the preservation of cultural heritage?

Sub-Questions: a) To what extent does implementing the experimental method in education influence students' understanding of cultural heritage preservation concepts in architecture and design? b) To what extent does applying the traditional lecture strategy impact students' understanding of cultural heritage preservation concepts in architecture and design?

2. Literature Review

Revitalizing cultural heritage through design education is essential for enhancing both current and future generations' understanding of cultural identity and the historical values that shape societies. Integrating cultural heritage into educational practice raises awareness of its significance, prepares students to address contemporary design challenges, and fosters a deeper appreciation for the cultures

from which they emerge. This approach not only preserves cultural identity but also supports broader sustainability goals.

2.1 Educational Value of Cultural Heritage:

Naheed and Shooshtarian (2022) emphasize the critical role of educational institutions in revitalizing cultural heritage in the face of globalization. Their research advocates for interdisciplinary strategies that merge theoretical understanding with practical application, supporting the development of sustainable urban communities. Similarly, Abdelnaiem (2012) highlights the role of educational programs in deepening students' appreciation for heritage by drawing on successful examples that integrate historical and contemporary architecture. Such integration enhances students' ability to carry forward cultural identity in modern contexts, contributing to their personal and professional growth.

Together, these studies affirm that embedding cultural heritage in education strengthens cultural belonging and equips students to tackle modern design challenges through a rooted, identity-driven approach.

2.2 Traditional Architecture as a Pedagogical Tool:

Ntefeh et al. (2014) explore how traditional Arab architecture informs modern sustainable design practices, emphasizing the importance of embedding heritage elements within contemporary education. This connection allows students to address environmental and social challenges through culturally grounded design solutions. Likewise, Al-Masry (2013) supports this view but notes policy-level gaps across Arab curricula, indicating a lack of systematic inclusion of heritage content in design education.

These findings support the use of traditional architecture as both a source of cultural transmission and a functional model for sustainable urbanism. Education thus

becomes the medium through which historical context is translated into design innovation.

2.3 Innovative Methods vs. Traditional Lectures:

Abouelmagd and Ahmed (2021) criticize the dominance of traditional lecture-based teaching in architecture programs, arguing that it limits student engagement. They advocate for experiential learning models that integrate real-world projects, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. El-Deeb (2024) echoes this, highlighting the value of active participation and the integration of cultural heritage into curricula to better prepare students for the demands of contemporary design practice.

These authors collectively argue that hands-on, immersive approaches foster critical thinking, creativity, and a more profound understanding of cultural heritage—core aims supported by the experimental approach used in this study.

2.4 Technology and Emotional Engagement in Heritage Learning:

Modern education increasingly leverages technology to offer interactive and emotionally engaging experiences. Morreale (2001) and Binbin et al. (2024) emphasize that emotional and sensory engagement enhances design learning, but caution that it must be paired with clear learning outcomes to be meaningful. Heritage education, when paired with digital tools and well-prepared instructors, can inspire stronger student connections to cultural identity while also promoting environmental awareness.

Despite these insights, the literature remains fragmented—some studies address theoretical aspects of heritage, while others focus on pedagogical innovation. Few combine both within an applied context.

2.5 Local Gaps and the King Salman Urban Charter:

There is a noticeable lack of empirical studies from Saudi Arabia that align cultural heritage with design pedagogy, particularly through national frameworks such as the

King Salman Urban Charter for Architecture and Urbanism. This Charter emphasizes preserving identity, sustainability, and innovation in urban planning, advocating for environmentally and culturally responsive design (Architecture and Design Arts Commission, 2022).

Alnaim and Bay (2023) highlight the relevance of the Charter through expert interviews and surveys of case studies, showing how traditional architecture can be critically reinterpreted to meet contemporary needs. Their research encourages designers to balance historical sensitivity with modern flexibility.

This study bridges existing gaps by applying the Charter in an educational workshop that introduced students to its principles through both traditional and experimental teaching methods. The workshop emphasized innovation, sustainability, and the preservation of local identity in interior design. Student comprehension was measured through pre- and post-tests evaluating their understanding of architectural heritage concepts.

In conclusion, integrating heritage into design education is essential for nurturing cultural identity and promoting sustainable development. Frameworks such as the King Salman Urban Charter provide a practical structure for linking theoretical understanding with design applications. This approach fosters innovation, cultural continuity, and environmental responsibility—foundations critical to the education of future designers.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design:

This study utilized a classic experimental design to evaluate the impact of educational methods on students' understanding of architectural and cultural heritage concepts. Two groups - experimental and control - were randomly assigned to ensure equivalence and mitigate internal validity issues. While pre- and post-tests helped

assess learning outcomes, this design has limited external validity, particularly due to the single-institution, single-gender sample and short intervention duration.

3.2 Participants and Sampling:

The sample consisted of 55 third-level female interior design students from Taif University. Participants were purposively selected and then randomly divided into two groups: 34 students in the experimental group and 21 in the control group. The restricted demographics (female-only, single institution, one academic level) limit the generalizability of findings.

3.3 Research Instruments:

Three tools were employed: (1) pre-and post-tests measuring understanding of cultural heritage; (2) direct observation forms documenting student engagement during activities; and (3) photo documentation of student outputs. However, the evaluation of creative output lacked standardized rubrics linked explicitly to the principles of the King Salman Urban Charter, which should be viewed as an integrated design philosophy.

3.4 Validity and Reliability:

Content validity was assured through expert review. Reliability was evaluated using intra-class correlation (ICC). Moderate reliability was found for the experimental group (ICC = 0.43, $p = .007$), while the control group's results were inconsistent (ICC = 0.12, $p = .282$), suggesting variation in interpretation or delivery of content.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures:

The intervention involved two-hour workshops for both groups. The experimental group participated in AI-enhanced, interactive design tasks reflecting King Salman Urban Charter principles. The control group received only lecture-based instruction. No extended time frame or follow-up was used, which is a noted limitation.

A classic experimental design framework was employed to explore relationships. Pre- and post-measurements compared an experimental group with a control group, utilizing random control to mitigate internal validity concerns. However, this design's external validity is limited, as pre-tests may influence participants' results, restricting generalizability (Nachmias et al., 2015).

In the experimental group, the teaching method emphasized hands-on learning through practical experiments related to the King Salman Urban Charter. Students engaged in activities such as observing materials and spatial distribution, reflecting on their experiences, and translating them into theoretical concepts. They then applied these concepts in design projects, creating sketches enhanced with AI for realism, with teachers acting as facilitators.

In contrast, the traditional teaching method centered on rote learning, where teachers served as the primary knowledge source. Students focused on memorization and information retention with limited interaction or critical thinking. Assessments relied on written tests emphasizing memorization rather than analysis, typically using low-tech tools like presentations and textbooks.

Experimental Teaching Method: This approach bases knowledge acquisition and scientific idea development on experimentation and observation. Key elements include:

1. Students engaged in practical experiments related to the King Salman Urban Charter style by observing materials, colors, and spatial distribution through various media.
2. Post-experience reflections allowed students to analyze the elements of the King Salman Urban Charter style, their reactions, and its efficacy in reflecting identity.
3. Students translated their experiences into theoretical concepts, explaining the King Salman Urban Charter style's use of natural materials and heritage traits, which integrated with contemporary design.

4. Students applied learned concepts in design projects by creating sketches of internal spaces that adhered to King Salman Urban Charter standards, which were enhanced via AI for realism. However, the use of AI in this experiment did not significantly add to students' understanding, serving primarily to render their ideas.
5. The teacher, who was one of the researchers, acted as a facilitator, providing feedback, helping to identify design goals, and guiding the experimental process (Binbin et al., 2024).

Traditional Teaching Method: The traditional teaching method places the teacher at the educational center, focusing on rote learning and repetition. Key elements include:

The teacher, who was one of the researchers, served as the primary knowledge source, guiding students through information dissemination and providing examples, with limited student involvement in research or critical thinking.

Students listened and memorized with minimal interaction or questioning, focusing on information retention for tests rather than deep understanding.

Traditional assessments relied on written tests that measured memorization rather than analysis, reinforcing education as mere memorization and retrieval.

Low-tech tools, such as presentations and textbooks, were utilized, relying on simplistic educational aids.

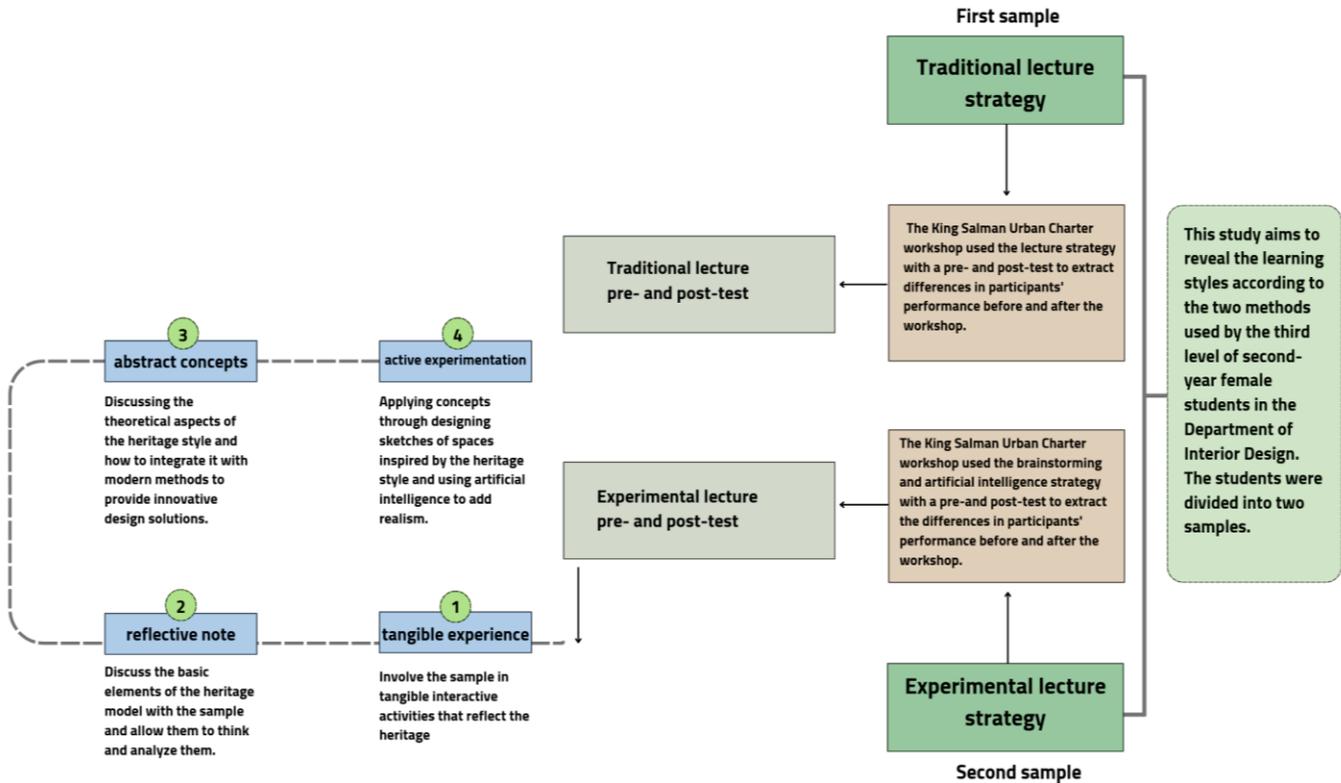


Figure (1): Outline of the Study Design (Binbin et al., 2024).

Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to ethical principles, ensuring the rights and safety of all participants. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained after the objectives of the study and participants' rights were thoroughly explained. The researchers maintained data confidentiality, using information solely for research purposes. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions affecting their academic status or access to educational services.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures:

Table (1): Frequencies and Percentages According to Personal Variables

Questions	groups	Category	Number	Percentage
Are you aware of the purpose of the study?	Group 1	Yes	30	91
		No	3	9
	Group 2	Yes	21	100
		No	0	0
I agree to participate in the above research and give my consent freely.	Group 1	Yes	34	100
		No	0	0
	Group 2	Yes	21	100
		No	0	0
What is your academic major?	Group 1	Interior design	34	100
		Other	0	0
	Group 2	Interior design	16	80
		Other	5	20

Table (2): Intra-Class Correlation – Group 1

p	df2	df1	F	Upper 95%-CI	Lower 95%-CI	Intra-class correlation coefficient
.007	30	30	2.52	0.68	0.1	0.43

Table (3): Intra-Class Correlation – Group 2

p	df2	df1	F	Upper 95%-CI	Lower 95%-CI	Intra-class correlation coefficient
.282	17	17	1.33	0.52	-0.26	0.12

Table (4): Pre- and Post-Test Results – Experimental Group

Pretest	Posttest	
13.39	13.68	Mean
1.71	1.62	Std. Deviation
2.91	2.63	Variance
8	7	Minimum
15	15	Maximum
12.76 - 14.01	13.08 - 14.27	95% Confidence interval for mean

Table (5): Pre- and Post-Test Results – Control Group

Posttest	Pretest	
14	13.17	Mean
0.91	1.58	Std. Deviation
0.82	2.5	Variance
12	10	Minimum
15	15	Maximum
13.55 - 14.45	12.38 - 13.95	95% Confidence interval for mean

4. Results

4.1 Sample Characteristics and Instrument Reliability:

The research sample consisted of 55 female students from the Interior Design Department at Taif University, divided into two groups: experimental (n = 34) and control (n = 21). Frequencies and percentages were calculated based on participants' awareness, consent, and academic background (Table 6).

Table (6): Frequencies and Percentages According to Personal Variables

Questions	groups	Category	Number	Percentage
Are you aware of the purpose of the study?	Group 1	Yes	30	91
		No	3	9
	Group 2	Yes	21	100
		No	0	0
I agree to participate in the above research and give my consent freely.	Group 1	Yes	34	100
		No	0	0
	Group 2	Yes	21	100
		No	0	0
What is your academic major?	Group 1	Interior design	34	100
		Other	0	0
	Group 2	Interior design	16	80
		Other	5	20

4.2 Instrument Validity and Reliability:

Reliability was assessed using intra-class correlation (ICC) for pre- and post-test results. Group 1 exhibited moderate reliability (Table 7), while Group 2's results showed inconsistency (Table 8).

Table (7): Intra-Class Correlation – Group 1

p	df2	df1	F	Upper 95%-CI	Lower 95%-CI	Intra-class correlation coefficient
.007	30	30	2.52	0.68	0.1	0.43

The ICC value of 0.43 with a significant p-value indicates moderate reliability but suggests the need for refinement in the assessment tool.

Table (8): Intra-Class Correlation – Group 2

p	df2	df1	F	Upper 95%-CI	Lower 95%-CI	Intra-class correlation coefficient
.282	17	17	1.33	0.52	-0.26	0.12

The low ICC and non-significant p-value indicate low consistency in the pre- and post-test scores of Group 2.

4.3 Statistical Data Processing:

Data were processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via DATAtab. The following methods were employed:

1. Pearson's correlation coefficient
2. Frequency and percentage distributions
3. Means and standard deviations
4. Paired sample t-tests

4.3.1 Impact of the Experimental Method:

Table (9): Pre- and Post-Test Results – Experimental Group

Pretest	Posttest	
13.39	13.68	Mean
1.71	1.62	Std. Deviation
2.91	2.63	Variance
8	7	Minimum
15	15	Maximum
12.76 - 14.01	13.08 - 14.27	95% Confidence interval for mean

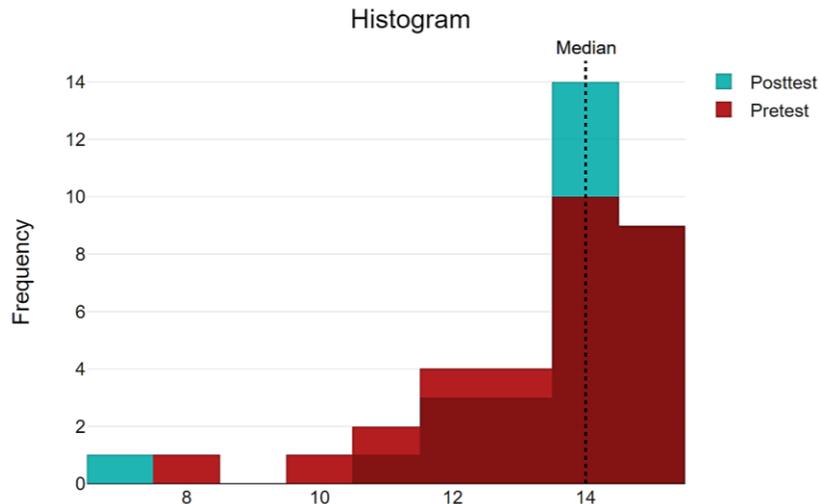


Figure (2): Means and standard deviations of the pre-posttests – Experimental Group

A marginal increase in mean scores was observed after applying the experimental method. However, the improvement was not statistically significant. Qualitative feedback highlighted student engagement with the workshop based on the King Salman Urban Charter. Students appreciated the hands-on and creative nature of the learning but required reinforcement from traditional methods to consolidate knowledge.

4.3.2 Impact of the Traditional Lecture Method:

Table 4.5. Pre- and Post-Test Results – Control Group

Posttest	Pretest	
14	13.17	Mean
0.91	1.58	Std. Deviation
0.82	2.5	Variance
12	10	Minimum
15	15	Maximum
13.55 - 14.45	12.38 - 13.95	95% Confidence interval for mean

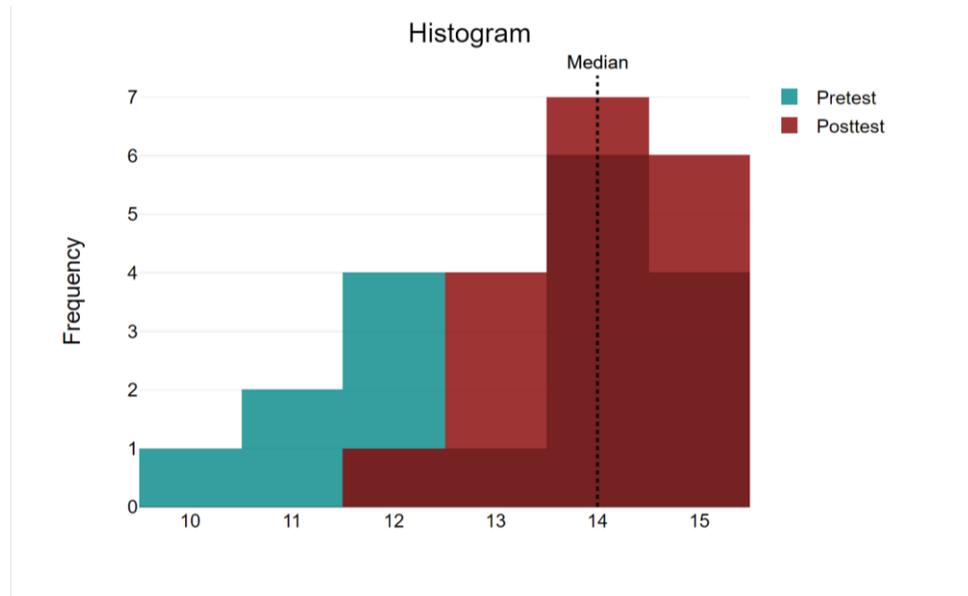


Figure 4.2. Means and standard deviations of the pre-posttests – Control Group

A statistically significant improvement was noted in the control group. The reduction in standard deviation suggests more consistent understanding among students. Qualitative feedback supported the statistical findings, with students praising the clarity and depth provided by the structured lecture format.

4.3.3 Comparative Effectiveness of Teaching Methods:

Comparing both groups revealed that:

- The experimental method encouraged creativity and engagement but yielded only marginal measurable improvements.
- The traditional lecture method led to a significant increase in understanding, indicating its effectiveness in delivering complex content.

A blended teaching approach is recommended—leveraging lectures for foundational knowledge and experiential activities for creativity and application.

4.4 Justification of Strategies:

The dual-method approach was validated by:

- Quantitative results favoring traditional lectures for foundational understanding.
- Qualitative feedback showing that experiential learning promoted engagement and emotional connection to content.

This dual approach allowed for a well-rounded educational experience. Future studies should develop standardized rubrics for evaluating creative output to better measure the impact of experiential strategies.

4.5 Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings:

- Quantitative: Traditional lectures improved post-test performance significantly (13.17 to 14.00), whereas the experimental group saw limited gains (13.39 to 13.68).
- Qualitative: Students responded positively to AI tools and design-based interaction, though assessment lacked structured evaluation tied to Charter principles.

4.6 Study Limitations:

1. Small, homogenous sample (female students, one institution) limits generalizability.
2. Short intervention duration (two hours) may not reflect long-term learning.
3. No standardized rubric for evaluating creative outputs.
4. Control group methodology not fully elaborated.
5. No longitudinal follow-up to assess retention or practical application.

Data were analyzed using DATAtab, employing descriptive and inferential techniques (mean, SD, t-tests, ICC). Thematic categorization of qualitative feedback provided contextual depth to the results.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that traditional lecture-based instruction remains effective in establishing foundational knowledge, aligning with the observations of Abouelmagd and Ahmed (2021). Conversely, while the experimental group exhibited only modest improvements, the positive student engagement aligns with Morreale's (2001) assertion that emotional and sensory stimulation must be coupled with structured evaluation to yield meaningful educational outcomes. The absence of standardized criteria for assessing creative outputs further limited the ability to fully evaluate the impact of the experimental method.

This research supports the blended learning model proposed by El-Deeb (2024), wherein traditional lectures are complemented by experiential approaches to optimize learning. The results affirm the value of diverse pedagogical strategies in enhancing students' understanding of cultural heritage and traditional architecture. Experiential learning was shown to foster creativity and engagement, while traditional lectures maintained effectiveness in delivering complex information and sustaining attention.

The implications of these findings are particularly relevant for educators and curriculum developers in interior architecture and design. A hybrid model that incorporates both methods can provide a holistic educational experience, supporting both theoretical knowledge acquisition and creative application in real-world contexts.

5.1 Recommendations:

1. Conduct Cross-Institutional Research: Broader, multi-institutional studies should be conducted to standardize effective teaching strategies related to cultural heritage within design programs.

2. Revise Academic Curricula: Curricula should integrate both traditional lectures and experiential methodologies to foster foundational understanding and stimulate creative engagement.
3. Enhance Educational Infrastructure: Classrooms and design studios should be upgraded with advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence and virtual reality, to enhance immersive learning and deepen students' comprehension of heritage-based concepts.
4. Update Heritage Education Modules: Educational content should be revised to highlight the role of cultural heritage in reinforcing national identity and to encourage innovative, context-sensitive design thinking.
5. Foster Institutional Collaboration: Partnerships between academic institutions and heritage-focused organizations should be encouraged. Such collaborations can provide students with access to field visits, hands-on workshops, and exposure to real-world design heritage projects.

5.2 Conclusion:

This study contributes to the evolving discourse on design pedagogy by demonstrating that an integrated instructional model—combining traditional and experiential approaches—can significantly enrich students' educational experiences. While traditional lectures provide clarity, consistency, and conceptual depth, experiential methods enhance engagement, creativity, and practical understanding.

The findings underscore the role of education not only in professional preparation but also in cultivating students as stewards of cultural heritage. The incorporation of frameworks such as the King Salman Urban Charter provides structure for embedding cultural identity within design education, ensuring the preservation of national heritage alongside innovative progress.

Ultimately, a well-structured hybrid model, guided by clearly defined evaluation metrics, may represent the most effective strategy for teaching cultural heritage

concepts in interior design—one that is adaptable, sustainable, and aligned with both cultural and educational imperatives.

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