

DIFFERENT GLOBAL CONTEXTS OF THE CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Introduction

The Confucius Institute is a non-profit organization that aims to promote the teaching of the Chinese language abroad, provide knowledge of Chinese language and culture to different peoples, stimulate humanistic and cultural exchanges, and foster mutual understanding between countries and China (CIEF 2020). By the end of 2021, despite the adverse conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the global development of this language and culture institution demonstrated resilience and reached a milestone of 489 Confucius Institutes and 817 Confucius Classrooms spread across 158 countries and regions worldwide. These institutions offer a diverse range of courses and classes, with over 105 million students enrolled in 78,000 different courses and classes (CIEF 2023).

With globalization, China's economic rise, and its integration with the world in recent decades, there has been a growing demand for learning the Chinese language. Inspired by the practices of Western countries such as the British Council of the United Kingdom, the Alliance Française of France, the Goethe-Institut of Germany, and the Instituto Cervantes of Spain, among others, the Confucius Institute was established as a joint venture, which marks its major difference and uniqueness in terms of its operating model compared to the aforementioned institutes (Cai 2019; Li 2022b; Liu

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2019a). Most Confucius Institutes are established within the campuses of host educational institutions in partnership with the Chinese International Education Foundation (CIEF) and Chinese universities. The parties involved, particularly the partner educational institutions, form a council consisting of members such as university presidents and directors of various administrative divisions. This council serves as the decision-making and administrative body of the Confucius Institute.

For China, the Confucius Institute has been one of its successful initiatives to develop friendly relations with the world. Chinese President Xi Jinping has stated that language is a golden key to understanding a country, and the Confucius Institute serves as an important platform for the world to get to know China. It acts as a window and a bridge for linguistic and cultural exchanges, playing a positive role in teaching the Chinese language and culture. Furthermore, it contributes to diversity, multiculturalism, and dialogue among civilizations (XINHUA 2015). Former Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong described the Confucius Institute as a “high-speed spiritual railway” to connect peoples (CHINA 2016). Considering its rapid expansion in less than two decades, the global presence of the Confucius Institute is indeed remarkable. Other language and cultural institutions took more than a century to achieve a similar level of reach and impact.

Although many countries have embraced the initiative, the Confucius Institute has also been subject to accusations and has become a tool for politicization in some Western countries. In the case of the United States, there has been a significant increase in negative attitudes towards the Confucius Institute, with it being portrayed as an educational institution with a political agenda. The U.S. government has taken a series of measures, including influencing public opinion, conducting inquiries and investigations, political interference, budget cuts, and legal restrictions, to hinder the activities of the Confucius Institute. As a result, many American institutions had to terminate previously formed agreements with China, leading to the closure of Confucius Institute activities under the effect of sanctions (Lien e Tang 2022). Today, it is not difficult to find metaphors, assumptions, and associations of the Confucius Institute as a “Trojan Horse,” “undermining academic integrity and importing censorship,” “political and ideological propaganda machines,” “national security,” etc. in Western media (Homeland Newswire, 2023).

Why has the Confucius Institute been well-received in some countries while experiencing a less amicable relationship in others? Why does the Confucius Institute, despite having the same nature as a language and cultural institution, seemingly receive different perceptions in Western contexts? What activities does the Confucius Institute engage in, and what role does it play?

What are the major challenges faced by the Confucius Institute? This debate about the Confucius Institute provides an observation panorama that can help enrich the understanding of China's role in the international arena, as well as the attitudes and involvement of other countries towards China's integration in the world. It is common to see many authors addressing the Confucius Institute within the dimension of international relations and politics (Lien and Tang 2022; Li 2022a; Wang, Uzodinma, and Niu 2021; Tien and Bing 2021; Nur Mutia and de Archellie 2023; Repnikova 2022; Zhou 2021; Luqiu and McCarthy 2019; Yellinek, Mann, and Lebel 2020; Becard e Filho 2019; Hruby and Petru 2019; Liu 2019b; Popovic, Jenne, and Medzihorsky 2020). At the same time, being installed in numerous educational institutions, the Confucius Institute is also studied for its academic functions and its role in the field of international education (Nitza-Makowska 2022; Rwantabagu 2020; Caruso 2020; Selezneva 2021; Paliszewska-Mojsiuk 2019; Haughton and Han 2020; Stambach 2022; Jain 2020; Li 2021). There are many comparative studies between the Confucius Institute and its Western counterparts or different Confucius Institutes in a particular country, region, or continent (Lien and Tang 2022; Cai 2019; Liu 2019a; 2019b; Li 2022b; Popovic, Jenne, and Medzihorsky 2020).

In this regard, given the importance and multidisciplinary of this topic, an update of knowledge is necessary. The present study aims to gather scientific literature on the Confucius Institute, investigating the most frequent questions and current research trends in this field, both nationally and internationally. Using a descriptive and comparative analysis as a basis, the study aims to construct reflections that significantly contribute to the study of this area.

Methodology

A systematic review aims to gather, critically evaluate, and conduct a synthesis of multiple primary studies (Magno Cordeiro et al. 2007). In the case of this study, the aim is to review articles related to the Confucius Institute published in the last 5 years (2019 to May 2023), focusing on the academic and diplomatic role of the institution. Therefore, a systematic literature review was conducted following the typical process of the method, which consists of: i) Defining the research question; ii) Searching for evidence; iii) Reviewing and selecting studies; iv) Analyzing the methodological quality of the studies; v) Presenting the results (Rf e Mancini Mc 2007).

The question that motivated this study was: What is the role of the Confucius Institute in the fields of education, academia, and diplomacy between countries and China? Guided by this question, the initial search aimed to find all articles that included the term “Confucius Institute” in the title, abstract, or keywords published in the last 5 years (2019 to May 2023). As a result, 402 articles were identified from two main databases (291 results from Web of Science and 111 results from Scopus). After reviewing the titles and abstracts, articles from the fields of philosophy, sociology, linguistics, and communication that did not address the research question were excluded. After removing duplicates, a total of 98 articles were selected for the next stage of analysis.

Next, an initial assessment was conducted based on the reading of abstracts, introductions, and conclusions, guided by inclusion and exclusion criteria. After this stage, 46 articles were excluded due to lack of relevance to the central theme, inappropriate format (work reports or event reports, comments, case reports instead of articles), restricted access to the full text, and difficulties in understanding foreign languages (Russian, Korean, etc.).

The remaining 52 articles were classified and analyzed in Microsoft Office Excel as potential references to be included in the review. By reading the full text of these articles, they could be broadly categorized into three groups: (a) studies that address the economic role of the Confucius Institute, focusing on how it can stimulate trade, exports and imports, investments, or tourism between countries and China; (b) studies that investigate the diplomatic and political role of the Confucius Institute and its reception in different countries; (c) studies that analyze the educational and academic role of the Confucius Institute.

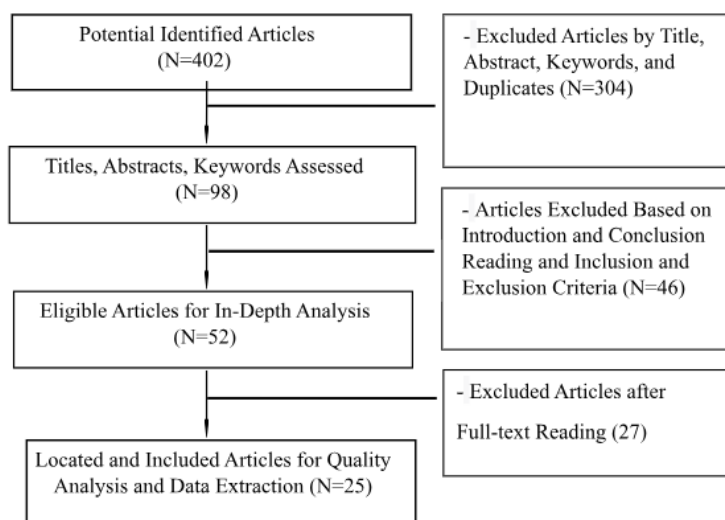
The present study aims to analyze the Confucius Institute as a relevant institution for cooperation and exchanges in the fields of education and research. In this process, the institution plays an important role in strengthening diplomatic relations between various countries and China. For this reason, only articles that exclusively focus on the economic role of the Confucius Institute in group (a) were excluded, as well as a portion of the articles in group (b) that only address political perspectives. After the filtering process, it was concluded that 25 articles met the established criteria and parameters and were included as references.

Table 1- Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	ID	Description
Inclusion	I1	Central theme approach that meets the research objective
	I2	Full-text access
	I3	Articles written in English, Portuguese, and Chinese
	I4	Academic articles with theoretical framework, methodology, and consistent presentation of the findings.
Exclusion	E1	Irrelevant articles for the research (excluded based on titles, abstracts, and keywords that do not relate to the objective, as well as articles from the fields of philosophy, sociology, linguistics, and communication).
	E2	Articles in languages other than English, Portuguese, and Chinese.
	E3	Articles with restricted access (paid articles or unavailable for download).
	E4	Work reports or event reports, comments, and case studies that are not actual research articles.
	E5	Articles solely focused on the economic role of the Confucius Institute.
	E6	Articles solely with political perspectives.

Source: Compiled by the author (2023)

Figure 1 - Selected Articles Flowchart



Source: Compiled by the author (2023)

Results and Discussion

Quantitative Analysis

The final analysis is based on a sample of 25 articles from the fields of political science, international relations, international education, and university internationalization management.

A total of 36 authors were identified, of which 8 (22%) have Chinese names and 28 (78%) have non-Chinese names. Regarding authorship, Li Siyuan (University of Leeds, UK) is responsible for 3 articles, while Liu Xin (University of Central Lancashire, UK) is the author of 2 articles.

Regarding the locations where the studies were conducted, a wide diversity is observed, including the African continent (6 articles), Asian continent (7 articles), North America (3 articles), Europe (1 article), and Arab countries (1 article). Additionally, there are studies that compare the Confucius Institute in China with other European, American, British, and Russian language and cultural institutions (6 articles), and one general study article that does not specify a location.

Table 2: Authors, Articles, and Study Locations

Authors	Articles	Study Location
Siyuan Li	China's Confucius Institute in Africa: a different story?	Africa
Siyuan Li	A Foucauldian Power Analysis of China's Confucius Institute in Africa: Power, Knowledge and the Institutionalisation of China's Foreign Policy	Africa
Repnikova M.	Rethinking China's Soft Power: Pragmatic Enticement of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia	Ethiopia, Africa
Stambach A.E	Chinese - Tanzanian Friendship and Friendship Treaties	Tanzania, Africa
Hermenegilde Rwantabagu	Building Dialogue Among Nations Through Educational and Cultural Cooperation: The Case of Burundi and the P.R. China	Burundi, Africa
Nur Mutia R.T., de Archellie R	China soft power and cultural diplomacy. The educational engagement in Africa	Africa
Ngu Ik Tien, Ngeow Chow Bing	SOFTPOWER, CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE AND CHINA'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN MALAYSIA	Malaysia, Asia
Hruby, J. Petru, T.	China's cultural diplomacy in Malaysia during Najib Razak's premiership	Malaysia, Asia
Selezneva, NV	LEARNING CHINESE IN VIETNAM: THE ROLE OF THE CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE	Vietnam, Asia
Zhou, Y	Confucius Institute in the Sino-Thai relations: A display of China's soft power	Thailand, Asia

Nitza-Makowska, A	Can the China-Pakistan economic corridor help Beijing Win Pakistanis' hearts and minds? Reviewing higher education as an instrument of Chinese soft power in Pakistan	Pakistan, Asia
Nur Mutia R.T. de Archellie R.	Reassessing China's Soft Power in Indonesia: A Critical Overview on China's Cultural Soft Power	Indonesia, Asia
Jain, R	China's Strategic Foray into Higher Education: Goals and Motivations vis-a-vis Nepal	Nepal, Asia
Yellinek,R. Mann, Y. Lebel, U	Chinese Soft-Power in the Arab world–China's Confucius Institutes as a central tool of influence	Arab countries, Africa and Asia
Haughton, NA Han, DW	Internationalisation through a Confucius sister city partnership: examining a 10-year sister city and university bi-lateral partnership	US
Luqiu,LR McCarthy, JD	Confucius Institutes: The Successful Stealth Soft Power Penetration of American Universities	US
Danielly Silva Ramos Becard Paulo Menechelli Filho	Chinese Cultural Diplomacy: instruments in China's strategy for international insertion in the 21st Century	US
Monika Paliszewska-Mojsiuk	Education along the Belt and Road	Poland, Europe
Donald Lien Peilan Tang	Let's play tic-tac-toe: Confucius Institutes versus American Cultural Centres	Comparative, US and China
Siyuan Li	China's Confucius institute and its European counterparts in Africa: A six-dimensional comparative study	Comparative, Europe and China

Liu Xin	So Similar, So Different, So Chinese: Analytical Comparisons of the Confucius Institute with its Western Counterparts	Comparative, Europe and China
Popovic, M; Jenne, EK; Medzihorsky, J	Charm Offensive or Offensive Charm? An Analysis of Russian and Chinese Cultural Institutes Abroad	Comparative, Russia and China
Cai, L.	A comparative study of the Confucius Institute in the United Kingdom and the British Council in China	Comparative, United Kingdom and China
Liu Xin	China's Cultural Diplomacy: A Great Leap Outward with Chinese Characteristics? Multiple Comparative Case Studies of the Confucius Institutes	Comparative
Wang, YW; Uzodinma, CG; Niu, CY	The path, value and limits of the Confucius Institute in carrying out public diplomacy	General study

Source: Research data (2023)

As the title, abstract, and keywords were analyzed, a WordCloud tool was used, and the most frequent words were: Confucius Institute, Soft Power, China, Relations, Cultural Diplomacy, education, and Public Diplomacy. Regarding the theories discussed, the most cited one was Joseph Nye's theory of Soft Power, which gained prominence from the 1990s to the present day. Following that, theories of Public Diplomacy and Cultural Diplomacy are also frequently mentioned. The majority of the articles made reference to or mentioned at least one of these theories.

Figure 2- Keywords Cloud

Source: Research data (2023)

Qualitative Analysis: the theoretical framework

The concept of Soft Power was developed by American political scientist Joseph Nye in his book, suggesting a more attractive approach to the exercise of power, without relying on traditional means. It refers to the

ability of a country to influence others through non-coercive means such as culture, values, policies, and institutions, rather than through military or economic means (Joseph Nye 1990). The author identifies three main sources of resources for a country's Soft Power: culture, political values, and foreign policies. In the context of globalization, education promoted by educational institutions plays a relevant role in the construction of Soft Power (Joseph Nye 2005).

Public diplomacy is a new diplomatic strategy adopted by various countries, which involves direct engagement with foreign audiences to improve the country's image and implement national policies (SHARP, 2005). Public diplomacy primarily targets the public of foreign societies, specifically non-official groups, organizations, and individuals. The central actor in public diplomacy is the government, and its objective is to explain the country's policies to foreigners, present its values and culture, and shape the national image of the country (Melissen 2005).

Cultural diplomacy is a diplomatic approach that involves specific fields, and in most cases, the actors involved are non-governmental, unlike public diplomacy (Wang, Uzodinma, e Niu 2021). The dynamics of Cultural Diplomacy are not limited to a dichotomy between state and non-state actors or between center and periphery, but are characterized by a network of transactional relationships involving various actors, including the state. This network is polycentric in nature and not hierarchical (HrubAe Petru 2019).

Analyzing the theoretical framework present in the reviewed studies, it is possible to observe that the trends are strongly linked to international relations and policies. At the same time, a portion of the studies seeks to evaluate the Confucius Institute from an educational and academic perspective, in light of theories of international cooperation or educational internationalization.

Case studies and comparative studies: Africa and arab countries

Comparing with the debates surrounding the Confucius Institute (CI) in the West, the development of the CI in Africa and Arab countries appears to be consistent and robust. According to the reviewed studies, this positive development is mainly attributed to the convergence between the CI and local Chinese presence. The CI is part of a broad network involving public and private institutions, businesses, labor agencies, and other forms of Chinese presence (Li 2021). Together with Chinese presence, the CI establishes a

collaborative power dynamic that contributes to the institutionalization of China's foreign policies in Africa (Li 2022a). The CI provides opportunities to experience China, enhance employability for its student body, and establish channels of contact for the host institution to integrate into the contemporary global education community (Repnikova 2022). Arab countries accept the CI as a contribution that can improve the quality and diversity of their educational system (Yellinek, Mann, e Lebel 2020). Chinese educational engagement in Africa has been seen as a cooperation based on shared benefits and interests, which helps nations overcome marginalization (Caruso 2020). The academic contribution of Chinese universities is of utmost importance, especially as educational institutions in Burundi face the challenge of understanding the needs of a developing society (Rwantabagu 2020).

However, challenges have also been observed. In terms of internal factors, there is a need for better coordination and transcultural understanding in the management of the Confucius Institute by both parties, as well as ensuring long-term sustainability (Li 2021; 2022a; Stambach 2022). In relation to external factors, the discourse of neocolonialism still causes repercussions (Repnikova 2022).

Asia

In the reviewed studies on Asian countries, all of them dedicated considerable paragraphs to explore the historical and cultural connections with China, as well as the evolution of bilateral relations as a contextualization. In the case of Thailand, it is argued that the success of the Confucius Institute is due to the economic, political, and social context of Sino-Thai relations within a specific period, rather than the attractiveness of Chinese culture (Zhou 2021). Similar conclusions can be observed in the cases of Malaysia and Indonesia, where the Confucius Institute was evaluated from the perspective of Cultural Diplomacy, actively involving the construction of a positive image in conjunction with other state, semi-state, and non-state actors, both Chinese and local (Hruby e Petru 2019; Tien e Bing 2021; Nur Mutia e de Archellie 2023). The authors consider it difficult to individually assess the effective impact of the Confucius Institute on the local public, but rather the cumulative effect of the relationship between various actors and factors (Tien e Bing 2021), especially China's economic agenda (Nur Mutia e de Archellie 2023).

In the case of Vietnam, the role of the Confucius Institute in teaching Chinese language and culture was deemed insignificant due to the fact that

the country had a long history of language teaching and learning even before the Chinese initiative (Selezneva 2021). In the cases of Pakistan and Nepal, the Confucius Institute was studied alongside other educational cooperation initiatives launched by China. Education in this sense is seen as a national brand, a conduct of values, and a tool for foreign policies, manifesting in various forms of technical assistance, scholarship grants, the introduction of the Confucius Institute, elite training, and influence of alumni, among others (Jain 2020). Due to the precarious conditions of Pakistani universities, assistance in this sector is urgently needed, and China's effectiveness and attractiveness have been demonstrated, as fragile states are unable to introduce these improvements on their own (Nitza-Makowska 2022).

The United States of America

In the United States, the situation of the Confucius Institute has gone through phases of reception, reflection, and criticism. Discussions about the Confucius Institute began within the academic sphere, transformed into a political arena, and have currently escalated to the level of national security (Lien and Tang 2022).

In the initial phase of reception, until the end of 2015, over 100 Confucius Institutes were present in educational institutions, primarily in highly ranked public universities, spread across almost all U.S. states. The external funding that the Confucius Institute could bring amidst budget cuts by the U.S. government was advantageous for these institutions, and there was generally a more positive and neutral perception of the Confucius Institute by the American media and public (Luqiu and McCarthy 2019).

Between 2014 and 2017, a shift in attitude and perception towards Confucius Institute programs in the U.S. began, as five Confucius Institutes were closed by their host universities following a petition signed by over 100 professors at the University of Chicago against the renewal of the Confucius Institute agreement (Becard and Filho 2019). Starting from 2018, due to pressures from sanction measures, more Confucius Institutes had to close their operations. Relevant U.S. agencies and departments were engaged in investigations and research to justify the restrictions. The National Defense Authorization Act prohibits any academic institution from concurrently operating a Confucius Institute and the Chinese National Security Education Flagship Programs, funded by the Department of Defense, which aim to enhance U.S. security by increasing the national capacity to understand and effectively engage with foreign cultures and languages (Lien and Tang 2022).

The accusations against the Confucius Institute are related to academic freedom, institutional autonomy and transparency, political influence, and propaganda, among others.

On the other hand, according to the study by Becard & Filho (2019), many academics opposed these criticisms. Edward A. McCord, then director of the Center for Asian Studies at George Washington University, argued that the biggest problem regarding the Confucius Institute was the readiness to be suspicious and jump to conclusions, while over 100 host institutions have sufficient competence to evaluate how the Confucius Institute interacts with the American academia. Michael Hill, then director of the Center for Asian Studies at the University of South Carolina, emphasized that the Confucius Institute was indispensable in creating courses and never witnessed any attempt of interference from the Confucius Institute in his institution. Stephen E. Hanson, a professor at the College of William & Mary who worked in the administration of two Confucius Institutes, stated that he had never witnessed any form of censorship or self-censorship in the Confucius Institute. There are case studies that examined the events and activities carried out by American and Chinese partner universities of the Confucius Institute over a decade (2009-2019), demonstrating the resilience of the Confucius Institute and a rare case of success in the macro environment. Despite the controversies, the premise of the Confucius Institute is based on reciprocity for the promotion of educational, cultural, and academic actions in favor of the internationalization of the institutions involved (Haughton and Han 2020).

Comparative studies

It is true that the Confucius Institute (CI) seeks to learn from Western language and culture institutions, as they are pioneers, have a longer history, and have a highly visible impact. For example, the Alliance Française has a history of over 120 years, and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) administered by the British Council conducts three million tests per year (Liu 2019a). This learning is seen by Popovic et al. (2020) as emulation within the Policy Diffusion Theory (PDT), which refers to the adoption of policies based on the experiences and models of others.

Motivated by these similarities and differences between the Confucius Institute (CI) and its Western counterparts, many authors have dedicated themselves to comparative studies. Li (2022b) compared the CI with other European language and culture institutions in Africa and highlighted the following advantages of the CI: generous material support from China, joint-

venture operational model, financial accessibility for the local audience, diversity of activities and benefits offered, and responsiveness to local needs. The European language and culture institutions in Africa operate with greater independence, which is reflected in their higher financial self-sufficiency compared to the CI (Li 2022b).

Similar points can also be found in the comparative study between the Confucius Institute in the UK and the British Council in China. The Confucius Institute adopts a unique joint-venture model that encourages deep cooperation and enables greater promotion of educational internationalization. However, the British Council, being structured and organized relatively more independently, has more autonomy in decision-making, project management, and the pursuit of broader and more lucrative partnerships (Cai 2019).

Lien & Tang (2022) compared the evolution of the Confucius Institute in the US and the American Culture Center (ACC) in China. From the initial peaceful acceptance to the sanctions faced by the Confucius Institute in the US and the stagnation of the ACC in China, it reflects the transition of Sino-American relations from an era of collaboration to an era of competition. In this regard, public diplomacy implementation agencies are also indicators of international political relations. Liu's study (2019b) analyzed the purpose, operational model, and scope of activities of the Confucius Institute and its Western counterparts in light of the "terrain of struggle," proposing a new perspective that, even though they share the purpose of promoting language and culture and have similar ties with their host governments, the Confucius Institute can still be interpreted differently within the struggle on the ground, which the author describes as Orientalism, cultural and ideological hegemony.

When comparing the Confucius Institute with the Russkiy Mir institutes in Russia, quantitative research reveals a geographical strategy: while China is more willing and proactive in cooperating with countries that have different political and cultural systems, Russia is more conservative. The study considers both the Confucius Institute and the Russkiy Mir institutes as results of emulation and attributes their failure in some countries simply to copying Western Cultural Diplomacy without adaptation to the Western context (Popovic, Jenne, e Medzhorsky 2020).

The other study by Liu attempted to create a diagrammatic model to analyze the variables that determine the operation of the Confucius Institute. After comparing five Confucius Institutes in four different continents, the study highlighted the importance of the Institute's ability to customize its products according to the audience and the interaction between external variables, which encompass ideology, nationalism, media environment, and the moderating effect of direct people-to-people exchange (Liu 2019b).

Conclusion

This article proposes a systematic review of the literature on the Confucius Institute. The number of articles found in the initial search indicates the popularity and relevance of the topic. The review revealed some trends in this research:

In terms of topics covered, the most frequent are: 1) The Confucius Institute as an actor in Public Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power, as well as its reception and effectiveness; 2) The Confucius Institute's organizational structure, operational model, management mechanisms, scope of activities and its relationship with the various entities involved; 3) The Confucius Institute's roles and impacts, identifying problems and challenges encountered, among others. Most of these studies reviewed are related to the areas of international relations and politics, while another part focuses on educational and academic areas, with a focus on cooperation between Chinese and foreign institutions and contributions through programs, products and services offered.

Regarding the geographical dimension, they are categorized into: 1) General studies focusing on the origin, history and global evolution of the Confucius Institute; 2) Case studies in specific countries or regions; 3) Comparative studies between the Confucius Institute and other similar language and culture institutions. Africa, Asia and the USA are the regions that have registered the most case studies, and European language and culture institutions have also been widely studied as a parameter for comparison. After the review, it can be said that there are significant particularities when considering location and geopolitics, which seem to be determining factors for the development of the Confucius Institute. In this sense, the inclusion of studies on Latin America and Oceania is lacking for a more complete overview of the literature, since these continents are also home to a significant number of Confucius Institutes and play an important role in geopolitics, especially Latin America in the context of the Global South.

In terms of theoretical framework and methodology adopted by the studies, there is a predominance of Western theories and perspectives that have political connotations such as power relations and influence through non-coercive means. Therefore, the Confucius Institute is primarily seen as a public and cultural diplomatic tool of China. Despite some challenges in specific countries where the Confucius Institute has been politicized, it is still received and perceived positively in the global context, according

to recent statistics. Several reviewed case studies support the role of the Confucius Institute in fostering pragmatic cooperation based on reciprocity. The methodological approach adopted in these studies is predominantly qualitative. Most of the research collected primary data through interviews, questionnaires, field observations, etc., to obtain empirical results. Other research relied on secondary data through literature review, document analysis, etc. However, it should be noted that the quality inference of the cases and the results are restricted and should not be generalized when the context changes.

In conclusion, studies related to the Confucius Institute cover a wide range of topics, including general research, comparative studies, and case studies in different contexts around the world. While there is evidence of success in the global development of the Confucius Institute, it is important to acknowledge the existence of controversial repercussions that have also received attention. In this regard, addressing this topic through scientific research has great potential for innovation both in theoretical and methodological terms, especially in less explored contexts.

Based on these considerations, the following future studies are suggested:

Investigating the presence of the Confucius Institute in Oceania and Latin America and the resulting impact of this presence. This analysis can address subtopics such as evaluating the quality of products and programs offered, diagnosing operation and management, assessing the ability to meet local needs, examining the relationship and engagement with the host institution and other local entities, as well as the perception of the surrounding society, the challenges and problems encountered, among others.

Based on the empirical results obtained in a specific context, the development of manuals, guidelines, evaluation and analysis models, management consulting, and practical applications are also expected. These initiatives can guide and assist in achieving the objectives of all involved parties, contributing to the sustainable development of the Confucius Institute.

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ABSTRACT

The discussion about the Confucius Institute provides a broad observation that can help enrich understanding about China in the international scenario, as well as the attitude and involvement of countries towards China's integration into the world. In order to investigate the current state on this subject, systematic review methods and procedures were adopted. 25 articles that cover the practice of the Confucius Institute in the main continents and countries were analyzed: Africa, Asia, and USA, as well as comparisons between it and similar European language and culture institutions, were included in the reference for this study. As a result, it was possible to identify and summarize some trends such as research scopes, frequent themes, theories and methodologies used, regional characteristics, success and controversy among others.

KEYWORDS

Confucius Institute. International Cooperation. Diplomacy. Education.

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