

Integrating Chinese Cultural Feng Shui in Interior Design Education in China

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the influence of Chinese Feng Shui culture in the practice of interior design. The understanding of Feng Shui enables the construction of a framework to embed Feng Shui into Chinese interior design education. This would be able to provide theoretical support and practical pathways for enhancing the design competencies and qualities among Chinese interior design professionals. Additionally, it contributes to promoting the innovative inheritance and application of traditional culture in modern spatial design. Interior design is an extension and deepening of architectural design, involving the re-creation of indoor spaces and environments. It is an emerging interdisciplinary science rooted in modern environmental science research, with its design scope encompassing the planning and design of humanistic and social environments, natural environments, and artificial environments. Feng Shui originated in ancient China and was an important principle for ancient Chinese people in constructing buildings and selecting construction sites. Its aim was to carefully and meticulously examine the environment, harmonise with nature, and utilise and transform nature in a restrained manner to create a favourable living and survival environment, thereby achieving the optimal combination of celestial timing, geographical advantage, and human harmony, and reaching the ideal state of unity between heaven and humanity. Feng Shui is an important component of traditional Chinese culture and a significant manifestation of Chinese philosophical thought. Under the influence of the ecological development perspective in modern society, Feng Shui culture should be effectively integrated with interior design to guide its creation and implementation, improve the relationship between humans and nature, create a favourable indoor spatial environment, enhance the quality of human life, and align with the goals of sustainable development..

Keywords Feng Shui, interior design, design competencies and qualities

1. INTRODUCTION:

Over the centuries, architecture and interior design around the world have been shaped by diverse natural conditions and cultural influences, resulting in distinct forms and cultural connotations. For example, European historical architecture primarily uses stone, with religious influences particularly evident in medieval churches. These structures feature towering, slender exteriors that reach toward the sky, while their interior spaces are dark and cool, evoking a sense of ethereal beauty through their height. Similarly, the architecture and interior design of regions such as Japan and South Korea in East Asia, India in Southeast Asia, and Egypt in Africa also exhibit their unique cultural characteristics. Traditional Chinese architecture is primarily based on wooden frameworks, with imperial buildings such as the Forbidden City deeply reflecting China's ancient ritual and legal system. These structures were constructed in strict accordance with the principles outlined in the famous literature titled “*Zhou Li - Kao Gong Ji*”, specifically the principle of ‘front court, rear market, left ancestral temple, right ancestral shrine’ for the construction of the imperial capital. Ancient Chinese architecture prioritised functionality and standardised design; its load-bearing structures were clearly defined, with structural components separated

from enclosing components; the exterior was solemn and symmetrical, while interior spaces were spacious and well-lit, with decorative elements executed with meticulous craftsmanship, reflecting traditional Eastern culture and art.

Architecture manifests as the physical shell of a container, while interior design embodies the void within it. The two are inseparable, as architecture is composed of two fundamental components: the design of internal and external spaces. As carriers of culture, architectural design and interior design exhibit strong regional and ethnic cultural characteristics (Gu, 2011). Chinese architecture and interior spaces have been profoundly influenced by indigenous traditional culture, with Feng Shui culture exerting a significant impact on Chinese architectural and interior design. Niu et. al (2022) argue that in ancient China, urban planning, rural planning, and the design of palaces, residences, and interior decorations all incorporated feng shui principles. The scope of feng shui theory and its application in ancient China was extremely broad. Feng Shui [風水] is a unique and traditional Chinese approach to locating, designing, and constructing dwellings to seek harmony between people and the environment (Han, 2023). Traditional Feng Shui is referred to as ‘*Kanyu*’ in academic terms, which is one of the five traditional arts of divination, specifically the art

of geomancy, i.e., the method of on-site inspection of geography. It is the method and principle for selecting sites for palaces, villages, and constructing graves (Xie, & Wu, 2024). Feng (2023) argues that traditional Feng Shui is the culmination of thousands of years of accumulated, explored, refined, and summarised living experiences of the Chinese nation. It is a comprehensive science that integrates multiple disciplines such as celestial bodies, geophysics, Earth's magnetic field orientation, hydrogeology, environmental landscape, ecological architecture, meteorology, and human information. It can also be said that Feng Shui encompasses elements of philosophy, science, statistics, and psychology.

Ancient Chinese people discovered that a living environment must provide good ventilation and a flowing water source to be suitable for survival. There are many interpretations of feng shui, but from a modern scientific perspective, it refers to the composite environmental conditions of air, water sources, and other elements as studied in geography, ecology, and architecture. Pang (2018) argues that wind represents vital energy and field energy, while water symbolises flow and change. Jia (2019) asserts that Feng Shui theory advocates harmony between humans and nature. The formation and development of traditional Chinese Feng Shui have always been intertwined with architecture, and it also provides some reasonable basis for modern residential interior design. It can be seen that Feng Shui culture is the accumulation of ancient Chinese people's life experiences and exploration of scientific laws, and many of its contents are worth learning from and applying to modern architectural design and interior design.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the 21st century, China has experienced over two decades of real estate development, which has driven the prosperity of the interior design industry. The emergence of modern architectural forms and interior spaces has made urban and living environments increasingly modern and convenient. The continuous emergence of new technologies, materials, techniques, and design concepts in the construction industry has driven the development of indoor space environments toward green ecology, environmental protection, energy conservation, and intelligent humanisation in both material and technical aspects. The interior design industry has made significant progress and development. At the same time, the general public has expressed an increasing desire for cultural and spiritual needs in indoor space environments. According to Zeng's (2021) research, the understanding of planning and layout of architectural interior spaces in traditional Chinese culture; the pursuit of Confucian ideals such as benevolence, ritual, harmony, and the unity of heaven and humanity in spatial design; and traditional auspicious patterns, partition art, and various carved artworks as ethnic symbolic elements all constitute the indispensable cultural foundation of modern interior design.

At this point, the importance and contemporary significance of Feng Shui culture became apparent, despite the ongoing controversy surrounding it. Fan (2018) noted in his research that 'science always grows

alongside error, and Feng Shui is no exception, being a mixture of truth and error. Feng Shui has a profound influence on people's lives, but due to its inherent flaws in reasoning, it is not possible to conduct empirical research on its theories, so criticism of it has been constant. It is an integration of modern design practice in a controlled manner (Kryżanowski, 2019) both in rational and transcendental (Guo, 2023).

Many researchers believe that Feng Shui culture should be integrated into the application of interior design to better address the human living environment. For example, Zhang (2020) argues that incorporating Feng Shui theory into contemporary interior design and adopting a dialectical perspective on Feng Shui theory can help us correctly understand the relationship between Feng Shui and the human living environment in interior design, thereby creating a people-centric, safe, comfortable, and efficient indoor living environment and establishing a harmonious relationship among people, machines, and the environment. Interior design also requires integration, such as Yang (2019) proposing a Feng Shui perspective in his research, including the worldview of *Yin-Yang* and the Five Elements, the ecological view of the organic cycle of 'Heaven, Earth, and Humanity,' and the geographical view of 'Heaven and Humanity as One.' Peng (2019) argued that Feng Shui theory emphasises the coordination of contradictions such as light and darkness, openness and closure, and movement and stillness, thereby achieving harmony between Yin and Yang. It also uses the Five Elements theory—based on the characteristics of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth—to explain the rationality of architectural and interior spaces and their subtle relationship with the natural environment. Song (2018) noted in his research that Feng Shui is a cultural phenomenon of learning from nature and an ancient environmental design theory that incorporates ecological concepts, providing guidance for planning, architecture, and interior spaces.

Interior design should be created in response to the evolving needs of users within indoor spaces. In today's world, cultural demands and aesthetic preferences are diverse, encompassing not only universal needs but also numerous personalised requirements. This necessitates interior designers to possess comprehensive knowledge, including expertise in spatial design, colour coordination, material selection, and construction techniques. Additionally, designers must create an ambiance tailored to the specific function of the space, ensuring that the design is rich in cultural significance, artistic expression, and human-centricity. Xing (2021) argued that modern interior designers should possess rich cultural literacy, deeply understand the essence of traditional Chinese culture, and be able to flexibly incorporate this essence into their designs, thereby infusing designs with cultural colour, vitality, and uniqueness.

Many aspects of Feng Shui culture can provide valuable guidance for the creation and improvement of modern indoor spaces, such as the size and shape of spaces, the distance and location of water features, the selection of plants, the angle of light, the positioning of doors and windows, and the choice and arrangement of furniture. Li Yongtai (2018) believes that a competent interior designer

should be proficient in combining modern design concepts with Feng Shui knowledge and applying them in practice, using a scientific perspective to interpret the significance of Feng Shui in residential applications. Li (2018) notes that most of Feng Shui's principles are scientific, particularly emphasizing psychology. It is the accumulated wisdom of ancient Chinese people over thousands of years, analysing and summarising the laws and strategies of communication between humans and nature, guiding people on how to choose the most suitable living spaces. As a competent interior designer, mastering common Feng Shui knowledge is a given.

The focus of interior design is the space where people live and spend their lives. The fundamental purpose of Feng Shui is to enable people to live in a favourable environment. It can be said that the objectives and principles of interior design and Feng Shui are aligned (Zhang, 2019). The core principles of Feng Shui culture are consistent with the modern concepts of ecological and healthy spaces. They constitute an important cultural component and spiritual core for modern interior design, serving as a guiding direction for interior designers and influencing their design capabilities and professional qualities.

3. FENG SHUI PRINCIPLES AND INTERIOR DESIGN DEFECTS

In interior design, there are numerous examples of successful integration of Feng Shui culture and experience, which can significantly enhance interior design and spatial environments. For instance, Ye (2017) argues that the intense sunlight during the day can make indoor lighting overly bright, prompting designers to employ techniques such as tinted glass or shading panels to control the light. Such examples of artificially balancing the Yin-Yang in the surroundings that are also common in modern interior design. However, in recent years, under the commercial catalysis of the market economy environment, interior design practitioners have directly demonstrated a lack of understanding of Feng Shui culture and an inability to control the environment guided by Feng Shui principles in actual interior design cases. In some cases, they have even created designs that violate Feng Shui principles, directly and indirectly causing negative impacts such as artistic expression errors, cultural expression errors, and incorrect cultural guidance. The following case images illustrate issues related to modern interior design and Feng Shui.

3.1 Theme Hotel

Picture 1 shows a Terracotta Army-themed hotel in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China, which became popular online due to its terrifying interior design. However, because it failed to create a pleasant living experience and had a negative impact on cultural communication, it has been the subject of constant criticism online.



Picture 1

Source: Terracotta Army Theme Hotel(Zongheng Video, 2023)

Why has the Terracotta Army Theme Hotel received so much criticism? The Terracotta Army falls under the category of ancient tomb sculptures. In ancient times, human sacrifice was practiced, and slaves were considered the property of their emperor during their lifetimes. After the emperor's death, the slaves were buried as sacrificial offerings to accompany their master in the afterlife. The Terracotta Army refers to sacrificial offerings shaped like soldiers, chariots, and horses. The hotel extensively uses Terracotta Army figurines as decorations. In Feng Shui beliefs, the placement of these figurines is critically important emphasising 'Yin-Yang' which is the balance of positive and negative energies. The tomb elements such as clay figurines are considered to have excessive negative (Yin) energy which may disrupt the harmony of the living environment in the Chinese culture.

Research indicates that the display of historical artifacts in non-original contexts may induce psychological discomfort, particularly when they overlap with everyday living spaces (Wang & Chen, 2023). The hotel has placed terracotta warriors in private areas such as bedrooms and bathrooms, directly violating the principle of 'avoiding oppressive positions' in Feng Shui (Li, 2022). Terracotta warriors have a special energy field that makes them a representation of historical treasures. According to feng shui, they may make residents feel oppressed, which would have an impact on their mental and sleep quality. The feng shui culture's goal of establishing a harmonious energy field is violated when occupants or consumers experience discomfort.

3.2 Theme Restaurant

Picture 2 shows a prison-themed restaurant, with interior design that mimics a prison environment. Each private room in the restaurant is a separate 'cell' made of iron bars, with interior design that fully references the prison model, including 'water cells,' 'sky cells,' and 'solitary confinement rooms,' accommodating different numbers of guests. The interior design of prison-themed restaurants typically incorporates elements such as iron bars, handcuffs, and shackles, and features 'cell-like' dining areas. This style directly contradicts the basic principle of 'harmonious energy flow' in Feng Shui.



Picture 2

Source: Prison Theme Restaurant, China (NetEase, 2019)

Feng shui principle posits that sharp metal objects, such as chains and fences, create ‘form Sha’ (the malevolent energy of form), obstructing the flow of qi and leading to the accumulation of negative energy, which in turn affects the mood and health of diners (Wang & Li, 2023). Additionally, prisons symbolise restraint and oppression, and their spatial layout is considered to have an excess of ‘yin energy’ in Feng Shui, which can easily trigger feelings of unease, conflicting with the ‘yang energy-generating’ characteristics that a dining environment should possess (Chen, 2024). Zhang et al. (2024) found that prolonged exposure to oppressive decorative environments significantly increases stress hormone levels, which contradicts the feng shui principle of ‘harmonious living.’ For example, a prison-themed restaurant in Beijing named ‘Zen Cool,’ which used elements like prison uniforms and iron bars, was criticised as a ‘feng shui disaster’ and eventually closed down. From the perspective of modern social culture, prisons are judicial institutions for detaining criminals. They serve to prevent recidivism by enforcing penalties on offenders, while also warning, deterring, and educating others in society who may be tempted to commit crimes. Their solemn nature should not be imitated or exploited as a commercial gimmick for attracting attention.

Feng Shui constructs spaces imbued with the unique sense of place characteristic of Chinese culture, yet it is more three-dimensional and comprehensive than the concept of sense of place alone (Wang, Wu, & Yu, 2018). Shi Peiwen (2018) noted in his research that Feng Shui plays a significant role in traditional Chinese culture, encompassing traditional customs such as selecting auspicious dates and avoiding inauspicious ones. The place spirit of the ‘prison-themed restaurant’ clearly contradicts the principles of Feng Shui culture regarding the selection of locations and also violates the traditional customs within Feng Shui culture.

3.3 Residential Layout

Picture 3 shows an example of a house facing southwest from the northeast, with the compass directions aligned according to Feng Shui principles. According to Li (2021), it is worth noting that for modern buildings, especially high-rise buildings, the orientation of the house is not the direction of the main entrance, but rather the

direction of the air inlet and the main hall. The air inlet and orientation of most houses are aligned with the direction of the living room balcony, primarily because this ensures a courtyard, sunlight, and air circulation. The direction of the main entrance door typically lacks a courtyard, sunlight, and airflow. We usually close the door immediately upon entering, so it serves only as an entrance and exit, not as the house's orientation.



Picture 3

Source: Residential Interior Design (Sohu.com,201)

This residential property has sparked controversy due to its functional layout severely violating feng shui principles. Specifically, the master bedroom and living room are situated in the ‘absolute death position’ and ‘five ghosts position’ according to feng shui theory, which traditional doctrine holds can lead to health issues and family discord; the kitchen and dining area are located in the ‘six Sha Qi position,’ further affecting residents' emotional stability. Wang and Chen (2023) argue that research shows such layouts may exacerbate residents' anxiety through environmental psychological mechanisms, directly conflicting with the ‘yin-yang balance’ principle emphasised in feng shui. Additionally, the entrance design fails to block the ‘leaking wealth’ layout, and the garden area does not mitigate the ‘five ghosts’ Sha Qi, both exacerbating the feng shui defects. In this case, the designer suggests relocating the master bedroom to the ‘Yan Nian position’ (auspicious position), adjusting the children's room to the ‘Tian Yi position,’ and introducing wooden elements (such as green plants and wooden decorations) to neutralise the negative influence of the inauspicious positions. Such interior design adjustments align with the ‘environment-psychology’ harmonisation theory proposed by modern Feng Shui research, which aims to improve residents' psychological states through spatial restructuring and the integration of natural elements (Li, 2022).

This residential interior design case research reveals the points of conflict between traditional feng shui culture and modern interior design, emphasising that functional zoning design must balance scientific principles with the design logic of traditional culture. Modern interior design should avoid solely pursuing aesthetics or spatial efficiency, but instead combine empirical research to validate the connection between feng shui theory and interior design—a key focus of this research.

From the above cases, it can be seen that many issues in modern Chinese interior design are related to Feng Shui culture, more accurately, they violate the principles and objectives of Feng Shui culture. Liu & Zhang (2018) mentioned in their research that 'people and space are not two independent entities; people influence space through transformation, and conversely, changes in the spatial environment also affect people. Additionally, the spiritual and cultural elements generated between space and people must be considered.' Using interior design techniques as a foundation and feng shui theory as guidance, it is essential to achieve a harmonious unity of spatial function, culture, and aesthetics." Jia (2019) discussed in her research that modern interior design should respect and adhere to the systemic principles, harmony principles, environmental protection principles, and principles of seeking benefits and avoiding harm found in traditional feng shui culture. The principles she mentioned are precisely the aspects of feng shui culture that interior designers should understand and master.

Therefore, researchers believe that interior designers should understand the cultural connotations of feng shui and master its methods and rules. Only in this way can the worldview and ecological view of feng shui culture be organically integrated into modern interior design, thereby promoting the healthy development of interior design.

4. METHODS

This research employed qualitative research method, which is often more flexible and intuitive, allowing for adjustments to the methodology based on findings throughout the research process. This research conducted in-depth, multi-perspective interviews with students majoring in interior design at ordinary universities, interior designers, and architects to collect qualitative data from multiple angles, ensuring that the data collected is multi-layered, more reliable and effective, and subject to analysis and summarisation.

Regarding the selection of interviewees, the researchers considered that interior design students are future designers; interior designers determine the extent to which feng shui culture influences interior design; architects influence interior design in many design practices, and many interior design projects are still led by architects. The data obtained from such interviewees is valid and reliable, and can better achieve data saturation. The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews (including individual and group interviews), and a total of 34 participants (P1-P34) from China were interviewed, including 13 undergraduate students (majoring in interior design and architecture), 15 practitioners (interior designers and architects), and 6 university teachers specialising in interior design education. Some respondents had dual or multiple professional identities, such as being both a teacher and a designer, or both a teacher and an architect.

This research takes some issues related to Feng Shui culture that have emerged in modern Chinese interior design cases as its starting point, analysing the influence of Feng Shui on interior design, and then conducting interviews with respondents to collect data. a. This

research analyse specific aspects of Feng Shui culture that are connected to modern Chinese interior design. This not only supports the identification of Feng Shui cultural elements required for interior design but also aids in identifying the specific Feng Shui cultural elements needed by interior design professionals. b. This research conduct interviews with interior design students, interior designers, and architects, and obtain their evaluations of interior design cases related to feng shui, thereby gaining insights into their understanding of feng shui culture. This help analyse feng shui-related issues in interior design and also assist in assessing the competencies and qualities of interior design professionals. This research begins with the phenomenon of issues in interior design within society, discusses and analyses the influence of feng shui culture on interior design, and explores the impact of feng shui culture on the capabilities and qualities of interior design professionals.

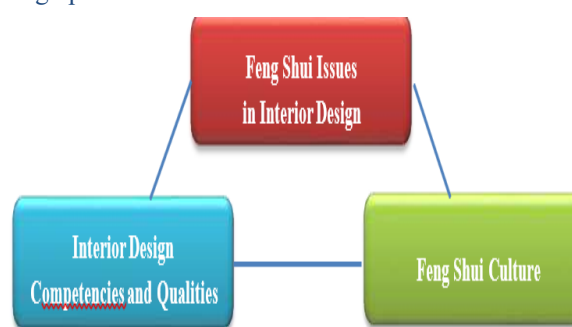


Figure 1: Research Operational

This research aims to identify indoor design issues related to feng shui in the context of today's social reality, investigate the impact of feng shui culture on the design competencies and qualities of indoor design professionals, determine that indoor design professionals should learn and master feng shui culture, and find a common ground for promoting the healthy development of the indoor design industry and the positive dissemination of feng shui culture. The research objectives were developed as 1) to investigate the Interior design issues caused by feng shui culture; 2) to explore Feng shui culture in influencing interior design competencies and qualities; 3) to unveil Interior design professionals' understanding of feng shui culture.

5. FINDINGS

The research data was obtained from individuals who voluntarily participated in and were eligible for this research. Qualitative data from the three occupational groups were coded and analysed thematically using NVivo software, resulting in a hierarchical thematic framework. Figure 2 shows a comparison of the amount of data for the three occupational groups under the three themes summarised by the research institute.

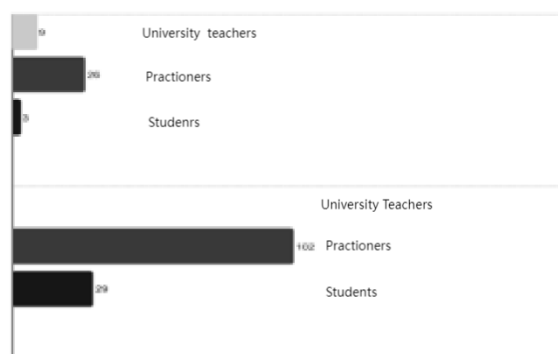


Figure 2: Matrix coding query chart

5.1. Interior design issues caused by feng shui culture

Data collected through interviews on ‘Interior design issues caused by feng shui culture’ was analysed from three professional groups. Approximately 68% of participants responded to questions about interior design issues. Figure 3 shows the number of data reference points provided by participants, with 7 students, 12 practitioners, and 2 university teachers responding.

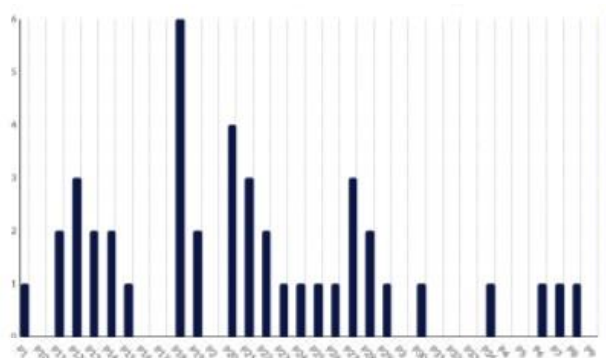


Figure 3: Interior design issues caused by feng shui culture

Seven students mentioned feng shui from the perspective of living experience and believed that improper feng shui treatment in indoor spaces could lead to indoor design issues. For example: P1 criticised a design case for incorporating feng shui culture, but the actual spatial comfort was poor; P6 believed that a screen in a design case improved the feng shui layout of the indoor space, but the design layout was odd, highlighting the influence of feng shui layout on design; P12 criticised a design case for its theme contradicting feng shui culture logic, stating that such a restaurant could only attract people temporarily.

Twelve practitioners believe that feng shui culture influences interior design and can lead to related issues. For example: P15 encountered a client who requested a fish tank be placed at the entrance, which conflicted with feng shui principles. Ultimately, it was placed according to the client's request, violating feng shui principles; P18 advocates that entrance design should balance feng shui and privacy, but the approach must be flexible; P21 believes that ‘Tang Sancai Museum can use it, exhibition halls can display it, but residential homes cannot place it, and it would not be placed in one's own home.’

Only two members of the university teaching staff discussed the connection between feng shui

principles and interior design practice from the perspective of feng shui culture. P30 argued that the placement of Tang tri-colour pottery in residential spaces violated feng shui culture taboos; P34 noted that from an interior design perspective, feng shui issues should be avoided during the construction phase, as there is limited scope for adjustment during the later stages of interior design.

Through data analysis, it was found that all three different groups believe that Feng Shui culture can raise issues in interior design, but different professions exhibit different characteristics. The student group exhibits a distinct utilitarian orientation, tending to passively perceive the influence of Feng Shui on interior spaces. Their views are largely based on their own intuitive feelings and experiences, such as a sense of oppression in the spatial environment or layout conflicts. These perceptions, to some extent, also reflect societal and cultural conventions, indicating a superficial understanding of Feng Shui culture and a lack of comprehension of its underlying principles. Additionally, the student group demonstrates a lack of theoretical understanding of Feng Shui culture and practical experience in its application. The data from the professional group reveals significant contradictions in the application of feng shui culture in interior design. While they acknowledge that feng shui culture influences interior design, their views are based on empirical judgements. The professional group demonstrates professionalism in design practice but is often constrained by client demands and market limitations, resulting in weak control over design decisions. This reflects the compromises made in design practice and the actual influence of feng shui culture on interior design. University faculty members have a relatively low understanding and mastery of feng shui culture, discussing only the selection and placement of decorative items and avoiding feng shui issues. They have not explored the deeper connections between feng shui culture and modern architecture or interior design, nor have they addressed concepts such as yin-yang balance and the Five Elements within feng shui culture. This leaves a gap in the cultural connection between feng shui culture and interior design.

5.2. Feng shui culture in Influencing interior design competencies and qualities

The data collected through interviews on ‘Feng shui cultural content can impact on interior design competencies and qualities’ was coded and summarised into two aspects, namely: a : Feng shui cultural can impact on interior design competencies; b:Feng shui cultural have an impact on interior design qualities. All participants responded separately to questions about interior design issues. Figure 3 shows the number of data reference points in the participants' responses.

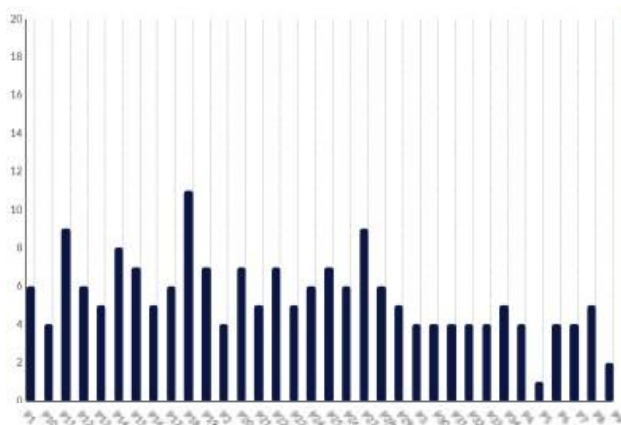


Figure 4: Feng shui culture in Influencing interior design competencies and qualities

Students believe that Feng Shui culture can influence interior design competencies and qualities, but their understanding of Feng Shui culture primarily stems from superficial family experiences and societal beliefs. For example, P1 mentioned, 'Mirrors should not face the bed, and beams should not press down on the head'; P2 stated, 'My understanding of Feng Shui theory is not very clear'; P7 believes that 'Feng Shui has had a significant influence on ancient Chinese architecture, urban planning, and interior design'; P10 mentions that 'some clients believe in Feng Shui and may request designers to incorporate it into furniture arrangement and plant placement'; P11 asserts that 'Feng Shui can influence design and interior layout.'

Practitioners believe that Feng Shui culture can influence interior design competencies and qualities. Practitioners often start from the client's feng shui cultural needs and need to take into account both science and psychological implications in their interior design practices. For example: P18 states that 'the sickle-shaped Sha Qi in Feng Shui can be mitigated through a recessed design'; P19, drawing on their professional experience, notes that 'it primarily depends on the client's and the client's attitude toward Feng Shui and whether they trust it'; P20 mentions that 'Feng Shui is considered when the client requests it, particularly in the layout of bathrooms and kitchens'; P22 asserts that 'Feng Shui is about places that are well-ventilated, have water sources, and are suitable for human habitation—this is the essence of Feng Shui. The presence of human habitation in the Mesopotamian region is because water sources are fundamental to human survival. Ventilation brings abundant oxygen and keeps indoor spaces dry'; P24 asserts that 'feng shui is a combination of metaphysics and science'; P25 points out that 'feng shui layout must align with principles of natural light and ventilation'; P29 asserts that 'feng shui influences the essence of interior design, which is fundamentally about serving people and prioritising human needs.'

University faculty members believe that Feng Shui culture can influence interior design competencies and qualities, but advocate for a dialectical perspective on Feng Shui culture. For example, P23 states, 'Feng Shui is a design philosophy within traditional culture, and its principles of harmony between heaven and humanity align with the idea of harmonious coexistence between humans and

nature'; P30 states that 'Feng Shui is a form of psychology that influences human psychology, sharing similarities with modern architectural psychology. It can affect the psychological state of space users, making those who believe in Feng Shui more receptive to design.' P31 notes that 'Feng Shui influences aspects of interior design such as spatial layout, cultural symbols of furniture, lighting, and ventilation,' but argues that "from a theoretical perspective, Feng Shui has not yet developed into a consensus-based theoretical framework. Although feng shui is a methodology, it lacks scientific and systematic validation and lacks scientific basis'; P32 feels that 'feng shui primarily achieves greater comfort through the arrangement of objects, focusing on psychological sensations, but there are now many other methods that can achieve the same effect'; P33 believes that 'feng shui considerations are now integral from architectural design to interior design,' and he views 'feng shui as a summary of empirical observations'; P34 notes that 'in the Greater China region, there is demand for feng shui considerations in interior design decoration, such as furniture orientation, plant selection, and room positioning. Feng shui culture must be applied in practice according to project type and client requirements.'

Through data analysis, it was found that all three occupational groups believe that Feng Shui culture can influence interior design competencies and qualities. Students' design practices primarily focus on avoiding traditional Feng Shui taboos. In terms of interior design competencies, students demonstrate a mechanical adherence to Feng Shui taboo rules in their designs. In terms of interior design qualities, students passively accept traditional concepts from Feng Shui culture but fail to independently assess the rationality of integrating Feng Shui culture with design, lacking scientific and cultural depth in their thinking. The professional group demonstrates greater practicality and depth in their understanding compared to the student group. In terms of interior design competencies, professionals have achieved a certain degree of modern design adaptation of Feng Shui cultural content and the practical application of Feng Shui rules, and they believe that Feng Shui culture is essential for interior design professional capabilities. Professionals believe that integrating Feng Shui culture with interior design can effectively meet clients' needs while balancing foundational Feng Shui rules with functional design to achieve harmony. In terms of interior design qualities, professionals place greater emphasis on the authenticity of Feng Shui culture and its coordination with practical applications. Professionals recognise the dual nature of Feng Shui culture, which combines experiential elements with scientific rationale. University faculty exhibit professional characteristics. In terms of interior design competencies, they believe that the use of Feng Shui culture in design can specifically influence the psychological state and feelings of space users, making it easier for them to accept the design. In terms of interior design qualities, university faculty believe that the core principles of Feng Shui culture can guide interior design, serving as an empirical methodology. However, Feng Shui culture has not yet developed into a scientific, systematic theoretical framework.

5.3. Interior design professionals' understanding of feng shui culture

Data collected through interviews on 'Feng Shui Culture Affects Interior Design (Industry)' was analysed from three professional groups. Approximately 32% of participants responded to questions about interior design issues. Figure 3 shows the number of data reference points provided by participants, with six students and five university teachers responding.

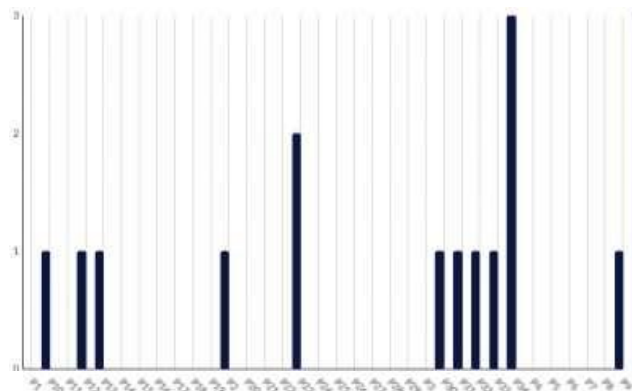


Figure 5: Interior design professionals' understanding of feng shui culture

Students in the design assignment adhere to the taboos and rules of Feng Shui culture and have a high level of recognition for Feng Shui. P1 mentioned, 'The teacher discussed the taboos and application rules of Feng Shui culture in interior design during class'; P9 believed, 'Feng Shui culture is definitely helpful and broadens one's knowledge in design studies'; P13 noted, 'The teacher mentioned the cultural aspects of Feng Shui and felt it still had some utility';

P13 focused on, 'The toilet door should not face the main door, which guided and assisted my design assignment.'

Practitioners did not mention the learning process or in-depth understanding of Feng Shui culture.

Some university teachers incorporate Feng Shui culture into their interior design teaching, but the depth is insufficient. P23 mentions that 'Feng Shui culture is helpful in explaining design cases to students'; 'In the course on Chinese architectural history, knowledge of Feng Shui culture is included in topics such as the selection of sites for ancient Chinese cities, the layout of traditional Chinese dwellings, and temples'; P30 mentions that 'I have previously discussed the Siheyuan courtyard house with students, and the connection between its layout and Feng Shui'; P32 mentions that 'feng shui has been used in teaching, and feng shui culture is used to explain the arrangement of furniture'; P33 argues that 'feng shui is an empirical summary of interior layout, and this effective summary has guiding significance for interior design education, provided that the content is effective,' which represents a dialectical understanding of the role of feng shui culture in interior design education. P34 states that 'in the design teaching process, students should be made aware of the aspects of design significantly influenced by feng shui.'

Through data analysis, it was found that three categories of professionals exhibit different levels of understanding of feng shui culture. Students are only familiar with the taboos of feng shui culture in social contexts, such as 'the toilet door should not face the main door,' indicating that students lack a thorough understanding of feng shui culture. This aligns with the data analysis in Section 5.1. Practitioners have not studied feng shui culture and do not possess knowledge of it. It can be seen that, for current interior design professionals, their understanding of feng shui culture can be considered virtually non-existent, or at best, fragmented knowledge of feng shui culture and taboos. This is merely a practical application of the knowledge students have, and does not reflect a deeper understanding of feng shui culture. While the teaching staff have some understanding of feng shui culture, they lack systematic knowledge reserves, clearly demonstrating insufficient depth of understanding and a lack of ability to apply feng shui culture to guide design practice. It is evident that all three groups have weak or even blank levels of understanding regarding feng shui culture.

6. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three occupational groups interviewed in the research exhibited significant differences in their understanding and practical application of feng shui culture due to their distinct professional characteristics. These differences manifested in various aspects, including their understanding of feng shui culture, the integration of feng shui culture into design innovation, and localised design practices. However, all three groups collectively highlighted the necessity of feng shui culture for interior design and interior design professionals. The common characteristics of weak or lacking understanding of feng shui culture among the three professional groups highlight the current gap in feng shui culture within interior design education.

The research found that three occupational groups exhibit different characteristics in relation to feng shui culture as follows:

Students demonstrate a passive understanding and perception of feng shui culture, exhibiting utilitarian characteristics. They lack experience in applying feng shui principles to design practice, resulting in a superficial understanding and recognition of feng shui, with little to no deep comprehension or insight into feng shui culture. In terms of interior design competencies and qualities, students mechanically adhere to feng shui taboos in their designs, passively accepting traditional feng shui concepts without engaging in critical reflection or rational integration of feng shui principles into their work. The student group only understands the taboos of feng shui culture within social culture and lacks a good understanding and comprehension of feng shui culture.

Practitioners' understanding of feng shui culture is based on non-theoretical empiricism generated in design practice and is influenced by client needs and market conditions. As a result, they occupy a clearly disadvantaged position in design practice and have limited actual control over the design process. In terms of interior design competencies and qualities, practitioners believe

that integrating feng shui culture with interior design can effectively meet clients' needs, as feng shui principles can align with functional design requirements, which are essential for interior design professional capabilities. Additionally, practitioners place greater emphasis on harmonising feng shui culture with contemporary societal realities. However, there are significant gaps in their understanding of feng shui culture, and their knowledge of it remains fragmented and limited to practical design applications.

The proportion of university teachers who understand and master Feng Shui culture is relatively low. They have not delved into the deeper theories of Feng Shui culture nor connected it to interior design. In terms of interior design competencies and qualities, university teachers believe that Feng Shui culture can specifically influence the psychological state and feelings of space users, making them more likely to accept the design. They also view Feng Shui culture as an empirical methodology that can guide interior design, but it has not yet formed a scientific and systematic theory. The depth of teachers' understanding of Feng Shui culture is insufficient, and they lack the ability to guide design practice.

Feng shui-related interior design issues that have emerged in modern society, such as historical context errors, disharmonious energy fields, chaotic physical environments, and design irregularities, have been studied by researchers through data analysis and in conjunction with research objectives. It can be seen that although the discussion above that Feng Shui culture has an impact on interior design competencies and qualities, all three groups of participants demonstrate a lack of understanding and knowledge of Feng Shui culture. In terms of understanding Feng Shui culture, a logical chain has formed university teachers do not possess a systematic understanding of Feng Shui culture. This has caused current interior design students do not have the conditions to master Feng Shui culture. Practitioners have not received formal education in Feng Shui culture, and their understanding of it is either non-existent or based on fragmented taboos and experiences gained through design practice and work. Therefore, one of the underlying causes for the emergence of Feng Shui-related issues in interior design practice in real-world settings is the lack of systematic knowledge of Feng Shui culture. This also establishes a logical connection between the research objectives.

This research proposed the following 'research recommendations guidance': it is recommended that feng shui culture be incorporated into interior design education to enhance interior design professionals' understanding of feng shui. As Guo (2023) noted in their research, 'Feng shui is an intermediary between science and religion.' Such an intermediary is precisely what interior design professionals currently need, as it can strengthen their design capabilities and professional qualities in certain aspects. Additionally, as part of China's historical and cultural heritage, it is recommended that Feng Shui culture be integrated into modern society's interior design. As Gong (2023) mentioned in his research, 'Let cultural heritage fulfil its social responsibility of aesthetic education and guide social value orientations,' thereby

promoting the healthy development of interior design and Feng Shui culture.

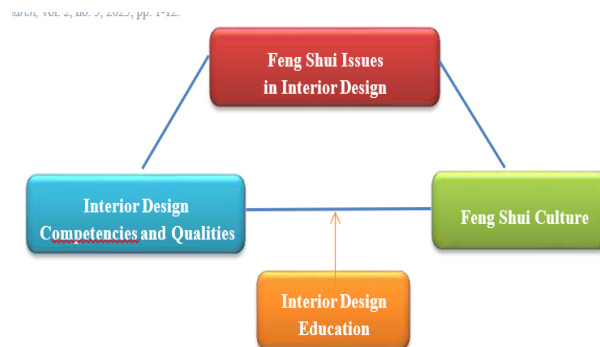


Figure 6: Integration of Interior Design Education with Feng Shui Culture

This research has begun with relating the issues of interior design with feng shui culture in contemporary society. It also determined that feng shui culture that influence the design abilities and qualities of Chinese interior design professionals and gained some understanding of Chinese interior design professionals' awareness of feng shui culture. At the same time, it analysed the importance of feng shui culture to interior design, which can positively promote the spread of feng shui culture and the healthy development of the interior design industry, achieving the goals set at the beginning of the research.

7. CONCLUSION

Practitioners are current design professionals, students are future design professionals, and teachers influence the design competencies and qualities of design professionals. It can be seen that the three groups' understanding of feng shui culture is interrelated and mutually influential. Integrating feng shui culture into interior design education can enhance students' understanding and mastery of feng shui culture, thereby promoting design capabilities and qualities, influencing future practitioners and the development of the interior design industry, and driving the application and positive dissemination of feng shui culture in modern interior design..

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