



Developing Malay traditional dance model for preschoolers: Evidence from contextual and content needs

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ABSTRACT

The uniqueness of the Malay dance community should be introduced to children, so that the beauty of the dance movements will be preserved. Therefore, this study examined preschoolers' content and the contextual needs of developing the traditional Malay dance model. Quantitative studies using this survey method aim to obtain information about the context and content of traditional Malay dance models. The utilized tool was a validated questionnaire that had undergone expert validation and piloting. 125 Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) preschool teachers were selected as the study sample based on their experience and qualifications in Early Childhood Education. The data collected were analyzed with descriptive statistics using SPSS version 26. The findings indicate that the necessities of the context should inhibit the aspects of creative movement. The results refer to the content aspect of the model of the basic movement elements in the traditional dances of the Malay community that should be taught to the children.

Keywords: contextual, content, traditional dance, model, preschoolers

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance is a valuable cultural heritage that must be discovered and passed on from an early age, starting with preschool education. An underlying theme related to gender and ethnicity is the significance of involving preschoolers in dance education as we know it in more conventional, professional ways (Gripson et al., 2021). However, there has always been a question about how to teach dance—an intrinsically embodied social discipline (Leonard, 2022). To specifically respond to this question, it is important to see how dance engages preschoolers in a learning process through the concrete experience of moving creatively, reflecting on their movements or those of others, evaluating them, and creating new shared meanings (Payne & Costas, 2021). Dabalsa's study (2017) found that physical fitness, motor skills, coordination, social skills, and teamwork can be improved through dance. The Malays are known for their various dances, which are almost unknown to the younger generation, including preschool children. Traditional Malay dance is characterized by vigorous limb movements that incorporate elements of strength, such as repulsion, as well as gentle movements accompanied by music and song. Dance is thus the physical expression of relationships, feelings, thoughts, and ideas through rhythmic movements and beats.

Dance and movement can be used in teaching and learning to enhance children's cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development. Interestingly, studies also reported that dance is useful for expressing, dealing and mirroring emotions (Leonard, 2022; Twiner et al., 2022). Children can also express and see themselves through mirrors, a common educational tool used to facilitate traditional dance performances and improve dance moves (Kang et al., 2023). A separate study discovered that preschool teachers actively record the children's dances using digital tools, and that dance videos from the internet are used to a very high degree and projected onto the wall (Gripson et al., 2022). However, it is not clear which approach is the best for preschool children. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the content and contextual needs in developing the traditional Malay dance model in preschool children. Traditional dance elements intertwine children's learning as they perform movements and dances. Purcel (1994), as cited in Lutz & Kuhlman (2000), also found that traditional dance leads to three benefits for children: (1) psychomotor, (2) affective, and even (3) cognitive development. A study by Kapodistria et al. (2021) showed children's motor sensory mastery increased after a post-test using three types of traditional Greek dance. Therefore, children as young as five to six can be introduced to the basic movements to acquire the traditional Malay dances quickly. Adoption at this early stage can indirectly promote their interest in traditional dance.

Delicate dance steps symbolizing the beauty of traditional art can be used to translate the Malay way of life, which is rich in manners. However, traditional dance no longer exists today as cultural globalization can potentially trample Indigenous culture (Razali et al., 2016). The young generation should pay attention to this problem of cultural globalization. Traditional dance is a movement art that contains body movements with beauty elements. The elements in the dance movement itself can help the child gain gross and fine motor skills through the movements that must be performed in dance. Dance movements also indirectly apply creative movements. For example, echoing the fingers in the dance can strengthen the child's fine motor skills. The steps in the dance movement itself can indirectly strengthen the child's gross motor skills. In addition, previous studies suggest that dance activities could help children acquire motor skills early to combat obesity (Zaric et al., 2018).

Introducing the culture and intricacies of dance in preschool is in line with the 2017 National Preschool Standard Curriculum, which is to appreciate and be sensitive to the culture of the Malaysian community. The above objectives can be linked to the Humanitarian Pillars learning standard, which recognizes and acknowledges cultural heritage. Cultural heritage must be passed down from generation to generation so that it does not die out and disappear. Chatzihidiroglou et al. (2018) mentioned that tradition is a treasure kept in society for a long time, so the knowledge of tradition must be passed on to the new generation. Therefore, preschool children should be introduced to cultural traditions such as traditional dance early to preserve the Malay heritage.

Due to the challenges and limitations that children face today, they do not have many opportunities to learn more about the culture and traditions of the Malay community. These include the relatively few traditional dance performances, trips to museums and treasure hunts, traditional play tournaments, celebrations, and festivals. The emergence of the latest culture and trends among children, such as dancing for TikTok videos, reels on Instagram, rave dancing, and many more, have found a place in their hearts and the preferred support of the community. Undoubtedly, these modern and popular dances can also contribute to the development of children. However, they lead to social defects and moral values forming morality (Hafiz et al., 2019).

The global problem of traditional dance in the social context is its share of learning and knowledge is too large and unstructured (Stevens et al., 2020). These things make the culture and appreciation of traditional dance a great challenge for the younger generation. In addition, the life system focused on the Western culture is also a challenge that has invaded a country's traditional culture (Fairuzzah et al., 2019). This results from the technological sophistication ingrained in

children's daily lives. Thus, children are easily influenced by harmful cultural elements that eliminate manners in their daily lives. In this context, education and curriculum are important policies because they promote curricula and content to address the challenges of globalization towards the culture and traditions of traditional dance in Malaysia.

As Lase (2019) stated that the curriculum should now think of equipping the young generation for the future, including educational skills, vibrant personalities, creative thinking, and collaborative skills. Therefore, the Malaysian education system's early childhood education programs and curricula should be expanded. This includes the content of the curriculum, especially learning about cultural heritage in the form of dress, festivals, and traditional food to diversity such as traditional dance, folklore, traditional games, and others. The National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) focuses on implementing learning and teaching for preschool children (Rosmah & Mariani, 2020). The curriculum has six main pillars, namely the pillars of language and communication, the pillars of spirituality, attitudes, and values, the pillars of self-skills, the pillars of science and technology, and the pillars of physical and aesthetic development.

In addition, integrating traditional dance into children's learning and teaching activities will be an important component of the pillars of physical and aesthetic development. Preschool children actively participate in movement activities during traditional dance classes. Therefore, this pillar is a justification for the detailed description of how the implementation of the activity is applied to the learning standards of the curriculum for children in the classroom. In Malaysian preschools, physical and aesthetic development activities emphasize gross and fine motor movement skills, balance and control movements, and manipulative skills. To date, sports and physical activities have become the concept of choice for preschool teachers as the backbone of physical and aesthetic activities. Rosmah & Mariani's (2020) research study showed that educators indicated that playground facilities and equipment for outdoor physical activities were complete. Thus, preschool teachers find it easier to conduct sports and physical activities with children to improve movement and aesthetic skills, as embodied in the 2017 KPSK.

As globally known, the development of traditional dance in the Malay community is highly very popular. Identifying the origin of Malay dances such as Inang, Joget, Zapin, and Serampang may be difficult. They have existed for too long, and the dances may also have been assimilated. Moreover, the traditional dance has its style and foot and hand dance rhythm (Haida et al., 2016). Although the dance movement was a mixture of different cultures, it still has its unique identity and meaningful values.

Moreover, preschool teachers are given opportunities and freedom to modify the activities if they meet the curriculum objectives. Therefore, preschool teachers need to be innovative in organizing and providing fun and varied learning activities so that children do not only do physical activities in sports and exercise. Each teacher is free to deepen the knowledge of effective teaching in the class. Furthermore, when it comes to organizing and implementing activities and learning standards, dedicated teachers are granted the autonomy to teach children according to children's individual development in both physical and physiological capacities. To ensure that children continue to receive important education, which includes learning about our nation's cultural heritage, teachers should act wisely by seizing the opportunity and being aware of the current situation. Teachers are encouraged to nurture our nation's heritage, even during pandemics. Learning cultural heritage, especially traditional dance, should not be sidelined. Teachers must develop new strategies so children can learn about the country's heritage like other communities.

Creative movement is one of the most effective educational tools when children can be satisfied with a natural movement (Lykesas et al., 2014). Children do not feel pressured or compelled to perform any movement through creative movement. There are many ways to perform creative movements, e.g. spontaneous, autonomous, following a theme or not, with or without instruction or musical accompaniment. According to Jamariah et al. (2017), the creative movement promotes psychomotor development and stimulates happy feelings in children.

In other words, creative movement is described as self-discipline for the child (Wulandari et al., 2019). It can be stated that every child has their own desires and ideas about how the movement should be performed and styled. Creative movement is not like learning to read. However, this does not mean creative movement should not be emphasized in the learning process. In this study, a traditional dance with creative movement elements is considered useful and appropriate for learning in early childhood. Children love something new and rarely feel and experience it.

Moreover, children can perform traditional dance movements in the classroom with teachers and peers even if the school does not have good equipment, such as a dance studio (Wulandari et al., 2019). A traditional dance with elements of creative movement will not hinder and limit children's opportunities and interest in learning their cultural heritage in school. Therefore, this study aims to identify the content and context needed to develop a traditional dance model.

METHOD

The design of this study is a survey study using questionnaire instruments consisting of two Parts, A. Context Analysis of Model Requirements and B. Analysis of The Need for Content Model. The 5-Point Likert Scale was used to determine preschool teachers' level of agreement with each of the items queried. The 5-Point Likert Scale begins with (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) less agree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

Before the actual study, the researchers conducted a pilot study to measure the level of validity and reliability. In addition, validity and reliability are critical when evaluating a measurement instrument (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The instrument's reliability for the entirety of the individual parts of the item is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha value

| Part | Total Item (N) | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------|----------------|------------------|
| A. | 14 | .949 |
| B. | 10 | .953 |

Samples of this study were selected through a purposive sampling technique. Simply put, the researcher can determine what needs to be known and then look for a sample who can and is willing to provide the information through knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016). In total of 125 preschool teachers from the Ministry of Education were selected based on their experience teaching in preschool. Data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms. After obtaining ethical approval, the survey links on Facebook and WhatsApp were publicly distributed. The link is accompanied by information that briefly explains the purpose of the study, survey procedures, and respondent eligibility criteria.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The analysis of this study was descriptively using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26 software, which includes the mean value and the standard deviation for each item. After the data were analyzed, the researchers used the interpretation of the mean score proposed by Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) to strengthen the study sample's consent level by category. The interpretation is shown in Table 2.

Table 3 shows teacher's experiences who are the sample of this study. 96 % (121 people) have more than ten years of teaching experience in preschool. Table 4 shows the contextual analysis of the study's model requirements required by preschool teachers. The findings indicates that preschool teachers should utilize the traditional dance model of the Malay community for contextual analysis. This model considers the training aspect, with an average score of 4.42 and

a standard deviation of .637. Additionally, preschool teachers strongly support using the Malay community's traditional dance model to emphasize age-appropriate movement skills. The agreed mean score is 4.37, with a .576 standard deviation.

Table 2. Interpretation of mean score

| Min Score | Category |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1.00 to 2.00 | Low |
| 2.01 to 3.00 | Medium Low |
| 3.01 to 4.00 | Medium High |
| 4.01 to 5.00 | High |

Table 3. Teacher's experiences

| Teaching Experience | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| < 5 years | 5 | 4% |
| 5- 10 years | 18 | 14% |
| 11- 20 years | 47 | 38% |
| >21 years | 55 | 44% |
| Total | 125 | 100% |

Table 4. Contextual analysis of model requirements

| Item | Mean | Standard Deviation | Category |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|----------|
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community emphasizes movement skills. | 4.37 | .576 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community focuses on basic movements in teaching and learning. | 4.18 | .696 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community emphasizes exposure to the traditional dance type of the Malay community. | 4.29 | .658 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community emphasizes the basic movement aspect of traditional dance. | 4.31 | .640 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community considers the space aspect. | 4.22 | .717 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community considers the time aspect. | 4.02 | .707 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community considers the aspect of force. | 4.11 | .710 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community considers aspects of the creative movement. | 4.38 | .680 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community considers the training aspect. | 4.42 | .637 | High |
| Traditional dance models of the Malay community consider the use of appropriate accessories. | 4.29 | .693 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community considers the aspect of applying noble values. | 4.31 | .689 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community considers the aspect of strengthening activities. | 4.18 | .685 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community performs demonstration activities. | 4.24 | .665 | High |
| The traditional dance model of the Malay community performs reflection. | 4.10 | .760 | High |

In turn, the Malay community's traditional dance model, which emphasizes the fundamental movement aspect of traditional dance, has also received high approval from preschool teachers, with a mean value of 4.31 and a deviation from the standard of .640.

The findings from the analysis of the need for traditional dance models based on creative movements for children are presented in Table 5. The total number of items in the table is 10, obtaining a mean value of 4.00 and above. The findings showed that preschool teachers agreed that the model content includes creative movements, with a mean value of 4.31 and a standard deviation of .653.

Table 5. Model content requirements analysis.

| Item | Mean | Standard Deviation | Category |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|----------|
| Model content covers cultural heritage by race in Malaysia. | 4.30 | .660 | High |
| Model content covers traditional dance types by race in Malaysia. | 4.26 | .697 | High |
| The model's content has a lesson on the traditional dance type of the Malay community. | 4.21 | .639 | High |
| The content of the model covers the creative movement. | 4.31 | .653 | High |
| The model's content applies a pedagogical element to the traditional dances of the Malay community. | 4.18 | .685 | High |
| The model's content implements the Malay community's traditional dance skills element. | 4.31 | .601 | High |
| The content of the models develops children's talents in the traditional dances of the Malay community. | 4.30 | .635 | High |
| The model's content implements the essential movement elements in the traditional dances of the Malay community. | 4.31 | .628 | High |
| The models' content has various motions in the traditional dances of the Malay community. | 4.28 | .617 | High |
| The content of the models supports children in mastering the order of motion in the traditional dances of the Malay community. | 4.28 | .617 | High |

In addition, preschool teachers need the content of a model that implements essential movement elements in the traditional dances of the Malay community with a mean value of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 6.28. Preschool teachers also require model content applying the traditional dance skills element of the Malay community with a mean value of 4.31 and a standard deviation of .601.

These three items are highly approved as preschool teachers require model content such as (1) covering creative movements, (2) applying traditional dance skills elements of the Malay community, and (3) applying essential movement elements in the traditional dances of the Malay community.

Discussion

The findings indicate that preschool teachers require a traditional dance framework that is appropriate for children's skill level. This is evident in the needs analysis of the questionnaire instruments distributed to the MOE preschool teachers. In Malaysia, the 2017 KSPK curriculum policy has also addressed the issue of shaping a young generation that expresses love and affection for the culture and traditions of Malaysian society. This relates to '*cultural globalization*', a new phenomenon threatening Malaysian society's artistic and cultural heritage (Fadzil et al., 2016). Therefore, the preschool teachers selected the traditional dance of the Malay community to streamline it by forming a robust model that will serve as a reference for educating preschool children. Biber (2016) stated that traditional dance can improve skills such as balance, coordination, flexibility, and rhythm, and it is an entertaining activity for children to enhance their motor development. This opinion aligns with Dabalsa's (2017) comprehensive development can be achieved through dance. Children must develop these skills to understand motor function fundamentals and increase self-confidence. As the child reaches adolescence, this growth will have a positive effect.

According to the aforementioned reasoning, two primary points are highlighted. First, the enhancement of the quality of traditional dance education should begin during childhood. Second,

traditional dance is an exciting activity that can improve children's skills and motor development early. In addition, the study focuses on creative movement, which is the basis for the movements that preschool teachers need. This is because the elements of creative movement can improve preschool teachers' knowledge to teach the child the basics of movement in a gradual and structured way. Creative movement also can make learning basic movement fun (Jamariah et al., 2017). Basic movements should be strengthened and supported first to strengthen traditional dances so children can develop motion skills for more complex and widespread forms of motion.

Laban Creative Movement Model, four elements must be mastered to produce creative movements, namely (1) body, (2) time, (3) space, as well as (4) relationships (Gratsiouni et al., 2016). The results suggest that preschool teachers agree that the traditional dance model appropriate for the child stage should incorporate space, time, and force concepts. Since traditional dance is a new activity for children, it is important to reinforce the fundamental principles of dance to prevent children from developing careless habits in their performance. Lindsay et al. (2020) define mastering basic movement skills as mastery of locomotors (running, jumping), stability (twisting and bending), and manipulation of objects (throwing, catching, kicking). Children who are literate in building their capacity in development will make their lifestyle more active in various aspects, including traditional dance. Moreover, the content of models covering creative movements is also needed by preschool teachers.

One of the key aspects emphasized by the preschool teacher for the development of a traditional dance is the application of noble values into the traditional dance. The principle of movement in traditional Malay dances trains us to behave in good manners, be gentle, and have good values. As such, children gain a physical understanding of how to be in the world, comprehend and respect their physical identities, regulate their bodies, and benefit from being physically active and fit via distinctiveness through creative dance (Payne & Costas, 2021).

However, the rapid modernization of technology led to a malfunction in the negative value system in the daily life practices of Malaysians, such as Western entertainment, the contradiction of cultural norms, and included movements that differed from the lives of the Malay community (Yusoff & Hanafiah, 2015). In line with the opinion of Fairuzzah et al., the focus and attraction of Western culture in society is a challenge in maintaining traditional culture. Therefore, applying noble values is an essential aspect of the traditional dance model of the Malay community. The justification for the values of the Malay community is based on the teachings of Islam, which can shape the practical life of every individual without regard to religion or race.

Malaysia has a diverse population characterized by a wide range of racial and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the traditional dance is extensively performed nationwide. As a result, it might be challenging for a preschool teacher to be proficient in all varieties of traditional dances. However, in line with the findings, the study also showed that preschool teachers lacked knowledge of dance content and creative movements. The solution is that the educational platform advocates for cultivating traditional dance and building a nation-loving nation-state of its own country's heritage (Setyawan & Dopo, 2020). Preschool teachers should prepare and streamline themselves with knowledge and skills so that they are better equipped to train children about traditional dances.

CONCLUSION

Traditional dance is a form of physical activity that can enhance children's mastery in their motor skills and movements. Traditional dance based on creative movements is indeed new learning for preschoolers. The limitations of this study include (1) a lack of knowledge and abilities and (2) a lack of dance teaching materials that prevent preschool teachers from regularly or infrequently exposing children to traditional dances.

In connection with current globalization, children are easily influenced to choose a modern lifestyle that negatively affects our country's preservation of heritage and traditions. The practice of life is now more geared toward a non-positive system of values in society, thus eliminating the decency and decency of one's own national identity.

Therefore, education about traditional dances needs to be streamlined so that children are educated at an early age to recognize and appreciate the traditional dances of their own country. Traditional dance can help children improve their movement skills through exciting and muscular activities. This study plays a role in developing a traditional dance model that they can adopt in teaching and learning sessions in the classroom.

Based on the study, the researchers finally suggest conducting a comprehensive analysis of teachers' constraints, such as knowledge and understanding, skills, curriculum policy constraints, facilities and infrastructure, as well as constraints imposed by the government, Non-Governmental Organizations NGOs, and support system. In this way, the study will open the eyes of all stakeholders to be aware of the issues of traditional dance in early childhood. This study investigated preschool teachers' need for traditional dance models to preserve Malay heritage among preschool children. The study sought to determine the extent to which preschool teachers understand traditional Malay dance for children and the context in which it is taught. Therefore, it is important to make traditional dance one of the skills that must be integrated into the early childhood education curriculum. Educators, policymakers, and stakeholders must realize this to foster a sense of pride and preserve cultural heritage.

For further studies, the researchers recommend investigating the need for traditional dances of other races, such as Chinese, Indian, and others. In this sense, preschool teachers have different models to lead the teaching of traditional dances. As Fazli et al. (2021) stated, the main problem for the instructors (teachers) is that they cannot handle and control learning Malay dance art. As a result, children tend not to involve in enjoying the process of learning traditional dance, which leads to a lack of motivation in the classroom (Suartini et al., 2020). Currently, there are no existing workshops or programs in Malaysia that specifically train preschool teachers to teach traditional dances. The focus in the physical education standard is primarily on sports and recreational activities. Preschool teachers, therefore, need a suitable role model to guide, educate, and inspire children in traditional dances.

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