



Virtual Art Innovations for Maintaining the Existence of Riau Malay Culture

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic affects all aspects, including cultural arts. Cultural arts have an important role in human civilization as a result of thoughts and traditions from ancestors. The existence of the cultural arts of Malay Riau is decreased during the pandemic. All cultural arts activities have been shifted from the offline stage to the online stage so that the efforts to inherit and develop the cultural arts of Malay Riau are hampered. This research aims to determine the differences in the existence of Malay Riau cultural arts before and after the pandemic in Riau students at the Malay Riau Cultural Unit, Bandung Institute of Technology (UKMR ITB) and in Riau people in general. This research also aims to gather the opinions from Riau students and Riau people about innovations to inherit the Malay Riau cultural arts during the pandemic. The methods which are used in this research to gather the data: study literature, interviews, and questionnaires. Based on this research, Malay Riau Cultural Unit has made an innovation to inherit the values of Malay Riau cultural arts through making cultural archives so that the inheritance of traditions can be carried out, even though the pandemic is still undergoing. Through this research, we hope that the existence of Malay Riau cultural arts can be maintained through continuous innovation, especially in Riau students at the Malay Riau Cultural Unit and in the Riau people.

KEYWORDS

Cultural arts;
Malay Riau;
Existence, pandemic;
Innovation

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1. Introduction

Art and culture are a custom that is characteristic of every region in Indonesia and is passed down from generation to generation. The inherited customs can be in the form of dance, music, language, and much more. In this journal, cultural arts are devoted to Riau Malay dance and music. To be able to preserve the arts and culture of certain regions in order to survive in society, of course, it is necessary to develop innovations from the culture itself. Innovation arises from the renewable creativity of a person in growing ideas and ideas based on flexibility, fluency, skill, and intelligence (Barker 2020). Something that has artistic and cultural value cannot be separated from the aspect of sustainable idea development so that it will give birth to a culture that continues to grow because of the birth of ideas. The creativity of a person who always thinks positively will create a concept in his work so that later a stimulus will be generated to go further in the future (Li 2020). However, for the past year, Indonesia has been in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic which requires people to limit their movement by shifting offline activities to online so as not to aggravate the situation; Riau is no exception. This has an impact on the existence of Riau Malay cultural arts in the community itself, both those who live in the Riau area or those who migrate to other areas and are gathered in associations or Riau student activity units.

In fact, based on the results of research that has been carried out, art connoisseurs from the Riau community and from the art association have experienced a setback in developing art because the pandemic has prevented the holding of cultural arts performances that can be watched by many people. This problem is important to find a solution because art and culture must still exist in social



life. An alternative that can be held is to develop culture by holding virtual cultural performances (Carvajal, Morita, and Bilmes 2020; Rambarran 2021), virtual cultural exhibitions, and so on. However, it also does not work properly. The solution that can be done is to develop culture significantly through the role of the Riau people because humans are social creatures, so that they cannot be separated from the role of others to develop sustainable ideas and ideas so that culture is not eroded. This can be realized with strong coordination between the community and the related Riau Government. Such as the development of continuous innovation in Riau Malay cultural arts learning which includes aspects of virtual dance and music. It is hoped that learning will trigger aesthetic thinking in exploring art further. Systematic learning that is planned, implemented, and evaluated will achieve something effective (Owen 2020; Regmi and Jones 2020). Thus, activities such as virtual cultural performances, virtual cultural exhibitions, and so on can be carried out. This research has the following objectives; (1) Knowing the differences in the existence of Riau Malay cultural arts values before and after the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) Knowing about sustainable innovations related to the inheritance of Riau Malay cultural arts during the COVID-19 period according to the people of Riau. With this research, the existence of Riau Malay arts and culture is expected to survive or even increase in the Riau community, both those living in the Riau area or those who migrate to other areas and are gathered in associations or Riau student activity units.

2. Method

Data analysis and hypothesis testing were carried out based on quantitative analysis methods by looking for various research instruments, including statistical data analysis with an approach to descriptive research (Guest, Namey, and Chen 2020). The population that is the subject of this research is the Riau Malay community. Because the population is too large, the researcher only takes a sample from that population. The samples taken were students of the Riau Malay Culture Unit, Bandung Institute of Technology and several Riau people. Sources of data used in this study consisted of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from questionnaires made by the author and unstructured interviews with several objects that have a high correlation to the research topic. Secondary data were obtained from literature studies of several research journals and articles that have a correlation with the research topic being conducted. Discussions on unstructured questionnaires and interviews are analyzed in the results and discussion section. The results of these unstructured questionnaires and interviews will produce solutions that are outlined in conclusion. Based on the research that has been done, the results and discussion will be described to determine the existence of Riau Malay culture during the pandemic, see Table 1.

Table 1. The Existence of Riau Malay Culture During the Pandemic

Question	Percentage	Response
The existence of cultural arts can still be maintained during the pandemic.	53.7%	Agree
Art performances during the pandemic are still effectively carried out while implementing health protocols.	41.5%	Disagree
To preserve Malay cultural arts, the role of the Riau people is prioritized to develop it.	73.2%	Strongly agree
The appearance of Riau Malay culture online is no less interesting than offline.	53.7%	Agree
Innovation through learning Riau Malay arts is effective in triggering further exploration in the future in terms of developing artistic aesthetics.	53.7%	Agree
Virtual cultural performances are an effective alternative for developing Riau Malay cultural arts during the pandemic.	46.3%	Strongly agree



The research results are presented in tabular form, referring to the quantitative descriptive analysis method from various respondents from the Riau community as many as 19 people and students from the Riau Malay Culture Unit, Bandung Institute of Technology, 22 people, with a total of 41 respondents. Discussions related to this research include the existence of Riau Malay culture during the pandemic, which must be maintained in its sustainability in developing virtual cultural appearances and other innovations related to the effects it has on the period before (Table 2), and after the pandemic.

Table 2. The Existence of Riau Malay Culture Before and After the Pandemic

Question	Percentage	Response
The implementation of Riau Malay cultural arts activities was more effectively carried out by the Riau people and Riau community students in the period before the pandemic.	53.7%	Strongly agree
After the pandemic ends, Riau Malay arts can continue to be carried out and developed and maintain their authenticity.	56.1%	Strongly agree

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Existence of Riau Malay Cultural Arts in the Pandemic Period

The existence of cultural arts can be maintained during a pandemic. The adaptability of art performers, art connoisseurs, other creative industries, and the surrounding community helps in maintaining the existence of art and culture during the current pandemic. If art performers, art connoisseurs, creative industries, and the public are unable to adapt to this situation, it is very likely that the existence of arts and culture cannot be fully maintained because of the boundary or gap between the pandemic period and the post-pandemic period. So, during this pandemic, art actors and other supporting aspects must be able to adapt so that the existence of cultural arts can survive and maintain its authenticity. Performing arts during the pandemic is indeed less effective to do while implementing health protocols (Simamora 2020). If the art performance is done offline and art lovers attend the performance directly, it will certainly have a negative impact on all the audience present. The government urges the public to implement health protocols, one of which is social distancing. In cultural arts performances, the performers will be close together on the stage (Fatmawati 2021). If the performers keep their distance from each other, the dance or music that is displayed will certainly not be as effective and exact as usual.

The role of the people of Riau is prioritized to preserve Malay cultural arts. The role is a pattern of behaviour associated with someone who occupies a certain position in a social unit (Silberbauer 2020). Riau people are expected to realize their role and play a role in preserving Riau Malay cultural arts because those who know very well about Riau's local wisdom and culture are the Riau people themselves. As a society, we must realize that we have several roles in preserving Riau Malay cultural arts, such as: participating in supporting cultural arts activities, maintaining cultural arts so that they remain original, and upholding Riau Malay culture. In a pandemic situation like today, it will certainly be difficult to support cultural arts activities. However, with innovations such as the appearance of virtual culture and other innovations, it is possible to involve the role of the community in it. For example, people share cultural arts in the form of dance and music on their social media or participate in watching virtual cultural performances if held by the government or cultural arts institutions.

3.2. Virtual Cultural Performances and Other Innovations

The appearance of Riau Malay culture online is no less interesting than offline. This is proven by the results of the questionnaire, which shows that the majority of people are still interested in seeing Riau Malay art performances, even though virtually. Virtual art performances are online-based art performances, which can be implemented through social media and websites. Artworks or



performances are displayed in a space called a gallery, while the place containing the gallery is called an art space (Ardhiati et al. 2020). Presenting works of art performances virtually will be more flexible because it can not only be displayed through galleries but also social media or websites that are not limited by a space so that anyone can see them. Algarni, provides examples of virtual art exhibitions that have been carried out, namely the Langgeng Art Space, whose exhibition posters are distributed via Instagram, invitations for those who want to see the exhibition are distributed via Whatsapp, and the exhibition is held on a website (Algarni 2021). The procedure for virtual art exhibitions can, of course, also be adopted into virtual dance and music cultural performances.

Virtual cultural performances are an effective alternative during the pandemic to develop Riau Malay cultural arts (Kartika and Hidayat 2021). Changes that occurred due to the pandemic made various innovations in terms of art and culture whose development was inseparable from the times. Culture is something that is still upheld despite the various changes that occur. Innovation was born during this pandemic in the form of a virtual cultural appearance which in its treatment applies health protocols. In the last few months, the Riau Government and the local Covid-19 Task Force have supported the implementation of virtual cultural performances as a spirit to support cultural activities and eradicate the spread of Covid-19, because it can be seen that cultural arts are able to unite the spirit in living life during a pandemic. By implementing social distancing and physical distancing, the productivity of artists will increase. Conditions that allow artists to be introverted will lead to deeper ideas and works. The show virtually enhances the appreciator's visual focus.

Innovation through effective learning triggers the exploration of artistic aesthetic development. This goes hand in hand with the development of innovation in the fields of art and culture; art learning always undergoes significant changes, which will then grow variants of self-creative methods in terms of processing taste and logic that have aesthetic value. Innovation arises dynamically, and this can be seen from the existence of various new thoughts from various problems that arise. The problems faced today will be more and more, one of which is the influence of an unsupportive environment for creating effective conditions for art learning, for example, during a pandemic, so that all parties must intervene to face this problem so that innovation can be provided by witnessing the appearance of virtual culture. Art learning is a means of developing intellectually on the basic elements of art (González-Zamar and Abad-Segura 2020). The implementation of learning basically builds the character of the soul that has the potential to develop an aesthetic idea that contains a touch of creativity, so that in its creation in the field of art it will produce quality works of art because it arises from talent and love of cultural arts. Based on the view of the results of this innovation, it will regenerate the spirit to develop art, especially Riau Malay Culture art, including a variety of dance and music videos that are shown virtually.

3.3. The Existence of Riau Malay Cultural Arts Before and After the Pandemic

Before the pandemic, cultural activities were more effectively carried out by the people of Riau and students of the Riau association. The cultural performances held can be watched by many people, both from Riau and not from Riau. The process of cultural development is effective; various performances can be displayed from music and dance so that people who are not from Riau can know more about Malay culture and are able to develop it as well as people who come from Riau will be able to preserve their culture. This is supported by the existence of a hearing mechanism in humans; the appearance that is witnessed directly will monitor the work of the brain to capture the stimulus in the form of audio and visual that can be enjoyed directly by the appreciator without an indirect path that occurs in two directions such as when witnessing a virtual appearance. Therefore, this raises a paradigm of satisfaction from the appreciator towards an appearance that is witnessed directly. After the pandemic ends, Riau Malay arts will maintain their authenticity and will continue to grow. This can be evidenced by the geographical location of Riau, which is on the route of a region that is thick with Malay culture, namely, Medan, Jambi, Palembang, Bangka Belitung, and even Malaysia. The variety of Riau Malay culture is very rich in the customs contained in it, the thickness of Islamic culture is in it; although not all Riau people are Muslim, Malay culture has become an ancestor in the life of the people of Riau. Riau Malay cultural values refer to Islamic teachings so that if there are teachings that are not balanced with Islamic teachings, they must be adjusted first in order to create a Malay cultural identity which symbolizes that Islam cannot be



separated from Malay customs (Rafi, Purnomo, and Wicaksono 2020). Malay culture from ancient times until now is still famous for its modernization in terms of the variety of dance and music that symbolizes Malay is timeless on earth.

According to the interview result, the impact of the pandemic on the performance of Riau Malay cultural arts in the Riau Malay Culture Unit is to reduce the intensity of the performance, although, in fact, it is still possible to perform online cultural arts performances. The cultural arts performances referred to by the speakers were recording Riau Malay dance and music performances, then broadcasting them online. This happens because not everyone can make appearances with such methods and procedures with the same feel or feel with offline performances as before the pandemic. In society itself, the pandemic has caused a decline in producing a more developed work because art workers have limitations in displaying their work openly. Nevertheless, the interviewees argued that the existence of arts and culture within the members of the Riau Malay Cultural Unit (UKMR) remained the same as before the pandemic because quite a number of UKMR members missed weekly exercises and Riau Malay cultural performances. However, for the class of 2020, there are still many arts and cultural values that cannot be taught optimally due to online lectures, so they are not allowed to come to campus due to the pandemic. Things that cannot be taught optimally, such as the installation of *songkets* and the beat of *marwas* (Riau Malay traditional musical instruments). According to sources, during the pandemic, many activities were limited; however, for the people of Riau itself, cultural activities did experience a decline during the pandemic because they could not be witnessed directly like before the pandemic. On the other hand, the knowledge of the Riau people about Riau Malay culture is still maintained. Through research from the questionnaire, the author found that almost all Riau people know various kinds of Riau Malay dances and music. This is supported by the frequent holding of cultural performances at the Idrus Tintin platform before the pandemic which was witnessed by various groups from the Riau community. It certainly supports a more innovative and creative culture.

The informant also said that the efforts that had been made so that the class of 2020 and beyond (which may still run online lectures in the future) would still get knowledge and values of Riau Malay cultural arts that are maintained and original, the Riau Malay Culture Unit (UKMR) has an archived variety of dance and music in the form of performance videos and video tutorials. If they are offline again, final year students or alumni from UKMR must be willing to involve themselves in teaching various dances and music to generations who have not received the knowledge offline due to the current pandemic. According to the source, the efforts that can be made by the people of Riau to maintain the existence of Riau Malay cultural arts are to watch virtual cultural performances by implementing health protocols; besides that, they can also diligently read books and articles related to Riau Malay cultural arts. Other Riau people love Riau Malay culture during this pandemic. A pandemic is not a way to end the existence of culture but a way to develop an innovative culture.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research that has been done, the authors can conclude that it is true there are differences in the existence of Riau Malay arts and culture between before and after the pandemic. The difference is not too significant, but if the performers and art connoisseurs cannot adapt to the current situation, it is very likely that there will be a significant degradation of Riau Malay cultural arts after the pandemic is over. The pandemic is not a barrier for people to continue to innovate in the arts and culture field. Based on the research that has been done with literature studies, questionnaires, and interviews, the authors can conclude that there are three efforts that can be made to maintain the existence of Riau Malay cultural arts during the pandemic, including the following: (1) Conduct virtual or online art performances that can include dance, music, drama, or other Riau Malay culture; (2) Conduct effective deepening of material about Riau Malay cultural arts to the younger generation; (3) Use social media such as Instagram to share infographics or posters about Riau Malay cultural arts so that the reach of information about culture becomes wider.



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