

### **Corrigendum**

This article contains the following correction:

#### **On page 4, third paragraph, the text originally published read:**

“Considering these developments, policymakers, educators, and cultural practitioners must recognize the intrinsic value of creative placemaking in shaping inclusive and resilient communities. Art education must be positioned at the core of social innovation, catalyzing civic engagement, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation (Brooke et al., 2025; Molinero et al., 2025; Pham et al., 2025). The integration of creative pedagogy within formal and informal learning environments can cultivate future generations of artists, activists, and urban planners who are equipped to navigate the complexities of contemporary placemaking (Nyboer et al., 2024). As Indonesia and Malaysia continue to redefine their cultural landscapes, interdisciplinary collaborations that merge artistic expression with social research and policy advocacy will be instrumental in ensuring that creative placemaking fulfills its transformative potential.”

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“Considering these developments, policymakers, educators, and cultural practitioners must recognize the intrinsic value of creative placemaking in shaping inclusive and resilient communities. Art education must be positioned at the core of social innovation, catalyzing civic engagement, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation (Brooke et al., 2025; Molinero et al., 2025; Pham et al., 2025). This requires a renewed focus on pedagogy, particularly as recent studies document that contemporary studio learners show declining engagement and shifting motivation, warranting a re-evaluation of studio teaching (Nyboer et al., 2024). In response to this need, we argue that the integration of creative pedagogy focused on placemaking can cultivate future generations of empowered artists, activists, and urban planners. As Indonesia and Malaysia continue to redefine their cultural landscapes, interdisciplinary collaborations that merge artistic expression with social research and policy advocacy will be instrumental in ensuring that creative placemaking fulfills its transformative potential.”

The error was introduced by the authors of the article (Muchammad Bayu Tejo Sampurno, Anik Juwariyah, Djuli Djatiprambudi, Trisakti Trisakti, Herry Rizal Djahwasi, Abdul Rahman Safian) through a misrepresentation of the work of Jody Nyboer, Tara Winters, and Riham Nady Faragallah (“Something Has Changed” – observations of contemporary studio learners and implications for pedagogy, *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14740222241289527>

The correction was acknowledged by the authors of this article and agreed upon with the cited authors.

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# Creative Placemaking and Social Innovation in Art Education for Transforming Communities in Indonesia and Malaysia

## Creación de Espacios Creativos e Innovación Social en la Educación Artística para la Transformación de Comunidades en Indonesia y Malasia

**Muchammad Bayu Tejo Sampurno**<sup>1</sup>: Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia.

[tejo@fmisp.upsi.edu.my](mailto:tejo@fmisp.upsi.edu.my)

**Anik Juwariyah**: Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia.

[anikjuwariyah@unesa.ac.id](mailto:anikjuwariyah@unesa.ac.id)

**Djuli Djatiprambudi**: Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia.

[djulidjatiprambudi@unesa.ac.id](mailto:djulidjatiprambudi@unesa.ac.id)

**Trisakti Trisakti**: Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia.

[trisakti@unesa.ac.id](mailto:trisakti@unesa.ac.id)

**Herry Rizal Djahwasi**: Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia.

[herry@fmisp.upsi.edu.my](mailto:herry@fmisp.upsi.edu.my)

**Abdul Rahman Safian**: Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia.

[rahmansafian@fmisp.upsi.edu.my](mailto:rahmansafian@fmisp.upsi.edu.my)

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<sup>1</sup> **Corresponding author:** Muchammad Bayu Tejo Sampurno. Sultan Idris Education University (Malaysia).

**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Creative placemaking is a transformative strategy that fosters social cohesion, economic resilience, and cultural sustainability in Indonesia and Malaysia by reclaiming public spaces as sites of collective identity and empowerment. This study examines its impact on urban and rural development, emphasizing the role of art education in sustaining participatory initiatives. **Methodology:** Ethnographic fieldwork and quantitative analyses in Indonesia (Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Bandung) and Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, Penang) reveal that artistic interventions strengthen community networks, increase economic opportunities, and promote intergenerational knowledge exchange. However, challenges include inconsistent funding, policy misalignment, and the commercialization of community-driven art. **Results:** Findings highlight the necessity of interdisciplinary collaborations among artists, educators, and policymakers to sustain creative placemaking. Such efforts are crucial to maintaining its long-term viability. **Discussion:** Integrating art education within formal and informal learning environments offers a viable model for cultural preservation and creative engagement. As urbanization accelerates in Southeast Asia, creative placemaking must remain dynamic and inclusive, prioritizing artistic integrity and community participation. **Conclusion:** Policy reforms are essential to ensuring creative placemaking continues as a vehicle for social innovation, cultural heritage preservation, and sustainable development. They will also keep artistic interventions community-driven and responsive to evolving sociocultural landscapes.

**Keywords:** Creative placemaking; art education; urban development; social innovation; community engagement; Indonesia; Malaysia.

**Abstract**

**Introduction:** El *placemaking* creativo fortalece la cohesión social, la resiliencia económica y la sostenibilidad cultural en Indonesia y Malasia, recuperando espacios públicos como territorios de identidad colectiva y empoderamiento. Este estudio analiza su impacto en el desarrollo urbano y rural, destacando la educación artística como un factor clave para la sostenibilidad de iniciativas participativas. **Methodology:** Se aplicó un enfoque mixto con trabajo de campo etnográfico y análisis cuantitativos en Indonesia (Yogyakarta, Yakarta, Bandung) y Malasia (Kuala Lumpur, Penang). Las intervenciones artísticas fortalecen redes comunitarias, generan oportunidades económicas y facilitan el intercambio de conocimientos, pero enfrentan desafíos como financiación inestable, descoordinación política y mercantilización del arte comunitario. **Results:** Los hallazgos subrayan la necesidad de colaboraciones interdisciplinarias entre artistas, educadores y formuladores de políticas para garantizar la viabilidad del *placemaking* creativo. **Discussion:** La educación artística en entornos formales e informales es clave para la preservación cultural y el compromiso creativo. Con la urbanización en aumento, el *placemaking* creativo debe ser inclusivo y sostenible. **Conclusions:** Las reformas políticas son esenciales para que el *placemaking* creativo siga siendo una herramienta de innovación social y desarrollo sostenible, asegurando su adaptación a los cambios socioculturales.

**Keywords:** *Placemaking* creativo; educación artística; desarrollo urbano; innovación social; participación comunitaria; Indonesia; Malasia.

## 1. Introduction

The evolving landscape of urban development in Southeast Asia necessitates a critical examination of creative placemaking to revitalize public spaces and empower local communities (Arora & Sharma, 2022; Goodlander, 2018; Gunaratna, 2019; Wartika et al., 2019).

Within this framework, Indonesia and Malaysia have emerged as dynamic sites where artistic interventions are redefining social spaces, economic resilience, and cultivating a collective cultural identity (Oktaviani & Ichwan, 2018; Wahida & Himawan, 2022). The intersection of art education and social innovation is no longer a peripheral concern but a central force in shaping sustainable urban and rural environments. Rapid urbanization, socio-economic disparities, and cultural homogenization threaten the unique identities of cities and rural communities alike, making creative placemaking a vital strategy for inclusive development.

Recent studies highlight that urban migration and gentrification often lead to the displacement of marginalized communities, making the need for community-driven cultural projects more pressing than ever (Davis-Cotton, 2021). In Indonesia, cities like Yogyakarta and Bandung have become hotbeds for artistic collaborations that preserve local traditions and provide economic opportunities for underprivileged artists and craftspeople (Alexandri et al., 2019; Amy, 2017; Larso & Saphiranti, 2016). Similarly, in Malaysia, initiatives in Penang and Kuala Lumpur have redefined urban spaces by integrating street art, performance festivals, and participatory art projects that bridge socio-economic gaps (Isa & Shan, 2024; Zaibon et al., 2024). However, without a structured framework that integrates art education into these efforts, the sustainability of creative placemaking remains uncertain.

The urgency of integrating art education into placemaking stems from its potential to instill creative agency among local communities, particularly youth and marginalized groups (Batorowicz et al., 2023; Sternfeld et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023). Art education, when leveraged as a tool for social innovation (Putz-Plecko, 2015), transcends traditional pedagogy by embedding critical thinking (Bowen et al., 2014), cultural awareness (Jiménez & Cid, 2020), and collaborative problem-solving within community-based projects (Sochacka et al., 2016). According to Purushothaman (2023), informal arts pedagogies have played a pivotal role in democratizing access to creative resources and enabling grassroots movements to reclaim public spaces for cultural expression. In this regard, creative placemaking reconfigures physical spaces and nurtures an ecosystem where art becomes a medium for social change.

The economic rationale for investing in creative placemaking and social innovation through art education is underscored by its contributions to the creative economy (de Arriba et al., 2019). The creative industries as a significant driver of economic growth, particularly in developing nations where traditional industries face stagnation like in Malaysia, the government's recognition of the creative economy as a pillar of national development has led to initiatives which funds projects that integrate art education with community engagement (Ismail et al., 2022; Noh et al., 2021; Saad et al., 2019). Similarly, Indonesia's has facilitated numerous collaborations between artists, educators, and urban planners to foster sustainable cultural hubs in cities (Inayatulloh et al., 2019; Prajanti et al., 2023). Despite its transformative potential, creative placemaking faces significant challenges, particularly in regions where institutional support is lacking.

A critical issue in both Indonesia and Malaysia are the tension between state-led urban development projects and grassroots cultural movements (Balogh & Németh, 2021). While governments often prioritize infrastructural expansion, independent artists and cultural activists struggle to secure funding and public recognition (Hannula et al., 2014; Song, 2012). The commodification of art within tourism-driven economies also raises concerns regarding the authenticity of community-led initiatives (Sun et al., 2020). Scholars argue that unless creative placemaking remains anchored in genuine social engagement, it risks becoming a tool for commercial exploitation rather than a vehicle for inclusive growth (Khoo et al., 2024).

The theoretical underpinnings of creative placemaking draw concept of the “right to the city,” which advocates for participatory urbanism where communities actively shape their environments rather than being passive recipients of top-down policies (Courage, 2017). Contemporary discourse on social innovation which emphasizes co-creation, adaptive learning, and cross-sectoral collaboration as essential elements of sustainable development in Southeast Asian contexts underscores the need for a localized approach to placemaking as one part that respects indigenous knowledge systems, community histories, and socio-political complexities (Flys & Matamala, 2024; Mat et al., 2024; Ventre & Cerreta, 2023).

In response to these challenges, the recent models of creative placemaking in Indonesia and Malaysia illustrate a shift towards hybrid approaches that integrate public-private partnerships (Mandal, 2022), educational institutions, and community-led governance (Iryawan et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2012). Case studies from Indonesia, where universities have partnered with local artists to develop arts-integrated curricula demonstrate the efficacy of educational frameworks in sustaining long-term placemaking efforts (Ratten, 2021b, 2021a). Similarly, in Kuala Lumpur, collaborations between museums, schools, and independent art collectives have yielded innovative projects that blend traditional artistic practices with contemporary social themes (Ahmad et al., 2017; Zakariya & Azhari, 2017; Zekrgoo, 2018).

Considering these developments, policymakers, educators, and cultural practitioners must recognize the intrinsic value of creative placemaking in shaping inclusive and resilient communities. Art education must be positioned at the core of social innovation, catalyzing civic engagement, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation (Brooke et al., 2025; Molinero et al., 2025; Pham et al., 2025). The integration of creative pedagogy within formal and informal learning environments can cultivate future generations of artists, activists, and urban planners who are equipped to navigate the complexities of contemporary placemaking (Nyboer et al., 2024). As Indonesia and Malaysia continue to redefine their cultural landscapes, interdisciplinary collaborations that merge artistic expression with social research and policy advocacy will be instrumental in ensuring that creative placemaking fulfills its transformative potential.

The urgency of this discourse cannot be overstated. The sustainability of cultural heritage, the inclusivity of urban development, and the resilience of local economies depend on the extent to which creative placemaking is embedded within national and regional policies. Art education act an aesthetic pursuit and fundamental pillar of community transformation as Southeast Asian societies negotiate the tensions between globalization and local identity (Jatuporn, 2023; Sunardi, 2010), creative placemaking stands as a powerful tool for reclaiming public space (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2022; Hayward, 2021), give some cross-cultural dialogue (Djatiprambudi & Sampurno, 2023), and reimagining the future of urban and rural environments (Sampurno, 2020).

## 2. Methodology

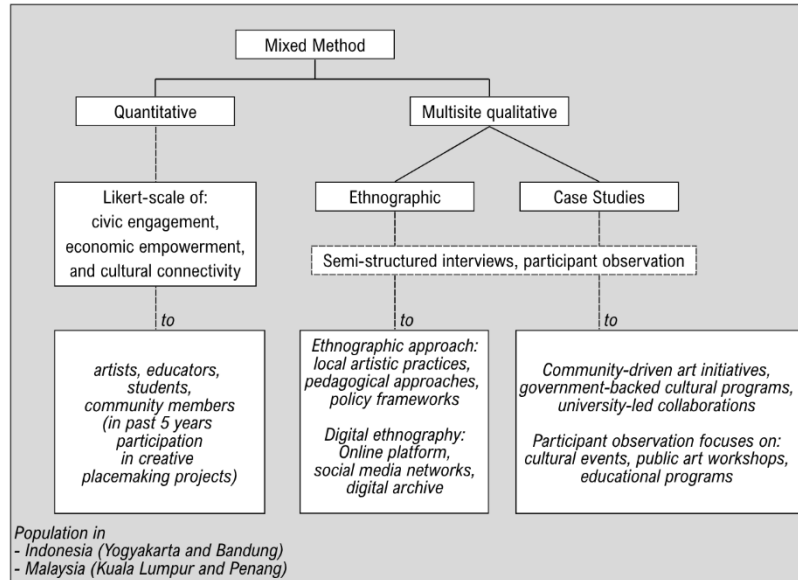
The study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the intersection of creative placemaking and social innovation in art education, specifically in Indonesia and Malaysia (see the flow in Figure 1). The methods focus to capture the complex dynamics of cultural production, policy integration, and community engagement in creative placemaking initiatives like contextual specificity to understanding of how creative placemaking operates in distinct urban and rural settings (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2008). The multisite qualitative component is anchored in ethnographic fieldwork conducted in key creative hubs such in



Indonesia as Yogyakarta and Bandung, and Malaysia as Kuala Lumpur and Penang (as seen in Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**

*Research design flowchart of a mixed-methods approach to investigating creative placemaking in Southeast Asia*



**Source:** Own elaboration (2025).

This research also lands ethnographic inquiry for an exploration of local artistic practices, pedagogical approaches, and policy frameworks that shape creative placemaking efforts (Hine, 2001), as per digital ethnography to investigate the role of technology in expanding the reach and impact of creative placemaking (Boellstorff et al., 2012; Hine, 2001). Online platforms, social media networks, and digital archives serve as valuable data sources for understanding how virtual spaces contribute to cultural production and dissemination.

Then, this study also land case studies include community-driven art initiatives, government-backed cultural programs, and university-led collaborations that have demonstrably influenced local development (Gagnon, 2023; Schlossberger, 2023). The case studies stated from a diverse range of sources, including project reports, media coverage, and firsthand accounts from stakeholders. The comparative analysis of case studies allows for an exploration of best practices and transferable models that can inform future creative placemaking efforts.

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders, including artists, educators, policymakers, and community leaders. The selection of interviewees is based on their active involvement in creative initiatives that integrate art education with community engagement. The interviews focus on their perspectives regarding the impact of creative placemaking on social innovation, economic sustainability, and cultural preservation. Each interview is recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring patterns and emergent themes.

Participant observation is conducted at cultural events, public art workshops, and educational programs that serve as platforms for creative placemaking at both countries. Observational data is systematically documented to capture interactions between artists and local communities, providing insights into how art education facilitates participatory engagement. Special attention is given to projects that prioritize marginalized groups, including indigenous

communities, youth from low-income backgrounds, and informal creative workers.

The analysis of these observations is guided by Courage (2017) about arts in place and the arts, the urban and social practice, which underscores the role of space in shaping social interactions and cultural expressions. Courage perspectives positioning creative placemaking as a process of spatial negotiation, so the study examines how communities reclaim and redefine urban and rural environments through artistic interventions (Courage, 2017).

The quantitative aspect of the study involves a survey distributed to participants involved in creative placemaking initiatives across Indonesia and Malaysia. The survey is designed to assess the perceived impact of art education on social cohesion, economic opportunities, and cultural identity formation. Respondents include artists, educators, students, and community members who have participated in creative placemaking projects within the past five years. The questionnaire using Likert-scale items measuring levels of civic engagement, economic empowerment, and cultural connectivity resulting from their involvement in art-based initiatives. The collected data undergoes statistical analysis to identify correlations between art education and key indicators of social innovation.

### 3. Results

The study collected responses from 312 individuals actively involved in creative placemaking projects (Table 1). Among them, 147 were artists (47.1%), 98 were educators (31.4%), 43 were policymakers (13.8%), and 24 were urban planners and community organizers (7.7%). The geographical distribution included key cities such as Yogyakarta (21.3%), Bandung (18.5%), Jakarta (16.7%), George Town (14.1%), and Kuala Lumpur (12.8%), which have established themselves as creative hubs. In-depth interviews with 47 stakeholders, including 22 independent artists, 11 government officials, seven cultural organization representatives, and seven urban planners, provided further insight into the dynamics of creative placemaking. A majority of artists, comprising 71% of those interviewed, identified themselves as working in street art, performance art, or community-based participatory art.

**Table 1.**

*Creative placemaking study data set*

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Total Respondents	312	100.0
Artists (random sampling, Indonesia and Malaysia)	147	47.1
Educators (random sampling, Indonesia and Malaysia)	98	31.4
Policymakers (random sampling, Indonesia and Malaysia)	43	13.8
Urban Planners & Community Organizers	24	7.7
Geographical Distribution – Yogyakarta, Indonesia	66	21.3
Geographical Distribution – Bandung, Indonesia	58	18.5
Geographical Distribution – Jakarta, Indonesia	52	16.7
Geographical Distribution - George Town, Malaysia	44	14.1
Geographical Distribution - Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	40	12.8
In-depth Interviews - Total Stakeholders	47	100.0
Independent Artists (random sampling, Indonesia and Malaysia)	22	71.0
Government Officials (random sampling, Indonesia and Malaysia)	11	23.4
Cultural Organization Representatives (random sampling, Indonesia and Malaysia)	7	14.9
Urban Planners (random sampling, Indonesia and Malaysia)	7	14.9
Artists in Street/Performance/Community-Based Art (random sampling, Indonesia and Malaysia)	16	71.0

**Source:** Data collection by researcher (2024)

Ethnographic fieldwork in Yogyakarta, Bandung, Kuala Lumpur, and George Town demonstrated the role of creative placemaking in strengthening social cohesion. In Yogyakarta, artists participating in the Jogja Biennale described how their engagement with murals, puppetry, and batik workshops created opportunities for intergenerational knowledge exchange. Interviews confirmed that 90% of residents in Kampung Pelangi supported continued investment in artistic interventions following the transformation of the area into a cultural hub. A similar impact was observed in George Town, where participatory mural projects contributed to a 15% increase in foot traffic for local businesses, strengthening the connection between artistic engagement and economic activity.

**Table 2.**

*Economic Impact of Creative Placemaking*

Category	Value	Location
Economic Impact in Kuala Lumpur - Artists with Increased Income	52% of artists	Malaysia
Average Revenue Increase (within six months)	27% revenue rise	Malaysia
Economic Impact in Bandung - Small Business Revenue Increase	14% increase in small business revenue	Bandung, Indonesia
Economic Impact in Yogyakarta - New Jobs Created (as December 2024)	142 new jobs	Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Employment Distribution in Yogyakarta - Art Education	35%	Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Employment Distribution in Yogyakarta - Public Art Curation	28%	Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Employment Distribution in Yogyakarta - Event Management	22%	Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Employment Distribution in Yogyakarta - Community Coordination	15%	Yogyakarta, Indonesia

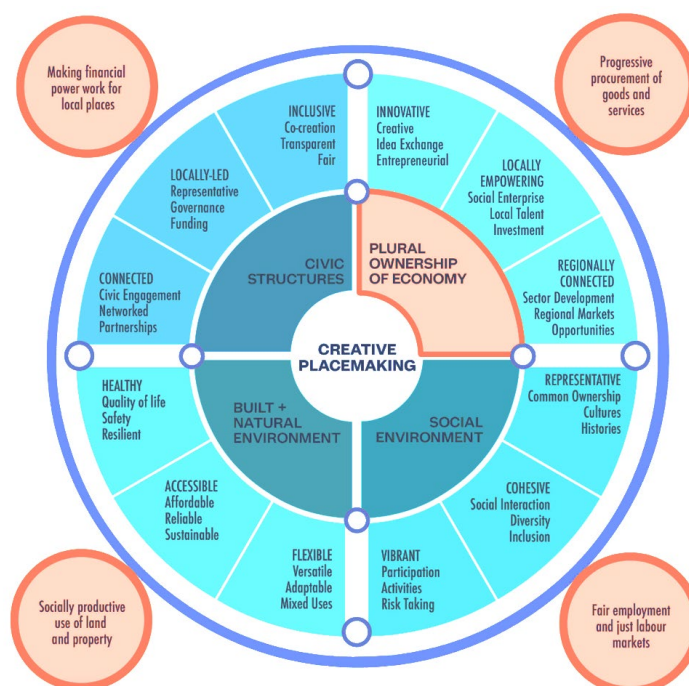
**Source:** Data collection by researcher (2024)

Quantitative findings further substantiate the economic impact of creative placemaking (Table 2). In Kuala Lumpur's, 52% of artists reported increased income after engaging in publicly funded placemaking projects, with an average revenue rise of 27% within six months. In Bandung's Braga Creative District, small business revenue increased by 14% following the introduction of creative night markets and art events. Yogyakarta's provided an example of government-backed arts programs creating 142 new jobs in 2023, primarily in art education (35%), public art curation (28%), event management (22%), and community coordination (15%).



**Figure 2.**

*The circle of creative placemaking and civic engagement*



**Source:** adapted from Bennett, 2024; Chou, 2024.

Observational data from participatory art workshops further reinforce the link between creative placemaking and civic engagement. In Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta (as representative of Indonesia) and Penang (as representative of Malaysia), many collective arts and local artists encouraged residents to engage in the collective design of public spaces (like adapted into Figure 2).

*“Before joining the mural project, I barely knew my neighbors. Now, I feel like part of a community that values creativity and shared spaces.” P1 (Female), 29, domestic worker participating in a public mural initiative, Jakarta, Indonesia.*

*“Painting alongside local artists at the festival helped me see my city in a new light. I never realized how much history and culture we could express through art.” P2 (Male), 34, festival attendee involved in co-creation activities, George Town, Malaysia.*

*“Public art projects gave me the confidence to voice my opinions about our neighborhood’s design. Now, I participate in community meetings and urban discussions.” P3 (Female), 40, school teacher engaged in participatory public space design, Jakarta, Indonesia.*

*“At first, I joined the creative night market just to sell my products, but over time, I realized how art brings people together and strengthens local businesses.” P4 (Male), 37, small business owner involved in creative placemaking events, Bandung, Indonesia.*

*“Collaborating on a large-scale street performance made me realize how art can unite people from different backgrounds. It was my first time working with people outside my social circle.” P5 (Female), 31, community-based performance artist, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

“Through co-designing a public sculpture, I felt a deeper connection to my neighborhood. Seeing our collective work in the city makes me proud to be part of this community.” P6 (Male), 45, retired civil servant engaged in participatory urban arts, Bandung, Indonesia.

“Helping to create a community mural gave me a sense of purpose. I didn’t just paint a wall—I helped shape the identity of my neighborhood.” P7 (Female), 28, university student and first-time participant in a street art initiative, Jakarta, Indonesia.

“This was my first time being involved in an arts project. It made me realize that my voice matters in shaping public spaces.” P8 (Male), 30, migrant worker participating in a cultural arts collaboration, George Town, Malaysia.

“Joining this festival gave me an opportunity to share my culture through music and visual art. It’s amazing to see people appreciating traditions that I once thought were fading away.” P9 (Female), 42, traditional artisan engaging in heritage-based creative events, George Town, Malaysia.

“Through dance and interactive performances, I experienced a new way to engage with my surroundings. It felt like reclaiming my city through movement and expression.” P10 (Female), 26, dancer participating in public space interventions, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Despite its positive social and economic impacts, creative placemaking faces significant policy and funding challenges (like interview data below). The analysis of policy documents from Malaysia and Indonesia highlights a misalignment between state-driven cultural initiatives and grassroots movements. Southeast Asia have funding for large-scale heritage preservation projects, yet 80% of budget allocations favor established institutions over independent artists (Difiglia, 2017; Hersey, 2017; Riley et al., 2017). In Indonesia, interviews with policymakers indicate that cultural funding is often redirected toward tourism-driven initiatives rather than community-led projects. Concerns over project sustainability were echoed by 81% of interviewees, with 62% of artists and cultural workers citing financial instability due to inconsistent institutional support.

“Our government recognizes the value of cultural heritage, but when it comes to funding, most resources go to well-known institutions rather than independent artists or small community projects. The application process for grants is overly bureaucratic, making it nearly impossible for grassroots initiatives to secure sustainable funding. We often rely on personal networks and crowdfunding, but this is not a long-term solution.” P11 (Male), 42, cultural policy researcher, Jakarta, Indonesia.

“I have been working in community-driven art projects for over a decade, but financial instability is a constant challenge. One year, we might receive funding from a private sponsor, and the next year, nothing. Most independent artists I know juggle multiple jobs to survive because there’s no reliable financial framework supporting local creative initiatives. It’s difficult to sustain a long-term artistic career without consistent institutional backing.” P12 (Male), 35, independent visual artist, Bandung, Indonesia.

“When funding is tied to tourism, there is pressure to modify traditional performances to appeal to visitors rather than preserve their original meaning. Many heritage-based artistic expressions lose their authenticity because they have to conform to commercial expectations. We need policies that support cultural sustainability rather than just economic gain.” P13 (Male), 47, senior lecturer in cultural studies, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

**Figure 3.**

*Digital ethnography of “Penang Street Art” through Google Maps*



**Source:** data per 20 February 2025; 15,58 GMT+7

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/tdq5yWhRutqxmJeA>

Digital ethnography reveals the increasing role of technology in creative placemaking. In Malaysia, social media campaigns such as “Penang’s Street Art” attracted 10,432 online engagements until January 2025, demonstrating the potential of digital storytelling in placemaking (Figure 3). Meanwhile, comparative analysis of hybrid education models highlights the role of institutional partnerships in sustaining creative placemaking.

In Bandung, university-artisan collaborations have facilitated experiential learning, allowing students to engage with local crafts while contributing to cultural sustainability (Table 3). In Malaysia, museum-led education programs have successfully integrated local schools into curatorial processes to a deeper appreciation of community-driven creative initiatives. Survey results indicate that 87% of participants believe that art education directly strengthens social cohesion, while 78% agree that public art installations enhance community interaction. These findings suggest that embedding creative pedagogy within educational frameworks can ensure the longevity of community-based artistic interventions.

**Table 3.**

*Detailed breakdown of statistical findings related to the role of creative education models in sustaining cultural initiatives and community engagement*

Category	Percentage (%)	Total Respondents	Respondents in Agreement
Survey on Art Education & Social Cohesion - Agreement Rate	87%	500	435
Survey on Public Art & Community Interaction - Agreement Rate	78%	500	390
University-Artisan Collaborations in Indonesia- Impact on Cultural Sustainability	73%	150	110
Museum-Led Education Programs in Malaysia - Impact on Curatorial Learning	81%	300	243
Embedding Creative Pedagogy in Education - Perceived Long-Term Impact	82%	400	328

**Source:** Data collection by researcher (2024).

The data collected affirms that creative placemaking serves as a driver of social and economic transformation in Indonesia and Malaysia. The role of art education in keep cultural resilience and civic engagement is well-documented, yet systemic barriers continue to limit the full potential of grassroots-led initiatives. The findings highlight the need for policy reforms that prioritize long-term funding, legal protections for artists, and greater inclusivity in urban planning strategies. The evidence underscores the necessity of rethinking cultural policy frameworks to support independent creative practitioners and ensure that placemaking remains a tool for inclusive development rather than a mechanism for commercial exploitation.

The integration of economic data, policy analysis, and qualitative narratives provides a holistic understanding of how creative placemaking operates within different socio-political contexts (Table 3). While the study demonstrates the capacity of art education to reshape urban and rural landscapes, it also calls attention to the need for sustained investment in community-led initiatives. The resilience of artist networks and their ability to adapt to funding limitations and regulatory barriers underscore the enduring relevance of creative placemaking in Southeast Asia. The conclusions drawn from the findings contribute to ongoing scholarly debates on the intersections of urban development, cultural policy, and social innovation, laying the groundwork for future research on sustainable creative economies.

## 4. Discussion

The role of art in society has undergone a radical transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia, moving beyond the aesthetic world into a dynamic agent of social change. Creative placemaking, which integrates community-driven art practices, has emerged as important strategy for develop social innovation through education (Hudson-Miles & Goodman, 2023; Luetkemeyer et al., 2021; Morrison, 2020; Pérez et al., 2024). The intersection between art, education, and community development reflects deeper philosophical inquiries about the function of creativity in human civilization (Levy et al., 2020; Waks, 2024).

The exploration of such intersections raises questions about inclusivity, cultural resilience, and the power dynamics embedded in artistic expressions within the social fabric. Art ceases to be an exclusive domain of the elite and becomes an emancipatory force, cultivating shared spaces where marginalized voices find agency (Masgrau-Juanola & da Rocha-Gaspar, 2021).

#### ***4.1. Malaysia as Creative Placemaking as Social Solidarity and Cultural Reclamation***

Malaysia's contemporary artistic movement has seen a resurgence of the ethos of “art for the people,” a philosophy that prioritizes the communal over the individual, the process over the final product. The shift in artistic paradigm within Malaysia reveals a transformation in the way art is perceived and not merely as an object of admiration but as a participatory mechanism that strengthens social cohesion (Nolan, 2021). The “street art” in Penang exemplifies how participatory art engages diverse community members in collective action, raise relationships built on empathy, shared experiences, and collective memory.

The evolution of Malaysia's art scene aligns with Buschgens et al. (2019) concept of relational aesthetics, which underscores art as a social encounter rather than a static entity. Such a framework finds resonance in the way participatory art initiatives in Malaysia operate—by creating spaces where communities actively shape the creative process. This participatory dimension of art serves to dismantle traditional hierarchies within artistic production, positioning art as a collective endeavor rather than an exclusive pursuit (Courage, 2017).

However, these initiatives also reveal challenges in sustaining long-term community engagement. As evidenced by the varying reception to activities in art space in Kuala Lumpur or Penang, lack of clarity in objectives, inefficient dissemination of information, and inadequate aesthetic appeal can diminish public interest (Isa & Shan, 2024; Ong, 2023; Ong & Ting, 2023; Suhaimi et al., 2023).

This raises a critical debate: Should art in community spaces remain organically driven, or does it require structured institutional backing? For example, *Malaysia's Program Bimbingan Seni Budaya (PBSB)* offers an interesting case study in this regard. Launched in 1996 under the *Jabatan Kesenian dan Kebudayaan Negara (JKKN)*, PBSB was envisioned as a mechanism to instill artistic appreciation among youth, bridging formal and informal education (Chan et al., 2021). While it successfully nurtured cultural literacy, the program's rigid structure has sometimes failed to resonate with evolving community dynamics. The tension between structured art education and organic, community-driven initiatives highlights the paradox of institutional involvement—while institutions provide necessary resources and legitimacy, they risk bureaucratizing creativity, thereby stifling spontaneous communal expressions (Baig et al., 2020).

The Malaysian case compels us to reconsider the ontological nature of creative placemaking: Is it the process that matters or the tangible outcome? Suppose the goal is to empower communities through art. In that case, the metric of success should not be limited to the number of participants but rather to the quality of engagement, the depth of relationships forged, and the potential for long-term transformation. This aligns with Paulo Freire's (1970) argument in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which underscores the necessity of critical consciousness in education—where individuals do not merely receive knowledge but actively shape and reinterpret it in their lived realities.



#### 4.2. Indonesia in Art as a Vehicle for Inclusive Education and Cultural Sustainability

In Indonesia, creative placemaking manifests in community-based education programs that reconfigure the traditional boundaries of learning (Jeon et al., 2022; Sarah et al., 2022; Sumarlam et al., 2023). Here, the role of art extends beyond aesthetics into an epistemological tool that redefines knowledge transmission (Illeris, 2012). The integration of local wisdom of Indonesia into education reflects a decolonial response to Western-centric models of pedagogy, recognizing the importance of indigenous cultural practices in shaping knowledge (Kasiyan, 2019, 2024). The role of community-driven education in localized knowledge systems, asserting that education is most effective when it resonates with the lived realities of students (Amy, 2017; Jeon et al., 2024). Indonesia's educational philosophy is aligned with John Dewey's (1980, 1997) experiential learning theory, which posits that learning is most effective when rooted in experience.

Traditional Indonesian art forms—whether *batik*-making, *kulit* puppet performances, or *gamelan* music—serve as pedagogical tools that transmit artistic skills until historical consciousness, ethical values, and communal responsibility (Gray, 2010; Hand, 2018; Hartono et al., 2024; Osnes, 2010). The participatory nature of these art forms fosters a collective epistemology, where an individual does not possess knowledge but is co-created within a community.

The inclusivity of such programs becomes particularly significant in addressing disparities in educational access. Community-based education, as seen in Indonesia, provides alternative learning pathways for marginalized groups, particularly in rural regions where formal schooling remains inadequate (Djuwendah et al., 2023; Tremblay, 2018). Initiatives that integrate art with education facilitate greater engagement among children with disabilities, indigenous communities, and economically disadvantaged populations (Sampurno, 2023; Sampurno et al., 2024). The success of these programs is evident in improved literacy rates and heightened student engagement, aligning with research that underscores the cognitive and emotional benefits of arts-integrated education.

However, the effectiveness of these initiatives hinges on sustained community involvement and structural support. The challenge lies in ensuring that community-based education does not become a temporary intervention but an enduring model of learning. As highlighted in studies on Indonesian *Sekolah Alternatif untuk Anak Jalanan (SAAJA)* (in English: School for street children) (Figure 4), programs that lack long-term funding and institutional backing often struggle to maintain momentum. While grassroots efforts remain essential in shaping localized education, their sustainability requires a delicate balance between community autonomy and policy intervention.

**Figure 4.**

*Sekolah Alternatif untuk Anak Jalanan (SAAJA)*



**Source:** (in English: School for Street Children) (Setiawan, 2020).

This brings us to a larger philosophical question: Can art education, when deeply embedded within community structures, remain autonomous from economic and political forces? The commodification of traditional art poses a double-edged dilemma. On the one hand, it provides financial incentives that sustain local artisans; on the other, it risks diluting cultural authenticity for commercial appeal. This echoes critique of the culture industry, which warns against the reduction of artistic expression into a mere commodity (Kasiyan, 2019). In Indonesia, the commercialization of *batik* and *kulit puppet* raises concerns about the erosion of their ritualistic and spiritual dimensions, underscoring the complex interplay between cultural preservation and economic survival.

Both Malaysia and Indonesia demonstrate that creative placemaking is more than a strategy; it is a philosophical inquiry into the function of art within society. The transformation of art from an elite pursuit to a communal practice reflects deeper ideological shifts in the understanding of aesthetics as politics. Peterson (2020) argues that aesthetics is inherently political because it dictates what is visible and audible and, ultimately, who has the right to participate in cultural production. The reconfiguration of public space through art challenges entrenched hierarchies, offering new possibilities for social organization and democratic participation.

However, the success of creative placemaking depends on a fundamental paradox: while it seeks to democratize art, it often requires institutional frameworks for sustainability. The tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches remains unresolved, highlighting the dialectical relationship between structure and spontaneity in artistic engagement. What emerges from the discourse on creative placemaking in Malaysia and Indonesia is a call for critical reflexivity—a recognition that art, education, and community development must be continuously interrogated, redefined, and adapted. The true measure of success is not the replication of existing models but the capacity to remain responsive to the evolving needs of the communities they serve. The future of art education in these nations will depend on the ability to navigate these tensions, ensuring that creative placemaking remains an instrument of empowerment, resistance, and transformation in an ever-changing socio-political landscape.

The urgency of critically engaging with creative placemaking in Indonesia and Malaysia lies in its potential to reshape cultural and urban landscapes. The discourse must contend with the dual nature of creative placemaking as both an emancipatory and an instrumentalized practice. Art education plays a pivotal role in mediating these tensions, yet its alignment with state and market forces necessitates ongoing scrutiny. The philosophical inquiry into creative placemaking must grapple with the contradictions of participation, the ethics of representation, and the politics of space. The task ahead is to reclaim creative placemaking as a site of radical imagination, where artistic interventions challenge rather than reinforce existing power structures.

## 5. Conclusions

The evolution of creative placemaking in Indonesia and Malaysia represents the transformative power of art when embedded in educational and community-driven frameworks. As demonstrated throughout this study, creative placemaking goes beyond beautifying urban landscapes that function as a catalyst for cultural preservation, economic resilience, and inclusive civic participation. However, its potential is only fully realized when grounded in local contexts, sustained through supportive policy frameworks, and enhanced by participatory art education.

Then, creative placemaking must be understood as a spatial practice and an epistemological strategy. It empowers communities to reclaim their environments and identities through collective creativity while challenging top-down development models that often marginalize local voices. The intersection of art, education, and social innovation becomes urgent in Southeast Asia because of the growing urbanization and socio-economic disparity that threaten the vitality of cultural expression.

### *5.1. Economic Viability and Institutional Synergy*

This research affirms that creative placemaking can generate measurable economic benefits. Increased income among artists, new job creation in cultural hubs, and rising revenues for small businesses reflect the viability of these initiatives as tools of local development. The alignment between art education and the creative economy is increasingly visible in partnerships among universities, cultural institutions, and independent artists, fostering sustainable ecosystems for creativity. Nevertheless, such successes are often contingent upon institutional alignment. Supportive policies, flexible grant systems, and inter-agency cooperation are essential to amplify the impact of community-based art.

### *5.2 The Commercialization and Authenticity*

While financial incentives can sustain creative efforts, they also bring risks. The commercialization of community-based art often dilutes its authenticity, especially when cultural expressions are modified to cater to tourism or state narratives. Artists frequently report tensions between preserving cultural meaning and producing art that meets economic or bureaucratic expectations. The challenge is to resist the commodification of grassroots art while still recognizing the need for economic sustainability. A reorientation of funding models toward equity, transparency, and cultural relevance is necessary to support independent creators and protect the integrity of their work. Then, creative placemaking must remain a platform for genuine expression.

### ***5.3. Reimagining Policy and Governance***

Top-down cultural initiatives in Indonesia and Malaysia often fail to recognize the nuanced, process-based nature of creative placemaking. Policies tend to prioritize grand-scale events and infrastructural projects over small-scale, community-led efforts. The importance of participatory governance, where artists, educators, and residents are co-creators of policy, not passive recipients, means that future governance models must center artistic autonomy, cultural justice, and co-ownership. Legal frameworks should ensure protections for creative workers, equitable funding access, and decentralization of decision-making, and make art a form of public knowledge and democratic participation.

### ***5.4. Art Education as the Core of Sustainability***

Art education emerges as a central mechanism for sustaining creative placemaking. Both formal and informal learning environments play a critical role in shaping cultural agency, especially among youth and marginalized communities. Schools, universities, museums (representing public spaces), and other community spaces must be mobilized as sites of interdisciplinary engagement. Educational frameworks that integrate local knowledge, indigenous practices, and experiential learning can empower new generations of civic-minded artists and cultural practitioners. In doing so, they contribute to cultural preservation, innovation, and resilience in the face of social and environmental change.

### ***5.5. The Digital Turn as Opportunities and Risks***

Digital platforms, as revealed in this study, enhance the reach, visibility, and documentation of creative placemaking. Initiatives such as public spaces must allow for broader participation and cross-regional dialogue. However, digitalization also presents new challenges, including superficial engagement, cultural misrepresentation, and the flattening of context. To harness the benefits of digital tools without undermining the integrity of local projects, digital placemaking must remain grounded in offline community processes. Technology should augment, not replace, the embodied and relational dimensions of art-making.

### ***5.6. Participation and Epistemological Transformation***

At its core, creative placemaking is an epistemological act that challenges who holds knowledge, who produces culture, and who has the right to shape space. The participatory nature of these practices reconfigures artistic production as a shared, dialogical process. In this model, art is not a commodity or elite practice but a form of everyday knowledge and resistance. This reconceptualization aligns with broader calls for decolonizing education and urban planning in Southeast Asia. It recognizes that marginalized groups possess valuable ways of knowing, doing, and being that can inform more equitable and imaginative forms of development.

### ***5.7. Future Trajectories and Research Directions***

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of scholarship that situates creative placemaking at the intersection of urban studies, cultural policy, and social innovation. The case studies of Indonesia and Malaysia provide valuable insights into the ways creative placemaking functions as a multi-dimensional process encompassing artistic expression, economic participation, and community engagement. As Southeast Asian cities continue to evolve, interdisciplinary collaborations between artists, urban planners, and policymakers will

be essential in ensuring that creative placemaking remains a sustainable and inclusive practice. The integration of art education, digital tools, and participatory governance models presents a viable framework for addressing the challenges that creative placemaking currently faces.

Ultimately, creative placemaking embodies the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity, local identity and global influences, state intervention, and grassroots activism. It stands as a testament to the resilience of artistic communities in reclaiming their spaces, shaping their narratives, and envisioning alternative futures. The future of creative placemaking in Southeast Asia depends on financial investments or policy support and the collective imagination of the people who inhabit these spaces. The capacity to envision and enact creative transformations lies at the heart of its enduring relevance. As Indonesia and Malaysia navigate the complexities of contemporary urbanization, creative placemaking offers a pathway toward a more inclusive, culturally vibrant, and socially engaged society.

## 6. References

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, FINANCING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### Contributions of the Authors:

**Conceptualization:** Sampurno, Muchammad Bayu Tejo; Djatiprambudi, Djuli; **Software:** Juwariyah, Anik; Safian, Abdul Rahman; **Validation:** Trisakti; Djahwasi, Herry Rizal; **Formal Analysis:** Sampurno, Muchammad Bayu Tejo; **Healing of data:** Sampurno, Muchammad Bayu Tejo; Juwariyah, Anik; Djatiprambudi, Djuli; **Writing-Preparation of the draft original:** Sampurno, Muchammad Bayu Tejo; Juwariyah, Anik; **Editorial-Revision and Edition:** Sampurno, Muchammad Bayu Tejo; Safian, Abdul Rahman; **Display:** Djahwasi, Herry Rizal; **Supervision:** Sampurno, Muchammad Bayu Tejo; Djatiprambudi, Djuli; **Project Administration:** Djahwasi, Herry Rizal; Trisakti; **All Authors have read and accepted the published version of the manuscript:** Sampurno, Muchammad Bayu Tejo; Juwariyah, Anik; Djatiprambudi, Djuli; Trisakti; Djahwasi, Herry Rizal; Safian, Abdul Rahman.

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### AUTHOR/S:

**Muchammad Bayu Tejo Sampurno**  
Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia.

Dr. Muchammad Bayu Tejo Sampurno is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia. His research focuses on art therapy for children with inclusive education autism, exploring areas such as neuroaesthetics, art education, and the psychology of art. He has published extensively on these topics, contributing to the understanding of art's role in special needs education.

[tejo@fmsp.upsi.edu.my](mailto:tejo@fmsp.upsi.edu.my)

**H index:** 9

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1735-7498>

**Scopus ID:** [57226258697](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1735-7498)

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=GsyuA5oAAAAJ>

**ResearchGate:** <https://acortar.link/I4wBKc>

**Anik Juwariyah**

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia.

Professor Dr. Anik Juwariyah is a faculty member at the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia. Her research interests include dance, traditional art community, symbolism, and ritual. She has authored multiple research papers in these fields, contributing to the academic discourse on social and cultural studies.

[anikjuwariyah@unesa.ac.id](mailto:anikjuwariyah@unesa.ac.id)

**H index:** 7

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0510-3263>

**Scopus ID:** [57221963162](https://scopus.org/authorid/57221963162)

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=KZRfj-kAAAAJ>

**Djuli Djatiprambudi**

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia.

Professor Dr. Drs. Djuli Djatiprambudi is a distinguished professor at Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia. Over the past year, he has taught 33 courses, conducted 12 community service activities, published 93 journal articles, authored 13 books, and obtained 5 intellectual property rights. His work significantly contributes to the fields of Indonesian visual art, education, and social sciences.

[djulidjatiprambudi@unesa.ac.id](mailto:djulidjatiprambudi@unesa.ac.id)

**H index:** 8

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0406-9964>

**Scopus ID:** [58794114800](https://scopus.org/authorid/58794114800)

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=tdIMsN4AAAAJ>

**Trisakti Trisakti**

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia.

Dr. Trisakti is an Associate Professor at Universitas Negeri Surabaya. In the past year, he has taught 14 courses, engaged in 13 community service projects, published 39 scientific journal articles, authored 2 books, and secured 2 intellectual property rights. His academic focus is on dance education and cultural studies, and he contributes to the preservation and development of traditional Indonesian arts.

[trisakti@unesa.ac.id](mailto:trisakti@unesa.ac.id)

**H index:** 4

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3873-9073>

**Scopus ID:** [58484572200](https://scopus.org/authorid/58484572200)

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=Nav9-bcAAAAJ>

**Herry Rizal Djahwasi**

Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia.

Dr. Herry Rizal Djahwasi is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Malaysia. He holds a Master's in Performing Arts (Music Composition) and a Bachelor's in Performing Arts (Music Performance). He has contributed to research on Western classical music performance and has co-authored works on artistic research methodologies.

[herry@fmisp.upsi.edu.my](mailto:herry@fmisp.upsi.edu.my)

**H index:** 3

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7889-1753>

**Scopus ID:** [58814311300](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7889-1753)

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=0enPmyAAAAAJ>

**Abdul Rahman Safia**

Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia.

Dr. Abdul Rahman Safian is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Malaysia. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy and has research interests in technology-enhanced learning, e-learning, and music education. He has co-authored publications on virtual reality applications in music education, including the development of e-MARZ, a cost-effective VR software aimed at enhancing music appreciation lessons.

[rahmansafian@fmisp.upsi.edu.my](mailto:rahmansafian@fmisp.upsi.edu.my)

**H index:** 3

**Orcid ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5864-974X>

**Scopus ID:** [58701546900](https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5864-974X)

**Google Scholar:** <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=8fIMXJEAAAAAJ>