

IMAGE OF TANGGAI DANCER: PARADOX OF VISUAL APPEAL AND SKILL MASTERY IN THE CONTEXT ARTS EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the gap between the ideal image of the dancer and the reality of learning in the Tanggai traditional dance, and to emphasize a more holistic understanding of dance as an art form and skill development process. This focus emphasizes the complexity of dance studies, highlighting the gap between the visual representation of the ideal dancer and the actual learning process. By reviewing the theories of David Michael Levin and Suzane K. Langer's trilogy with an emphasis on Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory. The results of the study indicate that the criteria for the ideal dancer as a learner are expected to place the values of societal beliefs in the context that should exist in learning, by seeing that each individual has unique potential and should be given the opportunity to develop according to their abilities. The difference between the interests of societal perceptions in their beliefs, which are related to the myth of the prima donna dancer, creates conflict tension in the context of arts education, thus giving rise to competition and jealousy in the learning process. Shouldn't art used as a medium in education be fun, without competition and social jealousy in learning.

Keywords: Image Dancer, Tanggai Dance, Visual Paradox, Skill Art Education

Introduction

This scientific article is based on feminist pedagogical analysis, which describes the nature and object of feminist analysis related to the paradox of the image of Tanggai dance dancers who are idealized as prima donnas, focused on dancers holding *tepak* and creating gaps in the art education process (Sartono, 2000). Observing feminist research on dancers by (Barr & Oliver, 2016), which analyses body image, myths about the ideal body and the development of feminist pedagogy. The results of this previous study try to reveal that the idealized dancer's body is not monolithic. Traditional dance movements are presented by movements that contain philosophical meanings and cultural values, which are sometimes a response to unspoken hierarchies in the art form itself (Conrad, 2019; Voris, 2019).

Tanggai Dance as a traditional dance, contains the philosophy of Rasan Tuo (the concept of local community belief in matchmaking carried out by parents to their children) (Larasati et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in the statement in the study, Tanggai dance is an artistic asset in the city of Palembang, South Sumatra, where basically this dance is a welcoming dance with an odd number of dancers and one of the dancers placed in the middle as the holder of the *tepak* containing *sekapur sirih* is made the prima donna as a form of respect. According to an interview with the creator of the Tanggai dance, the late Elly Rudy in August 2023, he stated that the prima donna dancer holding the *tepak* is a beautiful woman with an ideal body proportion.

The dancer in moving her body does not merely move, but the movement in the dance in question is a movement that has

been distilled or distorted, so that it becomes a certain form of movement that has a beautiful meaning in it (Eisner & Powell, 2002).

The female body is known to have beauty so that it is used as an object of interest to attract audiences in performing arts (Mursih, 2018). Referring to Straus' argument, paradoxically the female body actually states an adaptive body in its social context. Based on the context according to Straus regarding this study, it places that the prima donna dancer of the Tanggai dance must adapt and emphasize the perfect visual context by creating an ideal body in the placement of the dancer holding the *tepak* as the primadonna position which is required by the norms in the philosophy of the dance (Dian Mayang Sari et al., 2021), and is supported by the beliefs of the local community in the city of Palembang, South Sumatra, can be seen in figure 1.



Figure 1. Visualization of movements performed by Tanggai dancers wearing typical costumes from the Palembang Malay community (Photo Credit: Agustina, H)

In the context of tradition and culture that perceives the prima donna as a dancer holding a *tepak* in Tanggai dance has values from the beliefs of the community, so that it raises questions. 1) Why should the prima donna dancer be beautiful and have an ideal body? 2) How can the proposition of the criteria for body positions that should be possessed by Tanggai traditional dance

dancers provide cultural values from their philosophical basis? 3) How is the visual image seen from the context of art education that involves skills? Therefore, this is contrary to what actually happens in the context of art education, related to psychological and sociological aspects.

The belief of the Palembang city community inadvertently perceives that the dancer holding the *tepak* as a prima donna must have beautiful visuals and ideal body propositions, even though the dance movements performed do not match the technique or are lacking. This phenomenon in the context of the criteria for dancers visually places perception in the context of art education which should be value education, based on art as a medium for transferring local cultural values to other generations, (Wagiati & Zein, 2018, p. 187) by emphasizing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Rosala & Budiman, 2020, p. 534), is not carried out optimally in the process.

As a result of this gap, social jealousy arises in the context of art education, no longer focusing on the skills or abilities of dancers as students, who deserve the same rights in learning. The skill aspect in research (Ardhyantama, 2020) is an important aspect in the education process, because the success of education is not enough to be assessed from its cognitive aspect alone. The researcher's assumption is that as an educator, it is not just about sharing information, but more than that, it can provide an instillation to dancers as students, to be able to humanize humans and achieve self-actualization according to the humanistic theory by Abraham Maslow, to develop according to their abilities without being compared to others. Therefore, it is important to emphasize a supportive environment for all individuals to achieve their maximum potential (Li & Sun, 2019; Na-ye Kim, 2022).

The ideas in this article lead to three premises; (1) Values believed by the people of Palembang City, South Sumatra, which

place prima donna dancers who have beautiful visuals and ideal body propositions to be implemented in the context that should be in arts education. (2) Providing a discussion space to state arguments for dance studies in arts education so that it can provide understanding for students or dancers, educators, and the community in rethinking this. (3) Developing their imaginative persuasion skills and freedom to understand that with art education they can create freedom and a humanist attitude without any gaps and no equality in it. Therefore, taking the context of the problem with the objectification of body image by Tanggai dancers in the context of art education, brings researchers deeper into reflection on the findings of the objectives in education and the role of dance in society (Anderson, 2003; Jose Segado Boj et al., 2025). The focus in this study emphasizes the complexity of dance studies, highlighting the gap between the visual representation of the ideal dancer and the actual learning process. By re-emphasizing using David Michael Levin's trilogy theory and Susanne K. Langer's ethnochoreology theory by emphasizing the humanistic theory by Abraham Maslow.

Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study. This study focuses on a case study design as an approach to gain a holistic understanding of a phenomenon in investigating complex systems that are interrelated, so that it is impossible to study with other research methods (Cresswell, 2015; Hellsten, 2024). Qualitative research clearly reveals what events are experienced by the research subjects, explained from in-depth focus group interviews aimed at: Dancers as students, dance artists, educators and trainers (Endraswara, 2012; K. Yin, 2015). This study limits the scope to non-formal education at the Seruni studio and formal education at the PGRI Palembang University, Department of

Performing Arts Education. The two objects of the place can provide a conclusion in examining the image of Tanggai dance dancers in the relationship between visuals and skills in the context of arts education.

Focusing on the target of non-formal education at the Studio, placing the dancer holding the *tepak* as the target of his body as a form of performance. While the position of formal education at the PGRI Palembang University provides knowledge that dancers as students are required to be able to use their bodies in learning content that must position themselves not as artists but as educators who can understand that arts education is value education. In accordance with the context according to Ki Khadjar Dewantara who places art education as a character education in implementing the cultural values of Indonesian society (Ardhyantama, 2020; Haryati & Suciptaningsih, 2020; Towaf, 2016). In other words, this study understands a more complex context regarding the gap between ideal visual representation and the learning process in the realm of non-formal and formal education in the city of Palembang, South Sumatra for dancers as students (Harrison, 2013; Jazuli, 2010)

This research article tries to re-emphasize using David Michael Levin's trilogy theory by combining Susane K. Langer's theory to understand the entire form of Tanggai dance art in the context of the Palembang city community, South Sumatera (Langer, 1929; Levin, 1993). Furthermore, this article emphasizes the humanistic theory by Abraham Maslow in the humanistic context of dancers as students in art education, both in non-formal and formal education (Jose Segado Boj et al., 2025)

Data collection techniques in the study include 1) in-depth interviews by dancers as students as key informants and dance artists, educators and trainers as main and supporting informants. 2) Participatory observation of dancers as students in the

context of learning in studios and universities to observe dance performances directly and record visual elements such as faces, body movements, and interactions between dancers and audiences. This focus is used as a reference in contextualizing the paradox of visual dancers in the category of art education. 3) Literature study is used to collect and analysed relevant literature on the image of the dancer, Tanggai dance as a traditional dance, visual and skills, art education. 4) Content analysis, analysing learning phenomenon materials, performance media featuring dancers to understand how visual images are constructed and perceived. 5) Focus group discussions (FGD), holding group discussions with dancers, dance artists, educators, and audiences (the community) to communicate their perceptions of the image of the dancer.

Findings and Discussion

This study aims to explore learning places where dancers as learners are basically expected to be able to place the values of community trust in the context that they should be in learning, by seeing that each individual has unique potential and must be given the opportunity to develop according to their abilities.

Criteria for the Ideal Dancer of South Sumatran Traditional Dance

Traditional dance often functions as an expression of cultural identity, including the Tanggai dance in the city of Palembang, South Sumatra, which contains various philosophical and aesthetic meanings throughout the dance, including in the selection of its ideal dancer. According to an interview with the late Ely Rudy as a dance maestro in the city of Palembang, the dancers hope that dancers with body propositions with visual beauty can realize the narrative and cultural values represented in their performances.

In the context of the Tanggai dance, it positions itself as a traditional dance that

contains the meaning of the traditional concept of the Palembang community, namely Rasan Tuo. The depth of the cultural meaning in the Tanggai dance adds an additional layer to what characterizes the ideal Tanggai dance dancer as a representation of the culture of the Palembang community (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Luo & Lau, 2020). Analysis using David Michael Levin's trilogy theory related to the dancer's body and society (Levin, 1993), helps researchers to divide the discussion related to the criteria for the ideal dancer holding the Tanggai dance in the city of Palembang.

Embodiment: Aesthetic Presence of the Dancer

This emphasizes the embodiment according to Levin in the criteria for the prima donna Tanggai dance dancer by looking at the cultural context of the local community in the city of Palembang. This analysis emphasizes that the dancer's physique is an expression of the community's culture and physique as a body scheme (Ataria et al., 2021; Darroch-Lozowski, 2018). The physique of the dancer holding the *tepak* must be ideal as an expression of the community that places the dancer in the expression of cultural narratives through their movements (Blanariu, 2013; Ollora-Triana et al., 2023), creating a visual representation that resonates with the audience, if understood logically if the dancer is not beautiful and has a high body proposition, then the invited guests who come will not be entertained at the reception (interview with Palembang city dance artist. Elly Rudy).

The physique of the dancer holding the *tepak* who is presented as a primadonna dancer is not only technical but can communicate cultural meaning effectively through their movements and bodies as public consumption in the performing arts (Borić et al., 2023; Sarason, 1999; Susilo, 2018). Research by (Bollerman, 2020), supports this idea that this paradigm shift is how the performance is seen, witnessed and

experienced which gives rise to contradictions in the criteria for the ideal dancer (Oktavianus et al., 2024). In the Cartesian subject's experience, the audience's vision of the dancer's body is essentially detached from all other bodily senses. The gaze of the audience and invited guests towards the prima donna dancer holding the *tepak* in the Tanggai dance is categorized as a form of welcome.



Figure 2. The Primadonna Dancer Holding the *Tepak* in the Tanggai traditional dance (Photo Credit: Agustina, H)

The prima donna dancer holding a *tepak* containing betel, gambir and areca nut, is interpreted as a symbol that indicates the expression of the host's happiness at the arrival of his guests. Entertaining guests with betel and areca nut is a symbol of Malay tradition in respecting guests (Hera et al., 2023, p. 762). This is related to the culture of the city of Palembang, South Sumatra, which is found in the Tanggai dance, a blend of Malay culture with Hindu-Buddhist culture found in its movements. Therefore, the idealized prima donna dancer's body scheme refers to the internal understanding of the dancer's body in the training room. The dancer holding the *tepak* as the primadonna develops this scheme through strict dance training on the formation of the ideal body desired in the performance presentation

Direct involvement by the dance maestro and creator of the Tanggai dance who underwent rigorous training at the Seruni

Studio by the dancers as their visual appeal in dancing the Tanggai dance. This training allows for complex movements to be performed gracefully and precisely (Adela Hana et al., 2018). The aesthetic experience of the dancer holding the *tepak* when he has understood his body in moving the Tanggai dance movements precisely and full of Javanese wisdom, so this is what is called the ontology of dance as a work of art that places the living body as the source and core of dance as a work of art. So far, what has been of concern are the agents in society who produce their frame of perception of the aesthetics of the body of the dancer holding the *tepak* who with a beautiful face visual but eliminates the entity in the movements performed by the prima donna dancer. Bourdieu's criticism, as well as Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer's of pure aesthetics which were introduced when aesthetics was viewed as an end in itself, set its own limits in the experience, understanding, and evaluation of works of art.

The above idea is supported by research (Adela Hana et al., 2018), which reveals the criteria for dancers seen from their flexible, skilled, agile, confident, and capable dancing abilities. Then emphasized by (Sofron & Țifrea, 2022, p. 4), that ideal dancers position themselves on the basis of proportions seen from the complexity of physical, psychological and mentoring, not seen from individual perceptions that interpret dancers only as visual because they are beautiful. This indicates that although in traditional dance it is a prerequisite for the existence of a dancer holding a *tepak* to have an ideal body, dancers are not merely made to frame the aesthetics of the body but are seen from the ability to move and provide emotions that inspire.

Several categories in the criteria for ideal dancers of traditional South Sumatran dance can be summarized in several important points which include technical, emotional and social criteria that must be

possessed by dancers. The presence of dance in the presentation of the performance is not only displaying a series of well-arranged, neat and beautiful movements, but also needs to be equipped with all aspects in it (Jazuli Muhammad, 2021, p. 21), so in the theory of ethnochoreology by Suzan K Langer, it examines the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the criteria for Tanggai dance dancers in South Sumatra. The basic criteria for the dancer holding the *tepak* as the prima donna are analyzed to include several categories in the following:

Physical Criteria

a. Body Posture

Height: the dancer holding the *tepak* as the prima donna has a proportional height, allowing her to perform dance movements well and look attractive in welcoming guests who come to the city of Palembang, South Sumatra. Upright Posture: an upright and non-hunched and stable posture is very important to give the impression of confidence and elegance to the dancer. Good posture for the prima donna as the *tepak* holder also helps in performing movements more effectively.

b. Body Flexibility

The prima donna dancer as the *tepak* holder must have good flexibility in order to perform graceful movements in the Tanggai dance. This flexibility is very important in traditional South Sumatran dance, where the dancer must be seen to display elegance and flexibility in performing her movements softly and slowly, so that it becomes a characteristic of traditional South Sumatran dance.

c. Body Proportion

Ideal Proportion: The dancer holding the *tepak* must have balanced body proportions, with a ratio between body length and appropriate limbs. This proportion not only affects the appearance but also the ability to perform the graceful

Tanggai dance movements. Ideal Body Weight: ideal body weight combined with the height of the dancer, so that the dancer holding the *tepak* must reflect the graceful Palembang city woman and have an ideal body (not too thin and not too fat), so it is very important for the prima donna dancer holding the *tepak* to have an ideal body weight.

Psychological Criteria

a. Emotional Balance

Dancers holding *tepak* in traditional dance in Palembang city must be able to manage stress and emotions that arise during practice and performance. This ability is important to maintain concentration and performance quality. Dancers who can handle their own emotions well will be better able to adapt to unexpected situations in Tanggai dance performances. Self-flexibility in performance: dancers holding *tepak* are able to adapt to various situations when dancing Tanggai dance. This flexibility includes the ability to adjust movements and expressions that must show the elegance of Palembang city women that is reflected in their speech and appearance.

Love for their culture: this context shows intrinsic motivation related to the dancer's love for Tanggai dance so that it can be seen in their movements. This motivation helps dancers control themselves and commit to loving their culture. Self-Acceptance: dancers holding *tepak* must be able to accept themselves, including their shortcomings and strengths. This self-acceptance helps dancers to stay focused on developing skills without being influenced by negative criticism from others.

b. Motorik Criteria

Mastery of movement techniques in Tanggai dance combines various elements such as initial or opening movements, core movements, and final or closing movements, then the dancer tries to absorb and give emotional expression according to the delivery of this dance in a graceful

manner. Therefore, here based on the analysis using Suzane K. Langer's ethnochoreology theory, the researcher combines the categories of movement techniques that must be possessed by the dancer, especially the primadonna holding the *tepak* with the cultural values contained in the Tanggai dance art itself. By expressing all these aspects, the dancer can interpret and absorb every movement in dancing it.

Visual Image and Practical Skills of Tanggai Dancers in the Context of Arts Education

The paradox of the image of a dancer seen from the visual is not a desired skill but compared to humanized learning, it shows a gap in arts education. Learning emphasizes a balance between dance skills and visual images by emphasizing cooperation, compactness and harmony of movement and rhythm. Thus, dancers as students can develop real skills while meeting the expectations of society towards visual images and the values they want to transmit. The self-image of traditional dancers is greatly influenced by visual perception, where dancers are often hampered by the physical and aesthetic expectations of society. Three research subjects focused on students at Universitas PGRI Palembang, placed the existence of problems seen from visual images when dancing in the context of arts education.

Table 1. Visual Image Problems in Tanggai Dance Dancers in the Context of Arts Education in Higher Education

The Paradox of Visual in the Context of Arts Education in Higher Education	
Subject	Problem
Student Informant aged 18 years	Controlling emotions about themselves as students sometimes makes students feel hampered in developing their potential and abilities
Informant Student aged 17 years	The body posture of students as short and brown-skinned students makes them less attractive. In certain conditions, they feel that

their limitations limit them to being dancers holding *tepak*

Student Informant aged 18 years	Her limitations as a dancer holding a <i>tepak</i> are because she wears a hijab.
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Source: Agustina, H, 2026

Based on information provided by the third informant as a student in Tanggai dance learning at a university. The third subject has the same achievements, both of whom have had the ability to dance since childhood, why is it also compared when in the context of education. Therefore, a great dancer not only needs to have a strong artistic side, but also psychological qualities and good skills (Lu Yumo, 2022). Likewise in arts education, dancers as students place themselves in a learning space that emphasizes the emotional aspects, knowledge aspects, and skills aspects of students, so there should be no distinction in this category. The realm of learning in universities, students are the first subjects taught in education, because it is undeniable that lecturers as educators will continue to be in touch with students as their students.

In this understanding, students as students will always interact continuously in the realm of learning, both outside of lectures and in the realm of lectures, so this context focuses on odd semester 3 students who get courses on Tanggai dance material at the PGRI University of Palembang, Department of Performing Arts Education. In the context of art education, the criteria for attracting students include several important aspects that help them as educators in the field of arts and culture that require learning in the context of humanizing humans through art. This point is in line with Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory in the paradox of the Tanggai dance dancer in the context of art education. The wiraga, wirama and wirasa aspects are three important elements in the category that must be fulfilled by the ideal Tanggai dance dancer as a student in the

learning process at the University. A more specific analysis of each aspect of wiraga, wirama and wirasa.

Wiraga Aspect

Wiraga refers to the body movement skills that must be possessed by the dancer, in other words wiraga means the appearance of technical attitudes and movements neatly and orderly (Ediyono et al., n.d.). Therefore, in the context of art education in the assessment evaluation, students must master their dance movement techniques. The components that must be achieved by students are memorization of movements in seeing the ability to remember and carry out the correct Tanggai dance movement arrangement, movement techniques seen from the mastery of skills in expressing dance performed through movement.

Wirama Aspect

Wirama is a rhythmic movement performed by dancers in dancing the dance. The wirama aspect in the context of Tanggai dance in art education for students includes the ability to adjust body movements to the right rhythm. The elements of wirama are by using dance rhythm, precision of dance movements, tempo and harmony of movement with music (Uswatun Hasanah & Susmiarti Susmiarti, 2024, p. 99). The abilities carried out by students as ideal dancers in the context of Higher Education are harmony with dance accompaniment music, precision in making movement transitions correctly.

Wirasa Aspect

In the context of dance, wirasa is a very important aspect and must be possessed by an ideal dancer in absorbing the dance being danced. In the sense that wirasa is the dancer's ability to appreciate the movements being danced, so as to provide deep expressions of feelings and emotions (Rianta I Made et al., 2019, p. 386). The components that must be achieved by students are that students must provide emotional expressions through facial expressions and body movements in dancing the Tanggai dance, the ability to

embody characters in dancing the Tanggai dance.

Dance as an art form is one of the aesthetic delights of humans and has a basic foundation that can strengthen the character of local culture in the implementation of art education. Therefore, by developing physical skills (wiraga), sensitivity to rhythm (wirama) and emotional expression skills (wirasa), students can improve the quality of students in learning. The learning process that focuses on these three aspects will help students not only become skilled dancers but also be able to convey cultural values contained in the art of Tanggai dance and achieve the goals of art education itself.

Conclusions

Based on this in the category of problems questioned in this study, related to the paradox of the image of the prima donna dancer that is desired but contradicts learning, it can be understood that the context of the dancer in the performance criteria is carried out based on several criteria that should not be seen from the beautiful visuals alone but there are several criteria including the dancer's body, movement techniques and emotional expressions displayed. However, it is different if the context is placed in an educational space that is focused on Higher Education, students as learners are not formed as dance artists but students are formed to become educators and require them to be able to get complex overall results from the education process itself. Students in the process of learning Tanggai dance material, do not position themselves to meet the criteria for an ideal body but must meet the aspects of wiraga, wirama and wirasa as ideal dancers desired in learning. This learning aims for students to be able to learn more about regional traditional dance arts to be used as a basis for subsequent courses.

Related to this, this research article builds a joint dialogue, the hopes of the community

that emphasizes the prima donna dancer as a symbol of the elegance and beauty of women in the city of Palembang who have the speech of the noble beauty and inner self of a prima donna dancer who holds the right position in the Tanggai dance, if it is still seen from visual perception alone, it will create tension between the aesthetic appeal and the skills needed by students as learners.

Although the visual appeal of the dancer must be beautiful and is widely enjoyed by the audience, it can lead to misunderstandings that the skills that must be possessed by the younger generation are not expected to return, so this research article is a trigger for building public awareness in perceiving ideal dancers in traditional dance in the context of art education. The new paradigm related to the ideal body of students in dancing Tanggai dance in the learning process will not limit them from participating in the education process itself. Arts education leads the younger generation to be able to develop their abilities as much as possible and interact with their socio-culture.

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