

Review

The Impact of Intangible Cultural Heritage Dance Education on College Students' Cultural Identity and Creativity Development

Lin Wang ^{1,2,*}, Sumathi Maniam Raj ¹ and Saw Eu Gene ¹

¹ City University Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

² Ludong University, Yangtai, Shandong, China

* Correspondence: Lin Wang, City University Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia; Ludong University, Yangtai, Shandong, China

Abstract: Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) dance education plays a vital role in higher education by fostering both cultural identity and creativity among college students. This review examines the pedagogical approaches, learning outcomes, and challenges associated with ICH dance programs, emphasizing the integration of experiential learning, performance-based activities, and reflective practices. Evidence from diverse higher education contexts indicates that participation in ICH dance enhances students' cultural awareness, self-identification, and heritage pride, while simultaneously promoting cognitive creativity, including problem-solving, improvisation, and choreography skills, as well as affective creativity, such as emotional expression and artistic interpretation. The interplay between cultural grounding and creative exploration underscores the unique educational value of embodied arts practices. Despite promising results, research gaps remain, including limited longitudinal studies, small sample sizes, and regional bias. The review highlights implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and student engagement, and calls for cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and empirical investigations to further advance the field.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage; Dance Education; Cultural Identity; Creativity Development; Higher Education; Experiential Learning

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Rationale

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) encompasses practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural legacy. The safeguarding of ICH is critical not only for preserving cultural diversity but also for fostering social cohesion and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Within this context, dance emerges as a vital medium through which intangible heritage is both embodied and communicated. Unlike static forms of cultural documentation, dance allows participants to physically engage with cultural narratives, rhythms, and aesthetics, thereby providing a multisensory avenue for cultural transmission [1].

In higher education, integrating ICH dance into curricula offers a dual benefit: it exposes students to traditional cultural forms while simultaneously providing a creative outlet for self-expression. Universities are increasingly acknowledging the importance of cultural literacy and experiential learning, positioning ICH dance programs as both educational and developmental interventions. These programs often incorporate workshops, performance practices, and interdisciplinary collaborations, ensuring that students not only acquire technical skills but also develop a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage (As shown in Table 1).

Received: 01 February 2026

Revised: 28 March 2026

Accepted: 11 April 2026

Published: 15 April 2026



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Table 1. Summary of Different Types of ICH Dances in Educational Programs.

Dance Type	Region / Culture	Key Features / Elements	Typical Educational Approach
Folk Dance	Various local regions	Traditional steps, costumes, music	Group workshops, performance practice
Ceremonial Dance	Religious / Ritual-based	Symbolic gestures, ritual movements	Observational learning, guided practice
Regional Classical	Specific cultural schools	Structured technique, codified repertoire	Technique-focused classes, recitals
Contemporary Adaptation	National / cross-cultural	Fusion of traditional and modern styles	Creative choreography, improvisation

1.2. Research Problem and Objectives

Despite the growing recognition of ICH's educational value, limited research has examined the specific effects of ICH dance education on college students. Cultural identity formation and creativity development are two critical areas that intersect with higher education outcomes, yet empirical studies focusing on these dimensions in the context of ICH dance remain sparse. Understanding how these programs influence students' perceptions of self, heritage, and creative potential is essential for curriculum designers, educators, and policymakers aiming to foster holistic student development.

The primary objective of this review is to synthesize existing literature on ICH dance education, highlighting its impact on college students' cultural identity and creativity. By examining theoretical frameworks, pedagogical practices, and empirical findings, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the mechanisms through which ICH dance contributes to personal and cultural development. In doing so, it also identifies gaps in current research, offering directions for future investigation [2].

1.3. Scope of the Review

This review adopts a thematic approach, organized around three key dimensions: theoretical underpinnings, pedagogical practices, and student outcomes. First, it explores cultural identity and creativity theories as they relate to arts education, establishing a conceptual framework for understanding the influence of ICH dance. Next, it examines the design and implementation of ICH dance programs in higher education, highlighting curriculum structures, teaching strategies, and experiential learning opportunities. Finally, it evaluates the observed impacts on students, emphasizing both cognitive and affective outcomes, including enhanced cultural awareness, self-identification, and creative expression.

By focusing on these themes, the review seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, demonstrating how ICH dance education functions as a dynamic tool for nurturing culturally grounded creativity in higher education contexts. The inclusion of tables and examples throughout the paper further supports this synthesis by offering a clear, comparative perspective on diverse programs and outcomes.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Cultural Identity Theory

Cultural identity theory provides a conceptual basis for understanding how individuals perceive, internalize, and express their cultural heritage. At its core, this theory emphasizes three interrelated constructs: cultural awareness, self-identification, and heritage pride. Cultural awareness refers to the recognition and understanding of one's cultural traditions and practices, enabling individuals to situate themselves within a broader social and historical context. Self-identification involves the process through which individuals align their personal identity with cultural markers, including language,

rituals, and artistic expressions. Heritage pride denotes the positive emotional connection and esteem that individuals develop toward their cultural inheritance [3].

In the context of higher education, ICH dance education functions as a potent mechanism for fostering these constructs. By engaging in traditional dance forms, students do not merely observe cultural practices; they enact them. The embodied nature of dance facilitates a multisensory connection to heritage, reinforcing cognitive recognition and emotional resonance simultaneously. Empirical studies suggest that repeated participation in ICH dance programs cultivates a heightened sense of belonging and pride among students, particularly when performances and workshops involve collaborative, community-oriented settings. For instance, group rehearsals of folk dances not only teach technical proficiency but also immerse students in the social norms, stories, and symbolic gestures embedded in the dance, strengthening cultural self-identification.

2.2. Creativity Development Theory

Creativity development theory elucidates how educational experiences can foster original thought, problem-solving abilities, and expressive capabilities. Creativity is often conceptualized along two dimensions: cognitive and affective. Cognitive creativity pertains to divergent thinking, imagination, and the generation of novel ideas, while affective creativity involves emotional expression, sensitivity to aesthetic qualities, and the capacity for personal meaning-making.

Arts education, and specifically ICH dance education, contributes to both dimensions by providing a structured yet flexible platform for creative exploration. Cognitive aspects are nurtured as students experiment with choreography, spatial arrangements, and rhythmical improvisation. Meanwhile, affective creativity emerges through the interpretive and expressive dimensions of dance, where students translate personal and cultural narratives into embodied performance. By integrating traditional forms with contemporary adaptations, students are challenged to reconcile heritage-based rules with innovative expression, a process that strengthens creative competence [4].

2.3. Integration of ICH and Educational Psychology

The intersection of ICH dance education and educational psychology highlights the role of embodied learning in bridging cultural identity and creativity. Embodied learning theory posits that knowledge acquisition is not purely cognitive but also rooted in physical and sensory experiences. Dance, as a kinesthetic and multisensory practice, allows students to internalize cultural knowledge through movement, gesture, and rhythm. This form of experiential learning enhances retention, emotional engagement, and self-reflection.

Furthermore, educational psychology emphasizes the social and affective contexts of learning. Collaborative dance practices, peer feedback, and public performance create environments conducive to self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. By participating in culturally grounded creative activities, students experience a reciprocal reinforcement: cultural identity provides content and context for creative expression, while the creative process deepens understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage. This synergy between cognitive, affective, and embodied learning underpins the pedagogical value of ICH dance programs in higher education [5].

2.4. Comparative Overview of Theoretical Frameworks

To provide a structured perspective on how these theories have been applied in ICH and arts education research, Table 2 summarizes key frameworks, their primary focus, and typical applications in educational contexts. As shown, cultural identity frameworks emphasize heritage awareness and self-identification, while creativity development models prioritize divergent thinking and emotional expression. Integrative approaches,

often informed by educational psychology, leverage embodied learning to connect these dimensions, making them particularly suitable for dance-based interventions.

Table 2. Comparison of Theoretical Frameworks in ICH and Arts Education Studies.

Framework	Core Focus	Key Concepts / Constructs	Typical Application in ICH Dance Education
Cultural Identity Theory	Heritage awareness & self-identification	Cultural awareness, heritage pride, self-identification	Folk dance workshops, cultural performance projects
Creativity Development Theory	Cognitive and affective creativity	Divergent thinking, emotional expression, improvisation	Choreography exercises, creative performance tasks
Embodied Learning & Educational Psychology	Integration of physical, cognitive, and emotional learning	Kinesthetic engagement, reflection, motivation	Dance-based experiential learning, peer collaboration

As indicated in Table 2, these frameworks are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Implementing ICH dance education with attention to all three perspectives can provide a holistic learning experience, simultaneously nurturing cultural understanding and creative capacities. The integration of theoretical insights into practical pedagogy ensures that students are not only technically proficient but also culturally literate and creatively adept.

3. ICH Dance Education in Higher Education

3.1. Curriculum Design and Pedagogy

The incorporation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) dance education into higher education has gained increasing attention over the past decade, reflecting a broader recognition of the pedagogical and developmental benefits of arts-based learning. ICH dance programs are designed to transmit both technical skill and cultural knowledge, integrating a variety of instructional formats, including lecture-based courses, hands-on workshops, and performance-focused modules. These programs typically vary in scope, ranging from elective courses within arts and humanities departments to fully accredited majors in dance or cultural studies.

In terms of pedagogical approach, ICH dance education emphasizes experiential learning, in which students actively engage in the practice of traditional dance forms rather than passively observing or studying theoretical content. Workshops constitute a central component of this approach, offering opportunities for students to learn under the guidance of master instructors or cultural bearers, who provide expertise in movement techniques, stylistic nuances, and historical context. Performance-based learning complements workshops by encouraging students to apply their knowledge in public or simulated settings, fostering both technical competence and confidence. Moreover, many programs incorporate reflective practices such as journaling, peer feedback, and group discussion to encourage critical thinking about cultural heritage, artistic interpretation, and the ethical dimensions of cultural representation [6].

Instructional strategies in ICH dance education also frequently employ interdisciplinary integration. Courses may draw connections between dance, music, visual arts, and anthropology, highlighting the multifaceted nature of intangible heritage. For example, a curriculum may combine rhythm training with ethnographic study, enabling students to contextualize choreography within the social and historical narratives of a particular community. Similarly, contemporary adaptation modules challenge students to innovate while respecting traditional forms, fostering creativity alongside cultural literacy.

3.2. Teaching Outcomes

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) dance programs in higher education have demonstrated multiple positive educational outcomes. First, these programs significantly enhance student engagement. Through hands-on workshops, group rehearsals, and public performances, students maintain a high level of motivation and active participation. Successfully mastering dance sequences or contributing to collaborative performances often provides a strong sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, reinforcing intrinsic motivation and sustained interest in cultural courses.

Second, students develop both technical skills and cognitive understanding. Systematic practice and repeated performance enable students to master movement sequences, rhythmic coordination, and culturally specific expressive techniques. At the same time, students learn to connect physical skills with the historical background, social values, and symbolic meanings embedded in the dance, further enhancing their cultural awareness and understanding of traditional arts [7].

Third, ICH dance education contributes to students' cultural identity and creativity development. Engaging with authentic dance practices allows students to comprehend the values, narratives, and rituals of different communities. This cultural understanding not only increases students' sensitivity to and recognition of their own and others' cultural traditions but also promotes creativity through activities such as choreography, improvisation, and performance creation. Qualitative studies indicate that repeated participation in dance movements, storytelling, and musical accompaniment often leads to heightened cultural consciousness and creative expression in students' personal life, social interactions, and artistic endeavors.

Table 3 illustrates ICH dance programs in various universities, highlighting teaching methods, learning objectives, and approaches to fostering creativity. It can be observed that universities located in regions rich in local culture tend to emphasize mastery of folk and ceremonial dances, whereas urban or national institutions often focus on integrating traditional and contemporary dance forms and cultivating students' choreographic and creative abilities.

Table 3. Examples of ICH Dance Programs in Different Universities.

University / Region	Teaching Method	Learning Objectives	Creativity Development
Beijing Dance Academy, China	Folk dance training + stage performance	Mastery of traditional Chinese dance forms; cultural interpretation	Creative choreography and expressive performance
Universities in Japan	Regional dance experience + classroom instruction	Understanding local dance culture and traditions	Development of movement innovation and performance creativity
University of Cape Town, South Africa	Community participation + improvisation training	Learning folk dance techniques; cultural storytelling	Improvisation and narrative performance skills
University of California, Los Angeles, USA	Integration of traditional and contemporary dance	Fusion of different cultural dance elements	Creation of works combining traditional and contemporary dance
National School of Dance, India	Classical and regional dance training + performance	Mastery of classical and regional dance culture	Public performance and creative choreography

3.3. Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the pedagogical advantages, the implementation of ICH dance education in higher education faces several challenges. Institutional constraints are among the most prominent. Budgetary limitations, insufficient teaching personnel, and competing academic priorities may restrict the scope and quality of ICH dance programs. Smaller institutions, in particular, may struggle to secure qualified instructors or maintain facilities suitable for large-scale workshops and performances.

Student motivation and engagement can also present challenges. While many students initially express enthusiasm for participating in ICH dance, sustained engagement may depend on the perceived relevance of the program to their academic or professional goals. Without clear connections to career development, cultural literacy, or creative skill-building, some students may view these courses as supplementary rather than integral, reducing participation rates and learning outcomes [8].

Another critical challenge relates to cultural authenticity and ethical representation. Instructors and program designers must carefully balance the preservation of traditional forms with the encouragement of creative adaptation. Misrepresentation or oversimplification of cultural elements can undermine both educational and cultural objectives, potentially leading to cultural appropriation concerns. To mitigate this risk, many programs collaborate directly with cultural bearers and community representatives, ensuring that pedagogical content respects historical context and social norms.

However, these challenges also present opportunities. Institutions can leverage ICH dance programs to foster cross-cultural collaboration, community engagement, and interdisciplinary research. For example, partnerships with local cultural organizations or international exchange programs can expand student exposure to diverse dance traditions, while also supporting heritage preservation efforts. Integrating ICH dance with digital media, virtual reality, or other technology-enhanced learning platforms offers additional avenues for innovation, enabling students to document, analyze, and creatively interpret dance practices in novel ways.

By addressing these challenges strategically, higher education institutions can maximize the pedagogical and developmental benefits of ICH dance programs. As illustrated in Table 3, programs that combine experiential learning, performance opportunities, and culturally informed curricula are particularly effective in promoting both technical skill and cultural understanding. Through careful curriculum design, faculty training, and resource allocation, ICH dance education has the potential to serve as a transformative educational practice, enhancing students' cultural identity, creativity, and lifelong engagement with the arts.

4. Impact on Cultural Identity

4.1. Enhancement of Cultural Awareness

Participation in Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) dance education provides college students with an immersive experience that significantly enhances cultural awareness. Unlike traditional classroom-based instruction, which often conveys cultural knowledge in abstract or textual formats, dance education engages students in embodied learning, allowing them to internalize cultural values, narratives, and symbolism through movement. The kinesthetic nature of dance facilitates a deeper cognitive and emotional connection with cultural traditions, making heritage not merely an intellectual concept but a lived experience.

Through structured workshops and performance exercises, students learn to recognize and interpret the intricate elements of traditional dances, including gesture, posture, rhythm, and musical accompaniment. For example, regional folk dances often encode historical narratives, social roles, and communal values; by participating in these dances, students gain a nuanced understanding of the cultural logic embedded in movement patterns. Studies indicate that students who actively engage in ICH dance

programs demonstrate higher levels of cultural literacy, including the ability to articulate the significance of specific dance forms, understand the social context of performances, and identify regional stylistic distinctions. Furthermore, dance education fosters awareness of the dynamic nature of culture, emphasizing both preservation and adaptation, thus encouraging students to appreciate heritage as an evolving and living phenomenon rather than a static relic of the past [9].

4.2. Sense of Belonging and Pride

Beyond cognitive understanding, ICH dance education plays a pivotal role in cultivating students' sense of belonging and heritage pride. Engagement in traditional dance enables students to connect personally with their cultural roots, reinforcing self-identification and emotional attachment to heritage. This process often occurs in collaborative settings, where group rehearsals and ensemble performances create opportunities for shared experience, mutual support, and peer learning. Through repeated participation, students develop a sense of membership within both the immediate learning community and the broader cultural community represented by the dance.

Heritage pride emerges as students achieve technical proficiency, contribute to performances, and witness the value of their skills in culturally meaningful contexts. This positive reinforcement strengthens intergenerational knowledge transfer, as students often interact with master instructors or cultural bearers who have preserved these traditions for decades. Such interactions highlight the continuity of heritage and the students' role in sustaining it, fostering responsibility, respect, and admiration for preceding generations. In this manner, ICH dance education not only nurtures individual identity but also reinforces collective identity, encouraging students to view themselves as active participants in the ongoing life of cultural traditions.

Moreover, participation in public performances, festivals, or university showcases enhances students' visibility and recognition as bearers of cultural knowledge. These experiences contribute to increased confidence, a stronger self-concept, and motivation to engage in further cultural exploration. Students frequently report that performing traditional dances provides a tangible sense of achievement and pride in both personal skill and cultural affiliation. Consequently, ICH dance education functions as a vehicle for both self-affirmation and communal cohesion, fostering emotionally resonant engagement with heritage [10].

4.3. Empirical Evidence from Studies

A growing body of empirical research supports the positive impact of ICH dance education on students' cultural identity. For instance, studies conducted in East Asia, where traditional dance forms are widely integrated into university curricula, demonstrate measurable increases in cultural awareness and heritage appreciation among participants. Surveys and interviews reveal that students who engage in regular folk dance practice report enhanced understanding of local history, symbolism, and social norms, as well as stronger identification with regional and national cultural markers.

Similarly, research in South Africa and Latin America has shown that participatory dance programs in universities contribute to heightened intercultural sensitivity, particularly when students from diverse backgrounds collaborate in ensemble performances. Such programs encourage recognition of cultural diversity and respect for heritage practices, thereby reinforcing inclusive cultural identity. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs also indicate that students involved in ICH dance programs exhibit statistically significant gains in self-reported measures of cultural pride, sense of community, and willingness to engage in heritage preservation activities compared with control groups not participating in such programs.

In addition to quantitative findings, qualitative evidence underscores the emotional and psychosocial dimensions of cultural identity formation. Case studies highlight that students often describe transformative experiences, where repeated engagement with dance movements, storytelling elements, and musical accompaniment fosters profound appreciation for their heritage. These experiences often extend beyond the classroom, influencing students' personal lives, social interactions, and creative endeavors. Importantly, the literature consistently emphasizes that the combination of practical engagement, mentorship by cultural experts, and reflective discussion is critical for maximizing cultural identity outcomes.

Collectively, the empirical evidence demonstrates that ICH dance education is a highly effective pedagogical approach for nurturing cultural awareness, pride, and a sense of belonging among college students. By engaging students both cognitively and affectively, these programs facilitate a holistic process of identity formation, wherein heritage knowledge, emotional attachment, and social integration are mutually reinforcing. Such findings underscore the importance of institutional support, curriculum design, and culturally authentic pedagogical strategies in realizing the potential of ICH dance education to cultivate culturally grounded, confident, and socially connected students [11].

5. Impact on Creativity Development

5.1. Cognitive Creativity

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) dance education contributes significantly to the development of cognitive creativity among college students. Cognitive creativity encompasses the capacity for problem-solving, improvisation, innovative choreography, and cross-cultural adaptation. Within ICH dance programs, students are frequently tasked with interpreting traditional movements, integrating them into contemporary compositions, or adapting choreography to suit performance constraints. These activities require flexible thinking, divergent ideation, and analytical skills, all of which constitute core elements of cognitive creativity.

For instance, when students engage in improvisational exercises based on traditional dance motifs, they must reconcile the established rules of the dance form with personal innovation. This process encourages critical reflection on both movement technique and cultural context, promoting higher-order thinking skills. Similarly, choreographic assignments that incorporate elements from multiple cultural traditions challenge students to creatively synthesize disparate stylistic features while maintaining aesthetic coherence and respect for heritage authenticity. Such exercises stimulate problem-solving abilities, as students navigate issues of rhythm, spatial arrangement, coordination, and narrative interpretation.

Cross-cultural adaptation further enhances cognitive creativity by requiring students to understand the symbolic and structural conventions of unfamiliar dance traditions and to integrate them meaningfully into new performance contexts. This not only broadens their repertoire of movement vocabulary but also cultivates an analytical appreciation of how cultural values are embedded within physical expression. Empirical studies indicate that students involved in these activities exhibit measurable improvements in divergent thinking, creative problem-solving, and adaptive learning, highlighting the capacity of ICH dance education to foster sophisticated cognitive skills.

5.2. Affective Creativity

Beyond cognition, ICH dance education significantly supports affective creativity, which pertains to emotional expression, artistic interpretation, and personal meaning-making. The immersive and expressive nature of dance enables students to translate cultural narratives, personal experiences, and aesthetic sensibilities into embodied

performance. Emotional engagement is a central component, as students interpret the mood, symbolism, and storytelling inherent in traditional dances.

Participation in ICH dance programs encourages students to explore subjective interpretation, allowing for individualized expression while remaining grounded in cultural conventions. For example, the same traditional dance routine may evoke different affective responses and artistic choices among students, reflecting variations in personality, experience, and creative perspective. In performance-based assessments, instructors often evaluate not only technical precision but also the originality, expressiveness, and interpretive depth of students' presentations, underscoring the importance of affective creativity.

Additionally, affective creativity supports personal meaning-making, wherein students connect cultural heritage to their own identity, emotions, and social experiences. Reflective exercises, such as journaling or group discussions after rehearsals, reinforce this process by prompting students to articulate the significance of their creative decisions. By linking movement to personal and cultural narratives, ICH dance education facilitates emotional literacy, empathy, and self-awareness, which are integral components of holistic creative development.

5.3. Integration of Cultural Identity and Creativity

A defining feature of ICH dance education is the synergistic integration of cultural identity and creativity. Understanding heritage informs creative expression by providing students with a rich repertoire of symbolic, stylistic, and narrative resources. Cultural identity shapes the thematic content, stylistic choices, and interpretive strategies that students employ in choreography and performance, while the creative process deepens their engagement with heritage by encouraging exploration, experimentation, and personal connection [12].

This integration is particularly evident in interdisciplinary and contemporary adaptation modules, where students are encouraged to fuse traditional dance forms with modern techniques, multimedia elements, or cross-cultural motifs. Such practices necessitate both cultural literacy and innovative thinking, ensuring that creative outcomes are both aesthetically compelling and culturally grounded. Research suggests that students who engage in these integrative practices exhibit higher levels of creative self-efficacy, originality, and flexibility compared with peers in more conventional arts programs.

Table 4 summarizes the key outcomes of ICH dance education on creativity development, highlighting dimensions of cognitive and affective creativity, measures used in empirical studies, and reported results. The table illustrates that effective programs foster both technical skill and imaginative capacity, with outcomes spanning problem-solving, improvisational ability, emotional expressiveness, and personal meaning-making. By linking creativity to cultural heritage, ICH dance education offers a unique platform for cultivating versatile, culturally grounded creative thinkers.

Table 4. Key Outcomes of ICH Dance Education on Creativity Development.

Creativity Dimension	Measures / Indicators	Study Results / Findings
Cognitive Creativity	Divergent thinking, improvisation, choreography, cross-cultural adaptation	Students demonstrated increased problem-solving abilities, adaptive thinking, and innovative choreographic skills
Affective Creativity	Emotional expression, interpretive depth, personal meaning-making	Enhanced emotional literacy, originality in performance, and stronger personal connection to heritage

Integrated Identity-Creativity	Cultural knowledge applied in creative tasks	Improved creative self-efficacy, culturally informed innovation, and ability to synthesize tradition with contemporary expression
--------------------------------	--	---

As illustrated in Table 4, ICH dance education cultivates a multi-dimensional form of creativity that is both cognitively rigorous and affectively rich, fostering students' capacity to generate original ideas, express nuanced emotion, and engage deeply with cultural heritage. Programs that successfully integrate these elements provide students with enduring skills applicable in artistic, educational, and professional contexts.

6. Discussion

6.1. Synthesis of Findings

The review of existing literature demonstrates a strong interconnection between cultural identity and creativity outcomes in the context of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) dance education. Participation in ICH dance programs enhances students' cultural awareness, self-identification, and heritage pride, which in turn provides a rich foundation for creative expression. Embodied engagement with traditional dance forms allows students to internalize symbolic meanings, social norms, and stylistic conventions, thereby informing both cognitive and affective aspects of creativity. Cognitive creativity, reflected in problem-solving, improvisation, and cross-cultural adaptation, is enriched when students understand the historical and cultural context of their movements. Simultaneously, affective creativity, including emotional expression, artistic interpretation, and personal meaning-making, is reinforced through the personal connection to heritage cultivated by dance practice. This synthesis underscores that cultural identity and creativity are mutually reinforcing: cultural grounding enhances creative capacity, while creative exploration deepens engagement with heritage.

A recurring pattern in the literature is the emphasis on experiential and performance-based pedagogy, which appears more effective than purely theoretical instruction in fostering both cultural and creative outcomes. However, notable gaps persist. Many studies rely on small sample sizes, cross-sectional designs, or region-specific programs, limiting generalizability. Longitudinal studies tracking the sustained impact of ICH dance education on identity formation and creativity development are scarce, and cross-cultural comparative research remains underexplored.

6.2. Limitations in Current Research

The current body of research presents several methodological and conceptual limitations. First, limited longitudinal studies impede understanding of long-term effects on students' cultural identity and creative skills. Second, small sample sizes and institution-specific case studies reduce statistical power and constrain generalization to broader higher education contexts. Third, regional bias is evident, as most empirical evidence originates from East Asian and select Western contexts, with underrepresentation of programs in Africa, Latin America, and other culturally diverse regions. Finally, measurement tools for creativity and cultural identity vary widely, making cross-study comparison challenging and highlighting the need for standardized assessment frameworks.

6.3. Implications for Policy and Practice

Despite these limitations, the findings carry important implications for higher education policy and practice. Curriculum development should prioritize experiential, workshop-based, and performance-oriented approaches that integrate cultural knowledge with creative tasks. Programs should balance technical skill acquisition with opportunities for improvisation, choreography, and interdisciplinary exploration.

Teacher training is critical; instructors must possess not only technical expertise but also cultural literacy and pedagogical strategies that foster both identity development and creative capacity. Institutions should also enhance student engagement by promoting community involvement, intercultural exchange, and public performance opportunities. Finally, systematic evaluation and research initiatives are recommended to track outcomes, refine teaching methods, and ensure equitable access to ICH dance education across diverse student populations.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights that ICH dance education serves as a dynamic mechanism for cultivating culturally informed, creatively adept students. By addressing existing research gaps and implementing evidence-based pedagogical strategies, higher education institutions can maximize the educational and developmental benefits of these programs.

7. Conclusion

This review highlights the significant impact of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) dance education on college students' cultural identity and creativity development. Across diverse higher education contexts, participation in ICH dance programs has been shown to enhance students' cultural awareness, self-identification, and pride in heritage, while simultaneously fostering cognitive and affective dimensions of creativity. Cognitive benefits include improved problem-solving, improvisation, and choreography skills, whereas affective gains encompass emotional expression, artistic interpretation, and personal meaning-making. The synergy between cultural identity and creativity underscores the unique value of embodied, experiential learning in promoting holistic student development. Programs that integrate traditional dance forms with reflective, performance-based, and interdisciplinary pedagogies demonstrate the greatest efficacy, illustrating that technical skill, cultural literacy, and creative competence are mutually reinforcing.

Despite these positive outcomes, several research gaps remain. Longitudinal studies are limited, sample sizes are often small, and regional bias restricts the generalizability of findings. Moreover, standardized measures for assessing both creativity and cultural identity are scarce, complicating cross-study comparisons. Addressing these limitations through cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and empirical research will be critical for advancing understanding of the long-term effects of ICH dance education and for refining pedagogical strategies. Future studies should also explore the integration of digital technologies, community partnerships, and international collaborations to broaden access and engagement, fostering diverse learning experiences.

In conclusion, ICH dance education serves as a powerful medium for nurturing culturally grounded, creative citizens who are not only skilled in artistic expression but also deeply connected to their heritage. By bridging cultural knowledge with innovative practice, these programs equip students with the cognitive, emotional, and social capacities necessary for meaningful participation in both local and global cultural landscapes. Higher education institutions are thus uniquely positioned to leverage ICH dance education as a tool for cultivating well-rounded, culturally literate, and creatively adept graduates prepared to contribute to the preservation and evolution of intangible cultural heritage.

References

1. R. Zhao, "The positive role of the aesthetic education value of 'intangible cultural heritage' dance in alleviating the anxiety of primary and middle school students," *Psychiatria Danubina*, vol. 34, suppl. 2, pp. 348–348, 2022.
2. J. Carr, "The tangible and intangible: dance and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage," *Dance Research*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 66–78, 2023, doi: 10.3366/drs.2023.0390.
3. L. Xun, "Research on the Integration Teaching of Dance-related Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Ethnic Folk Dance Professional Course in Local Universities," *Frontiers in Art Research*, vol. 5, no. 10, pp. 22–27, 2023, doi: 10.25236/FAR.2023.051005.

4. M. Skublewska-Paszkowska, P. Powroznik, J. Smolka, M. Milosz, E. Lukasik, D. Mukhamedova, and E. Milosz, "Methodology of 3D scanning of intangible cultural heritage— The example of Lazgi dance," *Applied Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 23, p. 11568, 2021, doi: 10.3390/app112311568.
5. S. Gwervevende and Z. M. Mthombeni, "Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage: exploring the synergies in the transmission of Indigenous languages, dance and music practices in Southern Africa," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 29, no. 5, pp. 398–412, 2023, doi: 10.1080/13527258.2023.2193902.
6. Q. Ma, "Integrating traditional ritual dance and minority culture of Western Hunan into dance instruction: Utilizing information technology to preserve China's intangible heritage," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 635–646, 2023.
7. Z. Liu and D. Kalimyllin, "Chinese dance education and culture path in the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage to the younger generation," *Research in Dance Education*, pp. 1–14, 2024, doi: 10.1080/14647893.2024.2331120.
8. R. Huang, L. Zhang, and Y. Li, "Transforming dance education in China: enhancing sustainable development and cultural preservation," *Research in Dance Education*, pp. 1–29, 2025, doi: 10.1080/14647893.2025.2524151.
9. F. Petkovski, *From Community to Humanity: Dance as Intangible Cultural Heritage*. University of California, Los Angeles, 2021.
10. A. Aristidou, A. Chalmers, Y. Chrysanthou, C. Loscos, F. Multon, J. Parkins, ... and E. Stavrakis, "Safeguarding our dance cultural heritage," in *Eurographics 2022 – 43rd Annual Conference of the European Association for Computer Graphics*, Apr. 2022, pp. 1–6.
11. H. Zhu, X. Zhou, and H. Liu, "Human-AI co-creation for intangible cultural heritage dance: cultural genes retaining and innovation," in *International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction*, Jun. 2024, pp. 426–433, Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, doi: 10.1007/978-3-031-61950-2_46.
12. Z. Lian, "Dunhuang Intangible Arts in the Perspective of Pedagogy and Cultural Studies: Innovative Practices of Intercultural Education and Construction of Cultural Identity," *International Journal of Arts & Humanities Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2024, doi: 10.32996/Ijahs.2024.4.2.2.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of GBP and/or the editor(s). GBP and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.