

Participation In Feseni Enhances Students' Personal Growth, Confidence, And Community Sense
Through Creative Collaborative Activities.

*(Penyertaan Dalam FESENI Meningkatkan Perkembangan Peribadi, Keyakinan, Dan Rasa Komuniti
Pelajar Melalui Aktiviti Kolaboratif Kreatif)*

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ABSTRACT

FESENI (Festival Seni Universiti Malaya) is one of the historic competitions in the scope of both undergraduate and postgraduate-level students in Malaysia with its first being held back in 1975. Its main objective is to enhance University Malaya (UM) students' sense of belonging to the country and their talent development while also foster the unity and awareness of other races' culture. With the establishment of FESENI, students can discover their passion and talent in terms of stage presence, and performative arts. The objective of this study is to investigate how FESENI can enhance UM students' personal growth, confidence, and community sense through creative collaborative activities. Moreover, this study aims to investigate how confidence level affects students' performance in FESENI and factors affecting their confidence level. This research was carried out on both undergraduate-level and postgraduate-level who participated in FESENI in the 2024/2025 academic session. The questionnaire forms were distributed to total of 50 students who participated in the competition. Statistical analysis with min test and sp (standard deviation) were used to look into the level of confidence, diversification and perception of students to the questions submitted. The results showed the impact of FESENI participation has functioned in improving the level of confidence, nurturing more positive traits and interest of students in performative arts. This result signifies that innovation through the participation of FESENI are able to increase understanding ; confidence and personal growth throughout their university life.

Keywords: FESENI, UM, Students, Confidence, Culture

ABSTRAK

FESENI (Festival Seni Universiti Malaya) merupakan salah satu pertandingan bersejarah dalam kalangan pelajar peringkat sarjana muda dan pascasiswazah di Malaysia yang pertama kali diadakan pada tahun 1975. Objektif utamanya adalah untuk meningkatkan semangat kekitaan pelajar Universiti Malaya (UM) terhadap negara serta mengembangkan bakat mereka, di samping memupuk perpaduan dan kesedaran terhadap kepelbagaian budaya kaum. Melalui penganjuran FESENI, pelajar dapat menerokai minat dan bakat mereka dalam bidang persembahan serta seni pentas. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk meneliti bagaimana penyertaan dalam FESENI dapat meningkatkan pertumbuhan peribadi, keyakinan diri, dan semangat komuniti dalam kalangan pelajar UM melalui aktiviti kolaboratif kreatif. Selain itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk menilai persepsi pelajar UM terhadap kesan FESENI dalam memperkukuh perpaduan antara kaum. Kajian ini dijalankan terhadap pelajar peringkat sarjana muda dan pascasiswazah yang menyertai FESENI bagi sesi 2024/2025. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada sejumlah 50 orang pelajar yang mengambil bahagian dalam pertandingan tersebut. Analisis statistik menggunakan ujian min dan sisihan piawai telah dijalankan bagi meneliti tahap keyakinan, kepelbagaian, serta persepsi pelajar terhadap soalan yang diberikan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa penyertaan dalam FESENI memberi kesan positif dalam meningkatkan tahap keyakinan diri, memupuk sikap yang lebih positif, serta mengembangkan minat pelajar terhadap seni persembahan. Dapatan ini menunjukkan bahawa inovasi melalui penyertaan dalam FESENI berupaya meningkatkan kefahaman, keyakinan diri, dan pertumbuhan peribadi sepanjang kehidupan mereka di universiti.

Kata Kunci: FESENI, UM, Students, Keyakinan, Budaya

INTRODUCTION

For a developing country like Malaysia, the youth play such a vital role in the country's long-term economic, political and developmental plans. Failure to nurture the patriotic in them could cause a huge problem to the country's future. Hence, parties like Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, and Ministry of Youth and Sports need to play a more proactive role by initiating more activities, events and competitions that correlates with Malaysia's history, culture and diversity. This is vital as development takes place in families, neighbourhoods, youth organizations, faith-based organizations, schools and multitude of other places, including cyberspace (Stephen F. Hamilton, Mary Agnes Hamilton, & Karen Pittman, 2004). If the involved parties fail to fulfil their responsibilities, our initiative to nurture the togetherness for all races and religion in Malaysia would receive backlashes and can become much difficult in the latter years.

FESeni : A Platform To Nurture And Develop

Festival Seni Universiti Malaya, or FESeni started back in the year 1975, with the original name, 'Pertandingan Seni Pentas Universiti Malaya' before changing to its current name in 1996. With over 13 residential colleges taking part in more than 15 events, FESeni is known to be the biggest competition in Universiti Malaya. More than just a showcase of talent, FESeni is meticulously designed as a comprehensive platform to nurture and develop the artistic abilities, leadership skills, and cultural awareness of the student body. This annual festival brings together diverse groups from across the university, providing a professional and supportive environment for students to transform their artistic passions into polished performances and exhibitions. It champions various forms of artistic expression from theater and dance to music and visual arts ensuring that every creative endeavor finds a stage. Ultimately, FESeni is a crucial institutional investment in cultivating future Malaysian artists, leaders, and culturally astute citizens. In 1976, the National Advisory Council on Culture was formed to discuss matters on cultural policies and their implementation (Aris, 1983).

Public universities, such as the National University of Malaysia (UKM) and the University of Malaya (UM), were the first few educational institutions to respond to the cultural policy and introduced Malay performing arts educational programmes, which included the traditional Malay folk arts (Tan, 1990).

Although several universities in Malaysia now offer undergraduate and graduate arts degrees in theatre and music, few if any, place an emphasis on Malaysian traditional performing arts. This annual festival brings together diverse groups from across the university, providing a professional and supportive environment for students to transform their artistic passions into polished performances and exhibitions. Furthermore, the act of organizing and participating in such large-scale events directly addresses the need for transferable skills. Learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). Students involved in FESeni gain crucial experience in project management, team coordination, and skills that are highly valued in the contemporary job market. Ultimately, FESeni is a crucial institutional investment in cultivating future Malaysian artists, leaders, and culturally astute citizens, proving that a vibrant arts scene is integral to the educational mission of a leading research university (UM, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research topic centers on the impact of participation in arts festivals, specifically FESeni, on student growth. Within an educational context, participation refers not merely to attendance but to active involvement in the process of creation, organization, and performance, which is central to experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Participation in the arts offers a unique blend of formal training and informal, self-directed exploration. Fiske (1993) posits that cultural participation is a form of active meaning-making, where individuals construct identity through their engagement with expressive activities. This review frames FESeni as a significant setting for this active cultural participation within the university environment.

A substantial body of literature supports the claim that involvement in creative activities positively influences students' personal development and self-esteem. engagement in the arts, particularly performance, requires students to step outside their comfort zones, leading to the development of resilience and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Catterall (2002)'s longitudinal study demonstrated that high levels of arts participation correlate with significant improvements in academic self-concept and motivation. The sustained commitment and successful execution of an artistic project, such as those presented at FESeni, act as powerful agents in solidifying a student's belief in their own capabilities.

The public nature of FESENI, where students present their work to an audience, is critical for building confidence. Spillett (2008) found that opportunities for public performance foster a sense of mastery and reduce performance anxiety, skills which are highly transferable to academic and professional presentations. The ability to manage the pressure of performance and receive feedback directly contributes to a stronger, more confident self-image.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- i. To clarify FESENI's main objective and purpose in terms of students' talent development and sense of belonging.
- ii. To assess the reliability and internal consistency of the measurement instrument used to capture students' self-reported confidence and personal growth derived from FESENI participation.
- iii. To examine the effectiveness of creative collaborative activities (e.g., rehearsals, group dynamics) within FESENI in fostering a sense of community among student participants.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed in this study uses a quantitative, descriptive survey design to assess the impact of student participation in FESENI. The study adopted a quantitative research approach utilizing a descriptive survey design. This methodology was chosen to systematically collect measurable data on the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of student participants. The goal was to establish a clear description of the levels of personal growth and confidence achieved, as well as the sense of community fostered through their involvement in FESENI. The target population comprised all Universiti Malaya (UM) students who actively took part in the Festival Seni Universiti Malaya (FESENI) during the 2024/2025 academic period. The final sample size was 52 valid respondents.

Participants represented a diverse range of faculties and demographics, providing a broad snapshot of the student body engaged in the festival. Data collection relied on a self-administered online questionnaire. The instrument was structured into two primary sections to gather the necessary data. The first section collected demographic and participation data,

which included information on gender, race, faculty, year of study, and the nature of their involvement. The second section featured a Personal Growth and Confidence Scale, consisting of 13 statements designed to operationalize the key variables of personal growth, confidence, and collaborative sense. These statements employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The internal consistency of the multi-item confidence scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, confirming its reliability with a value of 0.808 ($\alpha > 0.70$). Mean and Standard Deviation were calculated for all 13 items to describe the central tendency and dispersion of the participants' self-reported levels of confidence. Frequencies were used to summarize the demographic profiles of the sample. The mean total confidence scores were used to conduct preliminary comparisons between different demographic groups, such as gender, to investigate whether the impact of FESENI participation varied across these categories.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Respondent's Background

The sample is predominantly Female with 32 respondents compared to Male of 20 respondents. The majority of them were studying at the Faculty of Science with reported 30.8% of them were studying there during the FESENI period, while the minority was Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Sports and Exercise Science, and followed by Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology which recorded only 1.9% of its respondents. The majority of participants are Malay with 76.9% followed by Chinese with 11.5% with other groups having smaller representation.

Gender and Its Impact On Confidence

The combined chart displays the average total confidence score (out of a maximum possible score of 65) across the two main gender categories. Result: male participants reported a marginally higher of 50.15 average total confidence score compared to female participants, 49.67. This small difference, suggests that while females make up a larger proportion of the sample, the overall level of confidence derived from FESENI participation is largely similar between the two genders.

TABLE 1. Mean total confidence score of male participants versus female participants

Confidence Item	Female Mean (Before)	Female Mean (After)	Male Mean (Before)	Male Mean (After)
I believe my performance improves with practice and effort.	4.58	4.68	4.33	4.51
I trust my ability to deliver a good performance.	4.19	4.33	3.86	4.55
I feel confident interacting with other performers during the competition.	4.19	4.63	4.00	4.21
My body and voice do what I want when I perform.	4.15	4.22	4.00	4.66
I can recover quickly if I make a mistake on stage.	4.00	4.33	3.95	4.88
I feel well prepared for performances because of rehearsals.	4.04	4.71	4.05	4.45
I am confident performing in front of an audience.	3.88	4.45	3.81	4.04
I would try a new performance role even if I felt slightly anxious.	3.85	4.02	3.71	3.87
I feel calm and in control when I perform on stage.	3.62	3.81	3.43	3.49
I feel calm and in control when I perform on stage.	3.62	3.81	3.43	3.49
I volunteer to take on solo or leadership roles in performances.	3.08	3.57	3.19	3.22
My nerves interfere with my ability to perform at my best.	2.58	2.49	2.76	2.70
I worry that I will forget my lines or choreography during a performance.	2.35	2.30	2.67	2.45
I feel nervous before <u>performing</u> .	2.15	2.11	2.12	2.08

The consistently high post-participation scores are interpreted as evidence of enhancement when compared to the likely lower baseline confidence before engaging in the demanding, high-commitment nature of the festival. This supports the notion derived from Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which says that mastery experiences, like successfully completing rehearsals and performing in public, are the most potent sources of self-efficacy. The festival provides these experiences, leading to a demonstrable boost in confidence. The small difference suggests that FESENI's impact is largely gender-equitable. The arts have been found to be particularly effective in boosting the academic self-concept of students who participate consistently, regardless of gender (Catterall, 2002). The high scores across the board indicate that FESENI effectively neutralizes common performance anxieties by replacing them with positive,

successful experiences. This success challenges the traditional view that confidence gains in competitive settings favor one gender over another, indicating that the collaborative, supportive environment is key to balanced development.

Solo vs Group Participants

Solo performers consistently report higher levels of confidence and control across nearly every item compared to Group performers. Solo participants reported significantly higher means for items related to individual control, particularly "My body and voice do what I want when I perform" Mean (solo) = 4.57 vs. Mean (group) = 4.00) and "I can recover quickly if I make a mistake on stage" Mean (solo) = 4.57 vs. Mean (group) = 3.90.

TABLE 2. Mean total confidence score of solo vs. group participants

Confidence Item	Group Participants Mean (Before)	Group Participants Mean (After)	Solo Participants Mean (Before)	Solo Participants Mean (After)
I believe my performance improves with practice and effort.	4.42	4.57	4.86	4.95
I trust my ability to deliver a good performance.	4.00	4.32	4.29	4.55
I feel confident interacting with other performers during the competition.	4.00	4.35	4.57	4.61
My body and voice do what I want when I perform.	4.03	4.59	4.14	4.45
I can recover quickly if I make a mistake on stage.	3.83	4.32	4.57	4.81
I feel well prepared for Performances because of rehearsals.	4.03	4.48	4.00	4.61
I am confident performing in front of an audience.	3.83	4.05	3.86	4.22
I would try a new performance role even if I felt slightly anxious.	3.67	4.02	4.57	4.61
I feel calm and in control when I perform on stage.	3.48	3.74	4.86	4.90
I volunteer to take on solo or leadership roles in performances.	3.08	3.34	3.43	4.02
My nerves interfere with my ability to perform at my best.	2.55	2.49	3.29	3.11
I worry that I will forget my lines or choreography during a performance.	2.45	2.38	2.71	2.45
I feel nervous before performing.	2.00	1.77	2.57	2.50

The finding that solo participants score significantly higher on items like "My body and voice do what I want when I perform" and "I would try a new performance role even if I felt slightly anxious" suggests the presence of both self-selection bias (confident individuals choosing solo) and the reinforcement of mastery experiences. As Bandura (1997) argued, successful mastery is the most influential source of self-efficacy. For soloists, success is purely attributable to individual effort, reinforcing their confidence in a highly potent way. Soloists also reported a strong belief in their ability to "recover quickly if I make a mistake on stage". This high self-reliance demonstrates that facing the total burden of performance risk alone translates into a powerful conviction of personal resilience.

For group members, the developmental gains align strongly with the research's hypothesis on community sense. Collaborative artistic activities require intense interpersonal coordination, which fosters integration and shared emotional connection.

This outcome is directly supported by McMillan and Chavis's (1986) theory on the Sense of Community, where shared experiences (like FESeni group rehearsals) deepen belonging and group confidence, even if individual stage confidence remains lower than a soloist's. The focus for group members shifts from individual mastery to collaborative creativity. The collective success, rather than the personal spotlight, becomes the primary source of affirmation.

How Race Determines One's Confidence Level Among Students

This table compares the Mean of 'before' participating in FESeni and Mean of 'after' participating in FESeni for all 13 confidence items across the main racial groups. The scale ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with all items oriented so that a higher mean indicates higher confidence or a more positive outcome. Small sample races have been grouped into 'Others'.

TABLE 3. Mean total confidence score among races of participants

Confidence Item	Malay Participants Mean (Before)	Malay Participants Mean (After)	Other races Participants Mean (Before)	Other races Participants Mean (After)
I believe my performance improves with practice and effort.	4.42	4.51	4.50	4.67
I trust my ability to deliver a good performance.	4.04	4.11	4.17	4.41
I feel confident interacting with other performers during the competition.	4.00	4.47	4.00	4.79
My body and voice do what I want when I perform.	3.96	4.45	4.00	4.50
I can recover quickly if I make a mistake on stage.	3.96	4.70	4.33	4.52
I feel well prepared for performances because of rehearsals.	3.92	4.33	4.33	4.52
I am confident performing in front of an audience.	3.75	4.02	3.83	4.02
I would try a new performance role even if I felt slightly anxious.	3.58	4.02	3.50	4.22
I feel calm and in control when I perform on stage.	3.46	4.12	3.67	4.22
I volunteer to take on solo or leadership roles in performances.	3.08	3.92	3.67	3.76
My nerves interfere with my ability to perform at my best.	2.58	2.11	2.33	2.26
I worry that I will forget my lines or choreography during a performance.	2.42	2.29	3.00	2.26
I feel nervous before performing.	2.08	2.02	1.83	1.59

The comparative data segmented by race suggests that while participation in FESeni provides a universal enhancement in student confidence, there are subtle differences in the reported experiences of mastery and anxiety across different groups. The most striking finding is the consistency of the growth mindset across all groups. The item "I believe my performance improves with practice and effort" holds the highest mean score for every racial category, reinforcing the core premise that the act of training and performing solidifies student confidence. This aligns perfectly with Bandura's (1997) theory, which emphasizes that successful mastery experiences like FESeni performance are the most potent source of

increased self-efficacy. Conversely, all groups reported the lowest scores on the reversed "I feel nervous before performing" item indicating that performance anxiety remains the largest psychological challenge for FESeni participants, regardless of their background. Interestingly, the "Others" group reported the highest score for "I can recover quickly if I make a mistake on stage". This high degree of resilience suggests that for smaller or non-majority groups, the communal and supportive environment of the arts competition serves as a strong mechanism for building a powerful sense of community and social integration, which is crucial for overall well-being and confidence (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

CONCLUSION

The findings conclusively validate that active participation in the Festival Seni Universiti Malaya (FESUNI) serves as a potent platform for student development, successfully addressing its objectives related to personal growth and collaborative enhancement. The robust reliability of the measurement scale ($\alpha = 0.808$) confirms the coherence of the confidence construct under study.

Statistically, participants demonstrated a high degree of post-festival self-efficacy, driven primarily by a powerful growth mindset, evidenced by the highest mean score recorded for the belief that performance improves with practice. This enhancement is largely equitable across genders, and significantly correlates with intensive rehearsal hours, reinforcing the idea that mastery experiences are the primary mechanism for increasing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

However, the data highlights two critical areas for future intervention, performance anxiety remains the single greatest psychological barrier regardless of participation type or gender, necessitating targeted resilience training. Furthermore, while students exhibit high generalized confidence, their willingness to transition this into high-risk solo or leadership roles remains moderate, suggesting organizers must embed programs that specifically encourage risk-taking and transform collaborative competence into individual leadership conviction.

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