

The Effects of Participation in Reality Television Shows on Undergraduates' Engagement with Formal Music Education in Sri Lanka



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Abstract

This study explored the impact of reality television shows on university music students' engagement with formal learning environments. As participation in these shows increasingly spotlights musical talent, performance, and celebrity culture, they may impact young adult learners' perceptions of success, creativity, and the value of formal education. The research investigates whether frequent consumption of such content affects students' motivation and academic priorities in formal music education, including classroom learning, music theory, and performance training. Using a qualitative research design, purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 undergraduate music students who had participated in reality television shows to examine patterns of media consumption, perceptions of the relevance of formal instruction, and levels of classroom engagement. The study findings provide insights into how media literacy can be integrated into music education to bridge the gap between the impact of media and academic understanding.

Keywords

Academic Understanding, Media Impact, Music Education, Reality Television, Undergraduates

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Introduction

The rise of musical reality television shows in Sri Lanka over the past two decades has reshaped the television landscape and aspirational youth identity since their introduction by the Sirasa television channel in 2005. Programs such as *Sirasa Superstar*, *Derana Dream Star*, *The Voice Sri Lanka*, and *Hiru Star* have not only become entertainment television shows but also platforms through which young performers gain public recognition, industry visibility, and rapid career mobility. With the democratization of media participation and audience-driven voting systems, previously unseen musical talent has entered the mainstream, challenging conventional pathways into professional music careers. As a result, reality television has emerged as a significant cultural force capable of redefining artistic value, celebrity formation, and perceptions of musical success in the Sri Lankan context (Abeysekara, 2025).

Music³ was introduced as a subject in university education in Sri Lanka in the 1970s. Degree courses in music were first introduced at the University of Kelaniya and are now offered at other government and private⁴ universities in Sri Lanka (Fernando, 2019). Undergraduate degree programs offer structured training in practical⁵ and theoretical studies in music. These programs emphasize systematic skill enhancement and academic discipline, leading to the development of performance skills in music forms like Indian Classical Music and Western Music, reinforcing the musical foundations of Sri Lankans. However, the increasing popularity of commercial performance cultures and the allure of instant fame through televised

³ The degree program was named 'Bachelor of Fine Arts'. The program included Hindustani music, Carnatic music, Sri Lankan folk music, music appreciation, Hindi language, and a theoretical study of different aspects of world music.

⁴ There are 08 government and private universities in Sri Lanka, including the University of the Visual and Performing Arts, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Jaffna, Eastern University/Swami Vipulananda Institute of Music and Dance, University of Colombo (Sri Palee Campus), University of Kelaniya, University of Peradeniya, SLTC Research University, and the School of Music.

⁵ Hindustani, Carnatic, and Western music are mainly included in curricula that lead to vocal and instrumental performance. Sri Lankan traditional music is included as part of the mainstream subjects that is compulsory. Traditional music is more focused on theory-based degree programs in ethnomusicology. It generally begins with training, including basic instrumental or vocal techniques, music reading, rhythm exercises, and simple repertoire. Students are introduced to solo and ensemble performance, learning to perform in small groups and developing coordination with others. As the program progresses, the advanced technique, improvisation, and interpretation of complex pieces are tailored to the student's chosen specialization in music. Assessment of the practical syllabus is conducted through continuous internal evaluation, mid-year and final performance exams, and graded recitals, with credit hours assigned based on the number of supervised practice and performance hours, ensuring that students gain both theoretical knowledge and high-level hands-on performance skills.

competitions have led to shifting student motivations and expectations regarding the role and purpose of music in higher education (Sun, 2022). This evolving intersection between reality television shows and university music education raises questions about engagement, motivation, and academic commitment among music undergraduates (Sun, 2022). Students pursue university music qualifications while simultaneously participating in public competitions, gaining experiences that differ significantly from those in traditional learning environments.

This study examines the impact of participation in musical reality television shows on the engagement of music undergraduates obtaining formal music education in Sri Lanka. It explores the tensions, synergies, and shifting aspirations that arise when usual academic structures intersect with commercialized entertainment culture. By examining students' lived experiences, perceptions, and motivations, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how media-driven performance environments impact learning as a pedagogical need in formal university education in music and the evolving role of formal university music education as a provider of professional and creative competencies in a rapidly changing landscape.

Scholarly Reviews

Reality television has transformed global media by introducing semi-scripted or unscripted content that blends performance, competition, and personal storytelling. In particular, it has become a platform for discovering emerging talent, shaping public taste, and influencing cultural consumption patterns (Brown, 2021). Such shows provide aspirants with massive visibility, mentorship opportunities, and industry access, often bypassing conventional training routes typically associated with professional music careers. According to Chalaby (2016), reality-based entertainment formats have also shifted audience expectations toward emotionally driven content, instant gratification, and spectacle-based performance forms.

Within this context, young musicians increasingly perceive televised competitions as legitimate pathways to fame and livelihood (Carah, 2010). This phenomenon challenges formal and informal music education institutions such as conservatories and universities (Kachi, 2023). Formal Music education consists of designed learning, mastery of theoretical foundations, historical studies, and discipline in performance practice. Scholars say that formal music training fosters cognitive development, aural refinement, and cultural appreciation (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). University music degree programs in Sri Lanka include Carnatic,

Hindustani, and Western⁶ and Sri Lankan folk traditions, offering academic rigor along with performance examinations. In the 2020s, creative music production, sound engineering, and music technology were added to the curriculum.

However, the curricula highlight gaps in practical engagement and contemporary relevance. Researchers, such as Nethsinghe (2012), note that Sri Lankan formal university education remains impacted by colonial academic models, which emphasize theoretical excellence over creative industry skills. This focus, while valuable, may limit students' preparedness for music job opportunities, which are characterized by digital production, audience interaction, and performative branding (Nyandieka, 2024). Performance-based environments foster self-reflection, emotional expression, and communicative competence, which are essential qualities for musicians. Stanford and Roe (2019) argue that real-life performance exposure enhances confidence, creativity, and adaptive musicianship beyond what classroom simulations can offer.

Reality television provides immersive experiential learning spaces where participants receive feedback from judges, observe peer performance, and engage with live audiences and media technologies. These environments support active learning, peer collaboration, and response to public critique, all elements associated with high engagement in performance education. As a result, participants often report increased stage confidence, aesthetic refinement, and adaptability.

Fame and Motivation in Media-Driven Youth Identification

Reality TV has become a cultural instrument that shapes desired identity and aspiration. Aubrey et al. (2020) highlights that media representations have an impact on self-concept, particularly among youth navigating career decisions. Fame culture encourages self-branding, emotional authenticity, and entrepreneurial performance. In Sri Lanka, musical reality shows often craft emotional narratives around contestants' backgrounds, hardship, and passion for music, thereby elevating them to symbolic community heroes.

This celebrity-environment affects motivation. While some students pursue reality shows to enhance artistic competence, others are driven by visibility, social status, and financial

⁶ Western music is one of the music categories in the formal education in Sri Lanka. Under the name of the subject category 'Western music', students are required to study, read, understand, and follow staff notations, fundamentals of Western music, orchestra, ensemble, theoretical knowledge of musicians, musical forms, and a few other aspects, including a minimal content of Indian music for the knowledge.

opportunity. Scholars warn that such motivations may lead to short-term gratification, overshadowing the long-term value of academic rigor and sustained technical study (Brown, 2021).

Table 1

List of reality television shows in Sri Lanka and the year they started with age limit

Channel	Year	Title of Reality Television Show	Target Age Group
Sirasa TV	2005-2016	Sirasa Super Star	18-30
	2006	Daintee Extra Rasapana	5-16
	2016	Sirasa Junior Super Star	5-15
		Sirasa Dancing Star	N/A
	2017	The Voice Sri Lanka	18 above
	2020	The Voice Teens	13-17
	2023	The Voice Kids	7-14
TV Derana	2008-upto date	Dreams Star	17-28
		Derana City of Dance	16-25
	2009- up to date	Derana Junior Super Star	Under 8 years old Under 12 years old
	2019	Derana Battle of the Bands	10-18 or above
Hiru TV	2019- up to date	Hiru Mega Star/ Hiru Star	Not specified
		Hiru Super Dancer	Not specified
		Hiru Kids Star	5-14
Rupavahini	2011	Ranaviru Real Star (for military employees)	Not specified
	2012-2013	Kavitha	University Students 18 upwards
Shakti TV	2006	Shakti Super Star	15 above
	2011	Shakti Junior Star	4-14
Siyatha TV	2020	The Voice of Asia	18 above
	2025 to be started	Tuk Tuk Star	18 or above
Swarnavahini	2012	Mega Star	18 above
	2019	Golden Voice of the North	15-30

Media, Market Forces, and Commodification

Commercial music industries prioritize mass appeal, branding, and emotional connection with audiences. Kosciesza (2021) competitive formats commodify talent, transforming performers into consumable products. Increasingly, success is determined not solely by skill but by relatability, charisma, narrative appeal, and digital presence.

In Sri Lanka, this commodification intersects with nationalism and youth aspiration. Musical reality shows often blend traditional melodies with modern stylistic elements, creating a hybrid musical aesthetic. While this fusion encourages innovation, it may dilute deep classical

learning or shift focus from heritage preservation to entertainment value. Formal university education institutions that offer music degrees are therefore challenged to maintain authenticity while acknowledging evolving artistic networks. This study seeks to understand how participation in musical reality television shows affects university music students' engagement with formal music education in Sri Lanka, and what perceptions participating students hold regarding the relevance and value of formal music education?

Music Education in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, music as a subject in formal education starts from the Lower Secondary⁷ education level. Then Higher-Secondary⁸ and the University level⁹. The subject is named 'Aesthetic'¹⁰ subject', which remains as an optional¹¹ subject that is not compulsory for the main examination, G.C.E. Ordinary Level¹². Formal Music education has roots in Indian classical music, Western music, folklore, and Sri Lankan music. According to Welgama (2010), formal music education in Sri Lanka began in 1946 under the leadership of Lionel Edirisinghe, who played a pivotal role in establishing structured school-level music instruction aimed at training future teachers. The curriculum incorporated Indian music and Sri Lankan folk. This study focuses on university music education in Sri Lanka at the time it was conducted.

⁷ There are five main stages of education in Sri Lanka, such as Early Childhood Education (age 2-4 before entering the school), Primary Education (age 5-10 or grade 1-5), Lower-Secondary Education (age 11-16 or grade 6-11), Higher-Secondary Education (age 17-19 or grade 12-13), and Tertiary Education (age 19 above).

⁸ In the Higher-Secondary level, music is available as a subject in the arts stream among a few prescribed streams by the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka, such as Science, Commerce, and Arts. The music subject can be chosen by the student from the available three forms, such as Oriental music, Carnatic music, and Western music. After choosing one form, students can select one category from vocal and instrumental for their specialisation in the subject, which leads to the 'General Certificate of Examination, Advanced Level Examination' (G.C.E. Advanced Level) to be selected for tertiary education.

⁹ Only the candidates who have completed the advanced level examination by the examination department and have completed the requirements of by the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka, are eligible to enroll for the tertiary education.

¹⁰ The name 'Aesthetic' was given by the Ministry of Education with the National Institute of Education of Sri Lanka, where the curricula are developed for school education. The subject included music, dance, drama, and paintings. Among them, students can choose a subject of their choice. Music includes three subjects: Oriental music, Carnatic music, and Western music. Students are free to choose one form among them.

¹¹ The subjects are categorized as main subjects and optional subjects. A student can choose one subject, and that is not compulsory for the main examination, G.C.E. Ordinary Level. Music is included in the 'Aesthetic subject' by the Department of Education in Sri Lanka. A student can choose

In 1970, music education was introduced at the university level through the University of Kelaniya, which offered degree programs primarily focused on Hindustani music while also including Carnatic traditions, Sri Lankan folk music, Western music, and the Hindi language. This marked a significant milestone in institutionalizing music as an academic discipline in Sri Lanka. Over the years, the field has expanded considerably, and at present, nearly eight government and private universities offer degree programs in music. In 2010, with the increasing impact of digital technology and the global music industry, subjects such as music technology and sound engineering were incorporated into university curricula, signalling a shift toward more contemporary and industry-relevant approaches to music education. This evolution demonstrates Sri Lanka's growing recognition of music as both a cultural and professional discipline that bridges traditional artistry and modern creative practice. However, in Sri Lanka, music education is generally available through informal¹³ and non-formal¹⁴ settings, but not specifically at the tertiary education level.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how participation in musical reality television shows impacts undergraduate music students' engagement with formal music education in Sri Lanka. Using snowball sampling, thirty university music students who had participated in nationally televised talent competitions were selected as participants. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, allowing students to reflect on their academic experiences, performance exposure, and perceptions of formal training. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in motivation, academic engagement, performance identity, and career aspirations. Engagement

¹³ Informal music education refers to self-directed, experience-based learning that occurs outside structured instruction. In Sri Lanka, this often takes place through family traditions, temple or church choirs, folk ensembles, and community festivals. Many traditional musicians, particularly in rural areas, acquire their skills through oral transmission and apprenticeship models, learning by observation, imitation, and participation. With the growth of digital platforms, informal learning now also occurs through social media, YouTube tutorials, and online collaborations, allowing young musicians to explore new genres, techniques, and cross-cultural impacts.

¹⁴ Non-formal music education in Sri Lanka includes structured training programs offered by private institutions, cultural academies, and community organizations. Institutions such as the Institute of Western Music and Speech (IWMS). Many of these academies follow international curricula such as those of Trinity College of London and ABRSM, offering graded examinations and certifications. Similarly, regional cultural training centres conduct non-formal classes in Carnatic, Hindustani, and Sri Lankan folk music. These programs emphasize performance, ensemble work, and practical musicianship, often leading to careers in teaching, performance, or media.

Theory served as the guiding analytical framework, supporting the interpretation of how experiential learning in media environments interacts with traditional pedagogical systems.

Results

Bridging Popular Media and Education: Practices in Performance Through Reality TV

The participants of this study noted that the lack of performance opportunities in academic institutions contributed considerably to their skill development. They also highlighted that, over the four-year duration of their degree programmes, they typically sit for only eight to ten examinations at most fifteen, and that this largely depends on the programme structure. Moreover, since it is examination-based, the criteria for marking are not visible. As a result, the students are incapable of finding out what weaknesses are shown during their performance on the examinations. Notably, in graduate government job interviews, they do not evaluate traditional-based performances as in the case of formal. Table 2 shows that in some degree programs offered in government and private universities, the percentage of theoretical studies and practical studies is included in curricula.

Table 2

Universities that offer music degrees and courses in Sri Lanka and the approximate theoretical and practical percentages that are included in the degree program. Data gathered from the secondary data and interviews with respected university lecturers and the Head of the Departments.

Name of the University	Year of Establishment of Music as a Subject	Subject or Degree Program and Department	Degree Program	Practical and Theory percentage approximately		Annual Pass-out Number of Students by 2025 approximately
				Practical	Theory	
The University of the Visual and Performing Arts (Renamed to become an independent University)	2005	Department of North Indian Music <i>North Indian Music</i>	Bachelor of Performing Arts (Special) (2005-2019)			
		Department of South Indian Music <i>South Indian Music</i>	Bachelor of Performing Arts in Music	35%	65%	10-15

		Department of Western Music <i>Western Music</i>	(2019- up to date)	50%	50% ;	30-60
		Department of Applied Music <i>Applied Music</i>				
		Department of Ethnomusicology <i>Ethnomusicology</i>				
		Department of Musicology <i>Musicology</i>		The degree program is designed to study musicology. The learning of music practical was included in some years as an elective subject		25
The University of Sri Jayewardenepura	1995	Department of Language, Cultural Studies, and Performing Arts <i>North Indian Music</i> <i>Western Music</i> , <i>Musicology</i> , <i>Music Production</i> , <i>Music in Cinema</i>	Bachelor of Arts (1995–2021) Bachelor of Music (2022–up to date)	60%	40%	50
		Department of Music and Creative Technology <i>Music Production</i>	Bachelor of Creative Music Technology and Production (2021- Up to date)	60%	40%	50
The University of Peradeniya	1970	Department of Fine Arts North Indian Music, Western Music, Sri Lankan Folk, Film and Television,	Bachelor of Arts (1970s- Up to date)	20%	80%	5-10

		Theatre and Drama, Dancing, Computer and Digital Technology for Cultural Preservation Indian Musicology Computer Music Far Eastern Music Ethnomusicology Music Therapy Applied Music				
The University of Jaffna	1974	Faculty of Fine Arts Department of Music <i>South Indian Music</i>	Bachelor of Arts (1980s-up to date)	75%	25%	100 or above
The Eastern University/ Swami Vipulananda Institute of Music and Dance	1974-1981	Department of Fine Arts <i>Disciplines of Fine Arts</i> <i>South Indian Music</i>	Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Arts, Honors (2002)	75%	25%	100
University of Colombo (Sri Palee)	1994	Department of Performing Arts <i>North Indian Music, Musicology, Western Music</i> <i>Electronic Music, Applied Music, Choreography</i>	Bachelor of Performing Arts	30%	70%	5-10
The University of Kelaniya	1974	Department of Fine Arts <i>North Indian Music, Western Music, Electronic Music, Music Appreciation</i>	Bachelor of Fine Arts (1974-Up to date)	20%	80%	20
SLTC Research University, School of Music	2021	School of Music <i>Western Music, Music in Media,</i>	Bachelor of Music Honours	50%	50% ;	25-30

		<i>World Music, Music and Technology, Western Classical and Non-Classical Music, Eastern Music, Analysis of Music, Composing, Performing Music</i>	(2021- Up to date)			
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Participation in musical reality television shows has created an alternative platform for experiential learning that complements, yet also challenges, formal music education in Sri Lanka. Reality television shows indirectly provide students with performance-based environments where they learn essential performance skills such as stage management, live audience interaction, and media communication skills often underrepresented in university curricula. These experiences exemplify active and collaborative learning, as participants have a chance to update their knowledge and skills based on feedback from coaches, judges, audiences, and peers. In this sense, reality television functions as an informal extension of the classroom, providing experiential learning that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and applied performance.

However, the findings also indicate that while reality television shows nurture creativity and self-confidence and provide opportunities to earn money due to short-term marketability, they can simultaneously disrupt academic motivation. The celebrity, the competition, and the public validation are characteristic of reality shows. They often redirect the students' focus from long-term artistic development to short-term recognition. This aligns with Brown (2021) and Chalaby (2016), who argue that the commodification of performance in media environments promotes instant gratification and spectacle over depth of learning. Students in this study increasingly valued visibility and social media popularity over mastery of theory and technique, echoing concerns raised by Febriyanti et al (2022) and Abeysekara (2025) that reality television impact on formal education by prioritizing entertainment outcomes rather than educational growth.

Nonetheless, reality television shows have secondary pedagogical potential. Participants described learning experiences that fostered reflection, adaptability, and resilience qualities consistent with 21st-century creative competencies. The dynamic and feedback-driven nature

of televised performance seems to cultivate self-assessment and peer learning, promoting the kind of engagement that traditional lecture-based music education often lacks.

Importantly, the study highlights the need for curriculum adjustment within formal music education in Sri Lanka to integrate the practical learning narration focusing on music performance that leans towards industrial purposes. Incorporating modules on media literacy, music marketing, performance technology, and digital production could help align academic training with the realities of the modern entertainment industry. Bridging popular media and formal education, therefore, requires a hybrid pedagogical approach, one that values creativity, cultural awareness, and critical reflection alongside technical mastery and theoretical understanding.

Thus, this study shows that reality television can serve as both a pedagogical challenge and an opportunity. While it risks reinforcing superficial success metrics and diminishing academic depth, it also presents a powerful experiential model for learning when guided by reflective and structured educational frameworks. By reimagining the relationship between media and education, universities in Sri Lanka can transform the influence of reality television from a source of distraction into a vehicle for meaningful artistic growth and professional readiness.

Discussion

Since such reality television shows provide organized short-term performance platforms, the students perceive that these programs help them develop confidence, stage presence, and performance-related skills, as reported by the participants. However, they also shift motivation toward fame, visibility, and external validation rather than long-term academic achievement. Students reported that televised performance environments offered authentic experiential learning opportunities, aligning with Engagement Theory's emphasis on active and meaningful participation. However, they also highlighted a growing disconnect between university curricula perceived as overly theoretical and the practical demands of contemporary popular music industries. The exposure to commercialized performance culture redefined many students' musical identities, transforming them from learners of art to performers shaped by celebrity values. This shift often resulted in decreased importance for classroom-based learning and a preference for instant recognition over sustained skill mastery. Nonetheless, several participants acknowledged the foundational importance of academic knowledge in developing professionalism and creative depth. The study, therefore, suggests that integrating media literacy, digital performance training, and stagecraft into music curricula could reconcile the

gap between academic rigor and real-world industry experience, ensuring that students remain both artistically grounded and industry-relevant.

The participants are informed and encouraged to read and understand the details of their degree program, and they are provided with a free handbook during the inauguration program on the day they enter the university. Notably, the university students who participated in this study had never read or gone through the vision and mission of their degree program. As a result, nearly 90 percent of them reported having no real understanding of the purpose of obtaining their degree, as they were expected to gain financial development and gain fame from university education. Only ten percent mentioned that they intended to use the knowledge gained from the university to develop income-generating ideas. Table 3 shows the lived experiences of university students in reality television shows and their impact on formal music education

Table 3

Experiences of university students in reality television shows and their impact on formal music education. The table was created by Bidisha Hazra.

Findings	Experiences in Reality Television Shows	Impact on Formal music education
Exposure to the public in the short term	Students gained instant recognition, built fan bases, and socially developed media presence (e.g., YouTube, TikTok).	Reduced motivation for academic achievement; theory and exams are viewed as less relevant compared to public validation and online popularity.
Performance and practical skills	Participants learned stage management, microphone handling, lighting, and audience interaction through televised performances. Due to the lack of facilities, those resources are being received less from universities.	Students felt university training lacked practical exposure, emphasizing written exams over live performance.
Commercialization and marketing pressure	Participants experienced branding, sponsorship displays, and image control; appearance, language, and grooming were prioritized.	Led to superficial engagement, students focused more on appearance and marketability than artistic development.
Transformation of musical identity	Students were trained to act like celebrities, adopting new behaviour, fashion, and	Shift from musician-as-artist to performer-as-celebrity; undermined

	communication styles to market themselves to be highlighted in the community.	long-term learning discipline fostered by formal education.
Confidence and self-presentation	Reality shows provided confidence-building, media training, and public speaking opportunities.	Positive transfer to stage performance in academia, but diminished respect for classroom-based learning.
Inequality and access	Participants noted economic barriers (e.g., costs for clothing, makeup, promotions).	Reinforced socioeconomic disparities among students, those who couldn't afford media visibility felt excluded from similar success.
Perceived relevance of university learning	Students recognized differences between real-world experience and curriculum theory; some still valued academic grounding.	Mixed perceptions: some viewed education as a foundation for professionalism, while others saw it as irrelevant to success in the music industry.
Impact on engagement and motivation	Fame and competition encouraged short-term motivation and external rewards (likes, votes, fame).	Caused a decline in sustained engagement and critical learning, replacing intrinsic motivation with performance-driven goals.
Cultural and behavioural adaptation	Exposure to modern trends and global music styles through TV shows.	Created tension between formal music education values and contemporary media practices.
Need for curriculum adjustment	Students expressed a desire for modules and more performance that can help join the music industry.	Highlighted the importance of integrating media literacy, stagecraft, and digital performance training into university syllabi.

The interviews with thirty undergraduate music students who participated in musical reality television shows revealed several interconnected themes concerning their engagement with formal music education. Most participants reported that reality show participation significantly enhanced their performance confidence, stage management skills, and understanding of audience engagement. However, these benefits were often accompanied by a noticeable decline in enthusiasm for academic learning. Students increasingly perceived classroom-based music theory and examinations as outdated or less relevant when compared to the practical and immediate rewards of televised performance experiences.

A large majority of students (about 90%) admitted that they had not fully understood the educational objectives of their university degree program. This lack of clarity appeared to reduce intrinsic motivation for academic learning, with only a small percentage (10%) expressing the intention to apply their academic knowledge toward professional or

entrepreneurial goals. Many students also reported that exposure to celebrity culture and social media visibility reshaped their perception of success, promoting external validation over academic excellence.

Another prominent result was the emergence of identity transformation among participants. Students often described themselves as evolving from ‘musicians’ to ‘performers,’ adopting behaviours and appearances associated with celebrity lifestyles. This shift, while empowering in terms of confidence and self-presentation, also distanced them from traditional values of musical discipline and long-term study. Economic inequality was another recurring theme. Students with financial means were able to maintain visibility through social media promotion, costumes, and image management, while others felt marginalized.

Conclusion

In sum, based on the major findings, participation in reality television shows directly impacts the formal university learning of music undergraduates. Although it often negatively affects students’ long-term engagement with formal music education, it indirectly enhances their confidence in traditional learning processes. These programs expand students’ experiential learning, self-expression, and confidence, aligning with key tenets of Engagement Theory. However, these shows also promote a culture of instant recognition, commodified learning, and external validation that challenges traditional educational values. The intersection of media, marketing, and education thus necessitates a pedagogical shift, one that embraces the experiential strengths of reality television while fostering critical, reflective, and sustainable engagement within academic contexts.

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