

The Impact of Intangible Cultural Heritage Theatre Integration on University Students' Learning Outcomes: The Mediating Role of Aesthetic Engagement

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Abstract: *The integration of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) into higher education has been increasingly recognized as a means of enhancing educational quality and cultural sustainability. Traditional theatre, as a performative form of ICH, offers rich aesthetic resources for university aesthetic education. This study quantitatively examines the impact of integrating ICH theatre into university aesthetic education on students' learning outcomes, with aesthetic engagement experience conceptualized as a mediating mechanism. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 400 undergraduate students from multiple universities in Henan Province, China, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that ICH theatre integration has a significant positive effect on students' learning outcomes, including cultural awareness, creative expression, learning engagement, and artistic perception, and that aesthetic engagement experience significantly mediates this relationship. Pedagogical factors exerted a stronger influence on aesthetic engagement than individual characteristics. These findings provide quantitative evidence that traditional theatre can function as an effective educational resource in higher education and offer practical implications for integrating cultural heritage into university teaching in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education).*

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage; Traditional Theatre; Aesthetic Education; SDG 4 (Quality Education)

1. Introduction

In recent years, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has gained increasing recognition as a critical resource for sustainable cultural development and educational innovation. Unlike tangible heritage, ICH emphasizes living cultural practices transmitted through participation, performance, and collective experience. Contemporary heritage research highlights that the educational value of ICH lies not only in preservation, but also in its capacity to foster cultural understanding, creativity, and social cohesion among younger generations (Nadolska & Havryliuk, 2023). Recent theoretical developments further argue that cultural heritage education should move beyond static representations and focus on experiential engagement as a means of generating educational and social value (Kosciejew, 2024).

Within the global framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, education is identified as a central driver of sustainable and inclusive development. Sustainable

Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning, cultural diversity, and human development. Recent empirical studies suggest that culturally grounded educational practices enhance student engagement and learning quality, thereby contributing to the broader objectives of sustainable education (Papavasileiou et al., 2025). From this perspective, integrating ICH into higher education represents not only a cultural safeguarding strategy but also a meaningful pathway to advancing educational quality in line with SDG 4

Aesthetic education plays a particularly important role in this process. By emphasizing perception, emotion, creativity, and reflective thinking, aesthetic education supports students' holistic development beyond disciplinary knowledge. Recent research in art and humanities education indicates that aesthetic learning experiences contribute positively to students' cognitive engagement, cultural awareness, and creative capacities, especially when learning is experiential rather than purely instructional (Wang, 2024). Consequently, aesthetic education provides a natural pedagogical context for integrating ICH into university curricula.

Among various forms of ICH, traditional theatre occupies a distinctive position due to its integration of performance, music, narrative, and embodied cultural knowledge. As a living artistic practice, traditional theatre enables learners to engage with cultural meanings through observation, participation, and emotional resonance. Studies on performance as intangible cultural heritage emphasize that theatrical traditions function not merely as cultural artifacts, but as dynamic practices capable of generating aesthetic and educational experiences (Ravelhofer, 2021). In higher education settings, theatre-based learning has been associated with enhanced student engagement, creativity, and reflective thinking, particularly when embedded within structured aesthetic education programs (Zhao, 2024).

Despite this growing recognition, empirical research on the integration of ICH—especially traditional theatre—into university aesthetic education remains limited. Existing studies predominantly adopt qualitative, descriptive, or policy-oriented approaches, with relatively little attention given to quantitatively examining student learning outcomes. Heritage education literature frequently discusses participation and engagement as key concepts, yet these constructs are often under-theorized and insufficiently operationalized in quantitative research designs (Mochalova, 2020). As a result, the empirical mechanisms through which ICH integration influences student learning outcomes in higher education remain unclear.

Moreover, much of the existing empirical work on ICH education has focused on informal learning environments such as museums, festivals, and community events, rather than formal university curricula (Jimura, 2022). This limits the applicability of prior findings to higher education contexts, where learning objectives, instructional design, and assessment structures differ substantially. In parallel, quantitative research in higher education consistently identifies student engagement as a critical predictor of learning outcomes, suggesting that engagement-related mechanisms warrant closer empirical examination (Kassab et al., 2022). However, few studies have explicitly tested engagement as a mediating mechanism linking heritage-based educational practices to student learning outcomes.

In response to these gaps, the present study aims to quantitatively examine the impact of integrating intangible cultural heritage theatre into university aesthetic education on students' learning outcomes. Drawing on student engagement theory, the study conceptualizes aesthetic engagement as a key mediating mechanism through which ICH theatre integration influences learning outcomes. Focusing on undergraduate students from universities in Henan Province,

China—a region characterized by rich theatrical heritage—this study employs a questionnaire-based survey and structural equation modeling to empirically test the proposed relationships. By adopting a purely quantitative approach, the study seeks to provide robust empirical evidence that advances understanding of ICH theatre integration in higher education and supports the development of aesthetic education practices aligned with the objectives of SDG 4 (Quality Education).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage and Higher Education

In recent years, higher education institutions have increasingly been recognized as key sites for the transmission and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Rather than viewing ICH solely as an object of preservation, contemporary scholarship emphasizes its educational value in cultivating cultural literacy, identity formation, and holistic student development. Empirical studies indicate that embedding ICH into university curricula contributes to students' cultural understanding and enhances learning relevance by connecting academic content with lived cultural practices.

Recent quantitative and curriculum-based research has shown that ICH integration in higher education can strengthen students' cultural awareness and disciplinary competence. For instance, Jiang (2025) demonstrated that localized ICH curriculum design in music education significantly enhanced students' cultural literacy and professional skill acquisition. Similarly, Aimukhambet et al. (2023) found that computer-aided instruction of folk cultural content improved students' academic achievement, cultural competence, and classroom participation, indicating that ICH-based education can produce measurable learning outcomes when supported by appropriate pedagogical strategies.

These findings suggest that ICH functions not only as cultural content but also as an educational resource that supports student-centered and experiential learning. However, existing research has largely focused on curriculum reform and instructional innovation, with fewer studies systematically examining how ICH integration affects students' engagement processes and learning outcomes across disciplines in higher education.

2.2 Traditional Theatre and University Aesthetic Education

Traditional theatre represents a distinctive category of ICH due to its integration of performance, narrative, music, and embodied cultural knowledge. In university aesthetic education, theatre-based learning has been increasingly explored as an effective medium for enhancing students' aesthetic perception and cultural appreciation. Compared with text-based heritage instruction, theatre offers immersive and participatory learning experiences that align with contemporary educational paradigms emphasizing experiential learning.

Recent empirical studies demonstrate that theatre-related ICH education can significantly enhance students' engagement and learning effectiveness. Su (2025), for example, showed that immersive virtual reality-based instruction for traditional Chinese opera costume education led to significantly higher levels of learning effectiveness, cultural understanding, and instructional interaction compared with conventional teaching approaches. Similarly, Haryana et al. (2023) found that digital creative learning models based on traditional puppetry improved students' aesthetic understanding and creative expression in higher education contexts.

These studies indicate that traditional theatre, when integrated through innovative instructional designs, can serve as a powerful educational resource in university aesthetic education. Nevertheless, most existing research concentrates on specific courses or technological interventions, while broader quantitative investigations into how theatre-based ICH integration influences students' overall learning outcomes remain limited.

2.3 Aesthetic Engagement and Student Learning Outcomes

Student engagement has been widely recognized as a key mechanism linking instructional input to learning outcomes in higher education. In the context of aesthetic education, engagement extends beyond behavioral participation to include cognitive involvement and emotional resonance. Aesthetic engagement reflects students' immersion in artistic experiences and their active meaning-making processes during learning.

Recent studies provide empirical evidence that higher levels of engagement are associated with improved learning outcomes across disciplines. Kassab et al. (2022) demonstrated that student engagement positively predicts perceived learning effectiveness and academic development in undergraduate education. Similarly, Papavasileiou et al. (2025) found that sustained engagement in sustainability-themed educational activities significantly enhanced students' learning motivation and alignment with educational objectives related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

These findings suggest that engagement operates as a central explanatory variable in understanding learning effectiveness. However, few quantitative studies have explicitly examined aesthetic engagement as a mediating construct in heritage- or theatre-based education, indicating a need for further empirical investigation.

2.4 Pedagogical and Individual Factors Influencing Aesthetic Engagement

Existing research indicates that students' engagement in learning is shaped by both pedagogical conditions and individual characteristics. Pedagogical factors such as instructional design, learning environment, and technological support play a critical role in facilitating active participation and emotional involvement. For example, Xu et al. (2023) showed that game-based and interactive instructional approaches significantly enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes by promoting autonomy and positive learning experiences.

At the individual level, students' prior experiences, interests, and self-perceptions also influence engagement. Studies suggest that learners with stronger cultural interest or creative orientation are more likely to experience deeper engagement in arts-based education. However, empirical findings consistently indicate that pedagogical design exerts a stronger and more consistent influence on engagement than individual background factors alone (Samiya, 2025). Together, these studies imply that aesthetic engagement is not an inherent learner trait but a dynamic outcome shaped by the interaction between instructional context and individual characteristics. This perspective supports the inclusion of pedagogical and individual variables in quantitative models examining learning outcomes in aesthetic education.

2.5 Summary of the Literature and Research Focus

The reviewed literature demonstrates that integrating intangible cultural heritage into higher education can generate positive educational outcomes, particularly when supported by experiential and innovative pedagogical approaches. Traditional theatre, as a performative form of ICH, holds significant potential for aesthetic education by fostering immersive learning experiences and cultural understanding. Moreover, student engagement—especially aesthetic

engagement—emerges as a critical mechanism linking instructional inputs to learning outcomes.

Despite these insights, existing research reveals three notable gaps. First, quantitative studies examining the educational effects of ICH theatre integration at the university level remain limited. Second, the mediating role of aesthetic engagement has received insufficient empirical attention. Third, few studies have systematically examined the combined influence of pedagogical and individual factors on engagement and learning outcomes within ICH-based aesthetic education.

To address these gaps, the present study adopts a quantitative approach to investigate how the integration of ICH theatre influences university students' learning outcomes, with aesthetic engagement experience conceptualized as a mediating mechanism.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among intangible cultural heritage (ICH) theatre integration, pedagogical and individual factors, aesthetic engagement experience, and university students' learning outcomes. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed, which is widely used in higher education research to examine students' perceptions and learning experiences at a specific point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the primary aim of the study was to statistically test hypothesized relationships and mediation effects among latent variables using structured measurement instruments.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in universities in Henan Province, China, who had participated in aesthetic education courses incorporating elements of ICH theatre. Henan Province was selected due to its rich theatrical heritage and the increasing presence of traditional theatre content in university aesthetic education curricula.

A multi-stage sampling strategy was adopted. First, universities were purposively selected to ensure institutional diversity. Second, students with relevant course exposure were invited to participate voluntarily in the survey. A total of 400 valid responses were collected and included in the final analysis.

The sample size was considered sufficient for structural equation modeling, exceeding recommended minimum thresholds for model estimation and mediation analysis (Kline, 2023).

3.3 Measures

All constructs in this study were measured using a self-administered questionnaire. Measurement items were adapted from established scales in higher education, student engagement, and aesthetic education research, and were contextually modified to reflect the setting of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) theatre-integrated aesthetic education. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), a format widely accepted for measuring perceptions and attitudes in educational research (DeVellis, 2021).

ICH theatre integration was assessed by measuring students' perceptions of the extent, relevance, and coherence of traditional theatre content embedded in aesthetic education courses, with items focusing on curriculum inclusion, learning activities, and perceived alignment between ICH theatre content and course objectives. Pedagogical factors were operationalized as a composite construct comprising teaching design, instructional support, and environmental support. Teaching design reflected the clarity of learning objectives and the provision of experiential learning opportunities, instructional support captured the availability of guidance and feedback, and environmental support assessed the adequacy of learning resources and learning settings. Individual characteristics were measured through self-reported items reflecting students' interest in traditional culture, prior artistic experience, and familiarity with theatrical arts.

Aesthetic engagement experience was conceptualized as students' cognitive involvement, emotional resonance, and active participation in ICH theatre-based learning activities. Corresponding items assessed students' sense of immersion, emotional response, reflective engagement, and willingness to participate in aesthetic learning tasks. Learning outcomes were measured as a multidimensional construct encompassing cultural awareness, creative expression, learning engagement, and artistic perception. Items captured students' perceived development across these domains as a result of their participation in aesthetic education courses integrating ICH theatre.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through an anonymous questionnaire administered during the academic semester. Prior to data collection, the instrument was reviewed by experts in aesthetic education to ensure content clarity. A pilot test was conducted to assess item readability and response consistency, leading to minor wording adjustments.

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. No personally identifiable information was collected.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and SmartPLS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize sample characteristics. The measurement model was evaluated by examining internal consistency reliability and construct validity. Structural relationships and mediation effects were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for predictive research, complex models, and data that do not require strict normality assumptions (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Bootstrapping procedures were applied to assess the statistical significance of direct and indirect effects.

4. Findings

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

A total of 400 valid questionnaires were included in the final analysis. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Female students accounted for a slightly higher proportion of the sample (60.5%) than male students (39.5%). Participants were distributed across all undergraduate year levels, with relatively balanced representation. In addition, more than half of the respondents (53.5%) reported prior experience in arts-related activities, indicating heterogeneity in artistic exposure within the sample.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	158	39.5
	Female	242	60.5
Year of Study	Year 1	96	24.0
	Year 2	124	31.0
	Year 3	110	27.5
	Year 4	70	17.5
Prior Arts Experience	Yes	214	53.5
	No	186	46.5

Descriptive statistics for the main study variables are shown in Table 2. Mean values ranged from 3.52 to 3.94, indicating moderate to relatively high levels across all constructs.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs

Construct	Mean	SD
ICH Theatre Integration	3.68	0.63
Pedagogical Factors	3.74	0.59
Individual Characteristics	3.52	0.61
Aesthetic Engagement Experience	3.81	0.58
Learning Outcomes	3.94	0.55

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated prior to testing the structural model to ensure adequate reliability and validity of the constructs.

4.2.1 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR). Convergent validity was evaluated using average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 3, all Cronbach's alpha and CR values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, and all AVE values were above 0.50, indicating satisfactory reliability and convergent validity.

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
ICH Theatre Integration	0.84	0.88	0.59
Pedagogical Factors	0.87	0.91	0.62
Individual Characteristics	0.82	0.87	0.58
Aesthetic Engagement Experience	0.89	0.92	0.64
Learning Outcomes	0.90	0.93	0.66

All indicator loadings were above 0.70 and statistically significant, further supporting convergent validity.

4.2.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. As presented in Table 4, the square root of the AVE for each construct (diagonal values) was greater than its correlations with other constructs, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

Table 4: Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	ICH	PF	IC	AEE	LO
ICH Theatre Integration (ICH)	0.77				
Pedagogical Factors (PF)	0.42	0.79			
Individual Characteristics (IC)	0.36	0.39	0.76		
Aesthetic Engagement Experience (AEE)	0.54	0.58	0.46	0.80	
Learning Outcomes (LO)	0.49	0.52	0.44	0.63	0.81

4.3 Structural Model Results

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed using PLS-SEM. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted to test the significance of path coefficients. Table 5 presents the standardized path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values. The results indicate that ICH theatre integration, pedagogical factors, and individual characteristics all had significant positive effects on aesthetic engagement experience. Among these predictors, pedagogical factors exhibited the strongest effect. Aesthetic engagement experience also demonstrated a strong positive effect on learning outcomes.

The model explained 56% of the variance in aesthetic engagement experience ($R^2 = 0.56$) and 38% of the variance in learning outcomes ($R^2 = 0.38$).

Table 5: Structural Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	ICH → AEE	0.28	5.12	<0 .001	Supported
H2	PF → AEE	0.35	6.47	<0 .001	Supported
H3	IC → AEE	0.22	4.03	<0 .001	Supported
H4	AEE → LO	0.61	11.28	< 0.001	Supported

4.4 Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of aesthetic engagement experience was examined by testing the indirect effects of ICH theatre integration, pedagogical factors, and individual characteristics on learning outcomes. Bootstrapping results for indirect effects are presented in Table 6.

All indirect paths were positive and statistically significant, indicating that aesthetic engagement experience significantly mediated the relationships between the antecedent variables and learning outcomes.

Table 6: Mediation Effects

Indirect Path	Indirect Effect	t-value	p-value	Mediation
ICH → AEE → LO	0.17	4.26	<0 .001	Yes
PF → AEE → LO	0.21	5.02	<0 .001	Yes
IC → AEE → LO	0.13	3.68	< 0.001	Yes

5. Discussion

5.1 Effects of ICH Theatre Integration on Learning Outcomes

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) theatre into university aesthetic education is positively associated with students' learning outcomes, including cultural awareness, creative expression, learning engagement, and artistic perception. This result provides quantitative evidence supporting the educational value of traditional theatre as more than a cultural or symbolic resource. Rather, ICH theatre functions

as an effective instructional component that contributes to measurable learning outcomes in higher education.

The positive association observed in this study suggests that when traditional theatre is meaningfully embedded into curriculum content and learning activities, it enhances students' understanding of cultural knowledge while simultaneously supporting broader educational development. Compared with abstract or text-based cultural instruction, theatre-based ICH education offers experiential and embodied learning opportunities, which may facilitate deeper cognitive processing and aesthetic appreciation. These findings reinforce the view that cultural heritage integration, when implemented through structured educational design, can enhance educational effectiveness rather than merely serve heritage preservation goals.

Importantly, the results indicate that the educational impact of ICH theatre integration is not marginal. The strength of its relationship with learning outcomes suggests that cultural content grounded in local traditions can play a substantive role in university-level aesthetic education, particularly when aligned with students' learning experiences and course objectives.

5.2 The Mediating Role of Aesthetic Engagement

A central contribution of this study lies in the identification of aesthetic engagement experience as a key mediating mechanism linking ICH theatre integration to learning outcomes. The mediation analysis indicates that ICH theatre does not influence learning outcomes directly alone; rather, its effects are largely transmitted through students' cognitive involvement, emotional resonance, and active participation in aesthetic learning activities.

This finding highlights the importance of engagement as an explanatory mechanism in aesthetic education. Traditional theatre, as a performative and experiential art form, appears to stimulate students' engagement by fostering immersion, emotional connection, and reflective participation. These engagement experiences, in turn, translate cultural exposure into meaningful learning gains. Without such engagement, the presence of ICH content alone may be insufficient to generate substantial educational benefits.

By empirically validating aesthetic engagement as a mediating variable, this study extends existing engagement theories into the context of heritage-based aesthetic education. It provides quantitative support for the argument that student engagement is not merely an outcome of teaching, but a critical process through which educational value is realized, particularly in arts- and culture-based learning contexts.

5.3 The Influence of Pedagogical and Individual Factors

The results further reveal that pedagogical factors exert a stronger influence on aesthetic engagement experience than individual characteristics. Teaching design, instructional support, and environmental support were found to be the most powerful predictors of students' engagement with ICH theatre-based learning activities. This suggests that the effectiveness of ICH theatre integration depends heavily on how cultural content is taught, supported, and contextualized within the learning environment.

Well-structured teaching design appears to enhance engagement by clarifying learning objectives and providing opportunities for experiential participation. Instructional support and environmental conditions further enable students to interact with theatrical content in meaningful ways. These findings indicate that cultural richness alone does not guarantee

engagement; rather, pedagogical quality plays a decisive role in transforming cultural content into educational experiences.

Individual characteristics, including interest in traditional culture and prior artistic experience, also showed a significant but comparatively weaker influence on engagement. This suggests that while students' backgrounds shape their initial receptiveness to ICH theatre, engagement is largely constructed through instructional conditions. This finding underscores the inclusive potential of ICH-based aesthetic education: effective pedagogical design can engage students regardless of their prior cultural or artistic background.

5.4 Implications for University Aesthetic Education and SDG 4

The findings of this study have important implications for university aesthetic education and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). By demonstrating that ICH theatre integration enhances learning outcomes through aesthetic engagement, this study highlights the potential of culturally grounded education to improve educational quality in higher education.

For universities, the results suggest that ICH theatre should be integrated as a systematic component of aesthetic education rather than as an occasional or supplementary activity. Curriculum designers should focus on aligning traditional theatre content with learning objectives, providing experiential learning opportunities, and creating supportive instructional environments that foster engagement. Faculty development and institutional support are therefore essential to ensure the effective implementation of ICH-based aesthetic education.

From a sustainability perspective, integrating ICH theatre into higher education contributes to cultural sustainability while simultaneously advancing educational quality. This dual contribution aligns closely with the objectives of SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive, relevant, and high-quality learning experiences. By embedding local cultural heritage into university education, institutions can support both student development and the long-term transmission of cultural heritage.

5.5 Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional research design limits the ability to draw causal inferences. While the results indicate significant associations and mediation effects, longitudinal or experimental designs are needed to establish causal relationships more conclusively. Second, the data relied on students' self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by social desirability or response bias.

In addition, the study focused on universities in a single region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or educational contexts. Future research could expand the sample to include multiple regions or countries to examine cross-cultural differences in ICH theatre integration and aesthetic engagement.

5.6 Directions for Future Research

Future studies may also explore additional mediating or moderating variables, such as motivation, learning strategies, or digital learning environments, to further clarify the mechanisms through which ICH theatre influences learning outcomes. Moreover, comparative studies examining different forms of intangible cultural heritage could provide deeper insights into the relative educational effectiveness of various heritage-based pedagogies.

6. Conclusion

This study quantitatively examined the impact of integrating intangible cultural heritage (ICH) theatre into university aesthetic education on students' learning outcomes, with aesthetic engagement experience conceptualized as a mediating mechanism. Based on survey data analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings demonstrate that ICH theatre integration has a significant positive effect on students' cultural awareness, creative expression, learning engagement, and artistic perception. Importantly, aesthetic engagement experience was identified as a key mechanism through which ICH theatre integration translates into learning outcomes, highlighting the central role of students' cognitive involvement, emotional resonance, and active participation in aesthetic education. The results further indicate that pedagogical factors—including teaching design, instructional support, and environmental support—exert a stronger influence on aesthetic engagement than individual characteristics, suggesting that effective instructional design and institutional conditions are critical for maximizing the educational value of ICH theatre integration.

From an educational perspective, these findings underscore the importance of integrating ICH theatre as a systematic component of university aesthetic education rather than as an auxiliary or occasional activity. Universities are encouraged to design experiential and participatory learning environments that foster students' aesthetic engagement and provide sufficient instructional and environmental support. By doing so, higher education institutions can enhance educational quality while simultaneously supporting cultural sustainability. In this regard, the integration of ICH theatre into university teaching aligns closely with the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes inclusive, relevant, and high-quality learning experiences.

In conclusion, this study contributes quantitative evidence to the field of aesthetic education by demonstrating that traditional theatre, as a form of intangible cultural heritage, can function as an effective educational resource when embedded within well-designed pedagogical frameworks. By clarifying the mediating role of aesthetic engagement, the study advances understanding of how culturally grounded education produces meaningful learning outcomes in higher education and provides a foundation for future research and practice in heritage-based aesthetic education.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research.

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