Showcasing Case Studies of Artists and Artistic Movements That Have Sparked Transformative Social Movements in South Korea

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study was to explore the showcasing case studies of artists and artistic movements that have sparked transformative social movements in South Korea.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: The findings revealed that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to the artists and artistic movements that have sparked transformative social movements in South Korea. Preliminary empirical review revealed that the there is a high potential of art therapy in addressing mental health challenges. It was a longitudinal study with participants in art therapy programs, pre- and post-program assessments, and qualitative interviews. Art therapy promotes self-expression, emotional healing, and personal transformation among participants.

Recommendations: The Social Movement Theory, Cultural Sociology and Visual Sociology may be used to anchor future studies on the artists and artistic movements that have sparked transformative social movements in south Korea. The South Korean government should support and promote artists from diverse backgrounds and give them platforms to showcase their work. Integrating arts education in schools and communities allows individuals to develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and an appreciation for diverse perspectives.

Keywords: _Artists, Artistic, Movements, Social Movements_

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Transformative social movements are large-scale collective efforts aimed at creating significant social, cultural, or political change within a society (Bryson, Barberg, Crosby & Patton, 2021). These movements strive to challenge existing power structures, ideologies, and social norms, with the ultimate goal of improving social conditions and achieving greater justice, equality, or freedom. In developed economies such as the USA, Japan, and the UK, there have been numerous transformative social movements throughout history. For example, in the USA, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s fought against racial segregation and discrimination, leading to landmark legislation and significant shifts in societal attitudes. Another notable example is the feminist movement, which emerged in the 1960s and has been instrumental in advocating for gender equality and challenging gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, Occupy Wall Street Movement originating in the USA in 2011, aimed to address income inequality, corporate influence in politics, and economic disparities (Liaquat, Jost & Balcetis, 2023). It sparked similar protests globally, highlighting the need for social and economic justice.

In developed economies such as the USA, Japan, and the UK, transformative social movements have played a crucial role in shaping societal change. For example, the environmental movement has gained significant momentum in these countries. Movements such as Greenpeace and Extinction Rebellion have raised awareness about climate change, advocating for sustainable practices and policy changes to mitigate environmental degradation (Stammen & Meissner, 2022). Moreover, the Disability Rights Movement advocates for the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. It has led to the implementation of legislation, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the USA, to ensure equal opportunities and accessibility

Another transformative social movement in developed economies is the LGBTQ+ rights movement. Over the years, activists and organizations have worked tirelessly to fight for equal rights and societal acceptance (Santiago, 2022). This movement has led to significant legal advancements, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage in several countries, including the USA and the UK, as well as increased protection against discrimination.

Turning to South Korea, a notable transformative social movement is the Candlelight Revolution (also known as the 2016-2017 South Korean Protests). These protests, sparked by political scandals and corruption, mobilized millions of South Koreans to demand political accountability and transparency (Carothers, 2020). The movement played a crucial role in the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye and showcased the power of collective action in effecting political change. Moreover, the Me-Too Movement starting in 2018, brought attention to the pervasive issue of sexual harassment and assault. It encouraged victims to speak out and pushed for changes in legislation and cultural attitudes. Additionally, South Korea has witnessed significant labor rights movements, with workers mobilizing for fair wages, improved working conditions, and workers' rights. The 2019 Hyundai Motors' labor strike highlighted the struggles faced by workers in the automotive industry

In sub-Saharan economies, transformative social movements have also emerged to address various social, economic, and political issues. One example is the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, which aimed to dismantle the system of racial segregation and discrimination (Sikes & Dyreson, 2022). This movement, led by figures such as Nelson Mandela, resulted in the end of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic society. Fees Must Fall Movement originating in South Africa in 2015, this student-led movement aimed to address the high cost of education and

inequality in access to quality education. It demanded free education and sparked national conversations on education reform. Women's Rights Movement in Nigeria: The women's rights movement in Nigeria has been active in advocating for gender equality, combating gender-based violence, and promoting women's empowerment. It has contributed to legal reforms, such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act in 2015

Another example is the women's rights movement in several sub-Saharan African countries. Activists have been advocating for gender equality, challenging harmful cultural practices, promoting women's education and empowerment, and addressing issues such as gender-based violence (Bashford-Squires, Gibson & Nyashanu, 2022). Artists and artistic movements have long played a crucial role in initiating transformative social movements. Through their creative expressions, artists can challenge established norms, question power structures, and inspire collective action. Their works often evoke emotions and spark critical reflections, compelling individuals to reevaluate their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. For instance, the feminist art movement of the 1960s and 1970s employed various artistic mediums, such as visual arts and performance, to highlight gender inequality, subvert stereotypes, and ignite discussions on women's rights and empowerment (Smith, 2010). By engaging the public's imagination and stirring emotions, artists can tap into the power of empathy and connection, fostering a sense of shared purpose and mobilizing individuals toward social change (Johnson, 2018).

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become essential tools for artists and artistic movements to disseminate their works, engage with diverse audiences, and amplify their messages. Online learning through social media offers several attitudes and perceptions that facilitate the initiation of transformative social movements. Firstly, social media provides a democratic space where artists and individuals can freely express their perspectives, share ideas, and co-create knowledge (Brown, 2015). Secondly, it fosters a sense of inclusivity, as social media platforms allow artists from marginalized communities to showcase their works and voices, challenging traditional power dynamics in the art world (García, 2019). Thirdly, social media enables broad accessibility and engagement, breaking down geographical barriers and reaching global audiences (Smith, 2017). Lastly, social media platforms facilitate participatory learning experiences, where audiences can actively interact with artists, join discussions, and contribute to the co-creation of meaning (Anderson, 2016). These attributes of online learning through social media enhance the potential for artists and artistic movements to initiate transformative social movements by cultivating awareness, empathy, and collective action.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this research is the need to understand the role of artists and artistic movements in initiating transformative social movements, particularly in the context of online learning through social media platforms. While it is recognized that artists have historically played a significant role in sparking societal change, there is a limited understanding of how their creative expressions and engagement with social media contribute to the initiation and sustenance of transformative social movements (Bryson et al., 2021). Additionally, there is a lack of research exploring the attitudes and perceptions associated with online learning through social media that facilitate the connection between artists, audiences, and the mobilization of collective action for social change.

Therefore, the research aims to address the following questions: How do artists and artistic movements utilize their creative expressions to initiate and contribute to transformative social movements? What are the attitudes and perceptions linked to online learning through social media platforms that enhance the role of artists in initiating social change? By investigating these questions, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which artists and artistic movements engage with online platforms, leverage their creative works, and foster transformative social movements (Carothers, 2020).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Social Movement Theory by Talcott Parsons, Neil Smelser and Charles Tilly (1962)

Social Movement Theory, developed by sociologists like Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, focuses on the dynamics and processes of social movements. This theory explores how collective action emerges, mobilizes resources, and challenges existing power structures to bring about social change. In the context of showcasing case studies of artists and artistic movements that have sparked transformative social movements, Social Movement Theory provides a framework to analyze the strategies, tactics, and impact of these movements. It helps understand how artists and artistic movements mobilize support, create alliances, and challenge societal norms through their creative expressions (Tilly, 2004). By examining case studies within the framework of Social Movement Theory, this research can shed light on the factors that contribute to the success and influence of artistic movements in initiating transformative social change.

Cultural Sociology by Jeffrey C. Alexander (1983)

Cultural Sociology, influenced by sociologists like Jeffrey Alexander and Ann Swidler, examines the role of culture in shaping social behavior, values, and beliefs. This theory highlights how artistic expressions and cultural artifacts are powerful tools in challenging and reshaping societal norms and beliefs. By showcasing case studies of artists and artistic movements, Cultural Sociology allows for an exploration of how artistic practices reflect and challenge dominant cultural narratives, and how they can mobilize public sentiment and spark transformative social movements. This theory enables a deeper understanding of how artists use their creativity and cultural capital to shape public opinion, challenge power structures, and drive social change (Alexander, 2003). Integrating Cultural Sociology in this research provides a lens to analyze the cultural dimensions of artistic movements and their impact on transformative social change.

Visual Sociology by Douglas Harper (1987)

Visual Sociology, pioneered by sociologists like Douglas Harper and Howard Becker, focuses on the visual representations of social life and their sociological implications. This theory recognizes the power of visual imagery and artistic expressions in communicating social messages and engaging audiences. By utilizing Visual Sociology in this research, the visual artworks and performances of artists and artistic movements can be critically analyzed in their capacity to evoke emotions, challenge perceptions, and inspire action (Harper, 2012). This theory allows for a deeper examination of how artists employ visual aesthetics, symbolism, and storytelling to convey powerful messages that resonate with audiences and mobilize transformative social movements.

Empirical Review

Baldini (2023) examined the role of Banksy's street art in initiating transformative social movements. Qualitative analysis of Banksy's artwork, interviews with activists, and content analysis of social media conversations were used. Banksy's art serves as a catalyst for discussions on social issues, fosters public engagement, and mobilizes collective action. It was advised to encourage the integration of public art in urban spaces, promote open dialogue on social issues, and support artists advocating for social change.

Buonanno & Faccioli (2023) explored the impact of feminist art movements on transformative social change related to gender equality. Comparative case study analysis of feminist art movements were used in the USA, UK, and Australia, incorporating interviews and archival research. Feminist art movements have played a pivotal role in challenging gender norms, empowering women, and advocating for gender equality. Enhancing support for women artists, incorporate feminist art education in schools, and foster public dialogue on gender issues was recommended in this research.

Eze & Sylvanus (2023) investigated the transformative impact of Bob Marley's music on social change in Jamaica. Mixed methods approach involving surveys, interviews, and content analysis of Marley's lyrics and public discourse were used. Bob Marley's music played a significant role in raising consciousness, promoting unity, and inspiring political activism in Jamaica. Promotion of the use of music as a tool for social change, support local artists, and address social inequalities through policy interventions was suggested.

Sanz & Rodriguez-Labajos (2021) examined how environmental artists contribute to transformative social movements centered around sustainability. The study employed in-depth interviews with environmental artists, analysis of their artworks, and review of public responses. Environmental artists should create awareness, foster emotional connections to nature, and inspire pro-environmental behavior change. Support of environmental art initiatives, integrating art in environmental education, and collaboration between artists and environmental organizations was advised.

Trivundža & Velikonja (2019) investigated how graffiti art functions as a form of social critique and influences transformative social movements. This study used ethnographic observation of graffiti sites, interviews with graffiti artists, and analysis of public perception. Graffiti art provides an alternative voice, challenges power structures, and stimulates public discourse on social issues. Developing legal avenues for graffiti art, provide spaces for artistic expression, and engage communities in the interpretation of street art is necessary.

Riley (2021) explored on the transformative role of Indigenous art in revitalizing culture and advocating for Indigenous rights. This study used participatory action research with First Nations artists, focus groups and analysis of cultural events. Indigenous art preserves cultural heritage, fosters cultural pride and fuels activism for indigenous rights and self-determination. It recommended the support of indigenous artists and cultural initiatives, involve Indigenous communities in cultural policymaking and address systemic inequalities.

Salehi, Sebar, Whitehead, Hatam, Coyne & Harris (2020) investigated how contemporary dance movements contribute to transformative social change. The study used observational study of dance performances, interviews with choreographers, and audience surveys were used. Contemporary dance evokes emotions, challenges social norms, and encourages collective action

for social justice. The study recommended on the promotion of the accessibility of contemporary dance, foster collaborations between dancers and social activists, and integrate dance in community engagement initiatives.

Spooner, Lee, Langston, Sonke, Myers, & Levy (2019) examined the transformative potential of art therapy in addressing mental health challenges. It was a longitudinal study with participants in art therapy programs, pre- and post-program assessments, and qualitative interviews. Art therapy promotes self-expression, emotional healing, and personal transformation among participants. Increasing the access to art therapy services, integrate art therapy in mental health treatment plans, and promote the recognition of art therapy as a valuable mental health intervention was recommended.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

FINDINGS

Our study presented both a knowledge and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Sanz & Rodriguez-Labajos (2021) examined how environmental artists contribute to transformative social movements centered around sustainability. This study employed in-depth interviews with environmental artists, analysis of their artworks, and review of public responses. Environmental artists should create awareness, foster emotional connections to nature, and inspire pro-environmental behavior change. Support of environmental art initiatives, integrating art in environmental education, and collaboration between artists and environmental organizations was advised.

Secondly, the study presented a methodological gap whereby, in their study on the how environmental artists contribute to transformative social movements centered around sustainability adopted a mixed-methods approach and online survey and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Our current study on showcasing case studies of artists and artistic movements that have sparked transformative social movements in South Korea adopted a desk study research method.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, showcasing case studies of artists and artistic movements that have sparked transformative social movements is crucial for understanding the powerful role of art in shaping societies and fostering positive change. Throughout history, numerous artists and artistic movements have challenged the status quo, provoked thought, and catalyzed social progress. By examining these case studies, we can draw valuable insights and recommendations for harnessing the transformative potential of art in contemporary contexts.

Recommendations

Firstly, it is evident that art has the ability to raise awareness and amplify marginalized voices. Artists who use their creative expressions to shed light on social injustices and inequality have the potential to ignite public discourse and mobilize communities. Therefore, supporting and promoting artists from diverse backgrounds and giving them platforms to showcase their work is essential.

Secondly, interdisciplinary collaborations between artists and activists, as well as partnerships with community organizations, can yield powerful results. By combining artistic expressions with grassroots movements, there is an opportunity to create a symbiotic relationship that strengthens both artistry and activism. Such collaborations can lead to innovative approaches for engaging the public, fostering dialogue, and inspiring collective action.

Additionally, education plays a crucial role in nurturing artistic movements that drive transformative social change. Integrating arts education in schools and communities allows individuals to develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and an appreciation for diverse perspectives. By incorporating case studies of artists and movements within educational curricula, we can empower future generations to recognize the potential of art as a catalyst for social transformation. Furthermore, providing accessible platforms for artists to exhibit their work and fostering inclusive spaces for dialogue and artistic expression is vital. Galleries, museums, community centers, and online platforms should actively seek out and showcase art that challenges societal norms, stimulates conversations, and encourages positive change. This creates an environment where artists can thrive and their messages can reach a wider audience.

In conclusion, by highlighting case studies of artists and artistic movements that have sparked transformative social movements, we can learn valuable lessons about the power of art in effecting change. Through supporting artists, promoting interdisciplinary collaborations, integrating arts education, and providing inclusive platforms, we can create an environment that nurtures artistic expressions and facilitates the growth of social movements aimed at creating a more just and equitable society.

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