



# STUDY AND RESEARCH IN HISTORICAL MUSICOLOGY DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES AND ALTERNATIVES.

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## Abstract

This article is going to discuss the challenges faced by the scholars and researchers of historical and textual musicology who are carrying out their higher studies and researches on some critical or rare areas of the cultural history through the analysis of textual, epigraphical and many other historical evidences including temple relief during the entire Covid-19 pandemic situation. Shifting to digital platforms is a solution for distant teacher-learning process and research up to a level. However, music education in online largely brings a less-effective learning process as the students and scholars need more and more direct and creative atmosphere where the innovative mind can develop by acquiring the essential finer techniques directly from the teachers. This period often brings difficulties for the researchers of historical musicology to access the sources or elements of cultural history in many places. Still, the Covid-19 pandemic situation has brought a major world-wide trend to continue teaching-learning and research in musicology through digital platform.

**Keywords:** Music Education, music research, Covid-19 Pandemic, Digital learning, limitations.

## INTRODUCTION

The world has been a helpless witness of four epidemics including the present Covid-19. The present pandemic has significantly impacted the structure and security of human life and living. Life has been ruined, the death march has been protracted and the economy has been severely damaged. But the mankind all over the world are struggling to overcome the negative and devastating effect of this pandemic era.

Lockdown was declared in the country from March to reduce the prevalence of corona. Before that, a general holiday was declared in all music and fine arts educational institutions of the country. As a result, with the closure of all educational institutions in the country, the institutional and direct education system of music also became barren for a long time. All educational institutions are closed till now. This is naturally affecting all education systems, including fine arts. The only alternative is – the activities that are usually carried out outside must be stopped for the time being and done from home, which is referred to as Work from Home (WFH).

## MUSIC EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Music education is a field of study associated with teaching and learning music. It touches on all learning domains, including the psychomotor domain (skill development), the cognitive domain (acquiring knowledge), and in particular and the



postgraduate domain (the student is interested in acquiring, internalizing, and sharing), including music appreciation and sensitivity. On the other hand, the process of developing a clear understanding of the performance through analysis and explanation is named as music research. one can say that research on music is nothing but expansion of understanding about the impact of musical performance and the entire music education process.<sup>1</sup> Research signifies and decipher the place and importance of music at every stage of human life. Through deep research on musical involvement one can trace the inter-dependence of musical sound and wellness of all living beings (both physical and emotional).<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, in order to build a proper infrastructure for music education in the university - educational materials and teacher training system is very much needed.

Corona's ill-effects on music research are already taking a serious turn. Initially, field-work and direct interviews were started by a number of direct methods (through data-collection of research) by young musicologists or music-researchers. As a result, this pre-research phase and the initial stage of research is an important time for their 'researcher-life'. The future of the researcher is now in doubt as libraries, archives and historical places have been closed for almost two years like all other educational institutions.

These broad social restrictions provide an effect on the world of music education and research. However, music teachers and students finally took advantage of various digital platforms like other discipline to support their distance learning. On the contrary, the situation provides us both - new challenges as well as new opportunities to make ourselves more creative and innovative in developing ideas, adopt methods and techniques and trying new ways that had never been executed before in music education and research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### DISTANCE LEARNING

A special ability for some special situation is named as distant learning. It develops in knowledge and behavior as a result of learning experiences that are limited by time and distance; thus, learners do not share the same situations in their learning. From distance learning, a definition of distance education is sometimes controversial. Distance education is instructional learning, where situations, times, and even

<sup>1</sup> Elliott, D. J. Music Education Philosophy. *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education*, Volume 1. Oxford University Press. (2012): 1-30. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199730810.013.0005

<sup>2</sup> [www.nammfoundation.org/what-we-do/music-research](http://www.nammfoundation.org/what-we-do/music-research)



geographic conditions limit the learning process by providing no direct contact between students and teachers.<sup>1</sup>

The situation of distance education can be grouped into two categories as follows:

- Synchronous distance education. Synchronous situations provide opportunities that allow real interaction between teachers and students. An example is the use of video conferencing and online chat rooms.
- Asynchronous distance education. Asynchronous situations do not provide direct interaction between teachers and students. An example is the use of e-mail and web-based instructions or tutorials.<sup>2</sup>

Meaningful experiences that do not place burden on students and scholars to attain all curriculum, scope achievements for the courses and researches that are provided for them through online/distance learning (from home).

## DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Learning platforms are used as virtual scenarios to promote educational innovation and professional development, especially in the education personnel model, which emphasizes cooperation. Learning platforms open new places that go beyond conventional learning space and time. Important communication features in digital platforms include discussion forums, message exchanges, and websites.<sup>3</sup>

## RESEARCH METHODS

Among the several research methods used in this research, the main is direct interview methods and qualitative data-gathering methods mainly mediated by communication or digital technologies. The data have been collected through interviews of the scholars and researchers throughout the country and abroad. Also by the analysis of various published documents and literature survey related to this area. The collected materials and data have been properly organized followed by a thorough analysis. The findings are properly checked and afterward put into several categories for the convenience of the report-writing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mulyanti, Budi, Wawan Purnama, and Roer Eka Pawinanto. Distance learning in vocational high schools during the covid-19 pandemic in West Java

<sup>2</sup> King, Frederick B., et al. Defining distance learning and distance education. *AACE journal* 9.1 (2001): 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> Love, Christa. 5 Reasons to Use Google Forms with Your Students. *TechnoKids*, 18 Dec. 2014, [www.technokids.com/blog/apps/reasons-to-use-google-forms-with-your-students](http://www.technokids.com/blog/apps/reasons-to-use-google-forms-with-your-students).

<sup>4</sup> Efendi, Neng Marlina. Revolusi Pembelajaran Berbasis Digital (Penggunaan Animasi Digital Pada Start Up Sebagai Metode Pembelajaran Siswa Belajar Aktif) [Digital-Based Learning Revolution (Use



The students and research scholars of Indian musicology working in various universities all over the country, London University, UK and Colombo University, Sri Lanka have been interviewed for collecting the necessary information from their direct research experiences.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the interviews conducted with four teaching-practice students/prospective teachers, there were three challenges they experienced when carrying out online teaching activities.

### LIMITED SUPPLY OF STUDY MATERIAL AND FINER TECHNIQUES

Largely, in online teaching of music and performing arts, students found limitations in the supply of materials and finer techniques. Teaching practices with direct methods, usually carried out conventionally, must switch to online mode using electronic media to teach the finer techniques and supply enough materials, such as PowerPoints, Google Classrooms, online discussion rooms, and others.

### POOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

One of the most prominent challenge faced by the teaching-practice students is the unavailability of adequate facilities from the village site for each student to study at home. On the online learning, the facilities used are electronic devices

### DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING RECOURSE FOR RESEARCH

If we look at musical studies and especially research, we can see that -

There are two main trends in music research -

One is based on current topics through direct interviews. In this lockdown situation which has become very difficult. In that case alternative calling, video-interview and online interview and data collection are being done as alternatives. However, in this way the possibility of many small details is decreasing. Also, the truth that can be gleaned from that environment through direct perception is not possible with this example-interview and telephone data collection.<sup>1</sup>

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of Digital Animation at Start Up as a Learning Method for Active Learning Students)]. *Habitus: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosiologi, & Antropologi* 2.2 (2018): 173-182. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20961/habitus.v2i2.28788>

<sup>1</sup> Daubney, Alison, and Martin Fautley. Editorial Research: Music education in a time of pandemic. *British Journal of Music Education* 37.2 (2020):107-114. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051720000133>



On the other hand, the second part of music research is the field of historical musicology. Here the basic truth is explored through a thorough description and analysis of a historical source. In this case, as a research material, we need to look at the various textual or sculptural materials written on the music, temple foothills, cave or mountain foothills, inscriptions and sculptures. In all these cases, researchers are facing huge difficulties. Because in this pandemic situation most of the Libraries, Loke and National Archives, Museums, University Collection Places are basically closed. So the material in that station is not available. Again, in most cases there are restrictions on traveling to historical places rich in musical evidence. Because, in a pandemic situation, gathering in public places has become dangerous. For the same reason, data collection for long-term research by traveling from one place to another via public transport is not only difficult but, in many cases, prohibited. So, the only way out is that most researchers in Historical Musicology have relied on online libraries, online channels and websites for a variety of source material, including primary and secondary.<sup>1</sup> But one of the major drawbacks is the availability of Manuscript Resources or Manuscript Library collections. From the British Library, London, the Oxford Library, the Saraswati Library in Tanjore, India, the Royal Collection Library in Beacon to the Asiatic Society Library in Calcutta - most of the most famous and century-old libraries contain manuscripts of various subjects. But in most cases this collection is not available online due to multiple security reasons. In this current situation, therefore, the library collections and archives are not able to help online scholars. The main reason for this is that all those libraries have strict regulations regarding the use of manuscripts. Scholars have to sit in that library and copy the manuscript directly manually. It is forbidden to take photos or scan of Manuscript there. Because some manuscripts are so fragile, they cannot be photocopied again and again.

In this case, the research scholar will have to face these issues until all those library collections are digitalized as a whole. This difficult area of Covid 19 Situation-Historical and Manuscript-based musicology research is clearly presented to us. But challenges are always an integral part of research's life. Research challenges can be overcome by adopting certain methods. In this case, efforts need to be made to digitize all library collections as soon as possible.

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>1</sup> Creswell, J. W. *Research Design Pendekatan Metode Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Campuran* [Research Design: Approaches to Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods]. *Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar* (2016): 5.



This can lead to long-term damage to the potential of young researchers educated in musiology. Kovid-19 has limited the hopes of young people who have just come to the university to study music to improve their reading and acquire proper direct knowledge. If this situation continues for a long time, then of course these problems can turn into a big social and educational failure.<sup>1</sup>

With the experience from Covid-19, as in other subjects - we need to change the way we teach music at university and the way we study music. Some initiatives can have a positive impact on the primary education system. Many educational institutions in urban areas have started online education activities but it is not possible in rural areas. Village students should take initiative for proper education. Parents need to be aware. The amount of stipend should be increased. And ensure its timely receipt.

The present study exhibits the main four difficulties or challenges faced by the students of music and performing arts in university teaching-learning process and the research scholars during their search for the resource-materials in the fields and in archives. Overall, the major challenges can be listed as follows-

- Difficulties in accessing library and archival material sources.
- Difficulties in Direct interviews and visiting the historical sites for data-collections.
- Limited scope of acquiring enough study materials,
- Often poor infrastructure and e-platform facilities,
- Difficulties in the use of digital platforms due to lack of practice and experience.

Still, during the Covid-19 pandemic, students, teachers and researcher of music compelled to follow online process and activities. That is undoubtedly the most significant phenomena which had hardly been carried out before this pandemic era.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the various challenges, online teaching situations provide them with new opportunities. Prospective teachers are becoming more creative and innovative and have more space to combine digital media and music education in their teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Kemdikbud. Reformasi Pendidikan Nasional Melalui Merdeka Belajar [National Education Reform through *Merdeka Belajar*]. *Kemdikbud*, 6 May 2020, [www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2020/05/reformasi-pendidikan-nasional-melalui-merdeka-belajar](http://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2020/05/reformasi-pendidikan-nasional-melalui-merdeka-belajar).

<sup>2</sup> Bahrul, B. Sejarah YouTube, Platform Berbagi Video Terbesar di Dunia [History of YouTube, World's Largest Video Sharing Platform]. (2020) Downloaded on August 29, 2020, from LOOP:<https://loop.co.id/articles/sejarah-youtube/full>



practices. They also become more familiar with digital-based learning in this postmodern era. Teaching practices during the Covid-19 pandemic urge prospective teachers to prepare themselves to be qualified graduates in 21st-century education

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