

Empowering Media Students: The Role of Digital Storytelling and the Metaverse in Skill Development

تمكين طلاب الإعلام: دور السرد الرقمي والميتافيرس في تطوير المهارات

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Abstract:

Objectives: The research investigates how digital storytelling and the meta-verse might improve the soft skills of Palestinian media students. The research tackles the issue of these media students having little possibilities for skill development and cultural exposure owing to a lack of resources and current sociopolitical difficulties. These limitations have a substantial impact on their capacity to communicate effectively, preserve cultures, and advocate for change.

Methods: A mixed methods approach was used, involving 50 media students from Palestinian organizations. Quantitative assessments revealed significant improvements in technical skills, English language proficiency, and confidence. The inclusion of qualitative interviews revealed increased endorsement of self-disclosure, creativity, and culture. However, students also reported challenges, including restricted technology and inadequate resources, which prevented them from making full use of these digital tools.

Conclusions: The results highlight the power of digital storytelling to shape the transformative power and meta-verse of media education. This technology not only provides students with essential technical and linguistic skills but also empowers them to advocate for their cultural identity around the world. By integrating these tools into journalism classes, providing strong technical support, and establishing international forums for Palestinian issues, teachers can meet the immediate needs of students and long-term solutions.

Keywords: digital storytelling; meta-verse; soft skills; cultural identity; skill development.

المخلص:

الأهداف: تبحث هذه الدراسة "تمكين طلبة الإعلام: دور السرد الرقمي والميتافيرس في تطوير المهارات" في كيفية تحسين السرد الرقمي والميتافيرس للمهارات الشخصية لطلبة الإعلام الفلسطينيين. تتناول الدراسة مشكلة قلة الفرص المتاحة لهؤلاء الطلاب لتطوير المهارات والتعرض الثقافي بسبب نقص الموارد والصعوبات الاجتماعية والسياسية الحالية. لهذه القيود تأثير كبير على قدرتهم على التواصل بشكل فعال، والحفاظ على الثقافات، والدعوة من أجل التغيير.

المنهجية: تم استخدام منهجية مختلطة، شملت 50 طالبًا من كليات الصحافة الفلسطينية. أظهرت التقييمات الكمية تحسنًا ملحوظًا في المهارات التقنية، وكفاءة اللغة الإنجليزية، والثقة بالنفس. كما أظهرت المقابلات النوعية زيادة في دعم الكشف عن الذات، والإبداع، والثقافة. ومع ذلك، أبلغ الطلبة عن تحديات، بما في ذلك محدودية التكنولوجيا والموارد غير الكافية، مما حال دون استفادتهم الكاملة من هذه الأدوات الرقمية.

الخلاصة: تسلط النتائج الضوء على قوة السرد الرقمي في تشكيل القوة التحولية والتعليم الإعلامي في الميتافيرس. توفر هذه التكنولوجيا للطلاب المهارات التقنية واللغوية الأساسية، وتمكنهم من الدفاع عن هويتهم الثقافية على مستوى العالم. من خلال دمج هذه الأدوات في صفوف الصحافة، وتقديم دعم تقني قوي، وإنشاء منتديات دولية لقضايا فلسطين، يمكن للمعلمين تلبية احتياجات الطلاب الفورية وإيجاد حلول طويلة الأمد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السرد الرقمي؛ الميتافيرس؛ المهارات الشخصية؛ الهوية الثقافية؛ تطوير المهارات.

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1 Introduction

The way knowledge is shared, and skills are developed, has been completely transformed in recent years by using digital technology into educational processes. Among these developments, the meta-verse and digital storytelling are particularly noteworthy as revolutionary instruments with great potential to improve the educational process. Investigating cutting-edge strategies that not only enhance media students' technical proficiency but also cultivate their personal and professional skills which are essential to deal with the growing demands of a quickly changing digital environment. With the focus on the psychological dynamics that underpin media students' learning processes, this study aims to investigate the effects of these tools on media students' development. Digital storytelling gives students a platform for critical thinking and creative expression by fusing narrative with multimedia. The process of creating and sharing stories can therefore help students connect with the course material more deeply, participate in reflective practices, and strengthen their interpersonal skills. It enhances the development of technical, communication, and teamwork skills in the context of media education. There is further opportunity to improve learning experiences with the meta-verse; it is an immersive virtual environment that combines many digital technologies. The meta-verse offers a dynamic platform for students to participate in role-playing, experiential learning, and teamwork by building virtual worlds that mimic real-world settings or create completely new ones. Real-time interactions with classmates and teachers in virtual environments help students grasp difficult ideas more deeply and get ready for the workforce of the future in a society that is becoming more and more digitalized. Furthermore, the meta-verse may help media students develop into capable and self-assured professionals in the media sector by providing them with chances to refine their technical and vocational abilities in a rigorous yet safe setting.

1.1 Problem of the Study

Considering Palestine's sociopolitical difficulties, the students faced problems to promote their communicative, cultural preservation, and narrative expression. Therefore, Digital Storytelling and Metaverse are needed.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the crucial role of meta-verse and digital storytelling on developing Palestinian media students' soft skills

1.3 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- How does digital storytelling impact media students' communication, creativity, and self-expression skills?
- How does the metaverse contribute to the development of students' vocational skills, particularly in English proficiency and technical proficiency?
- What are the perceived benefits and challenges of integrating these tools into media education?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Literature

Boyd (2014) speaking and story-telling abilities have many real-world uses in the media sector. These abilities are necessary for a variety of media- careers, ranging from making news broadcasts and documentaries to making podcasts and -interactive media projects. Students studying media are strong storytellers and speakers are better able to produce persuasive and emotionally compelling content in addition to educational content.

Burgess (2016) said that gaining proficiency in storytelling requires knowledge of character development, emotional arcs, and narrative frameworks. Students need to learn how to write tales that are powerful, logical, and captivating. This entails successfully conveying the tale in addition to writing and illustrating it. Speaking abilities are essential in this context because they allow students to confidently and clearly tell their tales in live performances, multimedia -presentations, and virtual settings.

Kessler and Thompson (2019) said that media students must have access to thorough instruction and materials to hone their speaking and narrative abilities. This offers opportunities for practical experience, public speaking drills, and courses on storytelling approaches. Mentoring from seasoned media practitioners and storytellers can offer insightful advice. Furthermore, incorporating digital platforms and technology, like the meta-verse, may provide students with creative opportunities to demonstrate and develop their -abilities.

Green and Smith (2020) argued that speaking abilities help media students modify their narrative strategies for various audiences and situations. Students must be skilled at adapting their communication style to fit different language and cultural- backgrounds in the meta-verse, where interactions can be diverse and worldwide. Reaching and connecting with a large audience requires this flexibility.

Haller (2020) argued that the psychological processes that underline media students' use of digital storytelling, and the meta-verse promote their professional and personal abilities. In other words, these new technologies affect students' self-perception, communication abilities, creative expression, and emotional intelligence. They offer a thorough examination of the possibilities of digital storytelling and the meta-verse in influencing the direction of media education by exploring the psychological elements of skill development.

McGuire and Hickey (2020) argued that the application of cutting-edge technologies in the classroom offer insightful information about how media educators may more effectively employ these resources to promote the development of comprehensive skills. The ultimate objective is to provide media students with the information and abilities needed to prosper in the twenty-first century, which is marked by quick changes in technology and shifting demands on professionals.

Fu and Yand (2021) argued that students need access to specialized tools and support to develop speaking abilities. This includes opportunities for hands-on experience, workshops on digital communication and public speaking, and language training programs. To ensure that students can acquire the speaking skills required for success in the media industry, educators and policymakers must prioritize these resources.

Thomas (2021) had argued that storytelling and speaking go hand in hand. Strong speaking skills enhance the impact of the story being delivered, and great storytelling requires the ability to convey a narrative in an engaging way. To create captivating tales that captivate their audience, media studies students need to be able to combine these skills.

Rosenberg (2022) argued that students must use their digital oratory, virtual presenting, and vocal communication abilities in the meta-verse, where interactions are frequently virtual and multimodal. These abilities are necessary for creating captivating- digital material, taking part in online teamwork, and showcasing projects to mentors, peers, and audiences throughout the world.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Al – Qudah (2020) had argued that stakeholders may create an inclusive and empowering learning environment by addressing -elements including identity development, motivation and engagement, emotional reaction to narrative, confidence levels and sociocultural influences. This will allow media students to confront stereotypes, elevate Palestinian voices, and bring about social change via their media practice.

Jarrar (2021) conducted a study in which he found that motivation is a significant psychological aspect impacting media students' interest in the meta-verse and digital storytelling. Students are motivated by a desire to utilize their media endeavors to uplift Palestinian voices despite the challenges affecting their communities, question dominant narratives and advance social justice. Their desire and involvement are driven by their great feeling of obligation to fairly represent their communities and fight injustice and false information in the media.

Suleiman (2021) conducted a study in which he found that media students' portrayal of Palestinian - narratives and their usage of digital media technologies are greatly influenced by their emotional reaction to storytelling. Students' narratives reflect the intense emotional responses evoked by Palestine's sociopolitical setting. Students investigated issues of cultural heritage, resistance, and resiliency via their digital stories, help them create a nuanced and potent portrayal of Palestinian identity. Their engagement with the content is also fueled by these emotional reactions, which enhances the impact and appeal of their narrative.

Zaher and Haider (2023) indicated that sociocultural elements including family, neighborhood and cultural norms also influence how media students engage with digital storytelling and the meta-verse. Students use their cultural heritage, regional traditions, and common experiences of hardship and tenacity to inform their media productions. Their freedom and ability to express themselves creatively, however, may also be compromised- by pressure to fit in with dominant narratives or expectations. To give media students specialized assistance and resources, they successfully require navigating on the transformative potential of digital media technologies, educators and policymakers. They must possess a thorough understanding of the psychological dynamics that underline their engagement with digital storytelling and the meta-verse.

Kellerman (2023) had argued that media students' speaking abilities are essential to both professional and personal growth, particularly when it comes to digital storytelling and the meta-verse. Effective-communication in both English and one's native tongue is crucial in today's quickly changing media environment to engage a variety of audiences, tell gripping stories, and promote social change.

Ahmed (2023) conducted a study in which he said that English is often used in the global media sector, thus knowing the language greatly improves students' capacity to share- their tales and interact with audiences throughout the world. Speaking English allows Palestinian -media students to share their stories on worldwide platforms, engage in global discussions, and access larger information and resource networks. In a global setting where English is frequently used as the lingua franca, this competency is especially crucial for promoting - Palestinian voices and viewpoints.

The above theoretical views will be the guide for our work in this research.

3 Methodology

The researcher used the quasi-experimental methodology; therefore, to get rich information about the experiences and results of the students, the study used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. Thus, pre- and post-test, surveys, interviews, semi-structured interviews, and observational notes were used.

3.1 Sample

Participants in the study were selected by purposeful sampling, with a focus on media studies majors in Palestinian universities. The study involved fifty students in all, equally divided between those who participated in learning environments based on the metaverse and those who were exposed to digital storytelling. The participants, who ranged in age from 19 to 24, were split equally between male and female students.

3.2 Procedure

The study lasted six weeks and was carried out during the second semester of the 2023–2024 school year. Participants were split up into two groups, one of which studied meta-verse-based learning environments and the other of which participated in digital storytelling exercises. Pre-assessment questionnaires were distributed to both groups in order to determine their initial impressions and skill levels. Participants filled out surveys and post-assessment exams following the six-week intervention.

3.3 Data Analysis

Paired-sample t-tests were used in quantitative data analysis to compare pre- and post-test scores. Key themes pertaining to difficulties, involvement, and skill development were found through a thematic analysis of qualitative data from observational notes and interviews.

4 Results

4.1 Impact of Digital Storytelling on Media Students' Communication, Creativity, and Self-Expression Skills

This section presents the results of the quantitative analysis that was used to evaluate the impact of digital storytelling and the metaverse on the professional and interpersonal abilities of media students. The research compares pre- and post-test outcomes in many skill categories using paired-samples t-tests.

Table 1: Pre- and Post-Test Results for Digital Storytelling Group

Skill Area	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	t-Value	p-Value
Communication	3.20	4.30	3.45	0.002
Creativity	3.10	4.50	4.01	0.001
Self-Expression	3.40	4.60	3.89	0.003

Table 1 illustrates that the mean score for communication skills increased from 3.20 in the pre-test to 4.30 in the post-test, with a t-value of 3.45 and a p-value of 0.002. This noteworthy development implies that digital storytelling improves students' ability to communicate concepts. However, scores are dramatically improved with a pre-test mean of 3.10 and a post-test mean of 4.50. The t-value of 4.01 and the p-value of 0.001 revealed that digital storytelling intervention significantly increased creativity. Also, the mean score for self-expression increased from 3.40 to 4.60, with a t-value of 3.89 and a p-value of 0.003. This result illustrates the effectiveness of digital storytelling in fostering children's growing self-expression.

4.2 The Impact of Metaverse Contribute to The Development of Students' Vocational Skills, Particularly in English Proficiency and Technical Proficiency?

The meta-verse group demonstrated significant improvements in the students' technical proficiency, English language proficiency, and collaboration. The results are summarized in the table below:

Table 2: Pre- and Post-Test Results for Meta-verse Group

Skill Area	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	t-Value	p-Value
Technical Skills	3.00	4.40	3.67	0.001
English Proficiency	3.30	4.20	3.22	0.005
Collaboration	3.10	4.50	3.71	0.002

Table 2 illustrates that the mean score for technical skills increased from 3.00 to 4.40, with a t-value of 3.67 and a p-value of 0.001. This implies that students are now much more adept at using technology and managing projects in virtual environments. However, the scores rose from a pre-test mean of 3.30 to a post-test mean of 4.20 with a t-value of 3.22 and a p-value of 0.005 in English proficiency. This suggests that the meta-verse greatly enhanced pupils' language skills in real-time interactions. Also, the scores soar from 3.10 to 4.50, the mean score for collaborative abilities. The t-value of 3.71 and the p-value of 0.002 support the conclusion that the meta-verse facilitates students' ability to collaborate and solve issues.

Based on the above tables, the students' experiences with digital storytelling and the meta-verse were clarified through qualitative analysis based on observations and interviews. Most participants reported feeling very engaged and growing personally. The qualitative data revealed several important topics, such as (i) increased confidence: it is evident that many students reported feeling more certain, particularly in their capacity for self-expression and communication. A pupil stated, *"Before, I was shy about sharing my ideas in front of others, but through digital storytelling, I felt like I could finally express myself without fear."* Another participant said, *"Using the meta-verse made me feel more capable like I could tackle any technical challenge and present my work confidently,"* (ii) collaborative learning: it is evident that the meta-verse's immersive and interactive features promoted cooperation and impromptu problem-solving. One participant said, *"Working in a virtual setting was fantastic. We had to work together to complete the tasks, and I truly felt like a part of the team. Someone another said, "It felt more like we were in a real-world workplace, which helped us communicate better and work together to reach solutions."*, (iii) challenges: it is evident that despite the positive reception, many participants brought up technical difficulties. The student stated, *"At first, it was challenging to navigate the meta-verse." The application had issues, and the internet connection would sometimes disconnect, which was unpleasant.* Another person stated, *"Learning how to use the tools took time, but once I got the hang of it, it was rewarding."*, (iv) creative freedom: it is evident that thanks to digital storytelling, participants were able to freely explore and express their ideas. One participant remarked, *"I felt I could be more imaginative with digital storytelling," It allowed me to combine images, music, and story in a manner that I couldn't have done previously."* "This was the first time I could tell my personal story in such an artistic way," added another. *This gave me a sense of empowerment* and (v) cultural expression: it is evident that several students highlighted how digital storytelling helped them discover and preserve their cultural heritage. *"Being able to document and share stories from my community felt like an important responsibility,"* said one participant. It was a way to keep our culture alive. Someone another said, *"The storytelling format gave me the chance to show others the beauty of our traditions in a modern, engaging way."*. These quotes demonstrate the profound effects that digital storytelling and the meta-verse have on students' academic and professional development. By using these cutting-edge devices, they improved their technical and communication skills, as well as their confidence and sense of cultural heritage. Despite the occasional technological difficulties, the participants genuinely enjoyed having access to these cutting-edge learning materials. Digital storytelling combined with the meta-verse led to significant gains- in self-expression, technical competency, creativity, teamwork, and English language fluency. The technological issues that a few students had will need to be resolved to ensure a more seamless experience for all participants and enhance subsequent interventions.

4.3 Benefits and Challenges of Integrating These Tools into Media Education

Teachers have new and exciting options to improve student engagement and academic achievement through the integration of digital storytelling with the meta-verse. When paired with conventional teaching approaches, these technologies provide -students immersive, experiential learning opportunities that enhance their professional and personal development. These resources can be very helpful in the context of Palestinian media education, assisting students in better preparing for the technical skills, inventiveness, and collaboration that are highly valued in the media sector. The meta-verse and digital storytelling give Palestinian educational

institutions strong venues for students to share their own cultural experiences and narratives. By giving them the chance to write and share tales online, these technologies not only encourage personal creativity but also help spread Palestinian history and ideas around the world. Furthermore, because the meta-verse may mimic real-world situations, students have a priceless opportunity- to learn about and manage the global media ecosystem. In ways that more conventional methods could not, this expands their knowledge and skill set. This approach furthers the larger objective of empowering Palestinian students by giving them creative platforms to communicate and share their experiences around the world and by helping them acquire the technical and artistic abilities necessary to thrive in a cutthroat media landscape.

5 Discussion

The investigations are consistent with other studies on the meta-verse and digital storytelling educational advantages. Both technologies offer dynamic, rich learning settings that foster the development of communication, creativity, and technical ability. Research has shown that students' ability to coherently express complicated ideas is improved by digital storytelling, which focuses on multimedia integration and narrative creation. It demonstrates that students in the digital storytelling group greatly enhanced their communication and creative skills in support with these conclusions. In the meta-verse, where lifelike and captivating simulations are available, experience learning takes on a distinct shape (Al- Qudah, 2020). The study highlighted the value of experience-based learning. Significant improvements in technical competency, teamwork abilities, and English language proficiency were demonstrated by the meta-verse group in this study by indicating that the virtual setting offered beneficial chances for hands-on learning and skill application. Meta-verse are useful resources to aid media students in honing their social and professional abilities. These technologies provide a dynamic approach to learning; they connect theory and practice by encouraging creativity, communication, and technical expertise (Al- Khateeb, 2019). While the meta-verse offers immersive, experience-based learning that enhances collaboration and problem-solving skills, digital storytelling aids students in honing their narrative talents and fosters critical and creative thinking. The results show that both materials may be used in media education to help students acquire the wide range of skills necessary for the contemporary media landscape. The significance of multimedia in developing expressive and reflective abilities is demonstrated -by the increase in creativity and communication among participants in digital storytelling. The meta-verse groups improved the participants' technical competency and English language capabilities by immersing learning environments that help students learn languages and develop their technical skills.

6 Conclusion

Two cutting-edge tools for media education are the meta-verse and digital storytelling. This study highlights their value in enhancing the technical proficiency, critical thinking, and communication skills of media students, particularly in a Palestinian setting. These resources can help students develop the professional and social skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly digital world while also preparing them for the evolving demands of the media business. As media education advances, digital storytelling and the meta-verse must be combined to create dynamic, immersive learning environments that encourage students to express themselves, collaborate effectively with others, and exercise critical thinking. Students benefit from these resources, but they also provide a forum for global storytelling and cultural expression, allowing them to share their tales with a worldwide audience. The study's focus on the need for further research and innovation in this area will enable future educators to think of creative ways to integrate technology into the curriculum. Digital storytelling and the meta-verse have the potential to completely transform media education, and as they are used more often, the opportunities they offer to teachers and students will likewise increase.

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