

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND EDUCATIONAL IMPACT OF FOLKLORIC DANCE FESTIVALS IN NEGROS ORIENTAL

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ABSTRACT: *The study systematically gathered information on folkloric dance festivals in Negros Oriental to classify their origins, characteristics, values, and educational uses. Using a descriptive-qualitative research method, the study employed interviews, video recordings, and questionnaires, analysing data through frequency counts, percentages, rankings, and means. 180 respondents from various groups provided insights. They noted that 33% of festivals honour patron saints, 36% are cultural showcases, and 43% have historical origins. The festivals predominantly feature street dancing, forward-backwards steps, and live percussion music. Respondents rated these celebrations as "very relevant" for creative expression, historical education, and community unity.*

Findings suggest that festivals often have historical themes, involve street dancing, and use live percussion music. Including these festivals in physical education classes was well-received, and benefits like creativity, cultural heritage revival, and appreciation were cited. Recommendations include conducting workshops, using a teaching guide, and ensuring that dance elements align with the festivals' cultural stories to preserve heritage.

Keywords: folkloric dance, festivals, street dancing, physical education, cultural heritage

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of dance in the Philippines mirrors its cultural history. Geographic barriers, isolated communities, and diverse foreign influences have created a wide variety of dances, differing in movements, costumes, music, spirit, context, and character [5]. Early Filipinos enjoyed dancing for various occasions, as documented in Spanish chronicles. Dances were categorized into religious, festival, courtship, and mimetic types [1].

The Philippines boasts a rich variety of folkloric dance festivals, each contributing to the dissemination and preservation of Filipino cultural heritage [5]. These festivals encompass elaborate rituals that host trade fairs, agricultural exhibits, beauty contests, song and dance exhibitions, Boy Scouts and band drill performances, and other entertaining events [2].

Folk festivals are common during Filipino fiestas, allowing people to express gratitude for the year's harvest. Religious activities dominate these celebrations. In Negros Oriental, towns showcase their unique interpretations of folkloric dance festivals, reflecting local customs and traditions through street dancing. Negrenses unite to preserve and revive ancestral traditions and customs. These festivals safeguard their unique culture, which faces threats from globalization.

Dance studies in the Philippines, especially related to folkloric dance, are scarce. Cultural theory, which includes post-structuralist textual criticism, cultural studies, and feminist and gender studies, plays a significant role in analysing dance [5]. These inquiries focus on the cultural and historical context of what is considered 'natural,' influencing methods across disciplines [5]. Semiotic analysis of dance differentiates between choreography codes that establish internal coherence and structure within the dance, and those that connect the dance to its external context [5]. Textual studies in dance research explore connections between everyday behaviour, structured movement practices, and dance. They investigate how dance aligns with other cultural practices, considering genres, modes of expression, pedagogical methods, and bodily identity. These investigations enhance our understanding of dance's meaning and its role in broader cultural values [2].

Ancient civilizations and primitive people held dance festivals to promote nature's flourishing and fertility. Similarly, Filipinos celebrate festivals to give thanks for a good harvest. These festivals include various activities like trade fairs, agricultural exhibits, beauty pageants, and entertainment. Primitive human reactions were expressed through rhythmic movements in simple rituals, evolving into dance characteristics of various ethnic groups. Despite colonization, ethnic groups across the Philippines have preserved native dances. This makes the Philippines a unique field for studying civilizations, from the primitive Negrito to the present culture influenced by the West [3]. Despite their primitive nature, ancient dances exhibit remarkable vitality and continuity, always organized around a central theme [4].

Modernization has not significantly altered the style and features of these primitive dances. They reflect different cultural stages. Tolentino's [3] study found that these dances remained unchanged since the end of Spanish rule, retaining their unique charm. Social Darwinism suggests cultural expression evolves from primitive to civilized. In lower cultures, dance expressed feelings and wishes, becoming a key act of worship in ancient religions. Filipino dances reflect this evolution, ranging from fire and frenzy to modesty and grace. Traditional dances remain nearly pristine in remote areas, while urban dances are highly theatricalized [5].

This study identifies and analyses the folkloric dance festivals of Negros Oriental, focusing on their origins, themes, characteristics, and cultural relevance. It also explores how these festivals can be integrated into educational institutions. Including these dances in physical education and related courses will enhance understanding and appreciation of local culture.

In Bacolod, the people celebrate the "Mass Kara Festival," a popular folkloric dance festival. It's the biggest annual tourism event in Negros Occidental and coincides with Bacolod City's Charter Day celebration [8]. The "Mass Kara Festival" in Bacolod celebrates the face of the masses. Colourful pageantry, enthusiastic revelry, and camaraderie make it the highlight of Bacolod City's Charter Day celebration. Over the years, it has become Negros Occidental's major tourist attraction [8]. The 'Mass Kara' and *Hudyaka* festivals express sen-

timents and attitudes. *Maskara* reflects Bacolodnon resilience in the face of scarcity, while *Hudyaka* showcases extravagant floats and costumes. Both celebrate camaraderie and fun. Other famous Visayan festivals include *Ati-Atihan* in Aklan and *Sinulog* in Cebu, both honouring the Child Jesus, *Sto. Niño* [15].

Kalibo's *Ati-Atihan Festival* is the country's most popular celebration. Originating in the 13th century, it commemorates a peace deal between warring tribes. Participants paint their faces with soot to emulate the original *Ati* people and wear colourful native costumes [7].

The *Sinulog de Cebu* re-enacts the Christianization of King Humabon and his queen. Celebrated every January in Cebu to honour *Sto. Niño*, originated from pagan practices predating Magellan's arrival. The dance was originally performed during harvest time or as a plea for help [18]. Our festivals, *Sinulog de Tanjay* and *Sinulog de Jimalalud* share similarities with *Dinagyang* in Iloilo. All three feature drum beats and venerate patron saints. *Dinagyang* is a grand mardi-gras celebration honoring *Sto. Niño*, with riotous street dancing. Fifteen tribes from neighbouring towns compete in the unique *Kasadyahan* contest [7].

The *Halaran* festival in the West Visayan region reflects Capizeño culture and history. Originating pre-Spanish times, it celebrates the Bornean *datus* settlement on Panay Island. Legend has it that they exchanged gifts with the Aborigines as a sign of goodwill. The festival features pageantry, food, dancing, and the exotic sound of drums. Other festivities include the *Ambahanon Kapisnon* serenade, beauty tilts, *banca* racing, and island hopping tours. It takes place annually on June 23–24 [3].

The *Handungan* festival re-enacts the historic barter of Panay. It commemorates the arrival of ten Bornean *datus* led by *Datu Puti*, who exchanged a gold *Salakot* with *Haring Marikudo*, the Black King of Panay Island, for the fertile plains of Panay. *Handugan* captivates both locals and visitors with its pageantry.

In the Mountain Province, the famous *Cañao* feast among the *Igorots* reflects the belief that social status is determined by contribution. Families contribute to the festivity, which includes songs, bonfires, ritualistic dances, and blessings for crops. In Marinduque, the *Moriones Festival* celebrates Lent with colourful and unique rituals, primarily in the towns of Boac, Gasan, and Mogpog [3].

The *Moriones Festival* re-enacts the legend of *Longinos*, a Roman centurion who pierced Jesus Christ's side on the cross. Chased over rocks and riverbanks, *Longinos* is captured, led to the scaffold, and beheaded. The *Moriones*, wearing grotesque masks, carry his body to a churchyard [7].

Unlike other festivals focused on Thanksgiving, this Holy Week festival is more dramatic and sombre, reflecting Filipino religiosity. The song *Sta. Clara Pinong-pino* is significant for childless mothers who pilgrimage to Obando, Bulacan, seeking the intercession of Santa Clara, the patron saint of fertility. The festival, mentioned by Rizal in *Noli Me Tenger*, illustrates the deep faith in saintly intercession among Filipinos [10].

The Carabao Festival, held on May 15 in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, Pulilan, Bulacan, and Agono, Rizal, honours the carabao, the farmer's best friend. Farmers gather their decorated

carabaos at the church for a blessing. Afterwards, the carabaos parade through town and race across fields. The festival culminates with the carabaos kneeling in prayer as the priest blesses them again [10].

Dance researchers in the province are rare, with none found locally. However, foreign studies, like those by Allan Lomax, focus on the cultural aspects of dance. Lomax's study analyzed dance movements from various cultures, hypothesizing that dance reflects habitual cultural movements. It aimed to describe dance styles, identify global stylistic areas, correlate dance with cultural and ecological factors, and uncover cultural evolution patterns. The study concluded that understanding dance in other cultures enhances appreciation and adaptation, highlighting dance as a vehicle for cultural identity and meaning.

Kyriacou's [11] study, "Preservation of Culture: Whose Culture, Which Part and How to Preserve It?", explores the meaning of culture, what parts are worth preserving, and how to preserve them. He emphasizes that dance performance affects its content and that ignoring the social dimensions of dance risks altering it.

Naerebout's [12] research, presented at the 1994 IOFA Conference, discusses two types of cultural preservation: preserving dances and their existence. He highlights that mixing Greek dances with others can create new forms and promote world peace and understanding.

These studies support the present research, validating the use of Negros Oriental's folkloric dance festivals for cultural revival. Schools are ideal for preserving and integrating these dances into their curriculum. Kyriacou's [11] study highlights that mixing original dances with others can create new forms without losing meaning. This study asserts that preserving Negros Oriental's folkloric dances fosters unity and cultural identity, showcased annually in the Buglasan Festival.

This study aims to systematically gather and classify the origins, characteristics, and values of folkloric dance festivals in Negros Oriental, and explore their use in educational institutions. It seeks to answer: How are these festivals classified by religious, cultural, and historical origins? What are their characteristics in terms of style, movement, and music? How can they be used in educational institutions?

Cultural revival is crucial for progress, allowing reflection on the past. This study will benefit Negros Oriental by preserving these festivals for future generations and providing baseline data for integrating them into subjects like Physical Education, Humanities, Music, and Social Science.

The study will focus on the popular folkloric dance festivals included in the yearly *Buglasan* celebration in Negros Oriental. These festivals are *Sinulog de Jimalalud*, *Tawo-tawo*, *Libod Sayaw*, *Ayuquitan*, *Gapnod*, *Budyas*, *Sinulog de Tanjay*, *Hudyaka*, and *Sandurot*. It will discuss their origins, characteristics, and integration into educational curricula in Negros Oriental.

To gather data, the researcher: Videotaped festival performances to analyse styles, movements, and music; Conducted interviews with trainers, participants, spectators, and PE teachers across nine towns in Negros Oriental; Distributed questionnaires to supplement interview data.

The study aims to analyse the perceptions of various stakeholders on the origin and characteristics of folkloric dance festivals in Negros Oriental, to develop a teaching guide.

The study involved 180 respondents from five towns and four cities in Negros Oriental, including Bayawan City, Dumaguete City, Tanjay City, Bais City, Sibulan, San Jose, Amlan, Bindoy, and Jimalalud. Each location had five trainers or choreographers, five spectators, five participants, and five Physical Education teachers or school officials and students from the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS).

Before starting the research, the researcher sent a letter to the identified respondents explaining the study's significance and requesting their participation.

The study used a descriptive-qualitative method with a questionnaire as the main data collection tool. The questionnaire had four parts: 1. Personal background and questions about the folkloric dance festival; 2. Spectators' and students' participation in the street dancing festival, its significance, and relevance; 3. Questions for Physical Education teachers and school heads; 4. Integration of folkloric festivals into subjects like Physical Education, Humanities, Music, and Social Sciences in educational institutions in Negros Oriental.

The researcher randomly selected respondents for the questionnaire and conducted interviews to verify responses. The Provincial Tourism unit provided data on the origins and characteristics of the folk festivals. Sun Cable assisted in analyzing the style, movement, and music. Information from Physical Education teachers, school heads, and students helped the researcher develop a comprehensive teaching guide for folkloric dance festivals in Negros Oriental.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Out of the participants, 61.1% were women (110) and 37.2% were men (67), highlighting the greater female participation in folkloric dance festivals.

Fourthly (40%) of respondents were teachers (72) and 21.1% were students (38), emphasizing their involvement and the importance of integrating folkloric dance festivals into educational institutions in Negros Oriental.

Most respondents were aware of the folkloric dance festivals, with few negative responses. This aligns with Olivar's [2] statement that dancing was a popular activity among early Filipinos, celebrated on almost all occasions.

Respondents were involved as organizers, trainers, participants, and spectators. Most were spectators (96), followed by participants (39), organizers (34), and trainers (27). Multiple roles were possible.

Folkloric dance festivals in Negros Oriental are classified as historical, religious, and cultural, ranked in that order. This aligns with the International Encyclopaedia of Dance, which states that dance development in the Philippines parallels its cultural history. Most respondents view these festivals as portraying significant events (historical), showcasing Filipino heritage (cultural), or honouring a patron saint (religious). Rivadelo [4] emphasizes that these festivals help preserve Filipino cultural heritage. Among the nine festivals, only *Sinulog de Tanjay* (religious) and *Hudyaka sa Bais* (cultural) are exceptions to the historical classification.

Most respondents (71 out of 180) perceived that folkloric dance festivals are presented as street dancing. This was evident in all nine festivals, including the *Buglasan: Festival of Festivals* in Dumaguete City. Bracamonte [6] of the Philippine Post noted that the celebration brought together many of Negros Oriental's distinctive folkloric dance traditions, promoting indigenous cultural traditions through street dancing and related activities [6].

Respondents noted that movements in the dance festivals included forward and backward steps, running, marching, mincing, and change steps. Tolentino [3] highlighted that these movements reflect the natural reflexes of various ethnic groups and are common in street dancing. Most respondents preferred live music with ethnic/tribal and folk styles. The International Encyclopedia of Dance emphasizes the variety in movement, costume, music, spirit, context, and character, which Tolentino [3] also finds charming.

Seventy-seven per cent (77%) of spectators considered folkloric dance festivals significant. Tolentino [3] noted that men dance to express feelings and wishes. These festivals attract tourists, promoting the province as a destination like *Ati-Atihan*, *Dinagyang*, and *Sinulog* in the Visayas.

Respondents rated all items as 'very relevant' on a scale of 1 to 3. Item 6, which deals with folkloric dance festivals as creative expressions during fiesta celebrations, ranked highest with a mean rating of 2.67. This aligns with the International Encyclopedia of Dance, noting that Filipino dances range from fire and frenzy to modesty and grace, reflecting evolving social mores [5]. The Encyclopedia Americana explains that ancient rites and festivals exhibit remarkable vitality and continuity, always organized around a central theme [4]. Ranked 2 with a mean rating of 2.65, interpreted as 'very relevant', focuses on educating the younger generation about the historical beginnings, customs, and traditions of the place. Ranked 3 with a mean rating of 2.63, also 'very relevant,' aims to strengthen unity and camaraderie among the people. According to the October 1999 issue of 'What's on the Expat: The Visayas and Mindanao Guide,' the *Maskara* Festival in Bacolod celebrates the people's zest for life. Born in 1980 during crises like the sugar price drop, the M/V Don Juan sea disaster, and worsening peace and order, the festival symbolizes the indomitable spirit of the *Negrenses*, who chose to celebrate life despite adversity.

The colourful pageantry is matched by everyone's enthusiastic participation. These statements explain why the Negrenses of Oriental hold the *Buglasan: Festival of Festivals* annually. According to Mr Bobby F. Villasis, Tourism Operations Assistant of Negros Oriental, the festival educates the younger generation about the province's history, strengthens camaraderie among locals and neighbouring provinces, and showcases the best of the province [19].

Among the nine folkloric dance festivals, respondents found *Sandurot*, *Sinulog de Tanjay*, *Gapnod*, and 'Tawo-tawo' to be the most relevant. Earl Bracamonte noted that the *Sandurot* festival showcases *Dumagueteños'* hospitality and celebrates sharing and friendship [6].

In its early form, *Sinulog de Tanjay* featured old men engaging in swordplay and dancing from house to house during the fiesta of Patron Saint Señor Santiago. The dance included

mock battles between Moros and Christians, with reconciliation through Señor Santiago's intercession [6].

Bracamonte mentioned that *Gapnod* reflects the discovery of the image of Sr. San Antonio de Padua, the great intercessor for the Sibulanons. Hon. Emmanuel *Maning N. Diputado*, a municipal councillor and native of Sibulan, emphasized that this is the only fluvial parade, a religious procession known throughout Region VII [14].

Respondents ranked the folkloric dance festivals as 'interesting' (1), 'entertaining' (2), 'educational' (3), and 'spectacular' (4). No one found them 'boring.'

Respondents ranked 'join cultural presentation' as 1st, 'watch folkloric dance festivals (Buglasan Festival)' as 2nd, 'include in the Physical Education curriculum' as 3rd, and 'integrate into the curriculum' as 4th. This implies that 'joining cultural presentations' is considered the best way to learn about folkloric dance festivals.

The top-ranked benefits were 'development of creativity', 'revival of cultural heritage', and 'appreciation of cultural heritage'. This aligns with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts' objectives to encourage artistic creation, conserve and promote cultural heritage, and support balanced cultural development and ongoing discussion.

The following ranks highlight the importance of reviving cultural heritage, appreciating folkloric dance festivals, fostering student creativity, and enhancing personality development. These align with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts' objectives. Passing these festivals down preserves cultural authenticity and teaches the younger generation to respect cultural heritage, despite rapid societal changes.

Ranked first was the suggestion to orient Physical Education teachers about the folkloric dance festivals of Negros Oriental. Second was to develop modules on the various steps and presentation styles. The Third was to organize student contests for folkloric dance festival presentations and include teaching these festivals in Physical Education classes. These align with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts goal of widely disseminating artistic and cultural products, emphasizing the need to orient PE teachers. As Obusan [3], choreographer and artistic director of the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, stated, learning a dance is learning its culture.

The findings can be summarised as follows.

A. Classification of Folkloric Dance Festivals

- Religious: 33% of respondents viewed the festivals as honouring patron saints, indicating strong devotion.
- Cultural: 36% believed the festivals showcased Filipino cultural heritage, reflecting a love for preserving traditions through dance and song.
- Historical: 43% saw the festivals as portraying significant historical events, highlighting the province's rich history.

B. Characteristics of Folkloric Dance Festivals

- Style: Most respondents (71 out of 180) perceived the festivals as street dancing, indicating they are performed in the streets.

- Movement: Many respondents noted the dances involve continuous forward and backward steps, characteristic of moving pageantry and street parades.

- Music: Respondents observed that live percussion instruments, including drums and bamboo, are commonly used, reflecting the Negrenses' love for playing musical instruments.

C. How the Local People Value the Folkloric Dance Festivals' Relevance

On a scale of 1 to 3, respondents rated all items as "very relevant." Item 6 ranked first (mean rating 2.67) for its focus on folkloric dance festivals as creative expressions during fiestas. Item 2 ranked second (mean rating of 2.65) for helping the younger generation learn about local history, customs, and traditions. Item 3 ranked third (mean rating 2.63) for strengthening unity and camaraderie. These ratings indicate strong local support for the festivals.

D. The Folkloric Dance Festival's Use in the Curriculum Program

This section covers the benefits of learning folkloric dance festivals and the reasons for integrating them into the Physical Education curriculum, based on responses from students and teachers.

- Benefits:
 - i. Development of creativity
 - ii. Revival of cultural heritage
 - iii. Appreciation of cultural heritage
- Reasons for Integration:
 - i. Inculcates the value of reviving cultural heritage
 - ii. Allows appreciation of folkloric dance festivals
 - iii. Develops student creativity
 - iv. Enhances personality development

Both teachers and students highly and positively accepted these points.

This highlights the need to include folkloric dance festivals in Physical Education classes, especially in folk dancing lessons, in educational institutions in Negros Oriental.

3. CONCLUSION

Folkloric dance festivals in Negros Oriental are historically rooted and celebrated through street dancing and moving pageantry, often with live percussion. These festivals are well-received by locals. Most teachers and students support including folkloric dance festivals in Physical Education classes, especially in folk dancing lessons in educational institutions.

4. RECOMMENDATION

The following are the recommendations of this study: Celebrate folkloric dance festivals in localities to showcase unique customs and traditions; Use street dancing as the main form of presentation; Ensure movement variations are relevant to the presentation's concept; Use live percussion, rondalla, and a mix of live and recorded music; Include local cultural presentations during special gatherings to enhance awareness and appreciation; Conduct seminar-workshops for Physical Education teachers, trainers, and choreographers for better implementation and interpretation; Use the teaching guide for folkloric dance festivals in Physical Education, Humanities,

Social Sciences, and related courses to preserve cultural heritage.

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