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# Social and Cultural Intervention through Dance for Promoting Values in Multicultural Contexts

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## Abstract

This study aims to understand the transmission of culture and values through artistic activities, such as dance. To this end, different variables such as marital and religious status are considered, as they may influence people's behaviour and participation in this activity. In this quantitative study, a sample of 440 individuals was collected using a questionnaire. The sampling was non probabilistic and causal. An ANOVA test was carried out to check for significant differences between the items when analysing dance as a tool in sociocultural intervention. It was found that dance is a mechanism that serves to transmit culture and promote socio-cultural values, especially in multicultural contexts, where variables such as religion and marital status were found to be significant in this activity.

*Keywords:* dance; religion; culture; marital status; ANOVA.

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## Introduction

Dance is difficult to define because of its large number of attributes. It is considered an art with different purposes - such as physical exercise, cultural development, and war history - as a tool for social intervention in the transmission of societal values (Bresnahan, 2015). Throughout history, dance has involved aspects related to the collection of food, rain dances, funeral farewells, or even for the call of marriage, or with other more religious aspects such as the dances of the angels being transmitted throughout history from generation to generation (Urtiga, 2017).

For Falco-Pérez (2022), music is an element that awakens feelings of sadness, joy, and melancholy in listeners; dance has a broad relationship with music, so the dancer's body is responsible for expressing these feelings through movements. Thus, it could be said that choreography can be a representative element, as it allows synchronising the different movements of the dancers, causing a connection during the performance thanks to trust, empathy, and group cohesion values that are transmitted to spectators (Tarr *et al.*, 2015). Arguably, teaching methods can be implemented with gender differences in mind by reinforcing theories and teaching plans that can be affected by the resonance, breathing, and emotional expression of young people, varies by gender (Ming & Chao-Jung, 2022).

Achieving people's well-being is fundamental for the development of humanity, as people are social beings who need to be in a group and learn through these activities to improve their control, self-esteem, and values, which are beneficial for the person and for the group (Williams *et al.*, 2019., Kyprianides & Easterbrook, 2020). Dance is a tool capable of transmitting different socio-cultural values to citizens; hence, the aim of this research, which, together with other classical activities such as music and cinema, is to develop artistic projects promoting values such as companionship, friendship, and collaboration to achieve well-being and happiness (Calderón *et al.*, 2018).

Culture can be understood as different reactions and actions that define the behaviour of a person within a group, considering different aspects, ideas, emotions, and motivations sometimes imposed by the activity or social group to which the person belongs, and which the person learns through imitation (Maqui, 2019). Carloni (2018) considers that cultural identity is formed by cultural and social aspects such as, different values related to pride, tradition, symbols, beliefs, and different ways of behaving within a social group. Each city has its own culture; for this reason, traditional dances are a great element of dissemination of the culture of a city, having positive repercussions for the rest of the people (De las Heras-Fernández & García-Gil, 2010).

In dance, culture is represented by different elements that make up choreography; these can be different scenes, sounds, instruments, and shouts, together with movement from traditional dances with the aim of representing and transmitting

one's own culture (Roper, 2019). According to Martínez-Rivera (2016), many of these cultural and religious events have been taking place in Europe throughout history, as a main element of tradition from one community to another, managing to maintain over time, disappearing, or undergoing some cultural transformation. Historically, dances were used to represent ideas that came from the religions themselves, arising from Catholicism when there were different situations of slavery of black people in ancient times being represented by this type of festivity (Luizaga, 2014). Additionally, all these festivities or moments that are represented need appropriate clothing for the occasion using masks, crowns, ornaments, and different costumes depending on the religion to be represented or the cultural moment. In the case of Muslims, the most characteristic materials and related to their culture are helmets, coins, aprons, and a cape, in addition to bright and very colourful fabrics for their cultural representation (Martínez-Rivera, 2016).

In society, the ability to communicate is fundamental to succeed; these interactions are important to achieve social development and relationships with others, as well as for own mental well-being (Shankar *et al.*, 2015). Dance and music are two fundamental elements to achieve the social, cultural, political, and economic development of the country, as they are considered to have a great capacity to achieve different social transformations and enable great cultural dialogue (Falco-Perez, 2022). Subjects are responsible for their personal experiences, for this reason art has a direct connection and relationship with the word 'wellbeing'. When both are related they enable dance to become a tool for change and overcoming different personal, mental, communicative and emotional obstacles (Mundet-Bolos *et al.*, 2017). Some authors consider that corporeality has a great capacity to transmit knowledge and is also used in certain contexts as a means of cultural transmission (Sevilla, 2017).

The current demography is characterised by an increase in the elderly population as mortality and birth rates have decreased, causing an increase in life expectancy and inverting the age pyramid in many parts of the world (Antunes *et al.*, 2022). According to the World Health Organization (2022), the population has a life expectancy of 60 years or more, so it is necessary to influence healthy ageing by allowing the elderly to learn new activities, continue their studies, or take up old hobbies, which has a great impact on the physical and social environment in which they develop throughout their lives, such as housing, the neighbourhood, community, a balanced diet, doing sports, and not consuming harmful substances. This considers physical activity as a fundamental and beneficial element for the mental and physical health of older people (Gries *et al.*, 2018). However, mental and psychological health are necessary to regulate the subjective vitality that, according to Rozanski & Kibzansky (2005), is responsible for regulating the different positive and negative emotions of each person to improve psychological functioning. Ageing can be affected by different environmental, economic, cultural, and social conditions that occur in a context in a positive way, providing people

with different opportunities or negatively creating barriers that limit their social development (Fernández-Mayoralas *et al.*, 2015).

The environment in which elderly persons develop throughout their lives can be of great importance in terms of whether they can be independent in their old age, since all socio-political and contextual interventions carried out generate optimal environments to achieve positive ageing (Fernández-Ballesteros, 2009).

According to Fitzgerald & Caro (2014), societies strive to achieve age-friendly communities through active participation and daily interactions with other people and through the use of different resources in associative and political organisations with their community participation. Loneliness is a serious problem because it increases the risk of premature death, anxiety, depression, and a higher number of suicides (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2019). Elderly and/or widowed people in family residences tend to participate in more social activities and feel less lonely, as families pay attention to their needs and health than elderly people who are in residential centres.

Ageing causes numerous psychological changes, but one of the most aggravating is the loss of a life partner, helplessness, fear of death, and loneliness, with a high rate of older people aged 45–65 years suffering from this social isolation (Sya'diyah *et al.*, 2020). Widowhood is a major life change that causes pain and loneliness during old age, even diminishing the quality of life of those affected (Vaarama *et al.*, 2010). Mourning is a process of negotiation, dealing with different emotions related to the sense of death, from personal and social perspectives through different cultural and religious rituals (Davis, 2017).

Activities such as dance are difficult to define, as it is an art capable of acting as therapy, physical exercise, social and cultural development, war history, or simply an element of improvisation (Bresnahan, 2015). According to Domínguez & Castillo (2017), dance is used on numerous occasions to improve memory and imagination, and two closely related elements of psychological development are used with older people on numerous occasions in a therapeutic way. Dance is an element of non-verbal communication that allows people to express themselves, communicate, practice self-control, and teaches people to breathe and meditate (Vargas & Castro, 2015). Additionally, Music and dance are considered great therapeutic tools capable of helping many people overcome different life problems (Gallego-Gómez *et al.*, 2020).

The main objective of this study is to analyse dance as an activity used to transmit different cultural, religious, and social values through the social interaction of people in multicultural contexts. This activity is a great opportunity for people with different difficulties, as it can help them overcome problems such as ageing, widowhood, and loneliness.

## Methodology

### *Population and sample*

This study uses a quasi-experimental, descriptive, and cross-sectional design. The selected sample comprised people living in the Autonomous City of Melilla, whose students belong to different dance schools in the city. The sample can be considered varied due to numerous variables such as sex, marital status, age, and dance style.

Due to the large population, they have been given the opportunity to participate in this study on a voluntary basis, responding to the non-probabilistic causal sampling, since it is the population that is available and within reach.

The sample comprises 440 subjects, of which 17.28% were men and 82.72% were women; according to the religious family they identify with Christians, 74.2%; Muslims, 20.1%; Jews, 0.7%; atheists, 2.9%; and practitioners of other religions or beliefs, 2.1%.

### *Instrument*

For data collection, the “Ethnodance-Q” questionnaire was developed, meeting the psychometric requirements for its use. It comprised a total of 30 items, of which six questions were sociodemographic (sex, age, religion, marital status, etc.) using a four-point Likert scale that collects information through the following responses: such as ‘1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=quite a lot, 4= a lot’. The questionnaire had adequate reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.814.

### *Procedure*

To carry out this study, prior permission was first requested from the teachers of the Municipal Dance School of Melilla, as well as from the directors of the public schools in the city. During this phase, before collecting information, a positive evaluation report was requested from experts from different departments of the University of Granada, with regard to the psychosociological, sociological, and methodological perspectives of the participants.

### *Data analysis*

Statistical tests were carried out to determine the type of statistical procedure to be adopted to generate results (parametric or non-parametric tests), checking the normality of the data (asymmetry and kurtosis) and the assumption of homogeneity of variance through Levene’s test, obtaining parametric tests in the results. To obtain the relationships between the variables, a one-factor ANOVA test was carried out in relation to the variables of religion (Christian, Muslim, and others)

and marital status (married, single, widowed, divorced), which was related to the way in which dance can strengthen cultural construction. All analyses were carried out using IBM SPSS version 26.0 statistical software.

## Results

The data obtained by the ANOVA test for the variable ‘religion’ (Christian, Muslim, and others) are shown below, to analyse whether there are significant differences according to different religions, in terms of whether dance promotes social and cultural values in multicultural contexts.

In Table 1, the item ‘dance can strengthen the cultural construct’ shows significant differences ( $p < 0.029$ ), with the highest mean difference in other religions (Jews, atheists and practitioners of other religions or beliefs), followed by the Christian and finally Muslim religions ( $3.67 \pm 0.57$  vs.  $3.45 \pm 0.68$  vs.  $2.86 \pm 0.77$ ).

The next item, ‘There is a need to teach dance students the transmission of values’ shows significant differences ( $p < 0.029$ ), highlighting the highest average in the Christian religion, followed by other religions (Jews, atheists and practitioners of other religions or beliefs) and finally, the Muslim religion ( $3.68 \pm 0.55$  vs.  $3.33 \pm 1.15$  vs.  $3.14 \pm 0.94$ ).

Table 1: Relationship of variables on dance and culture according to religion

	Religion	M	SD	CI (95%)		F	Sig.
				Lower	Upper		
Dance can strengthen the cultural construct	Christian	3.45	.689	3.33	3.58	2.778	.029
	Muslim	2.86	.770	2.41	3.30		
	Other*	3.67	.577	3.28	3.52		
There is a need to teach dance students the transmission of values	Christian	3.68	.554	3.57	3.78	2.792	.029
	Muslim	3.14	.949	2.59	3.69		
	Other*	3.33	1.155	.46	6.20		

\*\*Others (Jews, atheists and practitioners of other religions or beliefs).

Table 2 analyses the inter-group differences (Bonferroni), which show significant differences between the Muslim and Christian religions, both in the items ‘dance can strengthen cultural construction’ (0.008) and in the item ‘there is a need to teach dance students the transmission of values’ (0.008).

Table 2: Significant intergroup differences were observed for variables related to dance and culture (Bonferroni correction), has given rise to a great cultural and religious coexistence

	(I) Religion	(J) Religion	Mean difference (I-J)	DE	Sig.	IC (95%)	
						Lower	Upper
Dance can strengthen cultural construction	Christian	Muslim	.596*	.197	.008	.13	1.06
		Other	-2.14	.407	.859	-1.18	.75
	Muslim	Christian	-.596*	.197	.008	-1.06	-.13
		Other	-.810	.443	.164	-.75	.24
	Other	Christian	-.624	.407	.859	-.24	1.18
		Muslim	1.376	.443	.164	-1.44	1.86
There is a need to teach dance students the transmission of values	Christian	Muslim	.532*	1.75	.008	.12	.95
		Other	.342	.361	.612	-.51	1.20
	Muslim	Christian	-.532*	.175	.008	-.95	-.12
		Other	-.190	.393	.879	-1.12	.74
	Other	Christian	-.342	.361	.612	-1.20	.51
		Muslim	1.90	.393	.879	-.74	1.12

Note. \*. Mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to the results of the ANOVA test for the marital status variable, it can be observed whether the data were significant among the four groups (married, single, widowed, and divorced). Table 3 shows the items that relate dance and culture with the marital status variable, obtaining significant differences to the question of whether: ‘Dance can strengthen cultural construction’, obtaining the highest mean for widowed people, followed by divorced, single, and married people (4.00±.000 vs. 3.60±.548 vs. 2.91±.870 vs. 2.76±.953; p < 0.031). For the next item, ‘When talking about dance you think you are talking about culture’ the highest mean was for widowed people, followed by married, single and divorced people (3.67±.577 vs. 3.52±.565 vs. 3.12±.814 vs. 3.00±.770; p < 0.008). This was also the case for the item ‘Believes that traditional dances have to do with cultural identity’ (4.00±.000 vs. 3.50±.741 vs. 3.17±.766 vs. 3.00±.770; p < 0.008, .17±.766 vs. 3.00±.707; p < 0.025) and in the item ‘Modern dance can be an element of cultural transmission’ (3.67±.577 vs. 3.53±.741 vs. 3.22±.661 vs. 2.80±1.304; p < 0.021).

Table 3: Relationship of variables on dance and culture according to marital status

	Marital status	M	DT	CI (95%)		F	Sig.
				Lower	Upper		
Dance can strengthen cultural construction	Married	2.76	.953	2.52	3.00	3.054	.031
	Single	2.91	.870	2.70	3.12		
	Widowed	4.00	.000	4.00	4.00		
	Divorced	3.60	.548	2.92	4.28		
When you talk about dance, you think you are talking about culture.	Married	3.52	.565	3.37	3.66	4.074	.008
	Single	3.12	.814	2.92	3.31		
	Widowed	3.67	.577	2.23	5.10		
	Divorced	3.00	.707	2.12	3.88		
Believes that traditional dances have to do with cultural identity.	Married	3.50	.741	3.31	3.69	3.201	.025
	Single	3.17	.776	2.99	3.36		
	Widowed	4.00	.000	4.00	4.00		
	Divorced	3.00	.707	2.12	3.88		
Modern dance can be an element of cultural transmission.	Married	3.53	.718	3.35	3.71	3.334	.021
	Single	3.22	.661	3.06	3.38		
	Widowed	3.67	.577	2.23	5.10		
	Divorced	2.80	1.304	1.18	4.42		

In Table 4, the inter-group differences (Bonferroni) are analysed, and significant differences are shown. For the first item, ‘Dance can strengthen cultural construction’, no differences were found between the groups. However, ‘when you talk about dance, you think that you are talking about culture’ (.008), ‘Believes that traditional dances have to do with cultural identity’ (.021) and ‘Modern dance can be an element of cultural transmission’ (.026), differences were observed between married and unmarried people.

Table 4: Significant inter-group differences for variables related to dance and culture (Bonferroni)

	(I) Marital status	(J) Marital status	Mean difference (I-J)	DE	Sig.	IC (95%)	
						Lower	Upper
Dance can strengthen cultural construction	Married	Single	-.155	.157	.755	-.56	.25
		Widowed	-1.242	.529	.092	-2.62	.13
		Divorced	-.842	.416	.184	-1.92	.24
	Single	Married	.155	.157	.755	-.25	.56
		Widowed	-1.087	.528	.172	-2.46	.29
		Divorced	-.687	.414	.350	-1.76	.39
	Widowed	Married	1.242	.529	.092	-.13	2.62
		Single	1.087	.528	.172	-.29	2.46
		Divorced	.400	.653	.928	-1.30	2.10
	Divorced	Married	.842	.416	.184	-.24	1.92
		Single	.687	.414	.350	-.39	1.76
		Widowed	-.400	.653	.928	-2.10	1.30
When you talk about dance, you think you are talking about culture.	Married	Single	.400*	1.23	.008	0.8	.72
		Widowed	-.151	.417	.984	-1.24	.93
		Divorced	-.516	.328	.397	-.34	1.37
	Single	Married	-.400*	.123	.008	-.72	-.08
		Widowed	-.551	.416	.550	-1.63	.53
		Divorced	.116	.327	.985	-.73	.97
	Widowed	Married	.151	.417	.984	-.93	1.24
		Single	.551	.416	.550	-.53	1.63
		Divorced	.667	.515	.569	-.67	2.01
	Divorced	Married	-.516	.328	.397	-1.37	.34
		Single	-.116	.327	.985	-.97	.73
		Widowed	-.667	.515	.569	-2.01	.67
Believes that traditional dances have to do with cultural identity.	Married	Single	.326	.131	.026	-.01	.67
		Widowed	-.500	.422	.671	-1.65	.65
		Divorced	.500	.347	.477	-.40	1.40
	Single	Married	-.326	.131	.026	-.67	.01
		Widowed	-.826	.441	.244	-1.97	.32
		Divorced	.174	.346	.958	-.73	1.07
	Widowed	Married	.500	.442	.671	-.65	1.65
		Single	.826	.441	.244	.32	1.97
		Divorced	1.000	.546	.263	-.42	2.42
	Divorced	Married	-.500	.347	.477	-1.40	.40
		Single	-1.74	.346	.958	-1.07	.73
		Widowed	-1.000	.546	.263	-2.42	.42

Modern dance can be an element of cultural transmission.	Married	Single	.315	.125	.021	-.01	.64
		Widowed	-.134	.422	.989	-1.23	.96
		Divorced	.732	.331	.126	-.13	1.59
	Single	Married	-.315	.125	.021	-.64	-.01
		Widowed	-.449	.421	.709	-1.54	.64
		Divorced	.417	.330	.587	-.44	1.28
	Widowed	Married	.134	.422	.989	-.96	1.23
		Single	.449	.421	.709	-.64	1.54
		Divorced	.867	.521	.347	-.49	2.22
	Divorced	Married	-7.32	.331	.126	-1.59	.13
		Single	-.417	.330	.587	-1.28	.44
		Widowed	-.867	.521	.347	-2.22	.49

## Discussion

This study aims to analyse dance as a tool for social intervention to promote the transmission of values in multicultural contexts. It is an interesting study, since interaction in these types of activities allows the transmission of different cultural, religious, and social values. Additionally, due to the diversity within the city, the participants are from different cultures; hence, it is important to transmit these cultural values through dance itself. After specifying the objective of this study, aspects such as the fact that music is an element capable of awakening feelings of sadness, joy, melancholy in listeners is considered. Therefore, dance is a great tool for transmitting emotions and contributes not just to differentiating one culture from another, but considers dancing as an activity linked to music (Falco-Pérez (2022).

It should be noted that when studying inter-group differences (Bonferroni), significant differences were found between Christian and Muslim religions when considering dance as a tool for social intervention in terms of culture. However, no inter-group differences were found among other religions (Luizaga, 2014). Differences have also been found among widowed people when it comes to dance and culture, an important step towards active aging (Fernández-Ballesteros, 2009; Vaarama *et al.*, 2010). Present day societies are struggling to achieve active ageing with the elderly, through daily interaction with these vulnerable groups. For this reason, different associations and organisations use dance as an opportunity for connection, rapprochement and to help overcome major problems of loneliness (Fitzgerald & Caro, 2014). Loneliness is a big problem for older people, as it increases the risk of death, for this reason achieving participation in these activities allows them to improve their situation by overcoming problems of anxiety, depression, considering dance a therapeutic tool (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2019). Some limitations and aspects to consider are to have a more representative

sample for males and for future research to extend the sample to more cities, to continue investigating the objective set and establish comparisons.

## Conclusion

The objective of this study was to analyse dance as a tool to transmit different cultural and social values, help people with difficulties in interacting and overcoming situations such as aging and loneliness caused by widowhood. The dissemination of this cultural identity is fundamental to society's development. The transmission of cultural identity through dance is fundamental from an early age to old age, which leads society to become interested in and motivated by this type of activity and cultural aspects.

Dance is an element of cultural transmission within the same aspects related to religion, both traditional dances and typical elements are used to accompany this type of activity (Martínez-Rivera, 2016). This is the main reason it is necessary to understand that this type of activity can develop culture and be a great element of transmission through its dances, as they represent special moments for that culture (Urtiga, 2017). Dance promotes a number of values that allow people to express themselves freely, without the need to feel humiliated or discriminated against in a social group, is a beneficial activity for those who practice it (Londonw, 2006) and serves as an example to establish values of respect between cultures. Additionally, the religious perspective of this study, makes the study more interesting.

These are activities from which experiences can be gained, achieving personal learning through different cultural values of the area or city (Diaz, 2012). For example, the autonomous city of Melilla, where this study has been carried out is a place with immense cultural diversity. Limited by its border crossings with the country of Morocco, this small city of only 12 square kilometres, has given rise to a great cultural and religious coexistence. Although there are four cultures in the city, the Christian and Muslim communities are the most prominent.

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