



Sports Dance Education in Northwest China: A Study of Current Status and Future Development

Zixuan Du*

Xi'an Institute of Physical Education, Xi'an, China

*Corresponding author: 760645256@qq.com

Abstract. With increasing cultural exchange, sports dance has emerged as a valuable educational tool in Northwest China. This study investigates the current state of sports dance education in this region, examining its development, challenges, and strategies for sustainable growth. Employing questionnaires and interviews, the research highlights the positive impact of sports dance on students' artistic literacy, physical and mental well-being, and cultural engagement. However, regional, cultural, and economic factors pose challenges to its development, including limited popularity, lack of awareness and qualified instructors, and inadequate facilities. To address these issues, this paper proposes strategies such as promoting sports dance through public awareness campaigns, increasing investment in training and infrastructure, innovating teaching methodologies, and fostering inter-regional collaboration. These findings provide valuable insights for promoting the sustainable development of sports dance education in Northwest China, ultimately enhancing its contribution to talent cultivation and regional cultural enrichment.

Keywords: Northwest China; sports dance education; current situation; challenges; development strategies.

1 Introduction

While both "sports" and "sports dance" involve physical activity, their core focus differs significantly. Traditional sports prioritize athletic performance and physical fitness, while sports dance emphasizes artistry, expression, and aesthetic appreciation. Originating in European courts and refined over time, sports dance has evolved into a globally recognized competitive activity. Its inclusion in the International Olympic Committee in 1997 further accelerated its growth, driving innovation in sports technology and fostering the development of both physical prowess and artistic excellence in athletes.

In China, sports dance has progressed through three distinct phases: introduction, exploration, and rapid growth¹. Despite its late arrival, it has become an integral part of major competitions like the World Sports Dance Championships and the Olympic Games. However, compared to established sports like basketball and volleyball, sports dance, particularly in Northwest China, remains less popular. This disparity prompted

our investigation into the current state of sports dance education in Northwest China and its potential to cultivate well-rounded individuals and promote holistic well-being.

Northwest China, with its unique regional characteristics, cultural heritage, and economic landscape, presents a distinct context for the development of sports dance education. This research aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the current state of sports dance education in this region, identify challenges and opportunities, and propose tailored development strategies. By doing so, we aim to contribute to the advancement of sports dance education in Northwest China, fostering the cultivation of well-rounded individuals and enriching the region's cultural tapestry.

2 Literature Review

Sports dance originated in Italy between the 14th and 15th centuries and initially appeared in the form of "social dance". After gradual standardization and development, it formed ten dance species including two series: modern dance and Latin dance. In 1925, four dance steps, namely waltz, tango, foxtrot, and quickstep, were officially determined, marking the birth of modern dance. In 1950, the holding of the first world-class competition "BLACKPOOL DANCE FESTIVAL 1950" (Blackpool Dance Festival) further promoted the internationalization process of sports dance 2, and the name of international standard dance was also established.

In the development process of sports dance education, scholars at home and abroad have conducted extensive and in-depth research. Shen Siying pointed out that the development of youth sports dance in China shows regional imbalance, with the coastal areas being developed and the central and western areas being backward 3. Deng Shilin et al. (2023) emphasized that sports dance, as a sports event integrating sports and artistic values, although popular among students in colleges and universities, the imperfect training system of physical fitness limits its development level 4. The research of Chen Jianxia et al. (2023) revealed the problem of the younger age of the teaching staff of sports dance in colleges and universities, as well as the double pressure of teachers in teaching and scientific research 5.

In addition, the social value and cultural significance of sports dance have also attracted widespread attention. The research of Chen Yan et al. (2023) found that the public has a cognitive bias towards sports dance, resulting in its low popularity 6. Song Zilong (2023) emphasized the positive impact of sports dance on the physical fitness of adolescents, pointing out that its diverse dance movements play a significant role in enhancing students' physical quality 7.

In Northwest China, the development status of traditional sports dance is also worthy of attention. On the one hand, the participation of the masses has increased, and some traditional sports dance forms, such as the fire circle dance of the Baima Tibetans in Longnan, have become important activities for local people to entertain and celebrate 8. On the other hand, problems such as insufficient funds, lagging publicity, and a lack of professional talents are still severe, restricting the healthy development of sports dance in this area 9.

In conclusion, sports dance holds a distinct and valuable place in sports education. However, its development varies across regions, presenting unique challenges. Therefore, a thorough investigation of the current state of sports dance education in Northwest China and an exploration of its future trajectory are crucial for promoting both sports education and cultural development in this region.

3 Research Questions

This research investigates the development of sports dance education in Northwest China, aiming to address the following core questions to guide its future progress:

1. **Challenges and Barriers:** What specific challenges hinder the development of sports dance education in Northwest China? These may include limited awareness, inadequate policy support, a shortage of qualified instructors, insufficient resources and facilities, outdated teaching methods, and societal perceptions.
2. **Strategies for Growth:** How can these challenges be effectively addressed to promote the healthy development of sports dance education in Northwest China? This involves exploring policy interventions, resource allocation, teacher training and development, innovative teaching methodologies, the organization of events and competitions, and strategies to enhance public awareness and appreciation.
3. **Opportunities and Advantages:** What unique opportunities and advantages can be leveraged to enhance sports dance education in Northwest China? These may stem from regional cultural characteristics, existing educational resources, market demand, and national policy support. How can these be maximized to further promote the growth and flourishing of sports dance education?
4. **Recommendations for Sustainable Development:** What specific and practical strategies can be implemented to ensure the sustainable development of sports dance education in Northwest China? These recommendations should encompass curriculum design, development of a qualified instructor base, enhancement of facilities, innovative teaching approaches, organization of events, and inter-regional collaboration to ensure effective implementation and positive impact.

4 Research Design

4.1 Research Object

This study focuses on multiple cities and towns in Northwest China, specifically within Shaanxi Province, encompassing diverse economic development levels, cultural backgrounds, and educational resources. This selection ensures the generalizability and representativeness of the findings. Questionnaires were administered using a combination of random sampling and targeted distribution to individuals of varying ages and professional backgrounds within these areas.

Furthermore, eight individuals were selected for in-depth interviews. This purposefully diverse group includes students from various disciplines (broadcasting, street

dance, sports dance, etc.), office workers, sports dance instructors, and retirees. These interviewees represent a range of engagement with sports dance, including varying levels of participation, learning experiences, and knowledge. This diversity allows for a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and challenges facing sports dance education in Northwest China. Detailed information about the interviewees and their experiences with sports dance is provided in Table 1. A thorough analysis of the interview data will further illuminate key issues and potential strategies for enhancing sports dance education in the region.

Table 1. Basic Information of Interviewees

#	Gender	Name	Occupation	Exposure to Dance Sports Education	Participation in Dance Sports
1	Male	LCX	Student	Limited exposure	Occasional participation
2	Female	SY	Music Teacher	Almost no exposure	No participation
3	Male	T	Dance Sports Teacher	Daily exposure	Daily practice
4	Female	JTT	Student	Limited exposure	Occasional participation
5	Male	YJ	Student	Limited exposure	Occasional participation
6	Female	XXX	Student	Daily exposure	Daily practice
7	Female	LHY	Retiree	Almost no exposure	No participation
8	Female	HD	Student	Daily exposure	Daily practice

4.2 Research Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to comprehensively investigate the current state and future prospects of sports dance education in Northwest China.

First, a questionnaire survey was conducted to gather extensive data. The questionnaire was designed to encompass multiple dimensions, including personal demographics, the current landscape of sports dance, perceptions of sports dance education, opportunities, challenges, support systems, and recommendations for development. This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough understanding of the realities of sports dance education in Northwest China. To ensure representativeness and generalizability, the questionnaire was administered to residents and students across various cities, towns, and schools in Northwest China using a random sampling method.

Second, in-depth interviews were conducted to complement the quantitative data and provide richer insights. The interviewees comprised a diverse group, including sports dance instructors, students, office workers, and retirees, allowing for a multi-faceted understanding of their knowledge, participation levels, and suggestions for development. The interviews focused on topics such as perceptions of sports dance, understanding of its developmental trajectory, pathways and barriers to participation, perspectives on incorporating sports dance into school curricula, and the broader impact of sports dance on the community.

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative tests to identify correlations and patterns. Qualitative data from the interviews were

coded, categorized, and analyzed thematically to explore the perspectives and recommendations of the participants. This comprehensive analysis provides a robust foundation for developing targeted strategies and recommendations for the advancement of sports dance education in Northwest China.

4.3 Research Tools

To ensure the rigor and effectiveness of this study, the following two primary research tools were employed:

4.3.1 Questionnaire.

The questionnaire served as the primary quantitative research instrument, designed to comprehensively collect data related to sports dance education in Northwest China. The questionnaire covers a broad range of topics, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Dimensions of the Questionnaire

Dimension	Related Questions
Personal Basic Information	Gender, Age, Occupation
Sports Dance Development Situation	Nationwide Participation, Organization of Specialized Competitions, Social Activity Atmosphere
Cognitive of Sports Dance Education	Type, Importance, Interest
Current Situation of Sports Dance Education	Course Offerings, Teaching Implementation Status, Evaluation of Faculty
Development Opportunities and Support	Perception of Development Opportunities, Needs for Policy Support, Expectations for Educational Resources Investment
Overall Development Suggestions	(Open-ended)

4.3.2 Interview Guide.

The interview guide served as the qualitative research instrument, providing a framework for conducting in-depth interviews and ensuring comprehensive coverage of key themes. The guide addressed the following aspects:

1. Perceptions of Sports Dance: Interviewees were asked about their overall impressions of sports dance, its distinctive characteristics, and the perceptions of those around them. This aimed to understand how different groups perceive and evaluate sports dance.
2. Understanding the Development of Sports Dance: This section explored interviewees' knowledge of the historical development of sports dance, both domestically and internationally, their predictions for future trends, their understanding of various dance styles and genres, and their analysis of the current state and future prospects of sports dance in their region.

3. Pathways and Barriers to Participation: This section investigated interviewees' personal experiences with sports dance, including how they became involved, the challenges they encountered, and their suggestions for promoting participation and accessibility.
4. Perspectives on Integrating Sports Dance into School Curricula: Interviewees were asked about the suitability of incorporating sports dance into school sports activities, the potential benefits for students, the necessary resources and conditions, and pedagogical recommendations.
5. Impact of Sports Dance on Individuals and Communities: This section explored the perceived positive impacts of sports dance on physical and mental well-being, its popularity within communities and workplaces, and its role in social and cultural exchange. Interviewees were also asked for suggestions on how to enhance the influence and reach of sports dance.

5 Data Analysis

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were assessed to ensure the quality of the data. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to be 0.956, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability. Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.867, confirming the structural validity of the questionnaire and its suitability for measuring the intended constructs.

A total of 133 valid questionnaires were collected. The sample exhibited a balanced gender distribution, with 51.13% male and 48.87% female participants. The majority of respondents (66.17%) were young adults aged 18-25, followed by adolescents under 18 (14.29%) and adults aged 26-35 (16.54%), indicating a good representation of younger age groups and their interest in sports dance. In terms of occupation, students constituted the largest group (40.6%), followed by office workers (36.09%), freelancers (20.3%), and retirees (3%). This distribution reflects the engagement of individuals from diverse professional backgrounds in sports dance.

In addition to the quantitative data, in-depth interviews were conducted with eight individuals from diverse backgrounds, including students, office workers, sports dance instructors, and retirees. The interviews explored their experiences with, perceptions of, and suggestions for sports dance in Northwest China. This qualitative data provides valuable insights into the current landscape of sports dance education in the region, complementing the quantitative findings.

5.1 Participation and Perceptions of Sports Dance

Questionnaire data revealed a generally low level of public participation in sports dance ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.420$), indicating a need to increase the popularity of this activity in Northwest China. Among the dance types, Latin dance and Standard dance were the most popular, attracting 40.6% and 36.84% of participants, respectively. Street dance and ethnic dance also garnered considerable interest, with 36% and 26% of respondents

expressing a preference for these styles. This demonstrates the potential to engage diverse audiences through a variety of dance forms. However, participation in traditional dances specific to Northwest China, such as the Ansai Waist Drum and Xinjiang dance, was relatively low (14%), suggesting a need to promote and preserve regional dance traditions.

Statistical analysis revealed significant gender differences in participation frequency, dance type preferences (particularly for street dance and traditional Northwest China dances), and involvement in sports dance competitions ($p < .001$). Notably, men participated in street dance more frequently ($M = 0.5$) than women ($M = 0.22$), while women showed less interest in traditional dances of the region.

Community-organized sports dance activities were well-received by residents, who appreciated their engaging nature ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.245$). These activities play a crucial role in promoting interest and participation in sports dance.

Interview data further corroborated these findings. Most interviewees perceived sports dance as elegant and energetic, representing a harmonious blend of skill and artistry. They emphasized the multi-faceted nature of sports dance, integrating music, movement, and athleticism to provide a captivating experience for both participants and audiences. Interviewees generally acknowledged the positive impact of sports dance on physical and mental well-being, highlighting its potential to improve fitness, enhance body image, and promote mental health. They also noted the benefits of stress relief, increased coordination and flexibility, and the development of confidence and poise.

Furthermore, interviewees recognized the unique appeal of sports dance, combining the competitive aspects of sport with the artistic expression of dance. They acknowledged the demands of sports dance, requiring coordination, aesthetics, and attention to presentation (attire, shoes, makeup). The attractiveness of sports dance, they suggested, lies in its rhythmic and skillful movements, the visual spectacle created by dancers, and the comprehensive physical benefits it offers. The diversity of dance styles caters to a variety of personal preferences. For children, sports dance was seen as beneficial for physical development, cultivating hobbies, and improving coordination and flexibility, with the potential to even become a future career path.

5.2 Public Awareness and Pathways to Participation in Sports Dance

Interview data shed light on public awareness and acceptance of sports dance. While most interviewees, particularly young people, expressed a degree of familiarity with sports dance, often gained through media exposure (internet, newspapers, television), some perceived it as a niche activity. This suggests that while awareness exists, broader public understanding and engagement may be limited. Interestingly, the perceived "niche" status of sports dance had varying effects on individuals, motivating some to pursue further learning and inspiring others to contribute to its promotion.

Analysis of how interviewees became involved in sports dance revealed diverse pathways, including recommendations from friends, social media, and dance institutions. Some interviewees had experience with sports dance, including participation in training, competitions, and performances. However, a substantial number had limited

or no involvement, with some only having watched performances and others having no prior exposure to sports dance. This highlights a disparity in engagement levels.

Participants identified various challenges hindering their involvement in sports dance, such as difficulties with technical mastery, rhythm control, and foundational dance skills. Time constraints and a shortage of qualified instructors were also cited as barriers. These diverse challenges underscore the need for more accessible and comprehensive training opportunities.

To enhance the appeal and accessibility of sports dance, interviewees proposed several creative strategies. These included leveraging social media platforms for promotion, organizing performances and public demonstrations to increase visibility, inviting renowned dancers to perform to generate excitement, and offering free introductory sessions to encourage participation. These suggestions offer valuable insights for promoting and expanding the reach of sports dance in Northwest China.

5.3 Challenges, Opportunities, and Recommendations for Development

While interviewees agreed that sports dance in Shaanxi Province and Northwest China is steadily progressing, they acknowledged uneven development across the region. Strengths include increasing parental support for sports dance education, the availability of sports dance programs in colleges and universities, and the emergence of specialized dance studios and qualified instructors. However, weaknesses persist, including limited public participation, uneven quality of instruction, and a lack of high-profile sports dance events.

This observation is supported by survey data. Despite limited participation in competitions (21.8%), most respondents valued sports dance education ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.297$). However, awareness of educational opportunities and policy support for sports dance remained moderate, indicating a need for greater public outreach and advocacy.

Respondents identified a need for increased resources in sports dance education, including textbooks, facilities, equipment, and qualified instructors (mean scores ranging from 2.80 to 2.86). Funding, instructor shortages, and inadequate facilities were perceived as the primary obstacles to development (mean scores ranging from 2.86 to 3.03). Notably, men were more likely to cite inadequate facilities as a barrier, while women emphasized the shortage of qualified instructors.

Respondents expressed a strong desire for a more supportive social environment for sports dance, advocating for media promotion, community engagement, school integration, and corporate sponsorship to enhance physical fitness, enrich cultural life, foster social interaction, and promote personal development (mean scores ranging from 3.25 to 3.54). This highlights the perceived multifaceted value of sports dance. Women, in particular, favored media publicity, community activities, and corporate support as strategies for promoting sports dance.

Respondents were optimistic about the future of sports dance in Northwest China, anticipating increased popularity and participation, improved resources and facilities, more competitions and events, and enhanced training opportunities. However, they also noted insufficient investment in sports dance education ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.224$) and

called for increased support. Women particularly emphasized the importance of increasing participation, strengthening training, and enhancing social recognition and cultural value.

Interviewees envisioned a future where sports dance becomes more popular, diverse, and inclusive, attracting wider participation across age groups and playing a greater role in promoting national fitness. Some predicted increased specialization, with the emergence of more professional institutions. Several interviewees demonstrated knowledge of different dance styles and schools, such as Modern and Latin dance, recognizing their unique technical and rhythmic demands. They also acknowledged the distinction between artistic and athletic approaches to sports dance in China.

However, interviewees noted disparities in participation across age groups, with higher engagement among adolescents and lower involvement among middle-aged and older adults. They suggested promoting sports dance through community programs and interest-based classes to address this gap.

Most interviewees highlighted the social benefits of sports dance, emphasizing its potential to foster friendships, expand social circles, and enhance communication skills. They also recognized its role in cultivating teamwork and cooperation, as well as promoting cross-cultural understanding and exchange.

To enhance the influence of sports dance, interviewees recommended increased publicity, raising public awareness, strengthening professional training, and organizing more competitions and events. They advocated leveraging media platforms, hosting competitions, and integrating sports dance into educational curricula to broaden participation and appreciation.

6 Conclusions and Discussion

This study investigated the current state of sports dance education in Northwest China using a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaire data and in-depth interviews. The following key conclusions and discussions emerged:

1. **Limited Popularity and Participation:** Sports dance education in Northwest China exhibits low popularity and public engagement. While certain dance styles like Latin and Standard dance enjoy some popularity, participation in traditional regional dances remains limited, indicating challenges in preserving and promoting local dance culture. This highlights the need for increased promotion and advocacy for sports dance, particularly emphasizing the unique value of regional dance traditions.
2. **Inadequate Resources and Infrastructure:** Sports dance education in Northwest China faces challenges related to insufficient resources, including qualified instructors and adequate facilities. Survey respondents emphasized the need for increased investment in textbooks, venues, equipment, and teacher training. Interviews corroborated these findings, revealing variability in instructor expertise and experience, which can impact teaching quality. Strengthening instructor training and improving facilities are crucial for enhancing the quality of sports dance education in the region.

3. **Limited Awareness and Policy Support:** While most respondents recognized the importance of sports dance education, awareness of available programs and policy support remained moderate. This points to a need for increased public awareness campaigns and clearer communication regarding educational and policy initiatives related to sports dance.

Based on these findings, the study proposes the following recommendations:

1. **Enhance Promotion and Advocacy:** Utilize diverse channels and platforms to raise public awareness and appreciation for sports dance, emphasizing the value of local dance traditions.
2. **Increase Investment:** Prioritize investment in sports dance education, optimize resource allocation, and improve the quality of teaching conditions and facilities.
3. **Strengthen Instructor Development:** Invest in professional development programs to enhance the expertise and pedagogical skills of sports dance instructors.
4. **Innovate Teaching Practices:** Develop engaging and effective teaching methods that cultivate artistic literacy, physical fitness, and mental well-being.
5. **Foster Collaboration and Exchange:** Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing with other regions to learn from best practices and promote the sustainable development of sports dance education in Northwest China.

This study underscores the multifaceted value of sports dance in promoting physical health, mental well-being, social interaction, and cultural exchange. Promoting sports dance education contributes not only to individual development but also to the cultural enrichment of the region.

Future research should further investigate the factors influencing participation in sports dance across different demographic groups and explore targeted strategies for promoting wider engagement and appreciation for this activity.

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