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DANCE IMAGERY, EXPERIENCE MOTIVATION, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS AMONG DANCESPORT ATHLETES

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Abstract:
DanceSport is a unique blend of artistic expression with athletic performance, requiring synchronized movements, strong partnerships, and effective communication between dancers. Despite its dynamic nature, challenges such as interpersonal conflicts, psychological stress, and inadequate partnership dynamics frequently affect performance. This study explores the influence of dance imagery, experience motivation, and psychological mechanisms on the performance and relationships of DanceSport athletes. Employing a quantitative descriptive correlational design, data were collected from DanceSport couples in Region XI, Philippines, through surveys. Quantitative findings reveal that athletes exhibit high levels of dance imagery, particularly in technique, mastery, and goal-setting, which enhance their ability to visualize and execute complex routines. Experience motivation, especially in personal development and entertainment, emerged as a key driver of sustained engagement and resilience. Regression analysis showed that 64% of the variability in psychological mechanisms could be attributed to these factors, which include obligatory instrumental ties, expressive ties, and interpersonal perception. This study underscores the need for incorporating imagery training and motivational strategies into coaching to enhance performance, improve partnerships, and reduce burnout. The findings provide a framework for educators and coaches to develop evidence-based interventions, fostering resilience and long-term engagement among DanceSport athletes. Future research should extend these insights to a broader population for deeper exploration.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

DanceSport represents a combination of art and sports, characterized by artistic communication synchronized with music and competitive elements (Sofron & Țifrea, 2022). The partnership between DanceSport couples shows their psychological adaptation to each other and is key to their successful teamwork (Liu *et al.*, 2023). However, there are psychological mechanisms, such as expressions and interpersonal perceptions between two individuals, that challenge the dynamics of their dance (Eckhaus, 2019). The main challenge in partnership under these mechanisms is communication, with 42% of competitive dance couples reporting conflicts that negatively impacted their overall performance (Borne, 2022).

In Hungary, further research revealed that 39% of the dancers quarrel with their partners. A total of 65% of the competitors highlighted that being stubborn, immaturity and irritability were the top list of the partner's common negative characteristics (Majoroos, 2008). Similarly, Zaletel & Kajtna (2020) found that 16% of dancers identified the lack of a suitable partner as a factor contributing to unsuccessful performances. Hence, Liu *et al.* (2022) mentioned that there is a need to foster strong instrumental ties, expressive ties, and interpersonal understanding to be highly engaged and reach goals in dance.

Additionally, in the Netherlands, a study by Keijsers *et al.* (2023) revealed that out of 80% of 176 dancers, experienced common injuries like foot, ankle, and lower leg injuries. These injuries were reportedly the result of failing to maintain partnership throughout the dance competition process (Bota & Arnautu, 2023).

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, a study revealed that DanceSport training among Filipino dance sporters has significant room for improvement. Aside from issues related to technicalities, proper conditioning, and correct methods and exercises, a significant problem is the inability of partners to understand and communicate effectively during rehearsals. Unfortunately, even regular competitors, including professionals, often fail to adhere to this process consistently (DCRT, 2024).

Dance imagery significantly influences dancers' psychological mechanisms. Ahn (2013) emphasizes that the role of dance imagery boosts creative thinking and self-awareness among dancers (정유경, 2016), which can, in turn, influence their expression, interpersonal perception and communication. This is supported by Fonseca (2012), stating that in ballroom dancing, one can bring positive changes in body perception depending on how a dancer visualizes the situation, which affects how dancers perceive and interact with their partner. Nordin and Cumming (2006) further emphasize that dancers' use of imagery enhances both the quantity and quality of the dance routine over time, suggesting a relationship between imagery and partner communication.

Research has shown that the motivation to dance can significantly affect the quality of relationships and satisfaction of a dance couple (Ricard, 2012). Lobo *et al.* (2022), further support this, stating that positive dance engagement enhances psychological mechanisms. Additionally, Sharma and Singh (2023) denotes that having a dance partner with the same goal often provides social support and boosts self-esteem. These findings suggest a complex interplay between experience motivation and psychological mechanisms in the context of dance.

Dance imagery, experience motivation, and psychological mechanisms in DanceSport athletes reveal several research gaps warranting further exploration. These gaps include investigating specific types of mechanisms used by an athlete and how these mechanisms influence their performance and overall well-being (Klockare *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, it is crucial to understand the role of factors such as imagery and experience motivation in shaping the psychological mechanisms adopted by DanceSport athletes (Quested *et al.*, 2011). Also, conducting mixed-methods research that combines both quantitative and qualitative data could further contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences, motivation and psychological mechanisms of DanceSport athletes (Tremayne & Ballinger, 2018).

This study on dance imagery, experience motivation and psychological mechanisms holds significant relevance for dancers and student DanceSport athletes. It can provide insight into enhancing psychological preparation for dance couples and performance outcomes. Moreover, this research can help PE teachers and coaches develop strategies to sustain long-term engagement, foster commitment, and prevent burnout. The findings of this study could also contribute to evidence-based practices, interventions, and educational resources necessary for future researchers who conduct similar studies.

The investigation into dance imagery, experience motivation, and psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes aims to disseminate its findings through various avenues. The first is through a seminar presentation, which will be tailored for professionals in dance education and psychology, providing an overview of the study and encouraging dialogue. Next is participation in research summits, which will enable networking and interdisciplinary collaboration opportunities. Finally, the study will be submitted to peer-reviewed journals, highlighting its importance in comprehending the psychological dimensions of dance performance. Through these means, the objective is to share insights, foster knowledge sharing, and promote advancements in dance education and psychology research.

1.2 Purpose Statement

This mixed methods explanatory research determined the influence of dance imagery and experience motivation on the psychological mechanism among DanceSport athletes in Region XI through the use of adapted questionnaires in the quantitative phase and the validated guide questions for the focused group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview (IDI) in the qualitative phase.

1.3 Research Questions

The objective of this study is to examine how dance imagery and experience motivation affect psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes in Region XI. More precisely, it aims to address the following inquiries:

1) What is the status of dance imagery among DanceSport athletes?
2) What is the status of experience motivation among DanceSport athletes?
3) What is the status of psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes?
4) Do dance imagery and experience motivation significantly influence the psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Dance Imagery

Dance imagery is a complex, interdisciplinary concept involving mental representations that enhance creativity and movement. Researchers have found that dancers employ imagery for multiple purposes, with studies revealing that frequent imagery use can improve movement quality, concentration, self-confidence, and emotional regulation (Cantik *et al.*, 2021). Higher-level dancers typically demonstrate more sophisticated imagery techniques, using both visual and kinesthetic representations to enhance their performance (Golomer *et al.*, 2008; Nordin, 2006). Furthermore, dance technique involves a nuanced understanding of body movement as it relates to space, energy, and time. Research highlights that technique goes beyond mere physical execution, encompassing the mind-body connection and personal artistic expression (Meenan, 2013; Rothmund, 2023). Mental imagery is integral to technical development, enhancing precision, spatial awareness, and overall performance quality (Orlandi *et al.*, 2020).

Additionally, dance provides a unique avenue for personal exploration and transformation. Researchers note that dancers strive to authentically embody characters by engaging with their emotional and physical dimensions (Noice & Noice, 2002; Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Movement quality depends on body positioning, energy, spatial coverage, and performance dynamics (Zhang, 2022; Hendry *et al.*, 2022).

On the other hand, Mastery in dance combines technical skill, creative innovation, and emotional depth. Studies indicate that mastery evolves through consistent practice and is influenced by factors such as skill acquisition, positive self-image, and innovative pedagogical approaches (Song *et al.,* 2024; Mainwaring, 2010). Mastery imagery effectively helps dancers regulate anxiety and improve performance under stressful conditions (Williams *et al.*, 2021).

Meanwhile, goal-setting emerges as a critical factor in dancers' development and motivation. Research suggests that task-oriented goals and personal aspirations drive dancers to improve their skills, learn new techniques, and overcome challenges (Salo, 2019; Nieminen, 2001). Mastery-oriented goal structures in dance training foster motivation, balancing artistic growth with performance demands (Andrzejewski *et al.*, 2013).

2.2 Experience Motivation

Dance is a dynamic art form, blending motivational, experiential, and cultural dimensions. Research suggests that dance experience plays a vital role in enhancing individual enjoyment and well-being, rooted in social, cultural, and physical values (Gardner, 2008; Kirsch & Cross, 2021). The Dance Motivation Inventory (DMI) identifies key motivational factors such as mood enhancement, socializing, escapism, fitness, and personal development. Among these, mood enhancement is the strongest motivator for both genders (Maráz *et al.*, 2015; Granados, 2015).

Dance significantly enhances interpersonal skills and social connectivity, as numerous studies have shown. Ballroom dancing, in particular, has been found to improve communication, self-confidence, and social interactions (Rebrikova, 2024; Malkogeorgos, 2011). Researchers have observed that dance participants experience increased social support, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging, with varying motivations between genders - women typically seek learning and personal growth, while men often approach dance with more hesitation (Cuadrado, 2018; Murcia, 2010).

Experientially, dance provides a transformative journey, fostering self-discovery and personal growth. Participants often describe dance as a joyful and expressive outlet, enabling them to explore vulnerabilities and new forms of expression (Salo, 2019; Cremer *et al.*, 2017). An eight-month study revealed that dance programs can create an "*oasis from stress,*" fostering supportive environments and promoting personal empowerment (Duberg *et al.*, 2016). Dancers often experience "*crystallising moments*" that increase their commitment and dance identity (Pickard & Bailey, 2009).

As an entertainment form, dance transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, serving as a medium of emotional expression and connection (Greg, 2024; Qilin, 2019). It provides a unique escape mechanism, allowing individuals to address stress, psychological challenges, and personal limitations (Hanna, 2017; Tao *et al.*, 2022). Dancing offers a refuge for self-expression, enabling individuals to explore boundless possibilities without fear of judgment (Carapellotti *et al.*, 2022).

Personal development emerges as a critical aspect of dance participation. Unlike traditional sports, dancers compete primarily with themselves, continuously striving for self-improvement and skill refinement (Sobash, 2012). The discipline offers diverse career opportunities, including professional performance, choreography, teaching, and therapy (Rounds, 2016; NYFA, 2023). However, the profession's performance-oriented nature can also present challenges, potentially leading to maladaptive behaviors that require careful management (Staden *et al.*, 2009).

Dance offers holistic benefits, enriching emotional, physical, social, and spiritual well-being. Studies consistently highlight dance's role in improving self-esteem, well-being, and coping mechanisms (Murcia *et al.*, 2010). For independent dancers, intrinsic motivation, commitment, and mental resilience are crucial for navigating career challenges (Aujla & Farrer, 2015). Intrinsic motivation, particularly the desire for stimulation and knowledge acquisition, plays a significant role in sustained dance participation (Stavridis *et al.*, 2015).

2.3 Psychological Mechanisms

Psychological mechanisms in DanceSport encompass intricate interpersonal dynamics, partnership traits, and performance-related factors. Research has identified key components of partnerships, including instrumental and expressive ties, that significantly influence athlete engagement and competitive performance (Liu *et al.*, 2023a, 2024). The development of the Partnership Scale-DanceSport Couples (PS-DSC) provides a validated tool for assessing these intricate relationship dynamics, highlighting seven critical domains such as mutual understanding, intimacy, and affection (Liu *et al.*, 2022). DanceSport partnerships are defined by distinct psychological dynamics, with obligatory instrumental ties strongly influencing cognitive states and athlete engagement (Liu, 2023; Liu, 2022). Despite their benefits, the intensity of DanceSport partnerships often results in psychological stress (Čačković, 2012). Successful couples demonstrate remarkable traits, including higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability (Šifrar *et al.*, 2020; Majoross *et al.*, 2008).

Dance imagery is a critical mechanism in enhancing performance by refining movement precision and mental preparation. As professional dancers progress in their careers, they adopt increasingly sophisticated kinesthetic imagery to optimize technical execution and artistic expression (Nordin & Cumming, 2006). Psychological skills such as arousal control, concentration, and self-confidence significantly impact dance performance (Hanrahan, 1996). However, researchers note limitations in dance-specific measurement tools and methodologies, calling for more rigorous research approaches (Pavlik & Nordin-Bates, 2016).

Motivation is a cornerstone of dancers' psychological experiences, influencing their engagement and long-term participation. Intrinsic motivation factors, including personal development and desire for stimulation, are primary drivers of dance participation (Stavridis *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2020). The activity positively affects psychological well-being, with studies showing an increase in positive psychological components and decreased negative experiences (Hrusová, 2015; Lobo *et al.*, 2022).

DanceSport's interdisciplinary nature is evident in its integration of cognitive neuroscience insights and conditioning techniques borrowed from aesthetic sports like gymnastics (Cross *et al.*, 2014). The study of Outevsky (2015) suggests adapting conditioning methodologies from gymnastics and figure skating to DanceSport training. Mainwaring (2017) additionally draws attention to psychological risk factors, including stress and coping strategies that impact performance and potential injuries.

Interpersonal perception profoundly impacts DanceSport partnerships, influencing teamwork, synchronization, and overall performance quality. Research indicates that the success of dance couples depends on mutual understanding, intimacy, and shared values (Vidrin, 2024). Gender differences play a significant role, with women's satisfaction in joint physical activity linked to perceptions of dominance and partnership dynamics (Harvanová, 2018).

3. Method

This section outlines the methods and procedures employed in conducting this study. It covers various aspects such as the research design, place of study, participants, instruments, data collection and analysis methods, sequencing, anticipated methodological issues, trustworthiness, validity concerns, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative research design, particularly employing a descriptive correlational study. A descriptive correlational approach was adopted to address the research problem and achieve the study's objectives. This method, which evaluated relationships between two or more variables, was deemed suitable for examining the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Schmitz, 2012; Hancourt, 2016). Descriptive correlation analysis aims to measure associations between variables within the same population or across different populations, measuring characteristics from the same individual and calculating correlations between them (Curtis & Dempsey, 2015).

3.2 Place of Study

This study targeted DanceSport athletes from higher education institutions in Region XI (Davao Region), located in southern Mindanao, as shown in Figure 4. This region comprised five provinces: Davao del Norte, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur, Davao de Oro, Davao Occidental, and Davao City.

The researcher conducted the study since the region was rich with school-based DanceSport athletes. Tertiary schools included either colleges or universities under the Commission on Higher Education Institutions. It included school categories such as sectarian and non-sectarian institutions. In this way, the researcher aimed to provide valuable insights into dance imagery, experience motivation, and psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes and within the broader educational community. Lastly, the researcher selected Region XI higher education institutions as the site for this study because they already had established dance troupes, providing a pool of participants for the study. Additionally, focusing on these higher education institutions allowed for a targeted investigation into how institutional support influenced dancers' experiences and confidence levels.

3.3 Participants

A complete enumeration (census) sampling method was employed, ensuring all members of the target population were included. In this type of sampling, every member of the population was studied, and no element of the population was left out or excluded from the research (Mizuno & Komatsuzaki, 2021).

For this research, specific inclusion criteria guided the selection of participants from the dance troupe. The primary consideration of this study was tertiary DanceSport

couples who had been partners for more than two years. Additionally, DanceSport couples who had participated at least at the regional level and were part of either sectarian or non-sectarian higher education institutions were included. For the exclusion criteria, DanceSport couples who were below 18 years old, had been partners for less than two years or had not participated or competed in Regional DanceSport events were excluded. This complete enumeration of DanceSport athletes provided sufficient information based on their varied experiences for the needed analysis of this study.

3.4 Quantitative Strand

The participants of the study were the complete list of DanceSport couple athletes in higher education institutions in Region XI. Employing complete enumeration sampling in the quantitative phase was advantageous for selecting DanceSport couples from the entire Region XI with its five provinces. This approach ensured a comprehensive representation of the target population by including all DanceSport couples within the region.

3.5 Research Instruments

This study employed an adapted survey questionnaire. These questionnaires underwent content validity assessment by a panel of experts and pilot testing to ensure their validity and reliability. Feedback from the experts, including comments, corrections, and suggestions, was incorporated into the final revisions of the questionnaires.

The first questionnaire, known as the dance imagery questionnaire, from the study of Nordin *et al.* (2006), had four domains: techniques, role and movement quality, mastery, and goals, each containing four items. This tool measured the frequency with which dancers engaged in various types of imagery.

The researcher contextualized the questionnaire to align with the study's context. Changes were made to the wording of the items, and respondents provided answers using a 5-point Likert scale with the following levels: 5 for (Strongly Agree), 4 for (Agree), 3 for (Somewhat Agree), 2 for (Disagree), and 1 for (Strongly Disagree). These modifications aimed to provide clarity and consistency in assessing the level of dance imagery experienced by participants.

The Cronbach's alpha values were .81 for technique, .87 for role and movement quality, .80 for mastery, and .83 for goals—all above the .70 cutoff for adequate test-retest reliability, indicating acceptable internal consistency and the reliability of the survey questionnaire.

Range of Means	Description	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	Dance imagery is always evident among DanceSport athletes.
3.40 – 4.19	High	Dance imagery is often evident among DanceSport athletes.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately High	Dance imagery is sometimes evident DanceSport athletes.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	Dance imagery is rarely evident DanceSport athletes.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	Dance imagery is never evident DanceSport athletes.

The second part of the instrument was the experience motivation questionnaire originally developed by Argan *et al.* (2021). It was composed of five domains, namely: sociability with three items, experience with four items, entertainment with three items, escape with four items, and personal development with four items.

This tool measured the views of individuals who participated in DanceSport. The researcher modified the questionnaire to align with the study's context. Changes were made to the wording of the items, and respondents provided answers using a 5-point Likert scale with the following levels: 5 for (Strongly Agree), 4 for (Agree), 3 for (Somewhat Agree), 2 for (Disagree), and 1 for (Strongly Disagree).

Range of Means	Description	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	Experience motivation is always manifested among DanceSport athletes.
3.40 – 4.19	High	Experience motivation is often manifested among DanceSport athletes.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately High	Experience motivation is sometimes manifested among DanceSport athletes.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	Experience motivation is rarely among manifested DanceSport athletes.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	Experience motivation is never manifested among DanceSport athletes.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed: .83 for sociability, .81 for experience, .80 for entertainment, .83 for escape, and .89 for personal development—all surpassing the 0.70 threshold. This indicated that the experience motivation scale utilized in this research held validity and reliability, affirming its effectiveness in measuring the intended construct.

The third section of the instrument was the psychological mechanisms questionnaire from the research conducted by Liu *et al.* (2023). There were three domains of this variable: obligatory instrumental ties with five items, expressive ties with four items, and interpersonal perception with three items. This tool measured the partnership between DanceSport couples. The questionnaire was adapted to allow respondents to provide their answers using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 for (Strongly Agree) to 1 for (Strongly Disagree).

Range of Means	Description	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	Psychological mechanisms are always demonstrated among DanceSport athletes
3.40 – 4.19	High	Psychological mechanisms are often demonstrated among DanceSport athletes
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately High	Psychological mechanisms are sometimes demonstrated among DanceSport athletes
1.80 – 2.59	Low	Psychological mechanisms are rarely demonstrated among DanceSport athletes
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	Psychological mechanisms are never

		demonstrated among DanceSport athletes

Cronbach's alpha values were .93 for obligatory instrumental ties, .87 for expressive ties, and .72 for interpersonal perception. These results, with values exceeding 0.70, demonstrated that the psychological mechanisms scale employed in this research was a valid and reliable tool, confirming its suitability for accurately measuring the intended construct.

3.6 Data Collection

To facilitate quantitative data collection, the researcher obtained authorization from the Dean of the UIC Graduate School. Prior to administering the validated questionnaires, the researcher secured a certificate of compliance from the Research Ethics Committee to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines.

With the endorsement and compliance certificate, the researcher requested formal permission from the presidents of the higher education institutions (HEIs) involved in the study. Upon approval, additional consent was sought from the academic affairs offices and the respective Deans of the colleges within Region XI HEIs. Copies of the authorization letters were attached to the formal request addressed to these Deans.

Before collecting data, respondents were briefed about the study's purpose and provided with an Informed Consent Form (ICF). Participants signed the ICF, affirming their willingness to participate voluntarily. Clear instructions were given for completing the questionnaire, emphasizing the confidentiality of their responses. To protect privacy, pseudonyms were assigned, and completed questionnaires were coded for anonymity. Respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions, and contact information was provided for any queries or concerns.

After the questionnaires were completed, the researcher collected and securely stored them. Data were encoded with proper labeling to ensure systematic and organized analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves systematically examining and interpreting collected data to derive meaningful insights. What distinguished the explanatory sequential design was its two-phase approach:

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the quantitative data, assessing the degree of dance imagery, experience motivation, and psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes of higher education institutions in Region XI. First, the mean was used to assess the levels of dance imagery, experience motivation, and psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes. Specifically, the mean helped in understanding the characteristics of specific data sets by providing an average calculated from the sum of all measurements.

Second, the standard deviation measured the spread of the data distribution, indicating the extent to which respondents' responses varied, while multiple regression analysis ascertained whether dance imagery and experience motivation significantly influenced psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes of higher education institutions in Region XI.

4. Results

4.1 The Status of Dance Imagery among DanceSport Athletes

It is shown in Table 1.1 that in totality, the status of dance imagery of DanceSport athletes has an overall mean of 4.21, which is described as very high, which means that dance imagery is always evident among DanceSport athletes. Considering the degrees of dispersion in this variable, the standard deviation is .56, indicating that the responses are relatively clustered around the mean. In addition, this section will discuss the result of the following indicators: technique, role and movement quality, mastery, and goal.

Table 1.1: The Status of Dance Imagery among DanceSport Athletes

		Mean	SD	Description
Technique				
1.	Imagining specific dance skills like a jump a pirouette being performed perfectly.	4.06	.87	High
2.	Imagining key points in a dance sequence like entrances/exits, and difficult parts.	4.06	.93	High
3.	Imagining what the steps they are doing will look like.	4.40	.90	Very High
4.	Imagining the technical details of a dance, like places to be, and parts of a movement.	4.50	.79	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.25**	**.75**	**Very High**
Role and Movement Quality *Imagining …*				
1.	taking on the different qualities required for a role, like being powerful or being really slow.	4.28	.83	Very High
2.	the forces required for or associated with a movement.	4.34	.74	Very High
3.	focusing on what they need to express while performing.	4.30	.86	Very High
4.	taking on the characteristics of something else, like the arm is a wing on a bird and spins like a spinning top.	4.00	.97	High
	Category Mean	**4.23**	**.73**	**Very High**
Mastery *Imagining …*				
1.	themselves being psyched up.	3.82	.85	High
2.	themselves performing with anxiety under control.	3.70	.89	High
3.	how to carry out their plans, like what to do in rehearsal	4.50	.65	Very High
4.	themselves dealing well with any difficulties that may arise, like problems with costume.	3.98	1.04	High
	Category Mean	**4.00**	**.65**	**High**
Goal *Imagining …*				

1.	working hard to reach their goals in dance.	4.42	.88	Very High
2.	achieving their dreams and goals for dance, like getting a certain role, getting a position in a company	4.20	.81	Very High
3.	what they will take to reach their goals like hard work, applications and other procedures	4.36	.88	Very High
4.	short-term goals, such as getting through a performance or class.	4.36	.78	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.33**	**.76**	**Very High**
	Overall Mean	**4.21**	**.56**	**Very High**

A. Technique

This domain was rated by DanceSport athletes with a category mean rating of 4.25 described as very high, with items mean ratings that range from 4.06 to 4.50. Particularly, the items *imagining specific dance skills like a jump, a pirouette being performed perfectly*, and *key points in a dance sequence like entrances/exits, and difficult parts* have an equal mean rating of 4.06, described as high, while the item *imagining the technical details of a dance like places to be, and parts of a movement* has a mean rating of 4.50 described as very high.

B. Role and Movement Quality

This domain reveals a category mean of 4.23, which is described as very high. In particular, the mean ratings in this category range from 4.00 to 4.34. It shows that the item, *imagining taking on the characteristics of something else like arm is wing on a bird, and spin like a spinning top* has a mean rating of 4.00, described as high, while the item, *imagining the forces required for or associated with a movement* has a mean of 4.34 described as very high.

C. Mastery

The category mean of mastery is 4.00, described as high, with mean ratings of the items that range from 3.82 to 4.50. It shows that the items *imagining themselves being psyched up* have a mean rating of 3.82, and the item *imagining how to carry out their plans, like what to do in rehearsal,* with a mean of 4.50, is described as very high.

D. Goal

It reflects a category mean of 4.33, described as very high, with mean ratings that range from 4.20 to 4.42. Evidently, the items, *achieving their dreams and goals for dance like getting a certain role, getting a position in a company* reveals a mean rating of 4.20 described as very high, while *imagining working hard to reach their goals in dance* shows a mean of 4.42 which is described as very high.

4.2 The Status of Experience Motivation among DanceSport Athletes

The status of experience motivation among DanceSport athletes is reflected in Table 1.2, with an overall mean of 4.08, described as high, which means that experience motivation is often manifested among DanceSport athletes. In addition, its standard deviation of .67

is less than one, showing that the responses of the DanceSports athletes are clustered close to the mean.

Table 1.2: The Status of Experience Motivation among DanceSport Athletes

		Mean	SD	Description
Sociability *Joining dance …*				
1.	with their friends to do something.	3.88	.98	High
2.	because it was a social event.	3.94	.79	High
3.	to be with their friends.	3.50	1.07	High
	Category Mean	**3.77**	**.80**	**High**
Experience *Joining dance …*				
1.	because they were curious.	3.62	1.14	High
2.	to do something different.	4.36	.92	Very High
3.	to see new things.	4.40	.93	Very High
4.	because they were curious about the different events.	4.18	1.06	High
	Category Mean	**4.14**	**.81**	**High**
Entertainment				
1.	joining dance for fun.	4.10	.93	High
2.	attending dances because they enjoyed such activity.	4.56	.64	Very High
3.	joining dance to see the fun activities.	4.46	.65	Very High
	Category Mean	**3.70**	**.84**	**High**
Escape *Joining dance …*				
1.	because they want to move away from the daily stress.	4.10	1.03	High
2.	because they feel bored	4.12	.98	High
3.	to add changes to the flow of daily life.	4.34	.89	Very High
4.	to get away from a routine life.	3.68	1.27	High
	Category Mean	**4.06**	**.88**	**High**
Personal Development				
1.	improving themselves in dancing.	4.56	.73	Very High
2.	learning something about dance in the professional sense.	4.62	.60	Very High
3.	seeing their weaknesses of dance and improving them.	4.50	.71	Very High
4.	catching up to date with the dance.	4.30	.91	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.49**	**.61**	**Very High**
	Overall Mean	**4.08**	**.57**	**High**

A. Sociability

The category mean of this domain is 3.77, described as high. As shown in the table, item mean ratings in this category range from 3.50 to 3.94, with the item *joining dance to be with their friends* reflecting a mean of 3.50, described as high, while the item *joining dance because it was a social event* shows a mean of 3.94, which is also described as high.

B. Experience

A high category mean of 4.14 is reflected for experience. As shown in the table, the mean of items in this category ranges from 3.62 to 4.40. On the one hand, the item *joining dance because they were curious* has a mean of 3.62, described as high, while on the other hand, the item *joining dance to see new things* is shown with a mean of 4.40, described as very high.

C. Entertainment

It reflects a category mean of 3.70, described as high with item mean ratings that range from 4.10 to 4.56; the item, *joining dance for fun*, reflects a mean of 4.10, while the items, *attending dances because they enjoyed such activity* reflect a mean of 4.56, which is described as very high.

D. Escape

Notably, the escape factor shows a category mean of 4.06, described as high, with item mean ratings that range from 3.68 to 4.34; the item *joining dance to get away from a routine life* shows a mean rating of 3.68, described as high. Similarly, the item *joining dance to add changes to the flow of daily life* has a mean of 4.34, which is described as very high.

E. Personal Development

A very high category mean of 4.49 is reflected for this domain. Also, as shown in the table, the mean of items in this category ranges from 4.30 to 4.62. On the one hand, the item *catching up to date with the dance* has a mean rating of 4.30, described as very high, while on the other hand, the item *learning something about dance in the professional sense* shows a mean of 4.62, described as very high.

4.3 The Status of Psychological Mechanisms among DanceSport Athletes

It is shown in Table 1.3 that the status of psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes has an overall mean rating of 4.15, which is described as high.

Table 1.3: The Status of Psychological Mechanisms among DanceSport Athletes

Mean			SD	Description
Obligatory Instrumental Ties *Believing that as an athlete…*				
1.	cooperating with their dance partner gets them closer to their goal.	4.44	.76	Very High
2.	cooperating with their dance partner makes them grow professionally.	4.48	.79	Very High
3.	cooperating with their dance partner helps them achieve their goal.	4.46	.84	Very High
4.	cooperating with their dance partner promotes their personal ability.	4.60	.76	Very High
5.	following the training plan agreed upon with their dance partner is obligatory.	4.28	.81	Very High

	Category Mean	**4.45**	**.70**	**Very High**
Expressive Ties				
1.	having full of passion for dance training or competition, their dance partner, and themselves.	4.22	1.04	Very High
2.	getting along with their dance partner.	4.00	1.09	High
3.	appreciating each other, their dance partner and themselves.	4.12	1.04	High
4.	caring about each other, their dance partner and themselves.	4.04	1.05	High
	Category Mean	**4.09**	**.99**	**High**
Interpersonal Perception				
1.	feeling they really know their dance partner.	3.82	1.08	High
2.	being tied together with their dance partner.	3.78	1.11	High
3.	being willing to share their true thoughts with their dance partner.	4.12	.75	High
	Category Mean	**3.91**	**.78**	**High**
	Overall Mean	**4.15**	**.77**	**High**

It means that psychological mechanisms are often demonstrated among DanceSport athletes. Considering the degrees of dispersion in this variable, the standard deviation is .77, indicating that the responses are clustered near the mean.

A. Obligatory Instrumental Ties

The category mean is 4.45, which is described as very high. As shown in the table, items in this category range from 4.28 to 4.60. The item *believing that as an athlete following the training plan agreed with their dance partner is obligatory* has a mean of 4.28, described as very high. Meanwhile, the item *believing that as an athlete cooperating with their dance partner promotes their personal ability* has a mean rating of 4.60, described as very high.

B. Expressive Ties

The category mean is 4.09, which is described as high. As shown in Table 1.3, the mean of the items in this category ranges from 4.00 to 4.22. Specifically, the item, *getting along with their dance partner* has a mean of 4.00, described as high, while the item *having full of passion in dance training or competition their dance partner and themselves* reflects a mean rating of 4.22 described as very high.

C. Interpersonal Ties

It has a category mean of 3.91, which is described as high, with item mean ratings that range from 3.78 to 4.12. The item, *being tied together with their dance partner* has a mean of 3.78, which is described as high, while the item *being willing to share their true thoughts with their dance partner* has a mean of 4.12, which is described as high.

4.4 Significance of the Influence of Dance Imagery and Experience Motivation on Psychological Mechanisms among DanceSport Athletes

Table 2 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis, which is set at level of significance (α = 0.05 (two-tailed).

Table 2: Significance of the Influence of Dance Imagery and Experience Motivation on the Psychological Mechanisms among DanceSport Athletes

		Psychological Mechanisms			
Individual Influence of Predictors		**Standardized Coefficient**	**t**	**p-value**	**Remarks**
Dance Imagery		.37	3.94	.00	Significant
Experience Motivation		.58	6.09	.00	Significant
Combined Influence of Predictors					
R	.80				
R^2	.64				
F	42.49				
P	.00				Significant

The standardized beta coefficient of dance imagery is .37, with t-statistics of 3.94 and p =.00, which is less than the set level of .05 significance. This indicates that in individual capacity, dance imagery significantly influences the psychological mechanisms among DanceSport athletes. This means that for every unit increase in the status of dance imagery of DanceSport athletes, there is a corresponding increase of .37 in their psychological mechanisms.

Furthermore, the standardized beta coefficient of experience motivation is .58, with a t-statistics of 6.09 and p =.00, which is less than the set level of .05 significance. This result indicates that in an individual capacity, experience motivation is a significant predictor of psychological mechanisms. This means that for every unit, an increase in the status of experience motivation corresponds to an increase of .58 in the psychological mechanisms of DanceSport athletes.

Further, the *F*-ratio in Table 2 indicates whether the overall regression model, which is the combined effect of dance imagery and experience motivation as predictors of psychological mechanisms, is a good fit for the empirical data in this study. The results reveal that dance imagery and experience motivation significantly influence the psychological mechanisms of DanceSport athletes, as shown in the result of $F(2, 47) = 42.49$, $p = .00$. Therefore, the regression model is a good fit for the empirical data of this study.

Furthermore, the R-square value reflects the proportion of variance in the psychological mechanisms that can be explained by dance imagery and experience motivation. The R-square value is reported at .64, indicating that 64 percent of the variability of the psychological mechanisms of DanceSport athletes can be explained by the combined influence of the two independent variables. The remaining 39 percent is attributable to the unexplained variance or other factors not included in this study.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Status of Dance Imagery among DanceSport Athletes

The findings reveal that DanceSport athletes exhibit very high levels of dance imagery, demonstrating advanced mental visualization skills that enhance technique, movement quality, and performance mastery. This aligns with previous research by Moraru and Popovici (2018) and Cantik *et al.* (2021), which emphasizes the pivotal role of imagery in improving motor execution, emotional regulation, and strategic thinking in performance.

Athletes displayed highly refined visualization skills for technical details, enabling precise execution of movements and enhanced spatial awareness. These findings corroborate the work of Orlandi *et al.* (2020) and Spessato (2013), who highlight the significant impact of imagery on spatial orientation and movement fluidity. Furthermore, the athletes' ability to mentally embody roles and enhance artistic expression reflects their mastery in experience-taking and character immersion, as discussed by Noice and Noice (2002) and Kaufman and Libby (2012).

In addition to technical and artistic benefits, the results indicate strong mental preparation skills among athletes, equipping them to manage pressure and overcome challenges with resilience. This supports findings by Williams *et al.* (2021) and Monsma & Overby (2004), which emphasize the role of imagery in anxiety reduction and confidence building. Athletes also demonstrated a goal-oriented mindset, balancing short-term objectives with long-term aspirations. These findings align with Nieminen (2001) and Andrzejewski *et al.* (2013), who underscore the critical relationship between goal orientation and sustained motivation in dance contexts.

Overall, these findings highlight the central role of dance imagery in fostering technical, emotional, and motivational excellence among DanceSport athletes. They also extend existing research by showcasing the interplay of mental preparation and artistic expression in competitive dance settings..

5.2 The Status of Experience Motivation among DanceSport Athletes

DanceSport athletes exhibit a high level of experience motivation, driven by intrinsic factors such as personal growth, meaningful experiences, and social interaction. These findings align with Maráz *et al.* (2015) and Stavridis *et al.* (2015), who underscore intrinsic motivation's role in fostering resilience and skill enhancement. The prominence of sociability within experience motivation reflects the critical role of collaboration and social connection in dance, consistent with Rebrikova (2024) and Sharma (2023), who highlight dance's impact on social well-being and relationship building.

Athletes also value DanceSport as a medium for personal exploration and growth, echoing the findings of Duberg *et al.* (2016) and Pickard & Bailey (2009), which emphasize dance's role in empowerment and achieving flow states. High ratings for entertainment motivation underscore the enjoyment and therapeutic benefits of DanceSport, as supported by Murcia (2010) and Siljamäki (2012). Furthermore, many athletes utilize dance as a coping mechanism for stress relief, as suggested by Hernandes (2018).

However, consistent with Cardoso (2017), professional dancers may face stress related to performance demands. Overall, the elevated experience motivation among athletes highlights their commitment to continuous improvement and personal fulfillment, aligning with Murcia *et al.* (2010) and Aujla & Farrer (2015), who emphasize intrinsic motivation's role in skill and career development.

5.3 The Status of Psychological Mechanisms among DanceSport Athletes

Athletes reported high levels of psychological mechanisms, reflecting the significance of partner cooperation and emotional bonds in DanceSport. The findings emphasize strong cooperation for goal achievement, supported by Engelhard (2019) but cautioned by Čačković (2012) regarding potential stress.

Moreover, emotional investment in partnerships enhances performance dynamics, which is consistent with Esquiva (2019) and Guilbault (2020), who stress the importance of harmony and communication. Athletes demonstrate a deep understanding of their partners, supporting Šifrar *et al.* (2020) and Majoross *et al.* (2008), who emphasize collaboration and conflict management in successful partnerships.

5.4 Significance of the Influence of Dance Imagery and Experience Motivation on the Psychological Mechanisms of DanceSport Athletes

Linear regression analysis revealed that dance imagery and experience motivation significantly influence athletes' psychological mechanisms. Mental visualization enhances technical and relational dynamics, while experience motivation fosters growth and commitment. These findings align with Nordin & Cumming (2006) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which highlight the roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in motivation and performance. Dance imagery builds competence through mental rehearsal, while experience motivation strengthens commitment, reinforcing mutual respect and cooperation in partnerships.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter highlights the conclusion and recommendations based on the results yielded from the study.

6.1 Conclusions

The status of dance imagery among DanceSport athletes was high, consistently contributing to enhanced focus, technique, and emotional engagement. Similarly, experience motivation was also high, driven by sociability, entertainment, and personal growth. Psychological mechanisms, including collaboration and expressive bonds, were significantly evident.

1) Dance imagery and experience motivation, individually and collectively, had a significant influence on psychological mechanisms. Each is a strong predictor of psychological mechanisms, meaning improvements in either factor correspond to

enhanced mental readiness, collaboration, and emotional connection in DanceSport athletes.

2) Athletes confirmed the combined significance of dance imagery and experience motivation in shaping psychological mechanisms. These factors play a crucial role in fostering mental focus, performance confidence, and interpersonal bonds.
3) The integration of quantitative and qualitative data provided a deeper understanding of how dance imagery, experience motivation, and psychological mechanisms interact. The findings from both approaches are consistent and mutually supportive, confirming the critical role of mental and motivational factors in DanceSport performance.

6.2 Recommendations

1) Coaches may develop structured imagery training programs to enhance mental focus and performance precision further. Include visualization exercises in daily practice routines to strengthen athletes' connection to their routines and goals.
2) Organize engaging and social activities within the team to sustain motivation. Provide opportunities for skill development, competitions, and recreational events to maintain athletes' interest and enthusiasm.
3) Facilitate team-building workshops to strengthen interpersonal bonds and collaboration among athletes and dance couples. Include sessions on emotional intelligence and stress management to support psychological well-being.
4) Future studies may explore additional factors affecting psychological mechanisms, including cultural or environmental influences. Collaboration with sports psychologists can expand the understanding and application of mental techniques in DanceSport.

This study contributes to DanceSport by emphasizing the importance of mental imagery, motivation, and psychological preparation for competitive success. Athletes gain insights into enhancing their mental resilience and focus, while coaches are provided with actionable strategies to integrate mental training into performance routines. The findings also advance knowledge in sports psychology, bridging the gap between mental preparation and athletic performance in DanceSport.

This research underscores the critical role of dance imagery, experience motivation, and psychological mechanisms in the performance of DanceSport athletes. By addressing these interconnected factors, the study provides practical guidance for fostering excellence in the field. Continued exploration and application of these insights will drive innovation and success in DanceSport.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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