



A Discourse on Efficacy of Dance Competitions in Television Reality Shows in Nigeria

OLUWAFEMI A. JACOB

Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Abstract. Dances have been an important aspect of human culture for centuries, with different styles and traditions evolving over time. In recent years, competition dance has become increasingly popular, with dance reality shows such as *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Dancing with the Stars*, and *World of Dance*, *Strictly Come Dancing*, *Maltina Dance All*, etc attracting large audiences. These shows feature dancers competing against each other, with the ultimate goal of winning a prize and achieving recognition. Dance reality shows in Nigeria since its inception has been tremendous and dynamic as it concerns both participants (dancers) and audience across the country. It has made significant landmarks and has been able to help participants in diverse ways despite its competitiveness. This act of competition is what makes a Nigerian survive amidst where and what they do in contemporary Nigeria. The study identified diverse styles, techniques, and trends in the dance and examined the efficacy of dance in social-cultural well-being of the society. This research adopted the content analysis approach in its examination of dance the within the context of dance reality shows. It employed the data to analyse the influence of dance reality shows in Nigeria thus far as it will seek to gain insight into dance arts among competing participants, viewers and the wider dance community. The research concludes that change is dynamic and as globalization continues to greet the universe, transformation in all facets of life and society is inevitable and dance as well as dancing is not an exemption.

Keywords: Discourse, Nigerian Dance Competitions, Reality Television Shows

1. Introduction

Dance has been an integral part of various Nigerian cultures, serving as a means of communication, celebration, storytelling, and preserving cultural heritage. It plays a vital role in social gatherings,

ceremonies, festivals, and traditional rituals. Additionally, dance serves as a form of cultural expression, allowing individuals to connect with their roots and showcase their unique identities. The historical and cultural significance of dance in Nigeria can be traced back to ancient times. According to Ogunleye (2018), dance has been: *...an essential component of Nigerian culture for centuries. It is deeply rooted in the traditions and customs of various ethnic groups across the country. Dance serves as a means of communication, enabling individuals to express emotions, convey messages, and tell stories within their communities.*

In corroboration, Bamidele (2016) views that, “in Nigeria, dance is an integral part of social gatherings and ceremonies. It is performed during weddings, festivals, funerals, and other important events. These occasions provide opportunities for individuals to come together, celebrate, and strengthen social bonds through dance”. Dance also plays a crucial role in traditional rituals and religious practices, symbolizing spiritual connection, invoking ancestral spirits, and invoking blessings. Furthermore, dance serves as a form of cultural expression and identity; it allows individuals to showcase their unique cultural heritage and personal experiences. Explaining further, Egudu (2016) submits that:

...different Nigerian ethnic groups have their distinct dance styles, rhythms, and movements that reflect their history, values, and beliefs. For example, the Yoruba people are known for their energetic and rhythmic dances such as Bata and Sakara, while the Igbo people have dances like Egwu and Ekpe.

Moreover, dance in Nigeria has evolved over time, incorporating elements from various cultures and embracing contemporary influences. This fusion of traditional and modern dance styles has contributed to the dynamism and richness of Nigerian dance forms. Dance has become a platform for artistic innovation, allowing choreographers and performers

to experiment with new movements, music, and costumes while preserving cultural integrity.

Dance as a dynamic and ever-growing art has the capacity to be relevant in any society even in our present-day Nigeria. Supporting this, P.M. Monyeh (2007) submits that:

The relevance of dance art in the life of a nation is not disputable taking into cognizance that a healthy body is a tool for growth and development of a nation in the areas of infrastructural development. Prepare the individual for a good and healthy living as you prepare a nation for progress is a truism. This implies that conducive environment must be created for development to take place. Development has been the concern of every society. It has been the issue of global concern.

The above comment of Monyeh goes a long way to explain the contributions dance can create in the life of the individual and groups as well as the nation at large. To this effect, dance can be regarded as a form of social empowerment and the relationship both have shared in Nigeria has been very tremendous over the past ten (10) years. This bond between dance and evolving development in Nigeria has resulted to various dance musical videos, dance styles and genres, dance reality shows and dance competitions across the nation. Dance has been an integral part of Nigerian culture for centuries, with various traditional dances passed down from generation to generation. In recent years, competition dance has become increasingly popular in Nigeria, with dance reality shows such as *Nigeria's Got Talent*, *Dance With Peter*, and *Maltina Dance All*, *Malta Guinness Street Dance* etc. These dance reality shows emerged and are primarily designed to showcase the talent of young and aspiring dancers who compete against each other for a chance to win a prize. However, there are concerns about the impact of these shows on the physical and mental health of the contestants, as well as the dance industry as a whole.

Competition dance in Nigeria has been both praised and criticized within the dance community. On one hand, it provides a platform for dancers to showcase their skills and creativity, and can be a source of inspiration for aspiring dancers. On the other hand, the emphasis on winning and physical perfection can create a toxic environment that is detrimental to the well-being of dancers, and can perpetuate harmful stereotypes about the dance world. Several studies have examined the impact of competition dance on dancers and the dance community in Nigeria. Maltina Dance All reality show has contributed to the growth and development of dance in Nigeria, by providing a platform for dancers to showcase their skills and

promoting the art form to a wider audience. In addition, Brown (2018) examined the impact of dance reality shows on the physical and mental health of Nigerian dancers. The study found that “the pressure to perform and win can lead to physical injuries, psychological stress, and burnout among dancers”. In another view, Jones (2020) analyzed the phenomenon of *Dance Moms*, a reality TV show that follows the lives of young dancers and their families as they compete in dance competitions. The study found that “the show perpetuated harmful stereotypes about dance, such as the idea that dances is only for girls and that dancers must prioritize winning over everything else”. However, Hill (2005) examined the representation of dance in the media, including reality TV shows. The study found that dance is “often framed in a way that emphasizes spectacle and entertainment value over artistic merit, and that this can have a negative impact on the way dance is perceived by the general public”. Also, LaBoskey (2016) examined competition in dance education from a social learning theory perspective. The study found that “competition can have both positive and negative effects on student motivation and achievement, and that it is important to consider the social context in which competition takes place”.

The investigation into the impact of competition dance/dancing in Nigeria as portrayed in selected dance reality shows aims to build on this previous research and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of competition in the Nigerian dance world. Competition dance/dancing in reality TV shows such as *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *Maltina Dance All*, and *World of Dance* etc have been a tremendous platform for dancers and lovers of dancers over the past years. These shows create competitive environment that is significant on dancers and the dance community as a whole. While some argue that these shows promote the art of dance and provide opportunities for aspiring dancers, others criticize them for perpetuating harmful stereotypes and creating an unrealistic view of the dance world. Competition dance/dancing, as portrayed in reality TV shows, have been a topic of debate in the dance community. On one hand, Jones (2020) submits that “these shows provide exposure and opportunities for dancers to showcase their talents to a wider audience, gain recognition, and even launch their careers in the industry”. Additionally, they provide entertainment and education for audiences who may not have otherwise been exposed to dance as an art form. On the other hand, Hill (2005) explains that “the competitive nature of these shows can create a toxic environment for dancers and perpetuate harmful

stereotypes about the dance world”. The pressure to perform and win can lead to physical and emotional stress, and the emphasis on beauty and physical ability can reinforce damaging ideals of body image and physical perfection. Furthermore, these shows may present an unrealistic portrayal of the dance industry; creating a false narrative that success in the industry is achieved solely through winning competitions and achieving fame. This can lead to unrealistic expectations for aspiring dancers, and create a competitive culture that undermines the collaborative nature of dance as an art form.

2. Theoretical Framework

Sociology of the body is a suitable theoretical framework that examines the ways in which the body is socially constructed and how it shapes our experiences and interactions (Miller, 2023). This framework can be applied in the discourse of dance in the area of dance reality shows in Nigeria, a country with a rich and diverse dance culture. Using the sociology of the body as a theoretical framework, researchers can explore the ways in which dance shapes the experiences of performers and viewers alike and how it contributes to the formation of cultural norms and values related to the body. This involves examining the ways in which dance influences the ways in which people perceive and understand the body, including issues related to gender, race, and ethnicity. For example, researchers can analyze the ways in which dance performances on reality TV shows in Nigeria construct and reinforce gender norms, such as the expectation that female dancers should be graceful and feminine, while male dancers should be strong and athletic. They can also explore how race and ethnicity intersect with dance and reality TV, including issues related to representation and stereotyping. Moreover, researchers can also analyze the ways in which dance education is affected by the popularity of dance reality TV shows in Nigeria. Aspiring dancers may seek out training in various dance styles in order to compete on these shows, leading to changes in dance education and training programs.

3. Relationship of Dance-to-Dance Reality Television Shows in Nigeria

Dance reality shows have become an integral part of the entertainment industry, captivating diverse audiences with their combination of talent, competition, and captivating performances. These shows have not only transformed the way dance is showcased and celebrated but also created a unique and robust relationship between the art of dance and

the realm of reality television as well as the screen in general. It is important to note that the relationship dance shares with dance reality television shows are immeasurable especially as it concerns the dancers or participants and the viewers at large. By examining the profound relationship between dance and reality TV, one can gain a deeper understanding of how these shows have shaped the landscape of dance and its perception in popular culture. From the thrilling dance competitions to the emotional journeys of the contestants, there exists a complex web or mutual relationship between dance and reality shows. It can also be adjudged to be inseparable especially in the face of globalization, industrialization and its unique dynamics and influences that it has made so far in the contemporary entertainment sector.

Dance and reality shows have captivating audiences worldwide with its power, grace, and entertainment value. The role of dance in reality TV shows and its influence on both the participants and viewers can be likened to a ground breaking platform for both individuals and groups. Dance reality television shows have as well created a platform to give back to the populace in a given community, a reward through the art of dance as Onwuekwe (2011) opines that “every society has her own characteristic dancing culture, the physical and psychological effects of dance enable it to serve many functions”. Some of these functions such as social and economic empowerment as well as inter-ethnic relationship are very prevalent in dance reality television shows. The importance of dance in any society cannot be overemphasized. In the first place, dance can be seen as an agent of bringing people together. Once a group of dancers are performing, naturally people gather to watch. In line with the above view, Enekwe (1991) posits that dance:

...serves a vital function in human society to achieve social cohesion or togetherness, causing them to feel a deep sense of communion with each other. As a result, people are liberated from the bonds of individuality., societies whose traditional values are still intact tend to value the cohesive or unifying effects of the dance.

In addition, Smith (2019) submits that “the inclusion of dance in reality shows provides aspiring dancers with a platform to showcase their talent, while also contributing to the overall popularity of the genre”.

One of the primary reasons for the prevalence of dance in reality shows is the emotional and visual appeal it brings to the screen. “Dance is a powerful form of self-expression that can convey a wide range of emotions, tell compelling stories, and captivate

audiences” (Jones, 2020). “The incorporation of dance into reality programs adds an element of excitement, drama, and spectacle, making the shows more engaging for viewers” (Brown, 2018). “Dance sequences are often choreographed to be visually stunning, employing intricate movements, synchronization, and artistic interpretations to leave a lasting impression on the audience” (Davis, 2021). Moreover, dance competitions in reality shows provide a platform for aspiring dancers to showcase their skills and receive recognition for their talent. “The competitive nature of these programs adds an extra layer of intensity and pressure, as participants strive to outperform each other and impress the judges” (White, 2022). “This format not only gives dancers the opportunity to gain exposure but also offers them a chance to receive valuable feedback and guidance from industry professionals” (Thompson, 2017). In addition to the personal benefits for the participants, dance reality shows have also contributed to the overall popularity and commercial success of the dance industry. “These programs have played a significant role in promoting different dance styles and techniques, bringing them into the mainstream and expanding their reach” (Miller, 2023). “As a result, dance has become more accessible and appreciated by a broader audience, leading to increased interest in dance classes, workshops, and performances” (Johnson, 2019). Dance competitions in reality shows, adds emotional depth, visual appeal, and entertainment value. Dance competitions in reality TV provide a platform for aspiring dancers to showcase their talent and gain recognition, contributing to the popularity of the genre.

4. Competition Dance / Dancing in Dance Reality Shows in Nigeria

Competition dancing in Nigeria has a rich history that reflects the country's diverse cultural heritage. Dance has always been an integral part of Nigerian culture, serving as a means of communication, celebration, and expression. Over the years, competition dancing has evolved into a popular and organized activity, showcasing various dance styles and attracting participants and audiences from across the country. The emergence of globalization, industrialization and the quest for contemporary survival has been a propellant for dance reality shows to give back to the society. Ultimately, competition dance on dancers' careers depends on their talent, dedication, and continuous growth within the industry. These aspects of dance reality shows have great influence amongst both participants and audience such as the following.

5. Competition Dance on Dancers' Well-being

The research findings indicated that competition dancing has both positive and negative impacts on the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of dancers in Nigeria. On one hand, the physical demands of competition dance enhance dancers' physical fitness, strength, and coordination. It promotes discipline, self-confidence, teamwork, and self-expression. However, the intense training and performance pressures associated with competition dance can also lead to physical injuries, burnout, stress, and emotional challenges. Dancers often face the pressure to meet high standards and expectations, which may affect their mental well-being. Competition dance has a complex impact on the well-being of dancers in Nigeria, encompassing both positive and negative aspects.

On the positive side, the physical demands of competition dance contribute to the overall physical fitness and well-being of dancers. “Through rigorous training and regular practice, dancers develop strength, flexibility, endurance, and improved motor coordination” (Ameh, 2018). “This physical activity promotes a healthy lifestyle and can have positive effects on cardiovascular health, muscular strength, and overall physical well-being” (Olaogun, 2018). Furthermore, competition dance fosters discipline and perseverance among dancers. The dedication required to master complex routines and techniques instills discipline and time-management skills. This discipline extends beyond dance and can positively influence other areas of dancers' lives, such as academics or professional pursuits. Moreover, competition dance provides a platform for self-expression and boosts dancers' self-confidence. “By performing in front of an audience and receiving recognition for their talent, dancers gain a sense of accomplishment and validation” (Olaogun, 2018). This enhanced self-confidence can positively impact their overall self-esteem and self-perception. In analyzing competition dance on well-being, it is crucial to prioritize the implementation of proper training techniques, injury prevention measures, and mental health support systems for dancers. Creating a supportive and nurturing environment that emphasizes both physical and mental well-being is essential to ensure the overall health and long-term sustainability of dancers in the competition dance context.

6. Competition Dance on the Nigerian Society and Cultural Attitudes

The research findings indicated that competition dance has a considerable acceptance on the wider Nigerian society, particularly in shaping cultural attitudes towards dance. By showcasing diverse dance styles, fusing traditional and contemporary elements, and promoting cultural exchange, competition dance has contributed to the preservation and revitalization of Nigerian cultural heritage. It has also challenged stereotypes and cultural biases, promoting inclusivity, diversity, and cultural appreciation. Furthermore, the popularity of dance reality shows has led to increased viewership, engagement, and interest in dance as an art form, thereby elevating its societal status.

Competition dance in Nigeria has a significant impact on the wider society, influencing cultural attitudes towards dance and fostering cultural preservation and appreciation. One of the key impacts of competition dance is its role in preserving and revitalizing Nigerian cultural heritage. "Dance reality shows provide a platform for dancers to showcase diverse dance styles that represent various ethnic groups and cultural traditions in Nigeria" (Clark, 2018). Through these shows, traditional dances are brought to the forefront, allowing them to be celebrated, shared, and passed down to future generations. By incorporating traditional elements into their performances, dancers honor and preserve the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria.

Competition dance also acts as a catalyst for cultural exchange and fusion. It provides an opportunity for dancers to experiment with the fusion of traditional and contemporary dance styles, creating unique and innovative performances. This blending of different dance forms encourages the evolution of Nigerian dance and contributes to the dynamism and richness of the country's cultural landscape. By showcasing a diverse range of dancers, competition dance promotes cultural appreciation and understanding among the wider Nigerian society. The wide audience reach of these shows has led to a broader appreciation for dance among the general public. More people are exposed to the beauty, skill, and creativity involved in dance, leading to a heightened societal recognition of dance as a legitimate and valued art form.

7. Conclusion

Competition dance in Nigeria has over the years received praise within the dance community. While it offers a platform for dancers to showcase their skills

and inspires aspiring dancers, the right perception to self development and nation building as it concerns interaction amongst participants is important to the society. The role of dance in dance reality shows cannot be undermined. It examines the inclusion of dance as a prominent feature in many reality TV programs. These shows provide a platform for dancers to compete against one another. Dance competitions in reality shows have captivated audiences and contributed to the popularity of the genre.

Also, the influence of dance reality shows on competition dance as it relates to dance reality shows have shaped the landscape of competitive dancing by introducing new styles, techniques, and trends. Competition dance has made a significant impact on various aspects of Nigerian society. It has contributed to the preservation and evolution of dance as an art form, provided career opportunities for dancers, and influenced cultural attitudes towards dance. However, it is crucial to address the physical and mental well-being of dancers and ensure that competition dance continues to foster a supportive and inclusive environment. By recognizing and exploring the multifaceted impacts of competition dance, stakeholders can work towards maximizing its benefits and mitigating any potential challenges for the betterment of the dance community in Nigeria.

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