

Long Paper

Cultural Integration in Higher Education: Embedding Oro Higalaay Dance Festival in Tertiary Physical Education Curriculum

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Abstract

The study aims to integrate the Oro Higalaay Street Dance into the Physical Education curriculum at the tertiary level. In line with the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) mandate, the revised curriculum, now known as PATHFiT (Physical Activity Towards Health and Fitness), highlights the holistic development of students through physical fitness, stress management, and appreciation of cultural expressions. Although dance is listed as a component in PATHFiT 3 and 4, it remains underrepresented in classroom instruction. The integration of cultural and festival dances, such as those from the Oro Higalaay Festival, offers an opportunity to enhance the PE program by promoting cultural heritage while addressing physical well-being. The study employs a phenomenological research design within a qualitative framework, relying on in-depth interviews, audio recordings, and the transcription of local experiences to gain a deeper understanding of



the festival's impact. Through this approach, the study uncovers the role of street dancing not just as a form of entertainment but as a medium for preserving local traditions and promoting cultural pride among the people of Cagayan de Oro and its neighboring communities. The latest version of the street dance features a combination of religious and cultural elements in its choreography, music, attire, and thematic presentations. These elements allow audiences to connect more deeply with the city's heritage while the dance becomes a powerful storytelling vehicle. Ultimately, this research enhances the understanding of the festival's role in sustaining cultural identity and preserving traditions through the dynamic medium of dance.

Keywords – Oro Higalaay Festival, street dance, PATHFIT curriculum, physical education

INTRODUCTION

Culture encompasses many aspects of human life, including shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors that define a community's identity (Naik et al., 2023). Cultures are passed down from generation to generation and teach people about their ancestors and their way of life. Thus, culture is changing and dynamic, yet it remains vital to preserve its history and traditions to safeguard the essence of what makes it unique. Moreover, culture helps people appreciate diversity through their food, songs, dances, and other forms of expression. One significant medium through which culture is preserved and expressed is dance. It plays an important role in reflecting and sustaining cultural identity, often mirroring the traditions, history, and social practices of a group (Wu, 2023). Dance, particularly when showcased in festivals, becomes a powerful tool for storytelling and heritage transmission. Through movement, music, and symbolism, these performances serve as more than entertainment; they become expressions of identity, memory, and continuity.

Recognizing this role, the integration of cultural heritage into education contributes to preserving these traditions and fostering a deeper understanding of identity within a community. In the context of tertiary-level Physical Education (PE), cultural elements such as dance remain underrepresented despite their physical, historical, and educational significance. This paper serves as an extension of the previously published study titled *Dancing Through Time: Unveiling the Cultural Evolution of Cagayan de Oro's Higalaay Festival*, further exploring the festival's dance elements within the context of educational integration. The *Oro Higalaay Festival* of Cagayan de Oro City, celebrated annually in honor of St. Augustine, features street dancing and tableau presentations that encapsulate the city's diverse cultural roots and historical development. These performances function not only as artistic displays but also as living archives of the city's ethnic narratives and multicultural influences. Within the PE curriculum, particularly in PATHFIT 3 and 4, dance is included among the core topics alongside sports, martial arts, and recreational activities. However, in actual practice, dance is often overlooked by

instructors, resulting in missed opportunities to incorporate rich, culturally relevant elements such as the *Oro Higalaay* Festival dances. These cultural performances, marked by expressive movements, symbolic costumes, indigenous music, and choreographed sequences, hold the potential to enhance students' physical, intellectual, and cultural competencies.

While the CHED Memorandum Order recognizes the importance of dance, localized dance traditions are often underrepresented in actual teaching practices. This leads to a lack of integration between the city's cultural heritage and the tertiary Physical Education curriculum, one that can be addressed by incorporating dances reflecting the history and traditions of Cagayan de Oro City that can fill in and enhance the topics offered in PATHFIT 3 and 4. The *Oro Higalaay* Festival, deeply rooted in the history and identity of Cagayan de Oro City, plays a vital role in showcasing the dances that reflect the city's origins and traditions. Integrating these festival dances into the PE curriculum allows students to experience culture through movement while promoting physical health, appreciation of heritage, and a stronger sense of identity and community.

The absence of curated academic resources on the festival's dance component and its potential application in education has contributed to a gap in both historical documentation and curriculum development. This study, therefore, examined Cagayan de Oro City's *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance with tableau presentation and explored its potential as a basis for the enhancement of the tertiary Physical Education Program. Specifically, it sought to determine how the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance can contribute to the enrichment of the PE curriculum at the tertiary level by integrating local culture and heritage into formal education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dance is a non-verbal expression whose form is an abstract expression, and the function has been derived from an experience according to time and place. Furthermore, as for the aspect of people's expression culture, Homer (1999, cited in Briggs and Bauman, 2003) considers dance as a cultural art form that has been considered a medium of expressing emotions and ideas that are essential in the portrayal of customs and events, representing an important part of a people's history.

From the perspective of indigenous communities, the dances are an integral part of Philippine Culture. According to Celeste (2017), dance is one of the artistic elements of culture and is one of the most influential art forms that unites people. Ethnological dances are those performed in ethnic traditions and have retained their close kinship with religious rituals and community customs. These dances require a certain level of special performing skills that are symbolic in meaning, making it harder for those outside the group to understand.

It was declared that dance can also be used to find a solution for conflict as well as enhance tolerance and connections, which would aid in peace and harmony. In addition, dance forms mirror the culture of the period and reflect the political, social, intellectual, and religious nature of the society (Gabao, 2007). Moreover, according to Celeste (2017), dance is one of the artistic elements of culture and is one of the most influential art forms that unite people, like in the case of the Manobo Pulanguihon, who have been annually celebrating the Sunggod Ta Kamanga Festival. From the book titled *Strengthening and Preserving the Philippine Folk Dances in Relation to Cultural Awareness of Secondary Students in Davao City*. In this manner, it is the dance that enables them to celebrate and worship their Magbabaya and live harmoniously with others in their community. Moreover, it is the Kadayawan Festival that takes place every year. It exposes the young and old to colorful festivities characterized by street dancing, colorful traditional apparel, and dance performances that depict the lives of people (Poralan et al., 2014).

In the Philippines, the tertiary Physical Education Program (CMO39, series of 2021) conforms with the constitutional mandate that "the state shall promote physical education for the development of health and alert citizenry" (Article 14, Sec. 19). This CMO, which consists of a set of minimum standards for all degree programs, applies to private and public higher education institutions in the country. PATHFiT 3, described as Physical Activity Toward Health and Fitness (PATHFiT3), covers the following topics: Dance (Phil. Folk Dances, Contemporary, International Dances, Ballroom or Social Dances), Outdoor Adventure and Recreational Activities, Board Games, Larong Pinoy, and others.

Among the Physical Education courses stipulated by CHED is Dance, offered under PATHFiT 3, alongside other components. These include Philippine Folk Dances, Contemporary, International Dances, Ballroom or Social Dances, Outdoor Adventure and Recreational Activities, Board Games, Larong Pinoy, and related activities. However, it may be argued that selected topics under Dance should also incorporate ethnic or festival dances, particularly those originating from the region in which schools, colleges, and universities are situated. In this regard, the selection of cultural dance forms may be contextualized and localized.

Existing literature on festival dances and their integration for curriculum enhancement within the Philippine Physical Education program at the tertiary level remains limited. A review of Physical Education practices in the Philippines suggests that while folk dances are included in instruction, their integration is often not systematic or fully contextualized to local cultural forms. For instance, Fabillar et al. (2025), in their study "Dancing with Heritage: Lived Experiences of Physical Education Teachers in Teaching 'Curacha Samareña' Folk Dance," highlighted challenges in teaching local dances, including limited training and insufficient institutional support. These findings indicate gaps in the structured integration of indigenous dances within the PE curriculum.

In addition, Lobo (2026b) noted that teaching folk dance in the Philippines is challenged by declining student engagement, largely influenced by modern cultural

preferences and a growing disconnect from cultural roots, suggesting the need for more innovative approaches to sustain interest. Similarly, Babiera (2014) emphasized that globalization contributes to the marginalization of traditional dances as global cultural trends increasingly overshadow local practices. Ripalda and Ripalda (2025) further supported this by identifying limited student interest in Philippine folk dances due to exposure to modern and pop dance forms and reduced engagement with cultural experiences.

In relation to curriculum provisions, the CHED-recommended topics for PATHFIT 3 include folk, contemporary, international, and ballroom or social dances. However, CMO No. 20, series of 2013, does not explicitly include festival dances, and the category "folk dances" may not fully represent the distinct characteristics of festival-based cultural expressions. In this context, festival dances may provide valuable opportunities for curriculum enrichment by supporting cultural preservation and enhancing students' holistic development through culturally rooted movement forms.

Folk dance is generally defined as a vernacular, usually recreational expression of a past or present culture (Kealiinohomoku, 2026). These are traditional dances that originate from the everyday life, customs, and rituals of a community, often passed down through generations and performed in social or cultural contexts. They reflect the identity and values of the people and are considered an important expression of cultural heritage in the Philippines, where they embody the customs, rituals, and early forms of entertainment of ancestors shaped by tradition and cultural practices (Stocker & Deogracias, 2021).

In contrast, festival dances are performed during festivals or celebratory events and are often characterized by a theatrical or competitive character. While they may draw inspiration from folk traditions, they are typically stylized, choreographed for public performance, and adapted to contemporary audiences. In the Philippine context, festival dances reflect the culture of the community where they are staged, portraying people's way of life, beliefs, and practices through movements, costumes, and implements native to their place of origin. They are commonly categorized as religious or secular, with religious festivals performed in honor of a patron saint or religious figure (Tolentino et al., 2020). Overall, while both folk and festival dances express cultural identity, they differ in purpose, form, and presentation, with folk dances rooted in tradition and festival dances shaped for celebratory performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological design, a type of qualitative research, to gather information from participants about their lived experiences of the phenomenon.

The researcher collected stories from participants to understand their emotions, thoughts, and interpretations of their experiences. The focus was on the street dancing competition of the *Oro Higalaay* Festival, as experienced by various stakeholders, including consultants, coordinators, musicians, judges, choreographers, and the dancers themselves. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals directly involved in the street dancing competition. Thematic analysis theory was used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data. The information gathered on the dances was categorized based on themes such as expression and dance steps, music, attire, cultural materials, and choreography (sequence, arrangement, execution, and storyline).

The qualitative data gathered in this study were intended to explore stakeholder beliefs, opinions, and experiences regarding the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance. These perspectives provide the cultural, pedagogical, and institutional context necessary for exploring its integration into the Physical Education curriculum. Thus, the aim of curriculum integration is informed by these lived experiences, which serve as the empirical basis for identifying barriers, opportunities, and strategies for integration. The study does not directly implement curriculum changes but generates evidence-based recommendations for possible integration.

Research Locale

The research was conducted in Cagayan de Oro City, a highly urbanized, first-class city in the Northern Mindanao Region of the Philippines. Though geographically in Misamis Oriental province, the city is administratively independent. As of the 2020 census, it had a population of 728,402, ranking 10th most populous nationwide. Ethnically, about 44% of the household population is of mixed descent, with 22.15% Cebuano, 48% Boholano, and 28.07% from other ethnic groups, including indigenous peoples. Ten selected barangays actively join the annual Higalaay Festival street dancing, reflecting the city's cultural identity.

Festival dances are generally categorized into two types: secular and non-secular. Secular festivals commemorate cultural affairs, while non-secular or religious festivals are held to honor a town's patron saint (Divinagracia et al., 2023). These dances often make use of distinct movements and formations that embody the identity of the community. According to Akas (2016), learning every hand and foot movement of festival performers allows viewers to better understand their ancestors' lives and appreciate the traditions of earlier times. Understanding these movements is essential for proper interpretation and cultural appreciation.

As stated by Doria et al. (2014), Philippine festival dances embody various elements that depend largely on the community in which they are performed. They portray people's ways of life, beliefs, and customs "through movements, costumes, and

implements inherent to their place of origin.” The importance of such festivals, as explored by Villones (2020) in the Negros Panaad Festival, reveals how cultural events often reflect a community’s deep religiosity. Celebrated in gratitude to Divine Providence, the festival prominently features images of saints. Similarly, the *Oro Higalaay* Festival is a non-secular celebration that incorporates strong religious elements, honoring St. Augustine, the patron saint of Cagayan de Oro, through street dancing competitions and performances that blend devotion with cultural expression.

Research Participants

The research was conducted in Cagayan de Oro City and selected barangays that actively participate in the annual Higalaay Festival. Ten barangays regularly participated in the annual street dancing festival and had relevant experiences with the phenomenon being studied. In line with Cresswell (2007) and Moustakas (1994), participants were chosen based on their ability to provide significant and meaningful insights into the phenomenon. The researcher selected individuals who could provide valuable insights to address the study’s objectives and who had actively engaged in street dancing for at least one year.

The study included three consultants who facilitated the conceptualization of the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dancing, three coordinators serving on the organizing committee, and four choreographers responsible for conceptualizing the art of dance movement. Additionally, two musicians played indigenous instruments, while costume designers, who also served as choreographers, created performance costumes aligned with the festival’s theme. Two performers represented a barangay contingent, and one qualified judge, knowledgeable in cultural significance, theme interpretation, and consistent application of judging criteria, was included for their ability to provide constructive feedback.

Given that the participants were directly involved in the cultural dance activity, it is recognized that their responses may reflect certain biases. To address this, the study employed open-ended questions to encourage a range of responses and maintained participant anonymity to minimize social desirability bias. Furthermore, responses were considered alongside curriculum documents and secondary sources to enhance the credibility of the findings. The participants’ background and level of involvement were also taken into account in the interpretation of the data.

Research Instrument

This study employed a semi-structured questionnaire to encourage participants to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. To ensure significant findings, the researcher carefully developed the interview guide questions, which were pilot tested and subsequently reviewed and refined. An external validator, a member of the NCCA

speaker bureau specializing in street dancing, along with assistance from a city tourism operations officer, also verified the questions. Tailored open-ended questions were designed for each participant group. For instance, consultants were asked, "Why does Fiesta hold such importance for the culture, traditions, and community life of Cagayan de Oro?" while coordinators and event heads were questioned, "How do organizers evaluate the success and impact of the street dancing and tableau presentations, the festival's highlights?" Additional representative questions included: "Do you believe that the Oro *Higalaay* Street Dance can be meaningfully integrated into the Physical Education curriculum? Why or why not?" "In your opinion, what benefits or challenges might arise from incorporating local street dances into tertiary Physical Education courses?", and "Have you previously taught or participated in the Oro *Higalaay* Street Dance in an educational setting? Please describe your experience."

Data Gathering Procedure

For this study, the primary data collection method was through in-depth interviews with the three key informants and twelve other participants who played a role in the street dancing. Before data gathering, the researcher applied for research ethics at Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the shared meaning that individuals attributed to the phenomenon. Participants selected for this study had significant experiences related to the phenomenon. The researcher arranged interviews with each participant. When the participant could not attend the scheduled interview, he/she had the option to reschedule it. Permission was granted to record the interviews and to take notes during the interview. Data were collected from in-depth interviews, audio recordings, and transcriptions. Codes were assigned to participants to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

To thoroughly understand the data, the researcher adhered to the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data was rigorously reviewed multiple times, with detailed notes taken and coding employed to highlight key features. Emerging patterns were proactively identified by grouping similar data points and organizing codes into a coherent framework. After careful verification, the themes were clearly defined and labeled, adding clarity and precision to the final report. The analysis was presented alongside concrete data examples, resulting in a well-supported and comprehensive discussion.

The coding process was conducted collaboratively by the three researchers, with initial codes generated inductively from the data. To ensure coherence and consistency, coding outputs were reviewed and compared, and codes were refined through iterative discussion. In cases of differing interpretations, discrepancies were resolved through consensus, guided by the research objectives and relevant literature. This process

ensured that the resulting themes were well-defined and reflective of the participants' perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

There was no possibility of infringing on the participants' privacy, as measures were in place to guarantee and uphold confidentiality as mandated by the university's ethical regulations. There was no conflict of interest, and the ethical standards of the institutional committee ensured that ethics remained a priority throughout the study. Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity were rigorously maintained throughout the collecting, storing, and publishing of research materials. The participants were kept anonymous, and their inclusion in this study was strictly voluntary. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

RESULTS

Significance of the Oro Higalaay Street Dance in Physical Education

Table 1 illustrates the thematic analysis of the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance. The festival and its street dance are integral parts of the community's cultural identity, highlighting not only tradition but also its relevance to education and development. Street dance is significant as it reflects the region's culture and contributes to education, cultural preservation, and tourism. The current analysis emphasizes four themes: the mandate of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to offer Physical Education at the tertiary level, the preservation of local cultural traditions and expressions, the multidisciplinary approach to teaching, and the harnessing of the city's tourism. These themes outline the central contributions of the festival, showing how the street dance serves as both a cultural expression and an instrument for education, heritage preservation, and economic growth.

Compliance with CHED Requirements

Aligned with CHED Memorandum Order No. 39, series of 2021, the tertiary Physical Education program in the Philippines upholds the constitutional mandate that "the State shall promote physical education for the development of health and alert citizenry" (Article XIV, Section 19). This policy ensures that higher education institutions integrate Physical Education into their curricula, providing students with opportunities to develop both physical and mental well-being. Under this mandate, PATHFiT 3 (Physical Activity Toward Health and Fitness 3) and PATHFiT 4 (Physical Activity Toward Health and Fitness 4) cover various topics, including Philippine folk, contemporary, and international dances, as well as outdoor recreation and local games. These guidelines serve as the foundation for integrating culturally relevant activities, such as street dancing, into the curriculum, reinforcing both CHED's objectives and the country's broader commitment to holistic

education. Such integration ensures that the PE program remains responsive to national academic standards while also promoting cultural awareness.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis for PE Curriculum Integration

Theme	Description	Responses
Mandate of CHED to offer Physical Education at the tertiary level, following the menu of activities suggested	Promotion of Physical Education for the development of a healthy and alert citizenry (Article 14, sec 9)	“Street dancing should be offered in PE to feature the city’s historical, social, economic and religious milestones.”CN001
Preservation of the local cultural tradition and expression	Refers to safeguarding the locality's cultural heritage and involves documenting, conserving, promoting, and educating to foster an appreciation for future generations.	“In the academe, it’s the best platform for educators to build a good structure to make them feel who they are, where they are, and why they are here.” CN002
Multidisciplinary approach to teaching.	By integrating street dancing into a multidisciplinary curriculum, students can gain a holistic understanding of this art form while developing a range of skills and knowledge across various subject areas.	“The fusion of various traditional/indigenous music and modern sounds.” CC0015
Harnessing the tourism of the city	A Strategic Approach to Stimulate Economic Growth through Tourism Development"	“Give impact to the place like the economic opportunities, like local food restaurants, museums and spots.”CN002

One respondent emphasized that integrating street dancing into the curriculum is not merely a matter of compliance but an opportunity to strengthen Filipino identity, collaboration, and appreciation of culture. As stated, “Street dancing should be offered in PE to feature the city’s historical, social, economic, and religious milestones” (CN001). This statement affirms how the academic objectives set by CHED can be achieved through culturally grounded learning experiences that merge physical movement with the appreciation of local heritage.

Preservation of the local cultural tradition and expression

Street dancing can be a valuable addition to the Physical Education Program. By integrating it into the curriculum, students can learn about their local culture and understand their role in preserving it as future leaders of the community. This can help build their confidence and identity and foster positive values. Poralan et al. (2014) stated that exposing both young and old to colorful festivities marked by street dancing, featuring traditional costumes and performances that depict the everyday lives of people, helps sustain and celebrate cultural traditions. An example is the Kaamulan Festival in Bukidnon, an ethnic celebration that honors the customs and practices of the province's seven original tribal groups. In line with this, the Oro Higalaay Festival showcases Cagayan de Oro's vibrant identity through its street dancing performances, reflecting the city's collective memory, traditions, and evolving cultural expressions. The street dancing event serves as a captivating manifestation of local culture, with performers dressed in elaborate traditional attire and moving gracefully to indigenous rhythms. Through these choreographed routines, the dances intricately weave tales deeply rooted in Cagayan de Oro's history and folklore, offering a vivid means of connecting with the city's ancestral roots and enduring traditions (Aulia, 2023).

Moreover, promoting street dancing within schools helps ensure that traditional forms of expression remain alive and relevant in modern times. Students can gain a deeper appreciation of their community's customs, values, and artistic expressions through performance and participation. This creates a bridge between generations, allowing students to connect with the cultural narratives that shaped their local identity.

The following responses from participants emphasize how street dancing contributes to both cultural preservation and personal growth:

*"Yes, we preserve tradition, adapt them, but we create that is ours."*CC0012

*"It can help our students develop a stronger mind-body connection, improving their ability to stay present and focused during physical activities as they continuously rehearse the routines of the dance."*MC008

*"For me, the significance of street dancing can nurture cultural awareness in the local context of our community."*CC0013

*"It can boost confidence and add connections and friends to the other barangay and places."*PF0010

*"This event isn't just about dancing; they're about coming together as a community to celebrate our diversity and unity but it's a chance for everyone to feel the beat, appreciate different cultures, and preserve our rich heritage through the power of dance."*MC007

“Nowadays, a lot of younger generations are more drawn to and influenced by social media like TikTok, and even some students do not know the meaning of why it is called the City of Golden Friendship.”CC0014

“As one of the coordinators, I am thankful our new generation can learn from memorable experiences and help preserve our roots.”CD006

“The lack of a clear storyline for the street dance is causing issues for some groups to hit the theme, despite its historical foundation.”CN003

“Choreographers must be culturally sensitive and avoid offending religious communities. They should know the appropriate movements and props to preserve tradition and culture and avoid going too far with creativity, which can lead to cultural bastardization.”CC0013

“We must continue the street dancing next year to preserve and promote cultural expression through traditional dance forms.”JDo09

“This aspect of dance can contribute to holistic well-being and self-confidence.”PF0012

The responses from interviewees expressed how street dancing preserves tradition while embracing modern creativity. Many agreed that the practice promotes cultural awareness and community engagement, encouraging students to take pride in their roots while adapting to contemporary influences. Others emphasized its benefits for personal growth, enhancing confidence, focus, and teamwork while fostering unity among different barangays and communities. Respondents also recognized the challenge of maintaining cultural authenticity amid modern trends, particularly as younger generations become more influenced by social media. Furthermore, respondents emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity in choreography. While innovation and artistic freedom are encouraged, performers must remain respectful of tradition and religious symbolism to avoid misrepresentation. Through these ongoing efforts, the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance continues to embody the living heritage of Cagayan de Oro City, preserving its cultural roots while fostering unity across generations.

Multidisciplinary Approach to Teaching

Street dancing is much more than mere physical movement. It is a rich and fascinating art form that encompasses a wide range of elements, including cultural history, music appreciation, teamwork, and even aspects of sociology and anthropology. When incorporated into education, it encourages collaboration, discipline, and an appreciation for the country’s cultural diversity. Moreover, street dancing fosters creativity and self-expression, providing students with an avenue to communicate emotions, stories, and shared experiences through movement. It also enhances body awareness, coordination, and confidence, which contribute to overall personal development (Wal et al., 2025). By learning choreography that blends traditional and modern elements, students gain a

deeper understanding of how culture evolves and adapts over time. Thus, integrating street dancing into education cultivates well-rounded individuals who value both their cultural identity and artistic expression.

The following presents respondents' views on how street dancing may be integrated into a multidisciplinary curriculum:

*"The Oro Higalaay Festival Street Dance is a great opportunity for students to learn about the dances and history of Cagayan de Oro. This festival provides a unique learning experience that is not typically taught at the tertiary level. It can help students to better comprehend and appreciate the culture of the region, and foster a love of learning about it."*PF0011

*"It symbolizes learning because of the storyline presentation of dances, there is a part wherein narration is required."*CN001

*"Incorporate lessons on the history of the Oro Higalaay Street dancing, including its evolution over time and its impact on popular culture."*CD005

*"During the workshop, different genres of music are incorporated to enhance choreography and performance, reflecting cultural influences and musical composition."*CM008

*"You can witness the unique fluidity of transitions in the storyline arranged by choreographers and then the form of artistic expression with the interpretation of movement in the dance."*CN002

*"The three periods represent different eras: from the Higaonons to Spanish and American-Japanese colonial periods students with insights into different communities and their social contexts."*CN001

*"So amazing! local channels and networks televise the performances for home viewing."*CC0015

*"I made some props and backdrops unique to create magical effects on the presentations."*CC0013

Responses from the participants indicated that the Oro Higalaay Festival Street Dance can serve as an effective medium for multidisciplinary learning. According to them, the festival allows students to learn about the city's cultural history, choreography, and storytelling through performance. It also incorporates elements of narration, music, and artistic production, such as prop-making and stage design, which engage learners in creative and critical thinking processes. The inclusion of various dance eras, from the indigenous Higaonons to the colonial periods, also broadens students' understanding of cultural transitions and historical continuity. Similarly, other local festivals, such as the

Pamulinawen Festival, have been found to preserve traditions, foster unity, and engage both students and teachers in cultural education (De Jesus and Rabago, 2025). The involvement of educators as cultural advocates also reinforces the importance of guiding younger generations in connecting with their heritage, fostering both artistic appreciation and cultural awareness.

Harnessing the Tourism of the City

Street dancing, in particular, contributes to the vitality and attractiveness of tourists by offering unique cultural experiences, entertainment opportunities, and community engagement initiatives. With its vibrant culture, the city can enhance its appeal to visitors and stimulate economic growth. The *Oro Higalaay* Festival, through its vibrant street dancing and tableau presentations, serves as a living showcase of Cagayan de Oro's heritage and cultural pride. Its visual spectacle, colorful costumes, and rhythmic movements attract both local and foreign tourists, transforming the city into a hub of cultural celebration and economic activity.

The following presents responses from the interviewees:

*"Lots of people visit museums and restaurants, where they can admire art, crafts, photography, and paintings."*CD005

*"The fiesta celebration is a platform where we can showcase local culture and traditions, there is a magnitude of people where they can socialize with other people/ friends."*CC003

*"It's also the international arena to stage and show off our vibrant culture and traditions, a very dynamic and culturally inclined community."*CC0012

*"Local culture should be better represented to increase pride and love for the place and culture."*CN002

Apart from the festival, the city has many stunning natural attractions, thrilling adventure spots, and historical landmarks to discover. Tourists can also be made to engage in various charity drives and initiatives that benefit under-resourced schools and local communities, demonstrating a strong sense of community spirit. These activities further strengthen the city's reputation as the "City of Golden Friendship," where hospitality, generosity, and unity are deeply valued. Street dancing, as part of the *Oro Higalaay* Festival, complements these attractions by offering visitors a glimpse into the vibrant traditions of the Kagay-anons.

Respondents also emphasized that the city's cultural representation extends beyond the festival grounds, encompassing museums, art exhibits, local crafts, and culinary experiences that reflect Cagayan de Oro's rich heritage. The fiesta celebration serves as a meaningful avenue for people to gather, socialize, and showcase their traditions, while

also promoting the city's dynamic and vibrant cultural identity to both local and international audiences. They further noted the importance of strengthening cultural representation to nurture a deeper sense of pride and love for the city and its people.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show the relevance of integrating street dancing into PATHFIT 3 and 4, as it not only fulfills course outcomes but also strengthens students' cultural, social, and physical development. Moreover, the incorporation of street dance directly supports the university's goal of broadening its curriculum offerings by promoting a holistic, community-centered approach to education, aligning with CHED's mandate to encourage cultural appreciation and inclusivity in higher education. Despite some elements of the dance being rooted in Catholic traditions, students from non-Catholic backgrounds can still participate through alternative roles or supportive tasks, ensuring that the activity remains inclusive and respectful of diversity.

Furthermore, since the *Oro Higalaay* Festival embodies unity, friendship, and cultural celebration, integrating its street dancing traditions into PATHFIT allows students to engage meaningfully in activities that foster camaraderie, mutual respect, and deeper cultural understanding. Thus, compliance with CHED requirements becomes more than just policy adherence; it becomes an opportunity for innovative and culturally grounded Physical Education instruction. Through the integration of street dancing, instructors can introduce creative teaching approaches that merge fitness, history, and local culture, enabling students to develop physical well-being alongside cultural sensitivity and social awareness.

A study by Lobo (2026a) supports these findings by revealing that participation in traditional dance enhanced students' cultural competence, enabling them to better understand and appreciate the richness of their cultural heritage. The study emphasized the importance of integrating traditional dance into physical education curricula, as it not only preserves cultural practices but also equips students with essential skills to navigate a globalized world. Lobo further elaborates that such experiential learning opportunities foster cultural awareness, sensitivity, and social cohesion principles that support the integration of *Oro Higalaay* festival dances within the tertiary PE curriculum to enrich students' learning experiences and strengthen their connection to local culture. Although the study focused on traditional dances, its findings are equally relevant to street dancing, which upholds the same goal of preserving cultural identity while promoting engagement and connection among the youth.

In addition, efforts to emphasize the educational value of the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance Competition further show its importance. Schools are encouraged to participate by showcasing cultural performances supported by creative props and backdrops. The activity serves as a lively alternative to traditional aerobic exercises and nurtures

students' creativity, self-expression, and cultural pride. When celebrated annually, it strengthens cultural preservation and social development within the city.

Integrating street dancing into the PE curriculum ultimately creates a more engaging learning environment that supports holistic growth, allowing students to experience an education that blends physical fitness with cultural appreciation and social interaction. Through this approach, students begin to view dance not only as a physical activity but also as an educational and cultural experience that encourages inclusivity and collaboration. In the long term, such integration can cultivate lifelong learning habits, inspire stronger community involvement, and help students appreciate their heritage while embracing diversity.

Beyond education, the integration of street dancing also aligns with the city's tourism goals. According to Lopes and Hiray (2024), cultural events and festivals significantly contribute to economic growth by attracting visitors, increasing local spending, and generating business opportunities. These festivals preserve cultural identity and encourage community participation, allowing residents and tourists to engage in authentic cultural exchange. When paired with sustainable tourism strategies, events like the *Oro Higalaay* Festival continue to thrive as inclusive celebrations that uplift the economy while maintaining cultural authenticity. Ilieva et al. (2024) also stated that festivals contribute to tourism development by supporting existing enterprises, encouraging new businesses, and promoting community growth. They also enhance destination branding by showcasing local attractions and strengthening a city's identity. Through colorful street dance performances, tourists experience the city's cultural identity and the warmth of its people. The increased visitor activity supports artisans, performers, and local businesses, turning street dancing into a cultural bridge that promotes pride, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary goal of this study is to integrate the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance into the Physical Education curriculum at the tertiary level. The study assumed that incorporating the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance into PATHFiT 3 and PATHFiT 4 would comply with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 39, series of 2021, which emphasizes the inclusion of dance as a component of the PE curriculum. This integration not only meets CHED requirements but also supports the university's initiative to expand its course offerings, allowing students to experience learning that combines physical activity with cultural appreciation.

Street dancing, as reflected in the *Oro Higalaay* Festival, goes beyond physical movement; it preserves the city's local tradition, culture, and expression. Through its rhythm, choreography, and historical themes, students can gain a deeper understanding of their identity as Cagayanons while fostering pride and appreciation for their cultural

roots. Teaching these dances in PE classes can help develop confidence, encourage teamwork, and promote self-expression, contributing to holistic personal growth.

The study further assumed that a multidisciplinary approach to teaching street dancing can enrich students' learning experiences by integrating lessons on history, music, art, and social studies. The *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance reflects the evolution of Cagayan de Oro's heritage, making it a valuable tool for cultural education. Moreover, it can boost local tourism and community participation and strengthen the cultural identity of the city while promoting unity and creativity.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the University's Physical Education Department include street dancing in the menu of activities for PATHFiT 3 and PATHFiT 4 courses. The department may consider hiring qualified instructors and conducting culminating performances, with prior orientation on the history and cultural significance of the dances. The university administration is encouraged to provide adequate resources and facilities to support implementation. Furthermore, collaboration with the local government and the Higalaay Festival Committee is encouraged to promote sustainability, cultural preservation, and a stronger sense of local identity.

IMPLICATIONS

This study carries significant implications for the tertiary Physical Education program, particularly in integrating culturally relevant practices such as the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance. The findings suggest that incorporating local festival dances into PATHFiT 3 and 4 can enhance students' learning by combining physical activity with cultural education, allowing them to develop both physical fitness and a deeper appreciation of their cultural identity. It also highlights the importance of aligning PE with CHED mandates through inclusive and holistic approaches that connect movement with history, music, and social context. Furthermore, the integration of street dancing implies that educational institutions can contribute to cultural preservation while promoting cultural awareness and supporting local tourism.

LIMITATIONS

This study recognizes that the participants were directly involved in the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance, which may have influenced their responses and resulted in perspectives that lean toward favorable interpretations of its integration into the Physical Education curriculum. As such, the findings primarily represent insider viewpoints shaped by their cultural engagement with the festival. This context may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to individuals with different levels of exposure to the dance. Future studies may consider involving a more diverse range of participants to capture broader perspectives on its educational integration. Nevertheless, the participants' direct involvement provides meaningful cultural and pedagogical insights that are valuable in

understanding the practical possibilities of integrating the *Oro Higalaay* Street Dance into the curriculum.

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DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest exist between the authors that might be deemed significant to the article's content.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Ethics Approval

Approval to conduct the study was obtained

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