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The Dynamic Relationship between Agriculture and Dance in the Philippines

ROWENA MONTE-LIGACION[1], CARL JEROME LIGACION[2]

[1] Department of Human Kinetics, College of Arts and Sciences,

University of the Philippines Los Baños, College 4031, Laguna, Philippines

[2] Municipal Planning and Development Office,

Municipality of Bocaue, Bulacan 3018, Bulacan, Philippines

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Abstract: **This study examines the dynamic relationship between agriculture and dance in the Philippines, focusing on how farming practices, ecological environments, seasonal cycles, and rural livelihoods shape traditional dances and agricultural festivals. Using an exploratory qualitative design, the research applied document analysis and thematic synthesis to scholarly studies, government reports, cultural records, and publications from national and international organizations (Bowen, 2009; Snyder, 2019). Six interconnected themes emerged: agriculture as a cultural and ecological system; agricultural labor as a source of movement; dance as embodied cultural knowledge; festivals as expressions of community identity; education as both an opportunity and a risk; and safeguarding through protection of agricultural foundations. Findings indicate that occupational movements, local knowledge, spirituality, materials, and community relationships inform choreography and performance meanings. In turn, dances and festivals preserve collective memory, ecological knowledge, cooperation, gratitude, and cultural identity. However, migration, commercialization, climate-related disruption, changing livelihoods, and decontextualized school performances threaten continuity. The study concludes that preservation must extend beyond choreography and documentation toward community-led cultural mapping, intergenerational teaching, school-community partnerships, ethical tourism, digital archiving, and sustainable livelihood support. Protecting Philippine dance heritage therefore requires sustaining the farmers, cultural bearers, environments, and social relationships that give these traditions meaning and vitality.**

Keywords: **agriculture, traditional dance, cultural heritage, agricultural festivals, Philippines, safeguarding.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has long shaped Philippine settlement, livelihoods, food systems, social organization, and cultural expression. Across the archipelago, lowland rice cultivation, coconut and sugar production, and coastal and upland farming systems reflect ecological diversity and locally adapted relationships with the land (Corpuz, 1997; Owen, 2005; Bankoff, 2007). This connection remains especially significant in rural communities, where farming functions not only as an economic activity but also as a source of household identity, local knowledge, and intergenerational continuity. The 2022 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries recorded approximately 7.07 million agricultural households and 7.41 million agricultural operators, indicating that crop production, livestock raising, and poultry farming continue to support a substantial portion of the Philippine population (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2024). Agriculture must therefore be understood not only in terms of national production but also as a lived social system shaped by household labor, environmental conditions, customary practices, and community cooperation. Agricultural landscapes are both productive and cultural spaces in which resilience, reciprocity, stewardship, and gratitude are learned and expressed.

The relationship between agriculture and culture is particularly visible in Philippine traditional dance. Many dances stylize movements and experiences associated with planting, harvesting, fishing, hunting, food preparation, animal behavior, courtship, ritual, and communal celebration. Through rhythm, gesture, formation, costume, music, and material objects, these performances transform everyday life into embodied expressions of collective memory (Ocampo, 2016; Cañete, 2018). Tinikling, for example, is associated with the tikling bird's quick movements through grass and bamboo traps near rice fields. The dancers' coordinated steps between clapping bamboo poles evoke the bird's agility while situating the dance within a rice-growing environment (National Commission for Culture and the Arts [NCCA], n.d.). Rather than simply imitating agricultural labor, the dance reflects rural interpretations of relationships among people, animals, crops, and cultivated landscapes. Other Philippine dances likewise represent occupational practices, harvest activities, indigenous rituals, and thanksgiving, allowing agricultural knowledge, ecological observation, and community values to be embodied and transmitted across generations.

Agricultural festivals provide another important setting in which farming, dance, and community identity converge. Celebrations linked to planting cycles, harvests, patron saints, and thanksgiving bring together agricultural products, religious practices, music, dance, visual art, food traditions, and public participation (Fund, 2020; Villanueva, 2015). The San Isidro Pahiyas Festival in Lucban, Quezon, is a prominent example: residents decorate their houses with kiping, fruits, vegetables, rice, and other local products to express gratitude for agricultural abundance and devotion to San Isidro Labrador, the patron saint of farmers. The festival also supports cultural performance, local trade, tourism, and public expressions of Lucban's identity. However, its sustainability depends on the meaningful participation of farmers, kiping makers, artisans, cultural bearers, local officials, and residents, particularly as commercialization and rising production costs affect its authenticity and continuity (Demetrial et al., 2025). Although agricultural festivals can strengthen solidarity and create livelihood opportunities, their economic value should not displace their cultural foundations. When tourism becomes the dominant focus, farming communities risk being represented as decorative symbols rather than recognized as the creators and custodians of the traditions being celebrated.

Agriculture and dance are therefore interdependent dimensions of Philippine economic and cultural life. Farming provides food, raw materials, employment, and livelihoods, while dance enables communities to interpret labor, express gratitude, commemorate seasonal cycles, affirm spiritual beliefs, and strengthen social relationships. Agricultural conditions shape the communities that sustain dance traditions, while cultural practices influence how farming is remembered, valued, and represented. When agricultural knowledge is transmitted through participation, observation, storytelling, ritual, and performance, dance can reinforce cooperation, timing, discipline, environmental awareness, and collective responsibility (Cruz, 2019; Alcaraz, 2020). Roque (2025) likewise emphasizes the role of recreational activities and cultural dances in sustaining heritage, identity, and social participation. Dance thus performs educational, social, and cultural functions by connecting contemporary communities with inherited knowledge and traditions. Examining agriculture and dance together offers a broader understanding of Filipino identity in which livelihood, environment, spirituality, creativity, and community life remain closely connected.

Preserving agriculture-related dances and festivals has become increasingly urgent amid urbanization, migration, climate-related disruption, changing livelihoods, digital media, tourism, and globalization. As younger generations move away from agricultural communities, they may encounter traditional dances primarily through school programs, competitions, social media, or shortened stage presentations. Although these formats can broaden awareness, they may also detach performances from the communities, rituals, languages, ecological knowledge, and agricultural practices that give them meaning. Safeguarding must therefore extend beyond documentation to include active transmission, community participation, and support for cultural bearers. UNESCO's recognition of Aklan piña handloom weaving in 2023 demonstrates how agriculture-based materials, specialized knowledge, and community identity can be protected as living intangible cultural heritage (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023). Similarly, the 2025 inclusion of the Boholano practice of making Asin Tibuok on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding highlights the need to protect livelihood-based traditions threatened by declining transmission and changing economic conditions (UNESCO, 2025). These cases provide relevant models for preserving agriculture-related dances through community-led documentation, intergenerational education, sustained performance, and responsible cultural tourism.

Against this background, this paper examines how Philippine farming practices, agricultural environments, seasonal cycles, and rural livelihoods have shaped the themes, movements, meanings, and performance contexts of selected dances and festivals. It approaches dance not merely as entertainment but as embodied cultural knowledge through which communities

interpret labor, nature, spirituality, celebration, and social cooperation. The discussion also considers how agricultural festivals transform local products and farming traditions into public expressions of identity while generating tensions among cultural preservation, tourism, commercialization, and community ownership. The paper pays particular attention to the roles of farmers, dancers, elders, artisans, educators, cultural workers, and local institutions in sustaining these traditions. The paper argues that effective preservation requires scholarly documentation, cultural mapping, intergenerational teaching, school-based learning, digital archiving, ethical tourism, and community leadership. By examining agriculture and dance together, it seeks to deepen understanding of Philippine cultural heritage and to show that safeguarding traditional performance also requires protecting the livelihoods, environments, and social relationships that sustain it.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Agriculture as a Social and Cultural System

Agriculture remains an important economic, environmental, and cultural institution in the Philippines. The 2022 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries recorded approximately 7.07 million agricultural households and 7.41 million agricultural operators. These figures demonstrate that crop farming, livestock raising, and poultry production continue to support a substantial portion of the Philippine population (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2024). Agriculture should therefore be understood not only as a means of producing food and income but also as a social system involving household labor, local knowledge, cultural values, environmental adaptation, and community cooperation.

Recent literature emphasizes that Philippine agricultural landscapes are living cultural spaces shaped by interactions among people, livelihood practices, and the natural environment. Rios (2022), for example, examined folklore related to the natural environment in a farming community in Argao, Cebu. The study demonstrated how stories, beliefs, and local knowledge influence people's understanding of land, plants, animals, and environmental conservation. Agricultural knowledge is consequently transmitted not only through formal instruction but also through oral traditions, observation, practical participation, and community narratives.

Similar relationships are evident in the Indigenous rice-farming communities of the Philippine Cordillera. Delina et al. (2024) found that Indigenous rice farming is affected by pressures on natural, economic, human, social, and cultural resources. Commercialization, land-use change, migration, climate-related disruption, and declining agricultural labor can weaken both livelihoods and the cultural landscapes created through traditional farming. These findings suggest that the survival of agricultural heritage depends on the ability of farming households to continue cultivating the land and transmitting their knowledge to younger generations.

Buminaang-Mendoza (2024) likewise emphasized that traditional ecological knowledge contributes to understanding and conserving the Ifugao heritage landscape. Farming practices in this setting are connected with beliefs, rituals, environmental observation, and relationships among human, natural, and spiritual dimensions. The preservation of agricultural landscapes therefore requires more than protecting their physical appearance. It also requires maintaining the practices, values, and knowledge systems through which communities manage these environments.

Paing et al. (2025) further found that traditional ecological knowledge in the Cordillera is closely connected with ecosystem services and agroecosystem-based livelihoods. Indigenous agricultural practices contribute to food production, medicinal knowledge, environmental management, cultural identity, and social cooperation. This literature supports the view that farming is simultaneously an economic activity, an ecological practice, and an expression of community identity.

B. Agricultural Change and Rural Resilience

Recent studies identify climate change, migration, commercialization, changing land use, and declining youth involvement as major pressures on Philippine agricultural communities. These challenges can affect not only farm productivity but also the cultural practices associated with agricultural life. When communities shift away from traditional crops and farming systems, the rituals, language, stories, celebrations, and performances connected with those systems may also decline.

Delina et al. (2025) demonstrated that the resilience of rice-terraced communities in the Philippine Cordillera is supported by relationships among farmers, cultural identity, attachment to place, Indigenous knowledge, and community organizations. These non-material resources help communities respond to environmental and socioeconomic pressures. Agricultural resilience therefore depends not only on financial and physical resources but also on social relationships, cultural continuity, and people's emotional connection with their land.

This perspective is particularly relevant to agriculture-related dances and festivals. Cultural performances may continue only when the farming communities that created them remain socially and economically viable. If farming knowledge, agricultural vocabulary, and seasonal practices are no longer transmitted, dances based on agricultural experiences may gradually lose their contextual meanings. Protecting agriculture-related performances must therefore include support for the livelihoods, environments, and community relationships represented by these traditions.

C. Agriculture and Philippine Traditional Dance

Philippine traditional dances frequently draw their themes, movements, costumes, music, and performance materials from agriculture and other rural livelihoods. Gestures associated with planting, harvesting, carrying, threshing, cutting, pounding, gathering, and processing agricultural products are transformed into choreographed movement. Through this process, ordinary labor becomes an embodied representation of community history and cultural identity.

Santos et al. (2024) examined traditional onion farming in the Philippines through ethnographic and biomechanical perspectives. The study identified movements associated with land preparation, planting, and harvesting and analyzed the actions of the shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees, and ankles. The authors proposed that these occupational movements could provide a foundation for culturally grounded choreography. The study demonstrates that agricultural dance may emerge from systematic observation of actual farming activities rather than from generalized or invented representations of rural life.

The transformation of occupational movement into dance involves both physical and symbolic processes. Farming actions are reorganized through rhythm, repetition, spatial formation, music, and collective performance. The movements can represent the physical demands of agricultural work while also communicating cooperation, patience, timing, resilience, and gratitude. Agriculture-related dances therefore preserve more than visible actions; they can embody the values and social relationships involved in rural production.

Traditional dances also express cultural identity through the interaction of movement, music, clothing, ritual, and community narrative. Talangchey (2023) found that the Takik and Tallibeng Indigenous dances of Sabangan, Mountain Province, communicate community values, identity, and heritage. The study emphasized the importance of involving Indigenous dance experts, local knowledge holders, and educational institutions in cultural preservation. Although these dances are not exclusively agricultural, the study provides a useful framework for analyzing dance as a cultural system rather than merely as a sequence of movements.

Recent literature therefore supports an ethnographic approach to agriculture-related dance. Researchers should consider the experiences of farmers, elders, dancers, musicians, artisans, and other cultural bearers when interpreting movement. Attention must also be given to the livelihood represented, the environmental setting, the performance's purpose, and the meanings attached to costumes, music, props, and formations.

D. Dance Education and Cultural Transmission

Schools and universities have become important settings for transmitting Philippine traditional dances. Through physical education, cultural programs, festivals, and competitions, students encounter dances that may no longer be regularly practiced in their home communities. Educational institutions can expand cultural awareness and encourage students to value local and national heritage.

Lobo (2025) found that students' experiences with dance steps, music, costumes, and dance history were related to their interest in Philippine traditional dances. The study recommended meaningful and varied learning experiences to strengthen students' cultural appreciation and participation in preservation initiatives. This suggests that direct involvement in traditional dance can promote cultural interest, particularly when students understand both the performance and its historical background.

However, school-based presentation can also simplify or standardize dances. Students may learn choreography without understanding the agricultural livelihood, ritual, language, community, or environmental knowledge represented by the dance. Shortened stage presentations and competition-oriented versions may prioritize technical accuracy and visual appeal over cultural context.

The UNESCO Office Bangkok et al. (2022) emphasized that bringing living heritage into classrooms should involve cooperation among teachers, students, elders, practitioners, and communities. Heritage education should enable students to learn about cultural traditions while respecting the knowledge and authority of the communities that maintain them. Schools should consequently work with farmers, elders, artists, and cultural bearers when teaching agriculture-related dances.

A contextualized approach may include studying actual farming practices, interviewing community members, observing agricultural environments, documenting oral histories, and identifying the meanings of costumes and performance objects. Students can then understand traditional dance as embodied cultural knowledge rather than as entertainment alone. This approach can also connect dance education with environmental education, local history, agriculture, and community development.

E. Agricultural Festivals and Community Identity

Agricultural festivals provide public spaces where farming, religion, dance, music, visual art, food, tourism, and community identity converge. Festivals connected with planting, harvesting, patron saints, and thanksgiving transform local agricultural products and practices into collective expressions of gratitude and belonging. They can also promote local enterprises, cultural tourism, and community participation.

The San Isidro Pahiyas Festival of Lucban, Quezon, is one of the most visible examples of this relationship. Residents decorate their houses with ***kiping***, rice, fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products. These decorations represent agricultural abundance, artistic creativity, devotion to San Isidro Labrador, and Lucban's community identity.

Demetrial et al. (2025) explained that Pahiyas has developed from a relatively small religious and agricultural celebration into a major tourism and commercial event. Their sustainability plan identified challenges involving rising production costs, declining numbers of cultural practitioners, environmental pressures, commercialization, and the need for stronger youth and stakeholder participation. The authors recommended cultural and environmental assessment, youth workshops, local sourcing, support for artisans, intergenerational mentorship, and sustainable festival management.

Commercialization can create livelihood opportunities for farmers, food producers, artisans, vendors, performers, and tourism enterprises. It can also increase the visibility of Lucban and its cultural products. Nevertheless, commercial interests may influence how traditions are organized and presented. Agricultural displays can become tourism spectacles, while competition may encourage households to prioritize visual extravagance over religious thanksgiving and community reciprocity.

The cultural sustainability of Pahiyas therefore depends on meaningful community participation. Farmers, ***kiping*** makers, artisans, residents, performers, religious groups, youth, educators, and local officials should participate in planning and decision-making. Community members must be recognized not merely as performers or suppliers but as creators, interpreters, and custodians of the festival.

F. Safeguarding Agriculture-Based Cultural Heritage

Recent international recognition of Philippine traditions provides useful models for safeguarding agriculture-related dances and festivals. UNESCO inscribed Aklan piña handloom weaving on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2023. Piña production combines the cultivation of the ***pinya Bisaya***, manual extraction of fibers, handloom weaving, family-based learning, and community craftsmanship. The tradition functions as a livelihood and a marker of Filipino identity (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023).

UNESCO's 2025 inscription of the Boholano practice of making ***Asin Tibuok*** on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding provides another relevant example. The practice is threatened by aging practitioners, insufficient income, climate change, rural-to-urban migration, and declining youth interest. Knowledge is primarily transmitted through observation and hands-on participation within families (UNESCO, 2025).

These cases demonstrate that agriculture-based heritage depends on the continuity of both cultural knowledge and livelihood practices. Documentation through photographs, videos, digital archives, and written descriptions is necessary but insufficient. Safeguarding should also create opportunities for practitioners to continue producing, teaching, performing, and earning sustainable livelihoods.

For agriculture-related dances, safeguarding may involve community-led cultural mapping, movement documentation, oral-history collection, apprenticeships, school-community partnerships, local-language materials, ethical tourism, and support for cultural bearers. Communities should guide decisions about what may be documented, adapted, performed, or commercially presented.

III. SYNTHESIS AND RESEARCH GAP

The reviewed literature establishes that Philippine agriculture is an economic, ecological, and cultural system. Agricultural landscapes embody knowledge, social relationships, beliefs, environmental practices, and community identity. Recent dance studies likewise demonstrate that movement can preserve livelihood experiences, historical narratives, cultural values, and collective memory. Festival research further shows that agriculture can be transformed into public expressions of identity, thanksgiving, creativity, and tourism.

Nevertheless, these areas are commonly studied separately. Agricultural research generally concentrates on livelihoods, ecological knowledge, climate adaptation, and landscape conservation. Dance research focuses on movement, education, identity, and performance. Festival studies emphasize tourism, commercialization, cultural sustainability, and event management. Few studies directly examine how agricultural practices and environments shape the movements, themes, meanings, and performance contexts of Philippine dances and festivals.

The present research addresses this gap by bringing agricultural, cultural, educational, and heritage perspectives together. It examines how farming practices, seasonal cycles, ecological relationships, and rural livelihoods are translated into dance movement and festival performance. It also investigates how commercialization, migration, climate-related disruption, tourism, education, and changing livelihoods influence the transmission of these traditions.

By connecting agriculture and dance, the research recognizes that safeguarding cultural performance requires more than preserving choreography. It also requires protecting the farming communities, local environments, cultural knowledge, and social relationships that give these performances meaning.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employed an exploratory qualitative research design to examine the dynamic relationship between agriculture and dance in the Philippines. It used a literature-based approach involving the review and analysis of scholarly articles, government reports, historical documents, cultural records, and publications from relevant national and international organizations. This approach was informed by document analysis, which treats published and documentary materials as sources that can be systematically examined and interpreted, and by literature-review methodology emphasizing transparent selection and synthesis of existing knowledge (Bowen, 2009; Snyder, 2019).

Sources were purposively selected according to their relevance to Philippine agriculture, agricultural labor and movement, traditional dance, festivals, rural livelihoods, cultural transmission, education, tourism, modernization, climate-related disruption, and intangible cultural heritage. The materials were analyzed thematically through repeated reading, coding, categorization, and interpretation. Both recurring patterns and contrasting perspectives were examined to identify how agricultural actions, products, landscapes, beliefs, and community practices are translated into movement vocabularies, choreography, costumes, props, music, rituals, and public celebrations. The analysis was guided by thematic analysis, particularly the systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns across qualitative materials (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The documentary data were organized into interconnected themes: agriculture as a social, ecological, and cultural system; agricultural labor as a source of dance movement; festivals as expressions of gratitude and community identity; education and intergenerational cultural transmission; pressures arising from modernization, migration, commercialization, changing livelihoods, and climate-related disruption; and community-centered heritage safeguarding. A comparative thematic synthesis was then conducted to identify relationships, convergences, tensions, and gaps across the sources. This process enabled the study to explain not only how agriculture influences the form and meaning of Philippine dances and festivals but also how cultural performances preserve agricultural knowledge, collective memory, spirituality, cooperation, and identity (Snyder, 2019).

To strengthen interpretive credibility, conclusions were drawn only from patterns supported across the reviewed documentary sources, while differences in context and perspective were retained in the synthesis. Nevertheless, because the study did not involve interviews, participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork, or direct engagement with farmers, dancers, elders, artisans, cultural bearers, and festival communities, its findings represent an interpretive synthesis rather than firsthand experience (Bowen, 2009). The study therefore acknowledges the need for future community-based, ethnographic, and participatory research to examine how agricultural movements and knowledge are translated into particular dances and festival practices and to support culturally appropriate preservation initiatives.

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V. FINDINGS

The thematic analysis of scholarly literature, government reports, cultural records, and institutional publications produced six interconnected findings. Together, they show that the relationship between agriculture and dance in the Philippines extends beyond the representation of farm work in performance. Agricultural environments, livelihood practices, Indigenous and local knowledge, occupational movements, social relations, and cultural meanings shape dances and festivals. In turn, these performances embody and transmit agricultural knowledge, collective memory, community identity, and intergenerational heritage.

A. Agriculture as a Cultural and Ecological System

The first finding indicates that Philippine agriculture functions as an economic activity, ecological practice, and cultural system. Farming communities relate to land not only as a productive resource but also as a foundation of livelihood, Indigenous and local knowledge, spirituality, social relations, and identity. Its continuing importance is reflected in the approximately 7.07 million agricultural households and 7.41 million agricultural operators recorded in the 2022 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2024).

Agricultural knowledge is sustained through observation, participation, oral tradition, community narratives, and intergenerational teaching. In Argao, Cebu, folklore and local beliefs shape community understandings of plants, animals, landscapes, and environmental conservation (Rios, 2022). In the Philippine Cordillera, Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge connects rice cultivation with cultural identity, ecosystem management, food production, medicinal practices, and community cooperation (Buminaang-Mendoza, 2024; Paing et al., 2025). These knowledge systems are therefore learned through continued participation in community life rather than through formal instruction alone.

The continuity of agricultural heritage depends on farming households' capacity to sustain their livelihoods and transmit Indigenous knowledge across generations. Commercialization, land-use change, migration, climate-related disruption, and declining agricultural labor threaten the natural, economic, social, and cultural resources of Indigenous rice-farming communities (Delina et al., 2024). Conversely, attachment to place, cultural identity, Indigenous knowledge, and community relationships strengthen the resilience of rice-terraced communities (Delina et al., 2025). Agricultural landscapes are thus living cultural environments where ecological knowledge, livelihood practices, and community memory are continually renewed.

B. Agricultural Labor as a Source of Dance Movement

The second finding shows that agricultural labor provides a significant movement vocabulary for Philippine traditional dance. Actions used in soil preparation, planting, cutting, gathering, harvesting, carrying, pounding, threshing, and processing are transformed into structured movement patterns. Rhythm, repetition, music, spatial formations, costumes, and props then organize these occupational actions into cultural performance.

Santos et al. (2024) demonstrate this relationship through their ethnographic and biomechanical analysis of traditional onion farming. They identified coordinated movements of the shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees, and ankles during land preparation, planting, and harvesting. These actions provide culturally grounded foundations for choreography based on actual agricultural practice.

The transformation of agricultural work into dance is not a literal reproduction of labor. Recognizable actions are selected, stylized, and arranged to express the physical and social dimensions of farming. Coordinated movements can embody the timing, patience, endurance, cooperation, and shared responsibility required in agricultural production (Santos et al., 2024). Agriculture-related dances therefore preserve both the visible actions of labor and the community values through which that labor is organized.

C. Traditional Dance as Embodied Cultural Knowledge

The third finding shows that agriculture-related dances function as embodied cultural knowledge. Meaning emerges through the interaction of movement, rhythm, music, costume, props, formation, and performance context. Together, these elements preserve ecological observations, livelihood experiences, community values, historical memory, and spiritual beliefs (Ocampo, 2016; Cruz, 2019). Dance therefore serves as a physical and intergenerational medium through which communities enact and transmit knowledge.

Tinikling illustrates this relationship through movements associated with the agility of the tikling bird within environments of rice fields, grasses, and bamboo traps. Its movement patterns situate the performance in a rural ecological setting and reflect community observations of relationships among humans, animals, crops, and cultivated landscapes (National Commission for Culture and the Arts [NCCA], n.d.). The dance shows how agricultural environments can generate movement, narrative, and cultural symbolism.

Traditional dances must therefore be interpreted as cultural systems rather than isolated sequences of steps. The Takik and Tallibeng Indigenous dances of Sabangan, Mountain Province, communicate identity, values, and heritage through movement, music, clothing, ritual, and social participation (Talangchey, 2023). Their meanings are inseparable from the Indigenous communities, environments, livelihoods, beliefs, and intergenerational practices that sustain them. Understanding agriculture-related dance consequently requires attention to both performance and its cultural context.

D. Agricultural Festivals as Expressions of Community Identity

The fourth finding reveals that agricultural festivals transform farm products, seasonal cycles, religious beliefs, and local traditions into public expressions of thanksgiving and community identity. These celebrations connect agriculture with dance, music, food, visual art, craftsmanship, religion, tourism, and collective participation (Fund, 2020; Villanueva, 2015).

The San Isidro Pahiyas Festival exemplifies this relationship. Decorations made from kiping, rice, fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products combine agricultural abundance, artistic creativity, religious devotion, and community participation. By transforming farm produce into cultural symbols, the festival presents agriculture as a source of identity and shared heritage rather than solely as an economic activity (Demetrial et al., 2025).

The analysis also identifies tension between cultural continuity and commercialization. Pahiyas has developed from a local religious and agricultural celebration into a major tourism and commercial event. Rising production costs, environmental concerns, declining numbers of cultural practitioners, and limited youth and stakeholder participation now challenge its sustainability (Demetrial et al., 2025).

Commercialization can generate income for farmers, artisans, performers, vendors, food producers, and tourism enterprises, but it can also redirect festivals from gratitude and reciprocity toward spectacle, competition, and visual extravagance. Cultural sustainability therefore depends on whether communities retain authority over how their heritage is organized and represented (Demetrial et al., 2025). Farmers, artisans, residents, performers, religious groups, educators, young people, and local officials should be recognized as cultural custodians and decision-makers, not merely as suppliers, performers, or tourist attractions.

E. Education as an Opportunity and a Risk

The fifth finding establishes schools and universities as important sites for transmitting Philippine traditional dances. Physical education classes, cultural programs, competitions, and school festivals expose students to dances that may no longer be practiced regularly in their communities. Engagement with dance steps, music, costumes, and cultural history can strengthen students' interest and participation in heritage-preservation initiatives (Lobo, 2025).

School-based transmission, however, can decontextualize cultural practice. Educational and competitive performances may prioritize memorized choreography, technical accuracy, and visual appeal while overlooking the agricultural livelihood, Indigenous or local language, ritual, ecological setting, and community history represented by the dance. Shortened and standardized versions may preserve outward form while weakening cultural meaning and disconnecting students from the knowledge holders who sustain the tradition (UNESCO Office Bangkok et al., 2022).

Meaningful transmission requires collaboration among educational institutions, farmers, elders, artisans, dancers, musicians, and other community knowledge holders. Integrating living heritage into education must respect the knowledge, consent, and cultural authority of the communities that maintain these traditions (UNESCO Office Bangkok et al., 2022). Contextualized dance education may involve observing farming practices, studying agricultural environments, documenting oral histories, consulting cultural bearers, and examining the meanings of movements, costumes, props, music, and formations. Such approaches enable Indigenous, local, and intergenerational knowledge to remain connected to the communities from which the dances emerged.

F. Safeguarding Dance Requires Protecting Its Agricultural Foundations

The sixth finding indicates that safeguarding agriculture-related dance requires more than documenting and teaching choreography. The continuity of these performances depends on the survival of the livelihoods, environments, Indigenous and local knowledge systems, materials, and social relationships from which they developed. Migration, declining income, land loss, climate-related disruption, and reduced youth participation can weaken both agricultural practices and the intergenerational transmission of associated cultural traditions (Delina et al., 2024; Delina et al., 2025).

Aklan piña handloom weaving demonstrates the close relationship among agricultural production, specialized knowledge, family-based teaching, livelihood, and cultural identity (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023). Similarly, the Boholano practice of producing Asin Tibuok is threatened by aging practitioners, insufficient income, climate change, rural-to-urban migration, and declining youth interest (UNESCO, 2025). Although these traditions are not dances, they show that agriculture-based heritage depends on both intergenerational knowledge transmission and sustainable livelihood support.

The findings support community-led and livelihood-sensitive approaches to safeguarding agriculture-related dances and festivals. Measures may include cultural mapping, movement documentation, oral-history collection, digital archiving, apprenticeships, school-community partnerships, local-language resources, responsible tourism, and material support for cultural practitioners (UNESCO Office Bangkok et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023; UNESCO, 2025). Documentation alone cannot sustain a tradition when communities lack the resources, authority, or opportunities to practice, teach, and reinterpret it across generations.

Integrative Finding

Overall, the findings establish a reciprocal relationship between agriculture and dance in the Philippines. Agricultural environments, occupational movements, seasonal cycles, ecological observations, Indigenous and local knowledge, spiritual beliefs, and community relations provide the material and symbolic foundations of many dances and festivals. These performances, in turn, make agricultural knowledge visible, preserve collective memory, communicate community values, and transmit cultural identity across generations (Rios, 2022; Talangchey, 2023; Paing et al., 2025).

This relationship is dynamic rather than fixed. Agricultural traditions and cultural performances continually respond to migration, education, tourism, commercialization, climate-related disruption, digital media, and changing livelihood conditions. Safeguarding agriculture-related dances therefore requires an integrated, community-led approach that recognizes farmers, Indigenous knowledge holders, elders, dancers, artisans, educators, young people, and cultural workers as interconnected custodians of living heritage (Delina et al., 2024; UNESCO Office Bangkok et al., 2022). Protecting performance without sustaining its agricultural, ecological, and community foundations would preserve its outward form while weakening the knowledge, relationships, and meanings that give it cultural life.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that agriculture and dance in the Philippines have a dynamic and reciprocal relationship. Agricultural environments, livelihood practices, seasonal cycles, ecological observations, and community beliefs provide the material and symbolic foundations of many traditional dances and festivals. In turn, cultural performances embody agricultural experiences, preserve collective memory, communicate community values, and strengthen Filipino cultural identity (Cruz, 2019; Talangchey, 2023). Dance should therefore be understood not merely as entertainment but as a form of embodied cultural knowledge through which communities interpret labor, nature, spirituality, cooperation, and celebration.

The findings demonstrate that agricultural labor contributes to the movement vocabulary of traditional dance. Actions associated with land preparation, planting, harvesting, carrying, gathering, pounding, and processing agricultural products may be stylized through rhythm, music, formations, costumes, and props. The biomechanical and ethnographic analysis of traditional onion farming, for example, illustrates how movements derived from actual agricultural work can provide foundations for culturally grounded choreography (Santos et al., 2024). Agricultural festivals similarly transform crops, local products, religious beliefs, and seasonal practices into public expressions of gratitude, creativity, and community identity.

However, modernization, migration, commercialization, climate-related disruption, and changing livelihoods place pressure on both agricultural communities and their associated cultural traditions (Delina et al., 2024, 2025). Tourism and commercialization can provide livelihoods and increase cultural visibility, but they may also detach festivals from their original meanings when spectacle and economic value are prioritized over community participation and ownership. The sustainability of celebrations such as the Pahiyas Festival therefore depends on the meaningful involvement of farmers, artisans, performers, young people, cultural bearers, residents, and local institutions (Demetrial et al., 2025).

Schools and universities provide important opportunities for transmitting agriculture-related dances to younger generations. Students' participation in dance, music, costume, and cultural-history activities can increase their interest in Philippine traditional dances and heritage preservation (Lobo, 2025). Nevertheless, teaching choreography without its agricultural, ecological, historical, and spiritual contexts may preserve only the external form of a tradition. Meaningful heritage education requires collaboration among teachers, students, farmers, elders, dancers, artisans, and other community knowledge holders (UNESCO Office Bangkok et al., 2022).

Safeguarding agriculture-related dances and festivals consequently requires more than documenting and performing their choreography. It also requires protecting the livelihoods, landscapes, knowledge systems, materials, and social relationships that sustain them. The safeguarding of Aklan piña handloom weaving and the Boholano practice of making Asin Tibuok demonstrates that agriculture-based cultural heritage depends on intergenerational learning, community participation, and sustainable livelihood support (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023, 2025). Community-led cultural mapping, oral-history collection, movement documentation, digital archiving, apprenticeships, school-community partnerships, responsible tourism, and continuing support for cultural practitioners are therefore essential.

Because this study was based on published literature and documentary sources, its findings represent an interpretive synthesis rather than the firsthand experiences of farmers, dancers, elders, artisans, and festival communities. Future research should employ community-based, ethnographic, and participatory approaches to document local perspectives and examine how agricultural movements and knowledge are translated into particular dances and festival practices. Such research would strengthen the evidence supporting culturally appropriate preservation initiatives.

Ultimately, preserving the relationship between agriculture and dance means protecting both cultural expression and the communities from which it emerges. A performance may retain its choreography while gradually losing its deeper meaning if its agricultural and community foundations are neglected. An integrated, ethical, and community-centered approach is therefore necessary to ensure that Philippine dances and festivals remain living expressions of livelihood, ecological knowledge, spirituality, creativity, and collective identity for future generations.

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