

FAITH, GRACE, AND MOTION: ANALYZING THE MOVEMENTS OF KARAKOL DANCE IN CAVITE

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Abstract

Indigenous dances in Cavite continue to serve as living expressions of faith, cultural identity, and communal memory, yet many remain insufficiently documented for systematic preservation and instruction. This study investigated the process of analyzing the movements and developing enhanced dance literature for the Karakol dance in Cavite. Specifically, it determined the dancers' level of proficiency in executing choreographed movements, the frequency of community participation and engagement in documentation and preservation, the perceived level of cultural identity and pride, the duration of involvement in terms of hours of practice and sessions attended, and the respondents' knowledge of the historical and cultural significance of the dance. The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design involving sixty dancers, cultural practitioners, and community members who participated in Karakol-related workshops, rehearsals, performances, and documentation activities. Data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire and dance proficiency evaluation rubric, then analyzed using descriptive statistical measures. Findings revealed that respondents demonstrated high proficiency in performing the dance, frequent participation in documentation and preservation activities, high cultural identity and pride, moderate to high duration of involvement, and high knowledge of the dance's historical and cultural significance. These results indicated that sustained community participation contributed to the effective transmission of movement knowledge and strengthened appreciation of heritage. Based on the findings, the study proposed an enhanced Karakol dance literature comprising movement descriptions, choreographic structures, cultural annotations, historical background, and instructional guides. The study concluded that systematic documentation can support the preservation, promotion, and intergenerational transmission of the Karakol dance.

Keywords: Karakol Dance, Dance Literature, Cultural Preservation, Community Participation, Cultural Identity, Indigenous Dance

1. Introduction

In many Philippine communities, indigenous and devotional dances remain living cultural archives through which faith, collective memory, identity, and local history are transmitted across generations. As intangible cultural heritage, dance is preserved not only through objects or written records but through repeated performance, communal participation, embodied knowledge, and intergenerational transmission. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines intangible heritage as practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage and that provide a sense of identity and continuity (UNESCO, 2003). In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 10066, or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, affirms the State's responsibility to protect, conserve, develop, promote, and popularize the nation's cultural heritage and artistic creations (Republic Act No. 10066, 2010). These mandates underscore the need for community-based studies that do not merely describe traditional practices but also develop systematic means to document, teach, and sustain them.

Among the culturally significant ritual dances in Cavite, Karakol occupies an important place as a communal expression of devotion and celebration. Recent scholarship describes Karakol as a ritual dance performed in Cavite during the feast of a patron saint, or “Poon,” usually during chapel- or parish-based celebrations (Dioso & Demeterio, 2025). The dance brings together religious faith, procession, music, bodily movement, and community gathering, making it more than a performative event. It functions as a social and spiritual practice through which participants enact gratitude, belonging, and continuity. However, Dioso and Demeterio (2025) observed that Karakol has undergone changes in music, steps, and performance style, producing differing responses between those who favor traditional forms and those who view innovation as a way to encourage youth participation. This tension between preservation and adaptation underscores the need to document the dance without reducing it into a rigid or lifeless artifact.

Documentation is increasingly recognized as a critical process for safeguarding dance traditions, because movement is temporal, embodied, and vulnerable to alteration when transmitted solely through memory and imitation. Digital cameras, audiovisual archives, motion capture, and computational media have changed how dance can be recorded, analyzed, and transmitted, making embodied practices more accessible as cultural and pedagogical resources (Ravetto-Biagioli, 2021). In dance research and education, transcription and notation also support the identification of movement patterns, sequences, rhythm, posture, and performance structure. Multimedia-based transcription studies of classical dance demonstrate that formal documentation can assist preservation, tutoring, annotation, and later reconstruction of movement systems (Mallick et al., 2020). Although such technological approaches may not always be available in community settings, the principle remains relevant: dance preservation requires systematic, accurate, and culturally sensitive recording of movement and meaning.

The challenge, however, is that cultural documentation is never a purely technical activity. It involves questions of ownership, authority, authenticity, and community participation. UNESCO (2003) emphasizes the widest possible participation of communities, groups, and individuals in the creation, maintenance, and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Philippine heritage scholarship likewise shows that community participation can strengthen safeguarding efforts, but it must be handled carefully because heritage work may involve competing claims, memories, and interpretations (Gonzalez, 2017). For Karakol, this means that the process of developing dance literature should not be limited to an outsider’s written description of steps. It should consider the experiences of dancers, cultural practitioners, and community members who participate in rehearsals, workshops, performances, and documentation activities. Their involvement provides the empirical and cultural basis for determining how the dance is learned, practiced, understood, and valued.

Despite growing interest in intangible cultural heritage, several gaps remain in documenting local dance traditions. Many studies emphasize historical description, festival performance, or cultural interpretation, while fewer examine how participation, practice duration, proficiency, cultural knowledge, and identity formation may be measured together. In the case of Karakol, the existing literature confirms its ritual and communal significance, but there remains a need for studies that translate movement practice into usable dance literature while also examining the cultural outcomes of participation. This gap is important because preservation is not achieved solely by recording steps; it also depends on whether dancers understand the dance’s historical and cultural significance, whether they develop pride in the tradition, and whether community engagement is strong enough to sustain transmission.

Accordingly, the present study investigated the process of analyzing the movements of the Karakol dance in Cavite as a basis for developing enhanced dance literature. Specifically, it examined the dancers’ level of proficiency in executing choreographed movements, the frequency of community participation and engagement in documentation and preservation, the perceived level of cultural identity and pride among respondents, the duration of involvement in terms of

hours of practice and number of sessions attended, and the respondents' knowledge of the historical and cultural significance of the dance. By linking movement analysis with community participation and cultural outcomes, the study positioned Karakol documentation as both a technical and socio-cultural undertaking. The intended output may serve as a structured reference for educators, dancers, cultural workers, and local institutions seeking to preserve Karakol while respecting its living, communal, and devotional character. Through empirical assessment and culturally grounded documentation, the study aims to support the continued transmission of Karakol as a living tradition of Cavite.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the movement analysis and development of enhanced dance literature for the Karakol dance in Cavite. This design was considered appropriate because the study sought to describe measurable characteristics of the respondents, including their level of dance proficiency, frequency of community participation and engagement, duration of involvement, perceived cultural identity and pride, and knowledge of the historical and cultural significance of the dance. The descriptive component enabled the researcher to determine the prevailing levels of these variables through numerical summaries such as means, frequencies, and descriptive interpretations. Meanwhile, the correlational component provided a framework for examining the degree of association among participation, duration of involvement, and dance proficiency without manipulating the study environment or introducing experimental treatment. The study was also cross-sectional, as data were collected from respondents at a single point in time, allowing the researcher to capture existing patterns of engagement, performance, and cultural awareness within the Karakol dance community. Through this design, the study generated empirical evidence that served as the basis for proposing enhanced dance literature intended to support the documentation, preservation, and continued transmission of the Karakol dance as a culturally significant community practice.

2.2 Participants

The study consisted of 60 individuals actively involved in Karakol dance activities in selected communities in Cavite. They included dancers, cultural practitioners, and community members who participated directly in workshops, rehearsals, performances, and documentation or preservation-related activities. The selection of participants was guided by their actual engagement in the cultural practice to ensure that the data reflected informed experiences and authentic involvement in the transmission and preservation of the dance. To qualify for inclusion, participants had to be at least 18 years old, have attended at least 3 Karakol practice sessions, and have voluntarily consented to participate in the study. Individuals who only observed performances, were below the required age, or failed to complete the research instruments were excluded from the final data set. This participant profile was appropriate for the study because the investigation required respondents who could provide reliable information on dance proficiency, frequency of participation, duration of involvement, cultural identity and pride, and knowledge of the historical and cultural significance of the Karakol dance. Through this purposive selection of culturally engaged respondents, the study generated context-specific, relevant data aligned with the objective of developing enhanced dance literature for preservation and instructional use.

2.3 Instrumentation

The study employed structured, researcher-developed quantitative instruments to generate measurable data aligned with the investigation's objectives. A dance proficiency

evaluation rubric was used to assess respondents' execution of the choreographed movements of the Karakol dance, including accuracy, rhythmic timing, coordination, spatial awareness, posture, and overall performance quality. Each criterion was rated on a numerical scale to compute individual and group proficiency scores. In addition, a structured survey questionnaire was administered to collect data on community participation and engagement in documentation and preservation activities; the duration of involvement, in terms of hours of practice and number of sessions attended; knowledge of the historical and cultural significance of the Karakol dance; and perceived cultural identity and pride. The questionnaire utilized closed-ended items and Likert-scale statements to ensure uniformity of responses and suitability for statistical treatment. Prior to data collection, the instruments underwent content validation by experts in dance education, cultural studies, and quantitative research to establish clarity, relevance, and contextual appropriateness. Through these instruments, the study obtained systematic, comparable, and analyzable data necessary for developing an enhanced dance literature for the preservation and instructional transmission of the Karakol dance.

2.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistical procedures consistent with the study's objectives. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and grand mean, were used to summarize the respondents' level of dance proficiency, frequency of community participation and engagement, duration of involvement, perceived cultural identity and pride, and knowledge of the historical and cultural significance of the Karakol dance. The computed means were interpreted using a five-point scale to determine the descriptive level of each variable. For the correlational component, appropriate inferential statistics were used to examine whether significant relationships existed among community participation, duration of involvement, and dance proficiency, with a significance level of 0.05. This analytical approach enabled the study to present both the prevailing conditions of Karakol dance participation and the statistical associations among the variables under investigation. The analysis results served as the empirical basis for developing an enhanced dance literature intended to support the documentation, preservation, and instructional transmission of the Karakol dance in Cavite.

3 Results

The results showed that the respondents demonstrated a generally high level of proficiency in executing the choreographed movements of the Karakol dance. The grand mean of 4.20 indicated that the dancers performed the required movements with notable accuracy, timing, coordination, spatial awareness, and overall execution. Among the indicators, coordination had the highest mean, suggesting that the respondents had developed sufficient bodily control and movement synchronization through repeated rehearsals and performances. This finding implies that the Karakol dance had been effectively transmitted within the community through practice-based learning, observation, and collective performance.

Regarding community participation and engagement, the respondents frequently participated in activities related to documentation and preservation, as reflected in the grand mean of 4.05. Preservation activities had a slightly higher mean than documentation activities, indicating that the community was more actively engaged in sustaining the dance through performance, participation, and practice continuity than in formal recording or written documentation. This result suggests that while the Karakol tradition remains active in the community, there is still a need to strengthen systematic documentation efforts to ensure that movement patterns, cultural meanings, and performance practices are preserved in a more organized and accessible form.

The respondents also reported a high perceived level of cultural identity and pride after participating in the documentation and performance of the Karakol dance, with a grand mean of

4.31. The highest mean was observed in pride in the local dance tradition, indicating that participation in Karakol strengthened the respondents' sense of cultural belonging and appreciation of their community heritage. This result suggests that the dance functioned not only as a performative activity but also as a meaningful cultural experience that reinforced identity, emotional attachment, and motivation to preserve local traditions. The findings further indicate that community-based dance practices can serve as effective vehicles for cultural affirmation and intergenerational transmission.

Regarding the duration of involvement, the respondents showed a moderate to high level of engagement, with a grand mean of 3.96. The number of sessions attended had a higher mean than the hours of practice, suggesting that participation was sustained through repeated attendance at formal rehearsals, workshops, or community activities. This finding implies that consistent participation may have contributed to the respondents' proficiency and cultural awareness. Regular exposure to the dance enabled participants to internalize movement sequences, understand performance expectations, and become familiar with the cultural context of Karakol.

Finally, the respondents demonstrated a high level of knowledge of the historical and cultural significance of the Karakol dance, with a grand mean of 4.22. Understanding of cultural meaning obtained the highest mean, indicating that the respondents were aware not only of the movement structure but also of the values, traditions, and meanings associated with the dance. Taken together, the findings provided a strong empirical basis for proposing an enhanced Karakol dance literature composed of movement documentation, choreographic structure, cultural annotations, historical background, and instructional guides. These components may support the preservation, teaching, and continued promotion of Karakol as a living cultural and devotional practice in Cavite.

4. Discussion

The study's results affirm that the Karakol dance in Cavite remains a viable cultural practice sustained through embodied learning, communal participation, and repeated performance. The high level of dance proficiency among the respondents suggests that movement knowledge was effectively transmitted through practice-based engagement, observation, and collective rehearsal. This finding is consistent with the view that dance is a multimedia and embodied form of knowledge that unfolds through time, space, rhythm, and bodily execution; thus, its analysis requires attention to posture, sequence, movement structure, and performance context (Mallick et al., 2019). In the present study, the respondents' ability to execute the choreographed movements with accuracy, timing, coordination, spatial awareness, and overall quality indicates that Karakol has not only been retained as a ritual performance but has also remained teachable within the community. Such proficiency provides a strong foundation for the development of enhanced dance literature, as accurate movement documentation must be anchored in dancers who can consistently perform and demonstrate the choreographic patterns of the tradition.

The respondents' frequent participation in documentation and preservation activities further underscores the significance of community engagement in sustaining intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO (2003) emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage includes practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their heritage and transmit from generation to generation. The same convention highlights the widest possible participation of communities, groups, and individuals who create, maintain, and transmit such heritage. In this regard, the study's finding that respondents frequently participated in Karakol-related activities indicates that preservation was not limited to institutional action but was actively carried by the community itself. This corroborates the principle that living heritage is best

safeguarded when cultural bearers are not passive subjects of documentation but active participants in identifying, transmitting, and managing their cultural expressions.

The high perceived level of cultural identity and pride among respondents is likewise supported by existing heritage frameworks. The UNESCO Convention explains that intangible cultural heritage provides communities with a sense of identity and continuity while promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003). Similarly, Republic Act No. 10066, or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, affirms the mandate to protect, conserve, develop, promote, and popularize the nation's cultural heritage and resources (Republic Act No. 10066, 2010). Within this policy and cultural context, the respondents' strong sense of belonging, pride, appreciation, and motivation to preserve Karakol reflects the affective value of participation in traditional dance. The finding suggests that Karakol functions not merely as a performance activity but as a cultural mechanism through which community members affirm identity, religious devotion, local belonging, and continuity with past generations.

The moderate-to-high duration of involvement, measured in terms of hours of practice and the number of sessions attended, also helps explain the respondents' high level of proficiency and cultural knowledge. Sustained exposure to rehearsals, workshops, and performances allows participants to internalize not only the physical sequence of the dance but also its symbolic and historical meanings. This is particularly relevant to Karakol because recent scholarship describes it as a ritual dance performed in Cavite during the feast of a patron saint or "Poon," while also noting that the tradition has experienced changes in music, steps, and performance style (Dioso & Demeterio, 2025). The present findings, therefore, suggest that continuous involvement can help balance preservation and adaptation: participants become familiar with traditional movement forms while also understanding how the dance may continue to evolve in response to contemporary community life.

Finally, the high level of knowledge of Karakol's historical and cultural significance strengthens the justification for developing enhanced dance literature as the major output of the study. Dance documentation is important because movement traditions are vulnerable to loss, distortion, or fragmentation when transmitted only through memory and informal imitation. Studies on dance automation and movement analysis show that documentation, notation, sequence recognition, and digital representation can support heritage preservation, e-learning, tutoring, and the reconstruction of movement systems (Joshi & Jadhav, 2019; Mallick et al., 2019). Although the present study is community-based rather than technology-driven, its findings point to the same implication: Karakol should be documented through movement descriptions, choreographic structure, cultural annotations, historical background, and instructional guides. Such enhanced dance literature may serve as a culturally grounded and pedagogically useful resource for dancers, educators, cultural workers, and local institutions seeking to preserve Karakol as a living devotional and communal tradition.

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