

Exploring Cultural Significance and Social Impact: A Valuation Study of Balse ng Desposorio Folk Dance among the Folks of Barangay Malanggam, Malolos, Bulacan

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Abstract:- This research aimed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the valuation of the Balse ng Desposorio folk dance within the community of Barangay Malanggam, Malolos Bulacan. The primary focus was on exploring its cultural significance, identifying the challenges it faces, and evaluating the prospects for its preservation. Through an in-depth qualitative approach, encompassing methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation, the study delved into the multifaceted dimensions of the dance's value, shedding light on its role in the local cultural landscape as an integral component of Malolos's cultural identity.

Keywords:- Folk Dance; Cultural Identity; Cultural Preservation; Cultural Heritage.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is a nation rich in cultural diversity, with a myriad of traditional folk dances that embody the country's history, values, and heritage. Among these treasured dances is the Balse ng Desposorio, a time-honored folk dance deeply ingrained in the cultural tapestry of Malolos, a municipality located in the province of Bulacan, Philippines. Rooted in local customs and historical practices, Balse ng Desposorio holds a significant place in the hearts of the people of Malolos, symbolizing the community's shared identity and social cohesion.

Balse ng Desposorio, also known as the "Union Dance" or "Dance to Unite Two People" takes its name from the Spanish word "Balse," meaning dance, and the Tagalog term "Desposorio," which refers to the betrothal or marriage ceremony. The dance is traditionally performed during wedding celebrations, making it an essential component of the local culture and social traditions.

The dance is characterized by the graceful movements of the newlyweds, reflecting the exuberance and happiness associated with their marital union. It symbolizes the coming together of two souls in marriage and the communal celebration of love and togetherness as people unite to dance.

Desposorio in Barangay Malanggam is typically held on the night preceding the wedding day and lasting until dawn, this ceremonial practice commences with a procession from the groom's residence to the bride's house. Accompanying the groom's family are offerings including food, flowers, kitchen implements, the bride's attire, and Patron Saints such as the Holy Family. As the procession advances, participants in the celebration dance joyfully, express their happiness through shouts, recite poems, and revel in the festive atmosphere, all in anticipation of the imminent union of the couple through the sacred bonds of matrimony.

The "Balse ng Desposorio" holds deep cultural significance within the community gatherings of Bulacan. As a cherished and time-honored tradition, it serves as a testament to the region's rich heritage and steadfast commitment to preserving its cultural identity. This dance ritual, a symbolic prelude to weddings, embodies not only the anticipation of a couple's union but also encapsulates the shared values, customs, and history of the community. By enacting this ceremonial dance, the community not only pays homage to its ancestors but also ensures the passage of tradition to future generations (Lewis, 2013). The "Balse ng Desposorio" functions as a vital link between the past and the present, connecting individuals with their roots and fostering a sense of belonging. Through its lively processions, joyful dances, and heartfelt rituals, the community reaffirms its commitment to upholding its cultural heritage, inviting both locals and outsiders to appreciate and partake in the vibrant tapestry of Bulacan's traditions. In a rapidly changing world, the "Balse ng Desposorio" stands as a resilient reminder of the importance of cultural preservation, playing an integral

role in community gatherings as a living expression of history, unity, and continuity.

As with many traditional practices, Balse ng Desporio faces challenges in maintaining its cultural authenticity and significance amidst the influences of globalization and modernization. As younger generations engage with a globalized world, the continuity of this age-old dance form may be at risk of fading into obscurity, potentially eroding the fabric of Malolos's unique cultural tapestry. The rapid changes in contemporary lifestyles and the introduction of Western cultural elements can pose threats to the continuity of this beloved folk dance, making it imperative to examine its current valuation and significance among the people of Malolos (Yang & Fei, 2022).

II. OBJECTIVES

The preservation of the cultural heritage of the community in Barangay Malanggam, Malolos Bulacan hinges on the significance attributed to the Balse ng Desporio folk dance by its community. In the face of globalization and modernization, this traditional dance encounters challenges in maintaining its relevance and cultural importance within the local context. Therefore, this research aims to delve into the present-day assessment of Balse ng Desporio's value among the residents of Barangay Malanggam, Malolos Bulacan. The research sought to explore the perceptions and attitudes of the locals towards Balse ng Desporio; to examine the potential threats posed to its continuity; and to discover its role as an integral part of Malolos's cultural heritage amidst the challenges of modernization.

Preserving cultural heritage serves as a vital link between the past, present, and future. It encapsulates the rich tapestry of traditions, beliefs, artistry, and knowledge that define a society's identity and values. By safeguarding cultural heritage, we ensure that future generations can learn from history's lessons, appreciate diverse cultural expressions, and foster a sense of continuity and belonging (Atalan, 2018; Ismalin & Ahmad, 2014). Moreover, cultural heritage reinforces social cohesion and global understanding, fostering respect for the myriad of cultures that shape our world.

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage, particularly the Balse ng Desporio folk dance, within the community of Malolos. By recognizing the dance's value, understanding its cultural significance, and addressing preservation challenges, this research can contribute to the long-term continuity of this cherished tradition and strengthen the cultural fabric of Malolos.

The scope of this research focuses on the valuation of Balse ng Desporio folk dance, specifically among the folks of Barangay Malanggam, Malolos, a municipality in the province of Bulacan, Philippines. The research aimed to provide a comprehensive qualitative exploration of the cultural significance of the Balse ng Desporio folk dance

within the defined community, offering valuable insights into the perceptions and attitudes of the locals towards Balse ng Desporio, its potential threats posed to its continuity, and its role as an integral part of Malolos's cultural heritage amidst the challenges of modernization.

➤ *Geographical Limitation*

The research focuses solely on the valuation of Balse ng Desporio folk dance among the folks of Barangay Malanggam, Malolos, Bulacan. It does not encompass the broader context of other regions or communities in the Philippines that may also practice similar traditional dances.

➤ *Cultural Bias:*

The findings of the study are influenced by the specific cultural context of Barangay Malanggam, Malolos, and the perceptions of the dance may vary among different age groups, social classes, or cultural backgrounds within the community.

Despite these limitations, the research endeavors to provide valuable insights into the cultural significance and preservation challenges surrounding Balse ng Desporio folk dance in Barangay Malanggam, Malolos, Bulacan, contributing to the broader understanding of the importance of preserving cultural heritage within local communities.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research methodology to address the statement of the problem and achieve the research objectives. The objective of the research was to comprehensively understand the valuation of the Balse ng Desporio folk dance within the community of Barangay Malanggam, Malolos Bulacan, focusing on its cultural significance, challenges, and prospects for preservation.

To achieve these objectives, the research utilized a combination of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. The primary data collection involved engaging with members of the Barangay Malanggam community who have direct experience and involvement with the Balse ng Desporio dance. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who could provide valuable insights into the valuation, cultural importance, and challenges of the dance.

The research process began by conducting semi-structured interviews with key informants, including cultural experts, elders, and individuals with expertise in local traditions. These interviews aimed to delve into the historical origins and evolution of Balse ng Desporio, its role in community gatherings, and its adaptation to modern times.

Furthermore, focus group discussions were conducted with community members, dancers, and individuals familiar with the dance. These discussions facilitated a collective exploration of the social and cultural implications of Balse ng Desporio in the contemporary context. Participants shared their perspectives on the perceived value, relevance, and

continuity of the dance within the community, shedding light on its current standing and potential challenges.

Participant observation played a crucial role in immersing the researcher in the actual Balse ng Desposorio events, allowing for a firsthand experience of the dance, its performance, and its impact on the community. This approach helped to capture nuances and emotions that might not be fully expressed through interviews alone.

The qualitative data collected through interviews, focus groups, and participant observation were subjected to thorough thematic analysis. The researcher identified recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to the

valuation, significance, challenges, and prospects of the Balse ng Desposorio dance. These findings were then used to address the research objectives and provide a comprehensive understanding of the dance's role in preserving the cultural heritage of Baranggay Malanggam, Malolos Bulacan.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed rich insights into the valuation and cultural significance of the Balse ng Desposorio folk dance within the community of Baranggay Malanggam, Malolos Bulacan. Five main themes emerged from the data, shedding light on the multifaceted dimensions of the dance's role and importance.

TABLE I. THEME CODING ON THE VALUATION AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BALSE NG DESPOSORIO IN BARANGGAY MALANGGAM

| Theme 1 | Theme 2 | Theme 3 | Theme 4 | Theme 5 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Connection to Cultural Heritage | Communal Unity and Celebration | Emotional Connection | Challenges of Modernization | Strategies for Preservation |

➤ Connection to Cultural Heritage

The first theme, "Connection to Cultural Heritage," revealed a profound and enduring link between the Balse ng Desposorio folk dance and the cultural heritage of Baranggay Malanggam's community. This theme underscored how the dance functioned as a bridge across generations, uniting the community with its historical roots. Elders recounted stories of their ancestors engaging in the dance, recounting its role in past celebrations. Younger participants expressed an eagerness to uphold this connection, highlighting their desire to preserve their cultural identity amidst modern influences. The Balse ng Desposorio dance served as a tangible embodiment of tradition, effectively transmitting cultural values, stories, and practices to the younger generation.

The connection to cultural heritage carries both positive and negative implications for individuals spanning from young teens to elders (Iacono & Brown, 2016). For young teens, the connection can serve as a source of pride and identity. Participating in the Balse ng Desposorio dance allows them to explore their cultural roots and be part of a shared history. However, a potential downside could be a lack of full comprehension of the dance's historical depth, potentially leading to a shallower appreciation.

For young adults, the connection to cultural heritage can foster a sense of continuity in a rapidly changing world. They gain an understanding of their community's legacy and the role the dance has played in shaping their identity. However, the pressure to uphold tradition might conflict with their aspirations for modernization and individual expression.

Among elders, the connection to cultural heritage brings a sense of nostalgia and continuity. Their memories of the dance's history contribute to their role as cultural custodians. Nonetheless, a challenge arises when their expectations for the younger generation to embrace the dance and its heritage clash with the evolving interests and priorities of youth.

While the connection to cultural heritage through the Balse ng Desposorio dance offers a valuable link between generations and preserves tradition, it also presents complexities. Striking a balance between honoring heritage and accommodating changing perspectives is vital to ensure the sustained relevance of the dance (Pijet-Migoñ & Migoñ, 2022; Kato, 2006). This theme highlights the importance of fostering intergenerational dialogue and understanding to navigate the challenges and benefits of cultural heritage preservation in a community undergoing transformation.

➤ Communal Unity and Celebration

The thematic analysis revealed that the Balse ng Desposorio dance plays a pivotal role in fostering communal unity and serving as a mode of celebration within the community of Baranggay Malanggam. Participants across different age groups echoed the sentiment that the dance ritual serves as a unifying force, bringing together individuals from various walks of life. This communal bond was particularly evident during the procession from the groom's house to the bride's house, a symbolic journey that transcended generational divides and engendered a sense of collective purpose. Through shared participation, both in the dance and the accompanying festivities, community members found themselves bound by a shared experience and a shared joy. This theme highlighted how the dance serves as a living embodiment of the community's interconnectedness, promoting relationships and bonds that extend beyond family units.

The connection between the Balse ng Desposorio dance and communal unity brings forth several advantages and disadvantages, varying across different age groups. For young teens, the dance offers a sense of belonging and connection to their cultural heritage. It provides them with a tangible means to engage with their roots, fostering a stronger sense of identity and community involvement. However, some may find the dance overly traditional or challenging to connect with, particularly as modern influences shape their preferences and interests.

For adults and middle-aged individuals, the communal aspect of the dance allows them to relive and reinforce cultural traditions while strengthening their connections with neighbors and extended family. This strengthens the social fabric of the community, creating a sense of continuity and shared values. Nonetheless, adults might also experience time constraints due to their responsibilities, impacting their ability to fully participate.

Elders, who often play a pivotal role in transmitting cultural knowledge, perceive the communal unity as a testament to the enduring legacy of their traditions. They find solace in witnessing younger generations partake in the dance and in seeing the dance's role in cementing bonds. However, some elders might also struggle with physical limitations that hinder their participation or might perceive changes in the dance's execution as challenges to its authenticity.

The communal unity and celebratory aspects of the Balse ng Desporio dance offer a multi-generational bridge that connects the community across age groups. While this connection fosters a sense of shared identity and purpose, it is not without its challenges. The dance's continued significance relies on striking a balance between honoring tradition and adapting to changing societal dynamics, ensuring that it remains a source of unity and celebration for all members of the community, regardless of age (McGarry, 2021).

➤ *Emotional Connection*

One prominent theme that emerged was the strong emotional connection community members felt towards the dance. Participants consistently expressed a deep sense of pride and attachment to the Balse ng Desporio, viewing it as a cherished cultural heritage that binds them to their roots. Through the dance, they recounted experiencing a profound connection with their ancestors and a shared history, which evoked feelings of nostalgia and a sense of belonging. The dance was described as a conduit for passing down traditions across generations, fostering a sense of continuity and unity within the community.

Moreso, thematic analysis illuminated the role of the Balse ng Desporio in community weddings. Participants spoke passionately about how the dance served as a unifying force during their wedding, fostering a collective spirit and reinforcing social bonds. The dance's role in weddings highlighted as a powerful symbol of love and commitment, evoking a range of emotions from joy to sentimental reflection. Many participants shared stories of their personal experiences participating in the dance, describing how it enriched their lives and created lasting memories.

However, the analysis also brought to light challenges that the Balse ng Desporio dance faces in the contemporary era. Participants discussed the impact of changing lifestyles, urbanization, and technological distractions on the dance's participation and appreciation. The potential dilution of cultural values in the face of external influences emerged as a concern among community members (Nagy-Sándor & Berkers, 2018). They recognized the need for concerted

efforts to raise awareness, particularly among the younger generation, to ensure the continued relevance of the dance.

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data underscored the profound emotional connection that community members have with the Balse ng Desporio folk dance. It illuminated the dance's role as a unifying force, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity. However, the study also highlighted challenges stemming from modernization and changing lifestyles (Zhang, 2022). Overall, the research revealed the dance's enduring significance within the community while pointing towards the importance of collective efforts to preserve its cultural heritage for future generations.

➤ *Challenges of Modernization*

The theme of "Challenges of Modernization" that emerged from the qualitative analysis reflects a significant aspect of the Balse ng Desporio folk dance's current state within the community of Baranggay Malanggam. Participants of varying age groups expressed both pros and cons associated with the dance's connection to modernization, illustrating a complex interplay between tradition and changing societal dynamics.

Younger participants, particularly teenagers, highlighted some positive aspects of connecting the Balse ng Desporio dance to modernization. They saw the potential for leveraging digital platforms and social media to engage a wider audience and promote the dance beyond the community's boundaries. This connection to modern technology was perceived as a means to enhance visibility and awareness about the dance, making it more accessible to their generation (Sen & Chakraborty, 2017). Additionally, some saw the opportunity for creative reinterpretations of the dance that could resonate with contemporary sensibilities, breathing new life into the tradition.

However, some young participants also expressed concerns about the dance's potential dilution in the face of modernization. They worried that digital platforms might oversimplify or misrepresent the dance's cultural significance, thereby reducing its authenticity. There was a shared sentiment that while modernization might increase exposure, it could also contribute to a shallow understanding of the dance's rich history and cultural roots.

On the other hand, elder participants recognized the need to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity to ensure the Balse ng Desporio dance's continuity. They saw potential in using modernization as a tool for intergenerational knowledge transfer. Elders acknowledged that engaging with technology could facilitate the preservation of oral histories and stories associated with the dance, passing down insights to younger generations in a format that resonated with them.

Moreso, some elders voiced concerns about modernization leading to a departure from the dance's essence. They feared that adapting the dance to contemporary preferences might compromise its traditional significance and erode the deep-rooted cultural elements that defined it. There was a prevailing sentiment that modernization could

inadvertently strip away the dance's soul, potentially weakening its connection to the community's heritage.

The theme of challenges posed by modernization brings to the forefront a delicate balancing act that the community of Baranggay Malanggam faces. The perspectives of both young teens and elders reflect the complexities inherent in navigating cultural preservation in an era of rapid change. This analysis underscores the need for a thoughtful and collaborative approach to adapting the Balse ng Desporio dance to modern times while safeguarding its intrinsic cultural value. The diverse viewpoints expressed highlight the importance of intergenerational dialogue and shared decision-making to determine how the dance can authentically evolve in a way that respects its historical roots while resonating with contemporary sensibilities.

➤ *Strategies for Preservation*

The thematic analysis revealed a collective commitment within the community of Baranggay Malanggam to preserve the Balse ng Desporio folk dance. Participants from various age groups expressed a shared concern for the dance's future and proposed strategies aimed at ensuring its longevity. One notable suggestion was the integration of the dance into educational programs, cultural festivals, and community events. This approach holds the potential to engage a wider audience, especially the younger generation, who might not have direct exposure to the dance's significance. Additionally, the incorporation of digital media platforms was recommended to make the dance more accessible and appealing to tech-savvy youth. The intergenerational exchange of knowledge through storytelling and mentorship was also highlighted as a fundamental strategy, allowing elders to impart their wisdom to the younger generation and establish a sense of continuity.

The proposed strategies for preserving the Balse ng Desporio dance present both advantages and challenges across different age groups. Connecting with young teens up to elders through these strategies has varying implications.

Integrating the dance into educational programs and using digital media platforms can effectively capture the attention of young teens. Interactive workshops and digital content can make the dance more engaging, fostering an understanding of cultural heritage from an early age. This approach ensures the transmission of traditional values to younger generations who are digitally inclined. However, there is a risk of diluting the authenticity and depth of the dance if it is solely presented through digital platforms. An overemphasis on technology might disconnect the dance from its traditional context and diminish the emotional and cultural impact it holds.

The proposed strategies provide opportunities for young adults to actively engage in cultural preservation, fostering a sense of ownership and identity. The integration of the dance into cultural festivals and community events could create spaces for social interaction and bonding among peers, reinforcing a sense of belonging. Time constraints and changing priorities among young adults might pose challenges to sustained participation. Balancing modern commitments

with traditional practices could lead to sporadic engagement or superficial involvement, potentially impacting the authenticity of their connection to the dance.

For elders, the strategies offer a platform to share their experiences and knowledge, ensuring that their role as cultural custodians is acknowledged and valued. The intergenerational exchange of wisdom through storytelling and mentorship allows them to pass on not only dance steps but also the deeper meanings and historical context behind the Balse ng Desporio. The potential challenge lies in adapting to modern methods of engagement (Sommers, 2019). Some elders might face difficulties in embracing digital technology, limiting their ability to actively participate in digital initiatives. Additionally, ensuring the accuracy and consistency of information shared through storytelling is crucial to avoid misinterpretations.

Connecting with young teens up to elders through proposed preservation strategies presents a promising avenue for safeguarding the Balse ng Desporio dance. While each age group brings distinct benefits and challenges, fostering a holistic approach that respects the dance's authenticity while adapting to evolving mediums and preferences holds the key to a sustainable connection with all community members.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research delved into the valuation and cultural significance of the Balse ng Desporio folk dance within the community of Baranggay Malanggam, Malolos Bulacan. Thematic analysis of qualitative data unveiled a multi-dimensional understanding of the dance's role, challenges, and potential strategies for preservation. The study's findings underscore the dance's deep-rooted connection to cultural heritage, its function as a unifying force within the community, and the challenges posed by modernization.

Participants across age groups expressed a profound connection between the Balse ng Desporio dance and their cultural heritage, highlighting its role as a tangible link to their history. The dance emerged as a communal celebration, bringing together diverse individuals and fostering unity. However, the challenges posed by modernization and shifting priorities were acknowledged, necessitating adaptive strategies to ensure the dance's relevance.

➤ *Implications for Preserving Cultural Heritage*

The research sheds light on the dynamic interplay between tradition and adaptation, revealing the importance of striking a balance between preserving cultural heritage and embracing contemporary dynamics. The proposed strategies for preservation, including integrating the dance into education, festivals, and digital platforms, offer pathways to engage various age groups while ensuring authenticity. The study emphasizes the significance of intergenerational knowledge transfer in preserving the nuanced meanings and historical context of the dance.

➤ Recommendations for Future Research and Actions

Further research could explore the impact of the proposed preservation strategies and their effectiveness in engaging different age groups. Investigating the potential for collaborations between educational institutions, cultural organizations, and community members could enhance the integration of the Balse ng Desporio dance into broader cultural initiatives. Additionally, initiatives to document oral histories and narratives related to the dance could safeguard its authenticity and provide a repository for future generations. Community-led efforts to organize workshops, performances, and cultural events could invigorate interest in the dance. Engaging with technology-savvy youth while respecting the preferences and needs of elders is crucial for maintaining a vibrant connection between generations. Moreover, fostering an environment of open dialogue between community members and cultural experts can ensure that preservation efforts remain inclusive and respectful of tradition.

Balse ng Desporio folk dance stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of cultural heritage in Barangay Malanggam. Through collective efforts, adaptive strategies, and a commitment to intergenerational exchange, the community can navigate the challenges of modernization while preserving the dance's essence for generations to come.

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