

Discussion on the Characteristics, Functions and Effects of Multi-space Square Dance Activities

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Abstract: This article takes the square dance of Jilin City as the research object, using questionnaire surveys, field interviews, and other methods to investigate multi-space square dance activities, such as outdoor space square dance activities, digital space square dance activities, and stage space square dance activities. In this paper, we summarize the current situation and characteristics of multi-space square dance activities to expound the connections and differences among them and then explore the functions of multi-space square dance activities and their effects on participants. Finally, some references and thinking were proposed for the scholars studying square dance based on the development context of square dance activities.

Keywords: Square dance; Multi-space; Characteristics; Functions and effects

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1. Introduction

Square dance spreads all over China and the world at an incredible speed and has become a well-known daily leisure and entertainment form.^[1-3] In this paper, various types of square dance activities in Jilin City were investigated by questionnaire survey, field interview, and other research methods. These square dance activities were summarized into three types according to the differences in activity space, including outdoor space square dance activities, digital space square dance activities, and stage space square dance activities. Then, the characteristics, functions, and effects of various square dance activities mentioned above were summarized and analyzed in detail.

2. Discussion on the multi-space square dance activities

2.1 Outdoor space square dance activities

(1) Characteristics

The habit-driven morning and evening practice of urban residents boosted the development of square dance in outdoor spaces and the outdoor space square dance has become an indispensable part of citizens' daily lives.^[4] This type of square dance activity usually takes place in city squares, city parks, and open spaces of residential communities. The participants are mainly older female citizens, most of whom are retired and had more free time at home. This kind of square dance has regular fixed activity time, generally concentrated in the rest time of morning, noon and evening, and the largest number of people participate in the activity in the evening. This is mainly because most participants like to exercise after dinner. Most of the participants of such square dance activities join spontaneously driven by personal interest after witnessing the square dance activities in public places, or through the introduction of familiar people such as relatives, neighbors and colleagues.

(2) Functions and effects

Outdoor space square dance activities can realize the "Popularization" function of dancing for everyone. This kind of square dance has become the most popular entertainment activity for Chinese people today due to the fact that it requires no additional consumption behaviors and the dance movements are simple and easy to learn. Therefore, such square dance activities have played an important role in attracting public participation and promoting its dissemination, meeting the needs of everyone to dance and participate in fitness activities.^[5]

In addition, most participants can truly feel happy by participating in outdoor space square dance activities. This happiness is primarily based on the physical and psychological aspects of the participants. On the one hand, people participating in outdoor space square dance can exercise their body, relieve pressure and enhance their body functions, so as to obtain physical self-satisfaction. On the other hand, by participating in outdoor space square dance activities, people can make new friends, expand social networking, and obtain psychological dependence and companionship, so as to affirm the self-existence value.^[5,6]

2.2 Digital space square dance activities

(1) Characteristics

With the popularization and development of square dance activities, outdoor space square dance activities, which are easy to learn and in various forms, have been moved to various digital media platforms in the information age, mainly including video broadcast platforms, video software, portal website, cable television, etc., thus forming digital space square dance activities. It further enriched the types of square dance activities and promoted the spread of square dance activities. Different from the participants of outdoor space square dance activities, the participants of digital space square dance activities have a large age span, ranging from senior citizens to children and youth, and the number of male participants has increased. In addition, the virtuality and convenience of digital space break through the limitation of time and place for traditional outdoor space square dance activities, making participants more flexible and casual in square dance activities. Participants can live broadcast or record and upload square dance activities at any time and place through mobile phones and computers according to their personal preferences in digital space. The digital space square dance activities have been widely spread with the sharing and reprinting of participants, attracting more and more people to participate and enriching the participation methods of participants. The digital space square dance activities build a social circle of participants through the Internet, shortens the distance between participants, and makes the communication between participants more convenient. Additionally, the participants recorded and shared their daily square dance activities, which promote the dissemination, communication and learning of square dance while recording their own lives.

(2) Functions and effects

Digital space square dance activities can develop the “promotion” function of creating dances for everyone. Taking advantage of its convenience, intelligence and sharing, the digital space provides an ideal communication and learning platform for the hot square dance activities. Digital space breaks through the limitation in traditional square dance activities that the participants can only communicate and learn face-to-face in outdoor squares, and attracts many participants to join the live broadcast of square dance, so as to broaden the ways for participants to communicate, share and learn square dance. In addition, while learning the colorful square dance activities in the digital space, participants can give full play to their imagination and creativity, integrate various types of square dance, innovate and develop new square dance movements and dance types with their own unique style, so as to further enrich the types and promote the development of square dance.

The rapid development of digital space square dance activities is closely related to the psychological needs of the participants.^[7,8] The digital space not only creates communication and learning opportunities for square dance participants, but also provides a platform for the participants to show themselves, so that the participants gradually develop from learners looking for square dance videos to performers of square dance videos. Moreover, the participants expand their social activities and gained social attention in this process. The entertainment pursuit effect created by the digital space also changed the psychology of participants, which gradually evolving from self-entertainment to entertaining others. This phenomenon fully reflects the psychological demands of the digital space square dance participants who are eager to be heard, accompanied and recognized. In this way, they announce that they have never been “marginalized” in order to realize the affirmation of self-worth.

2.3 Stage space square dance activities

(1) Characteristics

The rapid development of square dance activities has attracted widespread attention from all walks of life. Enterprises and businesses, communities and governments jointly organized various forms of colorful square dance performances and competitions, forming the stage space square dance activities. The stage space square dance activities not only attract a large number of participants and audiences, but also effectively publicizes enterprises and shopping malls while promoting the development of national fitness. The stage space square dance activities put square dance on various stages, most of which are commercial performance stages jointly built by the businesses and the governments. The participants of stage space square dance activities are mainly composed of middle-aged and elderly women, and most of the team members are selected from the participants of outdoor space square dance activities. The selection of participants in stage space square dance activities is based on voluntary principle. In addition, the team members are required to have a certain dance level and a collective consciousness. This collective consciousness is mainly reflected in following the command of the team leader and actively sharing tasks for the team. The team members are often accompanied by their family members when participating in stage performances, so these companions have virtually become the participants of such square dance activities. In addition, public art museums, colleges, universities and other institutions will send professional dancers to guide the team members participating in the square dance competition and promote their dance training to be professional and systematic. The event time of stage space square dance has a certain limitation, which depends on the date of the event held by the businesses and the governments. Most of the stage space square dance activities will be held during the prime time of the holidays, because this time can attract more people to watch, so as to achieve the purpose of publicity and expanding influence.

(2) Functions and effects

Stage space square dance activities can promote the “leading” function of learning dances for everyone. “Leading” is mainly reflected in the following two aspects: On the one hand, it “leads” the improvement of participants’ skills. Due to the stage space being centered on the exhibition and competition, the participants need to perform artistic processing on the square dance with full of life elements before exhibiting on the stage, which puts forward higher requirements for the performers’ choreography ability and dance skills. In this case, the participants take the initiative to open the “independent learning and creation” dance learning method, which inspired the learning enthusiasm of participants and led to the trend of learning dance for everyone. On the other hand, it is reflected in the construction of “leading” participants’ aesthetic ability. The evaluation standard of stage space square dance activities takes the pursuit of “beauty” as the core, which encourages participants to improve their aesthetic ability in the process of communicating with the judges and interacting with the audience. Therefore, the stage space square dance activities can lead the aesthetic construction of the whole society while enriching the spiritual and cultural life of the masses. In addition, the stage space square dance activities provide a platform for ordinary people to show themselves, enabling many older participants to experience a feeling of returning to

youth on the stage. The participants expect to receive the recognition and attention from the audience and gain honors on the stage to realize their self-worth during the performance, so as to enhance their sense of achievement and happiness.^[9,10]

3. Conclusions

In this paper, we conducted a comprehensive and systematic research on the multi-space square dance activities in Jilin City, and summarized the popular square dance activities in major cities of China into the following three main forms: outdoor space square dance activities, digital space square dance activities and stage space square dance activities. In addition, the main features of the above-mentioned square dance activities, such as activity space characteristics, participant conditions, activity time rules, and participation approaches, are illustrated in detail. At the same time, the diversity and interactivity of the above-mentioned features are compared and analyzed. Furthermore, we point out the different functions of multi-space square dance activities affected by their respective spatial characteristics. Outdoor space square dance activities can realize the “Popularization” function of dancing for everyone. Digital space square dance activities can develop the “promotion” function of creating dances for everyone. Stage space square dance activities can promote the “leading” function of learning dances for everyone. Then the positive effects of participants on their body and mind by participating in multi-space square dance activities were also expounded. Outdoor space square dance activities meet the physical and mental needs of participants to strengthen their physique and return to society. Digital space square dance activities meet the physical and mental needs of participants to show themselves, expand social interaction, and get attention. Stage space square dance activities satisfy the physical and mental needs of participants to affirm themselves and realize self-worth.

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