

METHODS AND TRAINING TECHNIQUES IN COMPETITIVE DANCE

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ABSTRACT

Competitive sport dance is a complex discipline that combines artistic expression with high physical demands, requiring structured training methods and well-defined pedagogical strategies. This paper analyzes the main training methods and techniques applied to young dancers aged 12–13 from Class “D” in the Latin section, within the context of a research program conducted at the Zalău Sports Club between January and April 2026. Sport dance, consisting of ten standardized dances divided into Standard and Latin sections, imposes strict rules for technique, posture, musical interpretation, and competition structure. The study emphasizes that effective training integrates dynamic games, mobility drills, running and coordination exercises, physical conditioning routines, and specialized choreographic practice.

Three categories of training were employed: group training (AG), private training (AP), and functional training (AF), each contributing differently to performance enhancement. Group sessions allowed balanced improvement and social interaction, private sessions ensured personalized guidance and technical correction, while functional training improved strength, mobility, and endurance without overtraining. The research highlights the importance of proper posture, joint mobility, muscle development, and psychological factors such as confidence, cooperation, and discipline. Results show that the training mesocycle produced specific physiological adaptations, improved motor qualities, and enhanced overall performance.

The study concludes that competitive dance positively influences physical and psychological development, serving as both a performance sport and a socialization factor for youth. Proper use of training methods and structured progression supports the creation of better dancers and contributes to the long-term growth of sport dance as a recognized athletic discipline.

KEYWORDS: *dance training, motor skills, posture development, sport performance, youth dance education*

J.E.L. Classifications: I21, I29, Z29

1. INTRODUCTION

Competitive dance is a partner-based sport in which a boy and a girl form a couple that performs various rhythms to music, using specific techniques. Depending on the character and origin of the dance, there are two main sections: the Standard or European section (slow waltz, tango, Viennese waltz, slow foxtrot, and quickstep) and the Latin American section (samba, cha-cha-cha, rumba, paso doble, and jive).

The physical effort involved in competitive dance includes both aerobic and anaerobic components, making it an effective method for preventing cardiovascular diseases or managing body weight (dancers can burn between 200 and 700 calories per hour). Dance also develops excellent posture and mobility, providing significant benefits to the musculoskeletal system.

2. MOTIVATION AND PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

In all branches of sport, the greatest importance is given to technical training. This involves mastering the fundamental movements and correcting deficiencies through physical exercises that enable performance. Systematic and continuous repetition of physical exercises is essential, as it contributes to forming stable motor patterns. All physical exercises, the energy of the sport, and the improvement of motor skills must be directed toward refining technique.

The choice of this topic is important because it helps us understand how to prepare both the physical and technical aspects of the body in order to execute movements and elements correctly during dance performance. In every sport discipline, technical preparation holds a central role and must be closely connected with physical preparation.

From the lowest to the highest competitive categories, all physical exercises must be structured and systematized in such a way that those included in one level serve as preparatory elements for the next. This ensures a much smoother progression from one category to another.

3. THE CONCEPT AND OBJECTIVES OF COMPETITIVE DANCE

Competitive dance emerged from the need for dancers on the dance floor to compare their skills and be evaluated according to objective criteria. The partners' desire to perfect each figure and each dance gradually led to the development of specific movements executed with increasing grace, both in terms of body movement and musicality. Competitive dance follows precise rules regarding the creation of choreographic structures, includes a defined number of dances in competitions, and applies clear classification categories.

It is a sport accessible to individuals aged between 6 and 60 and can be practiced as performance sport, recreational sport, a means of socialization, or as a form of relaxation and psychological recovery. In physical education, competitive dance is still rarely included in lessons due to a lack of specialists; however, where it is introduced as a sports discipline, it aligns with other branches of sport through shared objectives. Among the main objectives are:

- Improving, strengthening, and maintaining an optimal state of health and increasing the body's resistance to environmental factors and the demands of the activity;
- Harmonious physical development;
- Correct posture and artistic execution;
- Developing conditional capacities (strength, endurance, speed, agility) and coordinative abilities;
- Learning basic notions of music theory;
- Training the ability to perceive and reproduce rhythm, tempo, and the specific character of each studied dance;
- Encouraging dancers to independently practice exercises for corrective, recreational, and compensatory purposes.

Competitive dance consists of ten dances in total. These are divided into two sections according to their origin and musical rhythm:

1. Standard section
2. Latin American section

1. The Standard Section includes five dances:

- Slow Waltz, with a tempo of 29–30 beats per minute (bpm);
- Tango, with 33 bpm;
- Viennese Waltz, with 60 bpm;
- Slow Foxtrot, with 29–30 bpm;
- Quickstep, with 50 bpm.

Tempo represents the speed at which a musical fragment or melody is performed, expressed as the number of beats or pulses per minute. Musical tempo is strictly respected in dance competitions because all figures and movements are performed according to these musical criteria.

2. The Latin American Section also includes five dances:

- **Samba**, with a tempo of 50–52 bpm;
- **Cha-cha**, with 30–33 bpm;
- **Rumba**, with 25–27 bpm;
- **Paso Doble**, with 62 bpm;
- **Jive**, with 44 bpm.

The same musical tempo is maintained in this section as well. If the tempo is incorrect, the music is stopped and the organizer must select another track in accordance with the regulations.

Duration of choreographic execution

The length of each dance routine depends on the musical tempo and the character of the dance:

- minimum **1 minute and 30 seconds** for Slow Waltz, Tango, Slow Foxtrot, Quickstep, Samba, Cha-cha, and Rumba;
- minimum **two gipsy sections** for Paso Doble (up to the semifinals);
- minimum **1 minute and 15 seconds** for Viennese Waltz and Jive.

Character of the Dance

- The character of each dance is expressed through specific movement qualities determined by the music, which may be sharp and staccato, smooth and flowing, lively and bouncy, or grave and dramatic. Each dance has its own distinctive character, which dancers must interpret as accurately as possible in their choreography.

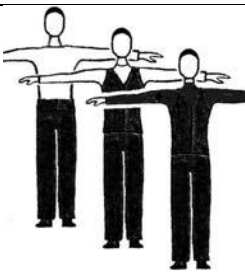
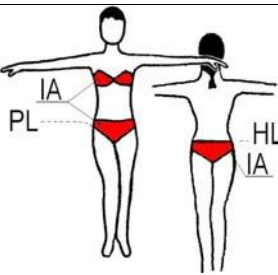
Dance Space

The dance floor must be rectangular and covered with a special parquet surface. Organizers are required to provide a minimum space of:

- **15 m²** for one couple aged 14–35,
- **10 m²** for one couple aged 6–13.

Awards

- At competitions organized in Romania, the following awards may be given: diplomas, trophies, medals, flowers, gifts, or cash prizes.
Below is an example of competition attire for the 12–13 age category:

Class “D” Latin	
BOYS	GIRLS
	
<p>Top – white long-sleeved shirt or black long-sleeved shirt</p> <p>Vest – optional, but the color must be black</p> <p>Pants – black, mandatory</p>	<p>Competition dress</p> <p>any color except skin color; combinations of colors or materials with prints are permitted.</p> <p>Top and torso</p> <p>must not consist solely of a bra and bikini.</p>

<p><i>Not permitted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shiny materials, fabrics with light effects, patterns, or prints (lace, etc.); • rolled-up sleeves; • any type of decorative element. 	<p><i>Not permitted:</i></p> <p>base materials with light-reflecting or shiny effects; any type of luminous decorative elements.</p>
<p><i>Footwear</i> – dance shoes with no restrictions <i>Socks</i> – black, mandatory <i>Hairstyle</i> – if the hair is long, it must be tied in a ponytail.</p>	<p><i>Footwear</i> – dance shoes with a heel of maximum 5 cm <i>Socks or tights</i> – short socks or skin-colored tights <i>Hairstyle</i> – decorative elements with shiny effects and colored hair spray are not permitted.</p>

4. THE EFFECTS OF COMPETITIVE DANCE ON BODY POSTURE

Posture represents the position we adopt at a given moment and the actions that modify or influence the position of the body. The placement of the head and neck, the upper and lower limbs, and the trunk—as well as the way we stand or move—express a wide range of psychological states and influence us in either a positive or negative way.

In the instructional–educational process of physical education lessons, competitive dance aims to maintain good motor capacity; however, beyond this, young participants must also acquire:

- distinctive body posture;
- expressive motor skills;
- learning, improvement, and consolidation of the motor content specific to each dance;
- the development of general technical foundations;
- knowledge related to music and the musical genres that accompany competitive dance;
- civilized behavior, good manners, and appropriate interaction between genders;
- psychological balance, courage, perseverance, and self-control;
- the ability to evaluate the motor actions of others;
- the ability to evaluate their own motor actions;
- development of coordinative abilities;
- formation of correct body schema in various directions and planes.

The amplitude of movements determines the range of joint motion, and joints become more resistant in those who perform physical exercises regularly. Thus, dance contributes significantly

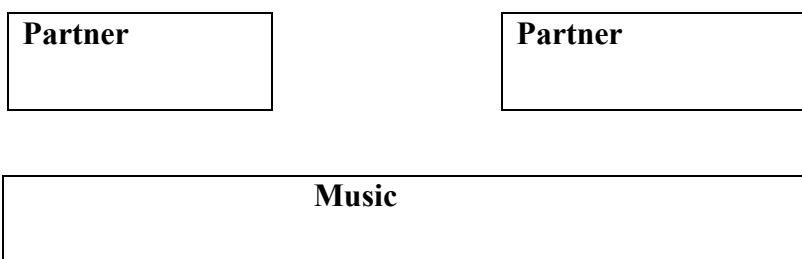
to strengthening joints—especially in the lower limbs, such as the ankle, knee, and hip joints. Joint and ligament mobility is maintained within normal parameters.

Both the muscular and skeletal systems are close to maturity during adolescence. At this age, young people increase muscle volume and develop greater strength capacity, making general and segmental strength development not only possible but recommended. Differences between males and females exist and are significant. Physical assessments comparing the two sexes have shown that:

- muscle tone is generally higher in males than in females;
- the strength of various muscle groups is lower in females—particularly in the shoulder girdle;
- muscle and ligament flexibility is higher in females and lower in males (Ionescu, A. & Mazilu, V., 1968).

5. COMPETITIVE DANCE AS A FACTOR OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIALIZATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

- For children and young people, dance is an educational activity with strict rules that must be respected in order for them to learn and progress successfully.
- By practicing competitive dance during physical education lessons, young people refine their senses, learn to form a mental representation of their physical body, develop observational skills, expand their knowledge base, strengthen their analytical and synthetic abilities, stimulate their thinking, learn to collaborate with others, and build self-confidence as well as trust in their partners. Dance is a combination of three essential elements:



These elements form a complex system that results in the harmonious movement of the two partners together with the music. Music is the determining factor in guiding the movements, as it triggers motor actions, influences attitude, and defines the character in which the steps must be performed.

6. PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH CONDITIONS

The research will take place at the “Zalău Sports Club” between January and April 2026. Within the Romanian Federation of Sport Dance, both Standard and Latin competitions are organized in the form of National Championships, Class National Championships, Formation National Championships, National Festivals, World Championships, the Romanian Cup, and Regional Cups. All athletes are registered with the Romanian Federation of Sport Dance and participate in competitions using their athlete identification booklets. There are also competitions for those who dance for pleasure in various clubs across the country, although these events are not part of the Federation’s structure.

For the purpose of this study, I will work with 8 students from the “Avram Iancu” Sports High School in Zalău, who are members of the Zalău Sports Club and who, like myself, are registered with the Romanian Federation of Sport Dance and have participated in several national competitions.

The training program is determined by age category, dance class, and dance sections. I have chosen to work with 4 dance couples from Class “D,” aged 12–13, in the Latin section. The study will consist of 19 weekly training sessions conducted in the dance studio, and when the weather allows, additional training sessions will be held in the courtyard.

Preparing the body for effort focuses on mobility and flexibility, with the hip joint (hip–femoral joint) being the most involved in all dances. The triple flexion (hip–knee–ankle) defines the character of each individual dance.

7. TRAINING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

To achieve the objectives of this study, I will primarily use the following groups of exercises:

- **Dynamic games** (developing running skills, sudden stopping, easily changing running direction, etc.);
- **Walking variations:** walking on toes with arms raised, walking on heels with arms behind the back, “dwarf walk” with arms behind the back, “elephant walk” with extended legs, walking in lunges;
- **Running variations:** high-knee runs, heel-to-seat runs, crossover steps, side steps, skipping steps;

- **Physical exercises:** bending the head forward, backward, to the right, to the left; turning the head to the right and left; rotating the head left and right; raising the shoulders alternately and simultaneously; extending the shoulders; rotating the arms forward and backward, simultaneously and alternately; vertical and horizontal arm extensions; trunk extensions forward, backward, and sideways; trunk rotations to the right and left; lifting the legs forward, to the side, and backward (straight or bent); side, forward, and backward lunges.

Categories of Sports Dance Training

- **AG – Group Training.**

This type of training was conducted with the 4 dance couples, focusing on a basic specific warm-up using various auxiliary tools (steppers, sticks, dumbbells, etc.).

Different Latin dance figures are practiced. During this training, all couples work equally. Finals are organized, and the dances are performed at a higher level. Games are included to relax the athletes, dancers are rotated between partners, humorous choreographies are created, and aerobic exercises are performed at the end. The working time is **1.5 to 2 hours**.

- **AP – Private (Individual) Training.**

In this session, the coach dedicates full attention to a single pair, allowing close observation of mistakes and refinement of performance. The working time is **1 to 3 hours**, during which choreographies are practiced and each dance figure is refined individually.

- **AF – Functional Training.**

Functional training must include elements of fun or competition and can be performed outdoors or indoors, often in a race or timed format. Exercises involve free movements using primarily body weight. TRX Suspension equipment is also used. The working time is **1 to 2 hours**.

Functional training is performed **only once per week**, generally on Saturdays, to prevent overtraining.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Within the Romanian Federation of Sport Dance, more than 5,000 dancers are officially registered, and over 5,000 others practice dance recreationally. In recent years, a significant increase in athletic performance has been observed, and training sessions are held at a much higher level.

The conclusions I aim to highlight regarding the methods and training techniques in competitive sport dance are the following:

1. Competitive dance is a sport that promotes a healthy, balanced, disciplined, and elegant lifestyle. More and more young people are fascinated by this sport, and performance improvements can be noticed after just a few competitions.
2. Sport dance contributes to the refinement of specific motor qualities, such as:
 - speed (execution speed, movement speed, and agility),
 - coordination (segmental coordination, balance, movement precision, and spatial–temporal orientation),
 - endurance (aerobic–anaerobic),
 - strength (in speed and flexibility-based contexts).
3. Following the proposed mesocycle, a specific adaptation of the subjects' bodies to performance effort was observed.
4. Accurate, concrete, and adequate knowledge of the group must guide the trainer toward effective action and intervention, in order to improve group activity and engage members in solving problems.

In conclusion, we hope that this research will achieve its intended purpose through the use of the methods and techniques discussed above. Contributions from experienced specialists are welcome, as they can help develop better dancers and, perhaps, support efforts for this sport to become part of the Olympic Games in the near future.

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