

**Capiz folk dances: Cultural practices, promotion, and preservation initiatives****JR B. Flores**

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**Abstract:** This study investigates how folk dances serve as vital expressions of cultural identity amid evolving societal dynamics. Employing an ethnographic qualitative approach, the research examined the cultural practices, promotion strategies, and preservation efforts surrounding these dances. Participants comprising three school cultural coordinators, six students, and eight tourism officers from various municipalities were selected through purposive sampling. Data gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) guided by a structured interview protocol were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that each municipality has unique folk dances that reflect local customs, livelihoods, and values such as Inilusan from Mambusao, Tinolabong and Kabatingan from Roxas City, Los Palomares from Panay, Mamalagkaw from Pilar, Bilaskugay from Punta Cogon, and Eskotis from Sigma. These dances are performed during festivals, school programs, and town celebrations, embodying themes like communal bonding, agricultural life, spirituality, and colonial influences. Promotion strategies included integration into school curricula, participation in community events, and partnerships with tourism and media sectors. Preservation initiatives involved school-based cultural education, community workshops, and incentive programs such as scholarships and awards. However, challenges persist, including declining youth engagement, scarcity of trained instructors, and limited resources. The study underscored the importance of intersectoral collaboration to ensure the sustainability of these cultural expressions. It recommended strengthening educational programs, leveraging digital platforms for wider reach, and increasing government and private sector support. Ultimately, this research contributes to the discourse on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the face of modernization and cultural erosion.

**Keywords:** Capiz Folk Dances, Cultural Practices, Promotion, Preservation Initiatives, Cultural Identity

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**INTRODUCTION**

Capiz, a culturally rich province in Western Visayas, is home to a wide array of traditional folk dances that embody the identity, history, and values of the Capizeño people. Passed down through generations, these dances are integral to the province's cultural heritage. However, the forces of globalization, modernization, and cultural assimilation pose serious threats to their survival. Despite the efforts of local advocates and government programs, initiatives to preserve and promote these folk dances remain fragmented, often lacking sustainability and integration into daily life. Recognizing this, the present study explores the current state of Capiz folk dances, evaluating existing practices and strategies for their promotion and preservation, while proposing more effective and enduring approaches.

Literature supports the importance of preserving traditional cultural expressions in a rapidly changing world. Bautista (2019) emphasizes the urgency of documentation to retain a community's identity, while Santos and Lim (2021) highlight the economic and cultural value of incorporating folk dances into tourism. Gomez (2020) and Garcia (2021) argue for integrating folk dances into formal education and community policy to sustain these practices. According to Hofstede (2020), cultural practices like folk dances shape communal identity and social values, making their preservation essential for sustaining heritage. Smith (2019) further points out that effective promotion—through education, media, and events—can foster deeper community engagement and global awareness. Garcia (2021) also

outlines how preservation strategies such as documentation, training programs, and community events help ensure cultural continuity.

The interplay between cultural practice, promotion, and preservation is essential to the survival of Capiz folk dances. Educational platforms, particularly the MAPEH curriculum, serve as powerful tools for transmission, fostering appreciation and cultural pride among students. This cycle of education, promotion, and practice builds a sustainable framework for cultural preservation. The study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those concerning quality education (Goal 4), sustainable communities (Goal 11), and institutional partnerships (Goal 17). It also supports the research agenda of Capiz State University, which champions local culture, education-driven development, and community empowerment.

Despite some ongoing initiatives, gaps persist in the effective teaching, promotion, and integration of folk dances into everyday life. Observations show a lack of cultural depth in classroom instruction, minimal student retention, and weak promotion outside educational institutions. This study was motivated by the researcher's firsthand encounters with the decline in folk dance visibility and appreciation. Through engagement with local educators, elders, and cultural events, it became clear that unless proactive and comprehensive strategies are implemented, these valuable traditions may fade into obscurity. Hence, this research not only serves as a scholarly endeavor but also as a cultural advocacy aimed at revitalizing Capiz folk dances for future generations.

#### *Problem statement*

This study aimed to describe the cultural practices, promotion efforts, and preservation initiatives related to Capiz folk dances, with the goal of assessing their current status and providing recommendations to ensure their sustainability for future generations.

Specifically, this study sought to answer for the following questions:

1. What are the folk dances in the different Municipalities of Capiz?
2. What are the cultural practices depicted in folk dances?
3. What are the promotional strategies employed by the different municipalities in promoting their folk dances?
4. What are the preservation initiatives employed by the different municipalities?

#### *Theoretical framework*

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in several key theories that explain the preservation, promotion, and transmission of cultural practices, particularly in the context of folk dances. These include Cultural Transmission Theory, Cultural Identity Theory, and Social Learning Theory, which together provide a comprehensive understanding of how folk dances are maintained and shared within a community. By exploring these theories, the study aims to offer a deeper insight into the mechanisms behind the promotion and preservation of Capiz folk dances.

Cultural Transmission Theory, proposed by Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981), focuses on how culture is passed down from one generation to another through both formal and informal channels. This theory posits that cultural elements such as language, rituals, and traditional practices like folk dances are transmitted through processes of vertical (parent-to-child), horizontal (peer-to-peer), and oblique (older generation to younger generation) social interactions. In the context of Capiz folk dances, this theory explains how these dances are learned and practiced within families, schools, and communities, and how gaps in transmission may lead to the loss of these traditions.

Cultural Identity Theory, as developed by Stuart Hall (1996), highlights the role of cultural practices in shaping individuals' and communities' sense of identity. According to this theory, cultural traditions like folk dances are essential in maintaining a community's unique identity and are crucial for social cohesion. Capiz folk dances, for instance, serve as a medium through which the Capizeño people express their history, values, and collective memory. This theory suggests that the preservation of these

dances is not just about maintaining art forms but also about safeguarding the cultural identity of the Capiz region.

Social Learning Theory, as outlined by Albert Bandura (1977), emphasizes the role of observation, imitation, and modeling in learning behaviors and practices. This theory applies to how young people and community members learn folk dances by observing and participating in performances. By engaging in rehearsals and cultural events, individuals acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to perform these dances. Social Learning Theory supports the idea that active participation in folk dance activities is critical for their survival, as individuals learn best when they are directly involved in cultural practices.

In the context of the present study, these theories collectively provide a foundation for understanding the cultural practices, promotion, and preservation initiatives of Capiz folk dances. Cultural Transmission Theory is directly relevant to examining how these dances are taught in schools and passed down within families. Cultural Identity Theory explains why the preservation of folk dances is important not only for their artistic value but also for maintaining the cultural identity of the Capiz community. Social Learning Theory, on the other hand, underscores the importance of hands-on participation and engagement in folk dance activities to ensure the sustainability of these cultural practices.

The epistemological stance of this study is rooted in constructivist, which posits that knowledge is co-constructed through human experience, interaction, and social context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the context of Capiz folk dances, constructivist epistemology recognizes that understanding and meaning are not objectively discovered but are shaped by cultural, historical, and communal experiences. This worldview aligns with the study's aim to explore how knowledge of folk dances is transmitted, interpreted, and valued across generations. It emphasizes that the preservation and promotion of these dances are deeply influenced by the lived experiences, narratives, and active participation of individuals and communities. Through interviews, observations, and engagement with cultural practices, the researcher seeks to uncover the subjective realities and shared meanings that define the role of folk dances in shaping Capizeño identity. This epistemological approach supports a deeper exploration of how cultural knowledge is generated, transformed, and sustained within dynamic community settings.

By integrating these theories, the study seeks to investigate how effectively Capiz folk dances are transmitted across generations, how they contribute to the cultural identity of the Capiz region, and how current promotion and preservation initiatives can be improved. The framework provides a lens through which to assess the roles of educational institutions, local governments, and cultural organizations in supporting the promotion and preservation of these dances, while also highlighting the importance of active community involvement in sustaining Capiz folk dances for future generations.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic design to explore the cultural practices, promotion efforts, and preservation initiatives related to Capiz folk dances. The research focused on documenting the lived experiences and cultural interpretations of individuals directly involved in sustaining these traditions. Data were gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs), which provided an immersive means of capturing the rich, shared narratives surrounding the integration of folk dances within educational and community settings. The study specifically centered on the exploration of how Capiz folk dances were performed, promoted, and preserved, thereby yielding a comprehensive understanding of their cultural significance and practical sustainability.

A total of seventeen (17) participants were purposefully selected from selected municipalities in the province of Capiz. These included three (3) cultural coordinators, six (6) student cultural enthusiasts, and eight (8) tourism officers. Focus group discussions were conducted to collect qualitative data. The responses were examined using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of key themes related to the classification of traditional folk dances, the cultural values they represent, and the strategies currently in place for their preservation and promotion. The study was geographically focused on areas within Capiz where folk dance traditions remain vibrant and actively practiced.

Despite its comprehensive ethnographic approach, the study was subject to several limitations. The research was delimited solely to Capiz folk dances, thereby excluding other forms of local cultural expressions, such as music, contemporary dance, or visual arts, which may also contribute to the province's cultural identity. Furthermore, the focus on a purposive sample of school cultural coordinators, cultural enthusiasts, and tourism officers meant that the findings reflected only the perspectives of these specific groups and could not be generalized to all stakeholders, including elders, choreographers, or government cultural agencies. Additionally, while the study thoroughly examined cultural, educational, and communal aspects of folk dance promotion and preservation, it did not extend into broader economic, political, or administrative factors that might influence the sustainability of these traditional practices.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Folk dances in the municipalities of Capiz*

The folk dances of Capiz, such as Inilusan, Kabatingan, Tinolabong, Los Palomares, Mamalagkaw, Bilaskugay, and Eskotis, represent a vibrant tapestry of the province's cultural identity, deeply rooted in community traditions, daily life, and oral histories. These dances, specific to various municipalities, reflect values such as bayanihan, hospitality, and resilience. For instance, Inilusan from Mambusao symbolizes communal sharing, while Mamalagkaw from Pilar captures the occupational routine of tuba gathering. Despite the lack of formal documentation in national cultural archives, these dances remain alive in localized practices, transmitted through performances, community events, and personal recollections.

Thematic analysis of focus group discussions revealed four major insights: first, the identification of diverse folk dances across municipalities underscores the richness of Capiz's intangible cultural heritage; second, the dances are deeply embedded in local narratives and lifestyles, serving as embodied expressions of cultural values and everyday experiences; third, platforms such as the Saot Capiz Folk Dance Competition and school-based activities play a crucial role in promoting and preserving these traditions; and fourth, there is a strong communal association between the dances and specific localities, with many residents taking pride in their roles as cultural stewards.

Findings affirm the assertions of scholars like Alcedo (2016), who stressed the importance of bridging oral traditions and academic recognition, and Mendoza and Sison (2019), who emphasized the impact of cultural festivals in reviving traditional art forms. Similarly, the integration of folk dances in schools, as noted by Castillo (2021), enhances intergenerational cultural transmission. The lived narratives and physical embodiment of dances such as Bilaskugay and Eskotis, often passed down informally, reflect Rebuyon and Dumanon's (2020) claim that folk dances function as socio-cultural texts that document history, occupation, and values. Ultimately, the study highlights that Capiz folk dances are not just performances but living traditions—fluid, communal, and vital to cultural continuity—requiring intentional documentation and integration into educational and cultural frameworks to ensure their survival in the face of modernization.

### *Cultural practices depicted in Capiz folk dances*

The thematic analysis of the focus group discussion (FGD) revealed that the folk dances of Capiz are deeply embedded cultural expressions that go far beyond artistic performance. These dances are performative rituals that encapsulate the Capiznon people's identity, values, and way of life. Three central themes emerged from the participants' responses: communal bonding, agricultural labor, and spiritual expression, each showcasing how folk dances reflect and preserve the region's living heritage.

First, folk dances serve as symbolic reenactments of communal bonding, particularly through the shared ritual of drinking native tuba in rural communities. Participants consistently emphasized how these drinking sessions are not merely leisure activities, but reflections of pakikisama, unity, and intergenerational reciprocity. Gestures in dances mimic real-life interactions, raising of cups, swaying to music, storytelling—thereby encoding social rituals into movement. This practice reflects what Santos

and Ocampo (2018) described as “reaffirmations of collective identity,” and as Delos Reyes (2021) noted, the integration of food and drink into dance creates emotional memory rooted in lived experience.

Second, the folk dances of Capiz celebrate agricultural life, particularly rice farming, which is central to the province’s economy and cultural identity. Dances like Kabatingan depict the life cycle of farming—from planting to harvesting—through grounded, repetitive movements, accompanied by native instruments. These dances become physical archives of gratitude and survival, reinforcing the dignity of manual labor. The findings mirror Navarro’s (2020) view that agricultural-themed dances are “body archives of gratitude,” and support Tolentino and Martinez’s (2019) assertion that such performances elevate labor into communal and spiritual celebration.

Third, spirituality and colonial memory are vividly expressed in dances such as Los Palomares, which blend Catholic rituals, Marian devotion, and indigenous beliefs. Costumes like veils and scapulars, and gestures of prayer and reverence, are choreographed into slow, solemn movements that transform performances into acts of faith. These dances reenact religious processions, Semana Santa, and stories of colonial influence, thus functioning as narrative rituals. Mendoza (2016) aptly termed such performances “spiritualized memory,” while Ramirez and Lim (2022) affirmed that they act as vessels of belief, suffering, and resilience.

Capiz folk dances reflect a dynamic interplay of memory, movement, and meaning. They transmit core values of friendship, gratitude, labor, and faith across generations. As Velasco (2023) proposed in her theory of embodied cultural memory, dance stores culture in the body more intimately than books—a view validated by the participants’ deeply personal accounts. By preserving these dances through education, festivals, and community events, Capiz sustains a living cultural heritage that connects the present to the past. These dances are not merely traditions, they are testaments of identity, resilience, and belonging, carried in every step, beat, and story they continue to tell.

#### *Promotional strategies employed by the different municipalities in promoting Capiz folk dances*

Three major promotional strategies were identified to preserve and promote Capiz folk dances: institutional integration through formal education, community participation via cultural events, and collaboration with tourism offices and media platforms. These strategies demonstrate the multidimensional efforts of schools, local governments, and cultural organizations to embed folk dances within the cultural consciousness of Capizeños, particularly among the youth.

First, formal education emerged as a central platform for transmitting folk dance traditions. Schools, especially those with arts programs like Capiz National High School, were consistently identified as sites where students first encounter and engage with local dances. Teachers, choreographers, and administrators serve not only as educators but as custodians of cultural heritage. Through structured instruction, school performances, and competitions, students not only learn basic steps but develop cultural literacy—understanding the symbolic meanings and historical context of each dance. As participants emphasized, school-based dance programs go beyond technical training; they immerse learners in the deeper values of their cultural identity. This aligns with Ornstein and Hunkins’ (2018) notion of curriculum promotion, where learning is expanded through active engagement with community-relevant content, and Hattie’s (2021) theory of visible learning, where public demonstrations validate the purpose and outcomes of education.

Second, folk dances in Capiz flourish in the context of community festivals and public celebrations, functioning as cultural anchors in local life. Performances during Independence Day, Panay Liberation Day, and town fiestas not only entertain but sustain cultural memory. Local dance troupes like “Silak” and school-based groups regularly perform during civic events, bridging generational gaps and reinforcing pride of place. Participants shared how performances are expected elements of community celebrations—often requested by LGUs and deeply woven into the cultural fabric of municipal life. Incentivized participation, including scholarships for student performers, further strengthens this model by recognizing dance as both a cultural and educational investment. These findings illustrate how folk dances function not just as tradition but as living practices of civic engagement and identity formation.

Third, collaboration with tourism offices and the strategic use of media platforms has transformed folk dances into tools for cultural branding and global visibility. Capiz LGUs and schools have actively promoted traditional dances through inter-municipal and national performances, aligning cultural preservation with heritage tourism goals. Folk dances are positioned as unique assets, showcasing the richness of Capiz culture on wider stages. Digital platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok have become powerful extensions of these efforts, turning performances into widely accessible and shareable content. This digital engagement supports current research on virtual cultural participation, allowing folk dances to remain relevant and visible to both local and global audiences. Participants noted how these media strategies attract international interest and foster youth involvement, contributing to a modern form of cultural advocacy.

These findings support Salandanan's (2020) assertion that collaborative educational approaches yield more impactful cultural outcomes. The synergy between schools, LGUs, and tourism offices reflects a collective commitment to safeguarding intangible heritage. Furthermore, Corpuz and Lucido's (2019) emphasis on integrating real-life skills into educational programs resonates with how folk dances develop students' collaboration, creativity, and civic responsibility. By treating folk dance as both a pedagogical tool and a cultural resource, Capiz creates a sustainable model of promotion where tradition is actively lived, taught, and celebrated. In essence, these strategies ensure that folk dances in Capiz remain not only visible but meaningful, carrying the rhythm of the past into the present and future.

#### *Preservation initiatives employed by the different municipalities*

Findings based on the thematic analysis identified four major themes regarding the preservation initiatives for Capiz folk dances: school-based cultural integration, community-led workshops and training, incentivization and recognition of cultural participation, and barriers to preservation and sustainability. These themes collectively highlight how the synergy among schools, communities, and local government units supports cultural continuity—while also exposing gaps that must be addressed to sustain these traditions.

Schools emerged as pivotal agents of cultural transmission, embedding folk dances into educational activities such as Buwan ng Wika, Foundation Day, and Nutrition Month. These events function not only as festive celebrations but as strategic opportunities to instill cultural appreciation among students. Teachers play a crucial role in this effort, often going beyond formal responsibilities to mentor students after class hours or on weekends. As participants noted, the inclusion of folk dances in MAPEH subjects and the practice of assigning them as graded requirements ensure wide participation. This structured approach transforms folk dance from a niche interest into a normalized cultural experience. The teachers' commitment reflects the powerful role of education in safeguarding intangible heritage and nurturing cultural identity.

Complementing these school-based efforts are community-led workshops and trainings, often organized by local government units or NGOs. These sessions provide technical instruction on folk dances while simultaneously teaching their historical and cultural significance. The workshops, typically held in accessible venues such as barangay halls or municipal gyms, are described by participants as transformative learning spaces that deepen cultural understanding. Participants who undergo such training frequently serve as multipliers—passing their knowledge on to students, peers, and younger community members. This cascading effect sustains folk dance practices within and beyond formal institutions, creating a network of culture bearers committed to preserving local heritage. The cooperative involvement of LGUs and trained facilitators affirms the community's collective responsibility in keeping traditions alive.

Incentivization also plays a key role in encouraging youth participation. Recognition through awards, scholarships, and public performances motivates students to engage deeply with folk dance. Municipalities that offer logistical support—such as funding for costumes and transportation—demonstrate that cultural work is valued and worthy of investment. Participants shared that applause, medals, and opportunities to perform at the provincial level contribute to a growing sense of pride and

ownership among the youth. These experiences do more than reward effort; they help reinforce cultural loyalty and identity. Incentives, whether material or symbolic, become tools for cultural reinforcement that validate students' efforts and emphasize the importance of cultural continuity.

Despite these efforts, participants pointed to significant barriers that threaten the sustainability of folk dance traditions. A generational disconnect is one of the most pressing concerns. Many young people reportedly find folk dances less appealing than modern dance trends popularized on social media. This shift in interest threatens the relevance and perceived value of traditional practices. Compounding this challenge is the lack of qualified instructors and access to authentic learning resources. Teachers frequently rely on YouTube videos to learn and teach dances, raising concerns about the accuracy and integrity of transmitted knowledge. Additionally, logistical constraints—such as limited funding, insufficient rehearsal spaces, and academic time pressures—further hinder sustained cultural practice. These obstacles highlight the need for systematic support, including capacity-building programs, resource allocation, and advocacy efforts aimed at restoring the significance of folk dances in the lives of the youth.

The study's findings reinforce scholarly literature on cultural preservation. As noted by Balayog (2019), schools play a vital role in nurturing cultural identity when arts and heritage are integrated into curricula. Similarly, Rivera (2020) emphasized the importance of community-based cultural initiatives in preserving traditions, especially in rural settings where LGU involvement is crucial. The role of incentives and recognition, as discussed by Sanchez and Garcia (2022), further supports the study's observation that motivating students through rewards enhances engagement and fosters long-term cultural participation. Finally, the barriers identified mirror those highlighted by Torres (2021), who underscored the consequences of generational gaps and the lack of formal training in folk traditions. Torres emphasized the need for coordinated efforts and well-funded initiatives to preserve the authenticity and continuity of cultural practices.

The preservation of Capiz folk dances is a community-wide endeavor rooted in education, supported by collaborative initiatives, and sustained through recognition and incentives. However, its future hinges on addressing generational disinterest, providing proper teacher training, and ensuring institutional and logistical support. Without these, even the most culturally embedded practices risk fading into obscurity. To preserve Capiz's rich dance heritage, a holistic approach—uniting schools, LGUs, families, and youth—is imperative to pass on this vibrant legacy with fidelity and pride.

## CONCLUSIONS

Capiz folk dances, as living embodiments of the province's cultural identity, serve as dynamic expressions of history, values, and communal memory. The present study has illuminated the multifaceted nature of these dances—not merely as performances, but as cultural texts deeply interwoven into the lives of the Capizeño people. Drawing upon cultural transmission, identity, and social learning theories, the research underscores how folk dances are taught, experienced, and preserved within educational, communal, and familial settings. Through qualitative ethnographic inquiry, the study has documented the richness of these traditions and critically examined the strategies employed across various municipalities to sustain them.

Findings affirm that schools are at the forefront of cultural preservation, functioning as consistent platforms for folk dance integration, while community workshops and cultural events reinforce this heritage through practice and performance. Recognition and incentives were revealed to be powerful motivators in sustaining youth engagement, and local government support, particularly in festivals and media promotion, has broadened the reach of these traditions. Yet, significant barriers remain—especially generational disinterest, lack of formal training, insufficient resources, and the gradual erosion of cultural knowledge due to modernization.

In addressing these challenges, the study contributes to both academic literature and cultural advocacy by proposing a more unified, inclusive, and sustainable approach to folk dance preservation. Aligning with Capiz State University's mission and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the research

recommends strategic integration of folk dances into school curricula, institutional capacity-building for instructors, increased funding and logistical support, and the use of digital platforms for documentation and promotion.

Ultimately, this study reaffirms that the survival of Capiz folk dances hinges not solely on nostalgia or occasional celebration, but on a committed, intergenerational effort to live, teach, and value these traditions in everyday life. By embracing a holistic preservation model that bridges education, community participation, and cultural policy, Capiz can ensure that its folk dances remain not just a symbol of the past, but a vital, evolving expression of identity for future generations.

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