

## **EXPERIENCING THE MASSKARA FESTIVAL DANCE COMPETITION**

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### **Abstract**

The study reported the results of experiencing the masskara festival dance competition. The dances performed during the festivities with dynamic and aesthetic choreography express the history and lifestyle of the natives attracting tourists and travelers. In this study, qualitative research -narrative inquiry approach was used. The researcher considered dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability as the trustworthiness of the findings. The results emerged with five themes, namely 1) Choreographer Standard 2) Attributes of a Choreographer, 3) Budget Concern, 4) Choreographer Experiences, and 5) Masskara Festival Dance Concept. It is interesting to note that most choreographers start as dancers themselves, doing something that they enjoy while establishing their standards, picking up their concerns, experiences, and challenges they need to go on. People who desire to be a choreographer do it in bits and pieces in their dance sessions and groups, building other concepts before taking their training sessions with their dancers to prepare the grandest Masskara Festival Dance Competition.

*Keywords: tourism management, experiences of masskara festival choreographers, qualitative design, narrative inquiry, Philippines*

## INTRODUCTION

Festivalisation is understood as the development of festivals and their influence on people. The surrounding space is not a new phenomenon; it is closely connected with the development of human culture (Falassi, 1987; Klein and Blake, 2002; Cudny, 2016). The dances performed during the festivities with dynamic and aesthetic choreography express the history and lifestyle of the natives attracting casual visitors and travelers. Festivals, therefore, are vital for the continuity of cultures providing tangible traces from antiquity to the recent past (Luna, 2015).

According to Bateson (2012), the empowered choreographer, who could read and write the dances, participated centrally in the circulation and sale of dances, which became authored for the first time. Dances moved from city to country across regional and national boundaries, entering a new economy of self-fashioning based on hierarchies of sophistication, style, and inventiveness (Bateson, 2012).

The basic skills & characteristics of a choreographer are dedication, flexibility, willingness to learn new things, work well with others, coordination, balance, good posture, communication skills, ability to learn from others, and creativity (Colorado Mesa University, 2014).

These festivals often start with a modest budget and grow year by year with their managers until the city or the state starts supporting them over the years, once they have proven that they can survive (Stefano, 2000).

On the other hand, the performer's experience is indeed something a choreographer needs to consider. A choreographer is responsible for all elements of a piece and should not presume to communicate explicitly to an audience through a dancer. All successful choreographers must negotiate this dichotomy based on their own experience and preference. When asked what a piece of choreography is about, choreographers may talk about a kind of relationship, an existential feeling, or describe a specific circumstance (Dunn, 2016).

The choreographer's experiences include being confronted with moments of forgetfulness in front of the audience, reacting to unexpected responses by the dancers, and going out of control. Such experience can provoke a great sense of vulnerability, usually not visible to the audience (Pumps, 2011).

In the Philippines, Bacolod City is known for the famous Masskara Festival, from October 1-20. Local and foreign visitors get a chance to enjoy 20 days of merrymaking, beer-drinking, dining, and street dancing. On the weekend nearest to 19 October, the biggest party in Bacolod is scheduled to take place. Bacolod is the capital city of the country's sugar-producing province of Bocolenos (Dowd, Bautista, Simborio, Montalvan, Henares, 2009).

The festival is first held in the year 1980. By that time, Negros Island, the primary sugar bowl of the Philippines and the world, and sugar is the main agricultural product, was in the deep sinking crisis (Singson, 2013).

## **Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of the Masskara Festival dance choreographers.

## **Framework of the Study**

The study was anchored on the concept of Gardner (2007) regarding the understanding of modern dance involving assumptions about the nature of the symbolic relations and actual relationships between the dancer(s) and the choreographer.

It was said that this framework was challenging to implement in a festival with such a long history. It seems it would best fit as a starting guideline for anyone looking to set up a festival, benefitting from the experiences of more practiced festivals (Salomé, Domingues, & Lopo, 2017).

In line with this, the concept of experiential learning differs from theoretical knowledge and fits easily into the world of dance education and choreography. An example of the first step in the circle is when the dancer has a substantial experience by physically doing a task set by the choreographer (Oetgens & Pancras, 2013). It is well established that the process of choreography involves creativity over time with variable levels of predictability, subjectivity, complex communication, and emergence (Schulze, 2005).

Furthermore, the choreography is a pair formed by a set of roles, describing the interactions involved and a conversation, modeling the ordering of interactions among the functions (Busi, Gorrieri, Guidi, Lucchi, & Zavattaro, 2005).

The choreographer and maybe the dancer as well, then observe and reflect the outcome of the task. They choose a direction to go with and blend it in with the concept and dramaturgy of the work. It might need to be adjusted or experimented with, but coming from the circle's previous steps, both choreographers and dancers have learned by doing and can continue from this new point (Oetgens & Pancras, 2013).

Likewise, choreographers have different methods of finding ideas, working them out, designing movement, and working with other dancers and artistic staff (A. P. Guide, 2013).

However, the focal point may refer to the whole piece, the stage, a dancer, an interaction, or a temporal pattern, and may be defined in an open, flexible, or set way (Felice et al., 2017). This theoretical framework is employed to comprehend choreographers' tactics to interact with artifacts in the creative process (Schulze, 2005).

Additionally, Choreographers must be able to retain the steps and routines for each character. They must be imaginative and creative, interpret the Director's instructions and contribute their ideas to the patterns (Industries, 2011).

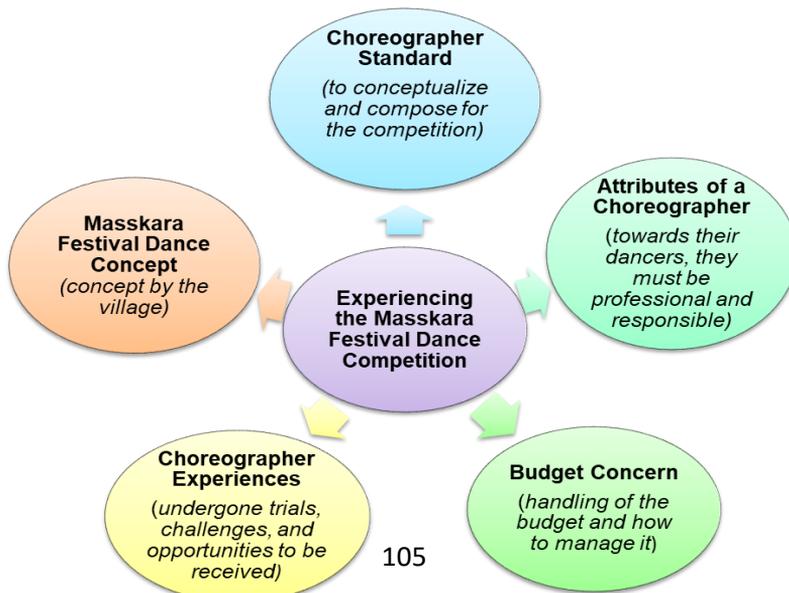
During budget preparation, trade-offs and prioritization among programs must be made to ensure that the budget fits government policies and priorities (Wildavsky, 1986).

Correspondingly, Choreographers usually start their working lives as Dancers. They may become Dance Captains (responsible for ensuring the continuity of the dance, but who have no creative input into its design) in theatrical productions, progress

to become Assistant Choreographers, and ultimately Choreographers (Industries, 2011).

On the other hand, experiencing the dance-making process was pleasurable and nourishing. Instead of extracting a dance work, we could share and validate that what was already there in our lived experience movement came from real experiences, not exploited for effect, but revealed it became an affirming experience (Barbour, 2008).

Indeed, it is an advantage for a dance choreographer to win in a competition. Thus, winning streaks end because winners can become over-confident, slipping into arrogance or complacency, or the competition becomes more complicated. But leaders can build on the advantages of winners to encourage a positive spirit, disciplined focus, mutual respect, lots of practice on the details, and lasting support systems that can make successes and comebacks more likely (Drucker, 1999).



## **Figure 1. Schematic Diagram Scope and Limitation**

This study was conducted to explore the experiences of Masskara Street Dance and Arena Dance Choreographers. The study employed a qualitative research design using narrative inquiry as an approach. Information for this study may be taken from participants best fit to contribute to the generation of ideas relevant to the central objective of this study. Participants were then Masskara Street Dance and Arena Dance competition choreographers for the past five years. The duration of the study was November to March 2018.

In this study, series of interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study was a qualitative type of research that seeks to accumulate data from the planning and organizing experiences of Masskara street dance and arena dance choreographers in the City of Bacolod during the festivity every October. Qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena. (Hancock, 2006). Qualitative research is a type of scientific research. In general terms, scientific research consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a question systematically use a predefined set of procedures to answer the question. Moreover, scientific research collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance, and

produces results that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

As an approach to this design, the narrative inquiry was used in this study as a relatively new qualitative methodology, which is the study of experience understood narratively. Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into the experience through “a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and social interaction with milieus” (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

For this study, the descriptive narrative will be used. We find narrative inquiry appropriate for this study since its primary purpose is to explore and provide a detailed description of choreographers’ experiences as told by them in their stories. Despite their tasks’ complexity, we determine why they still strive for excellence in passionately displaying their concepts and choreography in the Masskara competitions they participate in. Narrative inquirers attend to both personal conditions and, simultaneously, to social conditions. By personal conditions, “we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) of the inquirer and participants (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

### **Conversational Partners**

In qualitative research, conversational partners are necessary for the derivation of data used. This study utilized purposively identified conversational partners who were the Masskara Street Dancing and Arena Dance Competition choreographers in Bacolod City. They are Masskara choreographers, who were selected based on established inclusion criteria set by the researchers.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

The conversation partners were recognized and registered choreographers based on the list to be provided by the Tourism office of the city of Bacolod. They were Males with winning entries three times in teaching Masskara Street dance and Arena Dance Competition and residing in Bacolod City

## **Ethical Considerations**

The researchers personally met the conversation partners and explained the study and the need for their participation. The conversational partners were then requested to sign the informed consent form, which will prove their willingness to participate. The form contained the ethical considerations that must be observed throughout the inquiry.

When the verbal agreement of the conversation partner was attained, the informed consent form was presented and explained to them, after which they were asked to sign the document.

The interview schedule among each of the conversation partners was set at their most agreeable and convenient time. Each meeting was held in an easily accessible location and was conducted informally to encourage open dialogue and make each participant feel comfortable.

The following measures were observed To ensure confidentiality: Each conversation partner was assigned a code that was used instead of their names. The audio-recorded interview was retained in the mobile phone of the researcher that was password-protected and be deleted when data explication was done.

## **Gatekeepers**

The gatekeepers were the officers in – charge of the Silver Masskara Foundation under the Tourism office in the City of Bacolod. They were the committee in – charge of facilitating all the events and competitions during the Masskara celebration. The Village chief and principals/School Heads of participating schools in the Masskara Street Dancing and Arena Dance Competition.

## **Data Gathering Procedure**

The sources of data used in the study were the data/information taken from the recorded interview.

According to Dörnyei (2007), a ‘good’ qualitative interview has two key features: “(a) it flows naturally, and (b) it is rich in detail.” To attain this, it is, therefore, necessary for researchers to

remember that they are there to 'listen,' not just speak (Hero, 2018).

In this study, the researchers utilized the creative self-expressive activities of storytelling through the interview. Individual interviews were the primary data gathering method to be used. Each conversation partner was interviewed thrice or until crucial questions were consistently clarified. In the interviews, the researchers observed the conversational partners' facial expressions, bodily movements, gestures, pauses, and silences. Each of the interviews was recorded using two devices; a digital audio recorder and a mobile phone.

Furthermore, a series of interviews with the interval of one (1) week was the data collection technique of this study to capture shared stories that will impact future experiences and bring forth a wealth of information relevant to the experiences of Masskara choreographers.

An appropriate technique for collecting qualitative data is through in-depth interviews. Interview question in the conversation partner's mother tongue was conducted to generate detailed information, clarify concepts and develop questions that led to a much deeper probing of generated ideas.

### **Rigors of the Study**

Qualitative researchers consider dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability as trustworthiness criteria for qualitative investigation (Guba, 1981; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007; Butina, 2015).

**Credibility** is defined as the confidence placed in the truth of the research findings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Macnee & McCabe, 2008). Credibility establishes whether or not the research findings represent credible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' actual views (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Anney & Hume, 2004).

Member checks are crucial for any qualitative researcher because it is the heart of credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Anney & Hume, 2004).

Member check was used to provide credibility in this study. The researchers presented the transcribed results of the

interview, given to the conversation partners for verification of data as to its truthfulness and accuracy.

**Transferability** refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents. It is the interpretive equivalent of generalizability (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). According to Bitsch (2005), the “researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through ‘thick description’ and purposeful sampling (Anney & Hume, 2004).

The researchers did Transferability by selecting the conversational partners purposively. The Conversational partners were also qualified in the inclusion criteria that the researchers made. The conversation partners must be recognized and registered choreographers based on the list provided by the Tourism office of Bacolod, 25-60 years old, Male, With winning entries three times in teaching Masskara Street dance and Arena Dance Competition and Living in Bacolod City. The researchers proved this method to be effective for they only have limited numbers of people that serve as primary data sources or conversational partners.

**Confirmability** is “concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination, but are derived from the data” (Tobin & Begley, 2004; Anney & Hume, 2004).

An audit trail strategy involves examining the inquiry process and product to validate the data. A researcher accounts for all research decisions and activities to show how data were collected, recorded, and analyzed (Bowen, 2009; Li, 2004; Anney & Hume, 2004).

The audit trail was used to comply with confirmability in this study through the constant conveyance of the interview with the Masskara Festival choreographers. Repeated interviews with the conversation partners will be done until data is confirmed accurately based on consistent responses.

**Dependability.** According to Bitsch (2005), dependability refers to “the stability of findings over time.” Dependability involves participants’ evaluation of the findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by

the data as received from informants of the study (Cohen et al., 2011; Tobin & Begley, 2004; Anney & Hume, 2004).

Code recode strategy was used. The results from the two codings are compared to see if the results are the same or different (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Anney & Hume, 2004).

A stepwise replication strategy is qualitative research data evaluation procedure where two or multiple researchers analyze the same data separately and compare the results (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Anney & Hume, 2004).

Stepwise replication and code-recode strategies were used to establish dependability. Two groups analyzed the data separately and compared their work after the analysis was completed. Code-recode strategy was used simultaneously with stepwise replication. Units of meaning, a cluster of meanings, codes, and new codes (recode) were used in identifying the initial and final themes.

### **Procedure for Data Explication**

The researchers transcribed all qualitative data gathered from the interview in preparation for explication. Before explication, member checking was done by giving each conversation partner a hard copy of their transcribed statements for verification, validation, and authentication. Through this procedure, conversational partners could correct statements and ideas they wish to elaborate better than the interview to be conducted.

Braun and Clarke (2006) documented that a thematic analysis presented here is a linear, six-phased method. It is an iterative and reflective process that develops over time and involves constant moving back and forward between phases (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

**Familiarization.** Regardless of who collected the data, researchers must immerse themselves with the data to familiarize themselves with the depth and breadth of the content (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

The researchers read through the entire data set at least once before beginning coding. Ideas and identification of possible

patterns may be shaped as researchers become familiar with all aspects of their data.

**Generating Initial Codes.** Sections of text can be coded in as many different themes as they fit, being uncoded, coded once, or coded as many times as deemed relevant by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Accounts that depart from the dominant story in the analysis should not be ignored when coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

This phase begins once researchers have read and familiarized themselves with the data, having ideas about what is and what is interesting about them.

**Searching for Themes.** This phase involves sorting and collating all the potentially relevant coded data extracts into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

At the end of this phase, researchers have a good idea of the different themes, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data.

**Reviewing Themes.** The fourth phase begins once a set of themes has been devised, and they now require refinement. Some themes may collapse into each other, while other themes may need to be broken down into separate themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

At the end of this phase, researchers have a good idea of the different themes, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data.

**Defining and Naming Themes.** During the fifth phase, researchers determine what aspect of the data each theme captures and identify their interest and why (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

At this stage, researchers may consider how each theme fits into the overall story about the data set about the research questions.

**Producing the Report.** The final phase begins once the researcher has fully established the themes and is ready to start the final analysis and write-up of the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

The researchers aim to articulate what each theme means, the assumptions that underpin it, and the implications of each theme.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this narrative study is to determine the essence of stories and individual experiences of notable choreographers who are recent winners of the Masskara Festival Street dance and Arena Dance competition. This study also explored their features, such as their standards, experiences, and concerns that make them winners.

In this study, rigorous data explication of the interviews was conducted, and units of meaning, codes, and findings were examined from the product of the initial data, which were narrowed to arrive at themes. After cutting out redundancy, we trimmed it down into the following five essential themes that emerged, namely: 1) Choreographer standard; 2) Attributes of a choreographer; 3) Budget concern; 4) Choreographer experiences; 5) Masskara festival dance concept. These themes are vital to the stories of success of each of the Masskara Dance competition choreographers in recent years.

Types of collaboration between a choreographer and a dancer can differ significantly within and between each choreographic process:

What a choreographer asks from a dancer and in what way, how much freedom of interpretation a dancer has or can take within the given movement, structure, or task, and how much room there is for collective decision-making (Oetgens & Pancras, 2013).

Below is a thorough discussion of the experiences and stories of notable choreographers who are recent winners of the Masskara Street dance and Arena Dance competition.

### **Choreographer Standard**

Dance choreography and performance is a theoretical and practical course that challenges the intellect, body, and emotions. The study of dance at this level contributes to the learners' total development, including their artistic, aesthetic, and cultural

education. Through the study and practice of dance in this course, learners engage in reflective practice, create their expressive movement, and appreciate how other dance artists represent thoughts and intentions (Tasmanian Government, 2018).

Also, choreographers must be able to retain the steps and routines for each character. They must be imaginative and creative, interpret the Director's instructions and contribute their ideas to the patterns (Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries, 2011).

The following are their statements:

**Choreographer 1 said that** *“As a choreographer, we have rates or talent fees. So if you don't have a title or so-called “name” in Masskara, you can't have the right to make your talent fee higher. Also, you can't avail a big budget if you don't have any experience.”*

*“Being a champion would make your head hail high and being confident that next year you can do a lot better but also be pressured at the same time.”*

*“You should have a rule as a choreographer. For example, if you have three absences, then it's goodbye to you. It's part of our disciplinary measures. So you have the right to terminate the dancer if they have three absences. If they exceed the three absences limit, then they should say their goodbyes.”*

**Choreographer 2 says that** *“Yes, so I can focus on the dance. I also do design, but my work is to be a choreographer. So you should get a designer, so you will not be caught in the middle of two responsibilities.”*

*“Practice proper they should already be motivated about the competition days because they have strong and longer endurance. Gay dancers dance well. They know how to control their energy and their endurance compared to girls. Usually, girls would tend to faint.”*

**Choreographer 3 explained that** *“They also add, but that depends with the attitude. Attitude is what’s important with a dancer and also discipline. You need to be strict. So if you are lazy, you don’t need to join because this is not for those lazy dancers. There should be discipline always.”*

*“As long you that can do it, and you have that dedication and the skill, because if you are not, then you will be left behind.”*

*“Usually, the girls wear leggings, and the boys can wear shorts but not the shorts that are short for the girls, to avoid distractions.”*

Moreover, choreographers typically start by openly defining their ideas during preparation, and as they iterate, they increasingly constrain these ideas by operating on them (Felice et al., 2017).

It should also be noted that choreographers must retain the steps and routines for each character. They must be imaginative and creative, interpret the Director’s instructions and contribute their ideas to the patterns (Industries, 2011).

### **Attributes of a Choreographer**

The Choreographer agrees to be prompt and punctual for all scheduled rehearsals; respect the physical property of the Producer or Presenter and venue; respectfully conduct rehearsals; and abide by artistic policies of the Producer or Presenter as presented in the contract (Canadian Dance Alliance Artist, 2011).

Also, it wishes to understand better the center of attention of the Choreographer in each stage of the creative production,

what problems they mainly confront, what they work on, and how efficient these methods are due to their goal (Bateson, 2012).

The following are their statements:

**Choreographer 1 explained that** *“We are friends if we face each other and we greet each other during meetings. It depends if they are worth backstabbing, then I backstab, but never mind if it’s okay. Yes, especially if they are already starting to boast. There is this one time at a meeting that they are the only questioning, so I just said to myself, then it’s all yours, and I also say let them boast....”*

*“I don’t take it personally because it’s just a contest. Outside, we just say our hi’s/hello’s. But others make it personal, but I keep it between us during Masskara because we are foes during Masskara. But after that, we are friends.”*

*“There is nothing you can do about it, but during the time if you get the crown, then it’s your turn to snob them and goes on with your obligations in life.”*

**Choreographer 2 says that** *“I pay someone who can critique our performance. It’s usually my mentors before. There is nothing you can do. You need to be professional about it. Choreographers like us have our negative side, so we can’t usually tell, especially the lapses. So, we hire critics who are expert choreographers.”*

*“It’s natural if you compete and you talk to each other. We are used to it. What happens in the contest stays in the contest. Because outside we are friends”.*

**Choreographer 3 said that** *“It’s natural if you are competing because it’s just a contest. Outside of it, we are friends”.*

*“I have a designer of my own and also an artist. It’s like a complete package. Workers artist and designer they also have assistants it usually takes three months to finish it.”*

Choreography is the creation, arrangement, and design of movement and other events for expression and usually for performance (Canadian Dance Alliance Artist, 2011).

It demonstrates an understanding of lifestyle and weight management to promote community fitness; It also maintains an active lifestyle to influence the physical activity participation of the community practices healthy eating habits (Chin & Edginton, 2014).

### **Budget Concern**

Budgeting is not merely the preserve of central governments: it is a process that covers all levels of government, national and subnational, where different mandates and levels of autonomy apply in other countries. Budget systems and procedures should be coordinated, coherent, and consistent across levels of government. Therefore, these budget principles are beneficial and should be applied as appropriate to all levels of government (OECD, 2014).

Furthermore, there is always an element of bargaining in budget preparation, as choices must be made among conflicting interests. An “apolitical” budget process is an oxymoron (Wildavsky, 1986).

The following are their statements:

**Choreographer 1 discussed that** *“There should be a sufficient budget, and if they don’t have any budget, they can always look for sponsors.”*

*“Most of the time, the budget goes to the costume, the talent fee, the choreographer, the designer, and the set of props.”*

*“Of course, normally, the designer knows what is needed. They are the one who is in charge of buying*

*and usually the treasurer of the barangay comes along. If the treasure is not available, usually the designer is the one who secures all the receipts”.*

**Choreographer 2 explains that** *“Usually, we order. If we have a lot of budgets, we order from Manila. If we have thousands, we usually travel to Manila. If there is little budget, we buy from the center at the central market”.*

*“Yes, almost all. Last year the subsidy we received was 150 thousand from the city, and we only have one week, and we haven’t received it yet. So you need to go to the supplier. I think all of the barangay’s experienced this. So you don’t have a choice. So you need to go to the supplier. Even if you have 20 thousand less, at least you have the money”.*

*“The biggest issue is the delay, and there is no guarantee that the city will receive it because everyone relies on it. I hate it when your deal is going well, and in the end, you will still go to the supplier and will get 20% interest”.*

**Choreographer 3 said that** *“The dark side that I saw is there are a lot of problems. The work is delayed because of a delay in releasing the budget from the city and the barangay. It is very tiring.*

*“Yes, the budget we receive from the government is meager. So usually the barangay loans, so that we can get the budget.”*

*“Usually, we loan from the supplier, and sometimes we borrow from the persons we know from the Lace Center, and we pay them after. And also, if there is a delay, we order from Manila the props. But we don’t get a loan from Manila because you need to*

*pay after your order. We only loan here in Bacolod because we have a lot of connections. Because in Manila we have people who we ask to place our orders. And it's normal for us because you can't avoid it".*

The budget system was established first at the federal level in most countries and then spread to state and local governments. As earlier mentioned, the present study is concerned with the Budgeting process at the local government level (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2009).

The benefits offered to sponsors by cultural organizations provided them with the marketing/branding opportunities they sought from the sponsorship relationship. However, some had a potential cost to the organization included performances at sponsors' events and showcases for sponsors' products (Wellington, 2005).

### **Choreographer Experiences**

Dance making' is a Broadway of describing creative processes and practices engaged in by people in dance (Barbour, 2008).

Also, dance making' is a Broadway of describing creative processes and practices engaged in by people in dance. I use the term to refer to the plurality of techniques utilized in creating and performing contemporary dance. In this sense, dance making reflects more than just choreography – 'the tradition of codes and conventions through which meaning is constructed in dance.' Dance making encompasses the whole creative process, including the initial stages of conceptualization or crystallization of an idea, image, or experience, movement improvisation, and exploration (Barbour, 2008).

The following are their statements:

**Choreographer 1 said that** *"Usually, fifty girls and 50 boys and I think the big percentage is from the boys because when I was in Pahanocoy, there are usually many boys and girls and fewer gays. Because I am fond of partnering and lifting, and*

*when I was with Villamonte. Also, there were a lot of boys and girls and a few gays.”*

*“It is all about the game and pride of the barangay. Because if you are announced as the champion, you will be praised and have big points with the appointing captain of the barangay”.*

*“When in the arena, you are usually busy, and there is usually a first aid committee that is on standby as well as nurses that roam around to check the conditions of the dancers. After the performance, we always check up on our dancers to see if they are okay.”*

**Choreographer 2 tells that** *“You will get invited a lot from other places and festivals because you became a champion.”*

*“You are exhausted, and you lack sleep, usually 2 to 3 days without sleep. You experience fear and excitement at the same time. You will feel scared and excited at the same time.”*

*“Within six years, what I considered as my happiest was when I was still a beginner. If not for Barangay Pahanocoy, I was not able to go abroad. We were able to tour Singapore, our first tour in 1999. The second time, we went to Wow Philippines.”*

**Choreographer 3 explains,** *“I think it’s because I won 4 years of competing I got the opportunity to travel abroad that I think is one of my happiest moments.”*

*“That time when I was starting. I am not saying that I will become champion; I am just dedicated to win and give it my all and challenge myself.”*

*“Masskara is a lot of work, and it is very meticulous regarding the mask and the costume and also the props.”*

Conversely, qualities of experience resulting from anxiety, fear, or frustration were described as unfavorable and unenjoyable. Although negative experiences can motivate growth, they often divert attention and created tensions (Theatre Academy, 2013).

Choreographers essentially direct the story and apply their creative talents in putting it together. The opportunity to work professionally in a field with creative passion is unique in performing arts. Top choreographers can earn awards and garner industry recognition for their work (Kokemuller, 2007).

Pay for choreography work is typically low, aside from the most visible professionals in the industry. Choreographers earned a median hourly wage (Kokemuller, 2007).

Every choreographer is presented with the challenge of effectively placing movement on dancers. This challenge can be remedied by understanding how to present information and how to give feedback. This section offers essential information to help the choreographer have successful and productive rehearsals (Fenton, 2011).

### **Masskara Festival Dance Concept**

The organizers conceived a smiling mask, the fiesta symbol, to show the Negrenses' happy spirit despite experiencing bad times in the sugar industry (Guide, 2015).

The colorful variety and dramatic intensity of its dynamic choreographic and aesthetic aspects, the signs of deep meaning underlying them, its historical roots, and the involvement of the "natives" have always attracted casual visitors' attention (Luna, 2015).

The following are their statements:

**Choreographer 1 tells that** *“Yes, you need to get you’re a dance step there. And actually, you have to*

*conceptualize everything first before you can make a choreography. You need to conceptualize.”*

*“Celebration of life, so the concept will depend on you if what effect you are going to portray. And on how you are going to interpret the theme.”*

**Choreographer 2 explains that** *“Every year the theme changes. For example, “Masskara Festival Around the World, and also Masskara Festival ASEAN, you need to stick with the theme that is provided by the city. Because if you don’t stick with it, you will be questioned, and it’s all up to you. For example, the ASEAN concept, it’s all up to you on how you interpret it. You can use the boat if you want to as long as it connects with the theme. You can also use the airplane because it’s trending”.*

*“It’s with the choreographer. All we are waiting for is the theme. Usually, it’s September or August.”*

*“Our festival doesn’t have a storyline because we are Mardi Gras and not religious. And it depends on the theme every year.”*

**Choreographer 3 tells that:** *“We base on the theme that is provided by the city. We usually base is also on the music so we will know what to do. You need to have something new to show every year.”*

*“I think no. It depends on the theme. A lot of people don’t understand the ASEAN concept. However, we the trainers like it; we love listening to it.”*

*“We base on the theme that is given, we study it and study how we are going to interpret or show it.*

*So that every year you have something new to show.”*

The festival instills the culture of escapism and obscurantism among the people, where they have to accept and forget their sufferings caused by the exploitation and oppression of the landlords (Dowd et al., 2009).

The creative process is worthy of documentation, and potentially records of dance creation could unveil unique and unpredictable aspects of developing an idea into a finished dance (Guide, 2013).

### **GENERAL STATEMENTS**

This study yielded five (5) themes that encompass the choreographers' experiences during the Masskara Festival Dance Competition. These are as follows: 1) Choreographer Standard 2) Attributes of a Choreographer, 3) Budget Concern, 4) Choreographer Experiences, 5) Masskara Festival Dance Concept.

The choreographers always impose discipline among their dancers and make sure they follow the rules and pay attention during practices. They have to think big and creatively to be able to satisfy the judges and the viewers.

Working at a famous festival as a choreographer in Bacolod City, you need to be vigorous, courageous, and patient. You have to be always open to other people's opinions, ideas, suggestions, and criticism.

The choreographers are not just into choreographing them, but they also shoulder the problems during Masskara Festivals, such as financial problems, especially on the delay of subsidy, a limited amount of assistance received, and lack of budget wardrobe and props.

They have negative and positive experiences throughout the practice until the day of the dance competition. They take it as a challenge and inspiration and choose to strive, put more effort into improving, and win. On the day of the competition, they experience that their dancers sometimes faint and some experience wardrobe malfunction.

Masskara Festival is one of the famous festivals here in the Philippines, and it is an honor to be one of the choreographers of the winning team. Masskara festival has categories such as school and village category. Masskara dance competitions have street dance and arena dance. Dancers are only limited and counted during the competition. The choreographer makes sure that they follow the yearly theme and base their idea and choreography on the concept.

The choreographers find their work enjoyable, challenging, and tiring at the same. Their experiences brought them to their career path as choreographers. They realized that being a Masskara dance choreographer gave, gave, and will give them more opportunities for growth in their career and personal life.

However, in the thorough analysis, the researchers have also examined one (1) variation supported by the recurring theme, namely, Budget Concern (handling of the budget and how to manage it). The budget concern was experienced by choreographer one (1). According to choreographer one (1), it is about the delay of subsidy or releasing of the budget by the LGU. Choreographer two (2) says that delay of subsidy affects their practices and the production of the costumes. Choreographer three (3) also has the same problem saying it affects their practices because there will be no food supply during training if they do not have a budget.

Overall, these choreographers almost have the same problem in choreographing but different beliefs, opinions, and ways of solving their problems. All these experiences and circumstances help each of them become productive individuals.

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