

# Perceived and Anticipated Returns of Ballroom Dance: Perspectives of Parents, Guardians, and Adult Dancers

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## Abstract

This study examines the perceived returns of ballroom dancing among parents and guardians of ballroom dancers and adult dancers. It focuses on the financial, psychological, social, and developmental outcomes that influence the continuance of ballroom dance participation despite uncertain financial and competitive returns. Specifically, this study asks: What factors motivate parents, guardians, and adult dancers to invest their financial resources, time, and effort in ballroom dance, and how do their perceived financial, psychological, social, and developmental returns influence their continued investment despite the uncertain returns?

Data were collected through a questionnaire completed by 17 parents or guardians of ballroom dancers and 51 adult ballroom dancers about their financial and time investments, opportunity costs, motivation for participation, perceived returns, and future participation intentions. Results indicated that participants placed greater importance on developmental and experiential benefits rather than anticipated financial or career-related outcomes. While stronger expectations of future returns corresponded descriptively with greater financial expenditure among adult dancers, this association was not statistically significant, and continuance intentions remained high despite uncertain professional pathways and varying levels of perceived financial burden. These findings suggest that continued investment in ballroom dance is influenced by multiple forms of perceived value beyond direct financial returns.

**Keywords:** Ballroom Dance, Dance, DanceSport, Human Capital Investment, Opportunity Cost, Perceived Returns

## 1. Introduction

Participation in ballroom dance requires a substantial amount of time, financial resources, and other efforts. For many dancers and their families, this involvement goes beyond a casual hobby and becomes a long-term investment that shapes daily routines, social interactions, and future aspirations. Expenses such as training, private lessons, competition fees, travel fees, and costumes can accumulate quickly, beginning at a young age and continuing for many years, especially as the requirements for those resources increase with age (Second Stage Dance, 2025). Despite these high costs, the potential financial returns of dance participation remain uncertain, as only a small proportion of dancers who start at a young age pursue professional careers or achieve long-term economic success within the industry.

The tension between levels of investment and outcomes raises important questions about how individuals decide to continue participating in ballroom dance. Prior researchers, dancers

themselves, and authors have suggested that, in addition to the ongoing commitments of time, money, and effort based on expected economic returns, individuals often continued their commitment due to personal attachment, identity and community formation, and the social and professional recognition associated with ballroom dancing (Savoy, 2010). These findings demonstrate that decisions are not only determined by economic factors, whether for parents and guardians supporting their children or for dancers themselves, but also by how individuals perceive the value of their ballroom dancing experiences.

However, previous studies have examined various emotional, social, and physical benefits associated with ballroom dancing; little research has examined how dancers and parents and guardians of ballroom dancers assess the value of these benefits relative to the financial costs and other commitments involved in their continued participation. This study aims to examine how both parents and guardians of ballroom dancers and dancers perceive their investments in ballroom dance participation and how these perceptions affect their continued participation. Understanding this dynamic can help people make future financial and commitment decisions about the level of their investment in ballroom dancing, to the extent they desire, and their future career choices as a professional ballroom dancer.

## 2. Literature review

Participation in ballroom dance can be understood as an investment that requires continued commitment of time, effort, and financial resources. The existing literature consistently emphasizes that engagement in ballroom, especially at higher levels of proficiency, often demands a significant and ongoing investment. Developing expertise requires years of training, specialized instruction, competition participation, and the acquisition of technical, physical, and psychological skills, all of which necessitate sustained commitments from both dancers and their families (Grigore, 2014; Marion, 2011; Pavleski & Bozilova, 2022). As dancers progress and improve, participation often becomes increasingly intensive, requiring greater investments of time, training, and financial resources.

Despite these considerable commitments, the returns associated with ballroom dance are not limited to competitive achievement or potential professional opportunities. Previous research suggests that participants may experience a wide range of psychological, social, physical, and developmental benefits through their involvement in dance (Bosse, 2015; Marini et al., 2015; Sohn et al., 2018). These findings indicate that ballroom dance may serve not only as an investment in technical skill development but also in personal growth, well-being, and social experiences. Consequently, understanding how ballroom dancers and parents and guardians of ballroom dancers evaluate these investments and the returns they perceive from participation represents an important area of inquiry.

### 2.1 Financial Input

Participation in ballroom dance requires substantial and ongoing financial investment, a

pattern consistently documented in the literature. Ballroom dance and DanceSport have been described as resource-intensive activities in which expenses extend far beyond basic instruction and increase as dancers advance to higher competitive levels. Rather than representing one-time expenditures, expenses often accumulate over many years through continuous training, coaching, competition, and skill development. (Marion, 2007, 2011; McMains, 2006; Ericksen, 2011).

Several authors also emphasize that travel is a significant component of ballroom dance and DanceSport participation. Competitive dancers frequently travel to competitions, master classes, and camps that may not be available locally (Marion, 2011; McMains, 2006). Marion argues that travel eventually becomes an “elemental necessity” for dancers seeking advancement in the competitive industry. At the same time, McMains (2006) describes dancers investing extensive resources in training and opportunities beyond their local communities.

Since physical appearance is an important factor at the competition, Ericksen (2011), McMains (2006), and Marion (2011) all describe the importance of costumes, shoes, hairstyling, makeup, and grooming within competitive ballroom culture. Specifically, Marion (2011) notes that dresses regularly cost thousands of dollars, while shoes, lessons, and competition registration fees add additional recurring expenses.

Despite these significant financial commitments, scholars consistently note that direct economic returns remain uncertain. Savoy (2010), McMains (2006), and Marion (2010) all observe that only a small proportion of dancers achieve elite competitive success or professional careers within the industry. While top competitors may gain prestige, visibility, coaching opportunities, and professional recognition, most participants continue investing considerable resources despite limited prospects for substantial financial rewards.

## 2.2 Opportunity costs

Participation in ballroom dance also involves substantial opportunity costs, as the time, effort, and financial resources devoted to training and competition may limit individuals’ ability to pursue alternative educational, professional, and social opportunities. Multiple scholars suggest that DanceSport competitors frequently prioritize dance over other aspects of life, often making sacrifices in academics, career development, other leisure activities, and personal relationships (Hoffman, 2025; Ericksen, 2011; McMains, 2006). For example, Ericksen (2011) describes George Balanchine’s decision to leave college to pursue a teaching career at a Fred Astaire studio; similarly, McMains (2006) observes that relatively few professional DanceSport competitors possess education beyond high school or work experience outside the entertainment industry. Conversely, amateur dancers are more likely to have completed a higher education degree and maintain a career that provides sufficient disposable income to support their participation in ballroom dancing.

Researchers also show the social opportunity costs associated with ballroom dancing. The extensive time commitments required for training, travel, and competition may reduce their

opportunities for family connection, friendships, and other activities outside the dance community (Hoffman, 2025; Ericksen, 2011). Ericksen's interview participant Phoebe described these sacrifices directly, stating, "I do not have a social life; I only have a dance life; I sacrifice everything for it: friendships, family, they come second." This perspective aligns with the broader pattern identified in the literature, in which highly committed dancers are willing to forgo other uses of their time to pursue dance-related goals and experiences.

## 2.3 Uncertainties

### 2.3.1 Financial Returns

Despite the substantial investment required for ballroom dancing, the financial returns remain highly uncertain. Hoffman (2025), Ericksen (2011), and Savoy (2010) state that professional opportunities within the dance industry, especially for ballroom and DanceSport, are very limited and often fail to provide long-term economic stability, particularly for dancers who rely exclusively on dance-related income. The disparity between the level of investment and economic reward is especially conspicuous. Savoy (2010) specifically notices that dancers devoted the same level of dedication as elite Olympic athletes but received far less recognition, sponsorship, and financial compensation. Similarly, Ericksen (2011) and Hoffman (2025) suggest that earnings generated by dance vary considerably and often depend on teaching and performing opportunities, competitive success, and reputation. Only a small percentage of elite dancers can support themselves financially; many professional dancers rely on alternative income sources. However, the growth of the pro-am system has provided greater opportunities for some professional dancers. However, the long-term economic success remains uncertain for most ballroom dancers.

### 2.3.2 Competition Results

The competitive ballroom dance industry and DanceSport involve significant uncertainty in competition outcomes. NICOARĂ (2016), Savoy (2010), McMains (2006), and Ericksen (2011) all argue that judges evaluate dancers not only on technical skills and preparation, but also on subjective standards, aesthetic preferences, and competition-specific circumstances. The literature further indicates that competitive success in the ballroom industry is concentrated among a relatively small number of dancers. High placements at prestigious competitions often bring greater recognition, professional opportunities, and social status (McMains, 2006; Savoy, 2010; Ericksen, 2011).

## 2.4 Perceived Non-Financial Returns and Continued Participation

Even with the high financial costs and uncertain long-term returns of ballroom dance, many dancers and families will continue to invest substantial time, money, and effort in it. Researchers argued that ballroom dancing is closely tied to prestige, visibility, and status.

However, as Savoy (2010) and Marion (2014) stated, the competitive success in the DanceSport industry is highly concentrated in a small number of elite dancers; the pursuit of status alone cannot fully explain continued participation in DanceSport.

Existing research suggests that participants in ballroom dance perceive a variety of non-financial returns that may justify continued investment despite the uncertain competitive outcomes. Ballroom dance contributes to confidence, self-expression, resilience, and personal growth, with confidence emerging as a particularly important outcome of participation ( Ericksen, 2011; Jonas-Dwyer, 1997; Marion, 2014; Marini et al., 2015; McMains, 2016). Pasco-Pacheco (2015) describes confidence as a “hidden curriculum” of DanceSport (p. 136), while Aliberti (2024) found that self-confidence is positively associated with competitive dance performances. Similarly, Bosse (2015) argues that dancers often view ballroom dance participation as a process of becoming beautiful, through the greater self-confidence, self-acceptance, and a stronger sense of personal identity they develop.

Beyond psychological benefits, Marini et al. (2015) found that DanceSport also yielded important health-related benefits; for example, ballroom dancers demonstrated superior cognitive performance, balance, and quality of life compared with both sedentary individuals and participants in traditional exercise programs. Specifically, Sohn et al. (2018) found that 15 weeks of DanceSport training significantly improved walking and standing balance among senior citizens, suggesting that participation in ballroom dance can enhance physical functioning and postural stability. Educational benefits have also been identified as important outcomes of DanceSport participation. Tomescu et al. (2023) found that participation in a six-month DanceSport program improved study strategies, test-taking effectiveness, academic motivation, concentration, and organizational skills among institutionalized children. In particular, DanceSport participation has also been associated with the development of psychomotor skills such as coordination, rhythm, kinesthetic sensitivity, and spatial awareness, among children aged 12 to 13 years.

Social connection and identity formation have also emerged as important perceived returns of ballroom dance participation. Hoffman (2025) highlights that people experience social belonging as a key benefit of dance, while Meneau (2024) emphasizes the importance of community and identity formation within DanceSport. Bosse (2015) also found that dancers used ballroom dance to strengthen relationships, build connections, and experience inclusivity in a supportive dance and social community.

## 2.5 Research Gap

While the existing research and literature have explored the cultural, mental, and identity-related aspects of ballroom dance participation, less attention has been paid to how dancers and parents themselves evaluate these benefits in relation to their financial, time, and effort investments in continued ballroom dancing. Previous studies have described the social and personal rewards of ballroom dancing, such as discipline, social belonging, enjoyment, and

prestige. However, few examine whether participants themselves perceive that the returns justify the costs and uncertainties. In particular, limited research has focused on ballroom dance participation from behavioral and economic decision-making perspectives, examining how participants interpret and prioritize each financial and non-financial return during the decision-making process. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how parents/guardians of minor and adult ballroom dancers perceive the value of ballroom dance participation and how these perceptions influence continued investment in the activity.

## 2.6 Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory provides an economic framework to understand why individuals choose to invest resources in activities that enhance their future capabilities and expected returns and posits that education, training, and health are forms of capital investment. Schultz (1961) argued that individuals' knowledge, skills, and abilities are a form of capital that's created through deliberate investment, rather than being innate. He proposed that expenditures on education, training, health, and other activities that improve human capital should be viewed as investments rather than simply as consumption because they increase productivity and contribute to future economic growth. Becker (1962) further developed this idea by stating that individuals make investment decisions by comparing the expected future benefits from gaining new knowledge and skills with the associated costs. Together, these studies set the foundation of Human Capital Theory, explaining how people's investment increases their marginal productivity and generates long-run benefits over time.

The core principle of the Human Capital Theory — individuals invest resources in developing skills accordingly to anticipate future returns — can also be applied to ballroom dance participation.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Ethics Review Committee Formation

Since this research includes human participants, an Institutional Review Board approval is necessary under the Common Rule regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services prior to the data collection process. Since the researcher's high school's existing IRB was not able to provide IRB oversight for independent projects, the researcher established an alternative Ethics Review Committee with 3 members: an Analytical Reviewer, a Risks & Ethics Reviewer, and an Independent Community Reviewer.

### 3.2 Sample

Participants in this study were either parents or guardians of ballroom dancers and adult ballroom dancers (aged 18 years or older). To obtain a broader range of perspectives and increase sample diversity, participants were recruited from both the United States and China in regions where the researcher had access to ballroom dance and where ballroom dance cultures are

similar. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. The consent form was distributed prior to the survey, with a typed initial serving as confirmation that each participant fully acknowledged their rights, and individuals under 18 were excluded from participation.

A total of 68 responses were included in the final analysis, consisting of 17 parents or guardians and 51 adult dancers. Participants represented a range of dancers, from professional dancers to wedding dance couples within the ballroom dance community.

### 3.3 Sampling Method

Data collection was conducted over March 1st, 2026 to June 24th, 2026 using both in-person and online survey distribution. This study used a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Initially, the in-person surveys were distributed at the DanceSport competition, New York Dance Festival (NYDF), where the researcher approached adult ballroom dancers and parents or guardians of ballroom dancers throughout the competition venue, briefly introduced the research study, and invited them to participate. Interested individuals completed the survey electronically using the researcher's laptop. Participants who completed the survey received a small token of appreciation of a piece of chocolate and hand cream.

After the NYDF, the survey link and poster with QR code were sent out to ballroom dance studios, collegiate ballroom dance teams, and the survey was posted in ballroom dance-related social media groups, such as The Future of Ballroom Dancing, NYC Ballroom and Latin Dancers, and Everything Ballroom on Facebook, and r/DanceSport on Reddit. To encourage more people and studios to participate, the researcher introduced the study to online group administrators and requested permission to distribute the survey. To increase the sample size and reach a broader population, participants, studio owners, and coaches were encouraged to share the survey with adult ballroom dancers and parents and guardians of ballroom dancers within their networks. This snowball sampling method allowed the survey to reach participants from a larger social network who might not have had direct contact with the researcher.

To further increase the participant sample, the researcher also utilized her existing ballroom dance network to recruit additional participants. As an active member of the ballroom dance community, the researcher directly contacted eligible dancers through social media and the studios where she danced. These individuals were invited to participate in the study and were encouraged to share the survey online with other members of the ballroom dance community.

### 3.4 Instrument

The researcher-developed questionnaire was administered through Google Forms and WeChat Forms. Separate versions of the survey were created for parents or guardians of the ballroom dancers and adult dancers. Although both versions have the same questions and examine the same concepts, the questions were worded differently to reflect their different roles in ballroom dance. For the adult dancers, there were 18 questions and 19 for the parents and

guardians of the ballroom dancer version, each taking about 5-7 minutes to complete. Both versions include a mix of multiple-choice, Likert-scale type, ranking, and open-ended questions designed to examine participants' motivations for ballroom dance participation and their perceptions of the costs and benefits of continued involvement. The survey measured several domains, including demographic information, ballroom dance experience, financial and time investments, opportunity costs, sunk costs, anticipated and perceived returns, and future participation intentions. These questions were developed based on themes identified in the existing literature. To improve accessibility, English and Chinese versions of the survey were created.

#### 4. Results

Survey responses were exported from Google Forms into Google Sheets for analysis.

##### 4.1 Adult Dancers Data Analysis

A total of 51 adult ballroom dancers completed the survey, including responses collected from both the United States and China. The adult dancer data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine dancers' investment characteristics, motivations for participation, and perceived returns on ballroom dance. To further explore the relationship between investment and perceived returns, selected comparisons between investment-related variables and expected outcomes were also conducted.

##### 4.1.1 Investment Characteristics of Adult Dancers

Table 1. Investment Characteristics of Adult Dancers

| Characteristic                  | Summary                                                                 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of participants          | 51                                                                      |
| Weekly training hours           | Median = 6 (IQR 4–10)<br>Range = 1–50<br>M = 9.32 (SD = 9.84)<br>n = 51 |
| Travel time to studio (minutes) | Median = 30 (IQR 11–45)                                                 |

|                    |                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                    | Range = 0–270<br>M = 36.46 (SD = 40.27)<br>n = 50 (1 not reported)                                                                      |
| Annual expenditure | Median = \$6,000 (IQR \$2,280–\$22,500)<br>Range = \$100–\$80,000<br>M = \$15,595.63 (SD = \$19,312.01)<br>n = 47 (4 not reported)      |
| Competition Level  | Local: 33 (64.71%), Regional: 34 (66.67%), National: 27 (52.94%), International: 13 (25.49%); None: 7 (13.73%); not reported: 2 (3.92%) |

Table 1 summarizes the investment characteristics of the 51 adult ballroom dancers, which include a wide range of participation levels, including both recreational and professional dancers from the United States and China. Participants demonstrated a substantial variation in both time and financial investment. Dancers reported a median of 6 training hours per week (IQR 4–10), with a wide range of 1 to 50 hours (M = 9.32, SD = 9.84), indicating considerable differences in training commitment. Similarly, median annual expenditure was \$6,000 (IQR \$2,280–\$22,500; n = 47), while the mean was substantially higher at \$15,595.63 (SD = \$19,312.01), indicating that a small number of participants invested far more than the rest of the sample. Competition experiences also varied, with over half of the participants competing at the local, regional, and national levels, around a quarter competing internationally, and seven participants (13.7%) reporting that they did not compete at all. Overall, these data show that adult dancers included in the sample represented a wide spectrum of level of investment in ballroom dance.

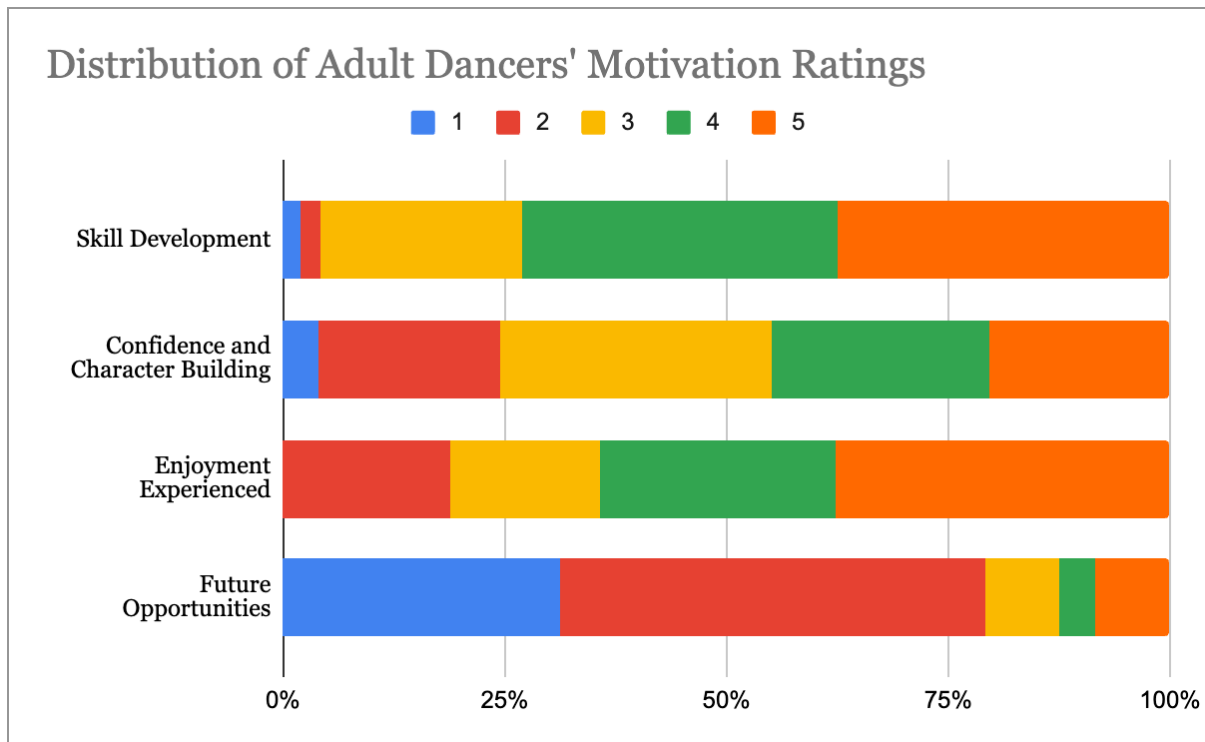
#### 4.1.2 Motivations for Investment

Table 2. Mean and Median Importance Scores of Adult Dancers' Motivations for Investing in Ballroom Dance (From 1 = Least Important to 5 = Most Important; n=51)

| Motivation            | Mean | Median | n  |
|-----------------------|------|--------|----|
| Enjoyment experienced | 4.14 | 4      | 49 |
| Skill development     | 4.04 | 4      | 48 |

|                                                          |      |   |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------|---|----|
| Confidence and character building                        | 3.36 | 3 | 49 |
| Future opportunities (scholarships, awards, career, etc) | 2.10 | 2 | 48 |

Figure 1. Distribution of Adult Dancers' Motivation Ratings



Note. 1 = Least Important; 5 = Most Importance

Note. Additional motivations were reported by nine participants under the “Other” category. Their responses represented a diverse set of themes, including health/mental health, friendship, dance with their significant other, personal aspirations, and therefore, these responses were summarized qualitatively rather than creating a separate category for the calculation of mean standard deviation and the counting for the bar chart.

Table 2 presents the mean and median importance scores of adult dancers' motivations for participating in ballroom dance and Figure 1 uses a 100% stacked bar chart to show the distribution of motivation ratings. Results suggest that adult dancers primarily valued the developmental aspects of ballroom dance over potential future awards or opportunities. Enjoyment and skill development received the top two highest mean importance scores with a relatively consistent response ( $M(\text{Enjoyment}) = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ;  $M(\text{Skill development}) = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ). Confidence and character building received a moderate level of importance with a

moderate level variation in responses, seen by the mean of 3.36 (SD = 1.15). Future opportunities, including scholarships, awards, and career advancement, received the lowest mean importance among the four predefined motivations (M = 2.10, SD = 1.15). Because respondents allocated importance across a fixed set of options, these scores should be read as relative orderings rather than as absolute levels of importance; a low score for future opportunities indicates that it was ranked below the other motivations, not that respondents considered it unimportant.

#### 4.1.3 Adult Dancer's Perceived Returns on Investment

Table 3. Adult Dancers' Perceived Returns on Investment (5-point Likert items, n = 51)

| <b>Statement</b>                                                                                                                 | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Standard<br/>Deviation</b> | <b>%<br/>Agree<br/>(4–5)</b> | <b>%<br/>Disagree<br/>(1–2)</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ballroom dance participation reduced my time spent on other activities (e.g., academics, other extracurriculars, family time)    | 3.22        | 1.39                          | 45                           | 31                              |
| Ballroom dance expenses require me to reduce spending in my household in other areas.                                            | 3.74        | 0.96                          | 63                           | 12                              |
| I will continue participating in ballroom dance because of the time, finances, or other resources I have already invested in it. | 3.74        | 1.02                          | 61                           | 14                              |
| I have considered stopping ballroom dance participation due to the time, finances, or other resources required                   | 2.78        | 1.30                          | 41                           | 41                              |
| I expect my preparation and effort to correspond to competition results.                                                         | 3.70        | 1.14                          | 63                           | 14                              |
| I believe that the career pathways in ballroom dancing are clear and well-defined.                                               | 2.96        | 1.02                          | 37                           | 35                              |

|                                                                              |      |      |    |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|----|----|
| I will continue participating in ballroom dancing next year.                 | 4.49 | 0.83 | 90 | 6  |
| I expect my investment in my ballroom dance to lead to future opportunities. | 3.33 | 1.05 | 37 | 18 |

Table 3 summarizes adult dancers' perceived returns on investment in ballroom dance. Generally, participants showed moderate to high levels of agreement with most of the statements. The strongest agreement was observed for the intention to continue ballroom dance participation in the following year, with 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing and only 6% disagreeing ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ). Adult dancers also generally agreed that ballroom dance participation requires substantial financial and time investment, with 63% agreeing that dance expenditures require them to reduce spending in other areas ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ) and 61% agreeing that they would continue to participate because of what they have already invested — a pattern consistent with, though not sufficient to demonstrate, a sunk-cost effect. By contrast, adult dancers were divided on whether ballroom dance offers clear career pathways, with 37% agreeing and 35% disagreeing ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) and only moderate expectations that ballroom dance can bring future opportunities ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). Standard deviations ranging from 0.83 to 1.39 showed that participants demonstrated a relatively wide range of perceptions regarding the returns on their investment in ballroom dance.

#### 4.1.4 Relationship Between Investment and Perceived Returns

##### **Annual Expenditures vs. Expected Returns**

Expected returns were measured using participants' agreement with the statement: "Based on the amount of time, finances, and other resources I have invested in my ballroom dance participation, I hope I will receive related awards, scholarship, sponsorships, fame/recognition, career, or other benefits," rated on a 1-5 Likert scale type, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Among respondents who rated their expected returns from 2 to 5 in the Likert scale type question, median annual expenditure increased consistently from \$4,800 to \$5,500, \$10,900, and \$13,000, respectively with the expected returns score. Mean annual expenditure also showed a similar but less consistent pattern, increasing from approximately \$10,012 at a score of 2, \$16,655 at score of 3, slightly dip down to \$15,920 at the score of 4 but increased significantly again to \$18,912 at the score of 5. Two respondents reported an expected-return score of 1, only one of whom reported annual expenditure; this category was therefore treated as too small for meaningful group comparison. These findings descriptively suggest that participants with stronger expectations of future awards, recognition, scholarships, sponsorships, or other

career-related benefits tended to report higher annual expenditures. However, this apparent trend was not statistically reliable: a Spearman rank-order correlation between expected returns and annual expenditure was small and non-significant,  $r_s = .23$ ,  $n = 47$ ,  $p = .12$ . The relationship should therefore be treated as a descriptive pattern requiring confirmation in a larger sample rather than as an established association.

### **Expected Returns vs. Continuation of Participation**

Continuation of participation was measured using participants' agreement with the statement: "I will continue participating in ballroom dancing next year," rated on a 1-5 Likert scale type, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

Participants with an expected-return score of 1 reported a mean continuation score of 4.00 ( $n=2$ ), while those with expected-return score of 2, 3, and 4 reported similar mean continuation scores of 4.43 ( $n=7$ ), 4.39 ( $n=23$ ), and 4.40 ( $n=10$ ), respectively. Participants with the highest expected-return score of 5 also reported the maximum mean continuation score of 5.00 ( $n=9$ ). Overall, continuation intentions remained high at every expected-return level. Nonetheless, the association between expected returns and continuation intention was statistically significant,  $r_s = .36$ ,  $n = 51$ ,  $p = .009$ , indicating that dancers with stronger expectations of future returns reported reliably stronger intentions to continue.

### **Financial Burden vs. Continuation of Participation**

The financial burden score was measured using participants' agreement with the statement: "Ballroom dance expenses require me to reduce spending in other areas," rated on a 1-5 Likert scale type, which 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

No respondents reported a financial-burden score of 1. Mean continuation scores were 4.33 ( $n=6$ ), 4.31 ( $n=13$ ), 4.65 ( $n=20$ ), and 4.50 ( $n=12$ ) among respondents stated financial-burden scores of 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Despite variation in perceived financial burden, continuation intentions remained consistently high, and the rank-order correlation between financial burden and intention to continue was negligible and non-significant,  $r_s = .12$ ,  $n = 51$ ,  $p = .42$ . There was therefore no evidence that greater perceived financial burden reduced the intention to continue.

## **4.2 Parents and Guardians Data Analysis**

A total of 17 parents and guardians completed the survey and were included in the analysis. The following analyses examine parents' and guardians' investment patterns in ballroom dance and their perceived returns on that investment. To address the research questions, the results are organized into four similar sections as previously presented in adult dancer section. First, summarizing the descriptive data, including participants demographics, characteristics, and levels of investment in ballroom dance: competition level, training commitment, travel time, and annual expenditures. Second, parents'/guardians' motivations for

supporting ballroom dance participation are examined through ranking responses. Third, parents' perceptions of the returns associated with ballroom dance participation are analyzed using Likert-scale type responses. Finally, relationships among investment indicators and perceived returns are explored to evaluate whether differences in investment are associated with differences in parents' perception of the value and outcomes of ballroom dance participation.

#### 4.2.1 Investment Characteristics of Parents and Guardians

Table 4. Investment Characteristics of Parent and Guardian Participants

| Characteristic                  | Summary                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of participants          | 17                                                                                                                                  |
| Weekly training hours           | Median = 3 (IQR 1.5–4.5);<br>Range = 0.75–25;<br>M = 4.31 (SD = 5.72); n = 17                                                       |
| Travel time to studio (minutes) | Median = 25 (IQR 12–30);<br>Range = 10–50;<br>M = 22.47 (SD = 11.05); n = 17                                                        |
| Annual expenditure              | Median = \$5,000 (IQR \$2,000–\$15,000);<br>Range = \$1,300–\$20,000;<br>M = \$8,546.67 (SD = \$6,860.85); n = 15 (2 not reported). |
| Competition Level               | Local: 9 (52.9%),<br>Regional: 9 (52.9%),<br>National: 5 (29.4%),<br>International: 2 (11.8%);<br>None: 6 (35.3%)                   |

A total of 17 parents/guardians participated in the survey. As summarized in Table 4,

parents reported variation in both financial and time investments in their children's ballroom dance participation. Weekly training hours (0.75–25 hours) and travel time (10–50 minutes) varied across respondents, reflecting diverse levels of commitment. Annual expenditures were collected for 15 participants, as two participants did not report their annual spending, ranging from \$1,300 to \$20,000 (median \$5,000).

#### 4.2.2 Motivations for Investment

Table 5. Mean Importance Scores of Parents' and Guardians' Motivations for Investing in Ballroom Dance (1 = Least Important, 5 = Most Important)

| Motivation                                               | Mean Ranking | n  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----|
| Skill development                                        | 4.00         | 17 |
| Confidence and character building                        | 3.86         | 14 |
| Enjoyment experienced by child/children                  | 3.07         | 14 |
| Future opportunities (scholarships, awards, career, etc) | 2.43         | 14 |

Note. Parents ranked each motivation on a scale from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important). Higher scores indicate greater importance

Figure 2. Distribution of Parents' and Guardians' Motivation Rankings

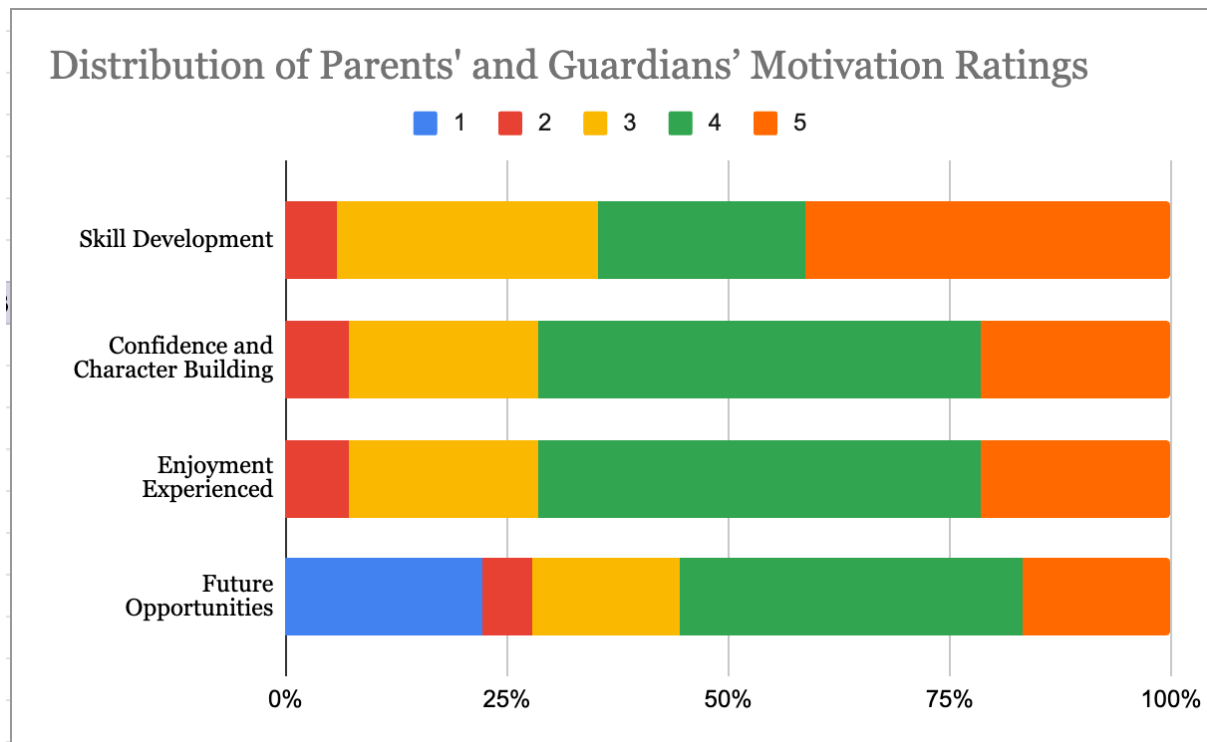


Table 5 summarizes parents' and guardians' motivations for investing in ballroom dance and Figure 2 uses a 100% stacked bar chart to show the distribution of motivation ratings.. Skill development received the highest mean importance score ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $n = 17$ ), followed by confidence and character building ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $n = 14$ ). In contrast, future opportunities such as scholarships, awards and career prospects received the lowest average importance score ( $M = 2.43$ ,  $n = 14$ ). As with the adult dancers, these scores reflect the relative ordering of motivations within a fixed set of options rather than absolute levels of importance. A small number of respondents also identified additional motivations, including developing resilience and persistence and improving posture. These findings suggest that parents and guardians primarily view ballroom dance as an investment in their children's personal and technical growth rather than a way to achieve external recognition or career opportunities.

#### 4.2.3 Parents' and Guardians' Perceptions of Returns of Ballroom Dance Participation

Table 6. Parents' and Guardians' Perceived Returns on Investment (Likert Scale,  $n=17$ )

| Statement                                                                                                                                                      | Mean | Standard Deviation | % Agree (4–5) | % Disagree (1–2) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Ballroom dance participation reduces time that my family spends on other activities                                                                            | 2.71 | 1.21               | 35            | 41               |
| Ballroom dance expenses require my household to reduce spending in other areas.                                                                                | 2.29 | 1.01               | 18            | 59               |
| I will continue supporting my child's/children's ballroom dance participation because of the time, finances, or other resources I have already invested in it. | 3.94 | 0.83               | 76            | 6                |
| I have considered stopping ballroom dance participation due to the time, finances, or other resources required                                                 | 2.41 | 1.06               | 18            | 53               |
| I expect my child's/children's preparation and effort to correspond to competition                                                                             | 3.24 | 0.97               | 41            | 18               |

|                                                                                        |       |      |     |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|-----|----|
| results.                                                                               |       |      |     |    |
| I believe that the career pathways in ballroom dancing are clear and well-defined.     | 3.003 | 1.12 | 29  | 35 |
| I will continue supporting my child/children's ballroom dance participation next year. | 4.65  | 0.49 | 100 | 0  |
| I expect my investment in my child's ballroom dance to lead to future opportunities.   | 3.65  | 0.86 | 53  | 6  |

Note. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree).

Table 6 summarizes parents' and guardian's perceptions of the costs, expected returns, and continued participation associated with their children's ballroom dance involvement. Overall, parents and guardians expressed a strong intention to continue supporting their children's participation in ballroom dance in the following year: every respondent (100%) agreed or strongly agreed ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ). Parents and guardians also generally agreed that the money and time they spent on ballroom dance increased their willingness to keep supporting their children's ballroom dance participation (Mean = 3.94,  $SD = 0.83$ ). In addition, participants moderately agreed that ballroom dance participation would provide future opportunities for their children ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ).

In contrast, parents were divided regarding whether ballroom dance provides a clear career pathway, with 29% agreeing and 35% disagreeing ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) and whether competition results would directly reflect the level of preparation and amount of effort invested (Mean = 3.24,  $SD = 0.97$ ). Parents and guardians generally disagreed that ballroom dance required them to reduce spending in other areas, with 59% disagreeing and only 18% agreeing ( $M = 2.29$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ).

#### 4.2.4 Relationship Between Investment and Expected Future Returns

##### **Annual Expenditures vs. Expected Returns**

Expected returns were measured using participants' agreement with the statement: "Based on the amount of time, finances, and other resources I have invested in my child/children's ballroom dance participation, I hope they will receive related awards, scholarship, sponsorships, fame/recognition, college admission, career, or other benefits", rated

on a 1-5 Likert scale type, which 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

No participants reported expected-return scores of 1 or 2. Among those who reported scores of 3 and 4, median annual expenditure increased from \$2,500 (n = 7) to \$7,500 (n = 6), while mean expenditure increased from approximately \$8,814 to \$10,000. Participants who reported the highest expected-return score of 5 had a mean and median annual expenditure of \$3250 (n=2). Given the small number of participants in this category and the overall parent sample size, no consistent descriptive trend between annual expenditure and expected future returns was observed. With only two respondents in the highest category, no inferential test was attempted for this comparison.

### **Expected Returns vs. Continuation of Participation**

Continuation of participation was measured using participants' agreement with the statement: "I will continue supporting my child/children's ballroom dance participation next year," rated on a 1-5 Likert scale, which 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

Mean continuation scores increased from 4.00 among the participants who reported an expected-return score 2 (n=1) to 4.29 among those who reported a score of 3 (n=7). Participants who reported expected return scores 4 (n=6) and 5 (n=3) had the maximum mean continuation score of 5.00. No participants reported an expected return score of 1. Although the small sample sizes limited interpretation, the results did suggest a positive pattern between stronger expectations of future returns and intentions to continue supporting their children's ballroom dance participation.

### **Financial Burden vs Continuation of Participation**

The financial burden score was measured using participants' agreement with the statement: "Ballroom dance expenses require my household to reduce spending in other areas", rated on a 1-5 Likert scale, which 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

Parents who reported the lowest financial-burden score of 1 reported the highest mean continuation score of 4.80 (n = 5). Mean continuation scores were 4.60 (n = 5), 4.50 (n = 4) and 4.67 (n = 3) among those reporting financial-burden scores of 2, 3 and 4, respectively. No participants reported a financial burden score of 5. Given the small sample size, these results do not indicate a clear descriptive relationship between financial burden and continuation intention for ballroom dance participation.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Principal findings**

This study found that investment decisions in ballroom dance appear to reflect a combination of expected returns, perceived returns, and non-financial motivations. Among adult dancers, enjoyment (Median = 4) and skill development (Median = 4) showed as the strongest

motivation for their investment, whereas expected future opportunities received substantially lower importance, suggesting that adult dancers may value their returns beyond conventional financial or career outcomes. Descriptive comparisons showed that adult dancers with stronger expectations of future extrinsic returns tended to report higher annual expenditures, although this association was not statistically significant ( $r_s = .23$ ,  $p = .12$ ). Intentions to continue participating remained high across all levels of expected return and perceived financial burden, and were themselves significantly associated with expected returns ( $r_s = .36$ ,  $p = .009$ ). Among parents and guardians of younger dancers, annual expenditures showed no clear relationship with expected returns, although stronger expectations for future opportunities generally corresponded with greater intentions to continue supporting their children's participation. Overall, these findings suggest that continued investment in ballroom dance cannot be explained solely by expectations of financial or career-related returns, instead, it may reflect a broader evaluation of financial, psychological, social and developmental returns alongside the perceived costs.

## 5.2 Motivations and Human Capital Investment

One of the clearest findings of this study was that when adult dancers are evaluating their motivations for ballroom dance participation, they believe that enjoyment and skill development are more important than future opportunities. Enjoyment ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $Mdn = 4$ ) and skill development ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $Mdn = 4$ ) received the highest mean importance scores among the pre-set motivations for adult dancers' ballroom dance participation, whereas future opportunities, including scholarships, awards, and career development, received the lowest rating ( $Mean = 2.10$ ). This finding is consistent with previous literature that suggested the perceived benefits of ballroom dance extend beyond competitive achievement and professional opportunities. Existing literature has identified the psychological and developmental benefits of ballroom dance, including confidence, self-expression, resilience, identity development, and social belonging and community (Jonas-Dwyer, 1997; Ericksen, 2011; Bosse, 2015; Hoffman, 2025; Meneau, 2024).

From a Human Capital Theory perspective, the results suggest that participants may evaluate ballroom dance investment through a broader set of perceived returns than conventional financial or career outcomes alone. While Human Capital Theory traditionally emphasizes investment and development in skills and capabilities that would generate future benefits, the high importance placed on skill development shown in this study indicates that the development of human capital itself may represent a valued return for the participants, even when the direct economic and general future opportunities are uncertain.

Adult dancers assigned a relatively low importance to future opportunities. This finding is important especially when considering the substantial resources required for ballroom dance participation. Existing literature describes ballroom dance as an activity that required a substantial amount of investments, which include expenditures on lessons, competitions, travel, costumes, and other forms of training, while direct economic returns and stable professional

opportunities remain limited and uncertain (Marion, 2011; McMains, 2006; Ericksen, 2011; Savoy, 2010). The findings suggest that adult dancers may continue to view ballroom dance as a worthwhile investment even when the conventional extrinsic returns are not their primary motivation. So rather than evaluating ballroom dance solely according to potential financial and professional outcomes, dancers may attach value to skills, enjoyment, confidence, and other capabilities developed through their participation. This broader valuation may help explain why when uncertainty in financial and professional outcomes exists in certain activity, participants still persist substantial investment into it.

A similar emphasis on nonfinancial developmental motivations was also observed among parents and guardians, although their investment decisions represent a different form of human capital. As skill development (Mean=4.00) reported as the most important motivations and confidence and character building (Mean=3.86) coming up at second, this pattern is consistent with previous findings presented in literature review, suggested that confidence, personal growth, educational development, and social connection are important outcomes associated with dance participation (Jonas-Dwyer, 1997; Marini et al., 2015; Bosse, 2015; Tomescu et al., 2023). From the Human Capital Theory perspective, parents' and guardians' expenditures in their children's ballroom dance can be interpreted as investment in the development of their skills and capabilities. Unlike adult dancers, who directly received the cost and benefits from ballroom dance participation, parents and guardians allocate their resources toward the benefits expected to accrue primarily to their children. Therefore, the value parents place on developmental outcomes may help explain why investment in ballroom dance can remain worthwhile from their perspective even when the direct financial or professional returns are uncertain for their children.

Together, the motivation patterns of adult dancers and parents and guardians suggest that ballroom dance investment is not evaluated solely according to direct financial returns and professional outcomes. While adult dancers invest directly in the development of their own skills and experience, parents and guardians invest resources toward the development of their children's human capital. Across both formats of investment, the perceived value of ballroom dance participation may therefore be driven more strongly by the developmental benefits rather than anticipated financial and career-related returns.

### 5.3 Financial Investment and Expected Returns

To further study the investment decisions, this study descriptively compared annual financial expenditure with participants' expected future returns. Different patterns showed between adult dancers and parents and guardians.

Among adult dancers, higher expected-return ratings were descriptively associated with greater annual expenditures, particularly when examining median expenditures, although this association did not reach statistical significance ( $r_s = .23$ ,  $n = 47$ ,  $p = .12$ ). In contrast, no clear descriptive relationship was shown between annual expenditure and expected future returns among parents and guardians. Although these findings are descriptive and do not establish

causality, they tentatively suggest that expectations regarding future returns may be more closely associated with financial investment decisions among adult dancers than among parents, a proposition that requires testing in a larger sample.

These findings are broadly consistent with Human Capital Theory, which proposes that individuals allocate resources when they anticipate future benefits that justify the associated costs. Adult dancers who reported stronger expectations of future returns also tended to report greater financial investment, suggesting that anticipated returns may influence the level of investment. However, because this study used a cross-sectional survey and descriptive analyses, it cannot determine whether higher expected returns lead to greater investment or whether greater investment influences participants' expectations of future returns.

Overall, these findings suggest that the relationship between expected returns and financial investment may differ depending on whether individuals are investing in their own experiences or in the development of another person.

#### 5.4 Investment Under Uncertainty

A second notable finding was that participants generally reported strong intentions to continue ballroom dance participation even though they spend a substantial amount of money and invest under the uncertainty regarding future returns. Among adult dancers, intention to continue ballroom dance remained consistently high across different levels of perceived financial burden and expected future returns. Similar patterns were also observed among parents and guardians, although the interpretation should be made cautiously due to the small sample size. Notably, both adult dancers and parents expressed moderate confidence that the career pathways in ballroom dance are clear and well-defined. Adult dancers reported a mean rating of 2.96, below the scale midpoint, with 37% agreeing and 35% disagreeing; parents and guardians reported a mean of 3.00, with 29% agreeing and 35% disagreeing. Participants therefore did not generally perceive ballroom dance career pathways as clearly established. But despite this perceived uncertainty, participants continued to report strong intentions to invest in ballroom dance.

From a Human Capital Theory perspective, individuals are generally expected to allocate their resources when anticipated benefits outweigh expected costs. However, the pattern for continuation intention observed in this study suggests that anticipated financial or career-related returns alone may not fully explain continued investment in ballroom dance. Instead, participants appeared willing to continue investing despite recognizing that professional career pathways were not clearly defined.

The findings suggest a distinction between investment intensity and investment persistence. Among adult dancers, stronger expectations of future opportunities were descriptively associated with greater financial expenditure, in the direction Human Capital Theory predicts, although the association was not statistically significant ( $r_s = .23$ ,  $p = .12$ ).

Continuation intentions remained high across varying levels of expected returns and perceived financial burden, yet were themselves significantly related to expected returns ( $r_s = .36$ ,  $p = .009$ ). Taken together, these results suggest that the distinction between the magnitude of investment and its persistence is worth pursuing, but that the present data do not establish which of the two is more strongly governed by anticipated extrinsic returns.

### 5.5 A Conceptual Model of Ballroom Dance Investment

Taken all together, the findings in previous sections support a conceptual distinction between the intensity and persistence of investment in ballroom dance. Investment intensity refers to the magnitude of financial, time, and other resources allocated to participation, and investment persistence refers to the decisions to continue allocating these resources over time for ballroom dance participation. This distinction is relevant from a Human Capital Theory perspective since an individual's decision regarding how much to invest may not be fully determined by the same factors as the decision regarding whether to continue investing. Rather than treating ballroom dance participation as a single investment decision, the findings suggest that continued participation may involve repeated evaluations of expected returns, perceived costs, and the broader value generated through participation.

Among adult dancers, the descriptive relationship between annual expenditure and expected future returns showed some support for this distinction. Stronger expectations of extrinsic returns were descriptively associated with greater financial expenditure, suggesting that anticipated benefits may be related to the intensity of resource allocation, though this association was not statistically significant in the present sample. This pattern is broadly consistent with Human Capital Theory, in which individuals allocate resources toward skill development when the expected future benefits justify the associated costs. However, the expectation for extrinsic returns appeared less clearly related to investment persistence. Continuation intentions remained high across most expected-return levels and across varying levels of perceived financial burden. At the same time, adult dancers reported a mean rating of only 2.96 regarding whether career pathways in ballroom dance were clear and well-defined, while parents reported a mean of 3.00. These findings indicate that continued investment occurred within a context in which conventional professional returns were perceived as uncertain.

This apparent difference between investment intensity and persistence suggests that participants may evaluate multiple forms of return when making continued investment decisions. The motivation findings provide additional contexts for this interpretation: adult dancers placed greater importance on enjoyment and skill development than on future opportunities such as scholarships, awards, and career advancement. Previous research also has documented similar psychological, developmental, physical, and social benefits associated with ballroom dance, while also identifying substantial costs and uncertain professional outcomes.

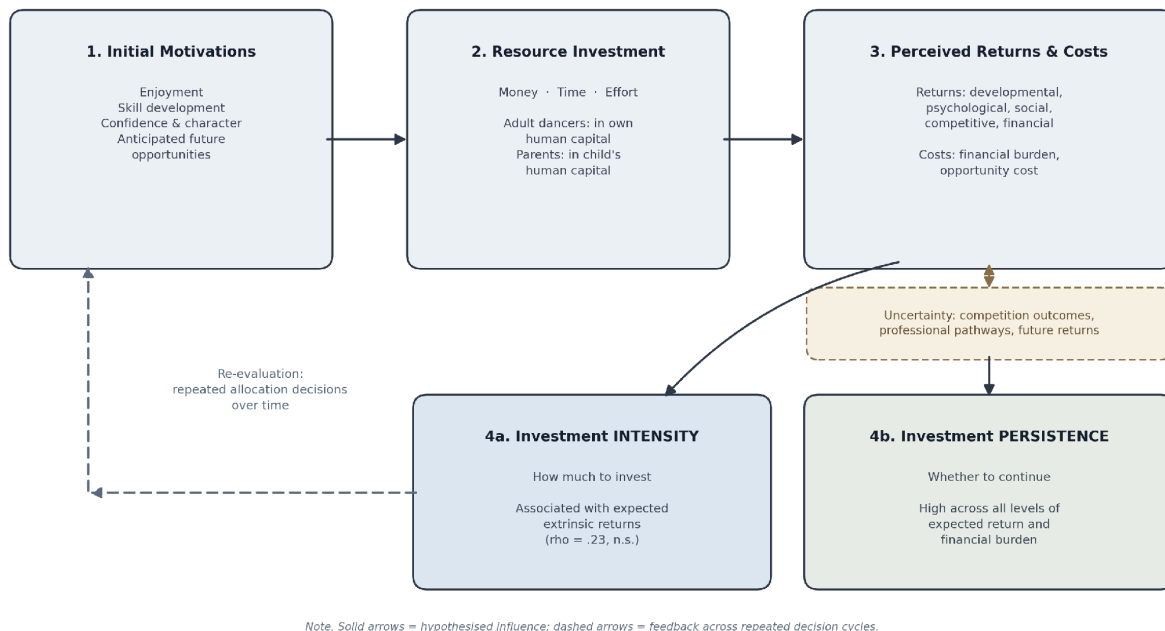
Based on these patterns, this study proposes a conceptual model which explains continued ballroom dance participation as a dynamic investment decision shaped by four

components: initial motivations, resource investment, perceived returns and costs, and subsequent investment decisions. Initial motivations, including enjoyment, skill development, personal growth, and anticipated future opportunities, provide the basis for adult dancers or parents and guardians to allocate their financial resources, time, and other forms of resources into ballroom dance participation. Once resources are committed, participants evaluate the value generated by this investment through different forms of perceived return, including developmental, psychological, social, competitive, and potential financial or career-related benefits, as well as simultaneously experiencing financial burden and opportunity costs generated by this investment.

These evaluations may influence two distinct dimensions of investment behavior as mentioned in the previous paragraphs: investment intensity and investment persistence. The findings suggest that these two decisions may respond differently to expected returns: stronger expectations of extrinsic future returns were descriptively associated with greater financial expenditure among adult dancers, indicating a possible relationship with investment intensity. Investment persistence, however, may depend on a broader evaluation of different aspects of perceived value since continuation intentions remained high across varying levels of expected returns and financial burden. The two dimensions are further complicated by uncertainty surrounding future outcomes. Because competition results, professional opportunities, and other future returns cannot be predicted with certainty, participants cannot evaluate their investments through a simple comparison of known costs and guaranteed benefits. Instead, investment decisions may require considerations of multiple uncertain outcomes, perceived probabilities, nonfinancial benefits, and current costs, making the decision process more complex.

The model is summarised in Figure 4. It therefore conceptualizes ballroom dance participation not as a single investment followed by a fixed return, but as a repeated process of resource allocation and reevaluation, in which participants continually weigh perceived costs against multiple forms of expected and experienced returns when determining both how much to invest and whether to continue to invest or not.

Figure 4. A Conceptual Model of Continued Investment in Ballroom Dance



Note. Solid arrows indicate hypothesised influence; dashed arrows indicate feedback across repeated decision cycles. Correlations shown are Spearman rank-order coefficients from the adult dancer sample.

## 5.6 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the sample was small, particularly for parents and guardians ( $n = 17$ ), which meant that several subgroup comparisons rested on as few as two or three respondents and that no inferential test could be applied to the parent data.

Second, the measurement instrument constrained how the motivation results can be interpreted. The motivation item asked respondents to rank five options from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important), but inspection of the raw responses showed that respondents did not treat the item consistently: some produced a strict ranking using each value once, while others used it as a rating scale and assigned the same value to several options, including a small number who rated every option 5. In addition, the "Other" option was completed by only 27 of the 51 adult dancers, so respondents who left it blank were effectively ranking four options rather than five. Because a ranking format mechanically constrains the scores — not all motivations can be rated highly — the finding that future opportunities received the lowest score should be read as a relative ordering rather than as evidence that respondents placed little absolute value on future returns. Future studies should either enforce a strict ranking or, preferably, present each motivation as an independent Likert item so that absolute and relative importance can be distinguished.

Third, participants were recruited through ballroom dance studios, competitions and online dance communities, which means the sample consists entirely of people who were still participating at the time of data collection. Individuals who had already withdrawn from ballroom dance — including those who left precisely because the financial burden became unsustainable or because the anticipated returns did not materialise — had no opportunity to be surveyed. This form of survivorship bias is likely to inflate the estimates of continuation intention reported here, and may also inflate perceived returns relative to perceived costs, since those for whom the cost–benefit balance failed are systematically absent. The uniformly high continuation scores observed in both samples should therefore be interpreted as characteristic of current participants rather than of everyone who has ever invested in ballroom dance.

Fourth, the study relied on self-reported, cross-sectional data, so reported continuation intentions may not correspond to actual future behaviour, and no causal relationships can be established. Expenditure figures were also self-reported and, for respondents completing the Chinese-language version, required currency conversion, which introduces an additional source of measurement error.

Future research should examine larger and more diverse samples and distinguish dancers by competitive level, professional status, country, years of experience and household income. Most importantly, future studies should recruit a comparison sample of former participants who have discontinued ballroom dance, and contrast their retrospective accounts of costs and returns with those of current participants. Such a design would directly address the survivorship bias described above and would allow the model proposed here to be tested against the decision to stop investing, which the present design cannot observe. Longitudinal studies could track actual investment and continuation over time rather than relying solely on the stated intentions at a specific time period. Finally, since the relationships identified are descriptive rather than causal, future research could statistically test the proposed distinction between investment intensity and investment persistence and examine whether financial, developmental, psychological and social returns influence these two dimensions of investment differently. Given the ordinal and skewed nature of the variables involved, rank-based methods such as Spearman correlations, Kruskal–Wallis tests or ordinal regression would be appropriate.

## Conclusion

The findings suggest that parents, guardians, and adult dancers in this study were motivated to invest financial resources, time, and effort in ballroom dance by multiple forms of motivations, with developmental and experiential benefits generally receiving greater importance than anticipated financial or career-related returns. Perceived returns appeared to influence investment decisions differently depending on the dimension of investment considered. The proposed distinction between investment intensity and persistence provides a framework for understanding these decisions as repeated resources allocations under uncertainty. More broadly, ballroom dance illustrates a wider economic question of how individuals allocate scarce

resources when future returns are uncertain and extend beyond direct financial and career related outcomes. Future research may examine whether similar investment patterns occur in other forms of human capital development, like education, sports, and specialized skill training.

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