

SECTION

2

TRADITIONAL
DANCES AS
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

Traditional Dances

INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance is a valuable form of physical activity and leisure, providing various health benefits and enriching overall quality of life. Studies show that participating in traditional dance can help meet daily physical activity goals, leading to better health.

Involvement in traditional dance programmes has been associated with improved physical fitness, balance, and strength among older individuals, promoting active aging and overall well-being. Additionally, traditional dance positively impacts various aspects of Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL), including health, mood, self-perception, and social interactions, especially among younger people. Traditional dance not only provides a culturally rich and enjoyable activity but also enhances physical, psychological, and social well-being.

This section provides an overview of traditional dance as a physical and recreational activity. It covers the meaning of traditional dance, physical activity and recreational activity. You will learn about traditional dance as both a physical and recreational activity, explore concepts of dance, see examples of traditional dances, and understand the connection between traditional dance and physical and recreational activities.

In addition, the section will bring to light the health benefits of engaging in traditional dance and will practically engage you in the performance of some dances.

At the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain traditional dances as physical and recreational activities for improving skill and health-related fitness.
- Perform traditional dances as physical and recreational activities for improving skill and health-related fitness.

Key Ideas

- Traditional Dance is a physical and recreational activity.
- Traditional dance originates from different ethnic groups.
- Dance uses movement of the body, time and energy.
- Agbadza is a Traditional Dance performed by the Ewes tribe in the Volta Region.
- It was created on the battlefield to inspire warriors.
- The dance was derived from an old war dance called Atrikpui.
- Agbadza is performed during festivals and funerals.

- Kpanlogo is a traditional dance of the Gas from the Greater Accra region, the capital city of Ghana.
- The dance is an innovate dance form influenced by the American rock and roll that gave the younger Ga generations a point of distinction from the Ga elders.
- The original name of the dance was Gbajo, which means storytelling in Ga.
- Adowa is a traditional dance by the people of the Akan tribe in Ghana.
- The dance is performed during ceremonies such as festivals, funerals, engagements, durbars and the installation of rulers in the Ashanti kingdom.

TRADITIONAL DANCE AS A PHYSICAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY

Traditional Dance

A **traditional dance** is a dance that portrays a group of people's way of life in a specific town, area, or country. It is typically accompanied by powerful regional musical forms that are connected to the people's customs and beliefs. Dance is an art form made up of a series of artistically chosen or improvised body movements with aesthetic and often symbolic values and meanings.

The concept of dance: The basic concept of dance includes the body, action, space, time and energy which are characterised by rhythmic movement and varying intensity.

Body: Dancers use their body to express themselves.

Space: Space is where the body generates movements.

Time: Time and energy are elements of movement.

Physical activity: Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. It refers to all forms of movement including dancing, walking, jogging, running, cycling and swimming.



Fig 2.1 Illustration on different physical activities

Recreational Activities: Recreational activities are experiences or organised activities

that one undertakes to have fun and enjoy life during one's free time. This includes experiences that require physical activity, interactions and playing with other people. Examples include dancing, playing games, swimming, hiking, gardening etc.



Fig 2.2 Examples of recreational activities

Traditional Dance as a Physical and Recreational Activity

This simply means traditional dance serves as both a physical and recreational activity that combines cultural expression with bodily movement for fun while maintaining good health and fitness.

Examples of Traditional Dances in Ghana are:

Bima, Agbadza, Kpanaliumni, Kete, Kple, Kundum, Boboobo, Apatampa, Zigi, Atsiagbekor, Adowa, Bamaya, Kpanlogo, Sanga, Bawa, Takai, Nagla and Pogne etc.

Click on the links below to watch videos on traditional dance and share the lessons learnt.

https://youtu.be/aj2WyBgJAzk?si=NlbGZcD_biRLwU9z

<https://youtu.be/knhzGHyRphQ?si=P1rK3J1rRU3RMD8z>

https://youtu.be/_CulBIvQEm0?si=xThsmUrnCwPEosxe

What do you think might be the connection between traditional dance, physical and recreational activities?

The Link Between Traditional Dance, Physical and Recreational Activities

1. Engaging in traditional dance involves the whole body and a broad group of muscles just as in physical exercise.
2. Engaging in traditional dance makes the body flexible and aids motion just as in physical exercise.
3. Traditional dance helps participants achieve aerobic exercise by moving, jumping and twirling just as in any physical activity.
4. Traditional dance provides an excellent form of exercise, fun and entertainment

at the same time just as in recreational and physical activities.

Health Benefits of Engaging in Traditional Dance

1. Improves coordination, muscular strength, endurance, motor fitness and balance.
2. Improves cardiovascular health.
3. Promotes greater flexibility.
4. Creates a sense of belonging and social interaction.
5. Improves communication and creativity.
6. Promotes critical thinking.
7. Increases understanding and appreciation of other people’s culture and uniqueness.
8. Improves weight loss.
9. Relieves stress.

Activity 2.1

Individually or with a partner, make a list of at least five traditional dances in Ghana. Make a note of where each dance originates.

	Dance	Origin
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Activity 2.2

In a recorded video, dance to any tune for two minutes and describe how you feel. Present your video to your teacher for further discussion.

Write how you feel here

Activity 2.3

Watch these short videos of people performing a traditional dance or visit a dance group in your community and watch them dance.

1. https://youtu.be/aj2WyBgJAzk?si=NLbGZcD_biRLwU9z
2. <https://youtu.be/knhzGHyRphQ?si=P1rK3J1rRU3RMD8z>
3. https://youtu.be/_CulBivQEm0?si=xThsmUrnCwPEosxe

Answer the following questions.

What do you think about the dance?

Describe the part you liked.

Why do you like it?

How did the dance make you feel?

What does the dance movement communicate to you?

Share your thoughts with a colleague/sibling/parent/teacher.

TRADITIONAL DANCE – A LOCAL OR REGIONAL SPECIFIC DANCE, FOR EXAMPLE, AGBADZA.

Recap: *The previous lesson introduced traditional dance as a physical and recreational activity. We covered examples of traditional dances, the link between traditional dance and physical and recreational activity, and the health benefits of engaging in traditional dance. This lesson is the practical aspect of traditional dance as a physical and recreational activity where you will perform traditional dances and incorporate contemporary dance movement patterns into selected dances. The traditional dance to be performed should be one in your locality or region where your school is located.*

The selected traditional dance we will discuss is Agbadza

The History of Agbadza

Agbadza is a dance performed by the Ewes from the Volta Region of Ghana. The dance was derived from an old war dance called Atrikpui. It was created on the battlefield to inspire warriors, to ease their fears and also to tell the younger generation of the traditional area about the pains and sufferings that their ancestors went through at Notsie. The dance has both slow and quick movements and it is performed all year round during occasions like festivals, naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, religious activities, graduation ceremonies and funerals.

Watch the videos below on Agbadza dance

<https://youtu.be/lFinkWGMKvc?si=yYGntZAp5jllOsFJ>

https://youtu.be/vzfDV2mK_HQ?si=gmk9u5ACsMb3YDry

Steps Involved in Performing the Dance

1. **Banyinyi:** This is a short introductory piece that is performed as prayer to the gods and the ancestors. Corn flour mixed with water is sprinkled on the floor to spiritually bring calmness and invite the ancestors. Plain water, and/or Akpeteshi, is used to pour libation to invite the ancestors to the dance. Water is for the ancestors that do not drink alcohol whiles the Akpeteshi is for those who drink alcohol.
2. **Vutsortsor:** This is the main dance, which is accompanied by clapping, drumming and singing.
3. **Adzo:** This is less energetic and only the Master Drummer is made to drum along the Gankogui and Ahatse.



Fig 2.3 Performance of Agbadza dance

Let's do the following activities!

Activity 2.4

1. Perform the dance with at least two steps involved.
2. Perform the dance with three steps involved in performing it.
3. Orally narrate the background of the dance and perform the dance with all steps involved.

TRADITIONAL DANCE – A LOCAL OR REGIONAL SPECIFIC DANCE, FOR EXAMPLE, KPANLOGO.

Recap: *The previous lesson provided an overview of how a traditional dance can be performed as a physical and recreational activity where the teacher took learners through a step-by-step performance of Agbadza. In this lesson, you are to practice and perform a dance chosen by you from your locality or region (e.g. Kpanlogo). You are to give a brief background to the dance you have chosen, practice and perform the dance sequentially following the steps involved in class.*

The selected traditional dance we will discuss is Agbadza

The History of Kpanlogo

Kpanlogo is a traditional dance of the Ga from the Greater Accra region, the capital city of Ghana. The dance emerged in the late 1960s, as an innovative dance form influenced by the American rock and roll that gave the younger Ga generations a point of distinction from the Ga elders around the time that Ghana gained its independence.

The original name of Kpanlogo was Gbajo, which means storytelling in Ga. Someone would tell a story and the group of people listening to the story would make up a song about the story and then set to dance to make the story telling more interesting and participatory by all present. Although it was created primarily by the youth as a form of entertainment, the dance is now performed everywhere in the country and during all occasions by people of all ages.

Steps Involved in Performing the Dance

To dance is to move the body in a series of rhythmic and patterned manners usually performed to entertain or to educate. The dance session starts with clapping of the hands, singing and drumming followed by the dance moves.

1. The dancers start the dance with the swinging of the arms
2. The arms movements are followed by the rapid movement of the torso
3. The torso movement is followed by quick foot work
4. The footwork is followed by the spinning of the waist.





Fig 2.4 Performance of Kpanlogo dance. Source: firststeptours.com

Activity 2.5

1. Describe or demonstrate the dance you performed in the previous lesson.
2. Discuss with a friend/ neighbour/ family member the chosen traditional dance to be performed.
3. Perform the previous dance a warmup activity.
4. Watch videos and practice the chosen dance paying attention to the steps involved.
5. Incorporate any rhythmic movement pattern into the chosen dance and practice with a friend.
6. Perform the chosen dance and take a video as you dance.

TRADITIONAL DANCE – A LOCAL OR REGIONAL SPECIFIC DANCE, FOR EXAMPLE, ADOWA.

Recap: The previous lesson, provided an overview of how a traditional dance can be performed as a physical and recreational activity where you were taken through a step-by-step performance of Kpanlogo. For this lesson, you are to practice and perform a dance chosen by you from your locality or region (e.g. Adowa). You are to give a brief background to the dance you have chosen, practice and perform the dance sequentially following the steps involved in class.

The selected traditional dance we will discuss is Adowa.

The History of Adowa

Adowa is a traditional dance by the people of the Akan tribe in Ghana. The dance moves originated from the movement of the antelope (Adowa in the Twi language). History has it that, the queen mother by name Abrewa Tutuwa, of the Ashanti

kingdom fell sick and the only way she could be healed was to slaughter an antelope and use its blood as pacification for the restoration of her health. The warriors who went to catch the antelope saw the captivating movements of the antelope. When the health of the queen mother was restored, the warlords imitated the movements of the animal in a dance in which they rejoiced at the restoration of the queen mother's health. Hence, the warriors were the first group of people to perform the Adowa dance. Later, older women imitated and improved the dance moves. Adowa is performed at cultural ceremonies like festivals, funerals, engagements, welcoming of visitors and other celebrations. Adowa is also performed during durbars and the installation of rulers in the Ashanti kingdom.

Steps Involved in Performing the Dance

In performing Adowa, the dancers mainly use their hands and feet. The basic dance steps are:

1. Apply pressure and move right foot forward.
2. Flung or stretch out arms.
3. Lift head back and arch or twist the body.
4. High kicks, leaps and measured walks.

Dancers ensure that there is an interaction with the drummer that is not obvious using the whole body.



Fig 2.5 Performance of Adowa dance.

Activity 2.6

1. Describe or demonstrate the dance you performed in the previous lesson.
2. Discuss with the chosen traditional dance to be performed.
3. Perform the previous dance a warm up activity.
4. Watch videos and practice the chosen dance paying attention to the steps involved.
5. Incorporate any rhythmic movement pattern into the chosen dance and practice with a friend.
6. Perform the chosen dance and take a video as you dance.

Review Questions 2

REVIEW QUESTIONS 2.1

1. Indicate the origin of five traditional dances in Ghana
2. Explain the meaning of traditional dance?
3. Describe two associations between traditional dance and physical activity.

REVIEW QUESTIONS 2.2

Complete the following table by recording your dance activities:

Name of dance	
When can you perform the dance?	
What is the significance of the dance?	
Where did it originate from?	
How is it performed?	
What are the key elements of the dance?	

REVIEW QUESTIONS 2.3

Complete the following table to record your dance activities:

1. Name of dance:
2. When can you perform the dance?
3. What is the significance of the dance?
4. Where did it originate?
5. How is it performed?
6. What are the key elements of the dance?

Extended Reading

Use the following link to search for information on traditional dance.

- www.motac.gov.gh

Click on the link below to read an article on traditional dances in Ghana.

- <https://www.asaaseradio.com/ghana-dance-ensemble-traditional-dancing-business-not-lucrative-in-ghana/?amp=1>

References

- Mandal, S., Gebretensay, M., Legesse, K., Gebru, M., & Kebede, R. (2020). Ethiopian traditional dance alters the health-related physical fitness traits of high school learners. Turkish Journal of Kinesiology 6(3): 125-133.
- Osei, L. A. (2020). Documenting Ghanaian Dances through Labanotation. An International Multidisciplinary of Journal, Ethiopia, 14 (2); 58.
- Onuman, V. (2011). Let's Dance Adowa - 5 Ashanti Dance Gestures. Nkyea.com
- Anku, W. (2009). Drumming among the Akan and Anlo Ewe of Ghana: An introduction of African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music, 8(3); 38-64.
- Apenkro, S. C. (2023). The Evolution of Agbadza Music and Dance <https://www.sophiaapenkro.com/the-evolution-of-agbadza-music-and-dance/>

Acknowledgements



Ghana Education Service (GES)



List of Contributors

Name	Institution
Dr. Edward Ansah	UCC, Cape Coast
Samuel Richard Marcourt	Wesley College, Kumasi
Isaac Twene	Techiman, MEO
Charlotte Hottor	Methodist Girls, Mamfe