

Challenges and Future Directions of Chinese Dance

Jie Cui, Muhammad Fazli Taib Saearani

Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Sultan Idris Education University

Corresponding Author: fazli@fmisp.upsi.edu.my

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Abstract

While Chinese dance has deep roots in ancient dynasties, representing a meaningful cultural asset, this tradition now faces challenges requiring thoughtful navigation into the future. Through analysing recent studies on the topic, this review aims to understand the challenges impacting Chinese dance today and how the field might evolve. Eleven open-access Scopus-indexed articles published between 2022 and 2024 were examined. With the keyword "Chinese dance," research objectives across sources significantly diverged, integrating different lenses. Such diversity highlights Chinese dance's multifaceted nature and broad academic interests. The review identified challenges stemming from preservation concerns amid modernisation attempts and integrating tradition with contemporary expression. Future directions proposed maintaining cultural integrity through innovation. Interdisciplinary cooperation, enhanced pedagogy, and technology could preserve and promote Chinese dance according to analysed papers. Understanding current trials and potential pathways forward offers strategies to safeguard Chinese dance while ensuring ongoing relevance. In summary, as a cultural heritage, Chinese dance confronts issues but also presents opportunities. This review illuminates such topics, providing useful insights for stakeholders in both protecting and advancing Chinese dance into tomorrow.

Keywords: Chinese Dance, Challenges, Future Directions, Literature Review

Introduction

The study of Chinese dance, particularly classical Chinese dance, is of significant importance due to its deep cultural roots and its role in preserving historical artistic methods. Chinese classical dance serves as a vital medium for expressing Chinese identity and heritage, distinguishing it from other forms such as folk, modern, and mainstream dances. This differentiation highlights the unique "Chinese essence" that performers strive to embody, fostering national pride and cultural continuity (Mazzola et al., 2021; Wilcox, 2021).

The significance of studying Chinese dance lies in its historical and cultural value. Historically, traditional Chinese dance, which has evolved into contemporary Chinese dance, has focused intensely on the concept of "Chineseness" (Wilcox, 2021). However, preserving these antiquated dances poses notable challenges. Due to minimal conditions for chronicling and sustaining these dances, comprehensive moving records of performances are lacking. Many

accounts of ancient dances are limited to fragments found in historic poetry, files, or illustrations, leading to the incomplete survival of dance as a classical performing art in China. Contemporary Chinese classical dance, created by dancers in the 1950s, reflects the ongoing efforts to preserve and promote China's rich cultural heritage (Duan et al., 2024). Since then, Chinese dance scholars and practitioners have recognized two primary subcategories: Chinese classical dance and Chinese national folk dance (Wilcox, 2021). These categories underscore the evolving nature of Chinese dance and the continuous endeavor to maintain its cultural significance.

Studying Chinese dance is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it helps preserve a vital part of China's cultural history, ensuring that traditional artistic expressions are not lost to time. Secondly, it fosters a sense of national identity and pride, as the unique characteristics of Chinese dance highlight the country's distinct cultural heritage. Lastly, understanding the challenges faced in preserving and evolving Chinese dance can inform future directions, ensuring that this art form continues to thrive and adapt in a modern context. Therefore, the study of Chinese classical dance is essential for preserving cultural heritage, fostering national pride, and addressing the challenges of maintaining traditional art forms. This research will explore the current challenges and future directions of Chinese dance, aiming to contribute to the ongoing efforts to preserve and promote this unique cultural expression.

The invention of calculated movement has transformed Chinese classical dance from rigid form to nuanced expression. The choreography now allows for more fluidity and inventiveness. Shen Yun uplifts classical dance from a technical focus to an artistic vision that conveys culture through motion. By century's end, Chinese classical dance had matured into its own genre celebrated at international events. However, cultural identity and style remained ambiguous - it emphasised techniques while embracing influences like ballet and modern styles. This evolving art struggled to preserve traditions or establish itself purely as the dances of antiquity.

During this period, performances prioritised acrobatic feats over aesthetics. Dancers competed through stunts rather than exploring feeling or meaning through movement. After modelling ballet, classical dance distorted its borrowed elements into representations disconnected from the Chinese cultural spirit. This distancing inhibited clear communication between art and audience.

Into the 21st century, Chinese classical dance retains fusion of ballet, opera and modern techniques. Ballet conditioned expectations for the form. Yet over-reliance on its conventions risked stagnation without indigenous roots. One factor limiting rediscovery of dance history was specialists' failure to appreciate ancient dances' depth or challenges of restoration. By seeing only limitations, they missed opportunities to enrich understanding and perpetuate cultural treasures through art.

Many classical dance scholars aim to revolutionise Chinese traditional dance by pursuing an artistic focus reflecting China's long history and strengths. As early as 1956, renowned Chinese classical dance expert Ye Ning proposed expanding movement vocabulary beyond opera to embrace historical styles across dynastic China, as documented by Wilcox (2021). This view showed dance experts recognized opera represented just one era, stressing a comprehensive study spanning styles from other periods.

The Han and Tang dynasties epitomised progress in Chinese dance history, noted Kong (2021). Renowned for flourishing dance activities with courtly elegant and folk dance jointly cultivating unique Han aesthetic culture, Han dance embodied traditional Chinese culture

with extraordinary appeal, symbolizing national culture and encapsulating Chinese classical spirit enabling enduring development over time, as described by Liu and Kalimyllin (2024). Abundant heritage from painted bricks, murals and tomb figurines provides invaluable resources for scholars probing Han dance culture, creating opportunities reviving Chinese classical dance to acquire physical, cultural and aesthetic identity through reconstruction efforts. Interpretations vary as dancers embark from different historical sections and approaches, shaping diverse contemporary Chinese classical forms. Chinese classical dance also comprises two meanings - one aligning with actual practice, one diverging between name and reality. This distinction manifests through reconstruction and reviving dances.

By acknowledging and integrating diverse historical styles, modern Chinese classical dance can better reflect rich cultural heritage while embracing modernity, honouring past traditions. Scholars' ongoing efforts underscore Chinese classical dance's dynamic nature and power as a vessel expressing and preserving culture. Philosophically, dance occupies two dominant schools of thought: the structuralist perspective and the non-structuralist view. Structuralists contend that dance may be codified and reconstructed through notation methods, implying future technologies will preserve and revive choreography via such representations. In opposition, non-structuralists assert dance defies complete documentation in any language like notation as dances often form spontaneously without predetermined plans, scripts, or scores. China's restoration work aiming to revive Han Dynasty dances is firmly grounded in structuralism, particularly aligning with new materialism shifting focus from traditional humanistic investigation to knowledge creation through empirical analysis. Eventually, this review considers three research questions:

- i) What were the aims of past studies examined?
- ii) What challenges were identified?
- iii) What paths were proposed for future research?

Literature Review

This session delineates Chinese dance and new materialism philosophies.

Chinese Dance Philosophy

Dance weaves a thread of shared experience across boundaries of culture and place, yet remains stitched into the fabrics of philosophy that uniquely clothe each society. Chinese dance, with histories both deep and distinctive, reveals contrasts to patterns followed elsewhere. Traditional thoughts of China, especially those of Confucius, Laozi, and the Buddha, profoundly influence the dances woven there (Panera, 2023). Seeking harmony over havoc, balance instead of strife, and the spiritual above all, these philosophies are reflected in the gestures sewn and themes explored through movement.

Confucianism, emphasising proper order of things great and small, shapes Chinese dance with demands for precision, discipline, and deference to duty (Panera, 2023). Strict codes of conduct are followed, the hierarchy of relationships respected, as dancers fulfill their roles. Unlike stands Daoism, uplifting spontaneity, interconnectivity, and flow (Panera, 2023). Naturalness, fluidity, and the synchronization of breath with form manifest its principles. Dancers embody the Dao, or path, by yielding to nature's navigation and relinquishing demands of their own (Wu, 1997).

Buddhism significantly contributes to Chinese dance philosophy by emphasising compassion, mindfulness, and the pursuit of enlightenment (Kashyap et al., 2022). Themes of

transcendence, inner reflection, and the continuous journey for deeper meaning regularly permeate various Chinese dance productions, conveying the Buddhist conviction in the impermanence of earthly presence and the search for higher realities.

In contrast with the unified and spiritually oriented technique of Chinese dance, Western dance philosophy is frequently portrayed by exclusivity, persistent advancement, and inventive narration (Peng, 2024). Western dance traditions, specifically those from European ballet and modern dance, prioritise specialized proficiency, imagination, and individual interpretation.

Western dance tends to concentrate on the dancer as an inventive storyteller, allowing flexibility of expression and trial (Peng, 2024). While ability and accuracy are fundamental, Western dance values novelty and uniqueness, often pushing the confines of conventional shapes and standards. This method is profoundly influenced by the sociocultural environment of individualism and rationality that defines Western societies (Kawalec, 2020). This impact is evident in the emphasis on solitary achievement, competition, and self-expression in Western dance education and performance settings.

New Materialism Philosophy

New materialism challenges traditional philosophical assumptions by recognizing the agency of all things (Dophijn & Van der Tuin, 2012). It moves beyond reductionist frameworks that divide the world into subjects and objects. Knowledge arises not just through language but also through dynamic exchanges between human and non-human entities across space and time (Markula & Frantsi, 2024).

Emerging in response to social constructivism and postmodern thought, new materialism posits a more integrative ontology (Jusslin, 2020). Unlike views tying knowledge solely to human perspectives or culture, it sees understanding as emerging through complex interactions between people and the diverse materials that constitute reality (Jusslin, 2020). The reconstruction of Han Dynasty dance, for example, involved engagement with historical sources that influenced interpretation through their varying forms and compositions. Both immaterial discourses and physical artifacts shaped understanding in a reciprocal process of materialization.

Knowledge is created through complex relationships between humans and non-human entities (Coole & Frost, 2010). Researchers integrating diverse phenomena do not separate inanimate objects from the humans involved. Consequently, historical sources in dance reconstruction cannot be isolated from their creators, just as reconstructed dance remains linked to choreographers and sociocultural contexts.

New materialism challenges the notion that language alone can convey reality. A core concept is that performance may better express truth than words (Jusslin, 2020). This view aligns with the understanding that all learning is embodied. To describe something as embodied implies it is demonstrated through the body. For example, an embodied experience could involve sensations, motions, or gestures communicating specific feelings or ideas. When discussed philosophically, embodied often refers to the concept that the body is significant in comprehending cognition, perception, and human experience.

Intra-actions are relations that transcend traditional divides between subject and object, as another key concept in new materialism demonstrates. Scenarios and protean memory serve as examples of intra-actions, representing the interwoven connection between archive and repertoire. This notion of intra-action differs meaningfully from interaction, which assumes

separate and distinct subjects and objects (Jusslin & Höglund, 2021). Rather, intra-action denotes entities not as independent but integral parts of a whole. However, for the purposes of this initial inquiry, the more general term "interaction" is used, though further analysis may shift to "intra-action" if compelling arguments and insights from source material engagements substantiate such a change.

New materialism also encompasses the concept of entanglement, denoting inextricable attachment where demarcations dissolve. In a state of entanglement, boundaries blur between self and others, past and present, here and afar, or cause and effect. The term derives aptly from quantum physics, a field inspiring new materialism with its revolution of how we see relations at tiny scales. Thus, new materialism can be viewed as applying such quantum-inspired materialist thought to social existence, with human and non-human intricately entwined. According to Barad (2003), new materialism sees the entire research process—including theories, prior work, methodology, researcher, and audience—as an apparatus actively generating the phenomenon under investigation. Barad stresses these apparatuses are not inert tools but play agentic roles in phenomenon formation.

Methodology

There were over one and a half million results when initially searching for "Chinese dance" on Google Scholar, making downloading all entries infeasible. As an alternative, the Scopus database was used to locate relevant articles. Approximately sixty-eight publications matched the keyword "Chinese dance". Refining the search to include only those published between 2022 and 2024 diminished yet further the pool, leaving thirty-two options. In the end, eleven open-access articles granted direct access and comprised the foundation of the review.

Findings

The findings of each research question is reported below.

What Were the Aims of Past Studies Examined?

A Table is Shown Below With Elaborations.

Author(s)	Year	Research Aims
Chui et al.	2022	To determine and assess the prevalence of chronic ankle instability (CAI) in Chinese dancers and correlate the impact of CAI with foot function.
Dang et al.	2024	To determine dance injury incidence and severity in full-time Chinese pre-professional dancers.
Hung et al.	2022	To investigate the prevalence and types of injuries experienced by dancers, aiming to identify risk factors and propose preventive measures.
Kao	2024	To develop a method for recognizing multiperson dance postures using cross-progressive multiresolution representation integration to improve accuracy and efficiency.
Li et al	2023	To explore and identify aesthetic preferences in Chinese dance postures using EEG data analysis.
Liu	2023	To protect, inherit, and develop minority culture by proposing the extraction of design factors of Chinese dance culture based on the analytic hierarchy model, specifically focusing on the traditional dance culture of the Qiang nationality.
Liu et al.	2022	To analyse the dynamics of partnerships between Chinese dance sport couples using a qualitative research approach to understand their interactions and performance outcomes.
Liu et al.	2023	To examine the adoption of emotional labor strategies among dancers and explore the outcomes on work strain and nonwork strain using cluster analysis.
Miao	2022	To examine the cultural and political implications of the American Dance Festival in China during the reform era, focusing on cross-cultural interactions and influences.
Song	2024	To develop an intelligent decision support system for evaluating classroom teaching quality in dance aesthetic education using Grey Relational Analysis (GRA) and information entropy.
Zhang	2022	To utilize digital technologies for correcting training movements in Chinese dance to enhance performance and reduce the risk of injury.

The body of research on Chinese dance, as summarised in the table, reveals multifaceted themes collectively underscoring this field's complexity. Initially, injury prevention emerges prominently addressed by Chui et al. (2022) and Dang et al. (2024), with the former investigating chronic ankle instability's impact and latter exploring spectrum of injuries in full-time pre-professionals. Similarly, Hung et al. (2022) identify risk factors and mitigation, emphasising strategies' critical need to reduce risks and boost safety.

Next, technological advancements constitute another significant theme exemplified by Kao (2024) and Zhang (2022). Kao (2024) develops multiperson posture recognition improving

choreographic analysis' accuracy and efficiency. Meanwhile, Zhang (2022) applies technologies to correct training, enhancing performance while lessening injury chances. These studies reflect a proliferating trend of leveraging technology to optimize outcomes in training and performances. Following that, cultural preservation and psychological aspects garner attention from researchers as well. Educational improvements also emerge as researchers explore choreography pedagogy and curriculum development. Cultural preservation arises as a vital motif, particularly in Liu's (2023) survey, which endeavors to shield and advance the conventional move society of the Qiang minority. This examination underscores the need to secure minority social expressions inside the more extensive setting of Chinese move. Miao (2022) supplements this by investigating the social and political ramifications of the American Move Festival in China, featuring the cross-cultural communications that impact Chinese move during the time of change.

On the other hand, the mental angles of move are contemplated in Liu et al. (2023), who look at enthusiastic work systems among performers. By breaking down the results on work pressure and nonwork pressure, this examination gives important understandings into the psychological and enthusiastic difficulties looked by performers, highlighting the need to uphold their psychological prosperity.

To continue, instructional upgrades constitute another essential subject, as seen in Song (2024) and Liu et al. (2022). Song (2024) advancement of a shrewd basic leadership framework for assessing study hall showing quality in move tasteful training targets to enhance instructive results through the utilization of Gray Relational Analysis (GRA) and data entropy. Liu et al. (2022) focus on the elements of associations in move game, offering understandings that can educate preparing and execution appraisal strategies.

Subsequently, the neural underpinnings of dance appreciation were newly illuminated by Li et al. (2023) exploration of aesthetic preferences using EEG data analysis, thus pioneering an innovative pathway toward comprehending how beholders behold beauty in movement. By joining neuroscience and dancing, this research opens fresh vistas on how performers and watchers perceive and delight in dance's unfolding.

In brief, the aims driving these studies manifest a holistic methodology to comprehend Chinese dance. From forestalling injuries and integrating technologies to conserving culture, supporting psyches, and enhancing education, these themes collaboratively contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive apprehension of dancing's complexities and dynamics in China.

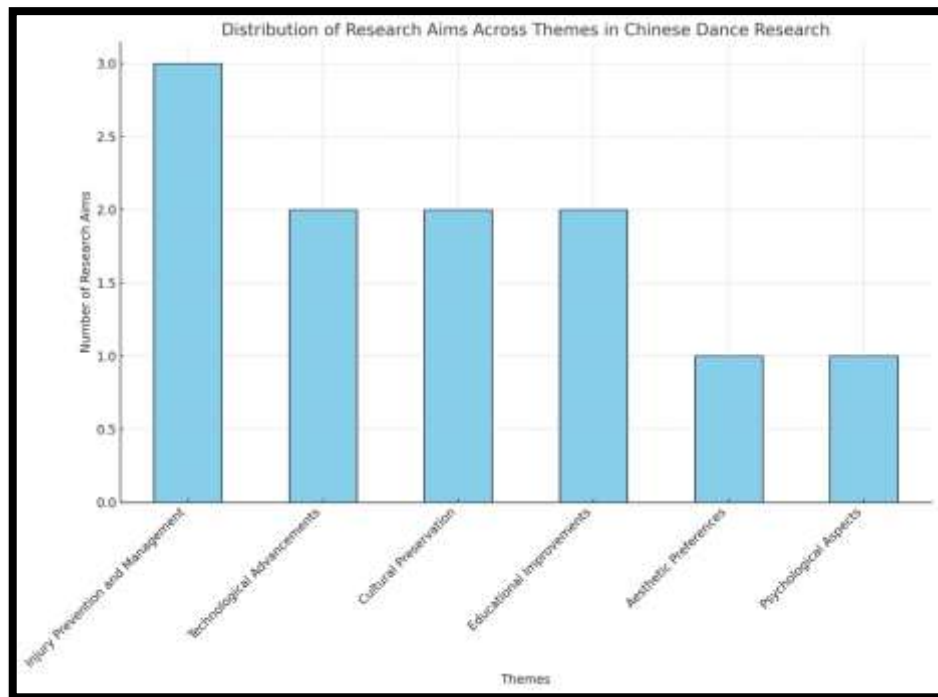


Figure 1. Distribution of Research Aims Across Themes in Chinese Dance Research

What Challenges were Identified?

Chinese dance, with its rich cultural inheritance and intricate techniques, confronts several obstacles impacting its exercise, demonstration, and preservation. Physically, performers battle with a widespread chronic ankle instability (CAI), impacting 28% of dancers, leading to greater soreness and poorer quality of life, seriously affecting their presentation and career longevity (Chui et al., 2022). In addition, the overall incidence of dance-related injuries is notably elevated owing to the physical demands and repetitive strain on specific body parts, like the ankles and feet (Zhang, 2022).

Culturally, upholding the authenticity of traditional factors while adapting to modern tastes introduces a substantial test. Integrating conventional motions, garments, and music into contemporary performances necessitates balancing cultural history with crowd participation (Liu, 2023). Moreover, the adaptation of cultural components into contemporary inventive works must resonate with modern aesthetics while safeguarding traditional values, necessitating broad research and innovative design approaches (Liu, 2023).

Educationally, assessing and improving the quality of dance education is crucial, yet executing advanced decision support systems and educational technologies into traditional dance education systems poses an obstacle (Jiang, 2024). Training performers both physically and intellectually to appreciate and personify the aesthetic values of Chinese dance necessitates comprehensive pedagogical strategies, with emerging technologies such as EEG presenting technical and practical tests (Zhou et al., 2023). Addressing these obstacles necessitates a holistic approach that combines modern technologies and groundbreaking strategies while respecting and preserving the rich cultural heritage of Chinese dance. A wordcloud is shown below for better comprehension.

the accuracy of aesthetic preference recognition (Zhou et al., 2023). These studies can bridge the gap between neuroscience and dance, providing new insights into how dance is perceived and appreciated. Lastly, investigating the integration of artistic and technical resources in dance education to improve the overall quality of dance training and performance is recommended (Jiang, 2024). This research can lead to the development of more effective educational frameworks that combine traditional techniques with modern innovations. Overall, these future research directions highlight the need for a multifaceted approach that integrates technology, cultural preservation, psychological support, and educational advancements to foster the continued growth and evolution of Chinese dance. A figure is shown below to summarise it.

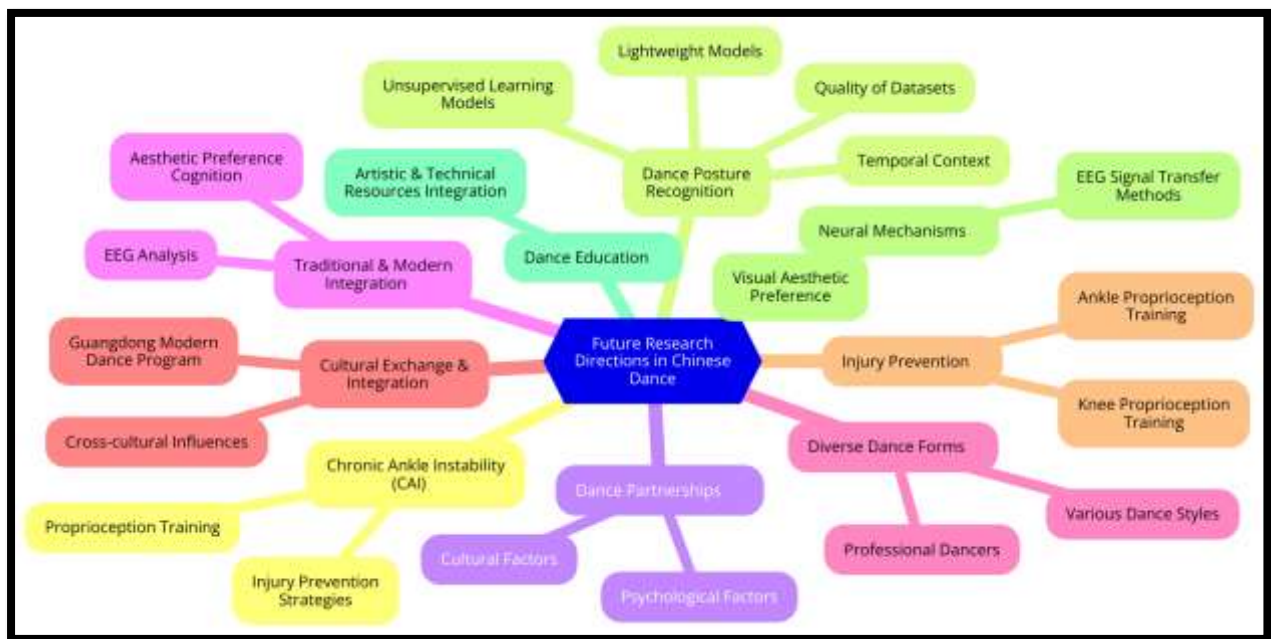


Figure 3. Future Research Directions in Chinese Dance

Discussion

Chinese dance, with its rich cultural roots and intricate techniques, faces noteworthy tests and chances in the modern period. New examinations have significantly expanded the degree of research looked at earlier works, which essentially zeroed in on the assurance and documentation of conventional move structures. Current contemplates receive a more total methodology, joining physical, social, scholastic, mental, and innovative points of view. One of the essential physical difficulties in Chinese move is the omnipresence of constant ankle weakness (CAI) among entertainers, influencing 28% of experts and bringing about huge trouble and diminished personal satisfaction (Chui et al., 2022). This center around damage counteractive action through proprioception preparing and other systems speaks to a huge advancement in the field, highlighting a change towards improving performer wellbeing and execution longevity. While conventional exploration meant to protect the authentic nature of Chinese move, ongoing considers perceive the need to adjust this with cutting edge creative articulation (Liu, 2023). This twofold center around insurance and advancement is more articulated in ongoing examination, reflecting an comprehension that social legacy should advance to remain applicable. Researchers are presently investigating ways to join

conventional components with cutting edge visuals, guaranteeing that Chinese move remains dynamic and engaging for cutting edge crowds.

Recent investigations into Chinese dance have prioritized enlightening aspects above advanced practices and academic tools to strengthen education methods. Techniques like EEG analysis for aesthetic notion understanding exemplify ways contemporary instruments are synchronizing preparation with modern artistic benchmarks. These improvements demonstrate a dedication to bettering the academic framework of Chinese dance, making it more compelling and pertinent. Another area recent examines have inspected more thoroughly than before is performers' mental wellness. Analysing the emotional work and strain experienced, new looks accentuate the necessity for mental healthcare. This concentration underscores a broader comprehension of dancers' holistic needs, expanding beyond physical coaching to involve psychological and emotional health. Recent examines also plunge into the impact of cross-cultural interplay on Chinese dance, highlighting the advantages of cultural exchange in enriching the art form. This analysis indicates a developing appreciation for the dynamic interplay between different cultural influences and the ways they can enhance and diversify Chinese dance. An interesting and relatively fresh concentration in new research is the intersection of neuroscience and dance. Using EEG data to explore aesthetic favourites in dance motions, researchers are offering novel viewpoints on how dance is perceived and enjoyed.

Contemporary scientific exploration into the intricacies of Chinese dance has expanded our understanding of how audiences connect with and appreciate this rich art form on physical, mental, and cultural levels. Noteworthy modern investigations highlight the importance of wellness while performing as well as educational enhancements through innovative technological tools. Such progressive research aims to maintain Chinese dance's cultural roots despite adapting to today's engaged viewers. By tackling issues such as injury avoidance, advanced digital training aids, and the psychological and heritage aspects, current studies offer valuable knowledge for safeguarding and advancing this tradition for generations to come. Moving forward, examination should delve deeper into prevention strategies, integration of cutting-edge tech for teaching dance skills, and ongoing probing into the emotional and cultural significance. Only through continual evolutionary scholarship can Chinese dance endure as a vibrant and evolving art that resonates with people now and in the future.

Conclusion

The recent focus on Chinese dance provides ample prospects for researchers to explore more deeply various facets of this art form. Emphasizing injury prevention as well as physical wellness, as seen in research such as that by Chui et al. (2022), motivates further investigation into effective instructional techniques and health strategies that may mitigate dangers linked to dancing. Additionally, incorporating innovative technologies like EEG analysis to comprehend aesthetic preferences, as Zhou et al. (2023) did, opens new vistas for scholarly work, bridging the gap between neuroscience and dance. For the broader artistic industry, the evolving nature of Chinese dance underscores maintaining a balance between tradition and novelty. Liu (2023) was on amalgamating conventional elements with contemporary artistic expression highlights the necessity for the industry to back initiatives that honor cultural heritage while expanding imaginative boundaries. This two-pronged focus can attract diverse audiences and foster deeper appreciation of cultural performances. Moreover, the

industry should invest in educational technologies and support systems that may improve training and well-being of dancers, ensuring the sustainability of the art form.

Traditional dance forms communicate cultural heritage in ways both graceful and profound. Researchers delve deeper into past techniques, but dancers and teachers apply learnings in progressive steps. Recent findings from studies like Liu et al. (2023) illuminate challenges both physical and emotional facing performers. Training programs now weave strategies for wellness through each element to sustain abilities long-term. Educators leverage decision aids like those of Jiang to individualize guidance, maximizing growth safely. Not only does this fortify skills, it nourishes fulfillment too. Cross-cultural appreciation, as Miao (2022) notes, enriches understanding while preserving uniqueness remains crucial. Documentation safeguards what innovation might reframe accessibly without compromising integrity. Interdisciplinary work through cooperation, not duplication, retains authenticity amid modernization. This research trajectory reveals Chinese dance as both steadfast and evolving. Prioritizing health alongside artistic spirit represents a paradigm shift, yielding insights applicable industry-wide. A balance of past and future strengthens traditions through tomorrow.

For scholars in the field, it is clear that innovating methodologies that fuse various disciplines can elevate dance study and practice to new heights. The art world must invest in projects which respect tradition yet unleash creativity. Dancers and educators require integrated wellness and advanced learning tools to nurture a sustainable and enriching practice. Cultural guardians must document and adapt traditions responsively, ensuring relevance for generations to come. In conclusion, Chinese dance's future balances honoring deep roots with embracing opportunities of progress. Addressing body, mind, education and culture, contemporary research charts a course for sustained growth and continued significance of this vibrant form across the global landscape.

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