

# Standardizing Movement, Governing Culture: Structural Characteristics of the 12 Sets of Standardized Choreography under State-Led Cultural Governance

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## Abstract

This study examines the structural characteristics of the 12 Sets of standardized guangchangwu and investigates how these routines manifest the regulatory logic of state-led cultural governance in China. Framed by Foucauldian concepts of discipline and biopolitics, the study approaches choreography as a cultural technology through which bodily conduct, public visibility and collective order are organized. A critical qualitative design was employed, integrating participant observation, video-based movement analysis and semi-structured interviews with elderly dancers in Jinan. The findings show that the 12 Sets are structured through three interrelated dimensions: bodily codification, temporal synchronization and spatial regulation. At the bodily level, the routines privilege precision, symmetry and repetition over expressiveness and improvisation. At the temporal level, fixed rhythms, compressed duration and repetitive cycles discipline leisure into a regulated pattern of active ageing. At the spatial level, grid formations, directional control and hierarchical positioning transform the public square into a visible field of order and surveillance. The study concludes that standardized guangchangwu functions as a choreographic mechanism of governance, translating state ideals of health, harmony and civility into embodied public practice. It also reveals tensions between standardized design and the diverse physical and lived realities of ageing bodies.

**Keywords:** Active Aging, Standardized Choreography, State-Led Cultural Governance, Biopolitics, Disciplinary Power, Embodied Ageing

## Introduction

Population ageing is one of the most significant demographic transformations of the twenty-first century. According to the World Health Organisation, the global population aged 60 years and above is projected to increase from 1 billion in 2020 to 1.4 billion by 2030 and 2.1 billion by 2050 (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2002, 2025). Ageing is a broader social and policy concern connected to health, participation, urban life, and social sustainability. The WHO Active Ageing framework was influential because it redefined later life in terms of

health, participation, and security, and positioned physical activity as central to quality of life in old age (WHO, 2002). This discourse appears empowering because it rejects deficit views of ageing and reimagines older adults as capable, active, and socially engaged. However, critical gerontology has shown that active ageing moralises independence, productivity, and bodily self-maintenance, while shifting responsibility for ageing well from institutions to individuals (van Dyk, 2014; Lamb, 2014). In this sense, ageing well becomes a desirable condition and a normative obligation of self-management.

This tension between empowerment and regulation becomes more visible when ageing policy is translated into everyday bodily practice. From a Foucauldian perspective, public health and participation policies may also operate as forms of biopolitical governance through which populations are managed by the regulation, optimisation, and surveillance of life processes (Foucault, 1978). Public exercise initiatives for older adults are never entirely recreational or politically innocent. They may simultaneously promote well-being and cultivate disciplined forms of citizenship by normalising bodily routines, temporal rhythms, and spatial behaviours. This perspective is relevant in contexts where later-life participation is organised through highly visible collective practices in public space. It offers a strong theoretical basis for examining how state power may work through movement.

Emerging as a widespread public practice in urban China, *guangchangwu* has been embraced primarily by middle-aged and older women as a form of collective exercise, sociability, emotional release, and spatial presence (Seetoo & Zou, 2016; Lin et al., 2020; Sheng, 2022). Existing studies have shown that the practice carries layered meanings. It functions as physical activity, a mode of social belonging, an embodied response to urban loneliness, and a culturally meaningful use of shared public space (Qian & Lu, 2019; Sheng, 2022). In this sense, *guangchangwu* is a visible cultural form through which ageing bodies participate in public life, negotiate social visibility, and challenge assumptions of decline or passivity in old age.

However, the expansion of *guangchangwu* also generated social controversy. Public complaints over noise, competition for urban space, safety concerns, and the need for more orderly management led to greater state involvement in the practice. In 2015, Chinese authorities issued policies to guide the “healthy” development of square dancing, and the General Administration of Sport of China together with the Ministry of Culture introduced 12 nationally standardised *guangchangwu* routines as officially promoted models of public exercise (General Administration of Sport of China & Ministry of Culture, 2015). These routines were presented as scientifically designed, health-oriented, and socially orderly forms suitable for mass participation. Their codification was promoted as a rational response to the perceived disorder, inconsistency, and bodily risk of informal square dancing. However, this moment of standardisation also marked a cultural and political shift. A once flexible, locally adaptive, and vernacular movement practice was increasingly recast as a uniform public fitness regime subject to expert design and administrative regulation.

The significance of this shift cannot be fully understood through a health lens alone. It also requires attention to choreography as a technology of governance. Choreography is not merely the aesthetic arrangement of movement. It is also a spatial-temporal system through which bodies are organised, synchronised, made visible, and subjected to norms. Foucault

(1977) concept of disciplinary power is useful here because it highlights how institutions regulate bodies through repetition, coordination, visibility, and routine. Applied to standardised *guangchangwu*, this framework suggests that the official routines may produce a disciplined visual order by privileging symmetry, synchrony, predictability, and collective legibility. Dancers are positioned within repeatable formations, movement is governed by fixed counts and pre-set musical timing, and bodily action is channelled into a shared tempo that limits spontaneity. Such regulation resonates with Lefebvre (2004) concern that modern institutional rhythms often suppress the plurality of lived temporalities.

This issue becomes even more important when considered in relation to ageing bodies. The official routines appear to presume a normative body able to sustain prescribed ranges of motion, balance, tempo, alignment, and repetition. But, ageing bodies are heterogeneous. They vary in flexibility, endurance, rhythm perception, mobility history, and vulnerability. What appears efficient and safe at the level of policy may therefore produce discomfort, misfit, or disengagement at the level of embodied practice. Existing study on *guangchangwu* has already shown that participants experience the activity in complex and uneven ways shaped by gender, aesthetics, bodily capacity, urban context, and social expectations (Lin et al., 2020; Sheng, 2022). This suggests that standardisation may not simply enhance participation. It may also generate subtle forms of exclusion by privileging some ageing bodies over others.

At the same time, standardisation does not eliminate agency. De Certeau (1984) reminds us that individuals negotiate, adapt, and rework them in everyday practice. Within *guangchangwu*, participants may simplify difficult steps, alter tempo, reduce intensity, or hybridise official routines with locally familiar gestures and styles. Such modifications indicate that the dancing body is not a passive recipient of policy, but an active site of negotiation. Standardised choreography therefore operates both as a disciplinary apparatus and as a field of embodied contestation. This duality is analytically important because it reveals that state-led cultural governance is not exercised only through direct control, but through the ongoing management of compliance, adaptation, and visible order.

Despite growing scholarly interest in *guangchangwu*, the literature has focused predominantly on its health benefits, psychosocial value, gendered meanings, and conflicts over public space (Seetoo & Zou, 2016; Lin et al., 2020; Qian & Lu, 2019; Sheng, 2022). Comparatively less attention has been given to the internal formal structure of the 12 standardised routines themselves. This is a significant gap. If the politics of standardisation operate through movement design, then analysis must move beyond policy discourse and examine how choreography itself organises bodies, regulates rhythm, structures spatial relations, and materialises a state-sanctioned vision of active ageing. A structurally informed reading of the 12 Sets is therefore necessary to understand how state power is enacted not only through policy language, but also through the patterned arrangement of bodies in motion. This study addresses that gap by asking:

What are the structural characteristics of the 12 Sets of standardised choreography, and how do they manifest the regulatory logic of state-led cultural governance?

## Literature Review

### Active Aging: From Global Discourse to Bodily Governance

#### *The Global Rise of Active Aging*

The concept of active aging emerged as a major policy response to global population aging. In the WHO framework, aging was reconceptualized as a process that could be enhanced through health, participation and security (World Health Organization, 2002). This policy shift marked a departure from earlier formulations which primarily emphasized disease avoidance, physical fitness and cognitive preservation. By contrast, active aging appeared broader and more socially inclusive because it foregrounded continued participation in family, community and civic life.

However, this apparent inclusivity has been widely questioned. Scholars have argued that active aging does not merely expand opportunities for older adults. It also introduces normative expectations about how they ought to age. Boudiny (2013) observed that the concept is broad but operationally selective. Katz (2000) argued that active aging is tied to a “busy ethic,” in which older adults are expected to remain productive, energetic and publicly engaged. Participation is not wholly voluntary. Rather, it becomes a moralized criterion through which older adults are judged as responsible or irresponsible, successful or deficient (Katz & Marshall, 2018; Vallée, 2017).

This tension reveals that active aging operates as a mode of governance that reshapes old age into a project of bodily optimization and self-regulation. Health becomes a sign of social worth and civic responsibility. Rose (2007) described this development as part of a wider transformation in biopolitical citizenship. Within this framework, the aging body becomes a site where autonomy and obligation converge. Older adults are empowered to remain active, yet they are also obliged to demonstrate that activity through appropriate bodily conduct.

#### *Active Aging as Biopolitical Rationality*

The disciplinary dimension of active aging can be better understood through the concept of biopower. Foucault (1978) argued that modern governance operates by managing life. States regulate populations by encouraging self-discipline, health maintenance and productive conduct. This means that bodily activity is promoted not solely for individual well-being, but also because it reduces social dependency, lowers healthcare costs and sustains economic and civic order (Estes et al., 2003).

From this perspective, the aging body is individualized because older adults are made responsible for their own vitality through exercise, discipline and self-care. At the same time, it is collectivized because the health status of aging populations is linked to national efficiency and demographic stability. Katz and Calasanti (2015) argued that this is a defining feature of neoliberal governmentality. Public policy goals are internalized as private aspirations. Older adults are encouraged to see self-management as freedom.

Critical gerontology has emphasized that active aging is underpinned by a moral economy in which movement, vitality and positivity are treated as ethical goods. Lamb (2014) noted that health is framed as an individual obligation. Inactivity is easily moralized as negligence, while rest, vulnerability and bodily limitation become signs of failure. Higgs and

Gilleard (2021) further argued that this performance-oriented understanding of aging narrows the range of legitimate embodied experiences in later life. The problem is the emergence of activity as the dominant and often compulsory model of valuable aging.

#### *The Localization of Active Aging in China*

The Chinese state's localization of active aging demonstrates how a global wellness discourse can be transformed into a state-led strategy of bodily governance. Healthy China 2030 Blueprint and the National Fitness Plan present physical activity as both a health imperative and a civic duty (State Council, 2016). The maintenance of elderly health is linked to broader goals of social harmony, public order and national development. As Wang et al. (2024) argued, aging governance in China merges public health rationality with political stability discourse, such that bodily discipline comes to signify civic discipline.

One of the clearest manifestations of this localization is the state's promotion of standardized *guangchangwu*. Since 2015, the General Administration of Sport of China has disseminated the 12 Sets of Standardized *Guangchangwu* as officially sanctioned routines designed to guide public exercise under the banners of scientific fitness and civilized conduct. Official discourse describes these routines as easy to learn, synchronized and visually pleasing (Menhas et al., 2021). It indicates that the routines are not designed merely for functional exercise. They also serve aesthetic and ideological purposes by producing orderly, coherent and governable bodies in public space.

This logic is deeply embedded in the history of socialist corporeality in China. Brady (2003) showed that state-organized mass performances have long operated as forms of political choreography through which synchronized bodies symbolize collective strength and ideological unity. Ren (2020) similarly argued that collective bodily movement in Chinese public life often functions as a performative metaphor for stability. Standardized *guangchangwu* extends a longer tradition in which choreography is used to render social order visible. The dancing square becomes both a site of health promotion and a civic theatre of harmony.

At the same time, this development reflects deeper anxieties within Chinese urban governance. Spontaneous collective activities in public space are often viewed ambivalently because they may be associated with disorder, noise or unpredictability (Anagnost, 1997; Xia, 2023). *Guangchangwu* initially provoked criticism on these grounds. The state's response has been co-optation. By standardizing movement, rhythm and form, a previously fluid and diverse practice is rendered legible to bureaucratic oversight. As Ren (2020) observed, governing the dancing body involves translating grassroots expression into controllable and auditable patterns. The 12 Sets function as administrative instruments that regulate how older bodies move, gather and appear in public.

#### *Critical Gerontology and the Moralization of Active Living*

Critical gerontology provides an important lens for understanding the normative force of these developments. Although active aging is often celebrated as progressive, it also produces subtle forms of exclusion. Katz (2000) argued that the cultural ideal of active living transforms old age into a site of compulsory productivity. Older adults are expected to remain mobile, cheerful, and engaged. Visible vitality has become a marker of civic legitimacy. Katz

and Marshall (2018) further showed that this expectation is reinforced by contemporary cultures of self-tracking, optimization and measurable performance.

This moralization of activity has significant implications for the governance of aging bodies. It creates hierarchies between the active and the inactive, the independent and the dependent, the synchronized and the slow. Inactivity is treated as a lack of effort. The discourse of active aging thus risks producing a narrow and exclusionary image of the “good elder.”

In China, these dynamics are visible in standardized *guangchangwu*. The elderly dancer is performing health, discipline and socially approved participation in public space. The 12 Sets embody what Foucault (1978) would call the microphysics of power, since they regulate the body through repeated, ordinary and apparently benign acts. Ren (2020) described such performances as choreographies of citizenship in which bodily conformity becomes a visible enactment of civic virtue. Menhas et al. (2021) further noted that dancers who cannot follow the official sequence or maintain synchronized movement may experience embarrassment and self-blame. This shows how disciplinary aesthetics translate into emotional hierarchies. Bodily nonconformity becomes morally charged.

For critical gerontology, the central issue is how activity is defined, valued and imposed. Lamb (2014) and Higgs and Gilleard (2021) stressed that later life must remain open to vulnerability, slowness and embodied difference. When active living becomes the only legitimate model of aging, the plurality of later-life experience is erased. This critique is relevant to standardized choreography, where movement is not only prescribed but evaluated against a normative ideal of bodily order.

#### *Guangchangwu as a Biopolitical Tool*

The literature suggests that *guangchangwu* should be understood as a biopolitical tool. At the global level, active aging frames older adults as moral actors responsible for maintaining their own vitality through visible participation (Boudiny, 2013; Katz, 2000). At the national level, China localizes this discourse by linking bodily fitness to social harmony, political order and civic display (Ren, 2020; Wang et al., 2024). The elderly body becomes both a target and an instrument of governance.

Standardized *guangchangwu* makes this process materially visible. The 12 Sets regulate the body through repeated rhythm, codified gestures and synchronized formations. In Foucauldian terms, they function as technologies of the self and technologies of governance simultaneously (Foucault, 1978; Rose, 2007). Participants are encouraged to internalize the norms of healthy, orderly and disciplined movement, while the state benefits from the public visibility of compliant bodies. The dancing square becomes a space where health, morality and governance converge.

Yet this convergence is not without tension. The literature indicates that standardized systems may reduce spontaneity, weaken local style and create discomfort for participants whose bodies or preferences do not align with the official model (Li et al., 2024; Menhas et al., 2021). *Guangchangwu* embodies a structural contradiction. It promotes participation while narrowing acceptable forms of participation. This contradiction is central to the present

study because it raises the question of how the structural design of the 12 Sets enacts regulatory logic and with what consequences for embodied cultural practice.

### **From Disciplinary Space to the Choreographic Body**

#### *Spatial Regulation: Enclosure, Partitioning, and Visibility*

Foucault (1977) account of disciplinary power begins with what he termed the “art of distributions,” that is, the transformation of open space into an ordered field of visibility, partition and control. Through mechanisms, bodies are fixed in place, categorized and made governable. Space ceases to be a neutral setting. It becomes an active medium of power.

This insight is relevant to guangchangwu. Public squares and parks are increasingly organized through choreographic grids in which dancers stand in rows, columns or geometric blocks. These formations produce symmetry, legibility and visual coherence. They also reduce interpersonal spontaneity by assigning participants a place within the collective arrangement. What appears to be merely an efficient dance formation is also a spatial technology of regulation. Each body becomes visible in relation to a larger order and the collective formation itself becomes a diagram of discipline.

In China, such spatial rationalization is often reinforced by broader planning principles that divide public space into designated functional zones. Dance areas, tai chi areas, rest zones and pedestrian pathways are differentiated and regulated in the name of safety, noise control and civic order. Yet, as Ren (2020) and Low and Smith (2013) suggested, these apparently neutral divisions also perform a political function. They domesticate spontaneity and render public life legible to administrative management. Guangchangwu takes place in managed space. The square becomes both a stage and a structure.

#### *Temporal Discipline: Timetable, Rhythm, and Collective Pace*

Discipline also operates through the organization of time. Foucault (1977) argued that the timetable is one of the key techniques through which conduct is regulated, because it divides time into measurable, productive and repeatable units. In guangchangwu, this temporal logic is visible at multiple levels. Dance sessions often occur at regular times of day in the early morning or evening, creating a routine that structures participation. Although these schedules appear voluntary, they also cultivate punctuality, repetition and collective coordination.

The standardized choreography itself encodes time through fixed tempo, rhythmic counts and repeated sequences. The 12 Sets synchronize participants to a common pace supported by pre-recorded music and regulated beats. Lefebvre (2004) theory of rhythm is helpful, since it distinguishes between lived rhythms and imposed rhythms. Aging bodies move through variable tempos shaped by pain, fatigue, pleasure, hesitation and recovery. Standardized choreography imposes a unified rhythm that may suppress this bodily diversity. Seetoo and Zou (2016) described this as temporal collectivism, in which social unity is achieved through synchronized pace.

This temporal standardization has moral implications. When collective rhythm becomes the norm, the inability to keep pace may be experienced as personal inadequacy.

Temporal discipline contributes to the moralization of bodily performance. The standardized tempo of guangchangwu transforms movement into measurable compliance.

### *Gestural Prescription and the Production of the Docile Body*

The disciplinary regulation of choreography also operates at the level of gesture. The 12 Sets prescribe specific arm positions, step sequences, torso turns and directional patterns. Such codification reflects what Foucault (1977) called the microphysics of power. The fine-grained regulation of bodies through small, repeated acts. Movement is guided by a normative script of correctness.

Mauss (1973) concept of body techniques is relevant here. He argued that gestures are socially learned. The body is trained to move in culturally sanctioned ways. Standardized guangchangwu exemplifies this process by teaching older adults how to move properly, efficiently and visibly. This is a pedagogy of obedience. The body learns a discipline of posture, timing and self-correction.

Such regulation produces what Foucault termed the docile body. In guangchangwu, the correct movement is privileged over the comfortable or expressive movement. Precision replaces spontaneity and deviation becomes error. This is significant for older bodies, whose capacities are heterogeneous. When standardized gesture is taken as the norm, bodily difference risks being interpreted as deficiency.

### *Repetition, Script, and the Automation of Movement*

A further dimension of disciplinary choreography lies in repetition. Standardized routines are learned and maintained through repeated rehearsal, repeated music and repeated execution of the same sequence. Foucault (1977) emphasized that discipline saturates time by filling it with repeated tasks and regulated activity. Repetition is a technology of normalization.

In guangchangwu, repetition creates a close fusion between body and script. The choreography becomes a pre-designed sequence to be executed accurately rather than interpreted creatively. The participant may feel accomplished through mastery, yet this mastery is achieved through compliance with an external model. The script directs the body and the body internalizes the script. What emerges is a form of automated movement in which freedom is experienced within the boundaries of correct execution.

This process gives the choreography a dual status. It is a health practice and a medium of governance. Each repeated sequence trains participants to align their movements with institutional expectations. The body becomes disciplined not through force, but through habit, rhythm and repetition. In this sense, standardized guangchangwu translates governance into ordinary bodily action.

### *Choreography, Governance, and the Research Gap*

Global aging policy frames activity as a marker of responsible later life. Chinese policy localizes this discourse by linking bodily fitness to social harmony and civic order. Foucauldian theory clarifies how such policy is materialized through space, time, gesture and repetition.

Together, these perspectives show that choreography is not merely aesthetic form. It is a regulatory structure through which bodies are ordered, displayed and normalized.

At the same time, an important gap remains in the literature. Existing scholarship has provided valuable insights into active aging, moralized health discourse and the social controversies surrounding *guangchangwu*. Yet fewer studies have examined the internal structural characteristics of the 12 Sets themselves as mechanisms of governance. There is limited analysis of how spatial arrangements, rhythmic standardization, gestural prescriptions and repetitive sequencing collectively manifest the regulatory logic of state-led cultural governance.

This gap is significant because governance is also embedded in form. The present study addresses this issue by analysing the structural characteristics of the 12 Sets and examining how these choreographic features materialize the state's broader rationalities of order, visibility and disciplined participation.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a critical qualitative research design to examine the structural characteristics of the 12 Sets of standardized *guangchangwu* and to explore how these choreographic forms manifest the regulatory logic of state-led cultural governance. Grounded in Foucauldian genealogy and embodied ethnography, the study approached *guangchangwu* as a choreographic system through which discipline, visibility, conformity and embodied negotiation are produced and contested (Csordas, 1990; Pink, 2015). This methodological orientation was appropriate because the study sought to interpret how power operates through bodily movement, spatial order and rhythmic coordination.

To capture both the formal structure of the standardized choreography and its lived enactment in practice, the study employed a triangulated multi-method design. Three complementary data sources were used: participant observation, video documentation and movement analysis, and semi-structured interviews. This design enabled the study to move across three analytical levels. At the macro-level, the official 12 Sets and related standardization discourse were treated as instruments of disciplinary inscription. At the meso-level, public dance practice in Jinan was observed to examine how standardized choreography was collectively enacted in urban space. At the micro-level, participants' narratives and embodied adaptations were analysed as small-scale negotiations through which official movement scripts were accepted, modified or resisted. This layered approach allowed the study to connect formal choreographic design with daily embodied experience.

### **Research Site and Participants**

Fieldwork was conducted in Jinan, China. Jinan was selected because it provides a highly suitable context for investigating the relationship between state policy and grassroots dance practice. As a provincial capital with a strong bureaucratic culture, Jinan has actively implemented the national fitness agenda and promoted the 12 Sets of standardized *guangchangwu* through local competitions, community training and fitness evaluation systems. At the same time, its urban public spaces remain important sites of informal dance activity. This combination made Jinan an analytically productive site for observing how national choreography is institutionalized, localized and negotiated in practice.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select six guangchangwu groups between May and August 2025. The groups were drawn from three major public sites: Quancheng Square, Daming Lake Park, and Qianfoshan Park. Selection was based on three criteria: first, the group had to regularly perform at least one of the officially standardized routines; second, practices had to occur in accessible public settings; and third, each group needed an identifiable leader and a relatively stable membership base. Across the six groups, approximately 85 participants were observed, aged between 60 and 75 years. Most participants were women, which reflects the broader demographic composition of guangchangwu in China. The groups also varied in organizational structure, including formally registered fitness teams, semi-formal community collectives and informal friendship-based groups. This variation enabled comparison across different degrees of standardization, institutional oversight and local adaptation.

### **Data Collection**

Participant observation served as the primary method for examining how standardized choreography was performed in natural settings. Over a 12-week period, each group was observed twice weekly during both morning and evening sessions. This schedule captured variation in tempo, energy, participation and social interaction. Observations focused on four dimensions: spatial arrangement, temporal rhythm, affective atmosphere and adaptive practice. Particular attention was paid to how dancers occupied space, followed collective timing, responded emotionally to the routine and introduced small bodily modifications. The researcher adopted a position of light participation, occasionally joining group practice to experience rhythm synchronization, physical strain and the affective intensity of collective movement. Reflexive field notes were written after each session to record sensory impressions and interpretive insights.

Video documentation provided a second layer of evidence by enabling close analysis of movement structure. A total of 12 video recordings were analysed: six official recordings of the 12 Sets obtained from government sources and six field recordings of local group performances in Jinan. Each field session was recorded from a stable tripod position and lasted between eight and twelve minutes. Video analysis focused on the relationship between official and enacted choreography, especially in terms of formation, tempo, gesture, coordination and deviation. Side-by-side comparison made it possible to identify where local practice reproduced, modified or departed from the official model. This method was useful for tracing how discipline operated through spatial symmetry, rhythmic control and repeated movement patterns.

To complement observational and visual data, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted with leaders, core members and peripheral participants across the six groups. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted in a quiet area near the practice site after the session. The interviews explored participants' views of the official routines, their physical experiences during performance, their emotional responses to group dancing and the ways in which they adapted the choreography to suit local identity, bodily comfort or collective preference. These interviews provided access to the subjective meanings of participation and clarified why dancers sometimes complied with the official form while also modifying it in practice.

### Data Analysis

The data were analysed through an interpretive thematic approach informed by the logic of open, axial and selective coding. Observation notes, interview transcripts and video stills were reviewed repeatedly to achieve close familiarization with the dataset. Coding was conducted manually to preserve sustained engagement with the embodied and affective qualities of the material. Initial codes captured recurring patterns such as tempo adjustment, gesture modification, fatigue, collective encouragement, local music use and embodied discomfort. These codes were then grouped into broader analytical categories related to bodily adaptation, emotional participation, cultural localization and choreographic discipline.

The analysis was guided by a triadic framework consisting of Body Fit, Emotional Engagement and Cultural Embeddedness. Themes were then interpreted in relation to the study's theoretical framework, Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, de Certeau's notion of tactical adaptation and embodiment theory. Through this process, the analysis moved from descriptive observation to critical interpretation of how choreography functions as a medium of governance.

### Ethics and Trustworthiness

Ethical approval procedures were followed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, their voluntary involvement and their right to withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and reports. Video data were stored securely with restricted access. Trustworthiness was strengthened through methodological triangulation, reflexive note-taking, peer discussion of thematic interpretations and member validation with selected participants. These strategies enhanced interpretive credibility and ensured that the findings remained closely grounded in participants' lived experiences.

### Results

The findings show that the structural characteristics of the 12 Sets of standardized guangchangwu are organized around three interrelated dimensions: bodily codification, temporal synchronization and spatial regulation. These features reveal that the 12 Sets are not merely fitness routines for older adults. Rather, they function as a choreographic technology through which the state regulates visibility, conduct and collective participation in public space. Across the official routines and the field observations in Jinan, the choreography consistently privileged precision over expressiveness, rhythm over self-pacing and order over spontaneity. These structural tendencies demonstrate how state-led cultural governance is materialized through movement itself.

#### *Bodily Discipline: Codifying Movement and Producing the Docile Body*

The first major finding concerns the regulation of body language through codified movement. The official choreography of the 12 Sets breaks bodily action into fixed, repeatable and teachable segments. Each arm lift, side step, torso turn and directional shift is pre-specified in amplitude, timing, and sequence. This codification transforms dance from an open-ended expressive activity into a standardized bodily script. It is trained to reproduce a correct one.

This standardization is visible in the distribution of bodily motion across the 12 routines. As shown in Table 4.1, arm movements dominate the choreographic structure, with

an average of 142 arm gestures per routine, compared with 41 torso movements and 36 head and neck movements. Leg movements are also frequent, averaging 136 per routine but their function is largely supportive, enabling alignment and forward rhythm rather than individual style. This anatomical distribution suggests that the choreography is designed for external visibility rather than full-bodied expressiveness. The upper limbs create large and legible visual patterns, while the relative restriction of the torso and head suppresses fluidity, improvisation and personal rhythm. In this sense, the routines produce a body designed to be seen, synchronized and read as orderly.

Table 4.1

*Distribution of Bodily Movement in the 12 Standardized Guangchangwu Routines*

No.	Routine Title	Head and Neck	Torso	Arm	Leg
1.	“Zui Mei Zhong Guo ” 最美中国 The Most Beautiful China	37	56	158	104
2.	“Ji Qing Fei Yang” 激情飞扬 Passion in Flight	29	42	193	147
3.	“Qing Dao Chang Cheng Lai Hua Xue” 请到长城来滑雪 Come Ski on the Great Wall	30	44	159	120
4.	“Tian Lan Lan” 天蓝蓝 Blue Sky	33	40	81	92
5.	“A Xi Li Xi” 阿西里西 A Xi Li Xi	41	36	161	182
6.	“Wan Shu Fan Hua” 万树繁花 Ten Thousand Blossoming Trees	39	25	140	132
7.	“Liang Liang” 凉凉 Cool Breeze	54	41	124	127
8.	“Ji Xiang Yao” 吉祥谣 Song of Auspice	35	42	136	148
9.	“Si Chou Zhi Lu” 丝绸之路 The Silk Road	26	45	150	150
10.	“Tao Hua Yao” 桃花谣 Peach Blossom Ballad	49	32	159	146

11.	“Liang Shan Gu Niang” 梁山姑娘 Girls from Liangshan	33	45	135	163
12.	“Sa Lang Jie” 萨朗姐 Sister Salang	24	41	105	117
<b>Average Number</b>		36	41	142	136

Table 4.2 reinforces this interpretation. The most common gestures across the routines are clapping, waving, symmetrical arm swings and evenly patterned step sequences. These gestures are simple to reproduce and easy to standardize across large groups. Yet their very simplicity is significant. The choreography reduces ambiguity in bodily expression and privileges those movements that can be aligned, monitored and publicly displayed. This supports the argument that the 12 Sets function as a pedagogical system of bodily discipline. What was once a flexible, locally adapted form of public dancing becomes a controlled language of visible compliance.

Table 4.2.

*Gesture Typology and Function in the 12 Standardized Guangchangwu Routines*

No.	Body parts	Movements
1.	Head/Neck Movements	Turning head left and right, Nodding, Tilt up, Tilt down, Turning in circles.
2.	Torso Movements	Torso flexion and extension, lateral flexion, rotation, and circular movements.
3.	Arm movements	Lifts, pushes, swings, claps, circling, and expressive gestures of arms and hands.
4.	Leg movements	Marches, side steps, lunges, toe taps, squats, jumps, Lifting legs, kicking legs, stepping, jumping.

The field data further show that this codification has embodied consequences. In Routine 5, A Xi Li Xi, the repeated elevation of the arms and the maintenance of a vertical spine created visible strain for many older dancers. Several participants explained that they could not comfortably hold their arms high for long periods and often experienced shoulder tightness after repeated cycles. Similarly, in Routine 8, Ji Xiang Yao, the large alternating strides required lower-limb strength and balance that some elderly participants could not safely sustain. In practice, the idealized bodily template embedded in the choreography often exceeded the physical capacities of ageing bodies. This reveals an important structural feature of the 12 Sets. They are built around a normative and idealized ageing body.

The findings also suggest that this bodily ideal is moralized. Participants frequently described pressure to “keep up,” “do it properly” or “not look unserious.” In this way, physical endurance becomes linked to civic worth. The choreography teaches how to embody discipline, effort and conformity. This is why bodily codification must be understood as more than technical instruction. It is a form of subject formation, where older adults learn to

internalize the expectation that correct movement is a sign of responsibility, vitality and public respectability.

#### *Temporal Discipline: Synchronizing the Body to the Rhythms of Governance*

The second major finding concerns the regulation of time. The 12 Sets do not only organize movement spatially. They also regulate the pace, repetition and duration of bodily activity. Rhythm emerges here as a core mechanism of governance. In *guangchangwu*, this temporal discipline operates through fixed schedules, standardized tempo and continuous repetition.

Field observation showed that *guangchangwu* practice in Jinan followed regularized daily routines during the early morning and evening. These sessions were widely understood as part of the city's social rhythm, and many dancers structured their meals, rest and family interactions around them. Although participation was described as voluntary, the regularity of the schedule imposed an implicit temporal order. The dance routine functioned as a timetable in the Foucauldian sense.

At the level of musical design, the temporal logic of the 12 Sets becomes even more explicit. As shown in Table 4.3, most of the routines are choreographed to a moderate-to-fast beat, with tempos ranging from approximately 80 to 129 beats per minute, though the dominant range clusters around 115 to 123 BPM. This is significant because it indicates that rhythm has been calibrated to sustain collective energy, visual vitality and moderate physiological exertion. The beat is a regulatory device that aligns breathing, stepping and bodily timing to a shared external tempo. The predominance of 4/4 time signatures further reinforces predictability and uniformity. Every movement falls into a measurable rhythmic grid.

Table 4.3

*Average Musical Tempo (BPM) of Selected Standardized Guangchangwu Routines*

No.	Routine Title	Time signatures	BPM beats per minute	Tempo
1.	"Zui Mei Zhong Guo" 最美中国 The Most Beautiful China	4/4	115	Moderate-Fast
2.	"Ji Qing Fei Yang" 激情飞扬 Passion in Flight	4/4	123	Fast
3.	"Qing Dao Chang Cheng Lai Hua Xue" 请到长城来滑雪 Come Ski on the Great Wall	4/4	122	Fast
4.	"Tian Lan Lan" 天蓝蓝 Blue Sky	2/4	95	<b>Slow to moderate</b>
5.	"A Xi Li Xi" 阿西里西 A Xi Li Xi	2/4	95	<b>Slow to moderate</b>

6.	“Wan Shu Fan Hua” 万树繁花 Ten Thousand Blossoming Trees	4/4	80	Slow moderate	to
7.	“Liang Liang” 凉凉 Cool Breeze	4/4	90	Slow moderate	to
8	“Ji Xiang Yao” 吉祥谣 Song of Auspice	4/4+2/4	80	Slow moderate	to
9	“Si Chou Zhi Lu” 丝绸之路 The Silk Road	2/4	86	Slow moderate	to
10.	“Tao Hua Yao” 桃花谣 Peach Blossom Ballad	3/4	129	Fast	
11.	“Liang Shan Gu Niang” 梁山姑娘 Girls from Liangshan	4/4	120	Moderate-fast	
12.	“Sa Lang Jie” 萨朗姐 Sister Salang	2/4	86	Slow moderate	to

This standardized tempo supports the state discourse of scientific fitness, but it also narrows space for individual pacing. Several dancers reported that they simplified steps or silently slowed down when they could not maintain the official beat. Others described feeling rushed or embarrassed when they fell behind. Rhythm, therefore, operates as both a health mechanism and a moral mechanism. It measures vitality, but it also differentiates between those who can and cannot keep pace. Temporal discipline thus generates a subtle hierarchy of bodily legitimacy within the square.

The findings from Table 4.4 deepen this argument. The official promotional versions of the routines are slightly shorter than the original songs, reducing the average duration from 4 minutes and 9 seconds to 3 minutes and 55 seconds. This compression of musical time may appear minor, but it has important structural implications. By shortening transitions and reducing pauses, the choreography intensifies the continuity of motion. It eliminates moments of looseness or expressive breathing space and turns the routine into a more efficient and controlled sequence. Participants themselves described the experience as sometimes breathless or rushed. From a theoretical perspective, this reflects what Lefebvre (2004) called rhythmic rationalization: the conversion of lived rhythm into an administratively managed pattern of efficiency.

Table4.4

*12 sets of guangchangwu music duration*

No.	Routine Title	Original duration of the song	Promotional Duration
1.	“Zui Mei Zhong Guo ” 最美中国 The Most Beautiful China	3’43”	3’40”
2.	“Ji Qing Fei Yang” 激情飞扬 Passion in Flight	3’52”	3’30”
3.	“Qing Dao Chang Cheng Lai Hua Xue” 请到长城来滑雪 Come Ski on the Great Wall	3’39”	3’10”
4.	“Tian Lan Lan” 天蓝蓝 Blue Sky	4’00”	3’58”
5.	“A Xi Li Xi” 阿西里西 A Xi Li Xi	3’55”	4’05”
6.	“Wan Shu Fan Hua” 万树繁花 Ten Thousand Blossoming Trees	3’47”	3’50”
7.	“Liang Liang” 凉凉 Cool Breeze	5’33”	4’40”
8.	“Ji Xiang Yao” 吉祥谣 Song of Auspice	3’19”	3’12”
9.	“Si Chou Zhi Lu” 丝绸之路 The Silk Road	4’22”	4’18”
10.	“Tao Hua Yao” 桃花谣 Peach Blossom Ballad	4’23”	4’20”
11.	“Liang Shan Gu Niang” 梁山姑娘 Girls from Liangshan	4’18”	4’10”
12.	“Sa Lang Jie” 萨朗姐 Sister Salang	4’11”	4’04”
Average length of time		4’09”	3’55”

The field data also showed a strong synchronization effect. When dancers moved together in near-perfect unison, the square acquired an affective atmosphere of cohesion and collective energy. Many participants described this as enjoyable and socially uplifting. However, this same synchronization carried a disciplinary force. Falling out of rhythm became an emotionally charged event associated with embarrassment and self-correction. Temporal coordination thus governed affect and self-perception. The choreography produced what might be called a moral rhythm of participation, where joy, effort, punctuality and bodily compliance were fused.

A final temporal feature concerns repetition. Routines were commonly performed multiple times without extended pause, producing long sequences of repeated motion. This repetition saturates leisure with activity and aligns with the wider discourse of active ageing, in which continued movement is treated as a civic good. The findings suggest that the 12 Sets transform public dance into a chronopolitical technology.

*Spatial Discipline: Governing Visibility, Hierarchy, and Inclusion*

The third major finding concerns the regulation of space. The 12 Sets structure public space through geometric formations, repeated reorientation and hierarchical positioning. In this sense, the square becomes a carefully organized field of visibility.

One important structural feature is the use of directional control. As shown in Figure 4.1, the official manuals specify eight standardized stage directions, and these directions organize how participants face, turn and advance during the routines. The corresponding counts in Table 4.5 show that the routines contain frequent directional changes, ranging from 48 to 86 across individual sets. Such density of reorientation indicates that the choreography prioritizes constant visibility from multiple angles. Every turn is predetermined, and every directional shift reinforces collective symmetry. In practical terms, dancers must align with an externally scripted spatial map.

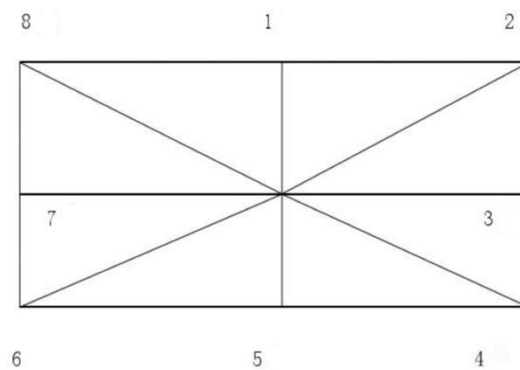


Figure 4.1 The 8 Directions of the Stage

Table 4.5

*Number of direction changes in body orientation for each of the 12 sets of guangchangwu*

NO.	Routine Title	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1.	“Zui Mei Zhong Guo ” 最美中国 The Most Beautiful China	20	8				8	20	56
2.	“Ji Qing Fei Yang” 激情飞扬 Passion in Flight	15	10	3		3	10	15	56
3.	“Qing Dao Chang Cheng Lai Hua Xue” 请到长城来滑雪 Come Ski on the Great Wall	16	6	6	6	6		8	48
4.	“Tian Lan Lan” 天蓝蓝 Blue Sky	20		4		4		20	48
5.	“A Xi Li Xi” 阿西里西 A Xi Li Xi	16	15	2	18	2	15	16	84
6.	“Wan Shu Fan Hua” 万树繁花 Ten Thousand Blossoming Trees	26	8		16		8	26	84
7.	“Liang Liang” 凉凉 Cool Breeze	20	4				4	20	48
8.	“Ji Xiang Yao” 吉祥谣 Song of Auspice	30	12		2		12	30	86
9.	“Si Chou Zhi Lu” 丝绸之路 The Silk Road	20	4	4	4	4	4	20	60
10.	“Tao Hua Yao” 桃花谣 Peach Blossom Ballad	32			10			32	74
11.	“Liang Shan Gu Niang” 梁山姑娘 Girls from Liangshan	23	4				4	23	54
12.	“Sa Lang Jie” 萨朗姐 Sister Salang	10	8	2	10	2	8	10	50

This design creates a public image of order, but it also produces physical and social consequences. Several participants reported dizziness or knee discomfort during rapid or repeated directional transitions. Others spoke of having to memorize the orientation pattern

carefully in order to avoid error. Directional control functions both as spatial coordination and as bodily discipline. The body learns to inhabit an externally imposed geometry.

Spatial hierarchy is also visible in the vertical and positional structure of the routines. Table 4.6 shows that the majority of movement occurs at medium spatial level (52% on average), followed by low level (30%) and then high level (18%). This indicates that the choreography privileges stable, visible and controlled movement rather than highly expressive vertical range. The medium level supports group alignment and reduces overt bodily unpredictability. High-level movements are rare and tend to be concentrated among stronger or more skilled performers, often in front positions. This creates an implicit visual hierarchy, where physically capable dancers become emblematic of ideal vitality.

Table 4.6

*The spatial hierarchy of the 12 sets of guangchangwu*

No.	Routine Title	Low	Medium	High
1.	“Zui Mei Zhong Guo ” 最美中国 The Most Beautiful China	17%	60%	23%
2.	“Ji Qing Fei Yang” 激情飞扬 Passion in Flight	27%	67%	5%
3.	“Qing Dao Chang Cheng Lai Hua Xue” 请到长城来滑雪 Come Ski on the Great Wall	21%	67%	13%
4.	“Tian Lan Lan” 天蓝蓝 Blue Sky	40%	41%	<b>18%</b>
5.	“A Xi Li Xi” 阿西里西 A Xi Li Xi	34%	56%	<b>10%</b>
6.	“Wan Shu Fan Hua” 万树繁花 Ten Thousand Blossoming Trees	30%	40%	<b>30%</b>
7.	“Liang Liang” 凉凉 Cool Breeze	49%	38%	<b>13%</b>
8.	“Ji Xiang Yao” 吉祥谣 Song of Auspice	63%	37%	<b>0%</b>
9.	“Si Chou Zhi Lu” 丝绸之路 The Silk Road	4%	59%	<b>37%</b>
10.	“Tao Hua Yao” 桃花谣	19%	53%	27%

11.	Peach Blossom Ballad “Liang Shan Gu Niang” 梁山姑娘	21%	63%	16%
12.	Girls from Liangshan “Sa Lang Jie” 萨朗姐	38%	45%	16%
	Sister Salang			
	<b>Average Number</b>	30%	52%	18%

Field observations confirmed that space within the square was not evenly valued. Leaders and strong core members tended to occupy the centre or front rows, where they guided pace and served as visible reference points for others. Peripheral members, irregular participants or those who struggled with coordination often drifted to the back or sides. This indicates that the square is organized not only geometrically, but socially. Ability becomes spatialized. Visibility becomes a form of symbolic capital.

The findings further show that visibility operates as a form of surveillance. Dancers frequently aligned themselves by watching neighbours, reflecting surfaces or the lead instructor. In some settings, performances were also recorded on smartphones or shown on community screens, extending the gaze beyond the immediate practice group. This created a setting in which participants engaged in constant self-correction. They adjusted posture, arm height and spacing in real time in order to maintain the collective image. In Foucauldian terms, the square approximates a panoptic field, where the possibility of being seen leads dancers to regulate themselves.

Importantly, the findings also reveal that this spatial harmony is selective. The choreography’s promise of inclusion is limited by its design. Participants whose bodies could not sustain the required tempo, alignment or positional accuracy were subtly filtered to the margins. Organizers sometimes framed this as practical necessity. If a participant could not keep the line straight or the timing clean, the formation would “look messy.” This suggests that the spatial logic of harmony depends on the management of difference. Inclusion is conditional upon legibility and conformity. Those who cannot embody the visual ideal are not openly excluded, but they become less visible, less central or eventually absent. Spatial regulation functions as a politics of harmony, where order is produced partly through the silent removal of embodied irregularity.

### *Choreographic Structure as Cultural Governance*

The 12 Sets are characterized by codified gestures, dominant upper-limb visibility, restricted torso expressiveness, fixed rhythmic tempo, compressed duration, repeated cycles, frequent directional changes, medium-level movement preference and hierarchical spatial arrangement. These formal properties are not accidental. They collectively materialize the regulatory logic of state-led cultural governance.

First, the choreography makes the ageing body legible. Through codification and symmetry, it produces movement that can be taught, monitored and evaluated. Second, it makes the body synchronous. Through fixed rhythm and repetition, it aligns individual tempo to collective tempo. Third, it makes the body visible. Through grids, directional control and

spatial hierarchy, it transforms public dance into a spectacle of order and harmony. In this way, the 12 Sets extend governance beyond policy language into everyday embodied practice.

At the same time, the findings show that this governance is never entirely frictionless. The very features that produce visual order also generate physical strain, emotional pressure and subtle exclusion. The standardized choreography is both productive and restrictive. It enables collective participation through a disciplined model of what healthy, civilized and governable ageing should look like. The regulatory logic of the state is inscribed in official discourse and the actual structure of movement itself.

## Discussion

This study set out to examine the structural characteristics of the 12 Sets of standardized *guangchangwu* and to explain how these characteristics manifest the regulatory logic of state-led cultural governance. The findings indicate that the choreography is structured through three interrelated dimensions: bodily codification, temporal synchronization and spatial regulation. Taken together, these dimensions show that the 12 Sets are not merely recreational or health-oriented movement routines. Rather, they function as a disciplinary cultural form through which the state organizes how ageing bodies should move, appear and participate in public space. In this sense, the findings confirm that choreography operates not only as an aesthetic arrangement of movement but also as a political technology of governance.

The first important contribution of the findings lies in showing how bodily movement is codified into a standardized and morally loaded script. The dominance of arm movements, the relative restriction of torso flexibility and the emphasis on precision and repetition suggest that the choreography privileges visibility and uniformity over embodied expressiveness. This extends Mauss (1973) notion of body techniques by demonstrating that the movements of the ageing body are socially and politically shaped performances that embody institutional values. The body is trained to become legible and correct rather than personal and adaptive. This supports Foucault (1977) argument that modern discipline operates through the detailed regulation of gestures and postures. The findings therefore show that the 12 Sets produce what may be called a governable body.

At the same time, the findings complicate the celebratory discourse of active ageing. Although the routines are promoted as healthy and accessible, the experiences of shoulder strain, difficulty with large strides and fatigue during repeated cycles reveal a mismatch between choreographic design and the heterogeneous capacities of elderly participants. This finding is important because it exposes the embodied limits of standardization. The choreography is built upon an idealized ageing body, upright, rhythmic, symmetrical and enduring, which does not always correspond to the physiological realities of later life. In this respect, the study supports critical gerontological arguments that active ageing often privileges able-bodied, visible and high-functioning forms of participation while marginalizing slowness, vulnerability and bodily difference (Boudiny, 2013; Lamb, 2014). The findings suggest that standardized *guangchangwu* normalizes a narrow model of desirable ageing.

The temporal findings further deepen this argument by showing that discipline operates through rhythm and repetition as much as through gesture. The standardized tempos, shortened durations and repeated cycles transform dance into a regulated temporal regime. Here, Lefebvre (2004) work on rhythm is especially useful. The routines impose an externally calibrated collective beat that often overrides the variable and uneven rhythms of ageing bodies. The body must synchronize itself not only with the music, but with the state's normative tempo of active living. In this sense, rhythm becomes a subtle form of governance. It converts leisure into measurable productivity and turns participation into a test of temporal compliance. This finding extends previous studies of *guangchangwu* by showing that state-led cultural regulation is embedded not only in what bodies do, but also in when, how long and how fast they do it. The choreography thus functions as a chronopolitical mechanism that disciplines later life through organized time.

Equally significant is the finding that synchronization produces both solidarity and regulation. Participants clearly derived enjoyment, energy and social connection from moving together in unison. This suggests that standardized choreography cannot be reduced to coercion alone. It also creates affective rewards that help sustain participation. Yet this emotional dimension should not obscure its disciplinary effect. Falling out of rhythm generated embarrassment, self-monitoring and pressure to conform. Synchronization worked as both pleasure and control. This duality is theoretically important because it demonstrates that governance in everyday cultural practice often operates through attraction rather than overt force. The elderly dancer is not only managed through rules, but also through the emotional appeal of belonging, harmony and public participation.

The spatial findings reinforce this interpretation. The eight-direction system, frequent directional changes, grid formations and hierarchical positioning show that the public square is transformed into a highly organized field of visibility. This strongly echoes Foucault (1977) "art of distributions," where power is exercised through the arrangement of bodies in space. The dancers are made visible, correctable and comparable through geometric order. At the same time, the square functions as a moral landscape. Front positions are associated with skill, vitality and exemplary participation, while weaker or less synchronized dancers drift to the margins. This shows that spatial order is also a form of social sorting. The findings therefore support Ren (2020) argument that collective bodily movement in China can function as a performative metaphor for stability, but they also add a more fine-grained insight. Such stability is achieved through choreographic structures that subtly differentiate between bodies that fit the visual ideal and those that do not.

Overall, the discussion points to a central theoretical implication. The 12 Sets of standardized *guangchangwu* embody a form of choreographic governance. Through bodily codification, temporal discipline and spatial control, they translate abstract state goals into embodied public practice. This contributes to scholarship on active ageing and cultural governance by showing that state power is not only expressed in policy discourse or institutional regulation, but also sedimented in the internal structure of movement itself. Choreography becomes a medium through which governance is aestheticized and naturalized.

At the same time, the findings also suggest that this governance remains incomplete. The presence of bodily strain, emotional pressure and spatial marginalization indicates that the apparent harmony of the 12 Sets is sustained through friction as much as through consensus. Thus, the study reveals a central paradox of standardized public culture. The more choreography seeks to create collective order, the more it exposes the irreducible diversity of embodied life. This tension between regulation and lived bodily reality is precisely what makes *guangchangwu* a significant site for understanding how ageing, citizenship and governance intersect in contemporary China.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shown that the 12 Sets of standardized *guangchangwu* constitute a structured choreographic system through which state-led cultural governance is enacted in everyday public life. The analysis demonstrated that the routines are organized through three main structural principles: bodily codification, temporal synchronization and spatial regulation. Together, these features transform movement into a visible and disciplined practice of order, harmony and civic conformity.

At the bodily level, the choreography privileges precision, symmetry and repetition over spontaneity and expressive variation. At the temporal level, fixed rhythm, standardized tempo and repeated cycles regulate how older bodies move in time and align leisure with the normative logic of active ageing. At the spatial level, geometric formations, directional control and hierarchical positioning render public dance legible, observable and aesthetically ordered. These findings show that choreography functions as a political technology through which the ageing body is shaped into a governable public subject.

At the same time, the study also revealed the limits of this standardizing logic. The idealized bodily template embedded in the 12 Sets often sits uneasily with the heterogeneous capacities, rhythms and lived experiences of elderly dancers. Physical strain, emotional pressure and subtle forms of exclusion indicate that the apparent harmony of the routines is sustained through ongoing negotiation rather than seamless fit.

Overall, the study contributes to understanding *guangchangwu* as a site where health discourse, aesthetic order and biopolitical governance converge. It suggests that standardized public culture should be examined for how its formal structures organize bodies, meanings and belonging in practice.

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