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Original article

STUDY REGARDING THE NEED TO OBJECTIFY EVALUATION IN LATIN-AMERICAN DANCES

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Abstract*

Aim. Through this research, we aimed at highlighting the need to optimize the evaluation system in Latin-American dances by introducing some quantifiable criteria and sub-criteria meant to remove the subjectivity of judges.

In this regard, we have developed and applied an opinion questionnaire comprising 26 items designed to emphasize the opinion of Romanian judges recognized nationally and internationally about the use of a new evaluation system, which includes the 5 criteria existing in the current judging sheets, but complemented with more quantified sub-criteria, depending on their contribution/importance in ranking the dancers' competitive performance.

Methods. Bibliographical study, observation, questionnaire survey, statistical and mathematical method, graphical representation method

Results. The obtained results reveal the respondents' desire for some changes in the current judging system, namely: introduction of quantified sub-criteria; each major criterion in the system should be judged separately by a judge; a smaller number of couples should perform simultaneously on the dancing floor; scoring for the technical part should be different from the one for the artistic side; a bonus should be awarded for more difficult elements.

Conclusion. Most of the interviewed judges agree to the idea of removing subjectivity from the evaluation system used in dance sport, which might also lead in the future to introducing this sport in the Olympic Games program.

Keywords: evaluation system, Latin-American dances.

Introduction

Dance is an art, an intentional work highlighting the movement performed with an aesthetic and communication purpose, but also aimed to transmit a wide range of states and feelings, on the rhythm of music (Driver, 2006). Dancesport or competitive ballroom dancing attracts due to the complexity, mixture of states, elegance and physical strength it involves.

Dancesport contains a pre-established set of movements and their combinations, and practitioners are concerned with both the emotions transmitted and the correctness of figures they perform.

Being so complex and vast, the opinions on dance often have a subjective character, and for this reason, specialists in the field have shown over time a particular interest in identifying suitable criteria through which the quality of execution could be evaluated in an appropriate way.

Thus, starting from a set of step patterns or figures imposed for each type of dance (Borrow, 2010, Grosser, 1983), in dancesport there have been established some generally valid criteria tracing the pursued standards and based on which the correctness

of dance execution can be evaluated.

But the evolution of dancers' figures and technique also requires an improvement in the judging criteria, which must respond to all changes found in the complexity of choreographies (Hodge, 2008) and the highly developed motor ability of the dancers (Franklin, 2003).

Because dancesport faces, both nationally and globally, a high degree of subjectivity as regards the scoring of couples in competitions, we aim to improve the evaluation system in Latin-American dances by establishing some quantifiable criteria and sub-criteria.

In a first phase, we conducted an opinion survey in order to find out the opinion of many people, former dancers or dancers currently working as coaches and/or judges. They expressed their point of view on the changes in the current judging system by quantifying the elements analyzed during judging.

Methods

Bibliographical study, observation, questionnaire survey, statistical and mathematical method, graphical representation method

To conduct this survey, there were

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interviewed 35 dancers/judges with a national and international activity, both men and women, aged

between 22 and 50 years.

Table no.1 *The questionnaire respondents*

Item no.	INITIALS (Surname and name)	AGE	GENDER	JUDGE	DANCER
1	I.J.	36	M	YES	YES
2	M.D.	45	M	YES	YES
3	R.S.	31	F	YES	YES
4	A.D.	35	F	YES	YES
5	C.R.	31	F	YES	YES
6	D.M.	25	F	YES	YES
7	I.R.	40	F	YES	YES
8	Z.M.	29	F	YES	YES
9	I.C.	40	F	YES	YES
10	O.A.	34	M	YES	YES
11	B.C.	32	M	YES	YES
12	B.V.	38	M	YES	YES
13	R.D.	34	M	YES	YES
14	D.M.S.	31	M	YES	YES
15	R.S.	24	M	YES	YES
16	S.A.	22	M	YES	YES
17	G.J.N.	39	M	YES	YES
18	N.A.V.	40	M	YES	YES
19	N.A.	31	M	YES	YES
20	O.V.	32	M	YES	YES
21	A.V.	37	M	YES	YES
22	S.M.	29	F	YES	YES
23	M.V.	39	M	YES	YES
24	G.V.	37	M	YES	YES
25	T.M.	38	M	YES	YES
26	T.S.	30	M	YES	YES
27	R.Z.	29	M	YES	YES
28	M.S.	40	M	YES	YES
29	C.S.	48	F	YES	YES
30	G.N.	35	F	YES	YES
31	R.T.	30	M	YES	YES
32	A.R.	33	F	YES	YES
33	M.R.	50	F	YES	YES
34	C.M.	35	F	YES	YES
35	A.S.	33	M	YES	YES

The questionnaire was distributed on the occasion of dance competitions organized by the federation of specialty, and also by mail, via the internet.

The survey aimed to find out the specialists' opinion on the possibility of eliminating the judging subjectivity existing in dancesport, in order to include this discipline in the Olympic Games program. In this regard, there were formulated questions focused on

the effectiveness of the current evaluation system, in terms of the way of establishing the best couples, the judging criteria, the time allotted for a dance, the number of couples who perform simultaneously, the coach-judge incompatibility, as well as questions about the need to implement a new system for evaluating/scoring the dancers, which involves: quantification of dancers' performance on the basis of scores awarded for each criterion and sub-

criterion; setting a fixed number of judges necessary for an objective evaluation during international competitions, possibly an optimum number of judges for each criterion evaluated; choosing the judges for each category based on a random-type system, for an increased objectivity of judging; the existence of separate scoring for the technical part and the one related to the originality/creativity/artistic side of the choreography. **Results**

We shall present the most relevant opinions regarding the need to implement a new evaluation system in competitive ballroom dancing.

To question 6 –Do you consider it important to optimize the judging system by quantifying the dancers’ performance based on a score awarded?, the respondents tended to give credit to changing the current judging system by quantifying the performance. A percentage of 46% chose the response option “Important, very important, extremely important”, and 37% “Somewhat important”, while all the other response options had much lower values.

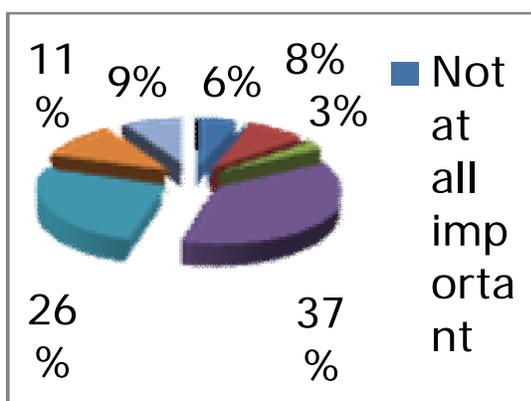


Fig.1 Percentage of responses to question no. 6

To question 7 –do you agree to changing the current judging system?, almost half of the respondents - 49% expressed their agreement to have the current judging system changed, opting for the variant “Agree”. Besides them, a percentage of 11% marked the variant “Totally agree”, there for the percentage of judges/coaches wishing the current judging system to be changed is 60%. 34% opted for “Do not know”, and the percentage of respondents who do not want change is 6% (3% “Disagree” and 3% “Strongly disagree”).

Question 6				
Responses	Number	%	Gender	
			M	F
Not at all important	2	6%	1	1
Very least important	3	8%	2	1
Less important	1	3%	1	0
Somewhat important	13	37%	7	6
Important	9	26%	5	4
Very important	4	11%	4	0
Extremely important	3	9%	2	1

Table 1

Question 7				
Responses	Number	%	Gender	
			M	F
Strongly disagree	1	3%	1	0
Disagree	1	3%	0	1
Do not know	12	34%	8	4
Agree	17	49%	11	6
Totally agree	4	11%	2	2

Table 2

To question 23 –Do you think there should be separate scoring for the technical part and the one related to the originality/creativity/artistic side of the choreography?, over half of the options were for

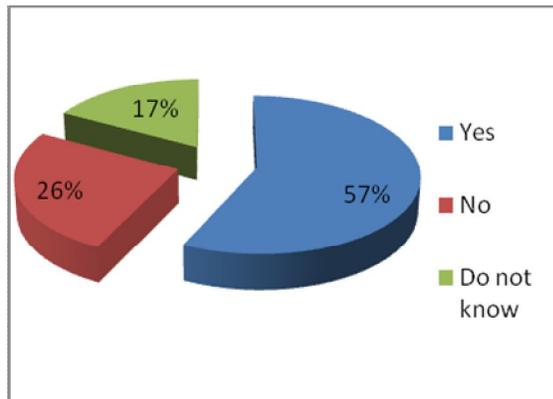
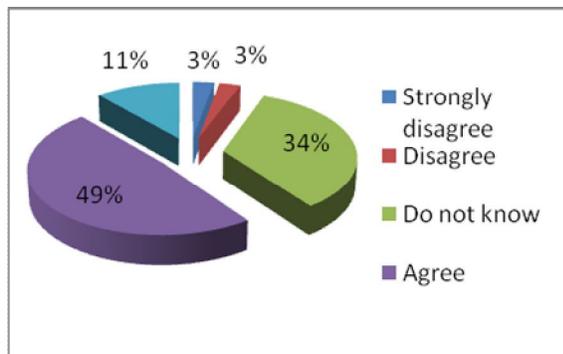


Fig. 2 Percentage of responses to question no. 7



“Yes”, with a percentage of 57%. “No” was voted by 26%, and “Do not know” by 17%.

Fig. 3 Percentage of responses to question no. 23

To question 26- If your response is “Yes” to the previous question, do you consider it important to remove subjectivity from the current judging system?, most respondents - 40% chose the variant “Extremely important”. 23% opted for “Very important”, 20% “Important”, and 8% “Somewhat important”, totaling a percentage of 91%. There were also recorded responses like “Very least important” - 6% and “Less important” - 3%, but the variant “Not at all important” was not voted by any of those who expressed their opinion.

Table no.3

Question 23				
Responses	Number	%	Gender	
			M	F
Yes	20	57%	12	8
No	9	26%	4	5
Do not know	6	17%	6	0

Question 26				
Responses	Number	%	Gender	
			M	F
Not at all important	0	0%	0	0
Very least important	2	6%	0	2
Less important	1	3%	1	0
Somewhat important	3	8%	3	0
Important	7	20%	4	3
Very important	8	23%	6	2
Extremely important	14	40%	8	6

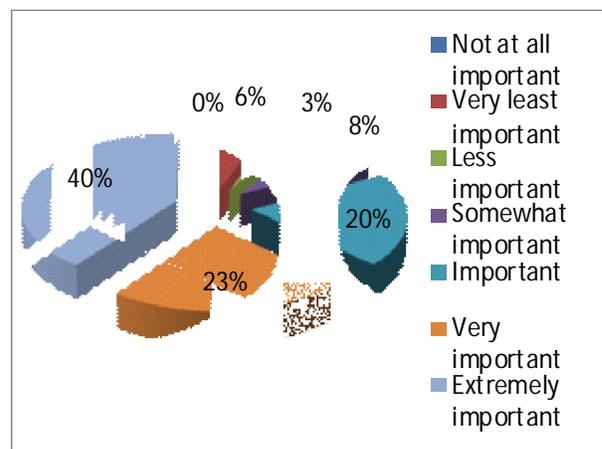


Fig. 4 Percentage of responses to question no. 26



Noticing the first three options chosen with a very high percentage, from the data analyzed for this question, albeit pressing the same idea, it results very clearly the desire for eliminating subjectivity from the current judging system in dance sport.

Discussion

Concerns for optimizing the evaluation system in dance sport are also highlighted in the works developed by (Kovalenko, 2001; Faina, 2005), who consider that the main problem of the current judging system consists in the fact that it goes on using the competitive principles and does not provide well-defined evaluation criteria expressed in points and numerical values.

The results obtained from processing and analyzing the responses given by the 35 judges/coaches surveyed allow us to draw the following conclusions:

60% of those interviewed want the current judging system to be changed, although around 70% have responded in the affirmative to the question regarding their level of satisfaction with the current system.

It is important to note that 60% want each major criterion in the system to be judged separately by a judge – which implicitly involves changing the system.

Most respondents agree to the duration of music in the competition, but they plead for a smaller number of couples to perform simultaneously on the dancing floor.

As directions for changing the system, the majority of respondents also require separate scoring

for the technical part and the artistic one, as well as bonus awarding for more difficult elements.

A majority percentage of the respondents, over 90%, agree to the idea of introducing dance sport into the category of Olympic sports, but considering that it is necessary to remove subjectivity from the evaluation system.

Conclusion

Most of the interviewed judges agree to the idea of removing subjectivity from the evaluation system used in dance sport, which might also lead in the future to introducing this sport in the Olympic Games program.

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