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Original article

STUDY ON THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF BALLROOM DANCE AS A MEANS OF LEISURE ACTIVITY

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to highlight the benefits of ballroom dance, practiced by adults as a leisure activity. Physical exercise performed on the musical rhythm, in the community, improves mental and emotional state, develops sociability and improves the quality of life, and the complexity of dance styles stimulates the development of psychomotor abilities.

Methods: During a period of 3 months, the study is intended for tourists staying in a hotel on the Romanian seaside, and it provides a program that includes daily dance classes. At the end of their stay, they completed a questionnaire with 9 items, for assessing their level of satisfaction about these activities.

Results: From a group of 199 tourists, the level of satisfaction reached maximum score for 179 persons, most of them practicing this activity to correct their posture and to develop their aesthetic sense. Even if just 40% of participants appreciate dance as a leisure activity to a great extent, 93% believe that this dance program has positively influenced their lifestyle they will have in the future.

Conclusions: Although not many people tried dancing to relax, they are willing to experiment, and the positive impact that this sport has on the mental state and physical condition, convinces them to introduce dance into their lifestyle, the effects being felt even from the first class.

Keywords: ballroom dance, quality of life, leisure activity, sociability, lifestyle.

Introduction

Also known as leisure, the free time suggests a theme of constant reflection, the first mentions belonging to Aristotle, who said that "free time does not mean the end of work, but work means the end of free time; it must be devoted to art, science and philosophy". M. Epuran gives leisure activities a recreational and fun character, lacking rigor and stressful elements, which can overcome fatigue through active rest. The activities that the individual freely chooses, of his own pleasure, in order to rest or have fun, to socialize, to develop, accumulating information and experiences, after exceeding its limiting factor – work, are called leisure activities. Passive rest is not the only way to revive the body, which performs physiological recovery and removes fatigue. Entertainment provides recreation, being the sure remedy of soul and mind.

Sport for all is one of the socio-cultural aspects of society and, at the same time, a factor in its development. The diversity of motor activities that can be practiced in free time make it accessible to all members of society, regardless of age, sex and motor skills. Recreational activities have become a constant

concern for specialists in this field. Having a role in increasing the quality of life, physical exercises practiced in free time have developed multiple ways of manifestations, due to the growing interest from people to different ages and occupations. The growing demand determined the diversification of the offer on the market, specialists in this field being more and more creative in forming solutions for spending free time in an active way.

Dancing has become an increasingly popular form of leisure as means of motor activity. Physically, it ensures harmonious physical development and improves health condition. But the main benefits are, in fact, at the mental level. Due to its fun and socializing role, people who practice dance, in any form of manifestation, manage to solve their behavioral problems, to accept themselves and the situations in personal life, to overcome inhibitions and adopt positive thinking. As a creative process, this complex activity that defines dance involves the intellect, emotions, body and personality. From a social point of view, this sport integrates people of any gender or age, regardless of social status or level

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of health they have. In pairs, individually or in groups, dance encourages the development of interpersonal relationship, and it can be practiced in any environment: at home, in the gym or dance hall, at parties, events, competitions etc.

Regardless of the age or ailments a person has, dance has the ability to correct deficiencies and improve the quality of life. Countless dance styles, which can have different rhythm and intensity, can be adapted to any type of person, depending on physical and mental needs. There are no restrictions on this form of movement, which means that its benefits can be easily received from anywhere, being an activity that is constantly manifested in society, both at events and in unorganized activities.

Ballroom dancing is the most demanding style of dance, training all the main muscle groups. Physically, this sport has the ability to harmoniously shape the human body, developing artistic qualities. It branches into two completely different genera: Latin-American and European (Standard), the first category being the most demanding and populated in dance and aerobic rooms lately. Variety of rhythm, complexity of movements, power, the passion transmitted by this musical genre and the possibility of being danced in pairs make this sport even practiced by couples, due to the positive impact it has on the psyche and, implicitly, in the couple's relationship. Learning Latin dances is a challenge for many people because the rhythm is fast and the styles may differ in their conditions and feelings.

For people who want diversity and do not want to deepen the specific steps of each style, there is the possibility of practicing aerobics on Latin rhythm, which involves performing movements specific to aerobic sports in an attractive choreography. It is a component of dynamic fitness, with a specific content of motor structures made on music. Depending on the objectives, it originally combines specific technical content with dance, gymnastic exercises or fighting techniques.

Music releases endorphins and generates effects both physiologically and psychosomatically, as well as mentally. Thus, the music relaxes the muscles, regulates respiratory rate, decreases heart rate and blood pressure, increases pain tolerance, influences the dynamics of emotional life, stimulates attention, memory, imagination, helps with mental relaxation and physical activation.

Methods

The study was applied to a sample of 199 people and consists of an opinion poll conducted through a questionnaire that followed the common or varied trends of tourists attracted to ballroom dance, as a means of leisure activity, in terms of both knowledge about this sport and the benefits generated by it, as well as the preferences for certain dance styles.

The organization and development of this study was done at a seaside Romanian hotel, by implementing a ballroom dance course on the beach, dedicated to accommodated tourists. This program was aimed at people of any age, regardless of gender, and it is an optional leisure activity for recreational, social and educational purposes for tourists staying at least one week. Daily, the participants learned a new dance style (Samba, Cha-Cha-Cha, Rumba, Jive, Salsa, Bachata, Disco), combined with specific aerobic steps.

The study lasted for 14 weeks, between 11th of June and 16th of September, and at the end of each stay of the participating tourists they filled in a questionnaire, having the opportunity to evaluate the program and express their opinion on possible improvements.

Results

The analysis of the results was made based on the frequency of the answers in the questionnaire, and the data are graphically illustrated for all questions.

The number of tourists who completed the questionnaire is 199, of which 126 women and 73 men. From the 14 weeks of study, the fewest participated in the first one, at the beginning of the summer season. There can be noticed a constant increase from one week to the next, until the period 16.07-22.07, when there was a small decrease compared to the previous week. The peak of the season brought even more tourists interested in dancing, so the weeks 23.07-29.07 and 30.07-5.08 were noticed by most participants, 18 persons, respectively 21, the maximum number reached in this study. In the following weeks, there were fluctuations, a significant wave of persons being between 27.08-2.09, with 20 subjects. The last week of the study is directly proportional to that of 18.06-14.06 in terms of the number of participants, meaning 11 persons.

The questions formulated in the questionnaire are presented in the following box:

SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age:
 - a. Under 20
 - b. 20-35
 - c. 36-45

d. 46-60
e. Over 60

2. Gender:

Female	Male
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3. To what extent do you enjoy practicing dance?

a. Very large extent
b. Large extent
c. Small extent
d. Very small extent
e. I am indifferent

4. What style of dance do you enjoy dancing to?

a. Standard (Viennese Waltz, Tango)
b. Latino
c. Folklore
d. Modern
e. Another

5. What are the reasons why you enjoy dancing in your free time?

a. Learning dance steps
b. Postural and aesthetic education
c. Communication and socialization
d. Positive mental state
e. Muscle toning

6. Rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how much you liked the dance lessons you took part in this week.

1	2	3	4	5
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7. Which is your favorite dance from those learned on this vacation?

a. Samba
b. Cha-cha-cha
c. Rumba
d. Jive
e. Salsa
f. Bachata
g. Disco

8. Did this activity influence your lifestyle for the future?

a. Yes
b. No

9. Observations and recommendations

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THANK YOU!

It was found that most people who participated in this program were between 46 and 60 years old, followed by the category of people over 60. Young

people under 20 were the least numerous, only 14 of them taking part in courses, throughout the study.

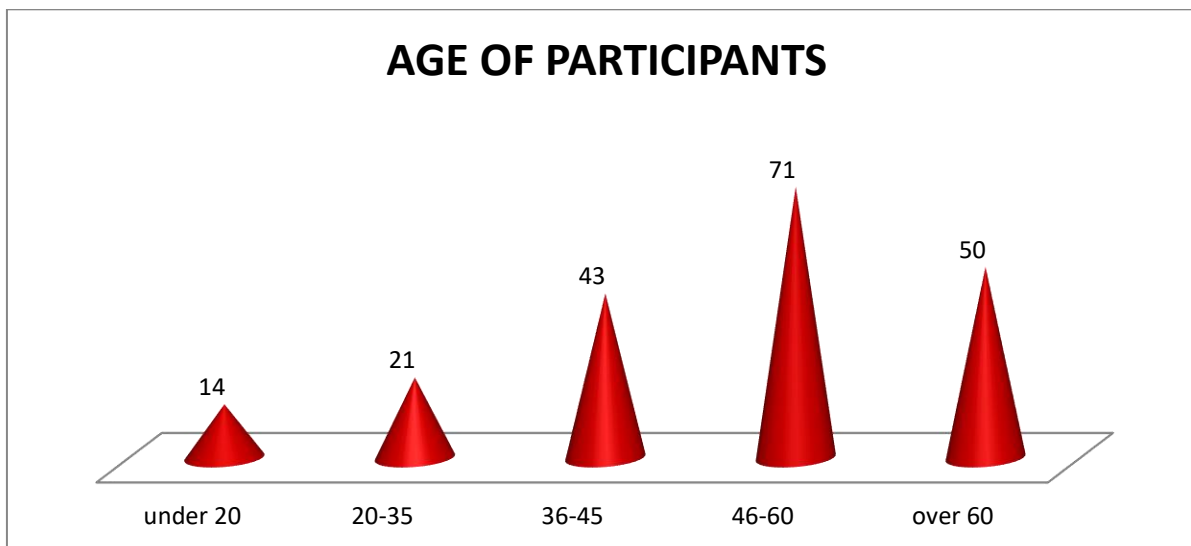


Figure 1. Age of study participants

The pleasure of dancing is felt in a very large extent by 80 persons, and in a large extent 93 of the total number, that is 47%. At the opposite pole there are those who like to dance in their free time only a

little or very little, that means 6%, respectively 2%. Only 9 persons declared indifference regarding this type of activity, but they chose to try in their holiday.

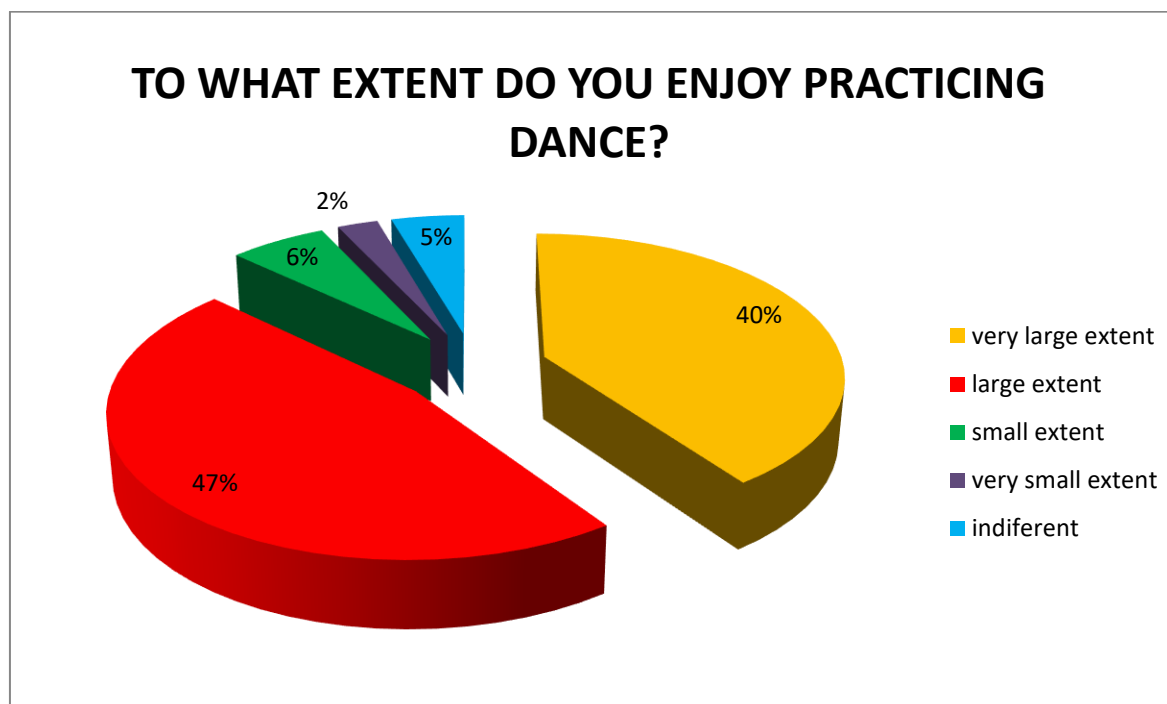


Figure 2. The pleasure of dancing expressed as a percentage

The variety of dance is great, so people's preferences are different. In attempt to please as many as possible, it is important to know the dance styles that they know and they want to practice in their free time. Most of them, 96 people (48%),

prefer Latin styles because the rhythm is varied, cheerful and determines well-being, the next category appreciated by 41 students being the Standard one (21%), because it includes slow, elegant movements, known to older people. Active people, eager for fun,

opted for folkloric and modern dances, meaning 34 (17%), respectively 15 persons (8%). Just 6% were

not found in any of the proposed categories.

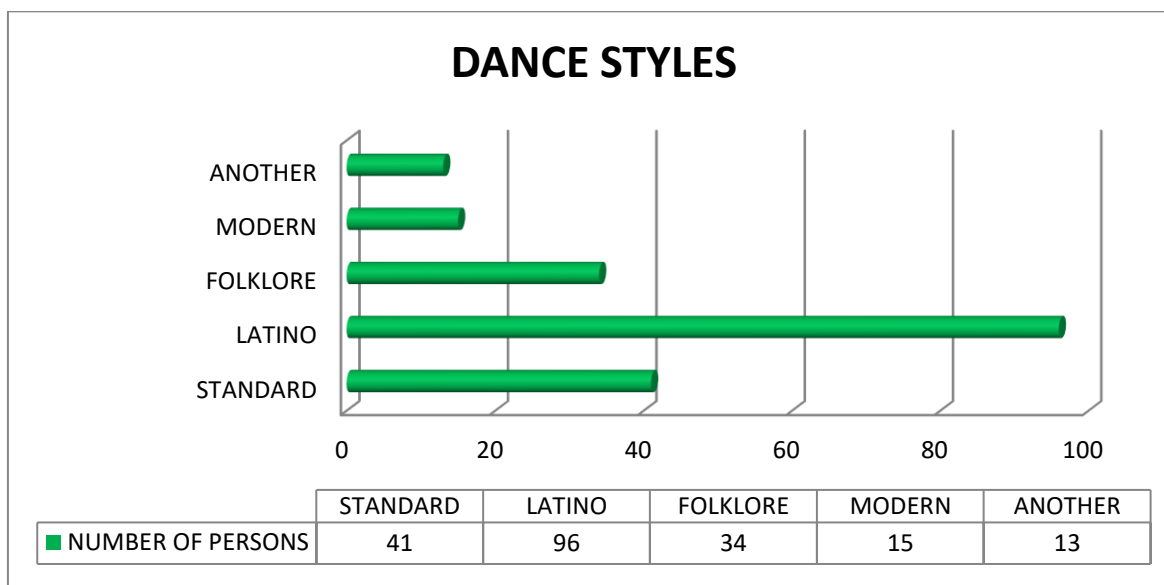


Figure 3. Favorite dance styles

At question “What are the reasons why you enjoy dancing in your free time?”, most of them, in percentage of 29%, answered that they practiced this sport to correct their posture deficiencies and develop their aesthetic sense. The results are close, so 22%

dance to socialize, 18% feel better mentally, 17% want to tone up in a pleasant and harmonious way, and learning dance steps is a reason only for 14% of participants.

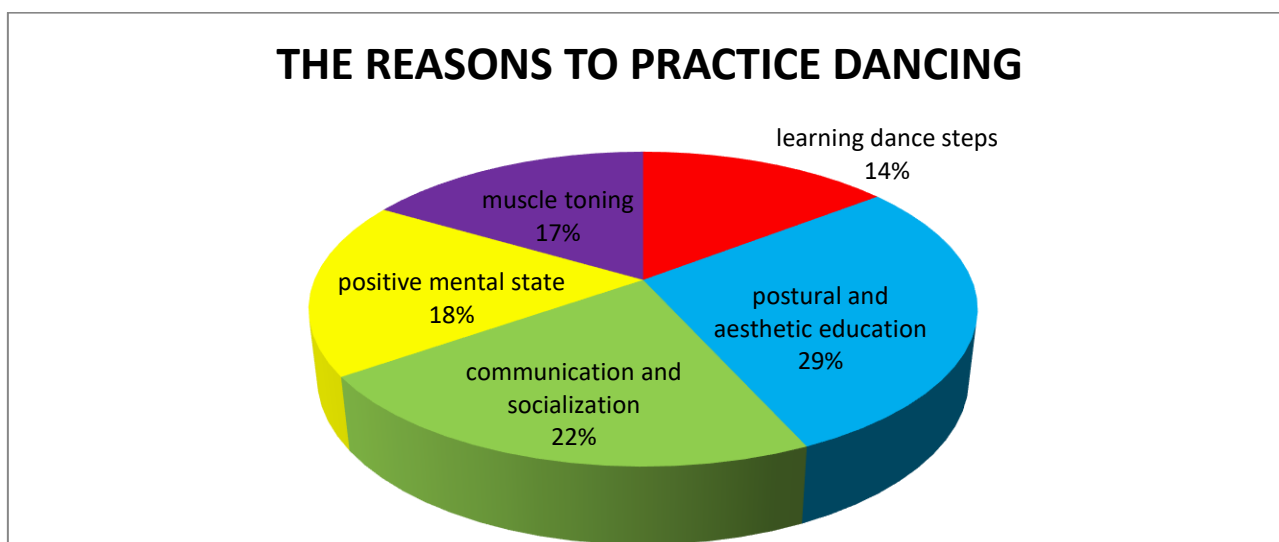


Figure 4. The reasons to practice dancing in the free time

The program was a success in terms of subjects, 179 persons rated it 5 out of 5, 12 of them gave a grade of 4, and just 8 students consider that the dance lessons deserve grade 3. These results suggest that

this free class made available to the tourists was affective and their satisfaction was at a high level, thus the objectives being achieved.

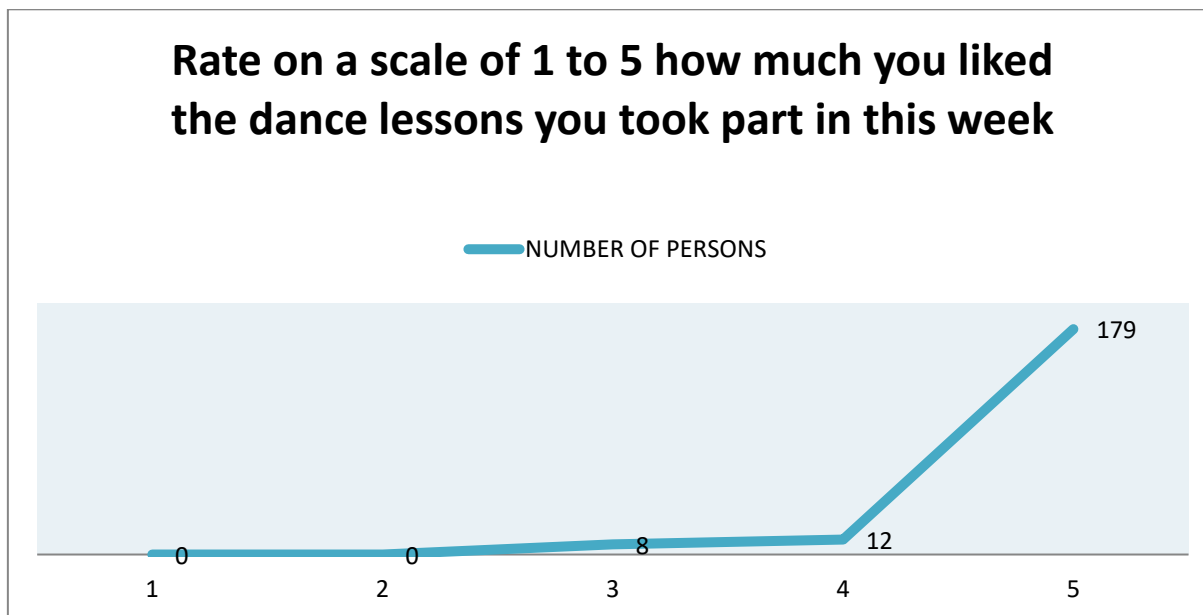


Figure 5. Satisfaction level

All the Latin dances included in the dance program were appreciated by tourists, especially Salsa and Bachata. These are dances more common in society, at parties and events, presenting a lower degree of difficulty in terms of execution technique.

Although it is the dance with the fastest rhythm, Jive was chosen by 39 persons as being preferred by them, and the lowest rated dances were Rumba, Cha-Cha-Cha and Samba.

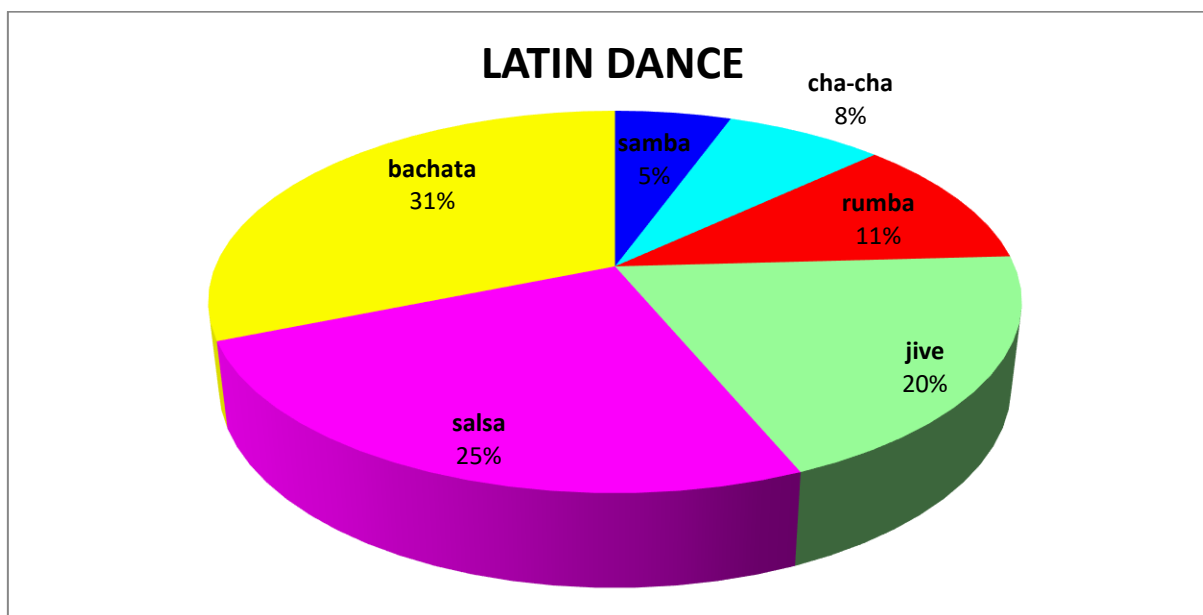


Figure 6. The favorite Latin dance

“Did this activity influence your lifestyle for the future?” - this is the question that 93% answered with „Yes” and consider that the program helps them understand that the movement through ballroom

dance is a pleasant and efficient way to maintain an optimal health. Only 7% of the tourists believe that these courses did not influence them in any way and their lifestyle will not change.

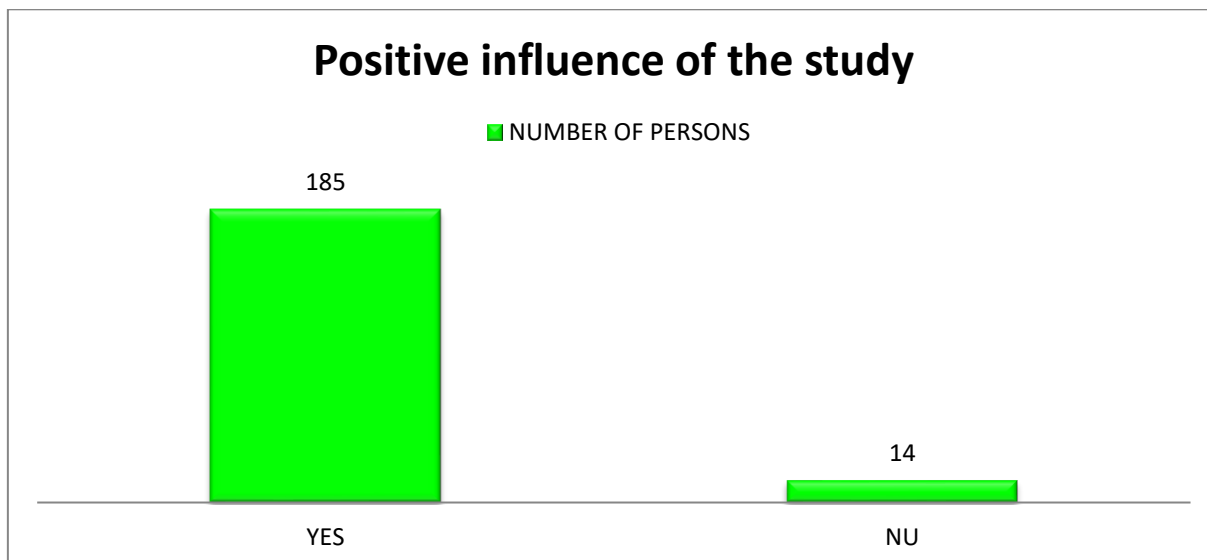


Figure 7. The positive influence of the program

The item for observations and recommendations was not completed by all persons, being created to identify the positive aspects of the lessons. The program will be repeated next season, taking into account the current recommendations of the participants, for its improvement. On average, they responded that positive mood and mental relaxation are some of the top positive aspects and the most important recommendation is to organize an aquagym course.

Discussions

Negative aspects of the program were not identified and reported by students, they only make certain recommendations for the next season, allowing the increase of the number of participants. Appreciations regarding the professionalism of the instructor and the positive effects of the dance lessons prove that the study was a success and met its objectives.

Conclusions

Ensuring the biological, social, psychological and spiritual balance, it results that the ballroom dance practiced as a leisure activity contributes to the harmonious physical development and broadening the horizon of an evolved thinking. The body abilities improve, professional performance is fulfilled and the level of quality of life increases. The happiness generated by this sport is felt inside and reflected on the outside, which is materialized by the efficiency of activities at work, in the family and in society.

The conclusion of this study is that people want to practice recreational activities in their free time, they

appreciating dance as a pleasant and accessible way to get a positive mental and emotional state, and to regain their optimal fitness. According to the applied questionnaire, over 90% of tourists were positively influenced by this program and they want to make lifestyle changes, while giving maximum points to initiative in which they participated.

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