

The psychological-social aspects of the Serbian Easter Ball in Santovo

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Background

Since 2019 I have been following the dance events, so-called Serbian Balls in Hungary. The Balls intrigued my researcher's curiosity by the mixture of multiethnic participants and ethnically specific cultural texts. Most participants were Hungarians (circa 80%), followed by Serbs and Croats. At the centre of Serbian Balls is the performance of Serbian and Macedonian traditional dances, accompanied by Serbian folk music (Nikolić, 2021).

Aims

The presentation begins with the ethnographical background of attendees at the Serbian Easter Ball in the southwestern Hungarian village of Santovo. Further, an analysis will disclose participants' responses as to their motivation for attending the Ball and their feelings about the event. Finally, the presentation will conclude with the social benefits of dancing at the Ball to the community.

Method

The case study method involves gathering empirical data based on the participant observation of the Easter Ball in Santovo. A written questionnaire (Williamson et al., 2021) comprising seventeen questions was then circulated to participants. It consisted of close-ended questions (age, nationality, profession, Ball experiences), multiple choice questions (frequency of Ball attendance), ordinal scale questions (valuing one's own dance experience), and open-ended questions (covering reasons for attending the Ball, the importance for the Ball to be maintained). The final methodology was a semi-structured interview with three participants of different nationalities. The interview data allowed a deeper understanding of the themes arising from the questionnaire. All gathered data were systematized by the thematic organization of qualitative data (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Results

Empirical material revealed a diverse range of age among participants (17-65), gender (male 40%, female 60%), professions (students, teachers, farmers, mechanical engineers, painters, etc.) and dance experience (beginners, well-experienced dancers). Participants identified themselves as being Hungarian (75%), Šokci (17%), and Serbian (8%). When motivation for attendance was in question, the two main themes were friendship and dancing (90%). Secondly, the themes of entertainment (70%) and relaxation (60%) came out as important to participants. Happiness and relaxation were the main feelings of those attending the Ball and were related to dancing

and spending time with friends. Lastly, 80% of participants expressed the opinion that the Ball helps strengthen the community together as well as a way of safeguarding a tradition.

Conclusions

The results showed that the Serbian Easter Ball participants in Santovo are diverse in multiple lenses. Attending the Ball varies from a family ritual to those with a strong passion for Serbian and Macedonian dances. For others, the Ball provides the basis for cultural coexistence and connectedness for its participants and provides an escape from everyday life. Ball's multifaceted dimensions bring enjoyment but continue the passion for this specific dance repertoire.

References

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