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## HEALTH VARIABLES AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PROFILE OF BALLROOM DANCE TEACHERS IN BRAZIL

### VARIÁVEIS DE SAÚDE E PERFIL DA PRÁTICA PROFISSIONAL DE PROFESSORES DE DANÇA DE SALÃO NO BRASIL

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#### RESUMO

O estudo teve como objetivo investigar a fadiga, a qualidade de vida (QV) e o perfil da prática profissional de professores de dança de salão no Brasil de acordo com o sexo. Foram avaliados 272 profissionais das cinco regiões do Brasil por meio de um questionário autoaplicável dividido em perfil profissional, QV e fadiga. Observou-se que as mulheres apresentaram melhores resultados em relação aos homens em termos de escolaridade e índice de massa corporal. A QV geral de ambos os sexos apresentou escores regulares, maiores valores de escores no domínio das relações sociais e menores valores no domínio físico. Os dados refletem a busca por informações sobre o perfil do professor de dança de salão e fatores de saúde relacionados ao seu perfil de atuação profissional, com possíveis distinções entre os sexos e destacam a importância da conscientização para a manutenção da saúde dos profissionais de dança.

**Palavras-chave:** Dança. Fadiga. Qualidade de Vida. Professores.

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#### ABSTRACT

The objective was to investigate fatigue, quality of life (QoL) and professional profile of ballroom dance teachers in Brazil compared by gender. A total of 272 professionals from the five regions of Brazil were evaluated using a self-administered questionnaire divided into professional profile, QoL and fatigue. It was observed that women showed better results compared to men in terms of education and BMI. The general QoL of both sexes showed regular scores, with higher values for the social relations domain and lower values for the physical domain. The data reflect the search for information on the profile of the ballroom dance teachers and health factors related to their professional practice profile, with possible distinctions between the sexes and highlight the importance of awareness for the maintenance of the health of dance professionals.

**Keywords:** Dance. Fatigue. Quality of life. Teachers.

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#### Introduction

Dance involves beautiful and complex mechanical and performative actions that require discipline, technique, and various physical abilities, using movement as a fundamental element expressed at a technical and artistic level<sup>1,2</sup>. Ballroom dancing, known as social dance for being danced by peers, is also practiced as a physical-motor activity that develops skills practice of physical, cognitive, social, and cultural abilities that bring benefits to the life and health of its various adherents<sup>3-5</sup>.

Among those who work in the professional context, the ballroom dance teacher stands out in this study, who performs theoretical-practical functions that include methodological, didactic, and pedagogical aspects. In addition to the responsibility of planning and giving practical classes to regular classes at different times, his routine includes choreographic creations, rehearsals, performance presentations, extra-class courses, private classes at unconventional times, and parties inside and outside the linked<sup>6</sup>. Factors that make the professional routine stressful, with an exhausting workload and that can negatively influence general health and the presence of fatigue<sup>4</sup>.

Fatigue, in turn, can be characterized by feelings of weakness, tiredness, and lack of energy to carry out daily activities<sup>7</sup>. Related to the professional context of ballroom dancing, fatigue includes physical, mental, and artistic demands, both internal and external, intense training

routines, anxiety, stress, and little time to rest between activities<sup>1,8,9</sup>. These issues may differ according to gender, due to women reporting more frequently the double working day<sup>10</sup>, and the use of specific dance footwear, such as high heels during classes, parties, and performances, has been identified in studies as a detrimental factor to health and conducive to the development of injuries in dancers<sup>4,11</sup>. For men, some factors, such as greater responsibility for the execution and firmness of movements in traditional ballroom dancing and the execution of acrobatic movements in performing ballroom dancing, are also pointed out as factors favorable to the intensification of fatigue.

Although there is a consensus in the literature that the intense work routine of these professionals can lead to the presence of fatigue, with negative consequences on general health and on the psychological, physical, social, and environmental aspects of QoL<sup>1,9</sup>, there are few studies dedicated to investigating health-related variables in the professional context. As a result, it is assumed that teachers have an intense work routine, combined with practical performance demands, which influences QoL and contributes to increased fatigue. Above all, this study had the objective of alerting dancers to the possible risks associated with inadequate practice, stimulating preventive and conscious attitudes in the professional ballroom dance context. Thus, the present study aims to investigate the fatigue, the QoL and the profile of the professional practice of the ballroom dance teachers in Brazil in a comparative study by sex.

## Methods

### *Sample*

This is a descriptive, quantitative, cross-sectional study. The sample, selected intentionally and for convenience, was obtained from records made available online by regionalized associations and was composed of 272 ballroom dance teachers, 173 men, and 99 women, with a mean age of  $31.48 \pm 8.63$ . Among the inclusion criteria stand out: teachers of both sexes, over 18 years of age, who worked with the teaching of the modality in schools/academies or dance companies located in the pole states of ballroom dancing, specifically: Southern Region (PR, RS, SC), Southeast (ES, MG, RJ, SP), Midwest (DF, GO, MG, MT) and North-Northeast (AL, AP, CE, MA, PA, PB, PE and RN).

### *Procedures*

Contact with the participants was established via phone, email, and/or social networks, and data collection was conducted from November 2016 to June 2017 using an online questionnaire created in Google Forms. The self-administered questionnaire was divided into three blocks: participant profile, QoL, and fatigue. For the profile of the sample, the following were analyzed: functional occupation, gender, education, marital status, age, ballroom dance practice and teaching, physical activity, socioeconomic level, presence of diseases, and anthropometric variables. Body weight and height were used to calculate the Body Mass Index (BMI) from cutoff points established by the World Health Organization<sup>12</sup>. For statistical purposes, the participants were categorized as normal weight (up to  $24.9 \text{ kg/m}^2$ ) and overweight ( $25 \text{ kg/m}^2$ ).

To assess QoL, the WHOQOL-bref<sup>13</sup> was used, which consists of 26 questions related to the individual's last two weeks and includes physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains. The scores range from 0 to 100%, and the closer to 100, the better the individual's QoL.

Fatigue was assessed using the Yoshitake Fatigue Questionnaire<sup>14</sup>, which consists of 30 multiple-choice questions divided into three components: sleepiness and lack of mood at work; difficulty in concentration and attention; and projections of fatigue to the body. Each component has 10 questions ranging from 10 to 50 points. The total final score ranges from 30 points (less fatigue) to 150 points (higher fatigue).

### Ethical aspects

The study was approved by the Committee on Ethical Research with Humans of the Brazilian university referred to as *Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina*. All the ballroom dance teachers participated in the research by reading and signing the informed consent form.

### Statistical analysis

An electronic spreadsheet was created in Microsoft Excel 2016 to categorize the data related to sociodemographic issues. The Kolmogorov Smirnov's normality test was used to select the statistical tests. The analysis was performed by using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, SPSS version 20.0. The tests used were: Pearson's chi-square to analyze the profile of the participants and the characterization of the practice of ballroom dance teachers, and the Student's T test for an independent samples, which analyzed the fatigue and QoL domains, and a significance level of 95% ( $p < 0.05$ ) was adopted.

## Results

Table 1 presents the general characterization of the sample, composed of the participating ballroom dance teachers. Statistically significant results were found related to schooling ( $p = 0.002$ ), noting that females have more schooling than males, and BMI ( $p \leq 0.001$ ), in which most female presented normal weight when compared to males. The other data were not statistically significant when compared by gender.

**Table 1.** Profile of ballroom dancing teachers according to gender. Brazil.

	Total %	Males (n 173)	Female (n 99)	<i>P</i> - value
<b>Education</b>				<b>0.002</b>
Elementary/Medium	49.6	56.6	37.4	
Higher	50.4	43.4	62.6	
<b>Marital Status</b>				0.913
With a partner	55.0	55.2	54.5	
Without a partner	45.0	44.8	45.5	
<b>Economic Stratum</b>				0.781
High level	18.0	17.3	19.2	
Middle level	75.0	76.3	72.7	
Low level	7.0	8.1	6.4	
<b>BMI</b>				<b><math>\leq 0.001</math></b>
Normal weight	61.4	50.6	81.5	
Overweight	38.6	49.4	18.5	
<b>Do you have any disease</b>				0.277
Yes	9.6	8.1	12.1	
No	90.4	91.9	87.9	
<b>Region</b>				0.476
North, Northeast	6.3	6.4	6.1	
Midwest	7.0	5.2	10.1	
Southeast	55.0	57.0	51.5	
South	31.7	31.4	32.3	

**Note:** BMI= Body Mass Index.

**Source:** Authors

Regarding the professional practice of the teachers shown in Table 2, although there are no statistically significant differences between the variables, it is highlighted that in relation to the time of practice of ballroom dancing, there are more males (57.8%) who practice this modality for

more than 11 years, with a weekly practice of 5 to 7 times a week (59%) when compared to the opposite sex. On the other hand, there are more women who practice other dances (54.2%), in addition to teaching other types of dances (26.2%) and for a longer time (18.9%).

**Table 2.** Characterization of teachers' professional dance practice according to gender. Brazil.

	Total %	Males (n 173)	Female (n 99)	<i>P</i> - value
<b>Ballroom dance practice time</b>				0.071
6 to 10 years	46.3	42.2	53.5	
More than 11 years	53.7	57,8	46.5	
<b>Ballroom dancing practice per week</b>				0.700
Up to 4 times	41.9	41.0	43.4	
5 to 7 times	58.1	59,0	56.6	
<b>Other dances practices</b>				0.220
Yes	49.0	46.0	54.2	
No	51.0	54.0	45.8	
<b>Teach other dances</b>				0.072
Yes	19.8	16.6	26.2	
No	80.2	83.4	73.8	
<b>Time to teach other dances</b>				0.068
0 to 2 years	21.6	29.7	13.5	
3 to 5 years	25.7	18.9	32.4	
6 to 10 years	12.2	5.4	18.9	
More than 11 years	5.4	2.7	8.1	
Not answer	35.1	27.0	43.2	

Source: Authors

Regarding the aspects of health investigated in the study, specifically the domains of QoL and fatigue (Table 3), it is clear that the overall QoL can be considered good, as it is closer to 100 (57.9 – 68.1), since that the values remain homogeneous when compared by sex. However, lower mean values were found for the physical domain in both sexes and higher mean values for the social domain. Fatigue also showed homogeneity between groups, with positive means.

**Table 3.** Quality of life and fatigue of ballroom dancing teachers. Brazil.

	Total $\bar{x} \pm$	Males $\bar{x} \pm$ (n 173)	Female $\bar{x} \pm$ (n 99)	<i>P</i> - value
Environmental Domain	63.2±16.2	62.6±16.3	64.2±16.0	0.741
Physical Domain	57.9±11.9	57.5±12.2	58.5±11.4	0.283
Psychological Domain	68.1±11.7	68.3±11.6	67.9±11.8	0.577
Social Domain	63.2±16.2	69.8±18.6	71.4±20.8	0.530
Fatigue	70.6±19.4	70.8±19.5	70.3±19.4	0.590

Note:  $\bar{x}$  = average.  $\pm$  = standard deviation.

Source: Authors

## Discussion

The present study sought to investigate the QoL, fatigue and the profile of professional practice according to the sex of ballroom dance teachers in Brazil. The predominance of women with normal weight in relation to men can be explained by the greater concern that women, wheter they practice dance or not, have with body aesthetics, influenced by the standards of beauty imposed by society and culture<sup>15</sup>, which leads to a greater concern with the body image and

maintaining a regular weight<sup>16</sup>. In ballroom dancing, this can be reinforced by the need for lightness, charm and sensuality that is naturalized in women's movements, even in acrobatic movements<sup>17</sup>, contributing to the demand for the ideal body in a professional context.

A higher level of education was also observed when comparing women and men, where more than half of the female participants had higher education, a point that can be explained by the increase of women in prominent positions in the different professional and social segments<sup>18</sup>. This fact strengthens the female quest for gender equality, which, even far from the idealized parameters, finds progress and reflects in our study on the credibility and the struggle for the professionalization of women who seek quality in their professional training.

The results, despite not showing statistically significant differences, revealed that for both sexes the participants QoL levels were better in the social domain and worse in the physical domain. Evidence from studies of dancers shows that higher levels of QoL in the social domain are often associated with dance practice<sup>2,9,19</sup>, particularly ballroom dancing<sup>1,6</sup>. A domain that can be positively reinforced because ballroom dancing is understood as a “social dance” performed in pairs, and which favors the interpersonal relationships of its practitioners<sup>20</sup>. According to Cardoso et al.<sup>21</sup> dancing together stimulates a physical dialogue that contributes to the exchange ideas, social support and the development of new dance practices. In addition, since it is a modality that is not limited to regular classes, since teachers and students usually participate in dance parties inside and outside their schools<sup>6</sup>, the benefits of ballroom dancing in the social domain can also be linked to the possibilities of socialization experienced between people and in different contexts<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, the low levels of QoL attributed to the physical domain may be related to the effort and skill required in the routine. Due to the specificity, professionals have to combine high-intensity exercises intermittently and eventually participate in performance presentations and perform complex movements<sup>1,9</sup>. It is possible that some movements potentiate the development of injuries<sup>4</sup>, negatively impacting general health. Irrespective of gender, other issues such as the high frequency of dance practice and the workload involved in teaching other dance modalities also lead to an overload of the physical condition of these individuals.

Nevertheless, a greater burden can be attributed to male participants, who in traditional ballroom dancing usually lead their peers, having a greater sense of responsibility for the firmness of the movements, especially acrobatic movements<sup>11</sup>. Although new concepts in ballroom dancing can be observed today, especially in the leadership of couples in the scenario of dances for two, triggering debates on gender issues and power relations<sup>21,22,23</sup>, the demand for greater physical effort on the part of male dancers and teachers is still observed, which may explain the relatively lower levels of perception of the physical domain of QoL compared to women.

The results also show that both women and men had a positive perception of fatigue ( $70.6 \pm 19.4$ ). Studies indicate that the practice of dance would tend to increase fatigue, due to the intense routine of regular classes and rehearsals, which sometimes require the ability to perform complex movements even when they present symptoms of pain and physical discomfort<sup>1,9</sup>. For many dance professionals, however, fatigue is not perceived negatively because the joy of dancing, the dedication to perfecting their art, and the demand to achieve high performance standards in the execution of the movements justify the symptoms of pain and fatigue that result from this practice. In the literature, it is noted that professional dancers develop a high threshold of pain tolerance and therefore tend not to report or omit pain complaints<sup>24</sup>. In this sense, as in endurance and high performance sports, there seems to be a culture of “naturalization” of pain and fatigue by these professionals<sup>25,26,27</sup>.

Regarding the limitations of this study, the use of indirect measures in the evaluation of the participating ballroom dance teachers is highlighted, since it was possible to obtain direct measures of the participants levels of QoL and fatigue. However, it is important to emphasize that the choice of this methodological approach was due to the possibility of accessing to a greater number of professionals, given that the research was conducted at the national level. In addition, the scarcity

of studies dedicated to investigating ballroom dancing in the Brazilian professional context is highlighted, an aspect that made it difficult to compare the results found with studies of a similar nature.

## Conclusion

The search for information on the profile of ballroom dance teachers and health factors related to professional activity showed better results in terms of education and BMI for women compared to men. For both sexes, there was extensive experience and systematic practice of ballroom dancing, however, the number of classes taught, added to the intense routine, seems to be detrimental to general health and influence lower levels of QoL in the physical domain.

For both sexes, the social domain of QoL presented good levels, as well as fatigue was rated positively, a fact explained by the fact that ballroom dancing is practiced in pairs and by the teachers' performance in different contexts (classes, dances, shows) that contribute to socialization in general. Regarding the positive perception of fatigue, it is clear that despite the intense professional routine, the dedication to teaching and practicing dance, combined with improved performance, seems to overcome the painful symptoms and the existing physical and mental fatigue. Therefore, there is an urgent need for knowledge and awareness on the part of teachers, dancers, choreographers, directors, and others involved in the ballroom dance scene, regarding the importance of maintaining healthy habits to minimize factors related to general health, favoring a healthy career and safe.

In this sense, it is suggested that future studies be carried out with different methodological approaches that seek to understand ballroom dancing and the impact of its practice on the general, physical and mental health of its professionals, encouraging debate on possible differences associated with gender and corroborating the national scientific agenda.

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