



ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS TOWARDS BULGARIAN FOLK DANCES (*HORÓ DANCES*) AMONG STUDENTS AT THE SOUTH-WEST UNIVERSITY “NEOFIT RILSKI”

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ABSTRACT

Bulgarian national dances can be systematically organized taking into account different parameters and criteria, when considering the opinions of specialists in the field of Bulgarian folklore. The national folk dances called Horó are the most popular and most widely spread characteristic way of dancing in our national folklore dances. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of the current article is to analyze the opinions and the attitudes towards the Bulgarian national dances and Horó among students. **METHODS:** In the text we have used data gathered via a questionnaire-based study. It covers 157 students. The questionnaire is created by the author, constructed especially for the purposes of the current study, and consists of 12 context questions and a socio-demographic block. In order to interpret the results, we have used statistical analysis for non-representative studies, among which descriptive statistics and the method of grouping. **RESULTS:** The main advantage of Bulgarian Horó dances and folk dances during leisure time is that they give the opportunity to students to have fun and to relax, to recover from stress, and in the university – to get new knowledge and skills while learning to dance new Hora which would also help their physical training, fitness and development. **CONCLUSIONS:** As per the analysis carried out we can observe that the most popular Horó dances among the students at the SWU “Neofit Rilski”, are Pravo (“lined up/ straight-line”), Dunavsko (“Danube), Elenino (“Elena’s”), all of which are largely popular in our country.

Key words: folklore, traditions, Bulgarian folk dances, Horó dances, analysis, physical training, physical exercise

INTRODUCTION

The dynamic character and emotionality of folk songs and dances (horó dances) make them an attractive activity for people of different ages. This is the main reason why they are considered an integral part of the system of physical education.

Bulgarian folk dances can be systematized according to various indicators and criteria, taking into account the opinions of experts in the field of Bulgarian folklore. Bulgarian horó dances are the

most widespread and characteristic way of playing in our dance folklore.

Globally, the number of people with obesity is increasing, making it one of the main health challenges (1). Almost half of Bulgarians at the age of 50 and above are overweight, and a quarter suffer from obesity even before the breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic (2). Obesity remains a major health concern for countries across Europe during Covid-19 and its post-pandemic consequences. Obesity is recognized as a high-risk factor for developing a severe infection with Covid-19 when infected. A large proportion of Bulgarians aged 50+ suffer from overweight (43.2%) or obesity (24.7%) (3).

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METHODS

The research on the topic “Attitudes and opinions towards bulgarian folk dances (*horó* dances) among students at the South-West University “Neofit Rilski” was conducted via an online survey. In the period March 2020 - March 2022, a total of 157 students took part in the survey.

The questionnaire is an author’s work, constructed specifically for the present study and consists of 12 meaningful questions and a socio-demographic block. Students get access to the survey through a link provided during the classes on folk *horó* and dances. Survey data were analyzed using SPSS – version 26.0 (IBM, 2019). For the interpretation of the results, statistical analyses, non-representative studies among which descriptive statistics and the method of groupings, were used.

Table 1. Body Mass Index (BMI)

| BODY MASS INDEX (BMI) | Number | % |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Underweight (< 18,5) | 22 | 14,1 |
| Normal weight (18,5-24,99) | 90 | 57,7 |
| Overweight (> 25) | 29 | 18,6 |
| Obesity (> 30) | 15 | 9,6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>156</i> | <i>100,0</i> |

Figure 1 reveals that the first thing that students at SWU “Neofit Rilski” associate “Bulgarian folk dances and *horó*” with is “tradition” – 37.5%, other 25% associate them with “fun and

Respondents take part in the study after an informed consent declaration. 31 of them are men and 126 are women. The youngest student included in the survey is 18 years old, and the oldest is 53 years old. The average age of the study participants was 24 years.

RESULTS

The physical education and sports sessions/ classes, and specifically folklore dances and *horó* dances, are part of the compulsory curriculum for the students at SWU “Neofit Rilski”. The detailed analysis of the Body Mass Index shows that 57.7% of the students (**Table 1**) have normal weight, 9.6% appear to have obesity and 18.6% are overweight, which is a very alarming fact and this in future may affect their health condition.

enjoyment”, while 13.4% - with “motherland”. In fact, only 2.7% of the students perceive Bulgarian folk dances as part of the “way of life” of Bulgarians.

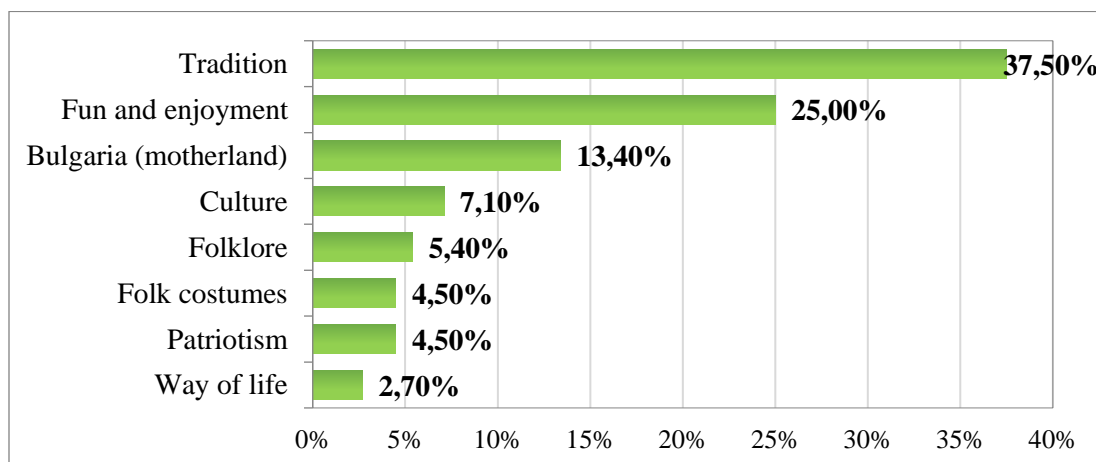


Figure 1. What is the first thing which comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “Bulgarian folk dances”? What is the first association?

The students are explicit that Bulgarian folk dances / *horó* dances should be studied at all levels of Bulgarian education. 96.2% in school,

91.1% in university and 87.3% of them are of the opinion that the folk dances should be studied in kindergarten (**Figure 2**).

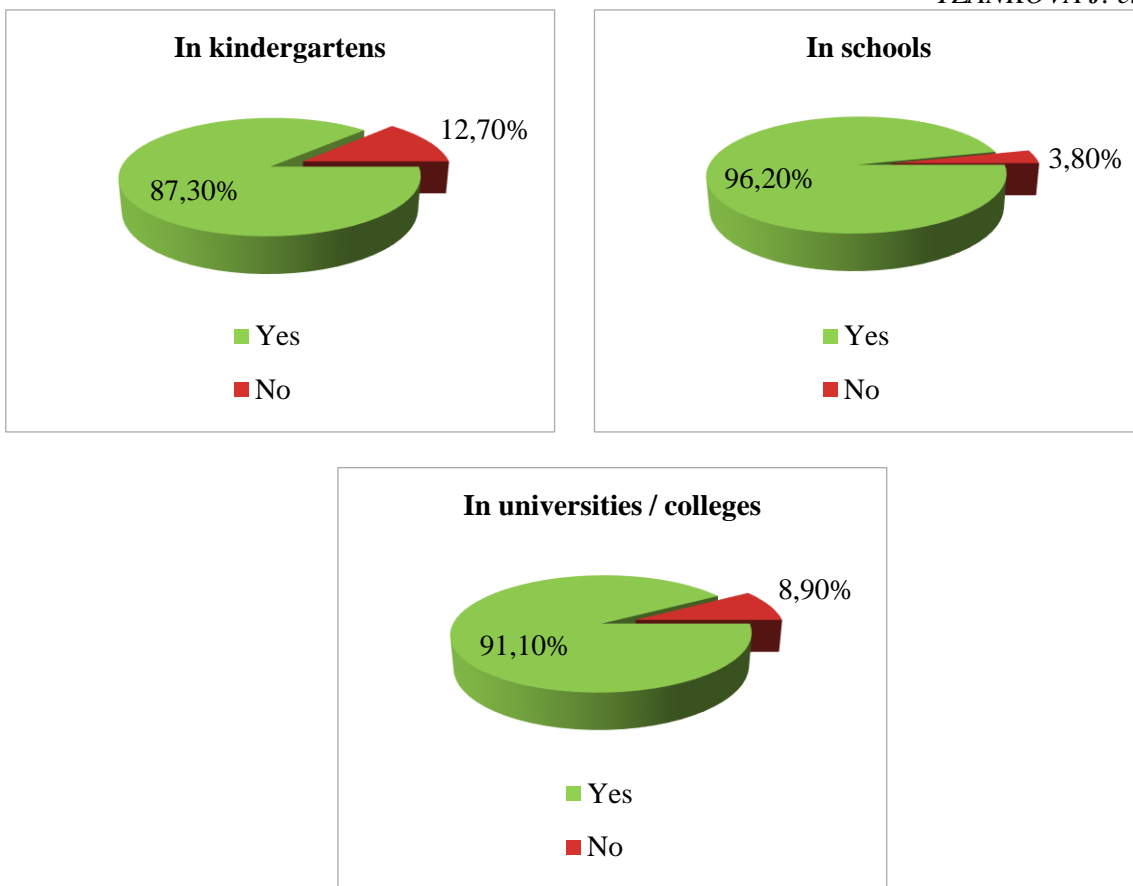


Figure 2. Do you think that Bulgarian folk dances / horó dances should be part of the classes in physical education and sports?

The motivation for the choice to participate in the groups of folk dances while studying at the SWU “Neofit Rilski” is very different. 69% of the surveyed students preferred this group due to the fact that they love folk dances, according to

24.2% this is the place where they will enrich their knowledge, 5% of the respondents think this will help preserve Bulgarian culture in this way, but for others it is the place to learn to dance (1.7%), **(Figure 3).**

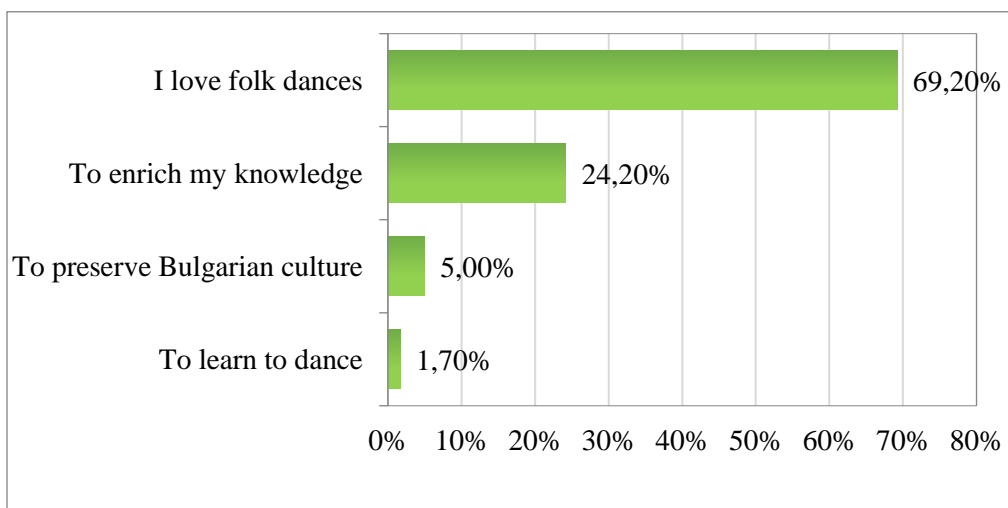


Figure 3. Why did you choose “Bulgarian folk dances and horó” classes at the SWU?

Considering the answers to the question “In your opinion, should they be passed down to generations”, almost all (99.4%) of the students who participated in the survey claimed that Bulgarian traditional dishes, customs, *horó* and dances, and national traditional holidays should be passed down from ancestors, parents, to children to preserve our national identity – 98.8% to preserve folk music and folk fairy-tales, and 96.2% for the religious holidays. To the question related to the passing down of religious holidays, 3.8% of respondents answered “definitely no”.

The perception among students is that Bulgarian folk *horó* dances in their free time help to relieve

stress (37.7%). The second most important benefit is that dancing is fun – 32.1%, while at university the most important perception is that students gain new knowledge (33.9%), the second most important trait is that they think dancing contributes to their general physical exercise (20.5%). Only at fourth place they mention “entertainment” (19.6%). We observe differences in students’ opinion about socialization in free time and at university. According to them, at the university (6.3%) there are better opportunities for socialization than in free time (2.8%). Perhaps this was influenced by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (**Figure 4**).

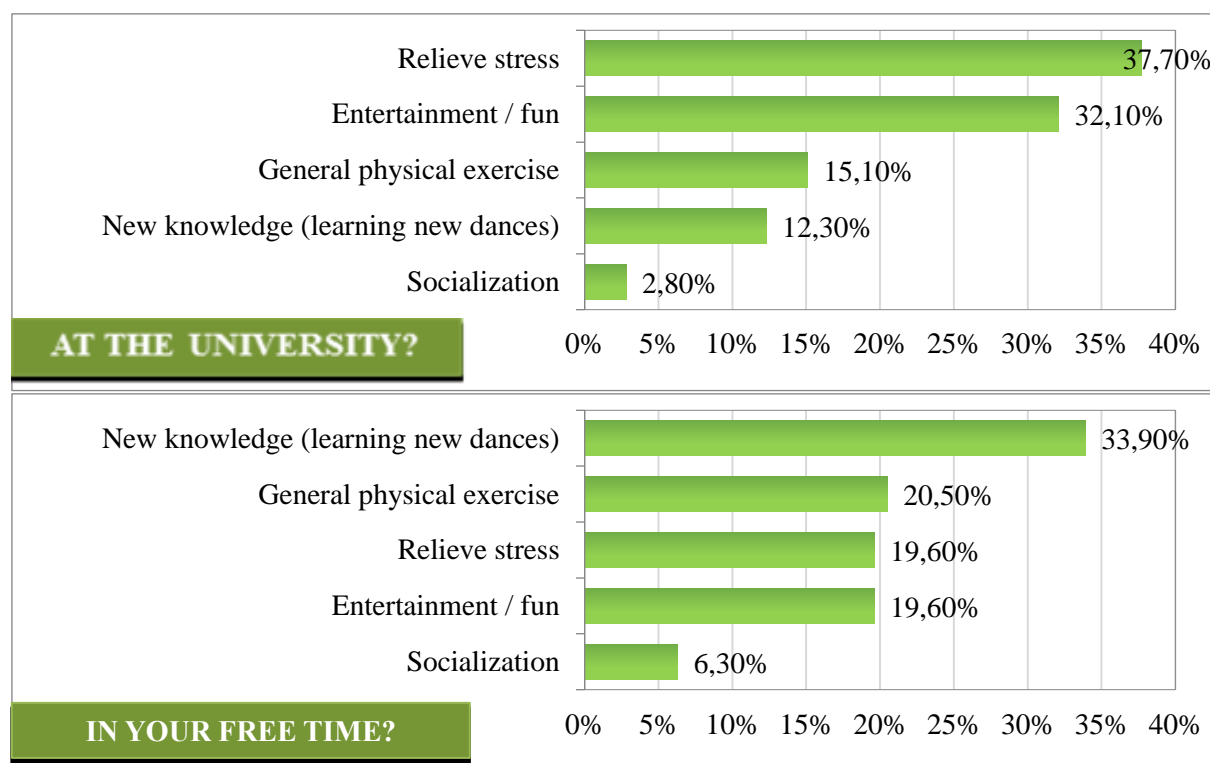


Figure 4. To you personally, what are the benefits of Bulgarian national folk dances and horó dances in comparison to other options for physical exercise?

The students who responded in the survey know the main Bulgarian folk dances and horó which are played and danced in Bulgaria. The most popular ones among respondents are: Straight-line (Pravo), Dunavsko, Elenino, Daychovo,

Shirto, Ratchenitsa, Chichovo. It is important to point out the rich variety of horó dances mentioned, which is probably due to the different origin of the students who were born in different places around Bulgaria (**Figure 5**).

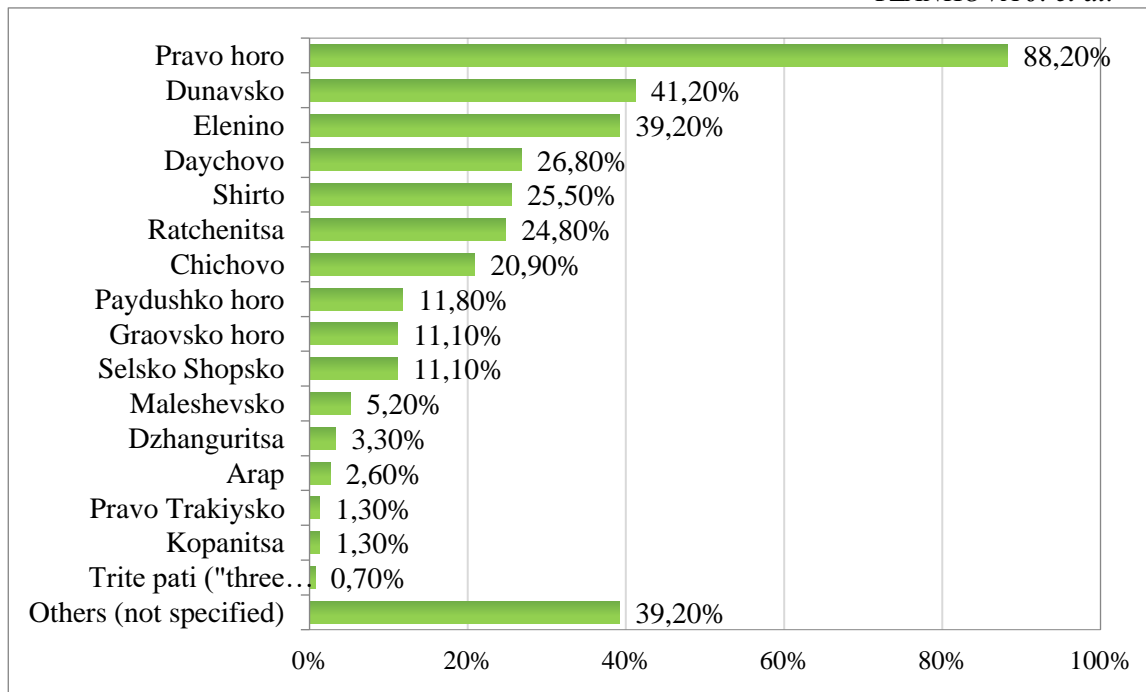


Figure 5. Please list which are the main most popular Bulgarian folk / horó dances which are danced in Bulgaria?

The results of the survey show that 92.4% of the respondents believe that classes in Bulgarian folk horó dances have a positive effect on their physical condition, with 70.1% answering

“definitely yes” and 22.3% “rather yes”, a smaller part of respondents (7.6%) are of the opinion that these activities do not affect their physical condition. (**Figure 6**)

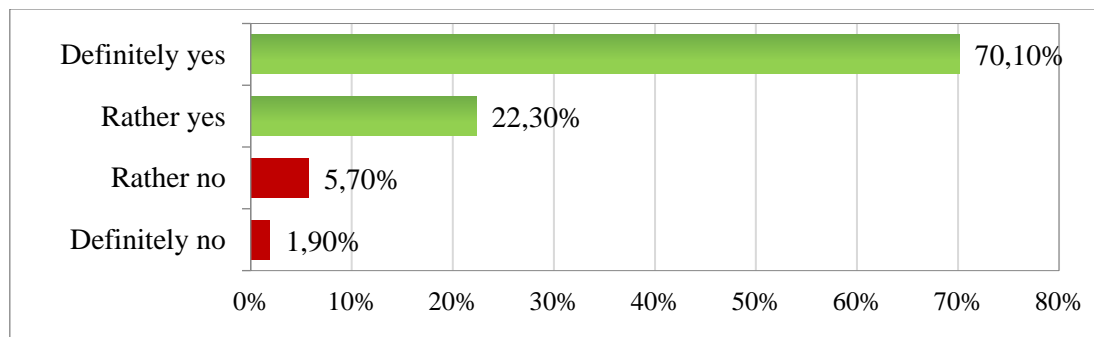


Figure 6. Do you think that Bulgarian folk dances classes affect your physical condition?

CONCLUSION

Bulgarian dance folklore is distinguished by great richness and variety of movements. They are a reflection of the temperament, resourcefulness and humor of the talented Bulgarians. The horó dances, the games and the ratchenitsa dances are diverse and are connected with movements from the daily working life of the people (4). Folk dances are an integral part of folklore and are related to human activity, religion and play. The movement of the legs and the expressiveness of the body imitate the labor actions associated with

agricultural work, the movements of animals, hunting as an activity in the means of livelihood. Bulgarian folklore has increasingly successfully entered the Bulgarian educational system in recent years. Folk songs and horó dances are part of our folklore. They have an impact on the multi-functional development of young people and cover some of the key competences for lifelong learning according to the Law for Pre-school and School Education – cultural competence and skills to express themselves through creativity, a skill to support sustainable development and a healthy lifestyle and sport.

In folk dances and horó classes, attention is paid not only to rhythm, but also to the relationship between dance, music and the development of motor skills, which has a beneficial effect on physiological, biological and mental functions, helps to strengthen health, improves performance and creativity in human activity (5).

Dancing helps to a relative extent in the development of dexterity, agility and flexibility. Classical, characteristic and folk dance are used in training sessions of some sports. Dances can be used for the complex development of physical qualities and their maintenance at a certain level (4).

The analysis of the results and the summaries made in the text allow us to formulate the following conclusions:

1. The students at the SWU “Neofit Rilski” are well acquainted with the traditions, customs and religious holidays, which are an integral part of life in the communities and families in which they live. They believe that traditions should be passed down from generation to generation;
2. According to the students who participated in the survey, Bulgarian folk dances should be studied at all levels of Bulgarian education. School is the main place where young people should get to know Bulgarian folk dances, but respondents also stress on the participation in festivals and folklore groups for this;
3. It is obvious that for the students, the main motive for joining *horó* dance groups is their love for folk dances, but this is the place where they can enrich their knowledge. The main advantage

of Bulgarian folk dances in students’ free time gives them the opportunity to relax and have fun, and at the university to gain new knowledge by studying new dances, which will also help with their physical exercise;

4. From the analysis, it can be seen that the most popular *horó* dances among the students of SWU “Neofit Rilski” are *Pravo*, *Dunavsko*, *Elenino*, which are widespread in the country;

5. Students are firmly convinced that studying Bulgarian folk dances will have an impact on their physical condition. We should not overlook the fact that a large proportion indicated that they were overweight or obese;

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