Collective Empowerment and Solidarity Through Dance Among Indonesian Migrant Workers in Taiwan: A Participatory Artistic Research Approach

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Abstract

This study explores how Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan use dance not just as recreation, but as a powerful form of collective expression and social connection. In the face of isolation, precarity, and restrictive legal environments, these workers come together to form self-organized dance groups: spaces where friendship, identity, and mutual care are cultivated. Drawing on participatory artistic research, this paper approaches dance not only as cultural performance but as a shared practice of resilience and empowerment. Through ethnographic fieldwork, performance observation, and active collaboration, the research highlights how dance becomes a strategy for building community and affirming dignity. Whether performing during religious celebrations, public cultural events, or advocacy campaigns, these migrant-led initiatives transform dance into a vehicle for visibility, belonging, and voice. Their choreographies speak of lived experiences, aspirations, and solidarity, grounded in the everyday realities of migrant life. The study draws from social design theory, performance studies, and migration studies to argue that dance serves as both a form of research and grassroots activism. It becomes a method through which migrants reclaim agency, build social capital, and imagine alternative futures, on their own terms. By recognizing migrant-led artistic practices as vital, this research invites both scholars and policymakers to pay closer attention to the creative strategies of marginalized communities. In these dance practices, we witness not only art, but acts of care, courage, and collective hope.

Introduction

Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan represent a vibrant yet often overlooked community within the wider landscape of global migration. While they make meaningful contributions to both their home and host countries, they continue to face systemic challenges: including social isolation, unstable job conditions, and legal limitations that restrict their ability to fully participate in society (Constable, 2009; Lan, 2006). In the face of these hardships, many Indonesian migrants have found strength and solidarity through collective cultural practices, especially dance. Far from being just a form of entertainment or nostalgic expression, dance becomes a powerful space for building community, sharing emotional support, and navigating complex identities (Taylor, 2003).

This research explores how dance serves not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a strategic practice of empowerment for Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. Grounded in a participatory artistic research approach, the study goes beyond detached observation by working closely with migrant dance groups as collaborators (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2015). In doing so, it embraces the idea that performative practices are not merely artistic—they are also methods of inquiry, reflection, and resistance (Jackson, 2011; Kuppers, 2007). Through fieldwork, performance analysis, and active engagement with these communities, this study highlights how dance becomes a vehicle for creative agency, social bonding, and collective resilience.

These dance practices unfold in diverse settings, religious holidays, cultural festivals, and even advocacy events, each time telling stories that transform personal and collective

experiences of migration into public acts of expression. By stepping onto a stage, these workers do more than perform; they challenge dominant narratives that often reduce them to invisible laborers or social burdens. Instead, they claim their dignity, creativity, and cultural identity, asserting their place within Taiwanese society (Bourdieu, 1986; Turner, 1987).

This analysis draws from an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that bridges performance studies, social design theory, and migration studies. Performance studies helps us understand dance as more than art: it is a lived, embodied practice that negotiates meaning, identity, and power (Schechner, 2003). Social design theory, especially the work of Manzini (2015), allows us to see how creative actions like dance can generate social innovation, enabling participants to reshape their environments and relationships. Migration studies, meanwhile, offer insight into how migrants construct belonging and identity under conditions of displacement and constraint (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Together, these perspectives provide a rich foundation for analyzing how migrant dance is deeply political, participatory, and transformative.

Ultimately, this research contributes to ongoing conversations in artistic research and creative community scholarship by showing how performance can be a grassroots method of inquiry and change. Working with migrant communities not as subjects but as co-creators, this study models the potential of participatory artistic research to bridge scholarship and activism. It calls for deeper recognition of migrant-led cultural practices—not only in academic work but also in policies aimed at fostering more inclusive and resilient societies.

The paper begins by reviewing the relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings, followed by a detailed description of the participatory research process. It then presents ethnographic findings and performance case studies that illuminate how dance operates within Indonesian migrant communities. The discussion considers the broader implications of these practices as acts of cultural resistance and social design. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the study's contributions and suggests future directions for research at the intersection of art, migration, and empowerment.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This study draws from a rich body of scholarship to explore how Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan use dance not just as art, but as a means of social connection, identity expression, and community-building. Three key theoretical approaches guide this inquiry: performance studies, social design theory, and migration studies. Together, they help illuminate the ways dance becomes a dynamic practice of empowerment, especially when viewed through the lens of participatory artistic research.

Dance as Social Practice and Collective Empowerment

Dance has long been recognized as more than a performative art—it is a social act that shapes identities, carries cultural meaning, and forges connections between people. In performance studies, dance is seen as a way of communicating that bypasses words, making space for emotions, memories, and resistance to be expressed through the body (Foster, 1995; Schechner, 2003; Thomas, 2014). Scholars like Phelan (1993) and Taylor (2003) highlight its ability to bring forth lived experiences that often remain invisible in mainstream narratives.

For migrant communities, dance often becomes a tool for survival, belonging, and transformation. As Brettell (2003) and Franklin (2014) note, migrant workers frequently face marginalization and isolation; conditions that dance can help counteract by providing communal space for cultural affirmation. Through shared movement and storytelling, migrant dancers assert agency over their bodies and reclaim spaces otherwise denied to them (Reed, 2003; Shay, 2014).

In Taiwan, many Indonesian migrant workers, especially women employed in domestic care, organize dance groups that go far beyond recreation. These groups are not just about leisure; they foster collective strength, visibility, and emotional resilience amid restrictive social and legal frameworks (Lan, 2006; Huang, 2018). Their performances become public affirmations of identity and solidarity, generating social capital in the process (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

Participatory Artistic Research and Dance as Methodology

This research is grounded in participatory artistic methods, where the line between researcher and participant is intentionally blurred. Instead of observing from the outside, I worked alongside dance groups as both collaborator and learner. This approach, often referred to as participatory artistic research, sees art-making as a legitimate and insightful form of inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2015).

Within this context, dance is not only what is being studied; it is also how knowledge is generated. Haseman (2006) and Kershaw (2011) argue that embodied performance can serve as a method that uncovers complex social realities. When people move together, they are not just performing; they are thinking, feeling, negotiating, and making meaning in real time. For migrant workers whose voices are rarely heard in academic or policy spaces, this methodology offers a way to center their experiences and highlight their agency (Jackson, 2011; Kuppers, 2007).

By dancing with migrant workers rather than simply watching them, this research brings their creative processes and community dynamics into focus, positioning them not as research subjects, but as co-creators of knowledge and change.

Social Design Theory and Collective Creativity

To better understand how dance fosters change on a community level, this study also engages with social design theory. Ezio Manzini (2015) describes social design as a participatory process that helps communities address real-world challenges through creativity and collaboration. Rather than focusing on the final product, social design values the shared journey of making something together.

In this light, the self-organized dance initiatives of Indonesian migrant workers can be seen as a form of social design. Their choreography and public performances are acts of collective problem-solving, responding to exclusion and invisibility by building something inclusive, affirming, and visible (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Bishop, 2012). These creative acts produce more than cultural expression; they generate new relationships, shared ownership, and a sense of belonging (Escobar, 2018).

Just like social design, participatory artistic research thrives on process, iteration, and dialogue. In both cases, the goal is not only a polished performance, but a deeper sense of connection and empowerment among those involved.

Migration Studies: Identity, Belonging, and Resistance

Migration studies offers essential insight into the lived complexities of moving across borders—physically, culturally, and emotionally. Migrants often construct hybrid identities and sustain transnational ties that defy simple categories like assimilation (Hall, 1990; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). For many, creative practices such as dance become tools for navigating the pressures of displacement and maintaining continuity with their cultural roots (Papastergiadis, 2000).

Agency is a recurring theme in this literature. Migrants do not simply endure their circumstances; they actively respond, resist, and reimagine their place in the world (Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Kibreab, 2004). For Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan, dance is one such

response. It allows them to express their values, histories, and dreams, not just individually, but collectively.
These performances are particularly powerful when viewed through the lens of gender and labor. Migrant women, often confined to invisible caregiving roles, use dance to push back against societal constraints, creating new spaces of visibility and pride (Parreñas, 2001; Foster, 2010).

Integrating Theoretical Perspectives

Bringing these three frameworks together, performance studies, social design theory, and migration studies, allows for a multidimensional understanding of dance in the lives of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. Performance studies helps us see dance as embodied meaning-making. Social design theory reminds us that collaborative creativity can be transformative. Migration studies grounds these ideas in the real-life struggles and strategies of people on the move.

Viewed through this integrated lens, dance is no longer a decorative add-on to migrant life; it becomes central to how individuals and communities survive, adapt, and flourish. It is through dance that these workers build solidarity, challenge marginalization, and imagine alternative futures. And in the process, they also become researchers, artists, and designers of their own lived experiences.

Methodology

This study is grounded in a participatory artistic research approach that centers the lived experiences and creative practices of Indonesian female migrant workers in Taiwan. Rather than treating dance merely as an object of study, I approach it as both a method and a space of inquiry: one that is co-created with those whose lives it expresses. In doing so, this research positions migrant workers not as passive subjects but as collaborators and co-authors of knowledge, echoing feminist and decolonial calls to reimagine the researcher-participant relationship (Haraway, 1988; Smith, 1999).
This methodology responds to the need for more relational, embodied, and ethically grounded approaches in migration and performance studies. It draws from contemporary paradigms in arts-based and participatory research, which emphasize co-creation, reciprocity, and reflexivity (Leavy, 2015; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). By engaging directly with migrant workers' dance communities over an extended period, I sought not only to observe but to move alongside them; to listen with my body, to learn through shared rhythm, and to co-perform understanding.

Participatory Artistic Research

Participatory artistic research integrates artistic creation with critical inquiry, recognizing art as both a medium of knowledge and a mode of social intervention. In this study, dance serves not only as a research focus but as a methodology that shapes how research is done—through movement, gesture, repetition, and improvisation.
Rather than standing apart from the community, I participated in rehearsals, joined workshops, attended performances, and contributed to discussions. Dance here is not a “case study” but a living process: a rehearsal space for freedom, a gathering point for collective care, and a vocabulary for expressing what often cannot be said. As Bresler (2006) and Leavy (2015) argue, such approaches destabilize the distance between researcher and subject, creating more ethical, empathetic modes of inquiry that honor artistic integrity and social complexity.

Ethnographic Fieldwork

The backbone of this research is long-term ethnographic engagement. Since 2019, I have spent extended periods with Indonesian migrant worker communities in Taiwan, building

relationships that stretch across mosque gatherings, church festivals, open-air dance rehearsals, and community-led advocacy events. My fieldwork spans both everyday settings and special occasions, capturing the rich texture of migrant life and its seasonal rhythms.

I kept detailed fieldnotes, recorded video footage of performances, and engaged in countless informal conversations, in Indonesian, Javanese, and sometimes with the aid of gestures and laughter when words failed. These encounters were not always planned; some of the most revealing moments occurred on long train rides after performances or over shared meals during Eid celebrations. Such moments offered insight into how these women navigate their identities, dreams, and constraints through dance.

Drawing from classic ethnographic methodologies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), I allowed my fieldwork to remain open-ended, guided not just by research questions but by relationships, trust, and the tempo of the community itself.

Performance Analysis

Understanding dance as a form of embodied knowledge requires an analytical lens attuned to movement, space, and affect. I drew from performance studies frameworks (Schechner, 2003; Reed, 2003) to analyze how choreography, spatial arrangements, and audience interaction serve as vehicles for expressing identity, community, and resistance.

For instance, I examined how gestures associated with religious devotion, such as the raising of hands or prostration, were woven into secular dance routines, blurring the lines between ritual and performance. In one performance by a Jakarta-based migrant group, the dancers' synchronized steps mirrored the patterns of factory work, subtly critiquing the mechanization of migrant labor while asserting agency through coordinated beauty.

These analyses were not conducted from a distance. They were enriched by the knowledge shared in interviews, by what I learned through dancing myself, and by post-performance discussions where dancers reflected on their choices. Thus, analysis became an extension of shared experience, not a detached act of interpretation.

Participatory Observation and Collaboration

Throughout this research, I deliberately embraced a role that oscillated between observer and participant, insider and outsider. I danced with the women. I laughed with them when mistakes were made in rehearsals. I cried with them when they shared stories of separation from children, or of unfair treatment at work. This embodied and emotional participation enabled a depth of understanding that conventional observation alone could not offer.

Participatory observation also required constant reflexivity. As a Javanese researcher with academic privilege, I was aware of the hierarchies at play. I continuously reflected on how my presence shaped the field, how trust was built (or not), and how to ensure that my representations honored the dignity and creativity of those involved (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Banks, 2001).

Specific Methods

The methodological framework was operationalized through a combination of qualitative and artistic methods:

- **Semi-structured interviews** were conducted with members of Indonesian dance groups. These conversations explored their migration trajectories, motivations for dancing, experiences of community, and reflections on empowerment. Interviews were flexible and shaped by participants' comfort and availability, often taking place during rest periods in rehearsals or over snacks after events.

- **Participant observation** took place across various domains of migrant life: from the mosque courtyard during Idul Fitri, to a Taipei public plaza during a solidarity performance, to the backrooms of dormitories where rehearsals happened after long shifts. Fieldnotes captured not just actions and words, but also silences, tensions, rhythms, and the textures of these shared spaces.
- **Video documentation** allowed for slow-motion re-watching of performances, revealing subtle elements like mutual eye contact, synchrony, and spatial dynamics. These audiovisual records became key tools for collaborative analysis with the dancers themselves, allowing them to narrate their intentions and interpretations.
- **Thematic analysis** of all data, transcripts, fieldnotes, video materials, was conducted iteratively. Using codes related to identity, faith, resistance, and affective labor, I constructed a layered understanding of how dance operates as a form of grassroots cultural politics. Themes were not imposed but emerged through ongoing dialogue with participants, ensuring that the analysis reflected collective insight.

Ethical Considerations

Working with migrant communities entails serious ethical responsibility. Many participants faced precarious legal and economic situations. Informed consent was not a one-time formality but an ongoing negotiation. I made sure participants understood the aims of the research, their right to withdraw, and how their stories and images would be used.

Confidentiality was rigorously maintained. Some participants chose pseudonyms; others gave full consent to be named, wanting their work and voices recognized. Wherever possible, I sought to ensure that the research served the community, whether through advocacy partnerships, public presentations of their work, or returning performance footage for their own use.

As Banks (2001) and Smith (1999) remind us, ethical research is not only about protecting participants but about respecting their autonomy, honoring their contributions, and ensuring that knowledge production is mutual and accountable.

In sum, this methodology emerges from a deep commitment to co-creating knowledge with migrant women whose creative resilience, expressed through dance, offers critical insight into the entanglements of labor, identity, and faith. This approach not only generates rich empirical data but also enacts the very values of community, reciprocity, and transformation that the research seeks to understand.

IV. Findings

This study found that for Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan, dance is far more than artistic expression; it is a living, collective practice that fosters community, identity, resilience, and advocacy. Drawing on a participatory artistic research framework, the study revealed the deeply interwoven social and affective dimensions of dance in migrant life. Three key themes emerged: dance as a site of belonging, a form of cultural resistance, and a tool for social capital and advocacy.

1. Dance as a Site of Belonging and Mutual Support

For many Indonesian migrant workers, the experience of migration is marked by isolation, often due to linguistic barriers, cultural displacement, and the structural constraints of Taiwan's labor and immigration systems (Lan, 2008). In this context, participation in dance groups offers an invaluable source of social and emotional support. Dance rehearsals and performances create rare communal spaces where individuals with shared cultural backgrounds and migratory experiences can gather freely. One participant noted, "When I dance with my friends, I feel connected. We are not alone here. We share stories, laughter, and strength, and also the Indonesian spicy food or sambal terasi."

Such informal gatherings serve as more than just artistic outlets; they become spaces for psychological reprieve and intersubjective solidarity (De Genova, 2010). Dance groups often serve as information-sharing hubs where members exchange knowledge about labor rights, access to healthcare, or strategies to cope with exploitative work conditions. In essence, these dance spaces become temporary "homes" in exile, emotional and cultural sanctuaries embedded in diasporic life (Brah, 1996).

Notably, traditional performances during Indonesian Independence Day or Islamic holidays also allow migrants to publicly reaffirm their cultural identity. The act of donning traditional costumes and performing ancestral dance styles becomes a powerful means of maintaining continuity with one's homeland and faith, even while living in a state of displacement.

2. Dance as Embodied Cultural Assertion and Resistance

Beyond community formation, dance emerges as a deeply embodied language through which migrant women assert their complex identities and push back against marginalization. In an environment where migrant laborers are often seen through the reductive lens of utility, dance reclaims the body as a site of dignity and narration (Csordas, 1994). Many performances observed integrated elements of Islamic symbolism, such as gestures inspired by ritual prayer or costumes referencing Qur'anic motifs, thereby allowing participants to express intersecting identities: as Indonesians, as Muslims, and as migrants. This integration also reflects a broader trend in migrant communities using culture to mediate between personal identity and host-society norms (Glick Schiller et al., 1995).

As one dancer explained, "Through dance, I tell my story, my struggles and hopes, without needing words. It shows who I am beyond the work I do." These narratives complicate the dominant portrayal of migrant workers as passive victims and instead foreground their agency and creative subjectivity. In some instances, migrant groups have performed at public events organized by NGOs or during multicultural festivals. These performances, while celebratory, carry an undercurrent of resistance, they challenge dominant societal scripts and call attention to issues of labor injustice, discrimination, and invisibility.

The performative act thus operates as what Butler (1997) calls a "performative counter-speech": a refusal to be silenced, and a way to inscribe alternative meanings into public space.

3. Dance as a Tool for Social Capital Building and Advocacy

Engagement in dance also builds vital forms of social capital. Migrant dancers not only become performers but also organizers, teachers, and community leaders. Through planning rehearsals, coordinating costumes, and managing logistics, participants cultivate valuable skills in leadership, communication, and collective action. One group leader reflected, "Being part of the dance group gave me courage to speak up and connect with others beyond our community."

These roles open new possibilities for migrants to advocate for themselves and others. Public performances at multicultural festivals or collaborations with local NGOs provide access to broader networks and civic engagement opportunities. Such encounters can foster intercultural understanding, challenge xenophobic attitudes, and carve out inclusive social spaces in host societies (Putnam, 2000).

Over time, the trust and solidarity developed through dance have enabled some migrant participants to act as informal advocates, helping others navigate bureaucratic systems or access support in cases of abuse or illness. This evolution highlights dance not just as a social activity but as a form of grassroots organizing and social innovation: a way to mobilize collective power from within the community itself.

In this sense, dance is both medium and message, an embodied practice that reclaims agency, makes visible the invisible, and catalyzes community-based solutions to structural inequalities (Noland, 2009).

Reflexivity and Researcher-Participant Collaboration

This research was deeply rooted in collaborative and reflexive methodology. Rather than positioning the participants as mere subjects, the study embraced a co-creative ethos. The researcher engaged as both observer and collaborator, attending rehearsals, assisting with logistics, and co-reflecting on performance meanings with participants. This mutual engagement nurtured trust and allowed the researcher to access more nuanced, insider perspectives.

Such participatory engagement also challenged conventional researcher-researched hierarchies and aligned with the feminist ethics of care and voice (Tronto, 1993). By centering participants' lived experiences and co-producing meaning, the study avoided imposing external theoretical frameworks and instead let the analytical categories emerge organically.

Participants expressed gratitude that their stories and artistry were treated with respect and authenticity. For them, the research was not merely extractive but affirming: a space to be seen, heard, and valued. This outcome illustrates the ethical power of artistic research not only to generate knowledge but also to cultivate dignity and empowerment within marginalized communities.

Summary

In sum, the findings of this study illuminate the multilayered significance of dance among Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. Dance serves as a sanctuary of belonging, a mode of embodied resistance, and a platform for building social capital and advocacy. It enables migrants, particularly women, to assert their identities, share knowledge, and foster mutual support. Moreover, it acts as a form of migrant-led innovation, one that transforms artistic practice into a vehicle for social change.

These insights were made possible through an engaged and reflexive research methodology that honored participants' voices and emphasized co-creation. The study affirms the transformative potential of dance in migrant contexts, not simply as performance, but as praxis: a lived, moving response to structural injustice and a pathway to empowerment.

V. Discussion

This study brings to light the vital and often overlooked role of dance in the everyday lives of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. More than a form of leisure or artistic display, dance becomes a living, breathing social practice, one that enables workers to connect, resist, and thrive amid the challenges of migration. Through a participatory and embodied lens, the findings illustrate how dance creates space for collective agency, cultural assertion, and emotional survival in an often isolating and precarious environment.

The first theme, dance as a space for belonging and mutual support, reflects a fundamental human need for connection and community. In the absence of formal support systems, self-organized dance groups operate as alternative social institutions; offering solidarity, shared identity, and practical knowledge exchange. This echoes broader migration scholarship that identifies grassroots cultural practices as essential to migrants' wellbeing and social integration (Almeida & Wright, 2016; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Rather than merely reminiscing about home, these gatherings foster a sense of "home-making" in the host country, providing emotional safety and reaffirming cultural continuity (Boccagni, 2017). In these spaces, dance functions as a form of social care: tending to the psychological and communal wounds left by labor exploitation, separation from family, and systemic marginalization.

Secondly, the research affirms that dance functions as a powerful form of embodied cultural assertion and subtle resistance. The expressive body, in this context, speaks volumes beyond what words can capture. Migrant workers choreograph and perform their lived experiences, reclaiming narrative control and resisting objectifying portrayals of migrants as voiceless or merely economic subjects. Performance studies scholars have long emphasized the body's political and cultural agency; highlighting how embodied acts transmit memory, reclaim identity, and subvert dominant narratives (Phelan, 1993; Taylor, 2003; Schechner, 2002). The infusion of religious and cultural symbols in these performances, especially Islamic nuance, allows dancers to navigate and articulate hybrid identities, embracing the intersection of being Indonesian, Muslim, female, and migrant. In this way, dance becomes a form of soft activism, embodying resistance in a manner that is culturally rooted and spiritually resonant (Hughes-Freeland, 2008).

The third theme, dance as a tool for social capital building and advocacy, reveals how artistic practices generate influence far beyond the stage. By participating in rehearsals, organizing events, and engaging with local communities, migrant dancers cultivate leadership, confidence, and a broader public presence. Social capital, as theorized by Bourdieu (1986), refers to the resources accessible through networks of relationships; here, dance serves as a key mechanism for building such networks. These performances become moments of visibility: connecting migrant communities with NGOs, religious institutions, policymakers, and Taiwanese allies. As such, dance operates not only as cultural expression but as a platform for participatory advocacy and intercultural dialogue (Kester, 2011; Belfiore & Bennett, 2007). The creative labor of these dancers thus expands into civic engagement, challenging stereotypes and fostering mutual understanding.

This study also affirms the strength of participatory artistic research methodologies in exploring lived experiences. By engaging in co-creation with participants, the research avoided extractive tendencies common in migration studies and instead centered the voices, values, and aesthetics of the community itself (Leavy, 2018; Barone & Eisner, 2012). This methodological orientation reflects a commitment to ethical collaboration, recognizing migrants not merely as subjects of inquiry but as co-researchers and cultural producers with rich interior lives and insights.

From an interdisciplinary standpoint, the study contributes to ongoing conversations at the intersection of migration studies, performance studies, and social design theory. It offers empirical support for rethinking how we understand migrant agency; not only through legal and economic frameworks but also through the creative, symbolic, and relational domains. The idea that marginalized communities use collective creativity to reimagine their futures resonates with social design principles that emphasize participatory, inclusive innovation from below (Manzini, 2015).

Nonetheless, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study focuses on one specific migrant community, Indonesian Muslim women in Taiwan, which, while rich in depth, may not reflect the full diversity of migrant artistic practices across geographies or religious-cultural backgrounds. Future research could undertake comparative or transnational studies to explore how different migrant populations mobilize dance and other artistic forms in varied sociopolitical contexts.

In sum, this discussion reaffirms that dance is not a peripheral or ornamental aspect of migrant life; it is central to how many migrants survive, connect, and resist. Through dance, they craft belonging, assert identity, and build networks of care and advocacy. Understanding these embodied practices can guide not only academic inquiry but also policy development and community programming aimed at creating more inclusive, responsive societies.

VI. Conclusion

This study has illuminated the profound and multifaceted significance of dance as a collective, participatory, and deeply affective practice among Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. Rather than simply serving as a means of cultural expression or entertainment, dance is revealed as an essential strategy of everyday survival, empowerment, and community care. It enables migrant women to creatively respond to the challenges of displacement, precarity, and marginalization by forging spaces of belonging, healing, and self-determination.

Through the formation of self-organized dance groups, these women actively cultivate environments of mutual support, interdependence, and embodied solidarity. These communities, built through shared rhythms and choreographed movements, become vital platforms for negotiating identity and enacting agency. In these acts of co-creation, dance becomes a medium for self-assertion and cultural continuity, where individual stories merge with collective experiences in ways that foster resilience and dignity. Such performances, though often modest in scale, carry powerful messages of hope, resistance, and endurance.

Moreover, this research has shown that the embodied performances of Indonesian migrant workers function not only as aesthetic expressions but also as subtle, yet impactful, forms of social intervention. These acts of dancing together—often in public spaces or on digital platforms—challenge dominant narratives that render migrant laborers invisible or disposable. By taking up space, both physically and symbolically, these women articulate new forms of visibility and participation. In this way, dance becomes a tool of soft resistance, offering a counter-narrative to structural silencing and marginalization.

Importantly, the study underscores how social capital generated through these creative practices extends beyond the stage. Dance fosters leadership, intercultural dialogue, and emotional well-being, while also facilitating connections with local and transnational communities. These outcomes speak to the broader transformative potential of arts-based, participatory research methodologies; approaches that respect and uplift the creative intelligence of migrant communities themselves.

Drawing from theoretical frameworks in social design, performance studies, and migration research, this work invites us to rethink how we understand agency, collectivity, and cultural labor in migratory contexts. It argues for the urgent need to recognize migrant-led artistic practices within both academic discourse and policy discussions; not as supplementary or peripheral, but as essential to building more inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive societies.

Looking forward, both scholarship and policy must continue to support and explore the rich, diverse ways migrant communities engage in creative practices as tools for transformation. These practices are not only deeply meaningful for the individuals involved but also carry important implications for how we conceptualize citizenship, participation, and belonging in an increasingly interconnected world.

Ultimately, this study calls for a broader recognition of collective creativity as a force capable of shaping alternative futures: futures grounded in solidarity, care, and shared humanity. The dancing bodies of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan remind us that creativity, when rooted in community, is not only an act of expression, but also an act of world-making.

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