

# Dancing with Commitment: Experiences of University Dance Troupe Members toward Choreographer Leadership

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**Abstract:** This qualitative phenomenological study explored the experiences of university dance troupe members regarding choreographer leadership and commitment. Twenty members from two dance troupes at Central Luzon State University participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. Three themes emerged: choreographer leadership experiences, leadership and commitment, and leadership practices encouraging continued participation. Participants described their choreographer as strict, supportive, patient, dedicated, and approachable. Strictness helped promote discipline and performance improvement, while guidance, feedback, and encouragement strengthened confidence and motivation. Peer relationships and personal passion also contributed to continued participation. Overall, the findings show that balanced leadership combining discipline, support, communication, and constructive feedback contribute to positive dance experiences, motivation, and organizational commitment.

**Keywords:** choreographer leadership, dance troupe, commitment, university dancers

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## 1. Introduction

Dance is an artistic, physical, and social activity that can foster discipline, creativity, teamwork, communication, confidence, and interpersonal development. In higher education, university dance troupes provide students with opportunities to develop technical skills while building commitment, responsibility, and social connections. Choreography is particularly important because it brings together creative expression, technical development, collaboration, and reflective learning (Giguere, 2019). Butterworth (2004) likewise emphasized that choreographic practice in higher education involves different relationships between choreographers and dancers, ranging from directive to more collaborative approaches. Within university dance organizations, choreographers perform an important leadership role by teaching movement, organizing rehearsals, providing feedback, establishing standards, and guiding dancers toward shared performance goals. Leadership practices may influence how members perceive their roles and sustain their participation. Lobo (2023), in a study of choreographers and student dancers from higher education institutions in Luzon, examined leadership style and organizational commitment. Although the study found no significant relationship between leadership style and commitment, it documented the importance of leadership and management development in strengthening choreographer–dancer relationships.

Recent research further demonstrates the relevance of choreographer management to dancers' organizational experiences. Lobo et al. (2025) examined competitive dance team members' organizational commitment in

relation to choreographers' management approaches and years of service, highlighting the importance of understanding leadership within the specific context of dance organizations. At the same time, participative approaches may contribute to confidence and perceived capability. Pestaño et al. (2025), involving student-athletes from the Philippine setting, reported on participative coaching in relation to self-confidence and self-efficacy, suggesting the value of supportive and collaborative leadership practices in performance environments.

Motivation and perceived competence are also relevant to continued participation in physical activities. Martin et al. (2016) found that Filipino college students demonstrated moderate perceived physical competence and physical activity participation, emphasizing the importance of considering individual differences in skills, readiness, and preferences in Physical Education. Similarly, Martin et al. (2017) found that motivation-related factors and perceived competence were relevant to physical activity participation among college students. These findings provide a useful context for understanding why dancers may continue participating when they experience encouragement, recognition, meaningful goals, and opportunities to improve.

Despite these studies, limited qualitative research has examined how university dance troupe members themselves experience choreographer leadership in their everyday rehearsals and performances. Existing research has often examined leadership styles, organizational commitment, or performance outcomes quantitatively, leaving a need to understand the personal meanings dancers attach to leadership experiences. This study therefore explores the lived experiences of university dance troupe members toward choreographer leadership, particularly how leadership practices influence their commitment, motivation, development, and continued participation. By focusing on dancers' narratives, the study seeks to provide deeper insight into the leadership practices that shape supportive and meaningful university dance environments.

## **2. Methodology**

### *Research Design*

The experiences of university dance troupe members in connection with their choreographer's leadership style were investigated in this study using a qualitative phenomenological research design. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), a phenomenological approach focuses on how individuals explain and interpret their own experiences with a particular situation or event. Because it allowed the researchers to learn more about how dance troupe members perceive their choreographer's leadership and how these experiences inspire them to shape their commitment and dedication to the dance troupe, this research design was appropriate for the study.

### *Participants*

The participants of this study consisted of twenty (20) active university dance troupe members from Central Luzon State University (CLSU), including fifteen (15) members from Bithay Sining Dance Company and five (5) members from Tanghalang Gagaw sa CLSU. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their experiences with choreographer leadership.

### *Data Collection*

Semi-structured interviews with members of the university dance troupe were used to collect data. A series of open-ended questions was created to investigate dance troupe members' perspectives on the choreographer's leadership and dedication, the elements that affected their participation, the challenges they faced, and the assistance they received from their choreographer. Each interview was audio recorded with consent from the participants to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. When necessary, more questions were posed to confirm the meaning of the participants' answers and to better understand their experiences.

### *Data Analysis*

This study used thematic analysis to explore patterns and themes in what the participants said. This included recording interviews, which were then collected and organized. The overall data were examined to identify patterns and themes that might relate to the responses gathered. Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Framework:

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generation of initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the reports

The interview transcripts were carefully reviewed to find important patterns and recurring ideas. The codes were grouped into categories and eventually organized into main themes representing the participants' experiences.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

The researchers will ensure that ethical standards are observed throughout the study. Before the interview, the respondents will be informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures, and their role as participants. Participation will be voluntary, and they will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

The researchers will keep the participants' information private and confidential, and it will be maintained through the use of participant codes instead of real names. The information collected during the interviews will be used solely for academic purposes and will be stored securely. The researchers will conduct the interviews in a respectful and non-judgmental manner to ensure that participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences. The rights, privacy, dignity, and well-being of all participants will be protected throughout the study.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **Choreographer Leadership Experiences**

##### *Theme 1: Experiences with the Choreographer's Leadership*

These statements explain how the choreographer's leadership influences the dancers' experiences and development in dance activities. His strictness, guidance, patience, and support help dancers become more disciplined, confident, motivated, and skilled in their performances.

*"My experience as a dancer with Sir V is that he can be strict when it comes to creating choreography, formations, staging, and other dance activities."*(P1)

*"To boost our confidence and help us improve, our choreographer really needs to be strict. If the choreographer is not strict, the dancers may not take the training seriously. When a choreographer sets rules and restrictions, the dancers become more serious, including me. I make sure to show the correct movements and execute the steps properly. His strict attitude becomes a good advantage for us because it helps us become more confident during performances."*(P2)

*"My experience as Sir V's student and as a member of Bithay Dance Company is that he is passionate about teaching. As our professor, he teaches us how to understand where a dance came from and why it is important to the place where it originated. Because of his passion, he encourages us not only to learn how to perform but also to learn different dances from different places."*(P4)

*"When we train with Sir V, we know that he is very strict. However, his strictness helps us improve and become better dancers."*(P7)

*"If I had to choose two qualities that really inspire us, I would say commitment and dedication. Because of the dedication that our choreographer shows us, we also learn to become dedicated to our journey as dancers."*

*Commitment is also very important because, as dancers, we need to have commitment within ourselves so we can continue doing what we do with all our hearts.”(P9)*

These statements show that the choreographer’s strict and supportive leadership plays an important role in developing dancers’ discipline, confidence, and performance skills. His strictness encourages the dancers to take training seriously, follow proper movements, and improve their overall performance. At the same time, his patience, guidance, and continuous feedback create a positive learning environment where dancers feel supported in overcoming difficulties. These findings are consistent with prior studies emphasizing that effective leadership in performing arts can influence motivation, self-confidence, and skill development among performers. The participants’ experiences further suggest that a balance between discipline and support helps dancers become more committed, confident, and engaged in their training and performances.

### **Leadership and Commitment**

#### **Theme 2: Choreographer’s Leadership Influences Commitment**

These statements explain how the choreographer's leadership may affect the dancer’s decision to stay active. His guidance, words of wisdom, and support and trust make the dancers feel motivated and committed.

*“For me, folk dance is really important. As Sir V said, it's not enough for folk dance to just be in your heart, and it's also not enough for it to just be in your mind. Both the heart and mind need to be together. Because of this, I understand the importance of dancing more and I feel more encouraged to stay active in the group.” (P3)*

*“What keeps me going as a dancer in Bithay is seeing the dedication of the other members and seniors in dancing. Even though they’re busy with academics and are about to graduate, they still make time for training and sharing their dance knowledge. This motivates me to stay in Bithay because there are still many dances I want to learn.” (P4)*

*“Sir's leadership affects my decision to stay active in the dance troupe because he gives us feedback. When he says, 'You're really good,' I feel more encouraged to keep going. When he doesn't point out any mistakes, we think we didn't do anything wrong, so that feels okay for us.” (P6)*

These statements show that the choreographer’s leadership influences the dancer’s commitment through feedback, guidance, support, and consistent training. Regular meetings allow and guide the dancers to talk about ways to improve and the needs to strengthen. At the same time, the choreographer’s words of wisdom and feedback encourage the dancer to continue and stay consistent. However, the dancer’s personal passion, willingness, and dedication play an important role in becoming more committed. These findings show that the leadership is effective in influencing and boosting the motivation of dancers, helping them to continue, remain active, and committed.

### **Leadership Practices and Motivation**

#### **Theme 3: Leadership Practices Encourage Continued Participation**

The data gathered from participants demonstrated that their choreographers' leadership practices effectively encouraged them to keep participating in the dance troupe. Participants described several leadership behaviors that motivated them to continue participating, including being strict when necessary, providing encouragement, showing concern for members' well-being, being approachable, giving constructive feedback, and serving as positive role models.

*“The actions of Sir V that encourage us to stay are a mix of different things. When we are on the dance floor, he can be strict and serious. However, outside the dance floor, he is fun to be with and easy to approach. That is one of the reasons why we continue to stay in the group under his leadership.”(P1)*

*“What I like most about them is that they are friendly and have a good sense of humor. Even when we were still first-year students, they were easy to approach. They never acted like intimidating or arrogant seniors who expected everyone to follow them. Instead, they treated everyone equally and served as guides for us. I also*

*admire how hardworking they are because they are able to balance their studies while teaching and training us in the dance troupe. They became role models for me because I also love dancing, and I want to learn how to manage both my studies and my passion for dance.” (P4)*

*“They always tell us to keep going, continue training, and stay committed. They remind us that one day we will have our own opportunity to shine and compete. This kind of encouragement has helped me a lot because it makes us feel that our hard work is not wasted. We know that we are working toward a goal and that we can achieve something if we do our part as dancers and as a team. Their encouragement, motivation, commitment, kindness, and sportsmanship help dancers continue in the organization despite the many practices and responsibilities. These qualities help us understand that we are not giving our time and effort for nothing but for a meaningful purpose.”(P11)*

Results showed that leadership strategies including discipline, motivation, supportiveness, accessibility, and modeling were significant for maintaining members' involvement in the dance troupe. Dancers felt motivated to give their best effort and want to continue being involved with the dance troupe when they feel important and committed to the organization through experiencing leadership strategies, even though there are demands and stresses.

#### **4. Discussion**

The findings show that choreographer leadership was an important part of university dance troupe members' experiences. Participants described their choreographer as strict, supportive, patient, dedicated, and approachable. While strictness helped maintain standards and discipline, guidance, encouragement, and feedback made dancers feel supported and motivated.

This finding complements Lobo's (2022) study of choreographer leadership and student-dancer commitment. Although the study found no significant statistical relationship between leadership style and commitment, it highlighted the importance of leadership practices and recommended leadership development for choreographers. The present qualitative findings provide further insight into how dancers personally experience specific behaviors such as feedback, encouragement, and approachability.

Motivation was also strengthened by positive feedback and recognition. This relates to Martin et al. (2016) and Martin et al. (2017), who emphasized the relevance of motivation and perceived competence in physical activity participation among Filipino college students. In the present study, motivation was reflected through personal passion, recognition of progress, social support, and a sense of belonging.

Participants also valued passion, collaboration, and role modeling. These findings are consistent with Giguere (2019) and Butterworth (2004), who emphasized interaction, collaboration, and feedback in choreographic education. Similarly, Pestaño et al. (2025) highlighted supportive and participative coaching in relation to self-confidence and self-efficacy among student-athletes.

Overall, the findings suggest that dancers experienced leadership through a combination of discipline, communication, feedback, encouragement, and interpersonal support. These practices contributed to their motivation, confidence, skill development, and continued participation. However, the findings do not establish that leadership alone causes commitment; rather, leadership was one factor within broader personal, social, and organizational experiences.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that choreographer leadership has a significant influence on the experiences and commitment of university dance troupe members at a state university in Central Luzon. The participants generally described their experiences with their choreographer as positive, emphasizing leadership qualities such as strictness, patience, guidance, support, dedication, and commitment. These qualities contributed to the development of the dancers' discipline, confidence, motivation, and performance skills. The findings revealed that the choreographer's strictness encouraged members to take rehearsals seriously, follow proper techniques, and continuously strive for improvement. At the same time, the

choreographer's patience, encouragement, and willingness to provide guidance created a positive learning environment where members felt supported and valued. Through regular feedback, open communication, and constructive instruction, members were able to overcome challenges and further improve their abilities as dancers. Furthermore, the study found that effective choreographer leadership strengthens members' commitment to the dance organization. The support, motivation, and dedication demonstrated by the choreographer inspired members to remain active, participate consistently in rehearsals and performances, and develop a stronger appreciation for dance. The leadership practices experienced by the participants not only enhanced their technical skills but also contributed to their personal growth, teamwork, responsibility, and sense of belonging within the organization. Overall, the study concludes that a balance between discipline and support is essential in choreographer leadership. Such leadership practices create a positive and productive environment that promotes commitment, engagement, and continuous development among university dance troupe members.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, choreographers should balance discipline with support by providing clear expectations, constructive feedback, encouragement, and open communication. University dance organizations should promote teamwork and a sense of belonging through regular meetings, mentoring, and collaborative activities. Dance troupe members should actively participate in rehearsals and performances while developing discipline, responsibility, teamwork, and openness to feedback. Future researchers are encouraged to examine choreographer leadership and member commitment using larger samples and different university dance organizations, employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

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