

# **Social Behaviour and Group Psychology: Investigating the Role of Bai Ethnic Dance on Psychological Mechanisms, Group Identity and Cohesion**

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Ethnic dance serves not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a psychological mechanism that cultivates group identity, social cohesion, and emotional regulation. This study investigates the role of Bai ethnic dance in Yunnan Province as a psychosocial tool that strengthens collective emotional experiences and interpersonal trust. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, the research examines Bai dance performances—specifically those held during the Raosanling Festival and Deng Ga Gan Zhou—focusing on their function in activating psychological processes such as emotional contagion, cognitive reinforcement, and synchronised movement. The study employs secondary data, archival research, and thematic analysis to explore how Bai dance reinforces community bonds and emotional resilience. The findings reveal that Bai ethnic dance promotes social cohesion through synchronised movement and collective participation, thereby enhancing psychological resilience and group attachment. The dance fosters emotional bonding, reduces social isolation, and encourages intergenerational interaction, thereby maintaining community unity. In contrast to many cultural performances that have been adapted for commercial purposes, Bai dance retains its psychological significance as a mechanism for social connection and emotional regulation. This study makes a valuable contribution to cultural psychology and social behaviour research, offering insights for policy, education, and community initiatives that leverage traditional dance to promote social integration and psychological well-being.

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## Introduction

### *Research Background*

Social behaviour and group psychology are fundamental for generating psychological mechanisms that reinforce group identity and social cohesion. Shared experiences, emotional connections, and cognitive processes form the foundation of a sense of belonging and collective engagement in human interactions. Social cohesion emerges from interactions that lead to repeated participation in similar group activities, fostering emotional trust, shared identity, and interpersonal synchronisation (Sahharon et al., 2023). Together, these interactions activate psychological mechanisms such as emotional bonding, cognitive reinforcement, and social attunement, contributing to group unity and continuity (Fonseca et al., 2019).

Interactive behaviours, particularly those involving collective movement, are strongly linked to a group's long-term loyalty and emotional attachment (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004). Participation in group activities fosters social bonding by enabling individuals to perceive psychological connections with their communities (He, 2023). Symbolic performances and collective movement allow individuals to internalise group norms, values, and shared identity, consolidating social bonds and behavioural alignment. Ethnic dance is one avenue through which these psychological mechanisms are expressed, offering a structured and interactive channel through which social cohesion and collective belonging can be reinforced. Culturally embedded performance participation enhances cognitive and emotional engagement, leading to a stronger group identity and cohesion (Crooke et al., 2024).

In this context, Bai ethnic dance in Yunnan Province serves as a case study to examine how group psychology, social behaviour, and psychological mechanisms intersect. Bai dance incorporates symbolic movement, rhythmic synchronisation, and communal participation, all designed to enhance emotional connections and strengthen group unity. This study investigates the role of Bai ethnic dance as an emotional tool that fosters emotional connections and social behaviour, while simultaneously strengthening group identity and cohesion. The research explores the increasing significance of group psychology and social interaction in maintaining community bonds, analysing its capacity to activate psychological functions such as synchronised movement, collective participation, and emotional regulation.

### *Problem Statement*

In Yunnan, the psychological impact of Bai ethnic dance has been relatively underexplored, particularly in relation to its influence on psychological mechanisms, group identity, and social cohesion within communities. Existing studies, however, often overlook the psychological and social mechanisms—such as emotional regulation, cognitive perception of belonging, and behavioural synchronisation—that underpin this traditional practice. This oversight limits the understanding of its role in the formation of collective identity and unity. Consequently, there is a clear need for more in-depth research on Bai ethnic dance as a structured social behaviour that strengthens community bonds, especially in the face of a changing social landscape, as evidenced by the lack of focused investigation in this area.

### *Research Objectives*

1. To investigate how Bai ethnic dance engages psychological mechanisms, such as emotional regulation and social bonding, in shaping group identity within Yunnan communities.
2. To examine how Bai ethnic dance fosters social cohesion by activating psychological mechanisms, including collective emotional experiences and synchronized movement, to strengthen group unity.

### *Significance of Research*

This study holds both academic and practical significance. Academically, it contributes to the understanding of how cultural practices, such as Bai ethnic dance, function as tools of group psychology in the development of group identity and social cohesion. It makes valuable contributions to cultural psychology and social behaviour studies. From a practical perspective, the research provides insightful recommendations for policymakers and community leaders on how to leverage cultural activities, such as traditional dance, to foster community unity through cultural ties, enhance social cohesion, and preserve cultural heritage in a pluralistic society.

## **Literature Review**

### *Psychological Mechanisms in Dance and Group Identity Formation*

Traditional dance functions as a psychological tool that facilitates the regulation of emotional fluctuations, cognitive reinforcement, and behavioural synchronisation, all aimed at fostering group identity. Dance encourages participation in collective emotional experiences, thereby

strengthening individuals' senses of group belonging and social attachment. For displaced communities, dance is recognised as a means of psychological continuity. (Smith, 2018) illustrates how synchronised movement and rhythmic timing trigger neuropsychological responses that reinforce unity and provide emotional security. Through dance, individuals can re-establish social bonds and regain a sense of identity via embodied cognition.

(Shay & Shay, 2016) introduces the concept of 'ethno-identity dance,' emphasising its role in the social identity process. His research explores how dance serves as a socialisation mechanism, through which individuals internalise group norms and values. These movements are ritualised, helping to encode a sense of cognitive and emotional attachment, and reinforcing collective belonging. These studies suggest that the teachings embedded in traditional dance are not merely a cultural expression but also serve as a psychological mechanism that fosters identity formation. By engaging in collective activities, participants amplify emotional states through collective effervescence, thereby deepening their psychological connection to the group. This evidence highlights that participation in group activities strengthens group identity, with dance acting as a potent tool for social cohesion.

#### *Psychological Synchronization and Social Bonding through Dance*

Ethnic dance activates psychological mechanisms such as synchronised movement, collective participation, and emotional regulation, which serve to foster social bonding and group cohesion. Shared dance experiences enable individuals to recognise commonalities, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging, increasing interpersonal trust, and promoting social unity. (English, 2015) defines dance groups as 'communities of practice,' emphasising their role in providing psychosocial support and collective engagement. Her study demonstrates that participation in structured dance activities promotes emotional synchronisation by strengthening social bonds among members. Involvement in rhythmic coordination leads to behavioural entrainment, which enhances social connectedness and fosters social attunement. (Afolaranmi & Afolaranmi, 2024) explore the role of cultural dance as a mechanism for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Their research reveals how rhythmic movement can reduce social tensions and cultivate trust within a community. Participation in communal dance fosters emotional co-regulation by aligning individuals' feelings and behaviours, thereby facilitating interpersonal cohesion. These studies suggest that ethnic dance functions as a neurosocial mechanism that enhances social bonding. Dance serves as a psychological bridge, linking individuals

through coordinated movement and shared affective experiences, thereby promoting solidarity and community well-being.

### *Bai Ethnic Dance in Yunnan*

Bai ethnic dance in Yunnan serves as both a psychological and social mechanism for promoting identity, regulating emotions, and fostering social cohesion. Through its ritualistic performances, Bai dance engages participants in synchronised movement, collective participation, and shared emotional experiences, thereby reinforcing group solidarity and resilience. (Yuan & Yodmalee, 2023) examines Baizu Benzhu culture and demonstrates how Bai dance fosters psychological synchronisation and strengthens collective identity through ritual participation. His study highlights the role of participatory rituals in enhancing emotional bonding within communities, as communal performances create shared affective states that strengthen interpersonal trust and group solidarity. This suggests that Bai dance is not merely an artistic expression, but a structured activity that promotes psychosocial cohesion.

According to (Louis, 2023), Bai ethnic dance is a performative ritual that sustains group resilience and psychological attachment to collective traditions. His research reveals that the embodied experience of Bai dance helps internalise group values through cognitive reinforcement. The performative aspect of Bai dance not only facilitates emotional co-regulation, aligning individual emotions and behaviours with those of the group, but also promotes group affiliation. Taken together, these studies underscore the role of Bai ethnic dance as a psychological and social tool that maintains group cohesion through ritualised participation. Bai dance fosters connections through synchronised and collective emotional expression, playing a significant role in social integration and community resilience.

### *Psychological Benefits of Dance: Emotional Well-Being and Social Integration*

Dance functions as a psychological mechanism that enhances emotional well-being while strengthening interpersonal relationships and group cohesion. Through rhythmic movement and collective participation, dance stimulates emotional regulation, alleviates stress, and fosters attunement between individuals, making it an effective tool for psychosocial integration. (Zafeiroudi, 2023) suggests that dance influences psychological variables such as social development and emotional resilience. His study highlights that structured dance participation aids in stress reduction, emotional regulation, and promotes positive psychological well-being. Dance activates neuropsychological responses, enhancing emotional capacity and self-awareness. Furthermore, he emphasises that the synchronised movement in dance fosters interpersonal trust, social bonding, and

promotes a shared identity through collective emotional experiences. (Lewis, 2013) employs a cross-cultural approach to examine the role of dance in bonding the BaYaka Pygmies. He argues that dance, as a ritualistic practice, reaffirms collective identity and social harmony. Through collective movement and participation, individuals experience behavioural synchronisation, which strengthens group cohesion and psychosocial stability. These studies indicate that dance is more than merely an artistic expression; it is a psychological tool for emotional well-being and social integration. By engaging in coordinated movement and shared affective experiences, participants develop heightened social awareness and emotional resilience, positioning dance as a vital mechanism for group solidarity and psychological health.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how group identity influences psychological processes and behaviours. The theory posits that a significant portion of an individual's self-concept is derived from their affiliations with social groups. This process is central to understanding how psychological mechanisms such as self-esteem, social comparison, and in-group favouritism are linked to group dynamics (Harwood, 2020). SIT suggests that individuals identify both themselves and others through social group memberships, with their sense of identity being tied to the norms, values, and behaviours within those groups (Hogg et al., 2017). In the context of Bai ethnic dance, SIT provides a valuable lens for understanding how participation in this cultural practice can enhance group identity and social bonding. For individuals performing Bai ethnic dance, the act transcends artistic tradition, serving as a means of identifying with the Bai ethnic group. This aligns with SIT, which posits that group membership enables individuals to feel part of a collective, fostering a social identity that influences their self-concept and interactions with others.

The ritualistic and synchronised nature of Bai ethnic dance functions as a psychological mechanism that strengthens emotional bonds and social cohesion. The dance offers participants an opportunity to engage in collective activities, emotionally connecting with one another, particularly during festivals such as Raosanling and Deng Ga Gan Zhou. Through these collective experiences, Bai dance reinforces in-group solidarity by deepening participants' identification with the Bai community and its ethnic collective. This collective participation not only strengthens social bonds but also enhances a sense of social cohesion, as the psychological experience inherent in the dance reinforces interpersonal relationships. (Harwood, 2020) argues that social identity plays a central role within eth-

nic groups, offering psychological benefits such as emotional security, belonging, and self-worth. Bai ethnic dance is pivotal in Yunnan's cultural practices, where multiple ethnic groups coexist, maintaining group identity and social cohesion. Beyond enhancing individual self-concept, the shared psychological experience of dance fosters a sense of community unity, binding individuals together. As such, the use of dance as a psychological mechanism for identity formation is consistent with SIT, as in-group identification plays a crucial role in preserving cultural and social solidarity.

### *Literature Gap*

Existing literature highlights the cultural, psychological, and social significance of ethnic dance but has yet to specifically explore how Bai ethnic dance in Yunnan influences group identity and social cohesion. Furthermore, the psychological mechanisms through which these effects occur—such as emotional bonding and the formation of collective identity—are insufficiently explained. Much of the research in this domain tends to focus on broader ethnic or cultural practices, often overlooking the unique role of Bai ethnic dance as a medium that can enhance cultural resilience and foster community unity in Yunnan.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Method and Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative research method to examine the psychological dimensions of Bai ethnic dance in Yunnan. Through a case study approach, the research explores how Bai dance influences psychological mechanisms, group identity, and social cohesion within the community. The case study method facilitates an in-depth exploration through observation, interviews, and document analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for investigating the complex psychological and social mechanisms that underpin the role of Bai ethnic dance in fostering collective identity and cohesion.

### *Case Selection*

The study focuses on communities in Yunnan where Bai ethnic dance is actively practiced. These communities were selected due to their regular participation in cultural festivals featuring Bai dance rituals. This selection ensures the representation of groups that rely on Bai dance to operationalise community life, thereby enabling a comprehensive exploration of how the dance influences psychological mechanisms, group identity, and social cohesion.

### *Data Collection*

The diverse data collection methods employed in this study offer a more comprehensive perspective for exploring the research objectives. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Focus	Studies focussing on Bai ethnic dance, cohesion, and group psychology	Studies not focussing on traditional or traditional or ethnic dance
Language	Studies published in English	Studies in language other than English
Type	Peer-reviewed and reputable databases such as SCOPUS, Web of Science, and ProQuest through systematic search	Non-peer reviewed articles and opinion articles

### *Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis is employed as the qualitative method for analysing the data collected in this study, enabling the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns (themes) within the data (Naeem et al., 2023). Given the social and psychological aspects of Bai ethnic dance and its impact on the formation and maintenance of ethnic group identity, this approach is particularly well-suited to the research.

### *Thematic Analysis Process*

The thematic analysis followed these six steps, as outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Thematic Analysis Steps and Its Description

Step	Description	Focus for this Study
Familiarization	Immersing in the data by reading and re-reading transcripts, archival documents, and journal articles.	Understanding the cultural and psychological dimensions of Bai ethnic dance and its social impact.
Generating Codes	Identifying and systematically coding relevant segments of the data.	Focusing on aspects related to psychological mechanisms, group identity, cohesion, and shared cultural practices.
Searching Themes	Organizing codes into broader patterns and potential themes.	Identifying themes like emotional bonding, psychological mechanisms and collective identity formation.
Reviewing Themes	Refining and validating themes to ensure they accurately represent the data.	Ensuring coherence and alignment of themes with the study's focus on Bai ethnic dance.

Defining Themes	Naming and describing themes with clear definitions to reflect their essence.	Defining themes like 'Cultural Preservation' and 'Community Participation' to link them with objectives.
Writing Analysis	Integrating themes into a coherent narrative, connecting findings with research objectives and literature.	Highlighting the role of Bai ethnic dance in fostering identity and cohesion in Yunnan communities.

*Ethical Consideration*

This qualitative study relies on secondary data from previous scholarly works, ensuring ethical integrity through proper citation and responsible data usage. All sources are accurately referenced to maintain transparency and avoid plagiarism. Intellectual property rights are respected by adhering to copyright laws and fair-use policies. Cultural sensitivity is maintained by objectively representing Bai ethnic dance traditions. Furthermore, only credible, peer-reviewed sources are used to ensure reliability, preventing misinformation or bias in the analysis of the cultural and social significance of Bai dance.

**Results**

*Themes of the Results Based on Objectives*

Table 3 presents the result themes and their descriptions based on the study's objectives.

**Table 3**

Result Themes and their Description		
Objective	Themes	Description
Objective 1: To investigate how Bai ethnic dance engages psychological mechanisms, such as emotional regulation and social bonding, in shaping group identity within Yunnan communities.	Psychological Mechanisms and Identity Formation  Symbolism and Rituals in Collective Identity	Bai ethnic dance encourages psychological mechanisms such as cognitive reinforcement and emotional attachment, strengthening Bai identity across generations. It serves as a psychological anchor and living archive of cultural history, ensuring continuity through symbolic movements and rituals.  Bai dance incorporates symbolic gestures, music, and rituals that activate cognitive categorization and emotional engagement reinforcing group identity, which maintain the psychological unity within the Bai community.
Objective 2: To examine how Bai ethnic dance fosters social cohesion by	Emotional Bonding through Dance	Bai dance fosters social emotional connections and social trust by creating shared experiences. Participation in communal performances generates feelings

activating psychological mechanisms, including collective emotional experiences and synchronized movement, to strengthen group unity.	Participation and Social Unity	of unity, mutual understanding, and group solidarity. Bai dance serves as an inclusive platform for intergenerational and social engagement. Public performances and workshops facilitate psychological synchronization, encourage participation across age groups and genders, strengthening community bonds and reducing social isolation.
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### *Theme 1: Psychological Mechanisms and Identity Formation*

Bai dance is a key cultural and psychological tool that supports group identity and social cohesion within the Bai community. It operates through mechanisms such as cognitive reinforcement, emotional encoding, and behavioural synchronization (Bryson, 2013). The dance enhances self-identity and emotional bonds among Bai community members, particularly during significant cultural events like the Raosanling Festival and Deng Ga Gan Zhou. (Louis, 2023) emphasizes that despite the influences of modernization, the psychological mechanisms underlying ethnic dances, such as Bai dance, have remained consistent. The ritualistic movements during the Raosanling Festival, for example, amplify emotional contagion and collective pride, thereby strengthening participants' psychological ties to their group. This process reinforces the participants' social identity while adding new choreographic elements to keep them engaged.

According to (Yang et al., 2022), Bai dance facilitates group pride and emotional resonance through cognitive reinforcement and social attunement. The communal immersion in synchronized movement during celebrations like Deng Ga Gan Zhou fosters stronger emotional bonds among participants, binding them closer together. These collective performances symbolize unity, embodying the shared affiliation of the in-group. Further supporting this, (Zhang & Su, 2025) explore how Bai dance contributes to psychological resilience through mutual emotional bonding and self-concept development. Their study highlights the ways in which community members use dance to share emotional solidarity and interpersonal trust, enhancing their psychological well-being. Bai dance thus plays a crucial role in creating strong emotional ties, strengthening social cohesion, and fostering psychological security within the group. In conclusion, Bai ethnic dance functions as a powerful psychosocial tool, facilitating group identity through emotional engagement, cognitive processing, and behavioural synchronization. It provides a deeply rooted sense of belonging, helping maintain group cohesion and psychological well-being through ritualized participation.

### *Theme 2: Symbolism and Rituals in Collective Identity*

Bai ethnic dance functions as a powerful psychological mechanism that reinforces collective identity through symbolic gestures, ritualized movements, and shared cultural narratives. It activates cognitive processes, fosters attachment, and strengthens group affiliation, all contributing to the reinforcement of in-group identity within the Bai community. Fang (2019) explains that Bai dancers use synchronized movements and symbolic gestures to demonstrate mutual respect and unity during the Deng Ga Gan Zhou festival. These performances go beyond entertainment; they encapsulate collective ethics and emotional unity, deepening the connection among community members.

The Raosanling Festival further illustrates how symbolic traditions bolster psychological and social cohesion. (Li, 2024) highlights that the performances at such festivals, which blend music, dance, and ancient storytelling, serve to connect individuals to their cultural and psychological heritage. Through active participation in these ritualistic performances, individuals experience shared emotional responses, reinforcing their sense of identity and belonging to the group. (Zhang & Wu, 2023) asserts that ritual dances have long served as psychological frameworks for achieving social bonding and emotional stability, particularly in religious and wedding ceremonies. These performances create psychological alignment among participants through structured movements, music, and attire, facilitating a profound emotional connection to the group. Ultimately, Bai ethnic dance transcends being a mere cultural performance; it serves as a psychological instrument that fosters solidarity, emotional unity, and social cohesion within the Bai community. The ritualistic movements and symbolic storytelling inherent in the dance maintain psychological unity, ensuring that the Bai community remains bound together through shared cultural and emotional experiences.

### *Theme 3: Emotional Bonding Through Dance*

The psychological mechanisms of emotional contagion, embodied cognition, and synchronized movement play a crucial role in fostering emotional bonding and social cohesion within the Bai community through figurative communication. These mechanisms create deep interpersonal connections, enabling individuals to collectively experience a common emotional state. This process reflects, reinforces, and establishes trust, group identity, and unity within the community. Through traditional events and festivals, Bai dance builds emotional ties and brings people closer together as a cohesive unit. (Cook, 2023) argues that ethnic dance facilitates emotional closeness within communities. During events like the Raosanling Festival, participants in Bai dance experience a joyful sense of

unity as they move together in harmony, creating a shared emotional experience that strengthens community bonds.

(Li, 2020) demonstrates that the movements and rhythms of ethnic dance act as psychological connectors, forging emotional connections among dancers. Bai dance performances enhance these emotional ties by allowing participants to move in synchrony, which reflects their mutual understanding and trust. When individuals share such meaningful dance experiences, their emotional connections transcend personal differences, fostering a sense of togetherness within the community. (Hao & Hao, 2020) emphasizes that dance participation fosters inclusion, intergenerational bonding, and psychosocial alignment. Bai dance performances serve as a platform for social connection, where individuals from different generations and backgrounds come together for the sake of community cohesion. Emotional expression and relationship-building, facilitated through public Bai dance workshops and festivals, contribute to participants' psychological well-being and a sense of belonging.

(Zhang & Wu, 2023) highlight the role of ritual dances in promoting emotional security and social relationships. Their study shows how dance participation in rural communities in Yunnan enhances emotional resilience and strengthens collective identity. The Deng Ga Gan Zhou festival, in particular, provides emotional reinforcement through collective participation, fostering a psychological connection to the community. Bai ethnic dance, through its capacity to promote emotional resonance and unity, plays a significant role in bringing the Bai community in Yunnan closer together emotionally and psychologically. It strengthens their sense of unity and supports both cultural and mental well-being, ensuring the preservation of community bonds and psychological health.

#### *Theme 4: Participation and Social Unity*

Synchronized movement and collective emotional bonding serve as key psychological mechanisms that foster participation and social unity within Bai ethnic dance. Public performances and workshops act as inclusive platforms, strengthening interpersonal relationships and social cohesion within the community. (Zhipeng et al., 2024) provide evidence that communal participation in traditional dances promotes connections among diverse community members, reinforcing group affiliation. Bai ethnic dance workshops facilitate intergenerational interactions, allowing younger generations to meet with older members, thus promoting intergenerational ties and psychological continuity. Participants experience behavioural synchronization, a psychological mechanism that increases trust and unity through shared patterns of body movements and rhythmic synchronization.

(Yang, 2023) highlights that festivals such as the Guerx Sal Lad Festival involve participatory rituals aimed at fostering mutual respect and psychological attachment to the group. These performances activate social bonding mechanisms, ensuring that community members of all ages and social backgrounds experience a collective emotional connection, reinforcing social belonging and shared identity. (Li, 2024) points out that Bai dance, especially during events like the Deng Ga Gan Zhou festival, is an inherited practice that functions as a psychological tool to transmit cultural values to the next generation. According to Social Identity Theory, collective activities, such as Bai dance, help synchronize attention and emotions within the group, thereby diminishing social barriers and enhancing group cohesion. The structured nature of Bai dance provides psychological security and emotional solidarity among its members.

(MacDougall, 2021) emphasizes the symbolic power of dance as a unifying force in Yunnan's ethnic regions. Bai dance performances at cultural celebrations create inclusive spaces where people of varying backgrounds can unite in a shared collective experience. The reinforcement of social bonding mechanisms, such as joint action and behavioural entrainment, helps build trust and cohesion within the group. At its core, Bai ethnic dance functions as a psychological and social tool that encourages participation, inclusion, and emotional unity. Through synchronized movement and shared cultural expression, Bai dance strengthens mental ties, societal cohesion, and community resilience, ensuring that group identity and emotional unity remain central within the Bai community.

## Discussion

### *Discussion on the Influence of Bai Ethnic Dance on Group Identity*

The findings indicate that Bai ethnic dance plays a vital role in fostering psychological mechanisms and shaping Bai ethnic identity by activating psychological processes that ensure the transmission of traditions from one generation to the next. Through its symbolic gestures and ritualistic movements, Bai dance functions as a psychological tool that reinforces collective identity, particularly in performances at significant events like the Raosanling Festival and Deng Ga Gan Zhou. The synchronized movements and accompanying music create a shared sense of community and belonging among participants, while the ritualistic nature of the dance strengthens psychological ties with ancestry, ensuring cultural continuity. These psychological mechanisms reinforce historical narratives, group identity, and ethnic pride, which further solidifies the group-oriented nature of Bai ethnic dance. The findings support (Filippidou, 2022), who analyzed the Zonaradikos dance of the Gagauz in Greece. Her study demonstrated that

symbolic presentation, synchronized movement, and collective performances activate psychological mechanisms such as cognitive reinforcement and emotional contagion. Similarly, Bai ethnic dance fosters collective pride and the formation of identity through ritualistic movements, where both men and women dance in synchrony, consolidating social bonds and emotional harmony. These findings suggest that traditional dance, like Bai ethnic dance, serves both as a cultural activity and as a psychological tool to enhance group cohesion and reaffirm social identity through embodied participation.

Additionally, (Afolaranmi & Afolaranmi, 2024) emphasize the psychosocial role of traditional dance in conflict resolution and social bonding. Their study corroborates the role of Bai dance in promoting social attunement, emotional regulation, and mutual trust, thus enhancing resilience and psychological security within the community. Bai dance, especially during religious and social gatherings, acts as a psychological bridge, facilitating interpersonal bonding, collective emotion regulation, and intergenerational connections. The studies collectively highlight that dance fosters social integration, emotional resilience, and a sense of belonging, contributing to the overall well-being of participants. However, (Du, 2019) explores the evolving role of digital platforms and new music in shaping the identity of younger generations. While Bai dance relies on deep psychological mechanisms rooted in ritualistic performance, new generations in China create fluid and flexible identities through online music production and consumption. This contrast highlights that while Bai dance contributes to stability, tradition, and psychological cohesion, digital platforms support more dynamic and personalized forms of identity articulation. Despite this difference, both modalities engage psychological mechanisms—Bai dance through grounded cognition and synchronization, and digital music through virtual spaces.

Ultimately, Bai ethnic dance remains unique due to its reliance on psychological synchronization, symbolic choreography, and collective emotional experiences. Unlike digital music cultures, where identities are fluid and personalized, Bai dance offers structured and ritualistic participation that fosters emotional resilience and group unity. As it continues to maintain its relevance in modern society, Bai dance will continue to provide psychological reinforcement for self-concept, emotional security, and social integration through synchronized movement, rhythmic entrainment, and collective engagement.

*Discussion on Bai Ethnic Dance Role for Promoting Social Cohesion and Unity*

The results underscore the essential role of emotional bonding and social unity within the Bai community, with Bai ethnic dance playing a significant part in stimulating psychological mechanisms that enhance group cohesion and interpersonal trust. Participation in festivals, workshops, and public performances forms a structured psychosocial framework, enabling individuals to experience emotional engagement, social synchronization, and unity. Events such as the Raosanling Festival and Deng Ga Gan Zhou, which attract widespread participation, foster close interpersonal relationships across different social and age groups. These activities activate mechanisms of emotional contagion, synchronized movement, and embodied cognition, which are crucial for bolstering group identity and psychological security. This aligns with the findings of (Pritchard et al., 2024), who demonstrate how community dance projects facilitate the development of social capital, public participation, and emotional cohesion. Similar to Bai ethnic dance, such collective movement projects foster interpersonal trust, break down social barriers, and promote social inclusion. The synchronization inherent in the dance provides a shared psychological experience, allowing individuals to build stronger emotional connections with others and reinforcing their sense of belonging to the group.

(Aguado et al., 2024) further explore how dance in local cultural festivals, like the Petronio Alvarez Pacific Music Festival in Colombia, fosters psychological and social unity. In a manner similar to Bai ethnic dance, these festivals act as platforms for promoting diversity, inclusivity, and social participation. The dance generates affective synchronization, a psychological process that aligns the emotions of participants, strengthening community bonds and cultivating a shared group identity. In contrast to many cultural performances that have been altered to meet commercial demands, Bai ethnic dance maintains its authenticity as a psychological and social practice. It strengthens interpersonal cohesion, promotes emotional regulation, and reinforces collective identity. Through ritualistic participation, synchronized movement, and emotional engagement, Bai ethnic dance continues to serve as a psychosocial tool that upholds social unity and fortifies group ties within the Yunnan Bai community.

### **Implications**

This study has significant theoretical and practical implications for group psychology and social cohesion. It demonstrates that Bai ethnic dance is a key mechanism for collective identity formation and community

bonding, highlighting the evolving nature of cultural practices that continue to promote social unity. The research reinforces the growing scholarly focus on ethnic dance as a psychological tool that strengthens group cohesion through rituals and symbolic representation. In line with Social Identity Theory, the study confirms that Bai ethnic dance triggers cognitive and emotional processes essential for in-group identification. It also underscores the role of shared traditions in developing collective self-concept. Psychological synchronization and emotional contagion within Bai dance contribute to cultural memory and emotional security, supporting intergenerational continuity and group unity.

From a practical perspective, this research emphasizes the importance of safeguarding traditional cultural practices against globalization and commercialization. Policymakers and cultural organizations can use these findings to design community programs that encourage dance participation, while educational institutions can integrate ethnic dance into curricula to promote cultural awareness and appreciation. Lastly, this study offers a foundation for future cross-cultural comparisons, providing insights for communities seeking to use traditional dance to foster unity and social cohesion.

### **Conclusion**

This study explores the psychological mechanisms of Bai ethnic dance in forming group identity, social cohesion, and emotional regulation within the Bai community of Yunnan. It reveals that Bai dance serves as a psychosocial tool to reaffirm collective identity and emotional bonding through symbolic gestures, synchronized movement, and ritualized participation. These performances bridge past and present experiences, fostering psychological continuity between individuals across generations. Using a qualitative case study approach and thematic analysis, the study examined Bai dance events such as the Raosanling Festival and Deng Ga Gan Zhou. Four key psychological themes emerged from the findings: (1) Psychological Mechanisms and Identity Formation, which shows how Bai dance reinforces self-concept and group belonging through emotional contagion and cognitive reinforcement; (2) Symbolism and Rituals in Psychological Cohesion, highlighting how ritualized movement and symbolic choreography create coherent emotional experiences and strengthen interpersonal trust and social identity; (3) Emotional Bonding Through Dance, demonstrating how synchronized movement fosters psychological

relationships and enhances social cohesion; and (4) Participation and Social Unity, illustrating how Bai dance serves as an inclusive platform, reducing social isolation, strengthening group cohesion, and promoting intergenerational connectivity. These findings align with global concepts of ethnic dance as a psychological tool for enhancing social cohesion and maintaining collective identity. While other traditional dances may adapt to market demands, Bai dance retains its authentic psychosocial role, offering emotional security, interpersonal synchronization, and group solidarity. In conclusion, Bai ethnic dance is not just a cultural tradition but a psychological and social phenomenon that regulates emotions, builds emotional resilience, and maintains social unity. Its continued practice preserves Bai community life and social integration, underscoring its importance in identity formation and emotional regulation.

### **Limitations**

Despite its valuable contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, it relied on secondary sources, which may not fully encapsulate the evolving interpretations and lived experiences of Bai dancers and participants. Secondly, the research was confined to Yunnan, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to other ethnic dance traditions in China. Lastly, the study did not examine long-term changes, thus limiting the ability to assess how factors such as modernisation or shifting socio-political dynamics may influence Bai ethnic dance.

### **Future Research Directions**

Future research should incorporate ethnographic fieldwork, combining interviews with participant observations, to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of Bai ethnic dance for both individual practitioners and their cultural community. A comparative study examining how dance functions across different cultural groups in China would enhance our understanding of its role in fostering unity through shared identity. Additionally, research should explore the sustainability of Bai ethnic dance in the face of external influences such as globalisation and tourism, which shape its development while preserving its cultural heritage. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of Bai ethnic dance over time would provide valuable insights into its adaptability as socio-political and technological changes unfold.

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