

THE EFFECT OF DANCE MOVEMENT ON STRESS AND MOOD

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BACKGROUND

- Exercise and art do not have to be understood as separate entities, rather they intersect in a valuable way that offers physical and emotional transformation.
- Dance movement practices, more specifically, encompass the expression aspect of art as well as the physical benefit that exercise promotes.
- Dance movement has been practiced by a diverse collection of people for decades as it has symbolized celebration, happiness and ritual.
- The healing element of dance movement transformed dance from an artform to a psychotherapeutic practice.
- It was not until the early to mid-20th century that the concept of dance as a therapeutic approach was established.
- Being connected to the emotional, psychological and physiological states of the self, permits individuals to experience the present moment, which provokes a stress relieving sensation (Alpert, 2011).
- Anderson *et al.*, (2004) showed that after a dance session, anger and confusion decreased in participants and mood was impacted regardless of gender, ethnicity or diagnoses.
- Victims of trauma that engaged in dance movement experiences a sense of release and freedom from the intense stress that they have endured, this psychological benefit is not always prominent in other physical forms of exercise (Mills & Judith, 2002).



METHODS

Survey (N=28)	% of sample
Female	89.29%
Male	10.71%
High school age	60.71%
College-age	39.29%

- The survey was administered to the participants via Qualtrics and was designed to take 10-15 minutes in total.
- The participants were asked to fill out both a pre- and post-test for the dance class that they took.
- 23 of the 28 students completed four surveys (a pre-test and a post-test for two separate dance classes) and the remaining 5 students completed two surveys (a pre-test and a post-test for one dance class).

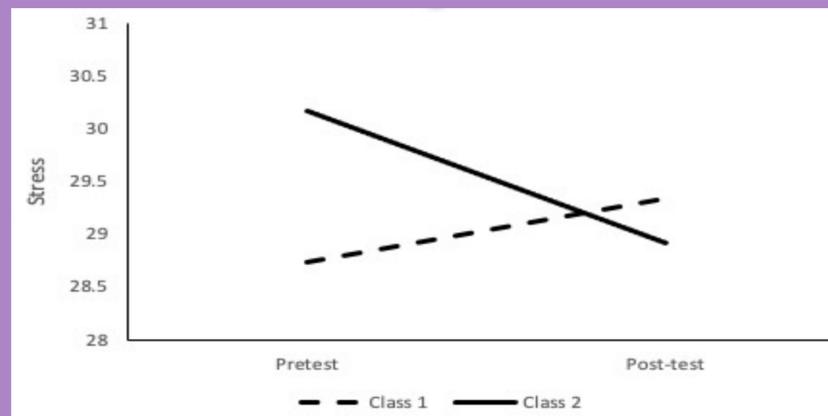
MEASURES

- **The Perceived Stress Scale**
 - The 14-item self-report questionnaire that was used to measure stress levels before and after participants completed an hour of dance
 - The responses that the participant can choose from include “Never”, “Almost Never”, “Sometimes”, “Fairly Often”, and “Very Often”.
 - Based on the 13 items, the Perceived Stress Scale measurement had a Cronbach’s alpha of .84 (Cohen *et al.*, 1983).
- **Brief Mood Introspection Scale**
 - This measure consists of 16 mood-adjectives, where each person indicates how well each term best describes their current mood, before and after the hour-long dance class
 - The responses that a participant can choose from include “Definitely do not feel”, “Do not feel”, “Slightly feel”, and “Definitely feel”.
 - Based on the 16 mood adjectives, the Brief Mood Introspective Scale measurement had a Cronbach’s alpha of .85 (Mayer & Gaschke, 1988).

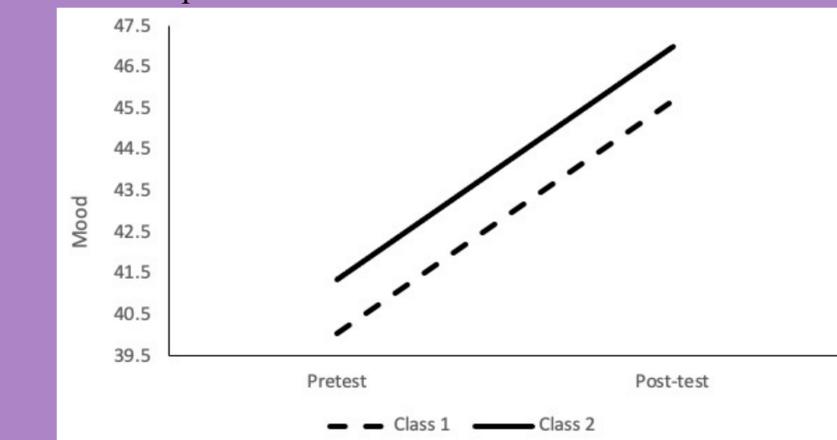


RESULTS

The Effect of Time (Pre. v. Post) and Class (One v. Two) on Perceived Stress



The Effect of Time (Pre. v. Post) and Class (One v. Two) on Pleasant-Unpleasant Mood



DISCUSSION

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS SHOW?

- Contrary to the hypothesis, stress had increased after the first dance class but decreased after the second dance class
 - ➔ First hypothesis: evidence of reduction in stress for the second class but not the first indicates that prediction was partially supported and partially not
 - ➔ Second hypothesis: supported - the effects of time and class on pleasant-unpleasant mood were significant, as mood was much higher after the dance class than before
- Brauninger (2012) suggested that movement has an intense emotional component, and many individuals feel alleviated from the burden of stress that they are experiencing, but this research challenges this idea
- The significant effect on mood is consistent with previous research that referred to exercise as an activity that has the power to influence mood or alter it (Lane et al. 2003).

LIMITATIONS

- This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the stress levels of individuals globally were abnormally high
- Movement and its nurturing of emotion-oriented stress might have been disrupted by the unfamiliar dancing environment that the Covid guidelines demanded.
- Each item in the Perceived Stress Scale begins with “In the last month” which might dampen perceived stress and might not accurately depict what the participant is feeling in that current moment.
- Mood is challenging to measure since there are so many adjectives to describe how someone is feeling and the adjectives that were provided might not have precisely characterized what the participants feelings were.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Many dance classes were not being held because of the number of Covid-19 cases, so it would be interesting to see how doubling or even tripling the number of participants might modify the results, a larger sample size might produce alternative results.
- It is worth exploring the effects of gender would be interesting as there may be a dissimilarity in the way that females and males report their own stress and mood levels.
- The most sensible point of future research would be to repeat the experiment at a time when the pandemic was not dominating all aspects of human life because it is difficult to discern what aspect of the findings could be attributed to Covid-19 versus other explanations.

MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH

- Dance movement fuses together motion and emotion, making it a powerful tool for healing (Schoop, 1974).
- Movement practices that value creativity and physical exertion such as dance, should be considered a viable option, to alleviate stress and improve mood.
- Since engaging in dance movement has been thought to satisfy the individual need for self-expression and communication, it also has been used as a psychotherapeutic technique.
- Little research has been done regarding the impact of dance movement experience on both stress and mood and so this study aims to fill in that gap.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

CAN DANCE MOVEMENT PRACTICES IMPROVE MOOD AND ALLEVIATE STRESS?

1) Subjects who participate in a ballet or jazz class will show, from pre-test to post-test, a decrease in stress as measured by the PSS, without a difference between class one and class two.

2) Subjects who participate in a ballet or jazz class will show, from pre-test to post-test, an increase in positive mood as measured by the BMIS, without a difference between class one and class two.