

## **The contribution of dance on children's health**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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**Introduction:** Dance is a kind of art therapy involving the psychotherapeutic use of expressive movement through which children can engage creatively in the process of personal development.

**Purpose:** To highlight the contribution of dance to children psychophysical development and their self-expression of personality.

**Materials and methods:** The research method consisted of reviewing articles addressing dance's role in children's psychophysical development and self-expression of personality found mostly via Medline, the Hellenic Academic Libraries Link and Google Scholar. A search of classic scientific literature and studies in libraries was also conducted. All articles had to be written in either Greek or English and refer to dance.

**Results:** Dance is a treatment procedure commonly used at schools as an educational means. It is an important effective tool for children who suffer from emotional disorders and learning disabilities and aims to increase children's self-esteem, emotional expression, and ability to complete tasks relaxation, social interaction and coherence of the group in which they participate. Dance also helps children both to manage emotions that impede learning and to improve their adaptability in school.

**Conclusions:** Dance develops children's the expressive ability and help them to express themselves not only verbally but also bodily.

**Key words:** Dance; children; dance therapy

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Dance is a type of art that generally involves movement of the body, often rhythmic and to music. Dancing is one of the oldest ways of communication between a person and those around him. Before the invention of written languages, dance was one of the methods of passing stories down from generation to generation [1].

Archaeological evidence also indicates dance has been an important part of celebrations and entertainment since the earliest human civilizations. One of the common uses of dance in ancient Greece was in education. The eminent Greek philosophers strongly reinforced this art like a perfect integration of body and soul [2].

The general impression that derives is that the ancients had a great appreciation for dance, especially for its pedagogical qualities. Common was the belief that dance is essential for the formation of personality. For this reason, along with writing, music and gymnastics formed the basis of youth's education [3].

So the dance is it so inherent to human existence that although over centuries it changed forms depending on the values of each society, and it is always a unique part of human life [4]. It can function as a modern educational tool for kinetics, cognitive and emotional development of children [5].

The dance is a part of therapy through the art, and it's the psychotherapeutic use of expressive movement through which a child can be engaged creatively in a process of personal integration and development.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the contribution of dance in psychophysical development of children and the self-expression of their personality.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For a performance, theme was performed extensive recording and study of literature in electronic databases (Medline, Google scholar) and magazines. Key words that used were dance, children and dance therapy. The criteria for selecting studies were the following:

- a) articles written in Greek and English, and
- b) articles which referred to the type of dance and children.

To find the relevant to topic surveys and studies, initially, conducted, a study of abstracts of all articles to arise those which were finally selected to be analyzed. It became as well careful exploration of bibliographical references of articles in order to identify more

and better information on the subject and to exclude cases of biased research.

### **The art of dance**

There are many styles and genres of dance. Although dance is often accompanied by music, it can also be performed without music, or it may provide its own audible accompaniment as in tap dance. When performed with music, dance may or may not be performed in time to the music [6,7].

Dance is a sequence of movements, integrated from the body, by the sound of voices or instruments. The human body is made to move. The movement is such an important element in human life as the air we breathe, and justly recognized as the most direct way of expressing feelings [8].

Dance and health have been subject of a number of research studies, which show dance to be a very healthy exercise. The dance is based on the basis that movement and emotion are directly related to expression. The ultimate goal is to find a healthy balance and a sense of completeness. Besides its artistic aspect, dance has a biological aspect, the liberation. Working the contradictions, the symbol-like gesture, repetition and dynamics exercise the person get to know better his body and himself. The body experience with the dance the enjoyment of a well-coordinated mobility, the satisfaction of exercising the balance, the orientation, the skill, the speed, the reflex capacity, vital skills that enable it to complete a sequence of motor sequences, genetic entered through, an attack, escape, etc. [9,10].

### **Dance therapy**

Dance therapy is the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance to support intellectual, emotional, and motor functions of the body [11]. Dance has been used therapeutically for thousands of years. It has been used as a healing ritual in the influence of fertility, birth, sickness, and death, since earliest human history [12]. Although dance has been a method of expression for centuries, it wasn't until the past half century that it was characterized as a form of therapy. The theory of dance therapy is based upon the idea that the body and mind are inseparable. Body and mind interact, so that a change in movement affects total functioning; that movement reflects personality; that the therapeutic relationship is mediated partly non-verbally [13]. Through the unity of the body, mind, and spirit, dance therapy provides a sense of wholeness to all individuals [14].

Dance therapy allows creative expression and is more holistic, meaning it

treats the full person: mind, body, and spirit. Through this form of therapy clients will gain a deeper sense of self-awareness through a meditative a process that involves movement, motion, and realization of one's body [15]. Clinical reports suggest dance therapy may be effective in improving self-esteem and reducing stress. As a form of exercise, dance therapy can be useful for both physical and emotional aspects of quality of life [16].

### **Dance and children**

Dancing helps humans, especially children, to restore their relationship with the environment, to discover the hidden rhythm inside them and to discipline the body and mind. Through dance, children are having fun doing exercise. In this way, while knowing how important it is for their body, they learn to love physical activity [17]. Apart from fitness, dance contribute in shaping the child's personality, enhancing sociability and confidence , teaching him respect for himself and others and learning the meaning of discipline. In addition, the child learns to concentrate on a specific goal, without being distracted, while improving his memory [16,18].

Dance is a treatment procedure, and it's used a lot in school as a means of education. It is an important and effective tool for children who suffer from emotional disorders and learning disabilities. It aims to increase children's self-esteem, emotional expression, the ability of the successful completion of an action, relaxation, social interaction and coherence of the group, they are part of [19]. With dancing children from the personal characteristic shapes, stability, cooperation skills, mutual friend-ships, sense of responsibility and comradeship [20].

Finally, dance helps children to manage emotions that impede learning and to improve their adaptability to space [21].

Primary element of the dance is to create a "safe space" on the physical and psychological level, because the sense of space is linked to mood. Next benchmark is "knowledge of the body." Games in which we call and rhythmic touch certain parts of the body help in building body image and physical limits. Similar kinesthetic experiences reported in parts that make the body function as physical and psychological warming, increasing the sense of physical self of each child [22].

Individual identity and essence of each child emerge through improvisations that reveal their true selves. Simple, repetitive and structured activities on an organic succession and experiences that enhance motor control and confidence contribute in reducing antisocial behavior and social skills in children [23].

Moreover, according to studies, an intensive after-school dance program reduces risk factors for heart disease, diabetes and obesity in school children [24]. In addition, dance as an exercise among elementary school children can improve their lifestyles choices [25]. Furthermore, break dance can significantly increase static balance and reduce the risk of injury in young athletes [26].

Finally, dancing contributes significantly in promoting the health of children with cancer undergoing chemotherapy [27].

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The dance develops the expressive ability of children, helping them to express themselves through their body and not only with words. Children, from very early age, tend and need to express their feelings through movement. This is evident from their spontaneous dance reactions when they experience some positive emotions. The dance, on the other side, provides to a child a nonverbal language that allows him to declare and express his needs. The dance therapy suggests alternative routes to be human-dancer in the process of making the desired changes.

### **Conflicts of interest**

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

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