

Comparative Study

Relationship of Dance/Movement Therapy with Quality of Life, Emotional Regulation and Interpersonal Skills and Social Anxiety: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

The present research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT) in promoting overall well-being within the Indian context. Employing a quasi-experimental comparative study design with a controlled and experimental group, this study specifically focused on three variables: quality of life, social anxiety and interpersonal skills, and emotional regulation. The impact of DMT on these variables was carefully examined. The measures for the study included the WHO Quality of Life Scale-Brief (WHOQOL-BREF), Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS), and Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). The study included a sample size of 100 participants, with 50 individuals assigned to each group (N=100). The findings revealed significant differences between the results of the controlled and experimental groups in terms of quality of life, social anxiety and interpersonal skills, and emotional regulation. These results provide robust evidence supporting the positive impact of DMT on the three variables of interest. Consequently, all six hypotheses proposed in the study were accepted. The outcomes of this research demonstrate that DMT plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of life, reducing social anxiety, improving interpersonal skills, and facilitating emotional regulation. As a result, it can be concluded that DMT is an effective and valuable therapeutic approach, contributing to overall well-being. The significance of this research extends beyond its immediate findings.

Keywords: *Dance/Movement Therapy, Quality of Life, Emotional Regulation, Social Anxiety, Interpersonal Skills, Overall Well-being*

The mental health condition in the Indian setting has improved but still has a long way to go; Mental health illnesses are commonly left misdiagnosed and untreated in India due to a lack of understanding and awareness about psychological diseases. Many young people in India experience mental health problems. But social stigmas and unfavorable views about mental health prevent young people from receiving the assistance they need. The stigma associated with mental health and sickness needs to be eradicated. (Arjan de Wagt, a UNICEF India deputy representative, 2023). Furthermore, there aren't enough mental health professionals to provide care for individuals who are seeking help. Particularly affected are India's rural districts. In India, there are just 0.75 psychiatrists for

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every 100,000 patients (Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 2023). The journal also suggests that a better ratio would be 3 to 100,000. In addition, despite evidence showing a rise in mental health difficulties, the Indian Health Ministry (2023) allocated less than 1% of its budget in 2022 to specifically address psychiatric illnesses.

Dance is an art form that is deeply ingrained in Indian culture and traditions. According to the American Dance Therapy Association (2023), "dancing/movement therapy is the psychotherapeutic use of movement to support a person's emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration". DMT is also described as "the therapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of the individual to improve health and well-being." (Dance Movement Therapy, European Association, 2023).

DMT is predicated on the idea that people can access and express their emotions, ideas, and feelings in a safe and encouraging atmosphere through movement and dance. This may result in better outcomes for mental health and an improvement in self-awareness and self-esteem. Results of qualitative research indicate that a DMT intervention leads to a reduction in depressive symptoms. (Aithal, Karkou & Zubala et al., 2019). DMT may increase the effectiveness of standard therapy as well (Hyvonen, Pylvanainen & Muotka et al., 2020). Dance and dance/movement therapy has positive effects on body image, mood/well-being, and affect quality of life, and a sub-analysis for depression. It is also reported to have a positive effect on anxiety and overall clinical outcomes. However, there was no consistency between the results of interpersonal skills. (Koch et al., 2013).

Factors Affected by Dance Movement Therapy

Emotional regulation: Emotional regulation refers to "the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions in a way that promotes well-being, facilitates goal attainment, and avoids negative consequences" (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010, p. 93). Motor behavior affects one's emotional state and can be used in psychotherapy as well (Shafir, 2016). "Mirroring" interventions of DMT with children helps to establish therapeutic relationships, become more self-aware and regulate their own emotions (Nardi, B.Or & Engelhard, 2022).

Quality of life: Quality of life refers to "a person's perspective of their place in life about their objectives, expectations, standards, and worries, as well as the culture and value systems they are exposed to daily" (World Health Organization, 2021). DMT improves the psychological domain, social relations/life, physical health, and general life in the short term. It also improves the psychological domain, spirituality, and general life over time. Thus, dance movement therapy improves QOL in both the short and long term. (Brauninger, 2012). DMT and PMR are effective interventions administered once daily for 30 minutes to improve the quality of life of the elderly (Jha et al., 2020).

Interpersonal Skills: Interpersonal skills refer to "the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with others in social situations" (Sparks & Hunt, 1998, p. 5). DMT boosts psychomotor skills, quality of life, interpersonal skills, and cognitive abilities (Koch, Riege & Tisborn et al., 2019). Both DMT and dance are useful in promoting quality of life, reducing clinical symptoms like depression and anxiety, improve subjective well-being, interpersonal skills, pleasant mood, affect, and positive body image (Koch, Kunz & Lykou et al., 2013).

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Social Anxiety: Social anxiety is defined as "severe discomfort or nervousness in social settings when one feels inspected, judged, or assessed by others. People with social anxiety may experience excessive self-consciousness, worry about being embarrassed or humiliated, avoid social situations, or endure intense distress. Social anxiety can interfere with daily functioning, relationships, and quality of life" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). DMT is effective in reducing social anxiety among older adults living in a long-term care facilities (Koch et al., 2013). DMT reduces social anxiety and improves overall well-being among older adults with mild cognitive impairment (Marquez-Gonzalez et al., 2015). Other factors include positive body image, self-esteem, stress and anxiety, physical health, creative expression, trauma recovery, etc.

Therefore, this thesis seeks to fill this gap in knowledge by exploring the impact of DMT in an Indian context. It will contribute to the existing literature on DMT in India, as well as conducting original research to investigate the experiences of individuals who have participated in DMT programs in India. The study aims to investigate the effectiveness of DMT in promoting emotional and psychological well-being in an Indian population and identify the potential barriers and challenges in the delivery of DMT in India.

In India, where dance is an integral part of the culture, DMT has gained attention as a potential therapeutic intervention for a variety of mental health issues. However, there is limited research on the effectiveness of DMT in an Indian context, and little is known about how it is perceived and received by Indian populations and how can Indian dance styles be integrated into DMT practices (Rangparia, 2011). Numerous features of abhinaya, navarasas, hand gestures, and footwork in Kathak make it an effective and therapeutic method to help to heal individuals. Thus, the DMT approach to kathak can be a beneficial way to practice it for personal healing. (Vishkarma, 2022).

The research findings from this thesis will have practical implications for mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers in India. It will contribute to the development of culturally appropriate interventions that can improve mental health outcomes in this population.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study

- The following are the objectives of the study:
- To study the impact of DMT on quality of life.
- To examine the impact of DMT on emotional regulation.
- To study the impact of DMT on social anxiety and interpersonal skills.
- To investigate the difference between the scores obtained for the experimental and controlled groups on quality of life.
- To study the difference between the scores obtained for the experimental and controlled groups on emotional regulation.
- To examine the difference between the scores obtained for the experimental and controlled groups on social anxiety and interpersonal skills.

Research Design

The present study on Dance Movement Therapy had a quasi-experimental design. Quasi-experimental designs are commonly used in social and behavioral sciences where

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randomization and control are often difficult or impossible to achieve (Cook & Campbell, 1979). The present study had a non-equivalent control group design. The sample of the present study was divided into two groups: the controlled and experimental groups. The experimental group had participants who received DMT, and the controlled group had participants that did not receive DMT.

Sample

The data for the study were gathered using purposeful sampling. The sample comprised one hundred people. There were two groups of adults between the ages of 17 and 35 years, who were comfortable in reading and writing in English and currently resided in India. Each of the groups had 50 participants that met the inclusion criteria of the group. Group A consisted of 50 individuals currently receiving DMT for the past 3 to 6 months and Group B consisted of 50 individuals not receiving DMT. Group B served as a control group while Group A was the experimental group. The participants were explained about the research and asked for consent followed by filling in their basic demographic details and three questionnaires. Each participant took around 10-20 mins to complete the task.

Hypothesis

Considering the objective of the study and reviewing the existing literature the following hypothesis were formulated:

- **H₁:** There is a positive impact of DMT on quality of life.
- **H₂:** There is a positive impact of DMT on emotional regulation.
- **H₃:** There is a positive impact of DMT on interpersonal skills and reducing social anxiety.
- **H₄:** There will be a significant difference between the scores obtained for the experimental and controlled groups on quality of life.
- **H₅:** There will be a significant difference between the scores obtained for the experimental and controlled groups on emotional regulation.
- **H₆:** There will be a significant difference between the scores obtained for the experimental and controlled groups on social anxiety and interpersonal skills.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

1. **WHO Quality of Life Scale-Brief:** The WHO Quality of Life Scale-Brief (WHOQOL-BREF) is a widely used questionnaire developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to assess individuals' subjective quality of life across multiple domains. It is a shorter version of the original WHOQOL-100 questionnaire and consists of 26 items that assess four domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment. The scale is designed to be used across different cultures and is available in multiple languages. The WHOQOL-BREF is a self-administered questionnaire and takes around 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The WHOQOL-BREF has been found to have high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 across different cultures and languages (Skevington, Lotfy, & O'Connell, 2004). The WHOQOL-BREF was developed based on a comprehensive literature review and extensive consultation with experts and individuals from different cultures and backgrounds to ensure content validity (Skevington et al., 2004).

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- 2. Social Interaction Anxiety Scale:** The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure the level of anxiety that individuals experience in social interactions and interpersonal skills. It was developed by Mattick and Clarke in 1998 and is widely used in research and clinical settings. The SIAS consists of 20 items that assess different aspects of social anxiety, such as fear of meeting new people, fear of being embarrassed, and fear of being observed by others. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (not at all characteristic or true of me) to 4 (extremely characteristic or true of me). It has been found to have high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.88 to 0.94 (Mattick & Clarke, 1998). The scale has also demonstrated good test-retest reliability, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.77 to 0.86 over 2 weeks (Mattick & Clarke, 1998).
- 3. Emotional Regulation Questionnaire:** The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) is a self-report questionnaire that measures individuals' emotional regulation strategies. It was developed by James Gross and John John in 2003 and is widely used in research and clinical settings. The ERQ consists of 10 measures that measure cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, two major aspects of emotion regulation. While expressive suppression is preventing emotional outbursts, cognitive reappraisal entails altering how one views a situation to change one's emotional response. Participants rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) is scored by summing the ratings for the items in each subscale: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The ERQ has demonstrated good reliability and validity. It has been found to have high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.79 for cognitive reappraisal and from 0.70 to 0.79 for expressive suppression (Gross & John, 2003). The scale has also been shown to have good test-retest reliability over 3 months (Gross & John, 2003).

Procedure

This study was quantitative in nature; each of the participants was briefed about the objective of the study and reassured about the confidentiality of the research. This was followed by giving instructions to the participants about the study and what would be expected from them. When the participants understood the study and the instructions, they were asked to sign a consent form to confirm their participation in the study. Then, they were given the form which asked about their demographic details and the measures of the research. Participants took approximately 10-20 minutes to complete the task. After they were done with the task the participants were thanked for their participation and were told that they could contact the researcher if they have any further queries about the research or their results.

Data Analysis

Both the results of the controlled and experimental groups were collected and scored based on the three scales. Descriptive statistics were done for the data and the means, standard deviations, and frequencies were calculated for both the groups. After descriptive statistical calculation of the data statistical test t-test was used to compare the outcomes between the groups followed by the interpretation of the results. In this study, an independent sample t-test is used since the two groups being compared are independent of each other.

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Ethical Considerations

- The participants were debriefed about the research objective and reassured that each participant's confidentiality would be maintained, and details would only be used for research purposes.
- The participants were told that their participation in the research is voluntary.
- After they agreed to be a part of the research an informed consent form was given to them, and they were requested to sign the document.
- The participants were told that they can contact the researcher if they would want to know the results or had any further queries about the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quality of Life

Table 1: Group Statistics for scores obtained on WHOQOL-BREF

Groups	N=100	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A	50	75.74	7.826	1.107
B	50	71.53	8.484	1.200

The mean scores obtained for Group A is 75.74 and Group B is 71.53. Additionally, the standard deviation of groups A and B are 7.826 and 8.484 respectively.

Table 2: Independent Samples Test for Quality of Life

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.015	.902	2.581	98	.006	.011	4.213	1.632	.974	7.453
Equal variances not assumed			2.581	97.367	.006	.011	4.213	1.632	.974	7.453

Since the p-value obtained was $0.011 < 0.05$ thus, there is a significant difference between the controlled group and the experimental group in assessing the quality of life. Thus, H_4 is accepted and proved. Furthermore, the scores obtained indicate a significant difference between the two groups and the scores obtained by the participants of the experimental group are higher and more significant as compared to the controlled group. Therefore, it can be said that there is a positive impact of DMT on quality of life, proving and accepting H_1 . The results can be supported by empirical evidence. A treatment outcome of a ten-week dance/movement therapy intervention on quality of life concluded that “dance/movement therapy is effective in short-term and long-term to improve the quality of life” (Bräuninge, 2012). Dance/movement therapy is effective in improving quality of life and decreasing

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clinical symptoms such as depression and anxiety. DMT was also found to be effective in improving mood, affect, body image, and subjective well-being (Koch et al., 2013). The results can be summarised as:

t (98) = 2.581, p = .011

Social Anxiety and Interpersonal Skills

Table 3: Group Statistics for scores obtained on SIAS

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A	50	39.6000	10.26387	1.45153
B	50	46.2400	11.51496	1.62846

The mean scores obtained for Group A is 39.60 and Group B is 46.24. Additionally, the standard deviation of groups A and B are 10.26387 and 11.51496 respectively.

Table 4: Independent Samples Test for Social Anxiety and Interpersonal Skills

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
					One-Sided p	Two-Sided p				
Equal variances assumed	2.523	.155	-3.044	98	.001	.003	-6.64000	2.18147	10.96906	-2.31094
Equal variances not assumed			-3.044	96.732	.002	.003	-6.64000	2.18147	10.96977	-2.31023

Since the p-value obtained was $0.03 < .05$. Thus, there is a significant difference between the controlled group and the experimental group in assessing the social anxiety and interpersonal skills in the sample. Thus, H_6 is accepted and proved. Furthermore, the scores obtained indicate a significant difference between the two groups and the scores obtained by the participants of the experimental group are lower and more significant as compared to the controlled group. Therefore, it can be said that there is a positive impact of DMT on interpersonal skills and reducing social anxiety, proving, and accepting H_3 . The results can be supported by empirical evidence of a study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic that reported three themes obtained through semi-structured interviews. The first theme depicts the link participants made between their DMT workshop experiences and the caregiving challenges imposed by the pandemic; the second theme describes how the workshop fostered emotional and physical connections among its participants; and the third theme focuses on the awareness participants gained regarding their professional role during the workshop (Mintarsih & Azizah, 2019). The results can be summarised as:

t (98) = -3.044, p = .003

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Emotional Regulation

Table 5: Group Statistics for scores obtained on ERQ

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A	50	27.8800	3.49717	.49457
B	50	18.1800	4.46615	.63161

The mean score obtained for Group A is 27.8800 and Group B is 18.1800. Additionally, the standard deviation of groups A and B are 3.49717 and 4.46615 respectively.

Table 6: Independent Samples Test for Emotional Regulation

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
					One-Sided p	Two-Sided p				
Equal variances assumed	2.055	.155	12.092	98	<.001	<.001	9.70000	.80221	8.10805	11.29195
Equal variances not assumed			12.092	92.671	<.002	<.001	9.70000	.80221	8.10690	11.29310

The analysis indicates that the two-tailed p-value obtained is $< .001$ which is less than 0.05 p-value which indicates a significant difference in the scores obtained. Thus, there is a significant difference between the controlled group and the experimental group in assessing the social anxiety and interpersonal skills in the sample. Thus, proving and accepting H_5 . Furthermore, the scores obtained indicate a significant difference between the two groups and the scores obtained by the participants of the experimental group are higher (on cognitive appraisal) and more significant as compared to the controlled group. Therefore, it can be said that there is a positive impact of DMT on interpersonal skills and reducing social anxiety, proving, and accepting H_2 . The results can be supported by a study conducted on emotions in depression and dance/movement therapy which concluded that DMT decreases participants' features of neuroticism alongside increasing features of extraversion, secure attachment style, and satisfaction with life (Punkanen et al., 2017). Additionally, observing movement behaviors may also give clinicians more information on the emotional regulatory capacity of school-age clients. (Potter, 2015). The results can be summarised as:

$t(98) = 12.092, p < 0.01$

There is a significant difference between the scores obtained in the controlled and experimental groups on quality of life, social anxiety and interpersonal skills, and emotional regulation. Thus, the null hypothesis that is, that there is no significant difference between the controlled and experimental groups, is rejected. Thus, proving that Dance/Movement Therapy has a positive impact in the Indian Context.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the present research is to study the effectiveness of Dance/movement therapy in the Indian context. The results prove that there is a positive impact of dance/movement therapy on quality of life, social anxiety, interpersonal skills, and emotional regulation and proves and accepts all six hypotheses. Thus, the effectiveness of dance/movement therapy promotes the overall well-being of an individual and is effective and helpful in a therapeutic setting.

The findings affirm the effectiveness of DMT in promoting overall well-being and highlight its value within a therapeutic setting. This research holds significant implications for future investigations in several ways. Firstly, it establishes a scientific basis for the efficacy of DMT in enhancing well-being, reinforcing the importance of this therapeutic modality. Secondly, it identifies specific areas of improvement, aiding in the development of more targeted and effective therapeutic approaches. Understanding the underlying mechanisms of DMT's positive impact can contribute to its integration into healthcare systems and raise awareness about its benefits. As a result, this research contributes to facilitating wider access to DMT and promotes its utilization as a valuable therapeutic intervention.

In summary, this study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of DMT in the Indian context, demonstrating its positive impact on quality of life, social anxiety and interpersonal skills, and emotional regulation. The implications of this research extend to future investigations, guiding the development of tailored therapeutic approaches and facilitating the integration of DMT into healthcare systems.

Future Implications of the Study

- The outcomes demonstrate that DMT plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of life, reducing social anxiety, improving interpersonal skills, and facilitating emotional regulation. As a result, it can be concluded that DMT is an effective and valuable therapeutic approach, contributing to overall well-being.
- This study establishes a scientific basis for the efficacy of DMT in promoting well-being, thus providing a foundation for future investigations.
- It helps to establish a scientific basis for the efficacy of DMT in promoting well-being across various populations and conditions.
- Understanding the mechanisms underlying the effects of DMT on overall well-being can inform the development of more effective and tailored therapeutic approaches.
- Moreover, this research contributes to the integration of DMT into healthcare systems. Demonstrating its positive impact, it helps raise awareness among healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the general public about the benefits of DMT.
- By providing empirical evidence of the positive impact of DMT on well-being, future research can pave the way for wider access to this therapeutic modality and its inclusion in comprehensive healthcare approaches.

Limitations of the Study

- It is important to acknowledge that the present study explores a relatively new concept that is still developing in India. It requires additional empirical evidence to strengthen its findings and support its claims. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize

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that the study is limited to the Indian context and focused on the specific cultural nuances present in India.

- The present study is a relatively small sample size used. To enhance the study's credibility and generalizability, it is recommended to conduct future research with a larger and more diverse sample. A larger sample size would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation.
- While the present study provides initial insights into the topic, it is crucial to recognize its limitations and the need for further empirical evidence. Conducting research on a larger scale, within a specific cultural context, and incorporating a controlled intervention will strengthen the study's validity and enhance its contributions to the field.

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Conflict of Interest

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