

Research Paper

Impact of Dance and Movement Therapy on Emotional Regulation in Adolescence with a Special Emphasis on the Adolescents with Special Needs: A Meta Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. It is a unique stage of human development and an important time for laying the foundations of good health. (WHO, 2024). It is the most critical stage of human development, involving major physical, emotional, and social transitions. Adolescents face many difficulties in emotional regulation. It becomes more onerous when the adolescents have some special needs. Emotional regulation, defined as the process of modulating the occurrence, duration, and intensity of internal states of feeling (both positive and negative) and emotion-related physiological processes (Morris et al., 2017). Current researches have been determining the effect of different interventions in becoming proficient in emotional regulation. As one of the significant methods, Dance and Movement Therapy proves its efficacy. The main objectives of the current study were- 1. To study the need of emotional regulation in adolescence stage 2. To discuss the concept of Dance and Movement Therapy and its different strategies in developing emotional regulation skill 3. To evaluate the impact of Dance and Movement Therapy in the development of emotional regulation in the adolescence stage with a special emphasis on the adolescents with special needs. Meta- analysis or systematic review method was adopted to fulfilling the quest. It is concluded from the analysis that Dance and Movement Therapy plays a pivotal role in emotional regulation among adolescents which indicates that the educational institutions, family and the society adhere to this method for better outcomes.

Keywords: *Emotional Regulation, Adolescence, Adolescent with special needs, Dance and Movement Therapy*

Adolescence is the transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between ages 10 and 19. The adolescence is a period of intensive growth and change in nearly all aspects of child's physical, mental, social and emotional life. Adolescence is marked by heightened emotionality. It is very difficult for an adolescent to have control over his/her emotions. Often adolescents are not found consistent in their emotional expressions. Emotions during this stage fluctuate very frequently. Mood swing

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and emotional vulnerability are very common during this stage. Adolescence is also a risk period for the new onset of anxiety and depressive disorders, psychopathologies which have long been associated with disruptions in regulation of positive and negative emotions. Katherine S Young , Christina F Sandman , Michelle G Craske (2019). Emotional regulation is defined broadly as the capacity to manage one's own emotional responses. This includes strategies to increase, maintain, or decrease the intensity, duration, and trajectory of positive and negative emotions. According to Gross (as cited in Modecki et al., 2017), regulation of emotions is a process by which individuals influence the emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express those emotions. Emotion regulation is crucial for adolescents' psychosocial adjustment given its consequences for social relationships, well-being, psychopathology, and maladaptive behaviors (Eichengreen et al., 2022; King et al., 2022). It becomes more difficult for the adolescence with special needs. Some strategies are needed to develop this skill to regulate the emotion in effective way. As one of the significant strategies, Dance and Movement Therapy have been proving its efficacy throughout last few decades.

Dance and Movement Therapy creates connection through movement, emotional awareness, and release, and enhances kinesthetic empathy. It allows participants to have a self-reflection, and to initiate a creative, sharing and empowering process. Dance/movement therapy can be a helpful tool for emotional regulation because it allows individuals to express and process their emotions through movement and physical expression. It helps individuals become more aware of their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, which can facilitate the development of self-regulation skills. It focuses on individuals developing coping strategies and resilience in the face of challenging emotions, which can support long-term emotion regulation. (D Lakshmi Priya, Dr. Molly Joy, 2023). Different research studies discussed and analyzed the impact of DMT on emotional regulation among adolescents. How the adolescents with special needs have been benefitted with the same also noticeable.

The major objectives of the present study are-

1. To study the need of emotional regulation in adolescence stage
2. To discuss the concept of Dance and Movement Therapy and its different strategies in developing emotional regulation skill
3. To evaluate the impact of Dance and Movement Therapy in the development of emotional regulation in the adolescence stage with a special emphasis on the adolescents with special needs.

METHODOLOGY:

Meta Analysis or systematic review method was adopted for the present study.

Emotional Regulation:

Emotion is a complex state that involves feelings, thoughts and physiological responses (Scarantino and Sousa, 2018). Emotions notably influence the body, significantly impacting various physiological processes such as heart rate, blood pressure and hormone levels (Crosswell et al., 2017). Emotional Regulation is the process of managing emotions to maintain balance and respond appropriately to challenges. Emotional Regulation is a

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dynamic and multifaceted process by which we experience and express our emotions (Thompson et al., 2008). It helps us in navigating the ups and downs of daily life. Emotional Regulation can alter the intensity of an emotional experience, but it does not mean suppressing or avoiding the emotions. It is essential for leading life effectively and maintaining healthy relationships. Emotional Regulation help out in the following matters:

- Strengthen our relationships with others
- Reduce unnecessary stress and suffering
- Build resilience and confidence to explore new opportunities
- Improve performance at workplace

From the current research studies some significant Emotional Regulation skills are depicted as follows-



According to the Gross's model, there are five ERS groups: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation (Gross, 2012). Recent studies indicate that emotional intensity exerts an influence on the selection of applied regulation strategies (Suri et al., 2018). More intensive negative emotions require people to apply a higher number of regulation strategies (Barrett et al., 2000; Gross and Thompson, 2014; Dixon- Gordon et al., 2015).

The process model of emotion regulation (Gross, 2015) is worth mentioning

SITUATION → ATTENTION → APPRAISAL → RESPONSE



In this context the framework of Gratz and Roemer (2004) can be referred. They defined emotion regulation as a multidimensional construct involving: (1) emotional awareness, (2) acceptance of emotional responses, (3) ability to engage in goal-directed behavior, (4) ability

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to inhibit impulsive behaviors, (5) emotional clarity and (6) access to emotion regulation strategies. So, these strategies have to be adopted in everyone's life for the overall wellbeing, that effective regulation strategies contribute to increased happiness, life satisfaction, and reduced emotional suffering.

Emotional Regulation in Adolescence (with special emphasis on Adolescents with special needs):

Emotion regulation is particularly critical during adolescence to cope with its many changes and new emotional situations. Major developmental tasks in adolescence involve significant regulatory challenges. Indeed, many adolescents experience heightened emotional sensitivity along with an immaturity of their regulatory processes, often accompanied by risk-taking behaviors (Casey, 2015). Adolescents experience different changes in intensity and lability depending on the emotion considered. Maciejewski & colleagues (2015, 2017) reported negative quadratic evolutions in the intensity of anger, sadness, and anxiety during adolescence, with a peak of intensity in middle adolescence for anger, and in late adolescence for sadness and anxiety. The lability of anger and sadness decreases linearly during adolescence. Neuroimaging studies showed that adolescents exhibit increased amygdala activity and reduced prefrontal cortex activity during the use of emotion regulation strategies compared to adults, resulting in lower effectiveness of emotion regulation (Stephanou et al., 2016). Samson et al. (2022) also found that adolescents exhibited slower switching abilities compared to adults. As a result, Emotional Dysregulation is very common among them. Emotion dysregulation is defined as patterns of emotional experience or expression that interfere with goal-directed activity. Koenigsberg (2010) described emotional dysregulation as frequent categorical shifts, high affective intensity, rapid emotional rise times, slow rates of return to emotional baseline, excessive reactivity to psychosocial cues, random chaotic or rapidly-cycling fluctuation in affect and histrionic reporting of affective experience. These skills are noticeably lower amongst students with special educational needs, causing them to experience social-emotional and behavioural challenges (Cavioni, Grazzani & Ornaghi, 2017). Several research studies analysed different difficulties in emotional regulation, faced by the special needs adolescents. Likewise, Munir (2016) evaluated that children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities experience elevated emotion dysregulation compared to their typically developing peers. Emotional dysregulation has been found to be associated with externalizing behaviours in autistic youths, including aggression (Patel et al., 2017; Ting & Weiss, 2017). At the same time, differences in neurological functions in the cerebellum, cerebellum cortex and limbic brain, functions closely related to the planning and execution of behaviour, attention, movement and emotional regulation, are also noticed among individuals with autism. This discussion determined the need of learning and practicing the Emotional Regulation skill with the assistance of different effective strategies. Therapeutic interventions may help adolescents, develop emotional regulation skills and improve their well-being

Present study aimed to discuss the impact of Dance and Movement Therapy as the strategy of mastering the Emotional Regulation skill among the adolescents.

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Role of Dance and Movement Therapy in Emotional Regulation among Adolescents: (with special emphasis on Adolescents with special needs): Meta-analysis

The American Dance Therapy Association describes dance/movement therapy as, the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual (ADTA, 2009). It is a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of the mind and body and aims to address emotional and psychological issues through movement expression (Millman L.M., et al., 2021). For adolescents, a randomized controlled study found DMT to be effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, potentially through the modulation of relevant neurohormones (Jeong et al., 2005).

In 1916, Carl Gustav Jung propounded the idea of dance as psychotherapy. The history will remember the name of Marian Chace, a key figure in the establishment and development of DMT. The utilization of DMT as an intervention for enhancing emotional regulation and control has accumulated escalating attention within psychological and therapeutic research field. Rudolph von Laban and his Movement Analysis Model has significant contribution to structure models in developing emotional regulation skill by identifying specific movement characteristics that correspond to different emotions and can be used to enhance or regulate those emotions. This approach suggests the body's capacity to both express and experience emotions, offering a somatic tool for emotional awareness and management. LMA categorizes movement descriptions into four main components: Body, Effort, Shape, and Space. **Body** i.e., which *body parts* move, and **Space**, i.e., the directions in which the body moves through the general space in the sagittal (Forward/Back), vertical (Up/Down), and horizontal (Right side/Left side) planes, describe how the spatial-temporal body and limb relationships change in relation to one another and to the environment. The category of **Body** includes also specific common *body actions* such as Springing (jump, skip, etc.) Traveling (walking, running, crawling), Changing support (sitting, lying down, getting onto hands or knees), etc. **Effort** describes the qualitative aspect of movement, expressive of a person's inner attitude toward movement and finally, **Shape** refers to the way the body “sculpts” itself in space, i.e., it describes the changes in the relationship of the body parts to one another and to the surrounding environment that occur when a body moves. Shafir et al. (2016) in their study showed that sets of motor characteristics that predict the elicitation or enhancement of each of the emotions: anger, fear, happiness, and sadness, when moving those characteristics. Knowing these predictors will provide people a tool to help regulate their emotions through their motor behavior, by incorporating into their daily movements those motor elements that enhance happiness, and by avoiding or decreasing motor behaviors that include elements that enhance negative emotions. Moreover, using motor elements to enhance specific emotions, as opposed to using specific movements, will enable to personalize this process of emotion regulation through movement.

In emotional regulation Laban recommended the following steps: 1. Identifying Emotion-Related Movement Qualities: LMA, with its four core components (Body, Effort, Space, and Shape), provides a framework for analysing and describing movement qualities. By examining these qualities, LMA can help in identifying particular emotions like anger, fear, happiness, and sadness.

2. Developing Emotion-Specific Movement Sequences (Motifs). These motifs can then be used for various applications, such as: Enhancing Emotions, Regulating Emotions and

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Emotional expression and Communication. Moreover, LMA can be treated as therapeutic measures also. Therapists can apply LMA to facilitate self-expression, explore underlying psychological patterns, and enhance emotional awareness. For trauma recovery also LMA plays a significant role and the regular practice self-regulation activities can modulate emotional states.

Nardi et al., 2022 studied on Dance movement therapy processes as the interventions in the treatment of children with anxiety disorders. This study is a qualitative assessment that examined DMT techniques and interventions of one therapist's work through their documentation in therapy logs tracking eight long-term treatments of children aged 8–11 coping with anxiety symptoms. Four intervention axes were identified: (1) action-promoting interventions (2) separation- promoting interventions; (3) interventions for strengthening the sense of self; and (4) integration- promoting interventions. Based on the findings, a therapeutic model is proposed drawing on various “mirroring” interventions as the basis for forming the therapeutic relationship and additional therapeutic interventions involving movement. The model enables the child to explore their experience of the relationship, understand themselves in a new way, and create meaning. Loman, 2005; Karkou et al., (2017) in their research study pointed out the following strategies, practicing of which are worthwhile in emotional regulation-A) Embodying a character: The therapist asks the client to choose a character from a book, movie, or play-perhaps a superhero, cartoon character, villain, or even an animal. Next, they are tasked with embodying that character through dance and movement. The therapist guides them through the movements and helps them explore different emotions and experiences associated with their character. B) Group circle dance: The group forms a circle and begins dancing together to a specific rhythm or beat in a piece of music chosen by the therapist to encourage connection and collaboration. They are asked to pay attention to their own and others' movements as they dance. After a few minutes, the therapist suggests they try synchronizing their movements across the group to create a sense of unity and togetherness, breaking down individuality and encouraging connection. C) Tuned walking in pairs: Clients form teams, walking side by side while listening to music or sounds through headphones. Each pair may have a unique piece of music. The therapist chooses the music or sounds based on a specific theme or mood, such as nature sounds or upbeat music. As they walk, the partners try to synchronize their steps with the rhythm of the music or sounds. They are asked to pay attention to the sensations in their body as they walk and try to stay in tune with their partner.

D) Movement mirroring: Partners face each other and take turns mirroring their movements. The therapist guides the pair through different movements, such as slow, fluid, fast, and energetic, possibly adding music. As they attempt to copy each other's movements, they are asked to pay attention to how their body feels and the physical patterns made by their partners. They should try to create a sense of flow and connection between each of their own movements and those of their partner. Priya, D.L. & Joy, M. conducted a research study on Impact of Dance/Movement Therapy on Emotion Regulation-A Study on Geriatric Population in 2023. In their experiment they applied two intervention programmes – Mirroring and Movement Metaphor. Mirroring is the act of imitating or continuing another person's motions. The process fosters connection and empathy. Mirroring can support experience validation. It can promote harmony and comprehension. They investigated that mirroring provides a chance to focus on the emotions of the clients through mirroring and sense of emotional clarity is derived. Movement Metaphors a metaphor can be used by a person to dance their feelings. Metaphor can help to illustrate important interactions with

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others, celebrate accomplishments, or sort through conflicting feelings. Props like chair and bottle were used to express few of the emotions and helped in interacting each other. In this study pre- test and post-test designed was applied to evaluate the effect of the intervention programme. The result depicted the positive impact of DMT and also suggested that the more practice and the lengthening the time frame would give the best result.

Shilpa, J., & Shetty, A, P. (2015) investigated the effectiveness of dance therapy on ADHD. The dance movement therapy lasted ten sessions and took place once a week during three months. This dance movement therapy consisted of specific child aerobic exercises lasting for 20 minutes. The phases of this therapy were divided into three phases as warm up, moderate intense moves and cool down. The moderate phases consist of 28 moves, were repeated for a maximum of 16 times. Parents after the end of the therapy stated their opinions. The parents strongly agreed that their children started to perform daily activities on their own, developed patience, improved social relationship with peers. The study findings conclude that Dance Movement Therapy is highly effective as a therapy to treat children with ADHD.

Salus and Schengerg (1971) note that the focus of the dance/movement therapy with a special needs child is mostly to improve the body image, coordination and motor skills, raising the awareness and teaching him or her to behave in his or her environment, by providing the child with creative space for personal development.

Duberg et al. (2013) tried to determine whether dance affects self-rated health (SRH) of female adolescents from 13 to 18 years of age, suffering from psychosomatic symptoms and stress related problems. 59 girls were randomized into an experimental group, while 53 were randomized into a control group. The therapy consisted of dance classes twice a week during 8 months. Every class lasted 75 minutes and the focus of the treatment was on the joy of movement and not on performance. 91% of girls rated the program as a positive experience, which leads to conclusion that DMT improves self-rated health in female adolescents with internalizing problems. Fourie and Lessing (2010) tried to determine the therapeutic value of DMT and its impact on body image in female adolescents. The participants described DMT as a positive experience and an opportunity to express their feelings through movement, while the self-exploration helped them improve their self-knowledge.

Koch et al. (2013) used their dance movement therapy based on mirroring in movement to increase body awareness, social skills, empathy, wellbeing and self-other distinction. The results of their research suggest that DMT proved as an efficient and feasible approach for autism spectrum disorder, because after the seven-week treatment, the participants of the dance program improved their body image, self-other distinction, wellbeing and social skills. Similar experience is reflected in the research work of Mukherjee et al. (2022). The study analytically explained the effectiveness of Samya Module of Dance and Movement Therapy, propounded by Dr. Aditi Bandyopadhyay on awareness of self and surrounding. The target group was the children with autism spectrum disorder and DMT was applied as the intervention process. The outcome of this research study showed the effectiveness of Samya Module of DMT on awareness about self and surroundings, social cohesion, development of inter personal relationship and emotional development with the help of qualitative and quantitative analysis.

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CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion and from the inference drawn from different research studies, it is well perceived that Emotional Regulation Skill has to be acquired during adolescence stage as this phase is the most vulnerable and full of emotional turbulence. For the said purpose some strategies are supposed to be practiced in daily life. Through this overview of studies we can conclude that Dance and Movement Therapy can be very effective as a therapeutic tool not only for emotional regulation in adolescence but also for various physical and psychological health issues. If the techniques are practiced by the adolescents in regular basis, they will be able to develop the emotional balance and handle the emotional turmoil. Above mentioned meta- analysis also validated the effectiveness of DMT on Adolescents with special needs in developing their emotional regulation ability. Last but not the least the role of the facilitators is of utmost importance. The motivation of the facilitator is regarded as highly important for inclusive work, as the person who facilitates plays a key role in these successful processes of inclusion (Miesera et al., 2019). All the cited DMT Models can be incorporated in the curriculum of the educational institutions for the better outcome in Emotional Regulation Skill development.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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