



The Impact of Dance on Stress and Life Satisfaction Among Corporate Professionals

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to determine the impact of dance on stress and life satisfaction among corporate professionals in Bangalore. A comparative study was conducted on 60 participants from the corporate sector divided into dancers (n=30) and non-dancers (n=30), within the age group of 20-40 years. The study was assessed using two scales namely Occupational Stress Index by Dr. A.K. Srivastav and Dr. A.P. Singh and Life Satisfaction Scale by Dr. Promila Singh and George Joseph which was analyzed using independent sample test and Pearson Correlation using SPSS 20. Results showed no significant impact of dance on stress and life satisfaction which implied that social factors like gender differences, nature of work, family dynamics, coping strategies, etc influences dance. This study provides scope for future studies to be conducted to find the impact of dance on specific domains of mental health in general which could provide healthy growth among corporate professionals.

KEYWORDS

IT Sector, Corporate, Stress, Life Satisfaction, Dance.

INTRODUCTION:

Stress is the most widespread epidemic affecting our society today.

With the present lifestyle in the cities especially, stress levels are considered to have increased a great deal. Be it in educational institutions, where children are overloaded with both academic and co-curricular activities every year or any occupational setting where an employee needs to meet a particular target in his annual sales for his company.

The individuals working in corporate companies and multi-national companies face difficulty in accomplishing specific roles and duties in the workplace, thereby resulting in stress. This kind of stress could be termed as "Occupational or Organizational stress or Work stress". It can be defined as the adaptive reaction to external conditions that cause physical, psychological and behavioural irregularities (Aktas & Aktas, 1992). According to Cooper and Marshall (1976), occupational stress could be an outcome of four major sources of stress namely, items inherent in the profession, roles in the organization, career development, in-job relationships, organizational structure and climate. (Ozkan & Ozdevecioglu, 2013) Yildirim in 2008 found that occupational stress could be an outcome of other factors as well like gender differences among professionals, nature of work, type of work setting, and other social factors. In recent times, mushrooming of various corporate companies in the IT sector has brought in severe changes in lifestyles. Industrial psychologists discovered that how much latitude employees have at work, and their control over job-related decisions affects their morale, and their ability to handle their workload. (APA, Psychology Help Center: Mind/Body Health :Stress, 2014).

As we could see, occupational stress negatively influences health, acts as a hindrance towards social well-being and also disrupts an equilibrium an individual thrives to have within. Altogether the individual experiences crises in his or her life satisfaction needs. Occupational stress does lessen the life satisfaction in an individual. The less life satisfaction professionals have, the more physical and psychological problems they have at work in addition to their own family problem and personal problems, vice versa (Ozkan & Ozdevecioglu, 2013). Life satisfaction as defined by Fisher (2001) is the fulfilment of basic needs and was viewed as a precursor to successful aging (Oz-

kan & Ozdevecioglu, 2013).

Experts have found that exposure to dance helps in reduction of stress levels. Candy Beers, a Dance Movement Therapist and Employee at a corporate sector have shared her experience as a dance therapist in the corporate sector. She has been offering the expertise of dance therapist in group facilitation. She strongly believes DMT facilitates self-awareness, presence and understanding of movement, and ability to improvise, which are vitally required in a leading business team. (Beers, 2007)

Review of Literature

Researchers have found neural basis of human dance in a study which shows entrainment of dance steps to music, compared to self-pacing of movement, is supported by anterior cerebellar vermis. Movement to a regular, metric rhythm, compared to movement to an irregular rhythm, implicated the right putamen in the voluntary control of metric motion. Spatial navigation of leg movement during dance, when controlling for muscle contraction, activates the medial superior parietal lobule, reflecting proprioceptive and somatosensory contributions to spatial cognition in dance. Finally, additional cortical, subcortical and cerebellar regions are active at the systems level. Consistent with recent work on simpler, rhythmic, motor-sensory behaviours, these data reveal the interacting network of brain areas active during spatially patterned, bipedal, rhythmic movements that are integrated in dance. (Brown, Martinez, & Parsons, 2006).

In Florida, a study was conducted on 90 high school students who were divided into two groups, one exposed to dance training apart from regular academic schedule and the other group were non-dancers. They had calculated the cumulative GPA scores, measured self-esteem by using Rosenberg self-esteem inventory and perceived wellness was measured by using Perceived Wellness scale of youth. After comparing the scores of both the group, the results suggested a positive effect of formal dance training and education on student academic performance, perceived wellness and self-concept (Carter, 2004).

Experts have found that dance has a positive impact in treating mental health problems like Autism, Anxiety disorders, Mood disorders, Psychotic disorders. In a study, they found

how Dance Therapy helped in better communication skills among patients suffering from psychotic disorders. They could express their feelings in an appropriate manner. Therapists described how the sessions helped in emotional healing which provided a sense of ego gratification within every individual (Weissberg, 1971). Another study conducted in Australia, on 76 people with depression, anxiety and high levels of stress. They divided the participants into two groups where one was only exposed to Argentina Tango Dance and the other was exposed to Mindfulness Meditation. The results suggested that Tango Dance alone had healing properties for individuals with Depression and high levels of anxiety and stress an also Mindfulness meditation with dance could better intervene in this process (Pinniger, 2012).

A study was conducted on 240 traditional dancers, practicing since 15 years in Odhisa, India. The aim of the research was to find the relationship between Emotional Maturity and Life Satisfaction among these dancers. The group comprised of 120 Odissi dancers and 120 Folk Dancers who were assessed using Emotional Maturity Scale by Singh & Bhargav and Life Satisfaction Scale by Singh & Joseph. The Odissi dancers showed better scores on emotional maturity and life satisfaction in comparison to the Folk dancers but there was no significant difference in life satisfaction in both the groups (Behera, 2014).

Another study tried to find the impact of creative dance and movement training on the life satisfaction of older adults. It was an exploratory study done on women of ages 37-65 years who were exposed to creative dance classes for 8 months. The pre-test and post-test was done by using Global Measure of Life Satisfaction and Philadelphia Geriatric Centre Morale Scale. The results suggested that there was a positive outcome of dance on the life satisfaction of these women in expression of feelings and needs, group participation, friendship formation, body awareness and sensitivity, laughter, joy and fun, increase in self-confidence, pride, accomplishment, group cohesiveness and improved life satisfaction (Osgood, Meyers, & Orchowsky, 1990).

A study has found a positive correlation between dance, stress and life satisfaction. The aim of this particular study tried to explore the effects of dance movement therapy and dance on health-related psychosocial outcomes. It was a meta-analysis which found that DMT and dance are effective for increasing quality of life and decreasing clinical symptoms such as depression and anxiety. Positive effects were also found on the increase of subjective well-being, positive mood effect and body image. Effects for interpersonal competence were encouraging as well (Koch, 2014).

So far the literature review has shown significant relationship between dance, stress and life satisfaction. No studies could be found on the impact of dance intervention on stress and life satisfaction of corporate professionals. Thereby, it gives a wider scope for this particular research to commence. Moreover, Bangalore being an 'IT hub' and functional center for numerous corporates provides this opportunity for the researcher to work with an accurate sample and with well-defined perspective.

Method

This particular research was a comparative study between two groups. It studied the impact of dance on the stress and life satisfaction between a group of dancers and non-dancers in the corporate sector. It was a quantitative study. The sample comprised of a group of 60 corporate professionals within the age range 20-40 years. The 60 participants were divided into two separate groups. First group comprised of 30 participants, who had been going to dance classes and the second group comprised of the other 30 participants who had not taken any dance classes. Participants were selected from nearby corporate companies and dance academies respectively using purposive sampling technique.

The hypotheses of the study were; H1: there is a significant difference in the stress levels as experienced by corporate professionals who take dance classes as opposed to corporate professionals who do not. H2- There is a significant difference in the life satisfaction as experienced by corporate professionals who take dance classes as opposed to corporate professionals who do not. H03- There is no relationship between occupational stress and life satisfaction of corporate professionals who take dance classes as opposed to corporate professionals who do not.

The procedure of the administration of the study was done by

selecting corporate professionals from different corporate companies in Bangalore. The consent form was distributed with a brief introduction about the study after which a screening test was done asking about the demographic details and inclusive criterion for the study. 60 individuals from the age group 20-40 years were selected eventually and the sample group was divided into two groups comprising of 30 participants each. The first group comprised of corporate employees who underwent dance classes over 3 months and the second group comprised of corporate employees who had not taken any dance classes. Both the groups were given Occupational stress index and Life satisfaction scale respectively. Data was analyzed using Independent sample t test and Pearson product moment correlation in SPSS 20 post which results were interpreted.

Table 2
Comparison of mean scores of occupational stress between dancers and non-dancers

| Variable | Corporate professionals | N | Mean | S.D | T | df | p |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----|--------|--------|-------|----|------|
| Occupational Stress | Dancers | 30 | 132.20 | 16.604 | 1.089 | 58 | .281 |
| | Non-Dancers | 30 | 136.13 | 10.763 | | | |

Findings

The study found that there was no significant impact of dance on the occupational stress or workplace stress of the 30 corporate professionals who dance and the 30 corporate professionals who do not dance.

To expand on this, it could be inferred that overall there wasn't any major difference between the occupational stress levels of both the groups. If noticed in detail, the majority in both the groups had 'moderate' levels of occupational stress, be it the dancers or the non dancers. It also threw light on the fact that individuals scoring 'low' on occupational stress were the corporate professionals who went for dance classes compared to corporate professionals who did not go for dance classes. This perhaps could reflect on many other factors that could influence occupational stress, apart from dance alone. The factors could be 'Gender difference among the corporate professionals'. Researchers state that the occupational stress differs between males and females. It is most likely to be high in females compared to males in any work setting (Yildirim, 2008). As this study did not consider gender as a inclusion criteria, this might influence the scores to an extent. Researchers pointed out that there might be individuals in some professional fields who face more occupational stress than others in the same setting, based on the type of work and coping styles (Ozkan & Ozdevecioglu, 2013). Thereby, company working hours and designation might yield different working lifestyles, which also is a factor to be considered in this study as all the participants were from different corporate sectors having different designations and working hours.

The second hypothesis proved that there was no significant impact of dance on the life satisfaction of 30 corporate professionals who go for dance classes compared to the other 30 corporate professionals who do not go for dance classes.

Table 3
Comparison of mean scores of life satisfaction between dancers and non-dancers

| Variables | Corporate professionals | N | Mean Rank | Sum Of Ranks | U | p |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----|-----------|--------------|---------|------|
| Life Satisfaction | Dancers | 30 | 34.05 | 1021.50 | 343.500 | .115 |
| | Non-dancers | 30 | 26.95 | 808.50 | | |
| | Total | 60 | | | | |

It is clearly stated that "Life satisfaction is a cognitive assessment of an underlying state thought to be relatively consistent and influenced by social factors" (Ellison 1989). In this study it could be influence of other social factors such as age, income generation, family, personal ambitions or goals of each corporate professional, on their life satisfaction levels. Individual differences are valid regarding life satisfaction scores as according to Neugarton, Havinghurst and Tobin (1961) life satisfaction is made up of the following components: zest versus apathy, resolution, and fortitude, congruence between desired and achieved goals, positive self-concept, which could differ from individual to individual.

The null hypothesis was accepted which means that there was no correlation between occupational stress and life satisfaction among corporate professionals.

Table 5
Pearson's correlation values between occupational stress and life satisfaction among corporate professionals

| Variables | Values | Occupational Stress | Life Satisfaction |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Occupational Stress Sig. (1-tailed) N | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.075 |
| | | .570 | |
| | 60 | 60 | |
| Life Satisfaction Sig. (1-tailed) N | Pearson Correlation | -.075 | 1 |
| | | .570 | |
| | 60 | 60 | |

Thereby, it could be understood that the scores of life satisfaction and occupational stress of the participants in both the groups were not consistent. This could be a reason for which there was no significant relationship between both. The direction of the type of relationship whether occupational stress increases life satisfaction and vice versa could not be reported as well.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Future studies could be conducted to determine the therapeutic aspects of dance in general. Intervention based studies using dance therapists to facilitate various corporate groups could make the findings much stronger and reliable. Future studies should be mostly focused on individual mental health aspects like emotional intelligence, coping mechanisms, learning, etc to find definite impact of dance on specific aspects of mental health. This would enable corporate companies to integrate dance as not only a recreational activity to reduce stress, or improve lifestyle but using as a medium of therapy enabling healthy growth of the corporate professionals. It could also facilitate different forums or programmes using multiple artforms like meditation, martial arts, yoga etc that could be merged along with dance to provide a fusion of therapeutic experience for future corporate professionals working in stressful situations.

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