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## Role of dance in socio-emotional learning among children and adolescents

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### Abstract

Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) fosters holistic development, and in a country as vast as India, a number of constraints propels up. To enable the process of SEL, this study was conducted to see if there is a role of Dance in Socio-emotional learning among children and adolescents. Statistical testing and analysis (chi-square) was conducted on 100 children, 50 of whom were involved in dancing and the other 50 with no involvement in dancing. This article makes an attempt to identify the role of Dance in certain SEL skills such as grit, social awareness, self-efficacy, challenging feelings, supportive relationships, emotional regulation and it showed dance plays a significant role in enhancing SEL.

**Keywords:** Socio-emotional learning, dance, supportive relationships, self-efficacy

### Introduction

India and the rest of the world are evolving rapidly, so staying well is a struggle. Hence increased stress results. This poses a challenge for wellbeing. Matters are worse for the lower economic section as state-run mental health services are overcrowded and stretched to the limit. Adolescent boys and girls have an equal lack of access to information about problems that impact their lives and the little opportunities they have to acquire the skills necessary for active engagement. Because of harmful societal standards that diminish girls' worth, adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to many layers of vulnerability that impact their freedom of movement, education, marriage, and social interactions. (UNICEF) Socio-emotional learning (SEL) describes the mind-sets, skills, attitudes, and feelings that help students succeed in school, career, and life. At its core, SEL focuses on student's fundamental needs for motivation, social connectedness, and self-regulation as prerequisites for learning. Educators may also refer to SEL as "non-cognitive skills", "Soft skills", "21<sup>st</sup> Century skills", "character strengths" and "whole child development". (Panorama Education). It supports well-being and strengthens several competencies to help build sustenance.

Dance is human behaviour made up (from the dancer's perspective, which is typically shared by the audience members of the dancer's culture) of intentional, rhythmic, and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movement that are primarily different from those carried out in regular motor activities and are purposeful (personal choice and social learning play a role). The movement (in space, time, and effort) has symbolic potential as well as intrinsic artistic worth (the idea of competence and appropriateness as seen by the dancer's culture). Dance moves have aesthetic and frequently symbolic significance. (Hanna 1983) It is an effective tool to enable SEL opportunities among the masses (e.g. Eddy 2018, Pereira & Marques-Pinto 2017) <sup>[7, 13]</sup>.

Dance builds muscles of perseverance and supports essential skills, like balance, prioritization, time management, responsibility, and organization (Jackson 2021) <sup>[10]</sup> in turn promoting grit which is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth et al. 2007) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Self-awareness promotes self-confidence, and self-efficacy and dance paves the way for it (Biddle & Asare 2011, Thoodoraku and Zervas 2003) <sup>[4, 18]</sup>. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments as was defined by Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997 <sup>[2]</sup>.

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(American Psychological Association 2009).

Relationship skills become a crucial factor in one's life qualities. Dance promotes supportive relationship skills Biddle & Asare 2011 [4]; Archbell et al. 2019 [1]; Pereira & Marques Pinto 2017 [13]; Zander, 2014 [25]. As per supportive relationships are genuine, safe, reciprocal, and caring. It enhances student's willingness to cooperate (Biber & Kazim 2016) [3], human tolerance, social interaction, collaboration, authentic relationships (Archbell et al 2019) [1], and conflict resolution (Eddy 2018) [7] leading towards Positive feelings which include pleasant or desirable situational responses, ranging from interest and contentment to love and joy, but are distinct from pleasurable sensation and undifferentiated positive affect marking overall wellbeing or happiness enhancing future growth and success. Dance promotes the spirit of doing, re-doing, and undoing reflecting trial and error learning. A better understanding of cultures, and values (Eddy 2018) [7] is cultivated through Dance education leads to better Social Awareness which is the ability to understand, empathize, and interact effectively with others playing a crucial role in understanding social norms and appreciating diversity and the ability to navigate social environments skilfully (Noustro.com 2023).

Dance facilitates acceptance of criticism enhancing Social Perspective taking, skills the process through which perceivers discern the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of a target is foundational for navigating social interactions, building relationships, maintaining mental health, promoting well-being (Gehlbach 2023) [8]. Dance is an excellent tool to manage emotions; it helps cope with challenging feelings, cultivating healthy habits to emote (Jackson 2021) [10]. Complete tasks or homework and engage better in school, collaborate and take leadership. Dance helps in self-regulation. The true essence of dance is that it cultivates empathy (Biber & Kazim 2016) [3] resulting in identifying problems from bullying or gun violence to find solutions (Eddy 2018) [7] maximizing developmental and mental health while reducing SEL risks.

### Research Objective

This study seeks to understand the role of dance, if any, in socio-emotional learning among children and adolescents.

### Methodology

#### Hypothesis

- There is no likelihood of pursuing one of the current goals.
- There is no tendency of keeping working towards an important goal when a problem is faced.
- No distractions were resisted.
- There is no preparation before coming to class.
- There is no getting along with students who are different.
- There is no respect for the views of others who disagree.
- There is no confidence that one can do the hardest work.
- There is no confidence that one will remember what was learnt in the current classes/
- There is no understanding of teacher's point of view.
- There is no understanding of teacher's feelings.
- There is no ability to remain calm when things go wrong.
- There is no ability to remain happy when things go wrong.
- There is no ability to remain hopeful when things go wrong.
- There is no ability to remain angry when things go wrong.

wrong.

- There is no ability to remain sad when things go wrong.
- There is no teacher or other adult from school who one can count on.
- There is no friend from school who can be counted on to help.

### Materials Required

- **SEL Guide Panorama (2020):** Panorama SEL questionnaire for students from Grade 6-12 survey cover a range of topic about student's social-emotional learning (SEL) and school environments. Students are more than just respondents for these self-report surveys: By reflecting on their experiences and sharing their perspectives, they are active agents in their own learning experiences and sharing their perspectives, they are active agents in their own learning and in their school's improvement. We developed our student survey using a rigorous six-step design process that builds reliability and validity into them from the beginning. The team analyzed data from millions of students in thousands of K-12 schools across the U.S to demonstrate the psychometric strength of surveys (Panorama SEL Questionnaire 2020).
- **Scales:** Self-management, social awareness, grit, social perspective, self-efficacy, emotion regulation, positive feelings, challenging feelings and supportive relationships.

### Participants

**Sample size:** 100

**Type of sample:** Combination of quota and snowball sampling

Characteristics of the sample: ICSE & WB state board students of grades 6-12 (both sexes).

1. 50 dancers
2. 50 non-dancers

### Techniques of statistical analysis

Chi-square was used, as data was categorical.

### Types of study

Mixed method (both quantitative & qualitative).

### Procedure

The topic "Role of dance in socio-emotional learning among children and adolescents" was chosen considering SEL as the need of the hour for Indian students. Indian dance forms have been known to have therapeutic effects; thus the topic was selected.

Similar research articles were viewed, abstracts were collected and in response, research hypotheses were framed showcasing the relation, if any, between practicing dance and socio-emotional learning.

A panorama Socio-emotional learning questionnaire for students of grades 6-12 was selected. Out of 15 domains, 9 domains namely, skills and competencies like self-management, social awareness, grit, social perspective, self-efficacy, emotional regulation, positive feelings supportive relationships and challenging feelings were chosen.

A set of questionnaires containing demographic information about the participant along with the selected questionnaires from the panorama socio-emotional questionnaire were prepared. Due to the present condition, both the printed version and an online survey by Google forms were done.

Data from a total of 100 subjects of grades 6-12 were collected out of whom 50 were dancers and 50 were non-dancers. Data was collected from students both in online and

offline mode. An excel sheet was prepared to tabulate the collected data. Statistical analysis was conducted; results were discussed and conclusions were drawn.

## Results and Discussion

	Questions	Chi-Square	Inference
1	Some people pursue some of their goals for a long time, and others change their goals frequently. Over the next several years, how likely are you to continue to pursue one of your current goals?	7.018	The null hypothesis is accepted
2.	If you have a problem while working towards an important goal, how well can you keep working?	34.682	The null hypothesis is rejected
3	How often did you pay attention and resist distractions?	28.42	The null hypothesis is rejected
4	How often did you come to class prepared?	21.202	The null hypothesis is rejected
5	How well did you get along with students who are different from you?	4.412	The null hypothesis is accepted
6	When others disagreed with you, how respectful were you of their views?	11.172	The null hypothesis is rejected
7	How confident are you that you can do the hardest work that is assigned in your classes?	4.822	The null hypothesis is accepted
8	How confident are you that you will remember what you learned in your current classes, next year?	8.058	The null hypothesis is accepted
9	How hard do you try to understand your teachers' point of view?	24.836	The null hypothesis is rejected
10	During class, how hard do you try to understand what your teachers are feeling?	17.918	The null hypothesis is rejected
11	How often are you able to control your emotions when you need to?	1.447	The null hypothesis is accepted
12	When things go wrong for you, how calm are you able to remain?	11.158	The null hypothesis is rejected
13	Happy	18.2	The null hypothesis is rejected
14	Hopeful	26.788	The null hypothesis is rejected
15	Angry	39.436	The null hypothesis is rejected
16	Sad	3.758	The null hypothesis is accepted
17	Do you have a teacher or other adult from school who you can count on to help you, no matter what?	3.502	The null hypothesis is accepted
18	Do you have a friend from school who you can count on to help you, no matter what?	4.94	The null hypothesis is accepted

The research study examined socio-emotional skills to detect the role of dance in SEL if any, and skills and competencies like Grit, self-management, social awareness, self-efficacy, social perspective taking, emotional regulation, positive feelings, challenging feelings, and supportive relationships of dancers and non-dancers were assessed.

The study concluded that children and adolescents who practice dance can better persevere through setbacks to achieve important long-term goals (not limited to academics), taking into account their experiences and identity as compared to kids who don't practice dance. Socio-emotional abilities help navigate difficult challenging life circumstances. The inclusion of creative dance in the curriculum will help children develop a sense of identity, creativity, self-confidence, self-awareness, better relationship and self-management, increased decision-making abilities, empathy, and mental wellness. (Biddle & Asare, 2011) <sup>[4]</sup> In Jackson's quantitative study (2021), the high standards placed makes her to "do everything to the best of [her] ability, and always try [her] best, and Jackson mentioned that her experiencing these healthy, high expectations is valuable to practice for future performance expectations in whatever career path she chooses".

It was also found that students, who learn dance, consider the perspectives of others and empathize with them more than students who don't practice dance.

In the survey it was found that those who dance are more accepting of others, value diversity, and get along with others who are different from them. (Pereira and Marques 2017) <sup>[13]</sup>.

Pinto's research on dance for socio-emotional learning shows how it significantly improved pupils' capacity for self-control and interpersonal interaction. Relationships develop nonverbally when individuals collaborate on a creative undertaking like dancing. By fostering this social contact, engagement, and collaboration, children may learn to communicate ideas and feelings through the immediate, physical, and perceptible medium of body movement, instead of relying just on words. During group dancing, children are able to adapt to their moves to fit those of the other children

in order to dance well with them and maintain positive relationships. This discipline helps in emotional self-control and regulation practice. It helps individuals feel less pressured and uncomfortable while also fostering social trust and a sense of "belongingness." All participants are welcome in this kind of dancing; soloists are not present, and even shy or anxious children can take part in accordance with (Walter and Sat 2013) <sup>[23]</sup>.

Dance helps build self-efficacy. Children who learn dance believes in them and believes that they can do the hardest work assigned to them in class. Dance may help with negative body image and self-perception while supporting metaphorical and symbolic functions that are innate to people. In contrast to the conventional teaching approach, creative dance, according to Theodorakou & Zervas's 2003 <sup>[18]</sup> research, helped youngsters develop self-esteem. In a qualitative study by Jackson (2021) <sup>[10]</sup> A mom mentioned how her daughter's comfort in herself as a dancer has given her daughter "self-assurance" in pursuing other things she likes but might not fit the "social norm."

More students who practice dance are confident in remembering what they have learned in class in the succeeding year as compared to students who are non-dance practitioners.

Thompson (1994) <sup>[19]</sup> describes emotional regulation as the external and internal process through which an individual becomes aware of emotional reactions to be able to reach goals. NS Pereira and A Marques-Pinto (2018) <sup>[14]</sup> cited that in their study, data showed that students mentioned music and dance to be helpful in dealing with emotions and that they were passionate about these types of activities.

In a qualitative study by Jackson (2021) <sup>[10]</sup>, an older dancer of the studio that was getting interviewed recalled how she "expresses all of [her] feelings via dance" and frequently "channels [her] bad emotions into [her] dancing." One of the younger dancers spoke on how she prefers dancing forms that give her more chances to express herself and use stage presence. Another mom concurred that her daughter can "address her thoughts in a healthy way" through dancing.

According to Weston (2012) <sup>[24]</sup> and Walter (2013) <sup>[23]</sup>, there is a substantial link between movement and emotion. Every movement emerges in conjunction with others and interacts closely with cognitive and emotional-social functioning, such as self-confidence, self-control, empathy, independence, and leadership (Johnstone M, (1999) <sup>[15]</sup>). Movement and games relieve a child's anxiety and frustration; when he moves his body, he is joyful, and the pressure that builds up as a result of irritation and emotional and physical components Theodorakou (2003) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Pereira NS, Marques-Pinto A, 2017 <sup>[13]</sup> conducted a study by offering educational dance classes to students as after-school activities and regular craft classes to the control group with no competency of socioemotional skill. They discovered that students attending educational dance classes significantly improved their socio-emotional skills in the areas of self-management and relationship skills after having participated in the Experiencing Emotions programme.

Biber & Kazim (2016) <sup>[3]</sup> observed that taking part in a folk dance program has various positive social effects. Children in the experimental group showed a 15% improvement in communication, a 20% increase in friend-making skills 35% increase in trying to understand others via empathy, a 20% increase in seeking to solve difficulties with friends, and a 20% rise in readiness to work with others.

In a qualitative study by Jackson (2021) <sup>[10]</sup> one of the research participants' parents, who has two daughters, shared how her daughters practice dance together at home. She revealed that the ladies frequently engage in a "show-and-tell type activity," giving comments on various technical talents to one another and is enhancing their relationship.

## Conclusion

Children and adolescents who practice dance had better socioemotional learning in domains such as grit, social awareness, self-efficacy, emotion regulation, challenging feelings and supportive relationships. However there are certain limitations like short period for data collection, limited sample size and shortening of length of Panaroma questionnaire.

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