

Dance Therapy, Stress Reduction, Emotional Resilience and Mental Well-being of Academics at Lagos State University

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of dance therapy on stress reduction, emotional resilience, and mental well-being of academics at Lagos State University. Using the descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 528 academic staff through questionnaires. Three hypotheses were stated and tested using the linear regression statistical technique with the aid of SPSS version 26. Results from the first hypothesis reveal a significant effect of dance therapy on stress reduction, with an R^2 value of .183. Equally, hypothesis two shows a significant effect of dance therapy on the emotional resilience of academics, with an R^2 of .153, and the third hypothesis shows that dance therapy has a significant effect on the mental well-being of academics with an R^2 of .169. The study concludes that dance therapy has potential as a valuable intervention in academic settings to combat stress, foster resilience, and improve overall mental health. Therefore, it was recommended amongst others that, Lagos State University and similar academic institutions integrate dance therapy programs into their wellness and mental health initiatives. Additionally, considering the unique stressors inherent in academic environments, customized dance therapy interventions could be developed to address the specific needs of different groups within the university, such as male and female academic members.

Keywords: academics, dance therapy, emotional resilience, mental well-being, stress reduction

INTRODUCTION

The academic environment is inherently stressful, characterized by rigorous deadlines, competitive atmospheres, and high expectations. Such conditions often lead to elevated levels of stress and anxiety among students and staff alike by such means contributing significantly to mental health issues within these settings. The prevalence of stress, anxiety and other mental health challenges has been well-documented,

with Quach et al. (2023) reporting that over 60% of lecturers experienced overwhelming anxiety in the past year in that way negatively impacting their overall well-being. Additionally, Obi and Okobia (2021) highlighted that a quarter of lecturers who responded to their survey were depressed with mild and moderate depression constituting the majority of cases experiencing depression when compared to the general population thereby underscoring the unique pressures faced in academic contexts in Nigeria.

The traditional methods for managing academic pressures—counselling, time management workshops, and stress management seminars—while beneficial, do not cater to all individuals' needs or preferences (Dollard et al., 2023). This discrepancy signals the necessity for diverse and inclusive approaches that can cater to a broader range of preferences and styles. However, despite the pressing need for effective interventions, alternative therapeutic modalities such as dance therapy remain underutilized and relatively unexplored (Wang, 2023) within academic contexts. The concept of dance therapy, also known as dance/movement therapy (DMT), operates under the principle that mind and body are inseparable and that movement can affect mental health positively (Zhou et al., 2021). This integrative therapy combines the creative process, movement, and dance to support the intellectual, emotional, and motor functions of the body (Millman et al., 2021). With its dual focus on movement and creativity, dance therapy has the potential to be particularly effective in the academic sphere by fostering a sense of connection, mindfulness, and emotional expression, offering a holistic approach to dealing with the pressures of academia.

Moreover, emotional resilience which connotes the ability to bounce back from negative emotional experiences and adapt to stressful situations or crises, plays a crucial role in academic success and overall well-being (Buck & Snook, 2020). Dance therapy can contribute to building emotional resilience by providing a safe and supportive space for expressing emotions, confronting challenges, and developing coping strategies through movement (Buck & Snook, 2020). However, the lack of widespread acceptance and implementation of dance therapy in academic settings can be attributed to several factors, including limited awareness among educators and administrators, scarce resources for such programs, and a dearth of empirical evidence supporting its effectiveness in this specific context (Grosu et al., 2021). Consequently, the potential benefits of dance therapy for improving mental well-being among academics are not fully realized, resulting in missed opportunities for enhancing academic experiences and outcomes. Additionally, while some studies (Koch & Fischman, 2011; Malchiodi, 2020) have investigated the effects of dance therapy on stress and emotional well-being, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding its impact on academic communities specifically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dance therapy, or dance/movement therapy (DMT), is recognized as a form of psychotherapy that uses movement and dance to support the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of individuals (Koch & Fischman, 2011). The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) defines it as the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual, to improve health and well-being (American Dance Therapy Association, n.d.). Dance therapy is based on the premise that body and mind are interconnected and that change in one affects the other. Chaiklin and Wengrower (2015) elaborated on the therapeutic process of DMT, which involves the use of movement and dance through which a person can engage creatively in a process of personal growth and community integration. A core aspect of dance therapy is its emphasis on non-verbal communication and expression. As Malchiodi (2020) noted, movement and dance provide avenues for expressing thoughts and feelings that might be difficult to articulate in words, making it particularly valuable for those who experience challenges with traditional verbal therapy. The modality is used with individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, highlighting its adaptability and broad applicability (Berrol, 2016). Despite its proven benefits, dance therapy remains underutilized in many clinical and educational settings (Dee et al., 2024).

Stress reduction refers to various strategies and therapies aimed at decreasing stress levels in individuals, and improving their ability to cope with stressors in their environment. Williams and Kabat-Zinn's (2013) mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program highlights the importance of mindfulness in observing stressors without judgment, thereby reducing the impact of stress on mental and physical health. Similarly, research by Lampen and Müller-Hilke (2021) supports the use of mindfulness and self-compassion as key components in reducing stress, particularly in high-pressure environments such as academic settings. Exercise, including forms of movement like dance therapy, has been shown by Hidalgo and Sotos (2021) to be effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are often associated with high stress levels. Techniques focusing on relaxation and breathing, as outlined by Smith (2005), provide additional methods for managing stress, by so doing emphasizing the body's ability to achieve a state of deep rest and reduced stress through the relaxation response.

Unlike stress reduction, emotional resilience is the ability of an individual to adapt to stress and adversity while maintaining psychological well-being. It encompasses the process of bouncing back from difficult experiences and involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed by anyone (Shanahan et al., 2022). According to Kuldas and Foody (2022), resilience is not a trait that individuals either have or do not have. It involves a complex interplay of various factors including personal coping strategies, social support, and adaptive capacities. This perspective shifts the fo-

cus from a trait-based understanding of resilience to a more dynamic process that individuals can cultivate through life experiences. Research by Southwick and Charney (2012) further elaborates on emotional resilience as a multifaceted construct that includes factors such as optimism, a moral compass, faith or spirituality, social support, resilience training, physical fitness, and cognitive and emotional flexibility. These components contribute to an individual's ability to withstand and recover from episodes of stress or trauma. The emphasis on a holistic approach to building resilience highlights the importance of both individual efforts and supportive environments in fostering resilience. Furthermore, Bonanno (2005) argues that emotional resilience is evidenced by a stable trajectory of healthy functioning across time, as well as the capacity for generative experiences and positive emotions. This view suggests that resilience is not merely about surviving adversity but also thriving in the aftermath of challenges. Emotional resilience, therefore, is a crucial element in promoting well-being and preventing mental health disorders.

Mental well-being is a broad concept that encompasses both the presence of positive emotions and moods (i.e., happiness, satisfaction) and the absence of negative emotions (i.e., depression, anxiety), but also includes the ability to function effectively in daily life and feel connected to others and the world around (Maddux, 2017). Keyes (2002) expands on the concept of mental well-being by introducing a dual-continuum model that differentiates between the presence of mental health (characterized by emotional, psychological, and social well-being) and the absence of mental illness. According to Keyes (2012), it is possible for individuals to experience high levels of well-being even in the absence of mental illness thereby suggesting that mental health and mental illness are not simply opposite ends of a single continuum but rather two distinct, though related, dimensions. Mental well-being is thus a multifaceted construct that involves a balance of emotional, psychological, and social wellness, reflecting the individual's ability to navigate life's challenges and maintain a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

To understand the interrelatedness between dance therapy, stress reduction, emotional resilience, and mental well-being of academics at Lagos State University, the stress and coping theory and the flow theory serve as the theoretical underpinning. For instance, the stress and coping theory, as conceptualized by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), posits that stress is a result of an individual perceiving a discrepancy between the demands of a situation and their resources to manage those demands. The theory distinguishes between two types of coping mechanisms: problem-focused coping, aimed at changing the situation, and emotion-focused coping, aimed at managing emotional responses. The effectiveness of coping strategies is contingent upon the context and the individual's appraisal of the stressor and their coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Dance therapy can be understood through the lens of stress and coping theory

as an emotion-focused coping strategy that facilitates the expression and management of stress-related emotions. By engaging in dance therapy, academics can express their feelings in a non-verbal manner, enhancing their emotional awareness and resilience. This process can lead to a re-evaluation of stressors, potentially transforming perceived threats into challenges that can be navigated more effectively (Folkman, 2011). Moreover, dance therapy provides a unique avenue for problem-focused coping by developing physical and emotional resources, such as improved self-esteem and body awareness, which are essential for managing stress and improving mental well-being. The embodied nature of dance therapy helps individuals to integrate cognitive, emotional, and physical experiences, fostering a holistic approach to stress management and resilience building in the demanding context of academia.

Equally, flow theory, developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), describes a state of deep immersion and engagement in activities, characterized by a sense of fluidity between body and mind where individuals lose their sense of self-consciousness and time. This state of flow is achieved when there is a balance between the challenge of the task and the individual's skill level, leading to optimal experiences and increased well-being (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Dance therapy naturally facilitates the flow state by offering a structured yet flexible environment where individuals can match movement challenges with their physical capabilities, thus optimizing their level of engagement and concentration (Smith et al., 2020). This alignment not only reduces stress by diverting attention away from stressors but also enhances mental well-being through the joy and satisfaction derived from the dance experience. For academics, who often face the stress of high expectations and workload, dance therapy can be a powerful tool for achieving flow thereby supporting emotional resilience and overall mental health.

Dance therapy, as a form of expressive arts therapy, has been increasingly recognized for its effectiveness in stress reduction. Studies have demonstrated that dance therapy can lead to significant decreases in stress levels, primarily through the mechanisms of physical activity, emotional expression, and the fostering of social connections (Andrejeva et al., 2023; Garg et al., 2023; Moratelli et al., 2023). Moratelli et al.'s (2023) research highlights the psychophysiological benefits of dance therapy, where the combination of movement and music in a therapeutic setting can enhance the body's stress response system, leading to improved mood and reduced symptoms of stress. This aligns with the broader literature on physical activity and stress, which consistently shows that engaging in regular movement can act as a powerful stress reliever. Furthermore, the work of Lanke and Nath (2024) supports the notion that dance therapy can specifically target stress by promoting emotional awareness and expression. Through structured and free-form dance activities, individuals are encouraged to explore and express their feelings, which can lead to a deeper understanding and processing of stressors. This emo-

tional engagement is key to the therapeutic process, allowing participants to experience catharsis and emotional release, thereby reducing perceived stress levels.

In addition to emotional expression, dance therapy also fosters a sense of community and support among participants, which is another vital aspect of stress reduction (Pylvänäinen et al., 2015). By participating in group dance therapy sessions, individuals can feel less isolated in their stress experiences, benefiting from the shared experience and mutual support. This sense of belonging can significantly mitigate the effects of stress, providing a social buffer that protects against the adverse effects of stress. Moreover, dance therapy's role in stress reduction is particularly relevant in academia, where stress levels are often high due to pressures related to performance, deadlines, and competitive environments. Incorporating dance therapy into academic settings could offer a novel and holistic approach to managing stress, potentially enhancing their mental well-being. Thus, we hypothesized that:

- H_1 : Dance therapy has a significant effect on stress reduction among academics at Lagos State University

Equally, dance therapy, as a form of expressive therapy, has been empirically studied for its effects on emotional resilience. According to Koch et al. (2014), dance therapy enhances emotional resilience by providing participants with a non-verbal means of expression and emotional processing. This form of therapy facilitates the expression of emotions that may be difficult to articulate through words, thereby allowing individuals to confront and work through emotional stressors more effectively. The physical movement involved in dance therapy also stimulates neurological pathways that are associated with positive mood and resilience, suggesting a biopsychosocial mechanism that underpins the therapeutic effects of dance on emotional resilience. In a study by Han and Sa (2023), older women who participated in dance therapy sessions exhibited significant improvements in measures of resilience and stress reduction. The study highlighted the role of rhythmic movement in fostering a sense of connectedness and well-being, which are crucial components of emotional resilience. This supports the idea that dance therapy can offer a unique and powerful avenue for enhancing the psychological resources needed to cope with adversity.

Further supporting the connection between dance therapy and emotional resilience, a systematic review by Tomaszewski et al. (2023) found that dance movement therapy provided significant benefits in terms of emotional regulation and resilience among adults with psychological traumas. The review emphasized the importance of body awareness and movement in developing a more adaptive and flexible response to emotional challenges. Linking these findings to the context of academics, the stress, and challenges inherent in academic environments necessitate effective coping strate-

gies and interventions. Dance therapy, with its proven benefits for emotional resilience, presents a compelling option for academics. Based on the foregoing arguments, we hypothesized that:

- H_2 : Dance therapy has a significant effect on the emotional resilience among academics at Lagos State University

It is important to note that, the impact of dance therapy on mental well-being has been the subject of various empirical studies, highlighting its potential as a holistic intervention for enhancing psychological health. A seminal study by Duberg et al. (2013) found that adolescents participating in dance intervention exhibited significant improvements in self-rated health, reflecting enhancements in mental well-being. The study posits that dance, as a physical and expressive activity, facilitates emotional expression and social interaction, which are key components of mental well-being. In addition to individual benefits, dance therapy promotes a sense of community and belonging, which is essential for mental well-being. A qualitative study by Quiroga et al. (2010) demonstrated that group dance therapy sessions led to increased feelings of social connectedness and improved mood among participants. This underscores the social dimension of dance therapy as a critical factor in its effectiveness in boosting mental well-being. Furthermore, the cognitive aspects of dance therapy, including concentration on movement and rhythm, have been shown to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, leading to an overall improvement in mental well-being (Patwari & Vajpayee, 2023). This indicates that the cognitive engagement required in dance therapy can serve as a distraction from negative thoughts and stressors, contributing to better mental health. Connecting these findings to the academic context, the pressures and stressors unique to academic environments can significantly affect mental well-being. Implementing dance therapy as part of wellness programs in academic institutions could provide an effective means of addressing these challenges. By improving emotional expression, social connectedness, and cognitive engagement, dance therapy has the potential to enhance the mental well-being of academics thereby improving their performance and reducing the prevalence of mental health issues amongst them. Premised on these arguments, we hypothesized that:

- H_3 : Dance therapy has a significant influence on the mental well-being of academics

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the descriptive research design was used, and its cross-sectional approach was adopted to collect a snapshot of data from the respondents. The data for this study was collected from members of the academic staff of Lagos State University who were 843 as cited in Aremo et al. (2023). Using the complete enumeration method, all

members of the academic staff were invited to participate in the study. Eight hundred and forty-three (843) copies of the questionnaire were sent out through research assistants to the university campuses at Ojo, Epe, and Ikeja for a period of 6 weeks (December 2023 – January 2024) and 534 copies were retrieved. Of the 534 (63.3%) copies retrieved, 528 (62.6%) copies of the questionnaires were properly filled and subsequently used for final analyses. Respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaires which were in two parts. Part A contains the demographic variables while Part B contains the scales that were constructed by the authors based on existing scales and literature review. The participants gave responses to the measures using the 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 5. All scales were pilot-tested amongst 50 doctoral candidates based on the suggestions of Saunders et al. (2009) at Lagos State University and they yielded an acceptable reliability coefficient above the threshold of Cronbach Alpha (α) .70. Cronbach Alpha Dance therapy scale (α =.880), stress reduction scale (α =.741), emotional resilience scale (α =.902) and mental wellbeing scale (α =.832). Thus, it can be concluded that the measures are reliable and efficient in measuring the variables under study. Collected and collated data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistical technique was applied to analyze the data collected on demographic variables while the inferential statistics of the linear regression were used to test the three (3) stated hypotheses. The analyses with these statistical techniques were achieved using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. This study followed the stipulations of the LASU Research Ethics Policy (2020) by ensuring ethical standards were met in protecting participants' rights, maintaining confidentiality, and upholding research integrity.

FINDINGS

This section is concerned with the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the collected data to understand the interplay between the variables.

Table 1: Analysis of demographic variables

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	416 (79%)
	Female	112 (21%)
Age	20-30	59 (11%)
	31-40	197 (37%)
	41-50	203 (38%)
	51-60	40 (8%)
	61 & above	29 (5%)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Marital status	Single	63 (12%)
	Married	427 (81%)
	Separated	23 (4%)
	Widowed	15 (3%)
To you, is dance therapeutic	Yes	497 (94%)
	No	31 (6%)

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents. For instance, the gender distribution of respondents shows a significant skew towards males, who constitute 79% (416 individuals) of the sample, compared to females at 21% (112 individuals). This gender disparity suggests that, within this population, males may be more inclined to participate in or acknowledge the benefits of dance therapy, which could be reflective of broader societal norms around gender and expressions through dance or perhaps a greater openness among men to explore therapeutic activities. Age distribution among the participants reveals a concentration in the middle age ranges, with 37% (197 individuals) between 31-40 years and 38% (203 individuals) between 41-50 years. This indicates that dance therapy appeals predominantly to individuals in these age groups, which together make up 75% of the respondents. The relatively lower representation of younger (11% within 20-30 years) and older age groups (13% for those 51 and above) might point to a specific relevance or accessibility of dance therapy to people at certain life stages, possibly those experiencing mid-life stressors or seeking wellness and physical activity as they age. Regarding perceptions of dance therapy's therapeutic value, an overwhelming majority of 94% (497 individuals) believe in its benefits, contrasting with a small minority of 6% (31 individuals) who do not. This strong endorsement underscores a general acceptance and recognition of dance therapy's positive influence on well-being, echoing existing literature on the subject. The high rate of affirmation across diverse demographic segments, albeit with a notable male and middle-aged predominance, highlights dance therapy's potential as a universally beneficial modality for enhancing mental health.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

- H_1 : Dance therapy has a significant effect on stress reduction among academics at Lagos State University

Table 2: Model summary of regression analysis

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.428 ^a	.183	.181	.59418	1.634

a. Predictors: (constant), dance_therapy; b. Dependent variable: stress_reduction

Table 3: ANOVA of regression analysis

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	41.595	1	41.595	117.816	.000 ^b
	Residual	185.706	526	.353		
	Total	227.302	527			

a. Predictors: (constant), dance_therapy; b. Dependent variable: stress_reduction

Table 4: Coefficients of regression analysis

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.219	.169		13.094	.000
	Dance_Therapy	.479	.044	.428	10.854	.000

a. Dependent variable: stress_reduction. Source: Field Survey (2024)

The data of linear regression analysis was evident in Tables 2, 3, 4 provides a compelling narrative about the effectiveness of dance therapy in reducing stress. The model summary indicates a moderate effect of dance therapy on stress reduction, with an R^2 value of .183. This suggests that approximately 18.3% of the variance in stress reduction can be attributed to dance therapy, highlighting its significance as a contributing factor to stress alleviation. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.634 suggests that the residuals are independent, supporting the model's reliability. The ANOVA results further reinforce the model's validity, with a significant F-value (117.816) indicating that dance therapy is a significant predictor of stress reduction. The coefficients table provides the specifics of this relationship, showing a significant positive effect of dance therapy on stress reduction, with a standardized beta coefficient of .428. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted while the alternate is rejected.

- H_2 : Dance therapy has a significant effect on the emotional resilience among academics at Lagos State University

Table 5: Model summary of regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.392 ^a	.153	.152	.56688	1.752

a. Predictors: (constant), dance_therapy; b. Dependent variable: emotional_resilience

Table 6: ANOVA of regression analysis

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	30.599	1	30.599	95.218	.001 ^b
Residual	169.033	526	.321		
Total	199.631	527			

a. Dependent variable: Emotional_resilience; b. Predictors: (constant), dance_therapy

Table 7: Coefficients of regression analysis

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.156	.162		13.340	.001
	Dance_Therapy	.411	.042	.392	9.758	.001

a. Dependent variable: emotional_resilience. Source: Field Survey (2024)

The regression analysis presented in tables 5 through 7 provides empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of dance therapy in enhancing emotional resilience. The model summary shows a significant effect of dance therapy on the emotional resilience of academics, with an R^2 of .153. This suggests that dance therapy accounts for approximately 15.3% of the variance in emotional resilience among the participants. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.752 suggests minimal autocorrelation in the residuals, affirming the independence of the data points and enhancing the reliability of the model. The ANOVA results further underscore the significance of dance therapy as a predictor of emotional resilience, with a substantial F-value of 95.218 and a significance level of .001, indicating that the model is statistically significant. The coefficients table delineates the specific effect of dance therapy on emotional resilience, where the standardized coefficient is .392. The t-value of 9.758 with a significance level of .001 demonstrates a strong positive effect of dance therapy on emotional resilience, reinforcing the hypothesis that dance therapy contributes significantly to building psychological resilience of academics at Lagos State University.

H₃: Dance therapy has a significant effect on the mental well-being of academics at Lagos State University

- **H₃:** Dance therapy has a significant effect on the mental wellbeing of academics at Lagos State University

Table 8: Model summary of regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.411 ^a	.169	.167	.49936	1.784

a. Predictors: (constant), dance_therapy; b. Dependent variable: mental_wellbeing

Table 9: ANOVA of regression analysis

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	26.622	1	26.622	106.761	.001 ^b
Residual	131.166	526	.249		
Total	157.788	527			

a. Dependent variable: mental_wellbeing; b. predictors: (constant), dance_therapy

Table 10: Coefficients of regression analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.559	.147		17.970	.001
	Dance_Therapy	.383	.037	.411	10.333	.001

a. Dependent variable: mental_wellbeing. Source: Field Survey (2024)

The regression analysis shown in Tables 8 to 10 robustly illustrates the positive effect of dance therapy on the mental well-being of academics at Lagos State University. With an R² of .169, the model suggests that dance therapy accounts for approximately 16.9% of the variance in mental well-being among participants. This significant portion highlights the substantial effect dance therapy has on enhancing psychological health. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.784 indicates a low likelihood of autocorrelation among residuals, ensuring the independence of data points and reinforcing the model's reliability. The ANOVA results further validate the model's significance, with a remarkable F-value of 106.761 and a significance level of .001, illustrating that dance therapy is a cru-

cial predictor of mental well-being. The coefficient provided in the analysis revealed that each unit increase in dance therapy participation leads to a .383 unit increase in mental well-being scores, with a standardized beta of .411. This significant positive relationship, underscored by a t-value of 10.333 and a significance level of .001, quantitatively confirms the efficacy of dance therapy in boosting mental health.

DISCUSSION

The findings from hypothesis one confirm that dance therapy has a significant effect on stress reduction among academics at Lagos State University. The regression analysis indicates that dance therapy explains approximately 18.3% of the variance in stress reduction, demonstrating its substantial influence. This aligns with previous studies by Andrejeva et al. (2023), Garg et al. (2023), and Moratelli et al. (2023), which document the psychophysiological benefits of dance therapy, including enhanced mood and improved stress response systems. These studies emphasize the role of physical activity and emotional expression in mitigating stress, which is quantitatively affirmed by the present analysis. The significant positive relationship between dance therapy and stress reduction (standardized beta coefficient of .428) supports the theoretical proposition that dance therapy facilitates emotional catharsis and processing, essential for stress relief. The communal aspect of dance therapy, highlighted by Pylvänäinen et al. (2015), aligns with the observed benefits, suggesting that the social support inherent in group sessions amplifies the stress-reducing effects. This is particularly relevant in high-stress environments like academia, where performance pressures are constant. Incorporating dance therapy into academic settings could provide a holistic strategy for managing stress to enhance overall well-being. The empirical evidence, coupled with the theoretical framework provided by the literature, makes a strong case for adopting dance therapy as a viable intervention for stress reduction.

Results from hypothesis two highlight that dance therapy significantly enhances emotional resilience among academics. The model suggests that dance therapy accounts for 15.3% of the variance in emotional resilience, underscoring its effectiveness. This quantitative evidence aligns with the findings of Koch et al. (2014) and Han and Sa (2023), who emphasize the role of non-verbal expression and rhythmic movement in enhancing mood and connectedness, crucial factors in emotional resilience. The act of engaging in dance allows for non-verbal emotional expression while physical movement stimulates neurological pathways associated with positive affect and resilience.

The systematic review by Tomaszewski et al. (2023) further supports the beneficial effects of dance therapy on emotional regulation and resilience, particularly among adults experiencing psychological trauma. This suggests that dance therapy can help develop adaptive responses to emotional challenges through enhanced body awareness

and movement. In academic contexts, where stress and emotional challenges are prevalent, dance therapy emerges as a viable intervention to bolster emotional resilience. The convergence of empirical data and literature highlights the value of incorporating dance therapy into programs aimed at enhancing emotional resilience, especially in high-stress academic environments.

Hypothesis three confirms that dance therapy significantly improves the mental well-being of academics at Lagos State University. The regression analysis shows that dance therapy accounts for 16.9% of the variance in mental well-being, highlighting its substantial impact. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Duberg et al. (2013) and Quiroga et al. (2010), which underscore the multifaceted benefits of dance therapy, including emotional expression, social interaction, and community building. These elements are pivotal for mental well-being. Additionally, the cognitive benefits of dance therapy, such as enhanced concentration and rhythmic engagement, are associated with reductions in depression and anxiety symptoms (Patwari & Vajpayee, 2023). This cognitive dimension complements the emotional and social facets of dance therapy by so doing offering offering a comprehensive therapeutic approach. By engaging participants in mindful movement and rhythm, dance therapy provides a distraction from negative thoughts and a means to navigate stress, promoting a healthier mental state. Thus, incorporating dance therapy into academic settings emerges as a promising strategy for addressing the unique stressors faced by academic members.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical data derived from this study robustly supports the effectiveness of dance therapy in enhancing stress reduction, emotional resilience, and mental well-being among academics. The analyses reveal significant effects between dance therapy and each of these psychological dimensions, demonstrating that dance therapy accounts for a meaningful portion of the variance in these outcomes. This study concludes that the findings of this study not only validate the hypotheses posited but also align with existing literature on the multifaceted benefits of dance therapy, underscoring its potential as a valuable intervention in academic settings to combat stress, foster resilience, and improve overall mental health. Based on this conclusion, this study recommends that Lagos State University and similar academic institutions integrate dance therapy programs into their wellness and mental health initiatives. Such programs could provide a structured yet flexible framework for academic staff to engage in dance therapy sessions facilitated by trained professionals as a proactive approach to managing stress and fostering a supportive community. Additionally, considering the unique stressors inherent in academic environments, customized dance therapy interventions could be developed to address the specific needs of different groups within the university, such as male and

female academic members. Implementing these programs could not only enhance individual well-being but also contribute to a more positive and supportive academic culture. Furthermore, to maximize the benefits of dance therapy, Lagos State University should consider incorporating educational workshops that highlight the science behind dance therapy and its benefits. This could increase awareness and participation across the academic community. Partnering with mental health organizations and professionals specializing in dance therapy could also enrich the program, thereby offering diverse perspectives and techniques to cater to a wide range of needs and preferences within the university setting.

As suggestions for further study, future research could explore the long-term effects of dance therapy on mental health outcomes, employing longitudinal study designs to track changes over time. It would also be beneficial to conduct comparative studies to evaluate the efficacy of dance therapy relative to other forms of therapy and wellness interventions used in academic settings. Investigating the specific elements of dance therapy that contribute most significantly to its therapeutic effects could help refine and optimize intervention strategies. Additionally, expanding the research to include diverse academic environments and populations could provide deeper insights into the universality and adaptability of dance therapy as a therapeutic tool across different cultural and educational contexts.

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