

Dance & Creative Movement: its 'effect on older adults' self-efficacy and well-being

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of dance and creative movement on older adults' self-efficacy and well-being. A group of 19 autonomous older adults of age 60 + with diverse health conditions were allocated in either an intervention group (IG) or a control group (CG). The IG attended 13 dance and creative movement (DCM) sessions of 90 minutes each, while the control group continued their daily routine. Both groups completed The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1999) to test their perceived self-efficacy and the WHO Five Well-Being Index (WHO, The WHO-5 website, 2018) to measure their well-being at pre-intervention and at post-intervention.

Summary

The amount of older adults (i.e., people over 60 years old) worldwide is expected to almost double from 12% (in 2015) to 22% by 2050 (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2018). However, longer lives does not necessarily mean that people are living in good physical and mental health conditions (WHO, 2018). Ageing may bring about several health issues such as osteoarthritis, diabetes and dementia (WHO, 2018).

According to Bandura (1994), sudden situations, such as, loss of a particular physical ability that occur in ageing, may effect an older adult's perceived self-efficacy. Sometimes such situations cannot be avoided and thus it is vital that older adults have a good sense of self-efficacy in order to recover quick and not fall into a negative state (Bandura, 1994). Moreover, well-being is also important as it effects how well and how long individuals live (Ryff, 2014).



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Self-efficacy refers to people's outlook on whether they can handle challenging tasks or hardships (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). This means that if older individuals have a good sense of self-efficacy then they believe that they are able to overcome difficult situations.

Well-being can have different meanings for different individuals and should be looked into as a continuous process (WHO, 2018). Furthermore, it includes individuals' awareness of their life purpose, talents and capabilities (Ryff, 2014).

Creative movement is a physical activity that applies and strengthens the use of feelings and thoughts (MacDonald, 1991). This suggests that in creative movement, participants are encouraged to delve into their emotions and use as a driving creative force.

Research has shown that participation in physical activity benefits older adults' self-efficacy (McAuley, Konopack, Motl, Morris, Doerksen & Rosengren, 2006; McAuley, Lox & Duncan, 1993) and well-being (Stathi, Fox & Mc Kenna, 2002). It has also been noted that different physical activities may have different effects on self-efficacy. That is, some activities might have a more positive effect than other activities (McAuley, Katula, Mihalko, Blissmer, Duncan, Pena and Dunn, 1999). Hui, Tsang-keung Chui & Woo (2008) argued that older adults' participation in physical activity such as dance may have a positive effect on their well-being. Their intervention was a dance context whereby participants had to learn dance steps from a dance instructor.

Other studies surrounding creative movement, whereby participants are encouraged to discover their own way of moving rather than copy movements from a dance instructor, have also revealed a positive impact on older adults (Ferreira, Marmeleira, Formigo, Gomes, Fernandes, 2015). Furthermore, participation in creative activities support older adults' growth, purpose and competence which promotes well-being (Fisher & Specht, 1999) and social interaction (Price & Tinker, 2014) which in turn supports self-efficacy (McAuley, Blissmer, Katula & Duncan, 2000). Hence, it seems that both dance and creative movement together can have a positive effect on older adults' self-efficacy and well-being, yet no study has included both in their intervention.

Even though dancing is a recommended physical activity for older adults (WHO, 2018), there are few studies that look into its effect on older adults' self-efficacy and well-being. Most research on older adults' self-efficacy and well-being adopt physical exercises such as sit-ups for their intervention. Yet, it was suggested that the effect of such physical activity on self-efficacy is of a small significance (Langan & Marrotta, 2000) and that participation in the physical activity itself promotes well-being in older adults (McAuley & Rudolph, 1995). On the other hand, the few studies that adopted dance or creative movement as their intervention have revealed positive outcomes. Participants in Murrock and Madigan's study (2008) on self-efficacy and dance, stated that dance benefits their mental and physical health. Moreover, creative movement has been found not only to improve older adults' physical fitness but also their psychological health (Osgood, Smith Meyers & Orchowksy, 1990).

Mac Donald (1991) argued that creative movement involves participants' intellect, encourages individual differences and challenges participants to improve their aesthetic qualities. Such an activity can support self-efficacy since environments that challenge thoughts actually improve functioning in advanced age (Bandura, 1994). Ryff (1995) argued that *purpose in life* and *personal growth* decrease with ageing. However, it was suggested that the creative process actually promotes both criteria (Fisher & Specht, 1999) and that older adult who dance perceive dance as having well-being benefits (Quiroga Murica, Kreutz, Clift & Bongard, 2010). Therefore, it is speculated that a physical activity that combines both dance and creative movement can improve self-efficacy and well-being in older adults.

Results

The dance and creative movement intervention did not have a positive effect on the IG's self-efficacy and well-being. For future research, longer interventions and multiple measurement tools are recommended. Despite the current study's insignificant results, it is suggested that dance and creative movement is an activity that supports older adults' general health.

Conclusion

As the amount of older adults drastically increases, it is important to find out how dance can support healthy aging. This means that the structure and deliverance of a dance programme, that is, a detailed content of the exercises deserves more attention in dance science research. Furthermore, the emerging industry in dance for healthy aging can provide work opportunities for dancers after they retire from performing.

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