



Effects of Dancing on Creativity and Self-Esteem in Young Adults

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Abstract: The present study was carried out to compare the level of creativity and self-esteem among professional dancers, casual dancers and non-dancers. An attempt was also made to understand the phenomena of creativity and self-esteem as subjective processes among professional dancers and casual dancers. 75 young adults (equal number of professional dancers, casual dancers and non-dancers) completed quantitative measures of creativity using Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (Torrance & Ball, 1984) and self-esteem using Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory (O'Brien & Epstein, 1988). A semi-structured interview schedule constructed by the authors was used to assess how the pursuit of dance is related to the notion of creativity and self-esteem as subjective processes among the dancers. Quantitative data was analyzed using mean, standard deviation, one-way between subjects ANOVA. Post-hoc analysis was done using the Tukey HSD. Qualitative data from the interview schedule was analyzed using thematic analysis. Results indicated significantly higher levels of creativity among professional and casual dancers compared to non-dancers. The scores were higher for casual dancers than non-dancers on three out of four dimensions of self-esteem. Though, overall pursuit of dance had enhancing effects on self-esteem but this relationship was impacted by whether dance was pursued professionally or as a hobby. Qualitative analysis results were in conjunction with findings obtained from quantitative measures though the manifestations were different for professional and casual dancers. The notion of creativity and self-esteem were open-ended, context oriented processes embedded within the socio-cultural and organizational milieu. The study established the phenomena of dance as a vehicle for overall psychological growth and development of the individual.

Keywords: creativity, self-esteem, pursuit of dance



1. Introduction

Performing arts including dance have been part of human civilization since the beginning. We were born with an instinct for movement. In transition from childhood to adulthood, we begin to suppress our natural urge to move freely. Our movements become increasingly restricted and task oriented due to societal norms and cultural conditioning (Kashyap, 2005). Dance is a culturally valid medium which can revive this natural urge of movement in our adult lives and authentically satisfy it.

Kashyap (2005) defined dance as a unique physical discipline in which emotional, psychological, spiritual, intellectual and creative energies are unified and harmonized. Dance has an invigorating effect on mind and body and allows people to move in patterns outside the constraints of the daily routine. Dance affects our personality, behavior and relationships with the environment and eventually boosts the self-image and self-reliance (Kashyap, 2002; Paradoxa & Robinson, 1997). Grogan, et al. (2014) carried out a qualitative study on dance and body image. Participants reported a positive impact of dance therapy session on body image due to more connection to their bodies, freer, less self-conscious, and more accepting of their bodies. There is abundant literature available on the sociological, historical, anthropological and cultural aspects of dancing. But the involvement of dance in contribution to the growth and development of an individual's personality has a lot of scope for further research. Very few studies have been carried out to explore pursuit of dance impacting cognitive, conative, and affective aspects of an individual. The important aspects of personality to be explored could include self-awareness, self-esteem, creativity, communication and coping patterns (ADMT, 2003).



2. Creativity

Torrance (1988) claims that creativity defies precise definition. It involves every sense - sight, smell, hearing, feeling, taste, and even perhaps the extrasensory. Torrance and Orlow (1984) define the term 'creative thinking abilities' as the constellation of generalized mental abilities like divergent thinking, productive thinking, inventive thinking, or imagination. Taylor (1959) sought to reconcile some of the apparent differences in opinion concerning creativity by suggesting creativity in terms of various levels; expressive creativity, productive creativity, inventive creativity, innovative creativity, and emergentive creativity. The phenomenon of creativity continues to be of considerable interest to researchers because of increasing demand for new solutions to old or continuing problems.

In a study by Banes (1998) it was found that dancers might be better able to oscillate between the fantasy world of the dance and the reality. A better repertoire of thought processes like, attention, concentration, concept formation, and so on, in the dancers, would make it possible for them to get engaged and absorbed in the process of dance. Creative movement and dance share a ubiquitous connection and lead to self-discovery (Capello, 2014). Badrinath (2002) opines that expressive aspect of dance kindles creative potential in dancers. Even though the biographical reports of dancers give evidence for multifaceted personalities, hard work and creative thinking in dancers, methodical study into the dancers' personalities is very limited.

3. Self-Esteem

Self-concept is the cognitive aspect of self, related to one's self-image. According to Purkey (1988), 'Self-concept may be defined as the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence. Self-esteem is the affective or emotional aspect of self



and generally refers to how we feel about or how we value ourselves (one's self-worth).'

Brown and Marshall (2006) have distinguished between global self-esteem, feelings of self-worth, and self-evaluations.

Epstein (1980; 1986) and O'Brien (1980) have proposed a multidimensional model of self-esteem. They propose that elements of self-evaluation are structured in a hierarchical fashion. At the highest level is the Global Self Esteem, which refers to the most general or basic evaluation of self-worth. At the intermediate level, the theory proposes that there are components of self-esteem which are more specific to particular domains of life experience, including competence, lovability, likeability, self-control, personal power, moral self-approval, body appearance, and body functioning. These components are conceptualized as areas of self-evaluation which usually have a strong influence on the level of global self-esteem and are trans-situational in guiding and controlling behavior.

Researchers have indicated a possibility of growth or self-transcendence that dances allows (Carter, 2004; McFee, 1992; McRobbie, 1997; Ramaswamy & Deslauriers, 2014). Belly dancers experience a number of benefits including positive body image and low self-objectification than the college students (Tiggemann, Coutts, & Clark, 2014). Kashyap (2002) stated that dance boosts the degree of confidence in our physical attitude. Dance makes one feel beautiful and works as a remedy for shattered self-image and increases self-reliance. Badrinath (2002) has also claimed that basic posture of dance brings confidence. Creative pursuits positively impacts self-appraisal.

The review indicates that there is a potential relationship between dance and expression of creativity and notion of self-esteem, which deserves detailed exploration. There are some studies relating phenomena of creativity and self-esteem to dance per se, but there is



a huge gap in the literature as far as relating the phenomena of creativity and self-esteem to dancers in Indian context is concerned, specifically pursuing western dancing styles.

Currently, pursuing such a dance style has become a raging phenomenon among Indian youth inspired by Bollywood (Roy, 2011; Booth, 2014). Moreover, there is a dearth of research on whether pursuing dance as a hobby or pursuing dance as a profession has any variable impact on the personality dynamics of the individual dancers, which the present study would focus on.

The purpose of the present study was to compare creativity and self-esteem among professional dancers, casual dancers and non-dancers. An attempt was also made to understand the phenomena of creativity and self-esteem as subjective processes. It was hypothesized that (i) there would be a difference in the level of creativity among professional dancers, casual dancers and non-dancers; and (ii) there would be a difference on four scales of self-esteem (GSE, CMP, BFN, and IDN) among professional dancers, casual dancers and non-dancers.

4. Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 75 young adults (equal number of professional dancers, casual dancers and non-dancers), age range 20 to 27 years ($M = 23.37$, $SD = 2.86$) was taken; of which 25 were professional dancers, 25 were casual dancers and the other 25 were non-dancers. Professional dancers were approached through various dance schools and colleges. They were part of a repertory company of performing artists in Delhi. Inclusion criteria were dancers performing fusion (western) dance styles. Moreover, they must be learning dance for at least five years and formally pursuing dance as a career for at least two years. Casual



dancers were students of various dance schools in Delhi and National Capital Region. Non-dancers never learned dance formally nor pursued any type of dance as a hobby. They were not pursuing any major creative hobby. Professional dancers included 10 males and 15 females, casual dancers included 7 males and 18 females while non-dancers included 9 males and 16 females. Most participants were from a higher socio-economic background and were educated with basic high school education.

Procedure

Quantitative Assessment. Creativity was assessed using Figural Form A of Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (Torrance & Ball, Torrance Test of Creative Thinking Streamlined Scoring Workbook, Figural A, 1984). It measures creative thinking using three picture-based exercises, namely Picture Construction, Picture Completion and Parallel Lines. Streamlined scoring was carried out in five norm-referenced measures - fluency, originality, elaboration, abstractness of titles, and resistance to premature closure; and thirteen criterion referenced measures, to obtain the creative index for each participant. Scoring reliability of the norm referenced and the criterion referenced measures ranged from .60 to 1.00, with most coefficients above .90. TTCT manual includes extensive documentation of content, concurrent, and construct validity, including several short-term and long-term predictive validity studies (Torrance, 1981).

Self-esteem was assessed using Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory (MSEI) (O'Brien & Epstein, 1988). It consists of 116 items with 5-point Likert scale options. The MSEI is based on a coherent model of self-concept and self-esteem. It provides eleven scales. However, the following four scales were selected as they were found to be relevant to the objectives of the present study:



Global Self Esteem measures subject's perception about whether he/she is pleased with self, feels significant as a person, self-confident, pleased with past, or expects future success. It is conceptualized as a summary of feelings of worthiness. These feelings often serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy by influencing an individual's expectations about the future behavior.

Competence measures subject's perception about whether he/she is competent, feels capable of mastering new skills, learns quickly and does well at most things, feels talented, feels effective and capable.

Body functioning refers to one's perception regarding whether he/she is well coordinated, agile, in good physical condition. Comfortable with body, enjoys physical activities such as dancing, or feels a sense of vitality and vigor in body functioning.

Identity integration concerns with the organization of self-experience and the efficiency with which these experience can be integrated into the self-concept. It concerns, with whether one has a clear sense of identity, knows who he/she is, what he/she wants out of life, well defined long term goals, inner sense of cohesion and integration of different aspects of self-concept.

MSEI ratings for each item ranged from 1-5. Internal consistency and test-retest reliability coefficients range from .78 to .90. MSEI manual includes extensive documentation of convergent and discriminant validity, including several studies on correlations with personality variables such as depression, ego strength, neuroticism, parental encouragement of independence, etc. The validity ranges from .50 to .87.

The participants were tested in small groups of three-to-five participants over a period of three months. Informed consent was taken from the participants. Both the tests were conducted according to the standardized procedures mentioned in the manual.



Qualitative Assessment. Semi-Structured Interview technique was used to collect qualitative data on creativity and self-esteem. The subjective context oriented meanings related to the phenomena of interest cannot be explored through quantitative method. Pilot interviews were carried out with some participants to get an overview of the relevant issues in the field. A semi-structured interview schedule was constructed based on a pilot study. Seven professional (P) and four casual (C) dancers were interviewed. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and later verbatim transcriptions were done. Each interview lasted from about 30 minutes to 2 hours. Each interview was qualitatively different from every other interview, in terms of themes and issues explored and the depth and spontaneity. Complete confidentiality was ensured and ethical procedures were followed.

Quantitative Analysis. Means and standard deviations were calculated for all the relevant variables for all the three groups. In order to test the significance of difference between the means, one-way between subjects ANOVA was carried out using SPSS version 22.0. Post-hoc analysis was done using the Tukey HSD.

Qualitative Analysis. Thematic analysis was used to qualitatively interpret the narratives of the research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interview recordings were heard several times before they were transcribed to understand what was verbalized and what was left unexpressed. This included becoming familiar with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing them, defining and naming them and finally producing a report. Starting with interpreting individual interview transcripts, researchers moved to more dominant themes to synthesize, explain and understand data related to notion of creativity and self-esteem. Themes related to the present research objectives have been reported though narratives were much richer.



5. Results

Results are reported in two sections as follows:

Comparison between Professional Dancers, Casual Dancers and Non-Dancers on Creativity and four Scales of Self-Esteem

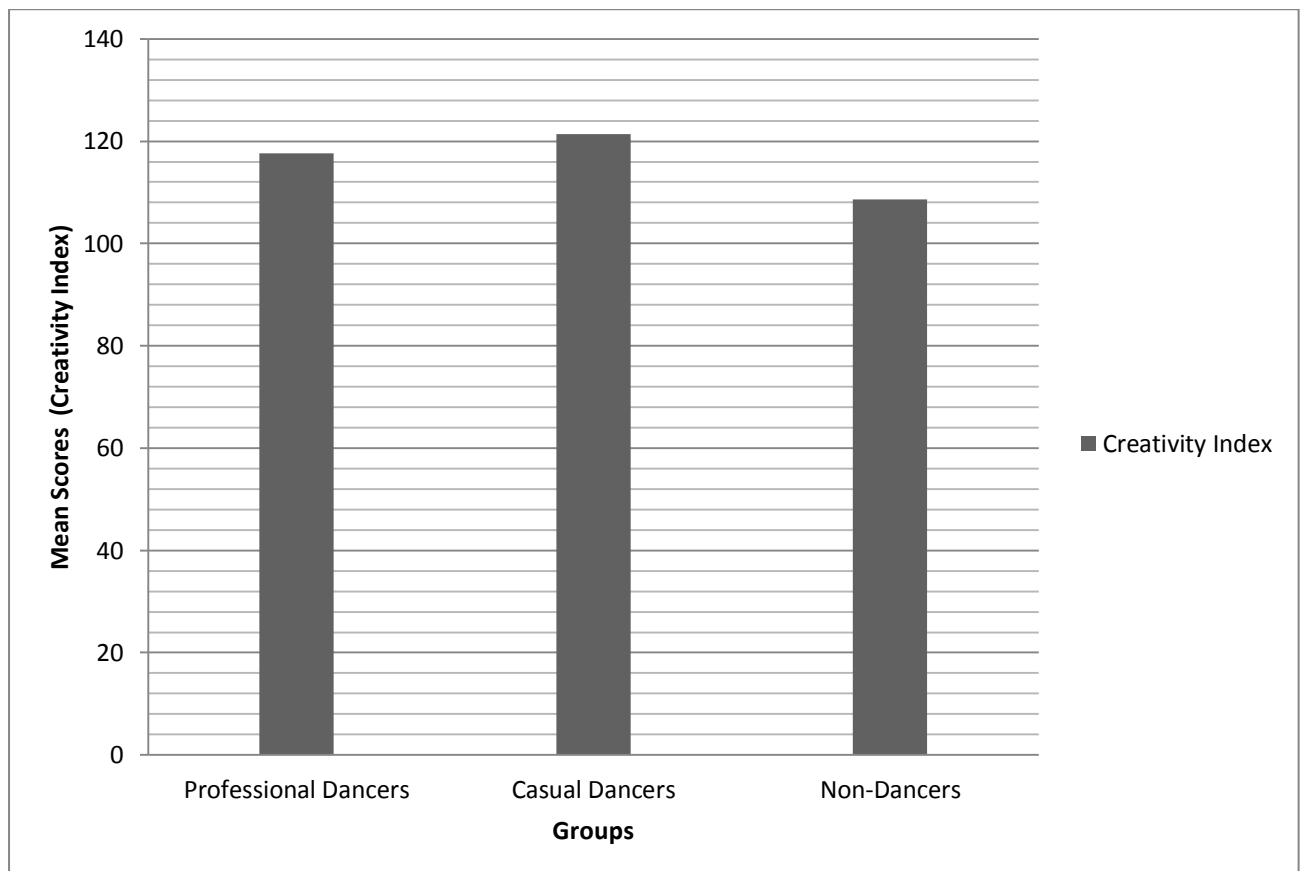


Figure 1. Comparison between Professional, Casual and Non-Dancers on the Creativity Index.



Table 1
Creativity Index and Self-Esteem for Professional Dancers, Casual Dancers and Non-Dancers

	Professional Dancers	Casual Dancers	Non- dancers	F	p	η^2
Creativity Index	117.57 ^a (11.62)	121.34 ^a (16.68)	108.56 ^b (11.76)	6.27	.003	.15
Global Self-Esteem	33.12 (6.39)	36.80 ^a (5.25)	31.96 ^b (7.16)	4.00	.023	.10
Competence	37.60 ^a (5.49)	38.84 ^a (4.49)	33.32 ^b (5.51)	7.80	.001	.18
Body functioning	36.12 (5.25)	38.44 ^a (4.21)	32.40 ^b (7.23)	7.13	.001	.17
Identity Integration	35.36 (6.94)	35.24 (5.39)	33.08 (7.81)	0.89	.414	.02

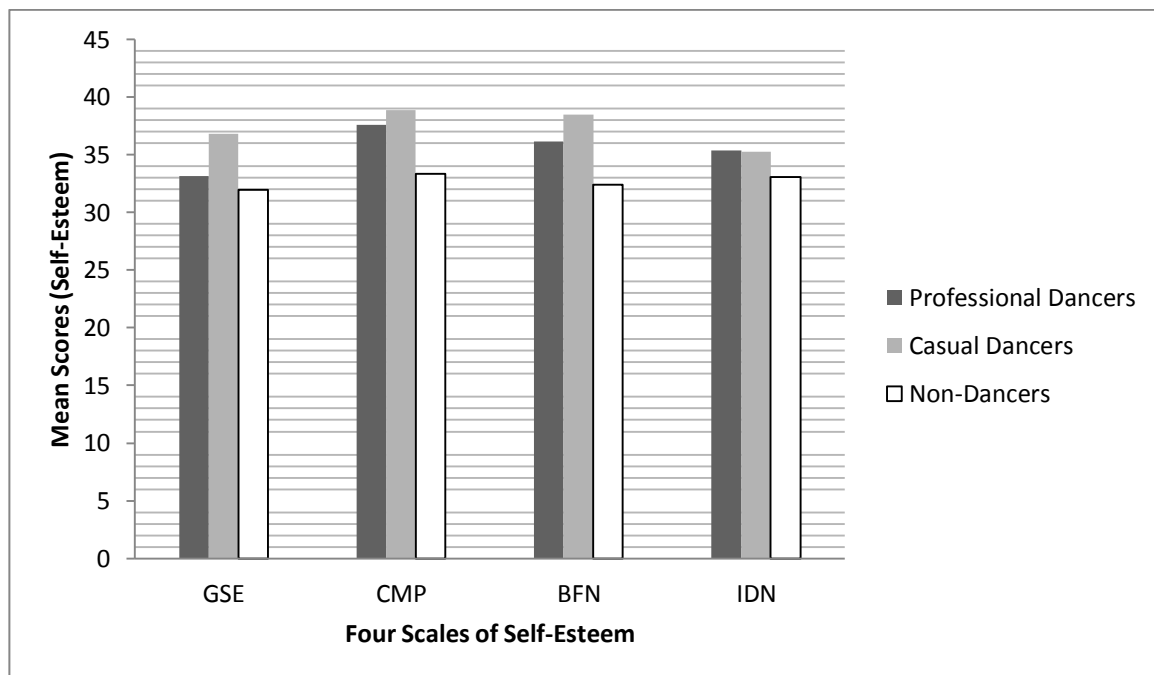
Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means. Means with differing superscripts within rows are significantly different at the $p \leq .05$ based on the Tukey HSD post hoc paired comparisons.

Table 1 indicates that there was a significant difference on the creativity index scores at the $p < .01$ level for the three groups ($F = 6.27, p = .003$). The effect size for this analysis ($\eta^2 = .15$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a large effect ($\eta^2 = .14$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for non-dancers was significantly lower ($M = 108.56, SD = 11.76$) than professional as well as casual dancers ($M = 117.57, SD = 11.62$; and $M = 121.34, SD = 16.68$ respectively). However, there was no



significant difference on creativity between professional and casual dancers. Taken together, these results suggest that dancers tend to be higher on creativity compared to non-dancers, irrespective of whether they were professional or casual dancers (refer Figure 1).

Figure 2. Comparison between Professional, Casual and Non-Dancers on the four scales of Self-Esteem.



Further, Table 1 also indicates that there was a significant difference on three out of four scales of self-esteem. There was a significant difference on global self-esteem at the $p < .05$ level for the three groups ($F = 4.00, p = .023$). The effect size for this analysis ($\eta^2 = .10$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($\eta^2 = .06$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for casual dancers was significantly higher ($M = 36.80, SD = 5.25$) than the non-dancers ($M = 31.96, SD = 7.16$). The global self-esteem scores for casual dancers were higher ($M = 36.80, SD = 5.25$) than professional dancers ($M = 33.12, SD = 6.39$), however the difference was marginally significant ($p = .106$). Taken together, these results suggest that casual dancers tend to be



higher on global self-esteem compared to non-dancers and even professional dancers to some extent as shown in Figure 2. In fact, there was no significant difference between the professional dancers and non-dancers on global self-esteem ($p = .793$).

There was a highly significant difference on competence scores at the $p = .001$ level for the three groups ($F = 7.80$). The effect size for this analysis ($\eta^2 = .18$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a large effect ($\eta^2 = .14$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for non-dancers was significantly lower ($M = 33.32$, $SD = 5.51$) than professional as well as casual dancers ($M = 37.60$, $SD = 5.49$; and $M = 38.84$, $SD = 4.49$ respectively). However, there was no significant difference on competence between professional and casual dancers. Taken together, these results suggest that dancers tend to be higher on competence compared to non-dancers, irrespective of whether they were professional or casual dancers (refer Figure 2).

There was a highly significant difference on body functioning at the $p = .001$ level for the three groups ($F = 7.13$). The effect size for this analysis ($\eta^2 = .17$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a large effect ($\eta^2 = .14$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for casual dancers was significantly higher ($M = 38.44$, $SD = 4.21$) than the non-dancers ($M = 32.40$, $SD = 7.23$) at $p = .001$. Moreover, the body functioning scores for casual dancers were higher ($M = 38.44$, $SD = 4.21$) than professional dancers ($M = 36.12$, $SD = 5.12$) and the difference approached a near significant trend ($p = .062$). Taken together, these results suggest that casual dancers tend to be higher on body functioning compared to non-dancers and even professional dancers to some extent as shown in Figure 2. In fact, there was no significant difference between the professional dancers and non-dancers on body functioning ($p = .327$).



One-way between subjects ANOVA revealed no significant difference in the three groups on identity integration ($F = 0.89, p = .414$). The effect size for this analysis ($\eta^2 = .02$) was found to approximate Cohen's (1988) convention for a small effect ($\eta^2 = .01$).

Phenomena of Creativity and Self-Esteem as Subjective Processes

The analysis presented here limits itself to the themes related to experiences of creativity and self-esteem. The verbatim excerpts for eleven participants are represented in the discussion section. P1 to P7 are professional dancers and C1 to C4 are casual dancers.

Creativity and Dance. The notion of creativity had multiple meanings and manifestations depending upon the life stage the participant belong to, and the socio-cultural context in which it was experienced. The themes identified were (i) Diversity and dynamism in the notion of creativity; (ii) Creativity embedded in a socio-cultural context and (iii) Surge in creativity through pursuit of dance.

Self-Esteem and Dance. Narratives generated diverse and dynamic themes related to self-esteem as well. Participants experienced enhanced self-esteem as a result of dancing and related activities. Important themes were (i) Dance as a skill; (ii) Appreciation and audience applaud (iii) Confidence building and interpersonal skills. (iv) Dance as an enhancer of quality of life (v) Dance as a cathartic experience, and (vi) Gender stereotypes related to dance.



6. Discussion

The discussion is an amalgamation of quantitative findings and qualitative insights obtained by the researchers.

Dance and Creativity

The first hypothesis was that there would be a difference in the level of creativity among professional dancers, casual dancers and non dancers. The results support the hypothesis as both professional and casual dancers have scored significantly higher on creativity compared to non-dancers. In case of dancers the benefits of dancing as a medium to express their emotions and being free with their bodies may lead to an enhancement in their creativity. Moreover, the casual dancers are relatively free to choreograph their movements in dance than the professional dancers. Studies by Badrinath (2002), Carter (2004), McFee (1992) and McRobbie (1997) support the above findings. Torrents, Ric, and Hristovski (2015) research revealed that instructional constraints had a significant effect on the type of configurations performed by the dancers, as well as on their creative behavior. Literature also suggests that dancers have creative potential and their performances have a cathartic value (Auslander, 2002).

Torrance's (1988) conception of creativity was based on fluency, originality, elaboration, and resistance to premature closure. The concept of fluency refers to the ability to produce a large number of images, very similar to dance where a dancer produces a variety of bodily posture in synchrony with the beats of music. Originality is ability to produce uncommon or unique responses, for example, creating movement and steps which can be subjectively different from others. The concept of elaboration is also reflected in dance where dancers make use of their ability to develop, embroider, embellish, carry out, or otherwise



elaborate ideas on movement, postures, facial expression, music, costumes, etc. Resistance to premature closure requires a dancer to 'keep open' in processing information and to consider a variety of information, in the context of dance per se (choreography, expressions, etc.), or related aspects (costumes, sound, music, light, stage designing, etc).

Previous studies such as Kashyap (2005) also support the above finding. Thematic analysis also supplemented the above finding. It indicated that pursuit of dance had led to major transformation in participants' life related to the self-actualization and fulfillment of their creative potential. Throughout the narratives there were many direct and indirect references to the notion of creativity as per the following themes:

Diversity and Dynamism in the Notion of Creativity. Perception of creativity and experiences of being creative were fairly diverse. It could include creating fantasies to escape mundane realities of life as shared by C1, 'I look at creativity where I can create a fantasy on the stage, far away from mundane realities of life.' Creative urges could include fulfilling multiple roles for some. In some participants it was satisfied through the socialization in the process of dance as indicated by the following excerpts:

C2: 'Creativity was inside only, dance helped me to bring it out... in various places... . Like even making posters, contacting people, writing new things, making brochures and stuff.... That was a separate medium of creativity, plus dance itself is so creative.. so both of them brought out my creativity.....'

P7: 'Creativity could be a lot of things... you could be creative with your pen, with your music..... also you got to know things to be creative with it,.... You got to know your music, in order to be creative with it. So ya... the knowing part has really gone up as with my dance and music... and that's creativity also...'



Creativity Embedded in the Socio-Cultural Context. Multiple meanings and manifestations of creativity were experienced depending upon the life stage and the socio-cultural context of the participant as expressed by participants such as P6: 'My creative urges are fulfilled when I perform on the stage and when I choreograph a piece, when my team achieves success against all odds. Even managing my finances to sustain my passion as a professional dancer is creative for me.' C4 also shared, 'I belong to a conventional business family. It was a struggle to convince my father that dance as a hobby is rewarding and important to me. Managing my passion for dancing and managing my family was kind of creative.' Similarly P5 stated, 'When you are working in a company, there are certain formats you have to follow... you can't be very creative.... There can be a lot of experimentation with work for which I don't get time to do, or I don't do... There are so many times when I wanted to do something different, but I couldn't...' Socio-cultural, familial, economic and organizational context could inhibit or enhance the creative process as the case may be.

Surge in Creativity through Pursuit of Dance. A reverberating theme in the narratives was a surge in the creativity due to the pursuit of dance. It acted not only as an enhancer but as basic source to realize the creative urges. P1 stated, 'Dance is definitely creative, you create new forms, you choreograph, (and) you listen to a lot of music... Your ears get addicted to music, whenever you hear music of your choice, your body starts dancing automatically... and you don't care about the world watching you.... Yes I am (creative), by now...' Similarly C2 expressed, 'Creativity has definitely gone up... As far as music goes... We used jam at various competitions and colleges.... definitely learned to take the crowd... and be with them... learned a lot about music... With dance ya..., I have learnt a lot, ...' C4 articulated, 'The idea of dancing kindles my creative potential. I start visualizing holistic vision, the beauty of movement and emotion is to create new themes.'



In the excerpts from P1, C2 and C4 the linkage between dance and creativity has emerged. Creating new forms, in the process of choreographing, enhanced creative expression. They further claimed that this pursuit had made them more creative with other art forms like music. Notion of creative freedom was also attached to pursuing dance as compared to any white collar job as expressed in the following excerpt.

P7: 'I love my profession because of the creative freedom I enjoy. My ex-class mates are in a nine-to-five job, checking files and doing mechanical work. I am my own master and I love what I am creating through my profession. I create artistic experiences for myself and my group.'

The above analysis represents the diverse notions of creativity and various contexts in which it is realized. Participants experience creative process in holistic fashion where not only dance but its related activities like choreography, teaching, pursuit of music etc. contribute significantly. Managing multiple roles and commitments of life, while pursuing dance, is also a part of creative process. Dance is also perceived as one of the creative and artistic profession as compared to other conventional professions.

Dance and Self-Esteem

The second hypothesis was there would be a difference on four scales of self-esteem (GSE, CMP, BFN, and IDN) among professional dancers, casual dancers and non-dancers. Results clearly indicate that there was a significant difference on three out of four scales of self-esteem. Thus, it was found that overall a physical discipline such as dance had enhancing effects on participant's self-esteem.

Global Self-Esteem (GSE). It was found that the global self-esteem was found to be highest among casual dancers, followed by professional dancers and then non-dancers. Both professional and casual dancers perform on stage which involves appreciation and audience



applaud which might boost their self-confidence and hence self-esteem. However, the global self-esteem scores were higher for casual dancers in comparison to professional dancers. In the narratives, professional dancers reported that dance as a profession has overpowered their freedom of expression. The profession of dance puts pressure on the dancers to perform at their best all the time. Small setbacks, like injuries, or break from work; stops their growth as dancers, leading to reduced efficiency. The economic constraints and the institutional pressures, may contribute to relatively lower self-esteem. In the Indian socio-cultural context, pursuing dance as a profession tends to be perceived negatively which may impact the self-perception of professional dancers.

Competence (CMP). The competence scores were observed to be significantly higher among professional as well as casual dancers in comparison to non-dancers (refer Table1). O'Brien and Epstein (1988, p. 6) have defined competence as, 'feels capable of mastering new tasks, learns quickly and does well at most things, feels talented, feels effective and capable.' In the qualitative analysis also the narratives of participants indicate that dance has contributed in enhancing their sense of competence. Previous research by Badrinath (2002), Kashyap (2005) and Mandigo and Holt (2000) also support the above finding.

Body functioning (BFN). Body functioning was again higher among casual dancers, followed by professional dancers, and then non-dancers (refer Table 1). O'Brien and Epstein (1988, p. 6) have defined competence as, 'well-coordinated, agile, in good physical condition, comfortable with body, enjoys physical activities such as dancing, or sports, feels healthy and feels a sense of vitality and vigor in body functioning.' Dancers creatively use their body to generate unique movements and sequences, which increase the comfort level, agility, and flexibility; and thus enhance body functioning. P7 stated that his elder sister/



mentor use to make him do stretching exercises which he hated at that time, but later on he realized their importance. Winton-Henry (2009) has noted that a dancer, with more and more practice, learns to be more relaxed and learns to make movements less jerky. Carter (2004) also supported the above findings.

Identity Integration (IDN). Identity Integration scores were not significantly different between all the three groups. (refer Table 1). Identity integration concerns with clear sense of identity, well defined long-term goals, inner sense of cohesion and integration (O'Brien & Epstein, 1988). A number of experts stress that the key developmental changes in identity occur in late teens and early twenties with adolescence being the key juncture (Santrock, 2007, p. 429). Since all the participants were in the age range 20 to 27 years, the identity integration scores were not significantly different.

Thematic analysis indicated that self-esteem was enhanced among participants as a result of dancing and related activities and the following themes were related to it:

Dance as a Skill. Enhanced self-esteem was experienced as a result of the perception that participants were skilled in a valued art form. They were interested in constantly learning newer skill set and evolve as better dancers as stated by P7 in the following excerpt.

P7: 'I am proud of the fact that I am skilled in this art form. When I am performing, it takes me into a different world of fantasy and imagination. Though achieving perfection is a lot of hard work but it's worth it. You get high. You feel a boost in your self-esteem when you compose a piece successfully.'

P6: 'An artistic profession like dancing is constantly evolving and learning. I have to sustain a name for myself. When people appreciate you for your versatility, it gives you a sense of achievement. I have not learned Indian classical dance, I want to learn that too to enhance my skill set. Learning about my native heritage through dance is important.'



In excerpt P6, participant has expressed desire to expand her arena as a dancer by learning new styles. She has further claimed that it would lead to an enhanced sense of achievement and evolution. Miller (1989) also reported that acquiring and mastering a new skill improved self-concept. C2 also reported, ‘When I choreographed a performance for my aunt’s wedding, it was highly appreciated. That was a proud moment for me, because my father was flooded with complements. I am sure he started respecting my dancing skills.’

Appreciation and Audience Applaud. Not only dance as skill contributed to enhanced self-esteem but closely linked was the appreciation and applaud received by the audience and their admirers. Enhanced self-esteem was attributed to the feelings of worthiness because of being successful.

P3: ‘I consider stage my God. I am scared and nervous before a performance but once I begin one thing follows the other. The clapping of the audience and their cheering is a big boost after a successful performance. It boosts my morale and the belief within myself.’

P4: ‘The best part about performing on stage is the audience. My art is not complete without them. In the very first moment I step on stage I come to know whether it is going to be a good day or not.’

Not only applaud and appreciation but a genuine feedback from the audience contributed to the self-esteem and to the process of being a successful dancer. Positive affirmations from the environment were important to keep going.

Confidence Building and Interpersonal Skills. As dancers, participants were engaged in multiple interactions with many people in different contexts. This enhanced their confidence and developed their interpersonal skills which in turn gave them a high sense of self-esteem.



P6: 'With all these experiences.... I know now I can speak in front of people....even if you make me stand in front of hundred people, I can speak. The way of talking to people, dealing with them, adapting my own behavior, the manner of dressing, all have changed. In school I was so scared to speak in front of a mike. After becoming a stage performer, I have a name for myself, gives me a confidence to carry myself.... It has made me more patient, I made more friends, my experience widens, my horizon widens, I meet new people'. Similarly C3 stated 'My self-esteem used to be very low in school, as I was an average student. My dancing talent was nurtured in college, which changed my perception about my own self and boosted my self-confidence.'

When the dancers were satisfied in their professional sphere they reported improved relationships in the personal sphere as well, unlike the excessively competitive white collar jobs. Even casual dancers reported boost in their self-confidence and interpersonal skills.

Dance Leading to Better Quality of Life. Pursuit of dance not only satisfied creative urges and enhanced interpersonal skills but also acted as a financial support and gave a better quality of life and hence enhanced sense of self-esteem. As expressed by P4, 'Every artist needs money also. After getting into professional dancing and the initial struggle, I earn much better than my counterparts. Two of my best friends joined MNCs but today I earn better than them and I also have a lot of freedom and no boss to dominate me. I am proud of my choice.' The financial boost and the sense of freedom one experiences in a creative field like dance leads to higher self-esteem.

Dance as a Cathartic Experience. Dance was also experienced as a release and relaxation not only for the dancers but also for the learners. This was a prevalent theme in the narratives. P3 said, 'I feel a sense of release when I am dancing. All the stresses and strains in the body and mind are healed. My students have reported the same. Business executives also



benefitted from my classes. They look forward to them. It gives me a sense of satisfaction.’

P5 mentioned, ‘Dance distracts me from stresses and strains of life even if temporarily.’

According to C4, ‘Dance uplifts my spirit and rejuvenates my body.’

Gender Stereotypes Related to Dance. In the Indian context, historically dance as a profession had taboos attached to it (Sharma, 2007), especially to the male dancers, which could lead to depletion in self-esteem but most of them emerged stronger eventually because of the popularity of fusion (western) dance among the youth.

P7: ‘I am in a romantic relationship and engaged to girl. When my fiancée broke the news to her parents, they did not like the fact that I am a dancer. They still have that feeling that their son-in-law is not into a respectable profession. It hurts sometimes but I love my art too much.’

P6: ‘I come from a traditional Haryanvi background. My parents were appalled when they heard that I want to pursue western dance professionally, but after I succeed(ed), they are proud of me.’

Struggle to get recognized professionally and gain respectability in personal and social spheres was reported by participants, but eventually they succeeded.

7. Conclusions

The study has important implications pertaining to acceptance of dance as a vehicle for overall psychological growth and development of the individual. The study clearly establishes that relationship of creativity with pursuit of creative art forms like dance needs deeper exploration in terms of finer patterns and nuances. Study moved with the assumption that pursuing a creative art form like dance helps in expressing and enhancing creative potential but there could be a possibility of a reverse relationship where inherently creative



people may opt for such pursuits and that's why such results were obtained. This is an interesting area where future research can contribute in terms of what aspects are unique to dance which contribute to enhancement of creativity and self-esteem.

The study established that pursuing dance professionally and pursuing dance casually have diverse socio-cultural and psychological implications. In the Indian urban socio-cultural context, casual dancers are largely revered, whereas taking up dance professionally is still a taboo. Performance pressure and organizational constraints affect professional dancers but not casual dancers. It would be useful for the future researchers to explore other creative pursuits, like music, poetry, theater, art, and various extracurricular activities like sports. There is a strong rationale for exploring the relationship of dance with various other personality variables and not only its healing potential as prevalent in current research trends.

In the present study, the casual and non-dancers were from various professions and all the three groups consisted of both men and women. Further studies can explore the effect of such variables also. Other dance forms besides western, for instance, Indian classical and folk dance styles can be investigated.

It would be interesting for the future researchers to examine these population groups. The research was conducted in the metropolitan city of Delhi and National Capital Region. The perception of western dance as modern and trendy pursuit, in vogue may also impact the phenomena under consideration in the study. All the participants were into performance oriented dancing. They all had stage experience. Thus findings should be generalized likewise.



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