

A STUDY OF PEOPLE WHO DISLIKE DANCING: MALE ATTITUDES TOWARDS RECREATIONAL DANCING

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Introduction

Recently, more and more scientific studies have pointed to the extensive benefits of dancing as a leisure activity and demonstrated its positive effects on physical fitness (e.g. Serrano-Guzmán et al., 2016), mental well-being (e.g. Quiroga Murcia et al., 2010), social skills (e.g. Rabinowitch et al., 2017) and learning ability (e.g. Merom et al., 2016). There are many reasons why people enjoy dancing: mood enhancement is the strongest motivating factor for both men and women (Maraz et al., 2015). Nevertheless, according to a survey on leisure behavior among the German-speaking population, this healthy and joyful activity is underutilized. According to the survey, 47% of female and 65% of male respondents never dance (Allensbach, 2017).

According to my personal observation, male participants are significantly underrepresented in dance classes such as ballet, jazz dance, afro-dance, modern-dance, ballroom dancing, historical dance, etc. In contact improvisation, on the other hand, men are significantly more represented than in the aforementioned dance styles. At social events (e.g. weddings and private parties), it is not uncommon to see women dancing with female partners to compensate for the lack of male dancers.

Humans as a species have the unique ability to coordinate movements to music, such as tapping their feet or dancing. This ability is considered innate and is associated with positive feelings in both girls and boys, as research on the rhythmic behavior of babies and toddlers indicates.

The ability to move to music is also linked to the development of social skills and emotional intelligence. It is therefore not surprising that dance is often used as a therapeutic tool to promote emotional well-being and social integration. This ability is considered innate and is associated with positive feelings in both girls and boys alike, as indicated by studies on the rhythmic behavior of babies and toddlers (Zentner & Eerola, 2010).

So why is dancing as a leisure activity so unpopular among men in particular?

According to Deci and Ryan's Self Determination Theory, demotivation results from a lack of appreciation for an activity, from feelings of incompetence, or from the belief that the activity will not deliver the desired result (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

An explanation for male dance motivation could be provided by the work of Peter Lovatt (2011). He describes the way in which someone relates to their own dancing ability as a form of self determination. An explanation for male dance demotivation could be provided by the work of Peter Lovatt (2011). He describes the way someone feels about their own dancing ability in a leisure context as dance confidence and classifies this aspect as domain-specific self-esteem. Domain-specific self-esteem describes satisfaction with oneself in certain areas, which is formed depending on the opinions and perceptions of others (Gentile et al., 2009). Society therefore has a formative influence on self-esteem when engaging in certain activities. According to Lovatt, men (under the age of 60) have significantly lower 'dance confidence' than women (Lovatt, 2011).



Corinna Janson is a naturopath and dance teacher. She runs the Tanzhologie Studio in Bad Kreuznach and devotes her professional activities primarily to the question of the extent to which dance can contribute to maintaining human health. As part of her MAS studies at the University of Bern, she researched the „Male Attitudes Towards Recreational Dance“ (completed in 2018). For her certificate in dance medicine at ta.med e.V. (Association for Dance Medicine in Germany), she researched the "Influence of Dance Training on the Body Image of Patients with Eating Disorders" (completed in 2011). Based on her training at the Institut für Tanz und Bewegungsdynamik in Essen with Dr Detlef Kappert (graduated in 2004), she developed Tanzhologie® as a teaching system for a health-oriented dance training for amateur dancers.

Summary

This study investigated whether there is a fundamental difference between men and women in their attitudes towards dancing.

What motivates men to dance in their free time, or what discourages them from doing so? In addition, the study examined whether physical education in childhood has an influence on later dancing activities.

An anonymous online survey conducted from 28 June to 17 July 2018 via the portal umfrage-online.com recorded the attitudes towards recreational dancing of 142 male and 290 female proband* members. A standardized questionnaire with a total of 35 items collected both qualitative and quantitative data (according to a Likert scale of 1-5) on dance and sports behavior. The six main categories for collecting qualitative data were dance motivation, sports motivation, talent, dance confidence, connectedness and physical education.

The criterion used to divide the subjects according to their affinity for dancing was their respective answers to the first question, 'I like to dance'. All male and female subjects who had answered 'does not apply' or 'rarely applies' were assigned to the 'dance-averse' group, and all those who had answered 'sometimes yes, sometimes no', "applies" and 'fully applies' were defined as the 'dance-affine' group. The dance-averse group comprised N = 52 individuals (33 men and 19 women), while the dance-loving group comprised N = 379 (109 men and 270 women).

For statistical evaluation using independent t-tests, comparisons between three different samples from the total population were considered:

- Sample A (N = 432): 142 men (M) and 290 women (F)
- Sample B (N = 52): 33 men who dislike dancing (MDM) and 19 women who dislike dancing (WDM)
- Sample C (N = 142): 109 men who enjoy dancing (MED) and 33 MDM

It was shown that men have similar reasons for dancing as women, and that they associate this activity with many positive emotions. Overall, however, the male participants showed a significantly lower affinity for dancing than the female participants. The motivation to dance with a partner and with physical contact was more pronounced among men than among women.