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A study on the contribution of dance movements to the personality development of children deprived of parental care

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Background: Dance movement therapy, pioneered by Marian Chace in the mid-20th century, is recognized for its potential to promote emotional well-being and personality development. In early childhood (particularly the first ten years) critical factors such as parental care, environment, and psychosocial stimulation significantly influence personality formation. This study investigates the impact of dance movements on the psychosocial development of institutionalized children in Sri Lanka.

Method: A mixed-methods study was conducted at the Gangodawila Girls' Child Development Centre in Sri Lanka's Western Province. A purposive sample of 12 girls aged 5 - 12 years participated in a 12 - week dance program comprising Kandyan, Bharatanatyam, and selected contemporary dance movements. Pre- and post-intervention assessments included structured questionnaires, drawing analysis, interviews, case studies, and physical evaluations. Quantitative data were statistically analyzed using descriptive and percentage-based comparisons.

Results: Post-intervention analysis revealed significant positive changes. Initially, 58.3% of drawings featured dark colors and distress-related imagery; this dropped to 8.3%, while 91.7% of final drawings used bright colors and joyful themes. Questionnaire results indicated improvements in teamwork and social behavior, with 90% of participants showing increased cooperation and reduced conflict. Observational data confirmed positive behavioral shifts in 87.5% of participants. Regarding physical development, 75% of children initially displayed below-average flexibility, balance, and coordination scores. By the end, 95.8% demonstrated marked improvement, achieving normative levels ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Dance-based interventions significantly enhanced both psychosocial and physical aspects of personality development among children deprived of parental care. Traditional and contemporary dance movements can serve as effective tools in institutional child development programs.

Keywords: Dance movements, girls, child development centre, child personality development.