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Article

Self-Efficacy and Resilience Among Indian Classical Dancers and Non-Dancers: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Since the time human beings have evolved, dance has remained an integral part in the lives of people of different cultures as it serves a medium for self-expression, transference of cultural knowledge and psycho-social development. From a historical standpoint, Indian Classical dance forms have been serving this purpose since centuries which largely remains undocumented. In this regard, the current study explores how participating in Indian classical dance may influence two important psychological traits: self-efficacy and resilience. Self-efficacy refers to a person's confidence in their ability to succeed in specific tasks, while resilience is the ability to recover from difficulties and adapt to challenges. The study employed a cross-sectional research design using a purposive sampling method, comprising 133 participants in total 64 trained classical dancers and 69 individuals without formal dance training. Standardized questionnaires were administered to measure both self-efficacy and resilience, and the data were analyzed through an independent samples t-test. Findings indicated that classical dancers reported significantly higher self-efficacy scores (M = 32.57) compared to non-dancers (M = 29.07), suggesting that engagement in classical dance may strengthen individuals' confidence in their abilities. In contrast, no statistically significant difference emerged between the two groups in terms of resilience, with mean scores of 46.13 for dancers and 43.04 for non-dancers. However, no significant difference was observed between the two groups in terms of resilience for classical dancers (M=46.13) and non-dancers (M= 43.04). These findings suggest that Indian classical dance could be a valuable tool for improving self-belief and confidence. The study also highlights the potential for incorporating elements of classical dance into Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) to support emotional and psychological development.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Resilience, Indian classical dancers, Non-Dancers, Challenges, Emotional Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Unlike many sports, dance combines art and athletics; its training frequently emphasizes creativity and melody, pushes the body through extreme ranges of motion, and lacks distinct cycles (Talegaonkar et al., 2020). Dance's sport-specific pressures may be disregarded because it is generally seen as an art form. Its holistic demand exerts substantial pressure on practitioners' well-being. As a fusion of artistry and athleticism, dance lacks the structured training regimens common in conventional sports but requires exceptional flexibility, creative interpretation, and rhythmic precision (Ambiance et al., 2020). Often perceived solely as an artistic pursuit, its physical intensity is frequently underestimated. Studies indicate that many dancers face mental health struggles, particularly stemming from perfectionist traits such as unrealistic self-expectations and hypercritical self-evaluation.

Although dance is a universal and deeply human form of expression, the academic research surrounding it remains limited. In recent years, dance has emerged as a recognized area of scholarly inquiry, which no longer needs to be understood only through a Western scientific perspective, and interest in this field is gradually expanding (Hoppus, 2003). While there has been a growing emphasis on mental health, most studies have concentrated on athletes from other disciplines. Research involving dancers has largely centred on their physical well-being, with significantly less focus on psychological issues, especially those faced by professional dancers.

This discipline enables performers to channel profound emotions while embodying cultural narratives (Pai, 2020). In India, dance has historically unified communities and honoured diversity, with every state preserving distinct classical styles. These forms are integral to religious rituals and celebrations, offering both physical and psychological advantages. While many individuals opt for activities like swimming or sports, culturally inclined groups often prefer classical dance for exercise, leveraging its familiar artistic framework.

Eight classical dance forms, namely Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Kathak, Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Manipuri, and Sattriya. Originating from the eastern state of Odisha, Odissi is a classical dance tradition with deep cultural roots. In Odisha, dance forms are broadly categorized into two styles: "Anchalika," which refers to local or folk dances, and the classical form, known as Odissi. Odisha is known for preserving its rich folk heritage and traditional village performances. Notable folk dances from the region include Chhau Nritya, Sambalpuri, Bharti Leela, Danda Nacha, and Prahalada Nataka. These performances are usually carried out by groups and are accompanied by indigenous musical instruments such as the Dhola, Ghumura, Nishan, Mahuri, Taal, and Madal.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE

The *Natya Shastra*, an ancient Sanskrit treatise, remains India's most authoritative guide to performing arts. Complementary texts like Acharya Nandikeshwara's *Abhinaya Darpana* and Sharangdev's *Ratnakar* further elucidate classical dance principles. A defining feature is *Rasanubhti*—the audience's immersion in emotional states or *rasas*. These include eight core sentiments: *sringara* (love), *hasya* (mirth), *karuna* (sorrow), *raudra* (anger), *veer* (valor), *bhayanak* (fear), *bibhatsa* (disgust), and *adbhuta* (awe). Such emotional complexity distinguishes classical forms from folk dances, which are typically less codified. The *Natya Shastra* positions classical dance as therapeutic mental relaxation, employing rhythm and movement to elicit emotional catharsis during stress. Regular practice enhances mental wellness, boosts flexibility, fortifies musculature, and bolsters immunity. Additionally, it refines posture, elevates mood, and cultivates aesthetic grace. The text also underscores its role in addressing mental health challenges and improving bodily coordination. Though superficially alike, each classical style employs unique techniques. India's Ministry of Culture officially recognizes nine classical forms, each reflecting regional heritage.

3. TYPES OF CLASSICAL DANCE FORMS

3.1 Bharatanatyam

Bharatanatyam, among India's oldest classical traditions, emerged in Tamil Nadu's Thanjavur region. This elegant form integrates mudras (symbolic hand gestures), abhinaya (narrative expressions), and padams (storytelling sequences). The term derives from *Bharata* (a sage) and *natyam* (drama), reflecting its spiritual essence. Beyond performance, it serves as a meditative practice in Hinduism, evident in temple sculptures depicting its postures (Bharath, 2021). Research links regular practice to improved circulation, immune function, blood pressure regulation, and reduced risks of thyroid dysfunction or vision impairment (Sudhakar, 1994).

3.2 Manipuri

Originating in Manipur, this dance form initially served temple rituals before evolving into a cultural cornerstone. Steeped in devotion to Hindu deities like Radha and Krishna, its signature *Ras Lila* performances gained national prominence through Rabindranath Tagore's advocacy. Unlike other classical styles, Manipuri emphasizes fluidity: dancers glide with minimal ground contact, reducing injury risks during prolonged practice. Circular, undulating motions replace sharp angles, fostering graceful aesthetics, bodily control, and mental focus.

3.3 Kathak

Kathak, a classical dance form originating in northern India, seamlessly integrates storytelling with technical precision. Recognized for its signature spins (*chakkars*), rapid rhythmic footwork (*tatkar*), and expressive *abhinaya* (narrative gestures), it has evolved into a refined art form combining intricate rhythmic patterns with fluid physicality. Kathak uniquely bridges abstract concepts and layered emotional narratives. Every element from the dancer's posture to *hasta mudras* (hand gestures) and gait collectively shapes the performance's emotional resonance (Vats, 2023). In therapeutic contexts, Kathak becomes a multidimensional practice: executing spins demands precise *ghungroo* (ankle bell) control, facial expressions, limb alignment, and symbolic gestures.

3.4 Odissi

Odissi a classical dance from Odisha, is distinguished by its unique hip movements rarely seen in other Indian styles. During the 15th century, King Prataparudradeva decreed that performances exclusively use verses from *Gita Govinda*, a Sanskrit devotional poem by Jayadeva chronicling Radha and Krishna's divine romance. In the 20th century, Odissi shifted from temple rituals to theatrical stages, with its stylized movements documented in Odisha's medieval sculptures, paintings, and literature. The Sangeet Natak Akademi formally recognized it as a classical form between 1947 and 2000, cementing its cultural legitimacy.

3.5 Kathakali

Kathakali synthesizes five artistic pillars: *natya* (emotive expressions), *nritta* (rhythmic dance), *nritya* (dramatic gestures), *geet* (vocal music), and *badya* (instrumentation). Its foundation lies in facial articulation, rhythmic precision, and synchronized limb-torso coordination. Renowned for intensive facial muscle engagement, Kathakali requires rigorous physical conditioning to develop strength and anatomical control. Per Raina (2015), the body's micro-movements combine to create nuanced expressions. Dancer's craft geometric stage patterns (rectangles/squares) through precise leaps, hops, and sweeping motions.

3.6 Mohiniyattam

Termed the "dance of the enchantress," Mohiniyattam emphasizes *lasya* (feminine grace) through circular motions, delicate footwork, and subtle facial storytelling. Rooted in Hindu epics, it narrates devotional tales using swaying hips, rhythmic torso shifts, and *mudras* synchronized with Carnatic music. Focus on spinal alignment and balanced weight distribution improves posture and core stability. Studies note that meditative synchronization of breath, music, and motion reduces cortisol, aiding stress relief (Unnikrishnan, 2018).

3.7 Kuchipudi

Originally staged as dance-dramas by male troupes, Kuchipudi now includes solo performances featuring acrobatics like dancing on brass plates or balancing pots. Its defining elements include brisk spins (*teermanams*), rhythmic footwork, and elaborate *abhinaya* to depict mythological narratives. Rapid footwork boosts bone density and agility, while acrobatics refine proprioception and balance. Research highlights improved lung capacity due to vocal recitations paired with exertion (Sarma, 2017). Expressive eye and eyebrow movements strengthen facial muscles, aiding emotional articulation and reducing social inhibition.

4. CLASSICAL INDIAN DANCES EXPRESSIONAL ASPECTS

4.1 Abhinaya

The book Abhinaya Darpana (the mirror of gestures), another text on Indian classical dances, contains the following Sanskrit shloka, which perfectly encapsulates the spirit of these dances and highlights the mind-body link at play.

Yatho Hasta stato Drishti

(the eyes follow the hand where it goes)

Yatho Drishti thatho Manaha

(the mind follows the eyes)

Yato Manaha tato Bhavana

(The expression follows where the mind goes.)

Yato Bhava tato Rasaha

(Where the expression goes, the mood/emotion follows) (Ghosh and Nandikesvara, 1957)

According to the shloka above, each gesture is like an alphabet of Classical dances, each with a distinct meaning. All the gestures draw in the attention of the witness or observer, who is then encouraged and followed the hand movements by evoking emotions and feelings.

4.2 Gestures

Dancers use their movements and gestures to communicate key aspects of a character's personality, emotions, and place in the narrative. Physical cues like posture, hand gestures, and body language often depict elements such as age, gender, emotional state, and actions within the story. In this framework, rhythm acts as the driving force behind the progression of the performance, while gestures function as the expressive language of the dance (Gesture and Rhythm, n.d.).

There are nine rasas (states of consciousness), often mentioned that Navarasas, have historically served as the foundation for all forms: Hasya (happiness), Shoka (sorrow), Krodha (anger), Karuna (compassion), Bhibatsa (disgust), Adhibatsa (wonder), Bhaya (fear), Viram (courage), and Shanta (serenity) are the first nine (Hays, 2008). Through facial expressions, the Navarasas are employed in Indian classical dances to convey a range of moods and sentiments. Paul Ekman's study on human emotions and the facial expressions is among the most significant. Ekman suggests (1999), the seven emotions—happiness, sorrow, anger, fear, disgust, surprise, and contempt—are felt in different ways by people from all walks of life.

5. INDIAN TRADITIONAL DANCE AND OVERALL HEALTH

Dance serves as a powerful medium that fulfils the innate human desire for unity between the mind and body, using physical movement as a form of expressive communication. Indian classical dance forms, much like Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), are deeply rooted in fostering this mind-body connection. DMT aims to promote overall well-being by strengthening the integration of physical and mental processes. Classical dance forms such as Bharatanatyam and Kathakali employ *mudras* (symbolic gestures) and *abhinaya* (expressive acting) to articulate nuanced emotions, offering a structured medium for emotional catharsis. The *Natya Shastra*'s framework of *rasas* (emotional essences) allows performers to embody and process sentiments like love, anger, and awe, cultivating emotional intelligence. A 2020 study revealed dancers displayed a 23% reduction in emotional suppression compared to non-dancers, correlating with diminished anxiety (Ambegaonkar et al.).

5.1 Physical Health Benefits

Musculoskeletal and Cardiovascular Benefits is one of the most important dynamic postures like Bharatanatyam's *aramandi* (half-seated stance) and Kathak's *chakkars* (spins) strengthen lower-body musculature and joint stability. Odissi's *tribhanga* (triple-bend posture) improves spinal flexibility and hip mobility, mitigating arthritis risks. Studies show dancers possess 18% greater cardiovascular endurance due to sustained aerobic exertion (Sudhakar, 1994).

Cognitive*:* Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans have revealed that certain brain areas become active during dance and movement-based activities. Among these, the somatosensory cortex plays a crucial role in managing motor coordination and aligning movements of the hands and eyes (Dancing and the Brain, n.d.). In Indian classical dance, this coordination is refined through intentional hand gestures that are followed by synchronized eye movements, reflecting the traditional principle from the Shloka, *Yato Hasta Tato Drishti* -meaning "where the hand goes, the eyes follow." This alignment fosters improved hand-eye coordination through structured, repetitive practice.

In terms of cognitive and social development, learning intricate sequences in dance styles like Odissi and Kuchipudi enhances mental flexibility and strengthens working memory. When performed in groups, such as in Mohiniyattam, these dances encourage social bonding and teamwork, as dancers must stay highly attuned to the timing and movements of others to achieve unified choreography.

Emotional: For individuals who find it difficult to express their emotions verbally, the Navarasas the nine foundational emotional states in Indian classical dance can serve as an effective medium for emotional articulation (Kashyap, 2005). These expressions not only support emotional expression but also enhance

emotional awareness. A comparative study by Khandelwal and Joshi (2016) examined the influence of emotional management training rooted in Navarasa techniques on adolescents. The results showed that participants in the experimental group, who received this specialized training, exhibited significantly improved emotional intelligence, while the control group showed no such progress.

Social: On a social level, the intricate facial expressions required in all major Indian classical dance forms engage numerous facial muscles, reinforcing the connection between emotion and social interaction. As Ekman (1999) notes, facial expressions are vital to developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. These expressions influence both the quality and depth of connections from infancy to adulthood and are also crucial in regulating the intensity of emotional reactions. Ekman's research on people with facial paralysis revealed that an absence of facial expression significantly hinders their ability to form and maintain even basic human connections.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

6.1 Self-efficacy

Albert Bandura, a professor at Stanford University, introduced the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to plan and execute actions required to achieve specific goals. In 1977, he published a seminal paper titled *Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behaviour Change* in the *Psychological Review*, which popularized the term. Central to Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is defined as the confidence one has in their capacity to organize and perform the necessary actions to handle future challenges (Bandura, 1995). This belief in one's ability to successfully complete tasks shapes both behaviour and expectations about outcomes.

While self-efficacy is often viewed as specific to particular areas or domains, recent research has also explored a more general sense of self-efficacy across different situations, noting a positive relationship between the two. Bandura (1995) described the self-system as a mechanism through which individuals regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. This system involves cognitive and emotional processes that influence how people perceive, control, and assess their actions. Self-efficacy impacts emotions, thoughts, and behaviour; low self-efficacy is commonly associated with anxiety and depression, whereas high self-efficacy encourages accomplishment, reduces stress, and enhances overall well-being. Strong self-efficacy beliefs empower individuals to lead more independent lives.

Bandura, who also served as president of the American Psychological Association, developed one of the most influential cognitive models of personality starting in 1977. His work began with the theory of observational learning, emphasizing that people learn by watching and reflecting on the behaviour of others. According to Bandura, an individual's perception of their own skills influences the types of activities they choose to engage in and the risks they are willing to take. The term "self-efficacy" specifically refers to the confidence a person holds in their ability to perform a certain behaviour.

6.2 Self-efficacy sources

Bandura (1997) identified four main origins of ideas about one's own efficacy:

- ***Mastery experiences***: The best method for generating a high degree of efficacy is through mastery experiences. While failures weaken self-efficacy beliefs, successes contribute to their development. Successful prior experiences are the source of high self-efficacy views.
- ***Vicarious experiences:*** Gaining knowledge from other people's experiences also helps one's self-efficacy beliefs grow. Observing skilled role models can enhance an individual's self-efficacy. When these role models exhibit their competence through behavior, it positively influences observers. The effectiveness of this modeling depends on how closely individuals relate to or identify with the role models. The greater the imagined similarity, the greater the impact that the models' achievements and shortcomings will have on the individual
- **Verbal persuasion:** This method serves as an effective way to strengthen an individual's belief in their own abilities. People who have confidence in their potential to succeed tend to work harder compared to those who lack faith in their skills. Encouragement from others is crucial in motivating individuals to

keep trying. Positive support and affirmation boost a person's self-confidence, increasing their belief that they can accomplish their objectives. Furthermore, receiving helpful advice or constructive criticism from others can greatly improve their performance.

- ***Physiological/emotional states****:* Self-efficacy is also influenced by physiological and emotional states. Intense negative emotions can undermine performance, whereas strong positive emotions tend to enhance it. Additionally, an individual's mood plays a significant role in how they assess their capabilities, with positive moods generally boosting self-efficacy and negative moods diminishing it.

- ***Imaginary Experiences:*** Maddux (1995) proposed imaginary experiences as an additional source of self-efficacy in addition to the four previously listed factors. He proposed that visualizing oneself acting in hypothetical scenarios is a useful technique for cultivating self-efficacy beliefs. These pictures could be based on real-life or imagined situations. They can also be formed by covert modelling, gradual desensitization, and verbal persuasion. Interventions to improve assertive behaviours have found results with the use of imaginative modelling (Kazdin, 1979). When practicing attributions, one can also employ imaginary modeling. Failures can be attributed to a lack of effort rather than a lack of skill. This will also contribute to the improvement of self-efficacy views.

6.3 The Self-Efficacy Theory of Albert Bandura

According to Bandura's book "Foundations of Thought and Action," the social cognitive theory he developed gives rise to the Self-Efficacy Theory. This hypothesis presupposes that the environment, society, and individual elements interact significantly. Personal, psychological, and external factors are the three main components that combine to define human behaviour, according to this theory.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory is founded on the essential idea of "reciprocal determinism." He aimed to clarify the reciprocal and interactive relationship between environmental, behavioural, and personal factors with this notion. People react to external events on a cognitive, emotional, and behavioural level. They exert control over their own actions by using their cognitive abilities, which affect their emotional and mental states (Bandura, 1986).

According to Bandura's model, the significance attributed to individual predictive efficacy rather than the stimuli's direct correlation with responses is what gives them their power. According to him, self-efficacy refers to a person's assessments or expectations of how they would perform in uncertain or stressful circumstances. These expectations have an impact on a person's decision-making, level of effort, tenacity, and capacity to deal with the difficulties associated with behaviour completion (Al-Mashayki, 2009).

- Dimensions of Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura, self-efficacy fluctuates along three dimensions:

- ***Efficacy Severity:*** According to Bandura, the degree of self-efficacy fluctuates according to the circumstances and level of difficulty. When jobs are arranged according to their degree of challenge, its scope becomes more apparent. This is affected by variations in people's expectations of efficacy. As a result, this dimension is known as the "level of task difficulty."

- ***Generality:*** The ability to generalize one's capacities across similar situations that is, the transfer of confidence across one setting to another that is like it - is known as generality. An individual's performance on tasks may be contrasted to their overall performance in related tasks. Bandura goes on to say that the degree of universality can differ from person to person and is impacted by things like how similar activities are, how potentials or abilities (cognitive, behavioural, and emotional) are expressed, and the particulars of behaviour, whether situation-driven or individual-driven (Bandura, 1997).

- ***Strength****:* According to Bandura, strength is the difference between people in how they handle failure

and the ensuing frustration. This variation is ascribed to variations in self-efficacy. While some people may struggle, those with strong self-efficacy keep going when they perform poorly. A student's dedication and tenacity in reaching success or giving up when difficulties arise are influenced by their level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

- Levels of Self-Efficacy
    - A person's conduct and capacity for self-control under both simple and complicated circumstances are influenced by their level, level of generalization, and level of self-efficacy. A person's ideas about themselves and their capacity to overcome obstacles and tasks to achieve their goals are referred to as self-efficacy. There are two primary stages of self-efficacy, according to Schwarzer and Schmitz. According to studies, people who have high levels of self-efficacy are excellent at mastering goals and choose to carry out more difficult and creative jobs.

6.4 Resilience

According to Russo et al. (2012), Rutter (2012b), Southwick, and Charney (2012), Resilience refers to the capacity and ongoing process through which individuals effectively adapt to stress and adversity, while maintaining stable psychological and physical health. Stressful life events are common to all and many people experience trauma during their lifetime. This review presents recent research findings that have deepened our understanding of how people build resilience to stress and trauma, providing a foundation for future psychological and pharmacological strategies aimed at promoting resilience. Although resilience research is still emerging, studies have begun to uncover a range of contributing factors—including genetic, epigenetic, developmental, psychological, and neurochemical influences—that shape resilience and help identify who may be more vulnerable to stress-related psychiatric disorders. Though the concept of resilience has long been applied across disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, ecology, economics, and engineering (Renschler et al., 2010; Rose, 2009), it has gained recent prominence in risk management.

6.5 Resilience in Indian context

Resilience study in India is an intriguing but challenging field because of its multiculturalism. Certain aspects of collectivistic culture, such as social and familial ties, may serve as protective variables. However, in some situations, a strong desire to fit in with conventional and social standards may act as a danger factor.

After major disasters like earthquakes and cyclones, resilience has been studied in India. Additionally, a variety of demographics have been investigated, including adults with a history of childhood hardship, students, and those with mental health diagnoses. Researchers in India have studied protective factors (Herbert, Manjula & Philip, 2013) and created interventions and assessments for resilience (Singh, Junnarkar & Kaur, 2016).

6.6 Models of resilience

Several theoretical models have been used to explain resilience. These frameworks, in contrast to psychopathological paradigms, anticipate that the person will overcome hardship and even flourish. The following resilience models emphasize both their environment's protective resources and their own inner qualities.

The goal of Grotberg's Paradigm of Resilience (1999) was to build abilities to cope with challenges that often lead to depression in young people. This paradigm presents five resilience blocks using three elements: I have, I am, and I can. Among my relationships are ones based on trust and support. I am referring to the fundamentals of identity and autonomy that help create internal Défense mechanisms like accountability and self-worth. I can refer to the fundamentals of initiative and business that help develop abilities like problem-solving and interpersonal skills. The three resilience building blocks and their descriptions, as provided by Grotberg (1999). According to Grotberg (1999), these building blocks can help people face, overcome, become stronger, or undergo transformation because of adversity

Other models of resilience, including those put out by Richardson (2002) and Kampfer (1999), show how people go from experiencing disruptions to exhibiting robust reintegration. Ungar and Theron introduced a dynamic multisystemic resilience model in 2020. The biopsychosocial ecological systems' contribution to resilience is recognized by this paradigm. It suggests that in resilience research, it is crucial to explore cultural

and contextual processes that range from rituals to communal activities.Researchers have made extensive use of these models in the planning, analysis, and application of their studies.

6.7 Multisystemic resilience

In addition to psychology, researchers from other fields have recognized that resilience involves the interplay of several systems. In this regard, Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory is frequently referenced. The intricate relationships between many systems must be mentioned to fully comprehend resilience. Researchers and practitioners must investigate multisystemic aspects to identify the type of intervention, even in situations like subpar academic achievement, where individual factors are typically implied.

Resilience internal protective elements alone can help people survive in certain situations, but when the environment also provides support, the path becomes less daunting. For example, people who are ill may work very hard to recover by following treatment plans and taking their medications as directed, but the rehabilitation process is accelerated when the patient gets emotional and structural support from friends, family, coworkers, and medical professionals. If the socioecological context is not conducive to resilient adaptation, the individual should not be held responsible. From the perspective of treatments, this multisystemic understanding of resilience is significant.

7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Arbinaga et al. (2025) studied the association between resilience, perfectionism, and self-efficacy among 147 seasoned dance students, the majority of whom were female and whose average age was 28 years. Results using validated measures rev3ealed that whereas perfectionism did not differ among resilience levels, students with stronger resilience reported far higher levels of self-efficacy. These psychological characteristics are important in dance because they affect motor skills and performance and can be improved with therapies.

A recent study conducted by Bajpai (2025) explores the relationship between self-efficacy, resilience, and mental health among 50 undergraduate students. Using a correlational design and incidental sampling, the research examines how belief in one's ability to overcome challenges (self-efficacy) and the ability to recover from adversity (resilience) impact mental health factors such as stress, anxiety, and depression. The findings aim to inform targeted interventions that enhance students' coping abilities and psychological well-being, addressing the growing concerns around mental health issues in college populations.

A research reviewed the therapeutic impact of classical dance and Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), concluding that structured movement through dance enhances emotional clarity, self-worth, and interpersonal connection. Their findings support the idea that dance can serve as a complementary tool in mental health promotion (Kaul et al., 2024).

Champagne et.al (2024) suggests that the number of people with neuro-degenerative diseases is rising as the population ages, placing more strain on unpaid caretakers who frequently experience detrimental health impacts. To improve caregiver resilience, few therapies take a comprehensive, strengths-based approach. Resilience characteristics like self-efficacy, flexibility, positive feelings, and interpersonal or spiritual assistance are reviewed in this article. Dance/movement therapy (DMT) is neglected by caregivers despite its psychological and physical advantages. For upcoming interventions, a novel resilience model based on DMT is suggested.

Gupta, Faroque et.al (2024) suggests that the evaluates several traditional dance styles, such as Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Manipuri, Mohiniyattam, and Sattriya. The historical roots, distinctive qualities, artistic components, narrative strategies, and cultural relevance in each dance style are examined. Along with their associations with mythology, religion, and local customs, the research emphasizes the variety of styles, gestures, movements, and costumes used in different dance forms. By means of a thorough examination, this study seeks to offer a thorough grasp of the range and depth of Indian classical dances, highlighting their creative manifestations and their lasting influence on cultural legacy.

Totaram and Rajan (2024) explored how Indian classical dance aligns with therapeutic principles found in DMT. Their review suggests that components such as facial expression, gesture (mudra), and emotional storytelling (abhinaya) help dancers process and express deep emotions in a structured, healing way.

Asikainen and Niemelä (2023), through interviews with Finnish dancers, identified common emotional pressures and coping mechanisms in the dance profession. Despite rising mental health awareness, support systems for dancers remain limited, highlighting the need for targeted psychological support in the performing arts globally.

Raghavan (2012) and Vatsyayan (1996) highlighted the deep cultural roots of Indian classical dance in ancient temple traditions and the *Natyashastra*. Despite its heritage, dancers particularly men face marginalization (Chakravorty, 2008), and the COVID-19 pandemic worsened their economic and emotional struggles (Banerjee & Ghosh, 2021). This study, involving 40 dancers from Kolkata, reveals gender-based challenges and pandemic-induced hardships, emphasizing the need for stronger institutional and societal support.

The arts education is a vital part of holistic learning in K–12 education, yet traditional forms like Chinese Classical Dance are still largely missing from school curricula. Despite its rich cultural roots and its potential to enhance students' cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, Chinese Classical Dance has not been widely studied or formally integrated into education systems. This lack of empirical research limits its promotion and the evaluation of its benefits in educational settings (Liu, 2023).

Self-efficacy has been defined as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute actions necessary to manage future situations (Bandura, 1977). It is believed that structured activities like classical dance enhance this belief through repeated success and public performance (Bandura, 1995; Bhatnagar & Mathur, 2012). Studies have shown that Kathak dancers demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy compared to Bharatanatyam dancers (Mathur, 2022).

Alexandros et al. (2022) highlighted dance's role in strengthening resilience among school-aged children from diverse backgrounds, reinforcing the importance of arts education in psycho-emotional development. Pandey et.al (2017) investigated the relationship between classical dance performers and psychological health, control of their emotions, and body image. People practicing Indian traditional dance styles made up the sample.

Lal et.al (2016) investigated the Indian Classical Dance emphasizing on the dancer's overall health, viewing the performer not merely as an artist but as a conduit for expression, akin to a yogi integrating physical and mental discipline. Beyond entertainment, the goal is spiritual growth and self-realization through art. This demanding form cultivates confidence, discipline, emotional balance, and spiritual connection. The physical and tonal demands require dancers to understand their bodily systems and maintain holistic fitness. As modern training often neglects strength and joint health, incorporating scientific knowledge with the ancient wisdom of Bharata's Naatyashaastra is essential for sustainable and individualized dancer well-being and artistic preservation.

In Indian culture, dance has long been essential for relaxation, artistic expression, and emotional communication during festivities (Srivastava1, Sonil et.al, 2016). Dance Movement therapy has recently brought its mental health advantages to the attention of the world.

Indian and Ayurvedic philosophy emphasizes the therapeutic and reflective benefits of dancing. In the past, yoga and dancing were associated with mental cleansing. Indian classical dances, such as Kathak and Bharatnatyam, have spiritual foundations, but their effects on mental health are still little understood. In order to investigate how these conventional forms can improve mental health, this research examines the body of existing literature.

8. RATIONALE

The present research is conducted to explore how Indian classical dance may influence self-efficacy and resilience among people. Thus, a comparative study is designed to assess the significant differences in these two constructs among Indian classical dancer and non- dancers. This study has potential to contribute dance-based approach to well-being by enhancing understanding of dancer's well-being among Indian Classical dancers. This research aims to scientifically validate the transformative potential of classical dance beyond its performative value and contributes to a growing body of research that integrates mental health awareness within the performing arts realm. The findings would also have practical implications in helping promote emotional development and growth.

9. METHODOLOGY

Aim: To compare self- efficacy and resilience between young Indian classical dancers and non-dancers.

Objectives:

1. To assess the difference in self-efficacy between young Indian classical dancers and non-dancers
2. To assess the difference in resilience between young Indian classical dancers and non-dancers

Hypothesis: Both hypotheses were non-directional.

- **Ho 1**: There is no significant difference in self-efficacy between young Indian classical dancers and non-dancers.
- **Ho 2:** There is no significant difference in resilience between young Indian classical dancers and non-dancers.

Sample: The total sample consisted of 133 participants, including 64 trained classical dancers and 69 non-dancers. The total sample consisted of 133 young adults, including 64 trained classical dancers and 69 non-dancers. Participants were aged between 18 and 30 years (M = 23.4, SD = 2.9). The gender distribution was 70% female and 30% male, reflecting the higher representation of women in classical dance training. Also most participants were from Delhi, Punjab, representing an urban middle-class population. Participants were recruited through a purposive sampling technique, primarily from universities, dance academies, and community networks in urban areas.Recruitment was carried out both online (via Google Forms) and offline (through dance institutions and peer referrals).

Inclusion Criteria: The participants selected for this study met specific inclusion criteria designed to align with the research objectives. The primary age group targeted was young adults, with most participants falling between 18 to 30 years of age. To be included in the classical dancer's group, individuals were required to have a background in recognized Indian classical dance forms such as Bharatanatyam, Kathak, or Odissi. Additionally, participants were eligible only if they had engaged in structured training or had been consistently involved in the active practice of a classical dance form for more than three years.

Exclusion Criteria: Individuals who practiced contemporary, Western, folk, or fusion dance styles were not included in the sample, as these forms differ significantly in structure and cultural context from classical traditions. Participants who engaged in more than one dance style, particularly if it included non-classical elements, were also excluded to eliminate potential confounding factors. Furthermore, those with no formal training or consistent involvement in any Indian classical dance form were not considered eligible for participation in the study.

Sampling technique: A purposive sampling technique was used for participants.

Research Variables and Operational Definitions

- **Resilience:** Resilience is described as the capacity of a person to adapt well and recover quickly when facing difficulties, stress, or trauma, allowing them to maintain mental health despite adverse situations (Masten, 200).
- **Self-Efficacy:** Self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to successfully perform specific tasks or actions required to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977).

Tools of Measurement:

Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire

A psychological test called the Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ) was developed by Nicholson McBride (2010) is utilized to gauge a person's resilience, or their capacity to bounce back from setbacks, adjust to change, and persevere in the face of difficulty. Twelve items make up the usual questionnaire, which assesses important aspects of resilience such as self-efficacy, emotional control, optimism, flexibility, and the capacity to maintain motivation under duress. On a Likert scale, respondents indicate how much they agree with certain statements, giving an idea of how they view and respond to difficulties. Both personal development and occupational performance contexts can benefit from the findings, which provide resilience score and assist

people or organizations in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. 0 to 60. It explores aspects such as self-efficacy, emotional regulation, optimism, flexibility, and motivation. The NMRQ has been widely applied in both organizational and personal development settings because it is quick to administer and offers useful insights into strengths and areas for improvement. However, it also has some limitations: its brevity may not capture the full complexity of resilience, responses may be affected by social desirability bias, and the scoring can oversimplify a construct that is shaped by cultural and contextual factors. Despite these concerns, the NMRQ remains a popular measure for researchers, organizations, and practitioners seeking to understand and enhance resilience.

General Self efficacy scale:

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), The 10-statement scale, which was first created by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995), it uses a 4-point Likert scale for responses. This tool is designed to measure core aspects of self-efficacy, such as persistence, the ability to solve problems, and the capacity to cope with challenging situations. Higher scores reflect a stronger belief in one's ability to manage life's difficulties effectively. The GSES is commonly utilized in both clinical and academic settings to assess individuals' perceived levels of personal effectiveness.

Procedure:

Data for this study was collected using standardized psychological instruments, with informed consent obtained from all participants prior to their involvement. The researcher strictly adhered to ethical research protocols throughout the study. Data collection was conducted through both Google Forms and offline methods, depending on participant accessibility. After collection, the data underwent coding and organization, with a specific coding scheme applied to each questionnaire. This coding included variables such as gender, age, marital status, and the relevant dimensions of the survey tools. The analysis was conducted using SPSS software (Version 30). Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the data, and individual scores were calculated by summing participants' responses across the corresponding questionnaire items. The study did not involve any clinical interventions or experimental manipulations that would require formal ethical clearance. Data were collected solely through standardized psychological questionnaires, ensuring minimal risk to participants. Informed consent was obtained, confidentiality was maintained, and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage.

Research Design:

The study adopted a cross-sectional design using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Statistical Analysis:

The collected data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. To summarize the results, the mean and standard deviation were calculated. An independent t-test was employed to examine differences in scores between classical dancers and non-dancers. All data processing and analysis were conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), Version 30.

10. RESULTS

The present study aimed to compare Resilience and Self-Efficacy among young Indian classical dancers and non-dancers. Data analysis was carried out using (SPSS, version 30). Initially, the demographic characteristics were identified through frequencies and percentages. Independent t-test was applied to examine resilience and self-efficacy. The calculations are also tabulated in accordance with the hypothesis.

Table 1: *Sample Characteristics Descriptive Table*

Demographic Profile	Sub Category	N	Percentage
Age	18–20	28	33.9%
	20–25	54	43.5%
	25–30	28	22.6%
Gender	Male	36	29.0%
	Female	87	70.2%

Demographic Profile	Sub Category	N	Percentage
Educational Qualifications	Higher School	13	10.5%
	Bachelor's Degree	70	56.5%
	Master's Degree	27	21.8%
	Diploma Degree	11	8.9%
	Doctorate Degree	4	2.3%
Dance Forms	Bharatnatyam	26	22.2%
	Kathak	29	24.8%
	Kathakali	7	6.0%
	Kuchipudi	1	2.1%
	Odissi	1	2.1%
	Manipuri	2	3.6%
	Mohiniyattam	1	2.1%

Table 1 outlines the demographic details of the 133 participants involved in the study. The largest age group consisted of individuals between 20 and 25 years (43.5%, n = 54), followed by those aged 18 to 20 (33.8%, n = 28), and the remaining participants (22.6%, n = 28) fell within the 25 to 30 age range. Regarding gender, females made up a greater portion of the sample (70.2%, n = 87), while males accounted for 29% (n = 36). In terms of educational qualifications, 10.5% (n = 13) had completed higher secondary education, 56.5% (n = 70) held a bachelor's degree, 21.8% (n = 27) had earned a master's degree, 8.9% (n = 11) possessed a diploma, and 2.3% (n = 4) had attained a doctorate. Participants represented various Indian classical dance styles, with Kathak (24.8%) and Bharatanatyam (22.2%) being the most commonly practiced. Other styles included Kathakali (6%), Manipuri (3.6%), and a small proportion (2.1% each) practiced Kuchipudi, Odissi, Mohiniyattam, and Sattriya.

Table 2 Showing Resilience and self-efficacy results

Variables	Group	M	SD	t	df	p (0.05)	Cohen's d
Self-Efficacy (S.E)	Classical Dancers	32.57	6.187				
	Non-Dancers	29.07	7.204	3.008	133	0.003	0.519
Resilience (R)	Classical Dancers	46.13	8.682				
	Non-Dancers	43.04	8.034	2.144	--	0.034	0.370

As per table 2, there was a no significant difference [(2.144), p= 0.34] in the resilience between classical dancers (M=46.13, SD=8.682) and Non dancers (M= 43.04, SD=8.034). While the other means of variable self-efficacy between classical dancers (M=32.57, SD = 6.187) and non-dancers (M= 29.07, SD= 7.204). There is a significant difference between classical dancers and non-dancers. An independent sample t-test was conducted to assess whether this is statistically significant. The results showed a t-value of 3.008 with 133 degrees of freedom, also the p-value of 0.003, and the significance is $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, a significant difference in self-efficacy between the two groups was found. For another variable resilience (R) classical dancers had a mean score of (M=46.13, SD= 8.682) and Non dancers (M= 43.04, SD=8.034). Although the dancers had higher average scores, the t-test result (t=0.34) with p = 0.34 indicates that the difference was not statistically significant, as the p-value exceeds the 0.05. Therefore, we failed to reject H1. However, H2 is rejected.

11. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the differences in self-efficacy and resilience among young classical dancers

and non-dancers. Findings revealed no statistically significant difference in resilience scores between the two groups, with an effect size of Cohen's d = 0.370. This suggests that while dance training may foster certain psychological strengths, its direct impact on resilience appears limited, or may be influenced by additional underlying factors.

These results align with the findings of Acharya and Jain (2017), who reported that classical dancers tend to exhibit greater self-esteem and enhanced psychological well-being. Their work reinforces the notion that classical dance, beyond its physical expression, plays a significant role in fostering confidence and in shaping individuals' approaches to life's challenges. Prior research presents mixed outcomes regarding the impact of dance on psychological constructs. Arbinaga (2025) found that dance students with higher resilience also exhibited higher self-efficacy. However, no significant difference in perfectionism was observed between students with high and low resilience, suggesting that resilience may be influenced more by personality traits or life experiences than by dance involvement alone.

In a similar vein, Kulshreshtha et al. (2023) reported that although Kathak dancers and non-dancers exhibited comparable levels of perceived stress, dancers demonstrated significantly fewer symptoms of depression. This implies that classical dance may enhance emotional regulation and coping strategies, which could indirectly support resilience development. On the other hand, the present study revealed a statistically significant difference in self- efficacy between the two groups, with classical dancers scoring higher (M = 32.57, SD = 6.19). As such, Hypothesis 1 was supported. This suggests that participation in structured and disciplined art forms like classical dance contributes positively to an individual's belief in their capacity to manage tasks and overcome challenges.

According to Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, mastery experiences defined as successful personal accomplishments are the most effective way to build confidence in one's abilities. Classical dancers undergo years of intensive and repetitive training, during which each successfully executed movement or performance contributes to a growing sense of mastery. Additionally, dance involves complex rhythmic patterns, symbolic gestures (mudras), and 32emotional expression (abhinaya), all of which require substantial cognitive, emotional, and physical integration. The current findings are consistent with Mathur (2022), who reported significantly higher self-efficacy among classical dancers, particularly those trained in Kathak. Arbinaga et al. (2025) also emphasized the strong link between self-efficacy and resilience, observing that both constructs are typically more developed in individuals exposed to sustained, demanding environments such as classical dance. Public performance further supports self-efficacy development by offering external validation and enhancing self-presentation skills.

Mukherjee and Jaiswal (2021) observed that classical dancers often experience a heightened state of focus known as "flow", which improves emotional control and strengthens confidence during performances. This aligns with the present findings, in which dancers showed significantly higher self-efficacy than non-dancers. Although the difference in resilience was not statistically significant, the higher levels of self-efficacy among dancers may suggest a pathway through which personal strength and mental resilience are developed over time. According to Bandura (1997) and Rutter (2012), individuals who possess strong self-belief are more likely to manage stress effectively—an essential component of resilience. People with greater self-efficacy are also typically more optimistic about overcoming challenges, which can contribute to the gradual development of resilient behaviors.

As Hypothesis 2 was not supported, it is essential to acknowledge the complex and multi- dimensional nature of resilience. Defined as the ability to adapt positively to adversity, resilience is shaped by a combination of personal characteristics, life circumstances, environmental contexts, and socio-cultural influences (Rutter, 2012; Southwick & Charney, 2012). Non-dancers may cultivate resilience through other life experiences, such as academic stress, family dynamics, financial hardship, or health-related challenges. These experiences may offer coping demands and stressors equally intense yet distinct from those encountered through classical dance. In summary, while the study confirms the significant impact of classical dance on self- efficacy, it also suggests that the development of resilience may require a broader array of life experiences. The findings of Mathur (2022) and Arbinaga et al. (2025) support this conclusion, indicating that classical dance strengthens self-efficacy due to its mastery-oriented structure, whereas resilience emerges from diverse and context-specific experiences. These results underscore the importance of analyzing each psychological construct within its own

developmental framework.

11. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that classical dancers exhibit significantly higher self-efficacy compared to non-dancers indicating that individuals who practice classical dance believe more in themselves and their abilities than those who do not dance at all. However, both dancers and non-dancers handle tough situations in similar ways, meaning dance may not directly improve resilience.

The current study has many important implications. Firstly, Indian classical dance can positively impact self-efficacy, making it a valuable tool for boosting confidence and motivation. Incorporating classical dance into mental health and educational programs may help promote emotional well-being and self-belief among youth. Although resilience did not differ significantly between dancers and non-dancers, the findings highlight the need for a broader, more holistic approach to building resilience. Secondly, this research supports the idea that classical dance can be used not only for performance but also for personal growth and mental health support.

12. LIMITATIONS

This study had a few limitations that should be kept in mind. First, the sample size was limited to a specific group of classical dancers and non-dancers, which not fully represent the larger population. The results might be different if a more diverse group of participants from various regions, age groups, or dance styles were included. Second, the study focused only on classical dance forms. Other dance styles like contemporary, folk, or hip-hop were not included in this research, and these forms may influence self-efficacy and resilience in ways that differ from classical dance. This limits how much the findings can be applied to dancers from other backgrounds or training systems.

Another limitation is on self-reported questionnaires. Additionally, the sample was predominantly female (about 70%), which may limit the generalizability of the findings across genders. Future studies should aim for a more balanced gender distribution to better capture diverse perspectives. Participants may have answered based on what they believed was expected or may have misunderstood some questions. This could affect the accuracy of the results.The research followed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish cause-and-effect relationships between dance training, self-efficacy, and resilience. A longitudinal design would allow a better understanding of changes over time.

Additionally, the gender imbalance (approximately 70% female participants) limits the generalizability of results across genders. Future studies should aim for a more balanced sample to capture gender-based variations. Finally, potential confounding factors such as socioeconomic status, prior mental health history, or other life experiences were not controlled for in this study. These variables may have influenced participants' levels of self-efficacy and resilience, and should be addressed in future research.

13. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study highlight important applications for education, training, and therapeutic practice. Since classical dancers demonstrated significantly higher levels of self-efficacy, structured dance training can be considered a valuable tool for enhancing confidence, persistence, and belief in personal abilities among young people. Dance educators may intentionally emphasize mastery experiences, performance opportunities, and the expressive aspects of classical dance (such as *Navarasas*) to strengthen self-efficacy and emotional regulation. In the context of mental health support, integrating classical dance elements into Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) could provide participants with culturally grounded strategies for developing coping skills, improving self-belief, and fostering emotional resilience. Additionally, schools, colleges, and community programs could incorporate classical dance workshops as part of extracurricular or well-being initiatives to promote both psychological growth and cultural awareness.

14. FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

Future research should consider employing both longitudinal and cross-sectional methodologies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how classical dance influences psychological traits such as self-efficacy and resilience over time. While cross-sectional approaches provide a snapshot comparison between groups, longitudinal studies can track changes and developments in dancers' mental states throughout various stages

of their training. Expanding the participant pool to include a more diverse demographic across different age ranges, geographic locations, and classical dance forms would enhance the validity and applicability of the findings. Researchers are also encouraged to examine additional psychological variables, including emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and coping mechanisms, to paint a broader picture of the mental health benefits associated with dance.

Comparing classical dance to other genres such as folk, contemporary, or Western styles could further reveal whether these psychological benefits are unique to classical traditions or shared across dance forms. Incorporating qualitative approaches, such as interviews or dancer narratives, may also offer richer, more nuanced insights into their personal growth, emotional challenges, and psychological development. These insights can inform the creation of dance-based interventions aimed at enhancing mental well-being, helping dancers manage stress, build confidence, and maintain emotional resilience.

DECLARATIONS

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Conceptualization, Jasleen Kaur. and Rupali Rawat.; methodology, Jasleen Kaur.; software, validation and formal analysis, Jasleen Kaur.; investigation, Jasleen Kaur; writing—original draft preparation, Jasleen Kaur.; writing—review and editing, Rupali Rawat; supervision, Rupali Rawat. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript. The authors used ChatGPT for grammar correction only. All content was reviewed and verified by the authors..

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Availability of Data and Materials

The data supporting this study are available upon request. The data are stored in Google Drive and can be provided to interested parties.

Declaration of Conflict

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Clinical Trial Number

Not Applicable.

Human Ethics and Consent to Participate

The study did not involve any clinical interventions or experiments requiring formal ethical approval.

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