

Motivational Analysis of dancers: A study of classical and contemporary professional freelance dancers.**Dr Rohini Thapar, Divya Jyoti**Assistant professor, Dept. of psychology, D.A.V college, Chandigarh, India
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Abstract: Psychology of dance is an extremely burgeoning area with a very limited empirical research and information available relating to motivational aspects of this intensive field especially in Indian context. In the earlier research on classical dance, there have been a very few empirical studies that have analysed the motivational basis of dancers more so hardly any study could be traced that explored the motivations of classical dance in relation to gender specifically. This study would assess meaning in life, passion and self actualisation of female professional dancers where passion scale (Ryan and Deci, 2000), meaning in life scale (Steger, 2006) and self actualisation scale (Jones and Crandall, 1986) were used. Passion scale consisted of 2 subscales, harmonious and obsessive passion whereas meaning in life consisted of search for meaning and presence of meaning subscales. Literature reveal ample research work on topics in dance psychology, such as dance moment therapy (Chace, 1940) injury psychology (Noh et al., 2007) and performance anxiety (Walker and bates,2010). Limited studies have revealed the psychological factors in career development in this area. Research is all the more scant in the area of motivational analysis of dance as a full fledged profession. An attempt is being made to study and understand the motivational factors (meaning in life, passion and self actualisation) underlying dancing as an independent full time professional choice amongst classical and contemporary dancers in Indian context.

Methodology: For this purpose a sample of 60 freelance qualified female dancers (30 classical and 30 contemporary) in the age range of 25-40 years having an extensive work experience for atleast 5 years, working in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore was taken. The data was purposively collected. **Results:** Results revealed significant differences between the professional dancers of these two genres. Classical dancers were relatively high on presence of meaning, passion and self actualisation whereas contemporary dancers emerged to be high on search for meaning in life and not reaching a self actualised state.

Keywords: Dance, classical dance, contemporary dance

Introduction:

Dance is an intellectual, physical and sensorial response to experiences of the world as suggested by Bannon(2010). It is considered to be a dynamic performing art or manifestation of music, following a set of melodious rhythms and tempo, with a sequence of rhythmic and improvised moves revealing an artist's emotions, visions and thoughts. It also involves expressions marked by graceful synchronization of the mood and steps. The emergence of dance started with "Natyashastra", an oldest surviving Indian treatise on performing arts and dramaturgy which is a magnificent compilation of what in the western performing arts would include dance, drama, music, poetry and theatre.

Nowadays, classical dance has evolved into a concert hall art form, imbibing Hindu and Muslim influences from history. Technical virtuosity, scintillating rhythms, rapid turns and subtle expressions mark this yet ever evolving spectacular art form. The present day scenario of dance in India embraces a variety of dance forms extending, from pure classical, to the modern contemporary dance forms embossed with western influence, to even a trend for a kind of fusion of the classical and the western. Although India boasts of a rich dancing heritage, but only eight of them have attained a classical status, namely Kathak (North Indian States), Bharatanatyam (Tamil Nadu), Odissi

(Orissa), Kathakali (Kerala), Kuchipudi (Andhra Pradesh), Manipuri (Manipur), Mohiniyattam (Kerala), Sattriya (Assam).

In recent years, dancing has been stripped of premeditation and formality and has evolved as a radical break from classicism (Battan, 2016). On the other hand, the visibility of Indian classical dances has been diminishing, as people have stopped relating to them and are not willing to invest time into it. Mostly youngsters seem to be more willing to take quick training for 2-3 years into exotic dances like salsa or contemporary, as several years of training for classical dance seems to be unreasonable to them. These dances are enjoying their boom in popularity due to the association with modern and pop culture. Lately, youngsters have started to take up contemporary dancing as a mainstream career which further interests us to go through the origin and background of contemporary dance.

Unlike classical forms like kathak and bharatnatyam dance, inception of contemporary dance form occurred during the mid-twentieth century and has grown ever since to become one of the dominant genres throughout the world, with strong popularity in the U.S. and Europe. Contemporary dance is flexible and malleable and it transforms itself to include experiments and novel discoveries

(Bhargav, 2013). Noisette (2011) author of “Let’s talk about contemporary dance”, says that contemporary dance is not about uniformity of dancers or of costumes; or formations. While he states that contemporary dance has no boundaries. It explores various facets from opera to hip-hop and from circus skills to fashion.

Contemporary dance is relatively incipient, it is unequivocally up-to-date and doesn’t hesitate to mould art, music, imagery and fashion into it, says Noisette (2011). It reconceptualises the traditionally flourished and originated forms of the west and in terms of the technique, this genre combines the controlled legwork of ballet with modern dance’s stress on the torso and implies floor work and improvisation characteristic of modern dance. It is an unpredictable form that sometimes incorporates different flavours of western dance styles.

Taking into account the above mentioned facts about dancing, a fact that emerges is that dancing is certainly a technically sound leisure activity, whether it be in its classical form, or the present day contemporary form. Pursuing dancing requires a considerable purpose, passion and a set of motivational factors.

However, we know very little about what kind of involvement and motivational

factors cause individuals to not only choose and continue classical and contemporary dance forms but also what kind of impact it has on their motivations and why do they choose this field as a full fledged profession. It is evident that motivation plays a substantial role in our leisure behaviour (Maraz et al., 2015). They have revealed that motivation also plays an important (if not determining) role in sporting activities, exercising and gymming as means of leisure activities. On the basis of studies examining these other forms of leisure activities, the examination of the motivational background of dancing could be arguably just as important. Not only there have been very few empirical findings that have explored the motives of dancing, but also, most of these studies have used a descriptive-qualitative method of assessment (Gill et al., 1983; Gould et al., 1985; Klint and Weiss, 1986; Longhurst and Spink, 1987). There is only one study that developed and tested a self-report questionnaire of dance motivation that paid attention to motivation of dancing (Nieminen, 2006).

Empirical researches substantiate the powerful role of dance as a means of self expression, task mastery, emotional release and creativity (Alter, 1997; Stinson, 1997; Neiminen, 1998; & Aujla, et al., 2014). It is a source of positive affect and satisfies basic

needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Aujla et al., 2010 & Quested, et al., 2010) and has also been reported to be intrinsically driven (Aujla, 2015). But the studies on the psychological factors in dancing are very limited (Critein et al., 2006; & Aujla et al., 2014). Most of this research has been done in foreign settings while in India, which has a rich legacy of classical dance, research is almost negligible.

Yalom (1980) stresses, meaning in life is a person's creative response and can be achieved by engaging in work (Steger, 2005), creativity and hedonism (Yalom, 1980) or dedication to a cause. Dance is a mean to gain meaning or sense in life (Borges-da-costa & Cox, 2016), while Zhang et al. (2013) proposed that the relation between dance and meaning in life was intervened by the type of passion. Harmonious passion leads to presence of meaning while obsessive passion is related to search for meaning. Tsipursky (2016) indicated that people having a clear meaning in life experience more positive emotions and lived healthier and longer lives.

Research (Aujla et al., 2015) revealed that professional dancers are incredibly passionate about dance in general and their work. As dance met dancers basic need satisfaction it led to both harmonious and obsessive passion (Akehurst et al., 2014).

Passion irrespective of harmonious passion or obsessive passion) is deeply connected with notions of identity (Wilson, 2004) and hence the dancers derive a large part of their identity from it (Wainwright and Turner, 2004). Further studies evinced that dancers who are high on harmonious passion experienced more positive psychological outcomes (Vallerand et al., 2003), exhibited more problem focused health promotion and flexible behaviour, were less prone to injury (Blanca et al., 2006) and enjoyed better interpersonal relationships (Vallerand et al., 2003). On the other hand, dancers embracing obsessive passion lead an uncontrollable urge to partake in the activity (Vallerand et al., 2003); had more health undermining, injury prone, rigid behaviour.

Siegenthaler (1992) proposed that degree of ego involvement was related to the expenditure in the activity, age and skill of the person and also level of commitment, so when dancers convert a leisure into profession the picture might change as ego oriented dancers emphasised social status and a high career competitiveness and not giving up (Neiminen et al., 2010; Quested and Duda, 2010). Moreover the degree and kind of (ego vs task) involvement is also related to gender (Wiley and Shaw, 2000); level of skill, growth and status attained in the field (Morris, 2000); age (Siegenthaler,

1992) and the form or genre of dance form (Ingram,1978).

Professional dancer

The term independent professional or freelance professional dancer is used to describe a performing artist training students and transitioning between projects and jobs (Aujla et al., 2014). According to Clarke, (1997) “dance artists work as freelance entrepreneurs, often juggling many roles simultaneously and taking their expertise into numerous communities through their performance, choreography, teaching and facilitation”.

Professional dance field is perceived as a communal, supportive and collaborative one in which adjustability is crucial to enable dancers to transition between projects and roles, and in which continual training and development is necessary to stay current in this varied field (Clarke, 1997; Rouhiainen, 2003; Aujla, 2014). However the capricious nature of this field means that it involves periods of instability and unemployment. Furthermore, dancers need to develop skills in promoting and marketing, or take up an additional pursuit in order to supplement their earnings which may restrict their performance. (Clarke and Gibson, 1998; Kogan, 2002).

The formalization of dance education has also facilitated its revival. From the

beginning of 21st century, a boom of dance awareness is being witnessed. The informal dance education of the past has now been shaped by setting up of formal schools of dance- both for classical and contemporary in Bengaluru in the recent past. As a result dancing has grown in status from a mere hobby to a full-fledged career option. People have started opting for a profession in dancing in the form of independent dance trainers or gurus.

This study becomes all the more relevant as the number of such freelance professional dancers in India is also rising especially in the metropolitan cities of Delhi and Mumbai and Bangalore and that too not only of the modern contemporary ones, but also the traditionally oriented classical dancers who are joining similar professional practices. These freelance dancers are performing in concerts, running dance academies or classes and working on independent projects as choreographers.

Objectives:

- 1) To examine the meaning in life, level of passion and degree of self-actualisation among the freelance professional dancers.
- 2) To evaluate the differences among contemporary and classical dancers in their meaning in life, passion and self-actualisation.

Methodology:

For this purpose a sample of 60 freelance qualified female dancers (30 classical [Mean age-34]) and 30 contemporary [Mean age- 27]) in the age range of 25-40 years having an extensive work experience for atleast 5 years, working in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore will be taken. Focus of the study specifically is 25-40 because contemporary dancers have a relatively quicker, fast paced training and settling in their profession, while training of classical dancers and their establishing as a professional might take relatively more number of years. Dancers who have done schooling till at least higher secondary (10+2) and a graduation degree with classical dance (kathak/ bharatnatyam) from a recognized university or having a professional diploma of “Visharad” in kathak or a diploma in contemporary dance from an established dance institute or academy were considered. The two forms of classical dance i.e. kathak and bharatanatyam were chosen due to popularity and availability constraints.

Since the career of independent/ freelance professional dancer is endowed with a lot

struggle and uncertainty, hence only dancers (both contemporary and classical) who have attest 2 years of active professional experience were selected. Further, by selecting only dancers maintaining at least a middle class status in society were selected to ensure homogeneity of sample, as strugglers living below this level of socio-economic status might have different psychological and motivational profile. Also it was seen that all these dancers had been actively participating in urban setups and were involved in dance as a full time profession and not as a part time one. Ethical considerations have been kept in mind and prior permission was taken from the dancers before collecting data. The method of purposive sampling was used for data collection, keeping in mind the context of study.

Results: Socio-demographic profile of the participants: They were between 25-40 years of age and were having upto 5 years of experience in teaching and freelancing. They belonged to an upper middle class background and were holding either a visharad or diploma in dancing.

Table 1 Mean table: Means of passion, meaning in life and self actualisation of professional dancers

Variables	Group	Combined Means	Interpretation
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Meaning in life: Presence of meaning	Classical Contemporary	28.33 24.76	High Moderate
Meaning in life: Search of meaning	Classical Contemporary	24.90 25.16	Moderate High
General passion	Classical Contemporary	23.13 20.66	High Moderate
Harmonious passion	Classical Contemporary	33.10 31.13	High High
Obsessive passion	Classical Contemporary	25.56 17.67	High Moderate
Self actualisation	Classical Contemporary	46.06 42.97	High Moderate

Table 2 t table: significant difference between male and female dancer

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	T
Meaning in life: Presence of meaning	Classical Contemporary	28.33 24.76	6.48 6.79	2.08*
Meaning in life: Search for meaning	Classical Contemporary	24.90 25.16	7.15 7.86	-0.137
General passion	Classical Contemporary	23.13 20.66	1.79 2.39	4.52**
Harmonious passion	Classical Contemporary	33.10 31.13	3.26 4.05	2.07*
Obsessive passion	Classical Contemporary	25.56 17.67	6.93 8.24	4.27**
Self actualisation	Classical Contemporary	46.06 42.97	8.03 4.18	1.88

P<0.5* P<0.1**

Results

Results in table 1 indicates that the most significant difference can be seen in passion

where contemporary female dancers show significantly high level of general and obsessive passion. Contemporary dancers were also found to be significantly higher in searching for meaning in the life and were found to be more obsessively passionate for dancing.

Results in table 2 reveals the most significant difference and significant t ratios on presence of meaning, general passion and obsessive passion. Classical dancers are found to be high on presence of meaning and both harmonious and obsessive passion which further leads them to a state of self actualisation. This occurrence might be associated with their long training periods and education that goes on for 7 to 9 years, which demands immense patience and dedication for the art form.

Nieminen (2002) reported participation motives among 308 non-professional folk dancers, competitive ballroom dancers, ballet dancers and modern dancers. These motives were 1) Self-Expression, 2) Social Contacts, 3) Fitness, and 4) Achievement/Performing.

Two contradictory motive items, Breaking Away From Daily Routines and Preparing for a Career, were considered as individual motive items. The most important factors were Self-Expression, Achievement/Performing and the individual motive item Breaking Away From Daily

Routines. There were significant differences in the ratings of all four motivational factors and the two motive items between dance groups.

Drawing a parallel between creative learners and students, Andrzejewski et al. (2013) identified that student's goals can be parsed into two types: mastery and performance. Mastery-oriented students are primarily concerned with learning as an end in itself. Performance-oriented students tend to be more concerned with how they compare to others. Classical dancers in our study seem to have a Mastery orientation whereas contemporary dancers are more inclined toward performance orientation that makes them high on search for meaning.

Maraz et al. (2015) revealed eight motivational factors with the DMI (Dance Motivation Inventory). These dimensions were Mastery, Fitness, Mood Enhancement, Intimacy, Socialising, Trance, Self-confidence and Escapism. The aim was to explore the motivational basis of recreational social dancing and develop a new psychometric instrument to assess dancing motivation. Eight motivational factors were identified via exploratory factor analysis and those comprised a new Dance Motivation Inventory: Fitness, Mood Enhancement, Intimacy, Socialising,

Trance, Mastery, Self-confidence and Escapism. Mood Enhancement was the strongest motivational factor for both males and females, although other motives differed according to gender.

A study by Siljamäki, Anttila & Sääkslahti (2010) explored three qualitatively different ways to understand conceptions of transnational dances among 7 Finnish dancers who have specialized in teaching but have no formal dance teacher education in African dance, flamenco and Oriental dance. They taught dance in private schools

and adult education centres in different parts of Finland and their students were people of all ages who are actively engaged in dance as a hobby. All the teachers had extensive experience, from 13 to 26 years, in teaching, performing and choreographing in their own dance fields. The findings represented well-being and art as holding a strong emphasis in the teacher's dance conception. They also believed that dance is culture open to all people and results in personal empowerment. Dance, hence could be an effective way of relating to one's meaning in life or even to search for it.

Table 3 Correlation table: Significant correlation between passion, meaning in life and self actualisation of classical dancers.

Variables	Correlation
Presence of meaning with general passion	.275*
Presence of meaning with harmonious passion	.367**
General passion with harmonious passion	.380**
General passion with obsessive passion	.332**
Harmonious passion with obsessive passion	.371**

Results in table 3 indicate that classical dancers are found to be relatively high on presence of meaning, passion and self actualisation. This indicates that these dancers are high on passion and they were ruled by both harmonious and obsessive passion. Those dancers who are enjoying harmonious passion are found to be equally

obsessively passionate about dancing. In classical genre of dancing the passion further seems to be leading them to an ultimate self actualised state and these classical dancers are perhaps enjoying peak experiences through their dancing.

A very interesting finding is gleaned out of these results is that meaning in life was found to have no significant relationship with passion and self actualisation amongst female dancers and they derive their meaning in life from some other activity but it has no relation with their passion for dancing or dance.

Discussion: Dancers are found to be passionate about dance in general and their work. As dance met dancers basic need satisfaction it led to both harmonious and obsessive passion (Akehurst et al., 2014). Passion (irrespective of harmonious passion or obsessive passion) is deeply connected with notions of identity (Wilson, 2004) and hence the dancers derive a large part of their identity from it (Wainwright and Turner, 2004). Further studies evinced that dancers who are high on harmonious passion experienced more positive psychological outcomes (Vallerand et al., 2003), exhibited more problem focused health promoting and flexible behaviours, were less prone to injury (Blanca et al., 2006); enjoyed better interpersonal relationships (Vallerand et al., 2003); and low levels of burnout through its facilitation of frequent flow experiences (Lavigne, 2011). On the other hand, dancers embracing obsessive passion lead an uncontrollable urge to partake in the activity (Vallerand et al., 2003); had more health

undermining, injury prone, rigid behaviour. (Blanca et al., 2006); showed self-evaluative perfectionism (Imogen et al, 2014); and dance dependence (Akehurst et al., 2014); possessed implicit self-esteem (Lafreniere et al., 2011); higher levels of burnout (Lavigne et al, 2012); experienced negative emotions and exhibited constant search for meaning in life (Zhang, et al., 2014); all this leading to addictive behaviour, escapism, interpersonal conflicts (Stenseng et al., 2011) and disordered eating (Aujla et al., 2014). Our findings support the above research as classical dancers came out to be high on both Harmonious and obsessive passion and contemporary dancers turned out to be high on only harmonious passion. This orientation led classical dancers to a state of self actualisation where they enjoy peak experiences whereas contemporary dancers are still searching for meaning in their lives and haven't enjoyed self actualisation like classical professionals.

Conclusion

Dancers are motivated in their profession because of their high degree of passion for it. They seem to enjoy a eudaemonic relationship for dancing which perhaps provides a meaning to their lives, thereby promoting a state of ecstasy and self actualisation. The study evinced that the

motivational profile of female classical dancers was predominantly ruled by their passion for dancing, unlike their contemporary dance counterparts. This passion of female classical dancers somehow does not turn out to be a source of providing a meaning to their lives, whereas

contemporary dancers seem to be enjoying harmonious passion and are still searching for meaning in their lives. They haven't yet reached the levels of self actualisation in their dancing unlike their classical dance counterparts.

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