

# Contemporary dance enhances physical fitness and psychological wellbeing

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This research was conducted by **Mary Kate Connolly, Edel Quin and Emma Redding** at **Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance**

## Summary

This study assessed the physiological and psychological impact of contemporary dance classes on 55 girls aged 14 from secondary schools in the UK as part of the Dance 4 Your Life scheme. Participants in the scheme experienced between 5-12 hours of classes for the duration of the project. Sessions were about an hour long and comprised a warm-up, structured contemporary technique exercises, creative and choreographic tasks and cool down. Results showed improvement on a number of physical fitness components as well as psychological wellbeing.

## Contemporary dance increases aerobic capacity and upper body strength

The students were assessed for flexibility, upper body strength and aerobic capacity before and after the dance programme. Participants' exposure to other physical activities was also recorded through the course of the experiment. Hand-grip strength increased significantly indicating an improvement in upper body strength as a result of the course. Aerobic capacity increased significantly too, with a small association observed between increased hours of participation in the programme and increased aerobic capacity. Participants' perceived exertion decreased post-intervention, as well.

## Participation in dance classes advances personal wellbeing

The self-esteem, intrinsic motivation and attitudes towards dance and group physical activities of the girls were assessed before and after the programme. There was a significant improvement in self-esteem at the completion of the project and, although no changes occurred in intrinsic motivation or attitudes towards dance, these positive attitudes and personal motivation were maintained throughout the programme.

## Further research would be welcome

The authors propose that future research might include a control group, standardising the number and length of the dance classes and investigating the impact of dance on adolescent boys. It would also be valuable to further explore how dance influences community and recreational settings.

This summary is by **Anna Kolliakou, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

### Keywords

**UK** **dance** **wellbeing** **children**

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