

# A review of research on dance therapy interventions for college students with psychological problems

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**Abstract:** College students are in the transition period from adolescence to adulthood, and while their physiological development is maturing, their psychological aspects are also undergoing drastic changes. This period is prone to anxiety, depression, interpersonal sensitivity, paranoia, loneliness, schizophrenia and other adverse psychological problems, and the psychological health of college students plays a crucial role in their healthy growth and successful success. Dance therapy, as an emerging method of treating illnesses in recent years, has begun to gain more and more attention, and its ability to help students solve various confusions and psychological problems in their growth and development, enhance their ability to adapt to modern social life, develop their individual psychological potential, and enable them to have a comprehensive and healthy development.

**Keywords:** dance therapy; college students' psychological problems; intervention study

## 1. Introduction

Once the word "dance" is associated with the word "therapy," it has a richer connotation, and dance therapy is different from dance in the general sense. Dance therapy, also known as dance movement therapy, is a form of psychotherapy that uses dance or improvisational movement to treat emotional, cognitive, and physical disorders and to enhance one's awareness and improve one's mind. Dance therapy has several simple characteristics: the universality of the subject, the freedom of content, and the complementary therapeutic nature of speech. So far, there is no unified description of the origin and development of dance therapy, and the representative statements are mainly as follows: Zhou Yu believes that the concept of dance therapy first originated in Europe in the late 19th century, but its real development was in the United States. Wang Zi-chi believes that dance therapy began in 1940, and its foundation came from free dance (creative dance), and after the Second World War dance therapy began to be applied to the psychological healing of veterans[1].

Dance therapy does not emphasize movement techniques, nor is it designed to lose weight and shape the body, but rather to address psychological issues and regulate the individual's mood. Dance therapy has a wide range of applications, including one-on-one therapy and group counseling; autism, depression, sexual abuse, domestic violence, psychiatric rehabilitation, depersonalization, stress relief, intimacy, personal self-confidence, stress reduction, spiritual crisis intervention, and the use of physicality in teamwork.

Accessing relevant literature through various sources, such as China Knowledge, Dance Movement Therapy - The Art of Healing, the American Journal of Dance Therapy, the British Journal of Dance Psychology, the official websites of One School and Apollo Education Consulting, etc, our main focus lies in exploring the origin and development of dance therapy, its theoretical foundations, and the target population it serves.

Dance therapy, as a branch of psychotherapy and creative arts therapy, has gradually gained professional recognition and established its disciplinary status since its emergence in the United States in the 1930s, and has shown its unique role in psychological intervention, treatment and rehabilitation as an effective means to integrate the body and mind in a comprehensive and deeper way. Dance therapy is based on a specific theoretical foundation, which can be broadly divided into a psychological basis and a theoretical basis for dance. The psychological basis includes Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, psychopathology, group psychology and object psychology. Dance theory: Improvisational dance can bring subjects to a new way of being, and dance therapy takes into account the reenactment of early object relations and relies heavily on nonverbal modulation.

Marianne Tweed's "Mirror Technique", Mary White's "Dance Therapy in the Deep Movement-Tolerance Format", Rudolf Laban's "Laban wMovement Analysis".

Dance therapy has different uses and efficacy for different groups of people, and there are currently two categories of dance therapy clients. Zhang Ye classifies dance therapy targets into three categories according to age: children, adults and the elderly. Another classification method is to divide the target group into special groups and general population. For example, Ren Chenjing's article "A Study on the Intervention of Dance Therapy on the Interaction Ability of Children with Intellectual Disabilities: A Case Study of Dance Therapy for Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Zhiguang Special Education Institution in Beijing" limits the target group of dance therapy to children with intellectual disabilities. Xie Dan's article "On the Promoting Effect of Dance Therapy on College Students' Mental Health" expands the target group of dance therapy to college students.

In Cao Zhaoli's article 'An analysis of the development of dance therapy in psychotherapy', he mainly introduces the role of dance therapy in three ways. Firstly, it improves individuals' self-cognition and self-adjustment. In his book 'The Creation and Growth of the Mind', the famous American scholar Vidocq Roenfeld clearly states that the creative activities in art education can enhance self-cognitive ability. Additionally, the well-known Japanese scholar Ryuhito Tokuda also suggests that dance and painting activities promote brain activity, effectively adjusting one's psyche and rejuvenating one's mental state." It is clear that dance therapy has the ability to improve the individual's self-awareness and self-adjustment. The second is to improve the individual's self-emotions, interpersonal relationships and quality of life: physical dance psychotherapy refers to the language of dance to improve self-emotions and interpersonal relationships. Human body language actually includes a lot of information, as the famous Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud once said: "No man can hide secrets, even if his mouth does not speak, but it speaks with his fingertips." Therefore, the outward expression of human mental activity is body language. The third is to promote the development of individual personality: through dance psychotherapy, the dancer's psychological state and emotions will be largely relieved, thus achieving a state of harmony, thus promoting the development of his personality, and, through dance to better understand and enrich oneself, further improving the development of one's personality. The future development trend of dance therapy is focused on the combination with music education; the combination with Chinese medicine and more use in people's daily life.

There are many other aspects to the current challenges to the development of dance therapy. First, the discipline of dance therapy is small, even when compared to music therapy. While music therapy started early and developed maturely, and also promoted undergraduate education with over 20,000 professionals, dance therapy is only around 4,000 and is more fragmented. Second, dance therapy is still in an auxiliary and subordinate position in clinical treatment, and has not really been placed in an important position by hospital psychiatry and psychology departments. Third, the empirical practice and scientific research of dance therapy are weak and need to be further strengthened. Fourth, industry standards vary from country to country, and even for European vocational training programs, standards vary greatly from country to country and training program to training program. For example, some internship hours are as long as 800 hours, while others are as short as 80 hours. Fifth, male therapists are in a very small minority, which has hindered the acceptance of dance therapy in the predominantly male medical and scientific community, resulting in a weak recognition of the professional identity of dance therapists. Finally, if dance therapy is to be truly expanded, it will require innovative and expanded applications outside of the clinic on the one hand, and on the other hand, it will need to eventually be incorporated into the health insurance system clinically, while actively collaborating and associating with other creative arts therapies, and doing a good job on the ground in terms of research, professional training, and certification standards. Although the challenges are great and there is a long way to go, the future of dance therapy in China is believed to be bright.

## 2. Psychological problems of contemporary college students

Dance therapy is a combination of dance and psychotherapy, which follows the advantages of dance in releasing stress, promoting the establishment and development of interpersonal relationships, and helping college students to reduce anxiety, express themselves, and bring psychological comfort to each other. Some studies conclude that dance therapy has positive effects on interpersonal relationships as well as psychology of college students, and that this new, healthy dance psychotherapy is suitable for application in the classrooms of college students in China.

In recent years, the survey report related to mental health shows that college students have become

psychologically vulnerable. Various media reported incidents of suicide by jumping from buildings, killing parents, slitting wrists for love, etc... However, the causes of these incidents are described in Xie Dan's article "On the Promoting Effect of Dance Therapy on College Students' Mental Health", which has the following seven points:

First, the lack of adaptability in role change. In the university campus, the ability to learn, the ability to communicate, the talent to organize, the spirit of cooperation and many other aspects have changed greatly compared with the secondary school. The purpose, content, learning methods, and time management of university studies have changed. The causes of mental illness in this area are summarized as: lack of adaptability in role change.

Secondly, the environmental adaptation ability adjustment barrier, after entering the university, the class collective becomes the main living environment, class activities become one of the indispensable basic forms of university life form, the student group dormitory becomes the main living area, daily life all depends on self-care, which is really a problem for those who are usually accustomed to rely on parents, family. In addition to their own studies, students have to take care of their social work and classroom construction. The cause of mental illness caused by changes in the living environment is called: environmental adjustment disorder.

Thirdly, improper handling of interpersonal relationship, the current college students educated under different environmental backgrounds of family education, school education and social education will have a lot of differences. They have different standards in the way they think about problems, the breadth and depth of their views, the differences in their personalities, the choice of friendships, and the way they deal with people, which to a considerable extent causes college students not to know how to deal with interpersonal relationships among classmates. The cause of mental illness in this area is called "interpersonal relationship mishandling".

Fourth, the sequelae caused by improper education of only child, most of the current college students are only child, some negative effects caused by improper education of only child, the group of only child has become the main body of the current college students, the sequelae caused by improper education of only child is a major cause of the frequent occurrence of psychological problems of college students, called: the problem of education of only child[2].

Fifth, employment pressure, in recent years, due to the intensification of social competition, the job market downturn, especially now the worldwide financial crisis, coupled with the outbreak of the epidemic in the general context, college students to find a job or find a more desirable job is increasingly difficult. This has caused a lot of mental and psychological pressure on many senior students in the university, making them lose their sense of security due to anxiety and low self-esteem, and many psychological problems have arisen in this regard resulting in the cause of mental illness, called: employment pressure.

Sixth, the dependence on the Internet is not unfamiliar to the college students nowadays, and the time students spend on the Internet is much more than the time they spend on their studies, and the Internet may become an indispensable part of the life of contemporary college students. Many college students are buried in the wonderfully rich virtual world of the Internet and cannot extricate themselves from it, ignoring the original purpose of coming to college, indulging in their own lives, being indifferent to the outside world, not treating their classmates and friends with great enthusiasm and love, devoting themselves to the online world, closing themselves off from real life and being reluctant to interact with people face to face, which causes the causative factor of mental illness, called: dependence on the Internet[3].

Seventh, College students' emotional well-being is shaped by various factors, and successful management of emotional issues is critical to maintaining balance within students' psychological functioning. Emotional crises can occur among students due to various reasons, including academic pressures, social problems or romantic relationships. However, among these, difficulties related to love can be particularly insidious and debilitating. When left unresolved, they can have serious negative effects on overall mental and emotional state, leading directly to negative mood and reduced cognitive functions, this cause of mental illness, called: the imbalance of emotional crisis handling. Some college students due to the failure of love, often lead to college students psychopath, a lot of negative thinking, blame, regret, narrow-mindedness, confusion, indulgence in self, and even some, because they can not get out of the shadow of lost love and go to extremes, and eventually cause tragedy[4].

### **3. The effect of dance therapy on the generation of psychological problems of college students**

As a product of the intersection of many disciplines, such as psychology, medicine and art, the role of dance therapy is also increasingly accepted and valued. Dance therapy plays a unique role in the

mental health issues of university students for several reasons. Firstly, dance therapy can promote healthy physical and mental development and emotional well-being, providing an entertaining way to improve one's overall health. Unlike typical dance forms, dance therapy is guided by educators who help the dancer connect with their inner personality and emotions, allowing them to express themselves through physical movements and to channel undesirable psychological emotions in order to improve oneself[5].

Secondly, dance therapy promotes harmony and team consciousness in a way that other forms of exercise cannot. This is because dance therapy combines the characteristics of modern dance and psychology, allowing individuals to exchange ideas freely and express emotions without barriers. Through direct contact with team members' bodies, individuals can sense each other's reactions to movements and feel each other's signals, allowing for clear and effective communication[6].

Improved mental and physical health are essential for university students' academic success and overall well-being. By recognizing the unique role that dance therapy plays in promoting these goals, students can continue to improve their well-being and achieve greater success throughout their academic careers.

Lastly, dance therapy can be a social interaction, improve social values, and have a social nature; dance therapy has a social nature, learning and establishing how to properly and healthily communicate with students of the opposite sex in harmonious and harmonious group dances and social dances, communicating with each other in a relaxed and harmonious youthful group, venting the depression in the heart, relieving psychological pressure, and even learning to care and help others in collective communication, how to mutually enlighten and Communication to help each other, etc[7].

#### **4. Research related to the intervention of dance therapy on the psychological problems of college students**

Samson S. Akapo. An Overview of Somatics Body Mind Approaches in Dance Therapy, in which Mary Starks Whitehouse develops a process called "movement insight" based on her knowledge of dance, movement and depth psychology. This form of dance therapy is also known as "movement deepening". This form of dance therapy is also known as "authentic movement," a process in which patients gain insight into past or current problems in their lives by dancing their own feelings about an inner image. Thematic research advocates the idea that the human mind and body work together to form a composite structure. Thus, since the 1970s, when dancers and choreographers sought new ways to incorporate the "body-mind concept" into dance training, body research has had a major impact on dance and has been successful in the therapeutic field[8].

In Chen Zhai Luzi's article, "A Study on the Intervention of Dance Therapy on Interpersonal Relationships and Emotional Psychology of College Students", a combination of quantitative and qualitative research was used. In the quantitative study, the positive effects of dance therapy on interpersonal relationships and emotional psychology of college students were analyzed by using the experimental method, starting from "interpersonal relationships" and "emotional psychology" of college students. A total of 90 college students were enrolled in the study, 30 of whom were enrolled in a 16-week dance therapy intervention program, 30 in a 16-week dance therapy intervention program, 30 in a 16-week physical education dance program, and 30 in no intervention other than daily classes. The results showed that there was a significant difference in "positive affect" and "negative affect" between the dance therapy intervention group before and after the intervention. There was a significant increase in positive mood scores and a significant decrease in negative mood. This indicates that dance therapy has an effective effect on the regulation of college students' emotions[9].

Shao Shuai. The article "The effect of dance therapy based on the Satir model on the mental health of adolescents during the COVID-19 epidemic" aims to examine the influence of dance therapy, which is based on the Satir model, on the mental health of adolescents diagnosed with depression during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sixty-two adolescents were selected based on the Symptom Scale 90, and they were randomly divided into two groups: the experimental group (32 participants) and the control group (30 participants). The experimental group was treated with group psychological intervention and dance therapy using the Satya model, and the control group was treated without any intervention. After the intervention, the scores of anxiety and depression scales were lower in the experimental group ( $p < 0.01$ ) and lower in the control group ( $p < 0.01$ ) than before the intervention; the scores of the experimental group in life satisfaction, psychological resilience and its dimensions were higher ( $p < 0.01$ ) than before the intervention and higher ( $p < 0.01$ ) than in the control group ( $p < 0.01$ ). It was concluded that group intervention based on the Satir model combined with dance therapy is a feasible method to effectively alleviate adolescent anxiety and depression, improve adolescent life

satisfaction and psychological resilience, and thus improve adolescent mental health[10].

According to medical experts in the clinical field, dance therapy has been shown to have an impact on students' motivation, anxiety, body language, and dance-related self-efficacy, perceived stress levels, and independent learning, effectively relieving patients' symptoms of insomnia, as well as reshaping one's body shape and improving one's temperament and self-esteem[11]. In addition, dance therapy can prevent cardiovascular disease and improve blood circulation and respiratory function, and it is important for the emotional expression and communication skills of college students. Individual college students who have been in a solitary environment for a long time slowly lose their communication skills and lack of emotional expression for a long time, which can be harmful to physical and mental health and interpersonal relationships. Dance therapy can effectively promote emotional detachment and enhance the ability to express emotions. This shows the importance of dance therapy to the mental health of college students. College is a boundary between school and society, and college students who have plans for their lives will consider their work and development direction after graduation, and will often participate in social practice even in school. Students are also under immense pressure in the face of a rapidly developing society. And dance therapy can effectively relieve inner anxiety and tension and other states of mind, and also enhance the self-confidence of college students, so dance therapy has an irreplaceable role in the mental health of college students[12].

## 5. Conclusion

College students are at an important stage of life development, facing various problems such as study, dating, love, employment and growth. Contemporary college students are eager to be successful and pursue excellence. Good psychological quality is the foundation of success, and the psychological health of contemporary college students has become a focus of social and academic concern. Dance not only helps to develop the mind and improve the noble aesthetic sentiment, but more importantly, it can influence people's psychology in a subtle way. Dance therapy will play its unique function of "embellishment", the inculcation of dance is likely to cast the personality of college students and affect their whole life, it may not bring visible benefits and results, but has an irreplaceable role in the spiritual enlightenment of college students, so that every college student's emotions are cultivated, thoughts are purified, intellect is enlightened, and the dance therapy will be a great success. It can make every college student's emotion be cultivated, thoughts be purified, intellect be enlightened, and spiritual realm be sublimated, so that the body and mind can be developed harmoniously and the quality be improved comprehensively. Therefore, it is of great social significance to carry out dance therapy for psychological diseases among college students, and to cover the society with dance therapy for psychological diseases through the base of college students, so as to realize the harmony and stability of the society.

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