

# EFFECTS OF DANCING TO COLLEGE STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING



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## Effects of Dancing to College Students' Psychological Well-Being

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### Abstract

This study sought to determine the effects of dancing on college students' psychological well-being before and after the intervention. This quantitative research study used a quasi-experimental design, specifically the one-group pretest-posttest research design. The results of the study revealed that the data gathered before and after the intervention of BSIT and BPED students as a whole were closely similar. However, when the results were analyzed per subscale, the findings revealed an increase in autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, and a slight decrease in the personal growth subscale. Additionally, findings showed a significant difference existed before and after the intervention in BSIT students. However, in the BPED students, it was found that a significant difference existed before and after the intervention. The researchers concluded that while dancing is a fun and enjoyable form of physical activity, it may not have any significant effects on the psychological well-being of BPED students but has a great impact on the psychological well-being of BSIT students because it gives students a chance to engage with others, which helps lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation. Thus, this study suggests that teachers must encourage BSIT students to use dance as a form of stress relief by incorporating dance breaks into classes or by suggesting dance as a way to unwind after a long day of studying. For BPED, the intervention does not have any specific psychological benefits beyond what they can already achieve through other forms of physical activity.

**Keywords:** *dancing, effects of dancing, college students, psychological well-being*

### Introduction

Movement is medicine for bringing about change in one's emotional and mental states. In dancing, all sorts of movements will make you feel better. Dancers can deal with negative emotions and let them out through the steps and routines they learn during dance class through the expression of movement (Elite Studio, 2019). Dancing, as a series of movements, allows many people to connect and convey their feelings and emotions, and at the end, they can release pent-up emotions (Pina, 2020).

Globally, mental health problems affect an estimated 10–20% of adolescents (Estrada et al., 2020). More than four in ten (42%) students reported persistent sadness or hopelessness, and nearly one-third (29%) reported poor mental health (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021).

The Philippines has the third-highest rate of mental health problems in the Western Pacific area, with an estimated 6 million Filipinos experiencing anxiety and/or depression (Martinez, 2020). It was corroborated by the National Statistics Office (NSO), which reports that among Filipinos, mental health disorders account for the third most common cause of morbidity (Malolos et al., 2021).

According to a study by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (2022), mental health problems can negatively impact a student's energy level, focus, dependability, mental capacity, and optimism in a school context, which can lead to subpar performance. In connection with this, among the total population of Bachelor of Physical Education and Bachelor of Science in Information Technology students enrolled at Kabankalan Catholic A.Y. 2023-2023, 18 % of them experience lower levels on a specific dimension of psychological well-being.

Mental health issues are not a sign of weakness; they are simply reactions to what is happening to us and around us (Mental Health Foundation, 2022). College students face a range of stressors, including academic demands, social pressures, and financial constraints, which can negatively impact their psychological well-being. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the effects of dancing on the psychological well-being of college students. Specifically, we examined whether regular participation in dance classes can improve mood, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance the overall quality of life. By shedding light on the potential psychological benefits of dancing for college students, this research could be the basis for the development of interventions and programs aimed at promoting mental health and well-being among this population.

### Research Questions

This research study was conducted to determine the potential benefits of dancing as a therapeutic intervention for the students at Kabankalan Catholic College who are experiencing psychological distress. The specific questions that the researchers aimed to answer were the following:

1. What is the level of psychological well-being of BPED and BSIT students in each of the following subscales and when these subscales are taken as a whole before the intervention?

- 1.1 autonomy;
- 1.2 environmental mastery;
- 1.3 personal growth;
- 1.4 positive relations with others
- 1.5 purpose in life; and
- 1.6 self-acceptance?
2. What is the level of psychological well-being of BPED and BSIT students in each of the following subscales and when these subscales are taken as a whole after the intervention?
  - 2.1 autonomy;
  - 2.2 environmental mastery;
  - 2.3 personal growth;
  - 2.4 positive relations with others;
  - 2.5 purpose in life; and
  - 2.6 self-acceptance?
3. Is there a significant difference in the psychological well-being of BPED and BSIT students before and after the intervention?

## Literature Review

Our mental health has a profound effect on our general health. Society frequently views health as being biological and physical: our bodies' state, our eating habits, and our level of physical activity. Nevertheless, something crucial to health is lacking in this. It is mental health, which includes both our internal workings and how we characterize ourselves in daily life (Peterson, 2023).

Moreover, how well a person can accept and control their emotions as well as deal with obstacles in life is referred to as their emotional well-being, emotional health, or emotional wellness. It can impact a person's ability to manage change or uncertainty or how effectively they can function daily (Wade et al., 2022). A person's mental and physical health may suffer as a result of emotional difficulties.

In the review of the Philippine mental health system, it was found that 16% of children had mental disorders, placing mental health conditions as the third most prevalent form of morbidity among Filipinos, according to the National Statistics Office (NSO) (Malolos et al., 2021). Additionally, in the study conducted by Martinez (2020), in the Philippines, mental illness ranks third in terms of the prevalence of disability.

Muniz et al. (2022) stated that a major mental health condition has symptoms that are seen in many college students. Anxiety and depression are prevalent mental health issues among students. Students in college frequently suffer from both emotional and mental health difficulties. This can be a result of how challenging their college experience has been for them.

But according to Narvaes' research from 2019, understanding our emotions and how we display them can be improved by utilizing a certain collection of dance-related elements. Dancing fosters a sense of community in situations where people might otherwise feel alone in addition to encouraging the release of feel-good neurotransmitters like endorphins and serotonin. Dancing therapy also includes a cognitive component for emotional rehabilitation.

### *Dance: An Overview*

Dance refers to the rhythmic movement of the body in a set area, usually to music, to express an idea or emotion, to let off steam, or to enjoy the movement itself (Mackrell, 2023). Dance is an expressive and aerobic form of exercise, a sort of art that is good for the spirit, body, and mind (Wargo, 2021). It is a form of discipline that deals with how the body moves, particularly in rhythm and music, and is viewed as a type of nonverbal communication that can be utilized to convey thoughts, feelings, or even a narrative (IvyPanda, 2023).

According to a study conducted by Harvard University (2023), dancing reduces stress, boosts serotonin levels, and helps your brain form new neural connections, particularly in areas involved in executive function, long-term memory, and spatial awareness. The physical movement and emotional expression that are emphasized in dancing help to lessen the symptoms of depression (Laguipo, 2023). Moreover, a mental vacation from the rest of your day is provided by dance (Danceworks, 2023).

### *Concept of Mental Health*

Mental health issues are not a sign of weakness; rather, they are only reactions to the things that are and have happened to us and those around us. For instance, we can experience "anxiety," which is a common feeling of tension, worry, and fear (Mental Health Foundation, 2022).

Peterson (2023) stated that our overall health is fundamentally impacted by our mental well-being. Society frequently views health as being biological and physical: our bodies' state, our eating habits, and our level of physical activity.

Positive mental health is referred to as mental well-being. It entails experiencing joy, fulfillment, and contentment in one's life, as well as a sense of direction and significance. There are many ways to promote mental well-being, including by taking care of yourself,

participating in worthwhile activities, and getting help when you need it.

In general, mental well-being refers to the capacity to thrive despite ups and downs in a variety of spheres of life, including relationships, employment, play, and more. It's the conviction that we can solve our difficulties and the knowledge that we are not our problems (Peterson, 2023).

### ***Concept of Psychological Well-Being***

Ryff applied a philosophical and psychological perspective to define psychological well-being through six dimensions that include autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose of life, self-acceptance, and positive relationships with others (Sha et al. 2020).

Autonomy means independence and self-determination; the capacity to withstand social influences to think and act in particular ways; the capacity to control conducts internally; and the capacity to judge oneself in accordance with personal standards (Celestine, 2021). The ability to manage oneself and take decisions based on one's own principles, beliefs, and preferences are characteristics of autonomy (Collins Dictionary, 2023). According to Ryan (2023), if you are an autonomous individual, you have the freedom to make your own decisions, often regardless of any particular moral implications. When people are autonomous, others perceive their behavior as self-organized, self-approved, and entirely voluntary and sincere. Autonomous groupings of individuals are self-governing in the collective sense. They are able to make choices and live their lives in accordance with their real ideas and goals. People are more likely to have higher levels of control, authenticity, motivation, and emotional regulation when they feel a sense of autonomy, which improves their psychological wellbeing and overall life satisfaction (Charry, 2020). They are free to decide for themselves without interference from outside parties (Sanders, 2021).

### ***Benefits of Dancing***

The art of dancing has several advantages, which are typically divided into two categories of wellness: emotional and mental. The objective of this study was also to break out the numerous mental advantages of dance while allowing the emotional benefits to exist in their realm. A quicker way to boost mental wellness is through dancing. Our culture has long included dancing in both traditional rites and celebratory events. People from all walks of life find dancing quite appealing. Dancing is associated with good physical health, but the majority of individuals are unaware that dancing can have an impact on their mental health too. Dance has countless health advantages for the body, but it can also be good for the mind. These advantages extend beyond lowering anxiety and despair. Dance is a fantastic sport for enhancing cognitive and interpersonal abilities as well as confidence (Elite Studio, 2019).

Moreover, Kapoor (2022) identified 11 major benefits of dance. First, it improves your mood; your body releases happy chemicals when you dance to the beat of the music, which lifts your spirits. Second, reduce stiffness and pain. We cannot all dispute the reality that movement makes our bodies flexible. These motions ease the body's rigidity and also aid in the reduction of chronic pain or disease. Third, boost muscle strength and aerobic power. When the body moves to the music, it helps to build the body's muscles and aerobic capacity. Aerobic dancing also improves our physical and mental wellness. Fourth, dance therapy keeps the mind sharp; your memory is improved, and your memory and creativity are sharpened through dance therapy. Fifth, it improves breathing rate; breathing problems are lessened as we modify our dance moves to the beats of the music. Sixth, dance reduces stress. As mentioned above, happy hormones are released during a dance, which also aids in stress reduction. As a result, the body becomes upbeat and serene, and the mood is improved. Seventh, social bonding through dance strengthens relationships with loved ones, family members, and friends for people who suffer from social anxiety, ADHD, OCD, and other mental health conditions. Eighth, dance therapy improves brain functioning; it focuses on bodily movement and emotional expression, which helps to lessen depression symptoms. Ninth, dancing therapy reduces the chances of neurological disorders. According to scientific evidence, dancing therapy enhances brain connectivity and chemical communication that aids in the stabilization of mental health. Next, dance reduces dizziness, and you stay motivated and fresh through dance. Lastly, it increases confidence and self-esteem and aids those who struggle with social anxiety in getting over their worries and fears.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

To gain an in-depth understanding of the topic, a quasi-experimental design, specifically the one-group pretest-posttest research design, was used in this study. This research design is characterized by two features. The first feature is the use of a single group of participants (i.e., a one-group design). This characteristic indicates that all participants are part of a single condition and receive the same treatments and evaluations. A linear ordering with a pretest-posttest design is the second feature, which calls for evaluating a dependent variable both before and after a treatment is applied (Cranmer, 2023).

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were the selected Bachelor of Physical Education and Bachelor of Science in Information Technology students enrolled at Kabankalan Catholic College for the academic year 2022-2023, from a specific age, group, and year level, particularly those who answered Ryff's Scale of Psychological Well-Being.

## Instruments

The data-gathering instrument for this study is composed of two parts.

Part I collects the profiles of the participants. This includes his or her name, course, and current academic level.

Part II consists of questions that are aligned to measure the participant's psychological well-being. This study used Ryff's Scale of Psychological Well-Being to identify those who require additional evaluation for anxiety and depression.

## Procedure

In gathering data, the following procedures are observed:

First, the researchers request permission from the school dean to conduct the study through a letter.

Second, a letter of permission was addressed to the registrar to get a summary of the Bachelor of Physical Education and Bachelor of Science in Information Technology students.

Third, the researchers gave a pre-test using Ryff's Scale of Psychological Well-Being to measure students' psychological well-being across multiple dimensions. This would help the researchers determine the number of participants after conducting the study.

Next, the researchers conducted three dance sessions as an intervention for the selected participants. Sessions 1, 2, and 3 include contemporary, pop dance, and samba, respectively. Each dance session lasted at least an hour.

After 3 weeks of giving dance sessions to the participants, the researchers then gave a post-test using the same researcher instrument.

After conducting the study, due to its confidentiality, the researchers informed the participants that it was for research purposes only and that their answers would not be disclosed to anyone.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the level of psychological well-being of the participants before the intervention. The table reveals that both BSIT and BPED students have average well-being, with an overall mean of 3.75 and 4.28, respectively. Moreover, when grouped according to each subscale, the table reveals that the BPED participants had the highest mean of 4.44 for the self-acceptance subscale, interpreted as "high well-being," and the lowest mean of 3.72 for the environmental mastery subscale, interpreted as "average well-being."

Moreover, the table also reveals that the BSIT had the highest mean of 3.97 for the personal growth subscale, interpreted as "average well-being," and the lowest mean of 3.22 on the environmental mastery subscale, interpreted as "average well-being."

This implies that they feel reasonably good about their lives, even though they are struggling academically. The result of the study contradicts the findings of Barbayannis (2022), wherein college students' mental health may be impacted by a variety of stress factors, but academic stress may be the most significant one.

Table 1. Level of Psychological Well-Being of BPED and BSIT students in each of the subscales and as a whole before the intervention

Indicators	BPED Mean	VI	BSIT Mean	VI
Autonomy	4.09	AW	3.22	LW
Environmental Mastery	3.72	AW	3.22	LW
Personal Growth	4.40	AW	3.97	AW
Positive Relations with others	4.30	AW	3.88	AW
Purpose in Life	4.15	AW	3.78	AW
Self Acceptance	4.44	HW	3.69	AW
Overall	4.18	AW	3.75	AW

Verbal Interpretation (VI); Extremely low wellbeing (ELW); very low wellbeing (VLW); Low wellbeing (LW); Average wellbeing (AW); High well-being (HW); Very high well-being (VHW); Extremely high wellbeing (EHW)

Table 2 shows the level of psychological well-being of the participants after the intervention. The table reveals that both BSIT and BPED students have average well-being, with an overall mean of 4.02 and 4.36, respectively. Moreover, when grouped according to each subscale, the table reveals that the BPED participants had the highest mean of 4.65 for the self-acceptance subscale, interpreted as "high well-being," and the lowest mean of 4.17 for the autonomy subscale, interpreted as "average well-being." In addition, the table also reveals that the BSIT had the highest mean of 4.24 for positive relations with other subscales interpreted as "average well-being" and the lowest mean of 3.89 on the purpose in life subscale interpreted as "average well-being."

Statistically speaking, there is a slight increase when it comes to the result after the intervention when taken as a whole. This implies that, as a whole, the intervention given doesn't have a direct effect on college students' psychological well-being.



Table 2. *Level of Psychological Well-Being of BPED and BSIT students in each of the subscales and as a whole after the intervention*

Indicators	BPED Mean	VI	BSIT Mean	VI
Autonomy	4.17	AW	4.04	AW
Environmental Mastery	4.20	AW	4.04	AW
Personal Growth	4.33	AW	3.96	AW
Positive Relations with others	4.43	AW	4.24	AW
Purpose in Life	4.41	AW	3.89	AW
Self Acceptance	4.36	AW	4.02	AW
Overall	4.36	AW	4.02	AW

*Verbal Interpretation (VI); Extremely low wellbeing (ELW); very low wellbeing (VLW); Low wellbeing (LW); Average wellbeing (AW); High well-being (HW); Very high well-being (VHW); Extremely high wellbeing (EHW)*

Table 3 shows the difference analysis in the psychological well-being of BPED and BSIT students before and after the intervention. At the 0.05 level of significance, the result shows that there is no significant difference in the psychological well-being of BPED students ( $p$ -value = 0.280,  $z$  = -1.080), before (mean = 4.18), and after the intervention (mean = 4.36), since the results of their post-test are higher than their pre-test. This implies that the intervention given does not affect the level of psychological well-being of the BPED students. As BPED students pursuing physical education, they are likely already engaged in regular physical activities, including dancing, as part of their curriculum or extracurricular activities. Therefore, the intervention may not have introduced any new or distinctive elements that would lead to a noticeable change in their psychological well-being. The findings are in opposition to the findings of a study by Tao et al. (2022), which showed that dancing showed improvements in every characteristic linked to detrimental mental health issues. Moreover, the result also shows that there is a significant difference in the psychological well-being of BSIT students ( $p$ -value = 0.005,  $z$  = -2.840), before (mean = 3.75), and after the intervention (mean = 4.02), since the results of their post-test are higher than their pre-test. This implies that engaging in dancing can have a positive impact on the psychological well-being of BSIT students. It is evident that their curriculum, primarily centered around programming and computer-related tasks, offers limited exposure to physical activities, including dancing. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating dance into the lives of BSIT students, promoting a balanced and healthy approach to their academic journey and personal growth. In a recent study, Smith et al. (2022) examined the effects of dancing on the psychological well-being of BSIT students' physical activity. The findings indicate that dancing can be a useful tool for enhancing BSIT students' psychological well-being because it provides a platform for social interaction, which can lessen feelings of isolation and loneliness, especially for those students who may spend a lot of time studying alone.

Table 3. *Difference Analysis on the Psychological Well-Being of BPED and BSIT students before and after the intervention*

Group	Mean	Z-value	p-value	Conclusion
BPED	Pretest=4.18; Posttest=4.36	-1.080	0.280	Not Sig.
BSIT	Pretest=3.75; Posttest=4.02	-2.840	0.005	Sig.

*Not Sig. if p-value is greater than 0.05; sig. and highly sig. if p-value is less than 0.05 and 0.01, respectively.*

## Conclusion

Based on the findings stated herein, the researchers have reached the following conclusions: The data gathered before and after the intervention of BSIT and BPED students as a whole were closely similar. However, when grouped according to six subscales, it shows that there is an increase in autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, and a slight decrease in the personal growth subscale. Most of the subscales have significantly increased after the dance intervention, which suggests that numerous aspects of participants' wellbeing have improved. The findings indicate that using dancing as a therapeutic intervention can have significant positive effects and improve one's general mental, emotional, and physical health. The results show that dancing has the potential to be an effective instrument for holistic wellbeing and personal development.

Furthermore, though both participants have average well-being, when taken as a whole, the findings show that the intervention was more effective with BSIT students than BPED students.

In particular, studies have shown that dancing has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of BSIT students. It shows that the unique combination of physical activity, social connection, and creative expression offered by dancing improves their psychological well-being. However, certain interventions do not have any significant effects on the psychological well-being of BPED students. These findings suggest that dancing may not provide BPED students with any additional psychological advantages over what they can already obtain from other forms of physical activity. The fact that dancing may still be enjoyed for its own sake and is a beneficial form of exercise should not be overlooked.

As a result, the instructor must engage the BSIT student in different dance activities, even though they spend most of their time on screens, to improve their psychological well-being. In terms of BPED students, they must engage in some high-level physical activities since dancing isn't new to them anymore given the fact that they are pursuing physical education.

Given the aforementioned findings and conclusions, recommendations were made. For BSIT students, the teacher should engage them

in any form of physical activity. One way to do this is to incorporate dance breaks into lessons or suggest dancing as a way to unwind after a demanding study day. By doing so, students' mental health can be improved, they can learn to manage stress, and they can discover new methods to practice self-care through encouraging involvement in and information about dance. Moreover, the inclusion of movement- or dance-based activities in the BSIT curriculum must be encouraged. The advantages of including such activities in terms of stress relief, increased creativity, improved focus, and general wellbeing should be highlighted. Offer specialized modules, workshops, or electives that concentrate on the fusion of dance and technology. By putting these suggestions into practice, it may contribute to the creation of a welcoming environment where BSIT students can learn about the advantages of dance and promote their psychological wellbeing.

For BPED students, although the given remedy has no particular psychological advantages, this can still be improved by engaging them in different sets of physical activities beyond their limits since dancing is known to be so familiar to them as a student pursuing physical education. Promoting involvement in extracurricular activities is still crucial. Sports, the arts, music, and other forms of physical activity are just a few of the alternatives available to students. These pursuits can offer chances for social engagement, personal development, and general wellbeing. By putting these suggestions into practice, they can encourage dance's positive impacts on their students' psychological well-being and foster a more vibrant and healthy campus community.

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