



Research Article

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Exploring Self-Compassion among Recreational Dancers: Differences Between Tango and Ballet - Dance Teaching Implications Through Somatic and Embodied Disciplines

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Abstract

Self-compassion is considered a protective factor that promotes positive psychology, happiness, emotional regulation and embodiment. Self-compassion offers an approach wherein individuals in dance can pursue optimal participation and performance without compromising health and well-being. The present study aimed to explore self-compassion among recreational dancers and discover possible differences between tango and ballet. More specifically the study examined: i) the levels of self-compassion in recreational tango and ballet dancers; ii) differences in self-compassion according to demographic characteristics; and iii) differences between tango and ballet dancers. The research was based on several adults from various cities in Greece who participated in tango and ballet for recreational reasons during their leisure time. One hundred and ninety-one dancers (20 men and 171 women), between the ages of 17 and 62, completed the self-compassion scale of Mantzios, Wilson and Giannou (2015), which consists of twenty-six items. The answers were given on a five-point Likert scale, while the reliability of the scale was successfully tested. In addition, the questionnaire contained the collection of other data such as demographic characteristics. According to the first aim, the high scores on self-compassion among recreational dancers showed a relationship between self-compassion and dance, and a positive influence of ballet and tango practice. The second hypothesis was partially confirmed as statistically significant differences emerged only between the age groups with those over forty years of age to show higher levels of self-compassion. Regarding the third aim of the research, differences were found between types of dance. Tango participants showed higher levels of self-compassion than ballet participants. Specific dance teaching interventions are discussed based on somatic and embodiment theory, to create healthier mental, emotional and behavioral patterns for dancers, schools, academies or companies.

Keywords: Dance education, leisure, recreation, mind-body, positive psychology, wellbeing, health, physical activity, motor learning

1. Introduction

Self-compassion is a concept that has received much attention recently, because it is strongly associated with mental well-being (Kotera, Green, & Sheffield, 2022). Self-compassion is defined as kindness, a sense of common humanity, and awareness toward oneself when confronted with a perceived feeling of inadequacy, suffering, failure or pain (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007). It is not based on self-evaluation but on the idea of self-acceptance, and it provides a path to a positive relationship with oneself by strengthening one's psychology (Neff, 2003a; 2003b). Self-compassion is just as important as compassion. The concept of compassion can be continued to oneself when suffering or pain comes through no fault of one's own, when the external circumstances of life are simply unmanageable (Neff, 2009). In self-compassion, the suffering comes from our own mistakes, failures or personal inadequacies (Neff, 2003a).

The practice of self-compassion requires conscious understanding of emotions, wherein pain or suffering are massed under a sense of awareness, forgiveness, common connection to humanity and self-kindness (Coaston, 2017; Neff, 2003). Most research has been conducted by using the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003a), a multidimensional measure system that includes six subscales: a) the three subscales of self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness delineating compassionate self-response and b) another three subscales of self-judgment, isolation and over-identification delineating uncompassionate self-response (Neff, 2022).

Previous research has indicated several differences regarding self-compassion and socio-demographic characteristics. Men have been found to exhibit higher overall self-compassion than women (Yarnell et al., 2015; Wu, Schroevers, & Zhu, 2021). However, more recent studies have demonstrated no gender differences in self-compassion measures, including the overall self-compassion score (Murn, & Steele, 2019). Women appear to be more critical of their bodies, their appearance and their mistakes than men. Differences have also been observed according to age: people over 35 years old are more likely to report a high self-compassion profile (Souza, & Hutz, 2016; Wu, Schroevers, & Zhu, 2021). In contrast, other research has found no differences according to age (Neff, & Pommier, 2013). Finally, people with lower educational status present profiles of more compassion toward themselves (Lopez et al., 2018; Stellar et al., 2012).

Self-compassion is a particularly important component of positive mental states in physical education, sports and dance (Mosewich, 2020; Zafeiroudi, & Kouthouris, 2022). It can facilitate athletes' ability to properly manage the demands that they face, thus enhancing their performance and promoting their well-being. In general, physical movement and activity have been recognized to be associated with physical health, mental health and quality of life (Giménez-Meseguer, Tortosa-Martinez, & Cortell-Tormo, 2020; Kouthouris et al., 2021). Dance is a physical activity that is an important part of the field of physical education and contributes to strengthening physical condition (Fong Yan et al., 2018), psychological health (Liu et al., 2022) and spiritual health (Millman et al., 2021).

1.1 Dance, Somatics and Self-compassion

Topics concerning positive psychology and mental health issues in dance are increasingly reported in the global literature, with an emphasis on the consequences and effects on well-being. Dance, in light of somatic education theory, has been associated with mind-body practices and disciplines (Mullan, 2014; Zafeiroudi, 2021; Zafeiroudi, & Kouthouris, 2022). Somatic or embodied approaches engage the relationships among the mind, body, brain and behavior through the sensations of the body. They concern all psychological mechanisms formed by the body, along with sensory systems, motor systems and emotions (Glenberg, 2010). Experiential knowledge involves perceptions, senses, and mind-body actions and reactions (Green, 2002; Kerka, 2002). Mind-body practices help in regulating imbalances, irritation and discomfort, thereby improving psychological and mental state (Bhuiyan et al., 2022; Zafeiroudi, & Kouthouris, 2022). Recreational dance as a form of physical exercise is gaining

ground and became more popular because it has been found to enhance many brain functions; decrease stress and depression; and increase self-awareness, self-esteem and self-efficacy, thus contributing to health, life satisfaction and well-being (Vecchi et al., 2022).

Self-compassion is an emerging concept in exercise psychology, with important research findings and practical applications concerning well-being. It is considered a protective factor that promotes positive embodiment, happiness, and regulation of emotions associated with shame and self-criticism (Burychka, Miragali, & Banos, 2021). In addition, positive embodiment promotes constructive connection with the body, through accepting it without judgment. In dance, self-compassion is an approach to help avoid or mitigate negative cognitive, emotional or behaviors (Tarasoff, Ferguson, & Kowalski, 2017). It also seeks to complement existing efforts to address and manage evaluation and excessive self-criticism, address body image and technical demands, and support the achievement of one's potential.

In the field of dance, many reasons exist for the increase in negative mental states such as stress (Karreman, Keizer-Hulsebosch, & Stubbe, 2019). Numerous components of the dance field, such as dance clothing (tight leotards) and mirrors, can cause negative perceptions and feelings about one's body or technique, which can easily convert to negative feelings such as anxiety and distress (Cassady, Clarke, & Latham, 2004; Price, & Pettijohn, 2006; Radell, 2011; Tarasoff, Ferguson, & Kowalski, 2017). The persistent evaluation of dance technique reinforces the spotlight on dancers' bodies providing negative self-evaluation and feelings (Cassady, Clarke, & Latham, 2004).

Mirrors are an indispensable educational tools in the dance environment. They help dancers to watch their bodies from the outside and allow them to compare themselves to other dancers (Radell et al., 2020; Tarasoff, Ferguson, & Kowalski, 2017). All these aspects may increase awareness of the body itself but simultaneously may increase body image concerns and anxiety (Tarasoff, Ferguson, & Kowalski, 2017). Dance attire can also affect dancers' perceptions of their bodies. In ballet, for example, dancers who wear tight clothing report lower body satisfaction, more negative feelings toward their bodies and greater social anxiety than dancers who wear loose clothing (Price, & Pettijohn, 2006; Tarasoff, Ferguson, & Kowalski, 2017).

Beyond research findings regarding mirrors and dance attire, dancers are consistently judged about their technique, body image and body control during dance lessons by themselves, teachers, instructors and classmates. All these aspects produce internal pressure which can lead to negative self-evaluation and emotions (Mosewich, 2020; Price, & Pettijohn, 2006; Tarasoff, Ferguson, & Kowalski, 2017). Thus, the exploration of self-compassion may be an important factor helping dancers cope with all dance experiences, particularly when they are beginners.

In summary, self-compassion has been explored in contexts of sport and exercise (Berry et al., 2010; Ferguson et al., 2015; Ingstrup, Mosewich, & Holt, 2017; Mosewich et al., 2013; 2019; Reis et al., 2015) and dance (Tarasoff, Ferguson, & Kowalski, 2017). Significant findings have been described regarding enhancing dancers' positive psychology and helping them continue to engage in the specific physical activity and avoid dropout. The threat of negative evaluation can deter individuals from participating in dance in the first place, just as it can deter individuals from participating in various forms of exercise (Raedeke, Focht, & Scales, 2007).

In the dance environment, most prior research has studied ballet with references to modern dance; almost no research concerns tango. However, tango has been shown to be a physical activity that is relatively greater freedom from costume and technical requirements, involves more interaction with partners, and promotes health and well-being (D' Errico et al., 2014; Toyoda, 2012; Witko's, & Hartman-Petrycka, 2021). In contrast, ballet is a more difficult form of activity with more physical and technical demands, and participants show more frequent negative self-criticism and emotions including concerns about body image, and psychological stress due to instructors' corrections and injuries (Chatzipanteli, 2016; Keizer-Hulsebosch, & Stubbe, 2019).

The purpose of the present study was to investigate self-compassion in recreational dancers and to examine differences between two specific types of dance: ballet and tango. More specifically, this research examined first the level of self-compassion in recreational dancers and second assessed

differences: a) according to dancers' demographic characteristics and b) between tango and ballet dancers.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

The study enrolled 191 dancers, of whom 89.5% were women and 10.5% were men. Slightly more than half of the participants were single (68.6%), 41.3% held a bachelor's degree, and 22% held a postgraduate degree. Most were employees in the private or public sectors (65.7%), 17.4% were unemployed or housekeepers, and 16.9% were self-employed; 55.9% earned above average annual incomes. Among the participants, 11% had been attending dance practice for less than 2 years, 16.8% had been attending for 3–5 years, and 72.3% had been attending for more than 6 years. The participants filled out a questionnaire that included the SCS, according to their dance experience and demographic characteristics, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of participants

Variables	n	%	Variables	n	%	Variables	n	%
Gender			Age			Dance years		
Female	171	89.5	30–39	58	30.4	3–5 years	32	16.8
Male	20	10.5	18–29	82	42.9	< 2 years	21	11
Family status			40–49	31	16.2	>6 years	138	72.3
Married	60	31.4	>50	20	10.5	Education		
Single	131	68.6	Dance type			Secondary	25	13.1
Income			Ballet	126	66	Students	45	23.6
Low	84	44.1	Tango	65	34	Higher	79	41.3
Medium-high	107	55.9				Master	42	22

2.2 Instrumentation

Participants completed the Greek version of the SCS (Neff, 2003; Mantzios, Wilson, & Giannou, 2015) which includes twenty-six items measuring individuals' self-compassion. The SCS consists of the following subscales: 1) self-kindness includes five items (e.g., "I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering."), 2) self-judgment includes five items (e.g., "When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself."), 3) common humanity includes four items (e.g., "When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people."), 4) isolation includes four items (e.g., "When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure"), 5) mindfulness includes four items (e.g., "When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.") and 6) over-identification includes four items (e.g., "When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong."). Answers were given on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Psychometric evaluation has been displayed to be reliable and valid in the Greek population (Mantzios, Wilson, & Giannou, 2015). The scale had a successful Cronbach alpha coefficient of .91. The present study also merged the twenty-six items into a single variable representing total self-compassion. Higher average total scores reflected greater self-compassion.

2.3 Procedure

Participants came from dance studios and schools in Greece, from different cities, including Athens, Thessaloniki, Trikala, Larissa and Patra. Participants came from classes taught by experienced

certified instructors in classical and tango dance. Participants were selected according to the criteria below: i) dance participation for at least 1 year in personal and group practices and ii) no regular involvement in other sports, or other mind-body programs or positive psychology sessions during the research period. Dancers who did not comply with the above criteria were not included. The research was carried out in the 2021–22 academic period. Participants anonymously completed a written questionnaire under the attendance of the researchers in the dance school/studio after the end of the practice.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive statistics and baseline differences

Means and standard deviations for the study variable were examined. The skewness and kurtosis for the scale were 0.104 and -0.537, respectively; therefore, the data obtained were considered normally distributed. The three highest scores in the SCS were expressed by item 4 (“When I think about my shortcomings, I feel cut off from the rest of the world”; $M=4.05$ and $SD=1.18$), item 11 (“I do not tolerate, nor do I have patience with aspects of my personality that I do not like”; $M=3.92$ and $SD=0.99$) and item 13 (“When I feel sad, I also feel like most people are probably happier than me”; $M=3.67$ and $SD=1.29$). The three lower scores in the SCS expressed by item 8 (“When I’m going through hard times, I get hard on myself”; $M=2.84$ and $SD=1.23$), item 20 (“When something upsets me, I get carried away by my emotions”; $M=2.65$ and $SD=1.11$) and item 10 (“When I feel inadequate for some reason, I think that most people have feelings of inadequacy”; $M=2.33$ and $SD=1.21$). Notably, the SCS, as a total of the twenty-six items, had a middle score ($M=3.25$ and $SD=0.625$).

3.2 Self-compassion scale and dancers’ demographic characteristics

Regarding the second aim of the study, investigating differences in dancers’ self-compassion according to demographic characteristics, we observed statistically significant differences only between the different age sub-groups ($F_{(3,192)} = 5.35$, $p < 0.001$). Specifically, dancers 17–29 years of age scored lowest ($M=3.31$, $SD=.52$); dancers 30–39 years of age had higher scores ($M=3.40$, $SD=.63$), followed by those 40–49 years of age ($M=3.46$, $SD=.60$), and the highest scores were recorded for the group >50 years of age ($M=3.49$, $SD=.73$). Statistically significant differences were observed between all age groups. No statistically significant differences were found in other demographic characteristics, such as gender, marital status and education level.

Finally, the results confirmed the third aim. T-test analysis for independent samples of classical dancers and tango dancers revealed statistically significant differences in self-compassion ($t=-3.49$, $p < 0.001$). Tango dancers had higher scores ($M=3.47$, $SD=.62$) than classical dancers ($M=3.14$, $SD=.60$).

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to explore self-compassion among recreational dancers and discover possible differences between tango and ballet. The research was based on several adults who participated in tango and ballet for recreational reasons during their leisure time. More specifically the study examined: i) the levels of self-compassion in recreational tango and ballet dancers; ii) differences in self-compassion according to demographic characteristics; and iii) differences between tango and ballet dancers.

This study is unique in that it examined recreational rather than professional dancers, including both men and women. The reasons for gaining this information were: i) to offer updated narratives with respect to the somewhat outdated previous literature about self-compassion and dance; ii) to provide new information and compare different types of recreational dance according to the main characteristics and requirements of each dance type; and iii) to suggest specific teaching

interventions based on somatic and embodiment theory, to create healthier mental, emotional and behavioral patterns for dancers, schools, academies or companies.

Using the SCS, we observed no distinct constructs between positive and negative components of self-compassion. Previous research has considered self-compassion as a single factor using a total score to indicate an overall measure of self-compassion (Muris, et al., 2021; Neff et al., 2018). According to Neff and colleagues (2018), the separation of positive and negative components does not inflate the differences between self-compassion and well-being but instead helps explain the links between them.

The findings confirmed most of our initial hypotheses. According to the first aim, the high scores on self-compassion among recreational dancers showed a relationship between self-compassion and dance, and a positive influence of ballet and tango practice. According to somatic education disciplines, dancers, through movement, tend to show enhanced awareness of bodily control and sensations (Zafeiroudi, & Kouthouris, 2022). Somatic approaches are based on sensorial experiences of cognitive and emotional processing. According to Haase and colleagues (2015), as the brain feels, the body creates contacts between the body and mind. This connection appears to be able to provide information about what does not work properly in the body and allows people to adapt to difficult situations by protecting themselves, thus supporting self-compassion.

Women were initially expected to present higher scores than men; however, no gender differences were found. The results are consistent with previous research (Murn, & Steele, 2019). However, in this case, the numbers of men and women were highly disproportionate, and the entire sample might have been too small to highlight differences. Regarding educational level, those over 40 years of age showed higher levels of self-compassion, in agreement with previous research (Souza, & Hutz, 2016; Wu, Schroevers, & Zhu, 2021). Researchers have justified the results by citing the possibility that people over age 30 face simultaneous challenges as well as favorable past experiences that may aid in developing self-compassion and coping with failures, suffering and flaws (Souza, & Hutz, 2016). Regarding marital status, no differences were found, in agreement with previous research indicating that marital status does not appear to influence self-compassion, although previous research has positively linked family satisfaction and self-compassion (Fahimdanesh, Noferesti & Tavakol, 2020). More research is needed at this level regarding marital status, educational level, gender and age, perhaps with larger samples of participants. Most previous research on self-compassion has addressed professional sports and dance, focusing on elite male and female athletes and dancers, rather than on recreational activities and sports (Fontana, Fry, & Cramer, 2017). However, the present results did not show significant differences with respect to prior research.

Regarding the third aim of the research, differences were found between types of dance. Tango participants showed higher levels of self-compassion than ballet participants. The results confirmed the original hypothesis that ballet dancers would have a profile of lower self-compassion, according to previous research (Tarasoff, Ferguson, & Kowalski, 2017). However, differences were initially expected because this study examined recreational dancing and not professional dancing. Ballet maintains rigid and rigorous teaching in both recreational and professional dance. Ballet is linked to goals of technical and artistic perfection through social media, and of transcending anatomical limitations (e.g., turnout, pointe work), thus leading to physical and mental dysfunction (Karreman, Keizer-Hulsebosch, & Stubbe, 2019). The goal of technical perfection appears to have affected the minds of students as well as the teaching methods of instructors, as expected, given that most dance instructors have gone through difficult certification procedures with high requirements to be able to teach. Even in recreational ballet, participants experience substantial fear of failure, stress and anxiety over whether they will be able to cope with the technical demands, and the mirrors and tight clothing prescribed by the instructors even for recreational ballet classes. Finally, the portrayal of professional dancers' perfect bodies in social media and networks appear to be a factor of comparison leading to negative self-criticism when recreational participants watch themselves in the mirror in dance environments.

In contrast, according to researchers (Toyoda, 2012; Witko's, & Hartman-Petrycka, 2021), tango is a freer dance without special technical and costume restrictions, in which mirrors play a very small role in the dance environment. Tango has two main characteristics. First, it is one of the few dances that is danced

as a couple in an embrace: the man and the woman face each other, and the man holds the woman's right hand in his left hand and places his right hand around her. The second element of tango is the freedom of improvisation. Tango is a partnership between two people: the man leads with his body, and the woman follows. According to D' Errico et al. (2014) and Pinniger et al. 2012 through the body and the process of movement, the participants explore themselves, learn new things about themselves and arouse feelings. The body speaks through the steps about fears, passions, dreams, ambitions and anger in a journey of self-discovery and development. Emotions, thoughts and weaknesses are expressed through movement and not verbally. There is a correlation between physical and emotional states. Furthermore, experiencing an emotion corresponds to perceiving a change in one's bodily state. Communication between partners, as well as caring for each other, in tango appears to develop compassion. In addition, the development of concentration, inner awareness, and the acquisition of greater familiarity with the body and the self strengthen feelings of self-belief, self-esteem and trust in oneself, and mitigate self-criticism and feelings of shame, particularly through the freedom of improvisation, thus helping dancers develop self-compassion (D' Errico et al., 2014).

In the present research, we attempted to limit other factors potentially affecting the variable of self-compassion in the study. The participants were recruited from different dance schools and studios in Greece. They had practiced ballet or tango continually for 1 year and were committed to the practice, and did not regularly participate in other physical activities or positive psychology programs. The classes were selected not to be for professionals. The most difficult part of the study was recruiting tango dancers. From our experience in collecting the questionnaires, the recreational ballet classes were more crowded than the tango classes. In addition, many of the tango dancers did not participate in the research, because they participated in other mind-body and positive psychology activities, or because some of them refused to participate in the research.

The findings of the present study should be interpreted in the context of several limitations. First, the study was conducted among a sample of Greek participants. Therefore, our findings cannot be generalized to a much broader general population or people from other cultural backgrounds. More research is needed to reproduce the present results in different samples. Future research, with the use of more objective measures while simultaneously exploring more factors that may be associated with and influence self-compassion are needed to replicate the present findings.

5. Dance Teaching Implications through Embodiment Approach

Somatic and embodied practices use the body as an apparatus for learning through sensory, motor awareness, mindfulness, self-regulation creating self- knowing, self-acceptance and self-healing. These practices involve interaction of the body, thoughts and actions. The embodied exploration of self-compassion can lead to development of greater knowledge and respect for the body and self-care needs. Somatic and embodied disciplines can improve the relationship with the body, because dancers are able to listen to and experience their physical responses through movement while also providing empathy, compassion, comfort and support (Gomes, Cochet, & Guyon, 2021).

Through the use of, and concentration on, breathing, awareness can be increased in the body by recognizing any tensions in various parts of the body each time, starting with efforts to soothe and comfort tense areas. Inhaling and exhaling allows dancers to release tension, and let go of feelings and thoughts. The increased awareness of the body makes dancers be present and face the difficult emotions that arise from moments of fatigue and suffering. The feelings of fear, pain and tension should first be perceived in the body in order for dancers to respond. Body awareness makes dancers want to invite comfort and support through self-soothing and self-regulating techniques. Dance instructors and teachers could use compassionate verbal instructions or encourage students to use compassionate words by themselves.

Students can begin dance by focusing on one body part, exploring its full potential with lessons that focus on free movement rather than technique. Thus, dancers begin to realize how their bodies can move and understand the support required. The basic modes of movement such as walking,

standing, sitting or lying on the floor, are approached with the aim of focusing on the experience and what the dancers feel—rather than how they look or how well they can perform a movement—to reconnect with the body. In this way, guidance and expression of the body can be explored safely. The aim is for dancers to get to know their bodies, to be friends with their bodies, and to strengthen feelings of self-compassion instead of distancing and self-criticism. Dancers can learn a lot from their bodies if they take the time to get to know them. Students must journey deep within themselves to create contemplation and to be able to explore within themselves.

A lot of techniques can promote awareness of the body in dance space (Chatzipanteli et al., 2021). The dancer needs to pay attention to the sensation and notice how the body feels through different rhythms, the instrumental use of each limb and body. It can also be incorporated breathing techniques teaching dancers how to handle their emotions. Focusing on breathing slowly can help reduce stress or anxiety by allowing the dancer a moment to stop, lower muscle tone, reconnect with mind, refocus to self and find emotional balance. Furthermore, improvisation using particular body parts, massage of the body including squeezing, brushing and rubbing, and the use of a repetitive sequence of spine mobilization help to increase muscle sensation and body awareness in dance class.

The use of multiple repetitions is an important method in dance teaching. Incorporating more breaks during classes gives dancers time to pause and rest physically and mentally and regain mind-body communication if it has been lost due to fatigue. Furthermore, particularly for beginners, slow movement provides an opportunity not to get tired, and to reconnect with the body sense enhancing possibilities for self-discovery and more dance enjoyment. The experience of feeling the sense of joy in movement can also boost an embodied self-awareness of basic dance skills like centering, stability, accuracy, flexibility, agility and strength. Dance instructors and teachers can encourage students to actively observe their bodies during slow motion in order to feel them giving more confidence in moving.

Dance instructors and teachers can incorporate improvisational technical skill building exercises into their lessons. Improvisational experiences enhance students' ability to adapt, solve problems and collaborate. Improvisation enhances the possibilities of artistic expression and connection with more experienced students. In improvisation, students can be encouraged to observe themselves and externalize through movement what they are thinking and feeling. Encouraging dancers to explore more forms and dance qualities; to observe how they think and feel; and to learn to label their emotional stages is also important. Regarding the use of patterns in classes, participants can be divided into groups or work all together in a circle. The group and circle promote a sense of unity, and students can feel themselves becoming one, thus reinforcing the understanding that we are all connected as part of the world and share common experiences. A sense of self is also developed through both differentiation and connection with the surrounding world.

Structured guidance, simple vocabulary that is easy to follow, and an avoidance of complicated dance definitions also contribute to a sense of community. Students may not all have the same knowledge, but they can all be connected through body and movement. Encouragement regarding how the movement is, rather than how it looks, allows dance students to trust their choices, embrace diversity of movements and feel more confident with greater self-worth. Emphasis should be placed on rhythm, musicality and expressiveness by focusing the mind on sensations through the rhythm and music rather than on correct techniques. In this way, every movement can be adjusted to individuals' limits according to own abilities and needs.

Other somatic methods that are already used in sport education and can be applied to dance include the use of imagery and visualization; positive feedback and supported, progressive muscle relaxation techniques; and positive self-talk instead of over-identifying and judging oneself harshly. Through the above techniques, which can be incorporated into the dance process, students learn that dance is about connection and awareness, not fixity and perfection. Students should be given the time to explore themselves, to enhance the sense of discovery and creativity in feeling freedom from body shapes, techniques without fearing mistakes. Somatic and embodiment processes within dance build space to create a deeper sense of connection with others, the community and the dance practice, but above all with the self.

6. Conclusions

The present study contributes to the existing self-compassion and embodiment literature by supporting known associations and bringing to light new ones, and through the exploration of socio-demographics and dance style differences. The reviewed literature and findings revealed that recreational dance is correlated with factors that enhance positive psychology and wellbeing. The findings in this research promote new knowledge into psychological structures through exploration of the interconnection between recreational dance styles and self-compassion. Self-compassion offers an approach wherein individuals in ballet and tango can pursue optimal participation and performance without compromising health and well-being.

Self-compassion is an emerging concept in dance and sport psychology, with important research findings and practical applications. It is considered a protective factor that promotes positive psychology, happiness, emotional regulation and embodiment. Somatic and embodied approaches may receive substantial academic attention in various dancing curricula. As more dance instructors embrace somatic training in dancing, practitioners will continue to refine their body perceptions through movement, thus eventually developing various sensory capacities that prevent negative emotions and enable self-improvement.

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