

# The Effect Of Participation In A Contemporary Dance Performance, On The Development Of Dancer Identity In Young Adults.

Voutsas H.<sup>1</sup>, Pavlidou E.<sup>2</sup>, Pitsi A.<sup>3</sup>, Mavridou Z.<sup>4</sup>, Phillipou F.<sup>5</sup>, Voulgaridis G.<sup>6</sup>

*Department Of Physical Education And Sport Science, Democritus University Of Thrace, Komotini, Greece*

*Department Of Early Childhood Education, Aristotle University Of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece*

*Department Of Physical Education And Sport Science, Democritus University Of Thrace, Komotini, Greece*

*Department Of Physical Education And Sport Science, Democritus University Of Thrace, Komotini, Greece*

*Department Of Physical Education And Sport Science, Democritus University Of Thrace, Komotini, Greece*

*2<sup>Nd</sup> Junior High School Of Alexandroupolis, Alexandroupolis, Greece*

---

## **Abstract:**

**Background:** Dancer Identity is a relatively new construct that refers to the degree of ones' self- identification as a dancer (Swami&Harris,2012). It is connected with Body Image and through engagement with dance practices it is thought to have a significant effect in adopting the norms and tendencies of the corresponding group (dancers), affecting elements of identity as was suggested in the research of Langdon & Petracca (2010).

**Materials and Methods:** In this research study, 25 persons, aged 18-25 years took part in 12 2 hour contemporary dance sessions leading up to a performance. The participants were given a questionnaire before the initiation of the research and after its' conclusion, to measure the mean differences- between the start and end of the project- on the Dancer Identity Measurement Scale. Statistical analysis utilized descriptive and inferential statistics, to determine if the research project produced statistically significant differences on dancer identity development and if gender was a contributing factor.

**Results:** The results from the Repeated Measures Anova, detected an increase on the mean value of Dancer Identity Measurement scale after the research project with no statistically significant difference between the two genders, indicating the positive effect of contemporary dance performance on dancer identity.

**Conclusion:** A positive correlation was observed between participation in contemporary dance performance and dancer identity formation for both genders.

**Key Word:** Dancer Identity, Contemporary Dance, Dance Performance, Dance Participation

---

Date of Submission: 10-07-2025

Date of Acceptance: 20-07-2025

---

## I. Introduction

In the field of dance, we have observed a significant increase in scholarly research, over the past several decades, and a shift from historical recording of dances and performance critique to areas like performance methodology, dance anthropology and the social and psychological effects of participation in dance programs. Different scientific subject areas have evolved such as dance psychology, dance medicine and science and dance anthropology, which examine the art of dance through a combined practice of scholarly academia, recognizing the multifaceted way that dance participation can affect the totality of the human nature, from its' bodily functions, muscle development, agility and co-ordination, to identity formation, social interaction and overall wellbeing (Tao et al., 2024).

Taking into account that identity has been categorized as an intricate construct, and that identity formation doesn't stop in early deveoplment but it continuously evolves as the individual ages and the environments' influences on them change (Fadjukoff P., Pulkkinen L., & Kokko K. 2016), sport and other extra curricular activities like dance are considered to influende identity development and shape the formation of personality (Agaiby, 2021). Considering the very nature of the way that personality is formed through a combination of genetical features and outside influences, it is logical to diduce that within a persons' identity one can find many different identities, that co-exist and form the totalitty of the humans' attributes and behavioral patterns (McKenna, J., & Marks, A. 2018). One of the aspects of identity that this paper will focus on, is dancer identity, which is one of the constructs that has emerged in dance theory and has drawn significant interest due to its's connection to dancer performance and overall boost of the dancers' positive body image and self-appreciation ( Swami, Harris, 2012). Dancer identity refers to the level that an individual considers themselfe to be a dancer, the higher the scores on the dancer identity scale, the more dance is considered as an inextricable part of one's

identity (Langdon & Petracca 2010). The formation of dancer identity is closely connected to social and racial identity, and during our research on the contributing factors of its' development, we discovered that an interesting influential component is the acceptance of others, that is if the individual is viewed by others as a dancer (Fortin, Long & Lord 2002). Thus, social interaction amongst likeminded individuals, through dance participation, can influence the internalization of dancer identity construct, via acceptance of others, especially in the developmental stages of adolescence and early adulthood, where social interactions influence directly the individuals' psychology, body image and self-worth.

There has been considerable amount of research presented in the way that dance participation affects identity, especially in the case studies of folklore-traditional dance and in dance anthropology research (Matelau, Tui & Sagapolutele 2023, Apostolaki A. 2021), therefore it is significant to distinguish that for the scope of this article, dancer identity was examined as a part of the individuals identity, in order for us to understand how participation in contemporary dance performance contributes to the construct development. It is important to note that the lack of research data on dancer identity has led to a "borrowing" of athletic identity's' measurement tools by dance researchers, to aid them in their quest towards the clarification of the basic elements that can influence and shape an individual's dancer identity (Langdon & Petracca, 2010). Dancer identity and Athletic identity have something in common as they both influence the way that a participant behaves, performs and interacts with others within the same environment and there is a correlation between them since they both have a strong use of the human body, but in order to be comprehensive for our study, we must not overlook the element of creativity that is inherently present in dance and distinguishes the two cases. Contemporary dance was selected as a field of work for this study as it is thought to promote body awareness and foster creative expression, while integrating in its' methodology exercises that can also be found in dance therapy (Godill S., 2005), thus promoting healthier body image and re-affirming self-worth.

Through our continuous experience in dance, we have observed an undeniable difference between the dancers' attitude during dance participation in the studio, just for the sake of technical advancement and dance participation leading to a performance. There are several explanations on this phenomenon and the way the methodology of the performance is approached by the choreographer can greatly affect the development of group dynamics, social interactions and the levels of dancer identity amongst the participants and the actual outcome of the choreographic work (Montero, 2021). Furthermore, the element of creativity, which can be found largely in contemporary dance studies and more so in contemporary dance performance, explains the conscious choice to conduct this experimental project, not in the confinement of the dance studio, working only to further the technical skills of the dancers, but to add in the factor of performance.

## **II. Material And Methods**

This research project was carried out on a random sample at a private dancing studio, in Thessaloniki, Greece, within a four month period. A total of 25 adult subjects (both male and female) aged 18-25 years, were included in this study.

**Research Design:** Practically based research project, culminating to a performance.

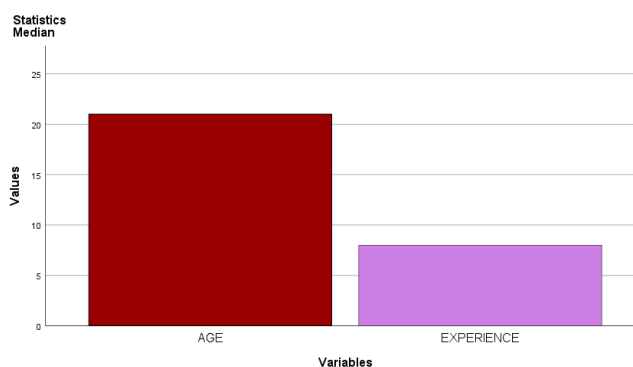
**Research Location:** This was a practical dance research project that took place at 29A ARTSPACE, in Thessaloniki, Greece.

**Research Duration:** October 2023 to January 2024.

**Sample size:** 25 young adults

**Subjects & selection method:** The sample was put together randomly after a public call of entry was submitted on social media, via email lists, and printed posters on public spaces. The volunteer group included 6 male (24%), 19 female (76%) participants with an average age of 21 years (21,36), none of which was a professional dancer. Their dance background differed both in the styles of dancing that they had previously had training on and the level that they were in (beginner, elementary, intermediate and advanced). The average time spent training in dance was 8 years and the styles of dance that they had previously trained on included: ballet, contemporary dance, heels, latin dance and traditional Greek dancing, with a small number of them (20%), having had zero contact with the field of dance, prior to their participation in this research.

**Table no 1.** Bar representation of years of dancing and age participation



**Inclusion criteria:**

1. Nonprofessional dancers
2. Either sex
3. Aged 18-25 years
4. 90% of attendance in the research's dance sessions
5. Participation in the final performance of the research project

**Exclusion criteria:**

1. Professional dancers
2. Aged >25 and <18
3. Poor attendance rate
4. Inability of the person to participate in the final performance

**Method**

**Measures**

Dancer Identity was measured on the «Dancer Identity Measurement Scale» by Langdon and Petracca (2010) which was adapted for the Greek population (Voutsas et al., 2025). The scale, in its' Greek version comprises of 7 formulations that produce one factor named: "total dancer identity". Responses are measured in a 5-point Likert type scale, where 1=totally disagree and 5=totally agree. Higher scores of the mean of all 7 items indicate that dance is a more substantial part of the participants identity, with statements referring to how strongly the individual feels about dance, for example " I consider myself a dancer", or "I would be very sad if I couldn't participate in dance due to injury". The Greek version of the Dancer Identity Scale, during the translation and adaptation process to the Greek dancing environment, presented good psychometric attitude, and its' internal consistency ranged in high levels, with Cronbach alpha being .943 (a=.943).

**List of statements comprising the Dancer Identity Measurement Scale:**

1. I consider myself a dancer.
2. I have many goals towards dance.
3. Most of my friends are dancers.
4. Dance is the most important part of my life.
5. I spend most of my time thinking about dance than anything else.
6. I feel bad if I perform badly in dance.
7. I would be very sad if I couldn't participate in dance due to injury.

**Demographics**

The participants were asked to provide the following demographic details: a) their age so that we could define their qualification for the project, b) their place of residence so that we could investigate if accessibility to dance centers could be a factor of dance participation, c) the type of dance that they formerly had training in and their level of proficiency so that we can attest to differences between the beginner and advanced students and d) their level of dancer identity and between those who already possessed a contemporary dance background and those who have experienced alternative forms of dancing or none at all.

## **Procedure**

Even though this research project was advertised through social media, printed posters and e-mail lists, we found that a significant factor that attributed to participation, was word of mouth. Thirty adults responded to the initial call for volunteers, with 25 remaining for the duration of the project, while drop out was attributed to reasons of health, change in working hours or university work load increase, all unrelated to the project. The research group attended 12 2-hour sessions of contemporary dance training, leading to a contemporary dance performance. The participants followed the instructions and movement material of renowned choreographer and dance teacher Konstantinos Katsamakias, who specializes in the field of contemporary dance choreography. The performance that was produced had the title "BUS", and its' theme was based on the transportation system of the city of Thessaloniki, with distinct socio-cultural references to the struggles of commute and survival in big city environments.

Konstantinos Katsamakias, used extensive exercises of team bonding, to promote an open-minded working environment that promoted collaboration, leading to a positively charged atmosphere amongst the participants, reflecting the ideas that are prevalent in the study of the scientific field of group dynamics (Gençer H.2019, Bakirtzis, 1999). During the choreographing process, the artist utilized exercises of organized improvisation, demonstrating of set movement phrases and object manipulation, to produce the kinetic segments that would form the final piece of choreography. Participants were involved in costume selection and throughout the sessions there has been an atmosphere of respect of the individual body abilities and personality traits, that fostered the creative input of the dancers and diminished negative body image issues, that can appear in a dance performative setting as suggested by the research of Langdon and Petracca (2010).

The qualitative data were collected via a 5-point Linkert type response questionnaire of the Dancer Identity Measurement Scale, adapted to the Greek population, that was given to the participants in the beginning and the end of the research project. The distributed questionnaire included socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, place of birth, place of residence and number of years involved with dance. After data collection we proceeded with statistical analysis to determine the effect of dance participation on the development of dancer identity and to investigate if gender was a factor of significance in total dancer identity formation.

## **Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis of the data included: a) descriptive and inferential statistics with indicators of central tendency and dispersion, b) confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the structural validity of the questionnaire, which was carried out with the LISREL 8.80 statistical package. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 30. The suitability measures taken into account as well as their acceptable values were:  $\chi^2/DF$  (degrees of freedom) < 5, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < .08, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) < .05, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > .90, Normed Fit Index (NFI) > .90 (Bentler, 1990; Πατσιδου, 2001), c) internal consistency and validity check of the questionnaires with the use of convergent validity measures (CV) and Average Variance Extracted(AVE). d) Independent samples t-test to determine differences in the means of the two genders before the commencement of the research project, e) Repeated Measures Anova analysis, to determine the mean differences between the start and the finish of the research project. The level of significance was defined as  $p < .05$ .

## **III. Results**

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to confirm or reject the structural integrity of the Dancer Identity Measurement Scale questionnaire, by Voutsas et al. (2005), for which the statistical package LISREL 8.80 was utilized. From the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, initial measure, it was determined that the theoretical model presents a notable  $\chi^2(34.42)$ , an acceptable quotient  $\chi^2/df (34.42/14) = 2.46$ ,  $p = .001$ . The indices NFI and CFI, scored a value of .92 and .93, that are within acceptable bounds. Finally, the numbers that were scored by the indices Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) RMSEA (.074) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) SRMR (.045) confirm good adaptation of the theoretical model. The results on the final measure were similar, were the theoretical model presented a notable  $\chi^2 (32.43)$ , an acceptable quotient  $\chi^2/df (32.43/14) = 2.32$ ,  $p = .001$ . The indices NFI and CFI scored values of .922 and .92 respectively, which are within acceptable bounds. Lastly, the value scores that were awarded to the indices RMSEA (.065) and SRMR (.0541) confirm a good adaptation of the theoretical model.

## **Internal consistency and structural validity of the questionnaire**

The above are also confirmed by the values of the Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity indices, which show the highly acceptable internal consistency and validity of the factor (Table no 2).

**Table no 2.** Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted of the “Dancer Identity Measurement Scale” at initial and final measurement.

Items	Loading		Composite Reliability		Average Variance Extracted	
	Measurement					
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
1	.93	.81	.938	.687	.931	.660
2	.95	.80				
3	.72	.85				
4	.81	.84				
5	.83	.77				
6	.82	.75				
7	.88	.86				

**Independent Samples t-test**

For the purposes of the present study, we performed independent samples t-test, so that we could investigate if there were statistically significant differences between the 2 genders in the total dancer identity, during the initial measurement. From the reading of the results of the analysis, no statistically significant differences were discovered on the factor of total dancer identity (Table no 3). Thus, supporting the idea that both gender dancers (male and female) were characterized by the same level of total dancer identity before the start of the research project.

**Table no 3.** Means-standard deviation and t-test scores on total dancer identity.

Factor	MALES		FEMALES		t	df	Sig
	M	sd	M	sd			
TOTAL DANCER IDENTITY	2.22	1.15	2.83	.98	-1.28	23	.214

**Repeated Measures**

An analysis of Repeated Measures (Repeated Measures Anova) was performed to examine the possible existence of differences on the total dancer identity values after the research project was concluded. The results of the Anova Repeated Measures indicated statistically significant effect of the factor measure,  $F_{(1, 24)} = 88.383$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .645$ . Specifically, a substantial increase on the mean scores was detected on the final measurement, (M = 3.98, SD= .61), compared to the initial mean score (M = 2.68, SD = 1.04).

Furthermore it was observed that both genders (male and female dancers), were statistically significantly involved in the detected shift of mean scores, with a) male dancers recording a statistically significant increase of  $-F_{(1, 5)} = 37.813$ ,  $p = .002$ - from the initial measurement (M = 2.22, SD = 1.16) to the final measurement (M= 3.78, SD = .98) and b) female dancers computing a statistically significant increase of  $-F_{(1, 18)} = 56.412$ ,  $p < .001$ - from the initial measurement (M = 2.83, SD = .98) to the final measurement (M= 4.05, SD = .46).

**IV. Discussion/ Conclusion**

The present research investigated whether dancer identity development can be affected by the individuals’ involvement in a contemporary dance performance setting. Due to the fact that previous research presented findings mostly about dance interventions in the dance studio (Millar 2013; Dantas et al. 2018), we believed that the element of the stage needed to be considered as a factor. Contemporary dance was used because of its’ more liberal approach on the dancing body and its’ multifaceted methodology approach that allows for a more versatile use of choreography (Kimbrough K. 2024).

The participating sample of 25 young adults filled the entry and secession questionnaires and after the data collection the information gathered was statistically analyzed via SPSS version 30. Through the use of the Dancer Identity Measurement Scale, adapted to the Greek population and facts gathered by demographic questioning, results were produced concerning our initial hypothesis, that participation in performance was a dynamic factor on dancer identity development.

Looking closer at the samples’ answers on the individual statements of the scale it was interesting to note that even though individuals had a modest response to the 4<sup>th</sup> statement “dance is the most important part of my life ” in average 3=agree, regarding dance as part of their identity and not a title that they identified with completely, the most common response on the 7<sup>th</sup> statement, “I would be very sad if I couldn’t participate in dance due to injury” was 5=totally agree, which we have theorized derived from the pupils commitment to the performance that was eminent. The above strengthens the argument about the importance of the stage in dance participation made by researchers such as Hamby (1984), and underlines the need of further studies, potentially in different dance techniques, that are performance based.

The analysis of Repeated Measures revealed that engagement throughout the research program and the final performance in particular, helped advance the formation of dancer identity to both female and male participants, with male participants having a slightly higher mean difference, possibly in conjunction with the lack of previous training in the field of dance.

Although, elements like place of residence and place of birth did not appear to hold merit in the way that the dancers provided their answers, it would be interesting to conduct a further analysis to compare the difference of means with the different levels of dance education each participant held before the commencement of the research project.

Moving towards future studies, it would be highly valuable to determine the relationship between Dancer Identity scores and Body Image related constructs, in the specific field of contemporary dance performance, with the aim of establishing a clearer view between the factors, since the conclusions of previous studies around dance participation have returned both negative and positive results (Swami V.&Harris A., 2012).

Through the present study evidence was presented that participation in a contemporary dance performance can increase the levels of dancer identity in both male and female participants, regardless of their previous contact with the field of dance.

### References

- [1]. Agaiby, D.S.. Dance Identity: A Mixed-Methods Study Exploring Dance Identity And The Development Of A Dance Identity Questionnaire (DIQ), Doctoral Dissertation, University Of Huddersfield Repository (2021), <https://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/35718/>
- [2]. Apostolaki A., Dancer Identity Through The Social Aspects Of The Community Of Sklivani, In Xsirovounio, From Past To Today, A Post Graduate Thesis, Democritus University, (2021) [https://repo.lib.duth.gr/jspui/bitstream/123456789/19582/1/Apostolaki\\_2021.pdf](https://repo.lib.duth.gr/jspui/bitstream/123456789/19582/1/Apostolaki_2021.pdf)
- [3]. Bakirtzis, K. The Dynamics Of Interaction In Communication., Athens: Gutenberg, (1999).
- [4]. Bentler, P. M. , Comparative Fit Indexes In Structural Models. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107(2), (1990), 238–246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.107.2.238>
- [5]. Dantas A. G. & Alonso D. A. & Sánchez-Miguel P. A. & Río Sánchez C., Factors Dancers Associate With Their Body Dissatisfaction., *Body Image*, 25 (2018) P. 40–47 , <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2018.02.003>
- [6]. Fadjukoff, P., Pulkkinen, L., & Kokko, K.). Identity Formation In Adulthood: A Longitudinal Study From Age 27 To 50. *Identity*, 16,(2016), 8–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2015.1121820>
- [7]. Fortin S, Long W, Lord M., Three Voices: Researching How Somatic Education Informs Contemporary Dance, *Research In Dance Education*, 3(2), (2002), 155–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464789022000034712>
- [8]. Gençer H., Group Dynamics And Behaviour, *Universal Journal Of Educational Research* 7(1): 223-229, Maritime Higher Vocational School, Piri Reis University, Istanbul, Turkey, (2019), DOI: 10.13189/Ujer.2019.070128
- [9]. Hamby C., Dance And The Dancer, *British Journal Of Aesthetics*, Vol.24, No 1, (Winter 1984), Online Article, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=40be5e6e2d3ee77ccaf0c391818d1b9ea9219967>
- [10]. Kimbrough K., Ballet Vs. Contemporary Dance: Training, Skills, And Injury Prevention, *EW Motion Therapy Trussville*, (April 2024), <https://www.ewmotiontherapy.com/blog/ballet-vs-contemporary-dance#:~:text=Skills%20such%20as%20floor%20work,Unique%20to%20this%20dance%20form.>
- [11]. Langdon S.W. & Petracca G., Tiny Dancer: Body Image And Dancer Identity In Female Modern Dancers, *Body Image*, Volume 7, Issue 4, (September 2010) , Pages 360-363, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2010.06.005>
- [12]. Matelau, Tui And Sagapolutele, Ufitia, Constructing A Hybrid Samoan Identity Through Siva Samoa In New Zealand: A Multimodal (Inter)Action Analysis Of Two Dance Rehearsals, *Multimodal Communication*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (2023), Pp. 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.1515/Mc-2023-0008>
- [13]. Mckenna, J., & Marks, A. Eriksonian Theory. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia Of Lifespan Human Development*, (2018). (Vol. 5, Pp. 769-770). SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506307633.N287>
- [14]. Montero B., Dance As Embodied Aesthetics, *The Bloomsbury Handbook Of Dance And Philosophy*, Bloomsbury Academic, Imprint: London, UK; New York, (2021), Pages: 82-96
- [15]. Platsidou M. , Confirmatory Factor Analysis In Psychological Research: Basic Principles, Limitations, And Application Examples, *Scientific Yearbook Of The Department Of Psychology Of The Faculty Of Philosophy*, 4, (2001), P. 367-394
- [16]. Swami V. & Harris A., Dancing Toward Positive Body Image? Examining Body-Related Constructs With Ballet And Contemporary Dancers At Different Levels, *American Journal Of Dance Therapy*, ( June 2012), DOI: 10.1007/S10465-012-9129-7
- [17]. Tao D, Gao Y, Cole A, Baker JS, Gu Y, Supriya R, Tong TK, Hu Q And Awan-Scully R., The Physiological And Psychological Benefits Of Dance And Its Effects On Children And Adolescents: A Systematic Review. *Front. Physiol.*, (2022), 13:925958., DOI:10.3389/Fphys.2022.925958