# STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF DANCE ON THE BODY OF CHILDREN AGED 9 TO 11 YEARS

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**Abstract:** Dance stimulates the development of fundamental motor skills such as coordination, balance, rhythm, and precision, supporting children's physical and psychosocial growth. This study aimed to investigate parents' perceptions of dance and its benefits for children aged 9–11 years, as well as the motivations and barriers influencing participation. A structured questionnaire of 20 items was administered online to 127 parents. Most respondents recognized dance as highly beneficial for motor development, posture, flexibility, rhythm, attention, and self-confidence, while also highlighting its role in socialization and cultural identity. Reported barriers included lack of time, limited program availability, and financial constraints. Most parents supported the inclusion of dance in school curriculum, preferably as an optional activity. The findings suggest that parents perceive dance as an effective extracurricular activity for promoting physical and mental health and reducing sedentary behaviors. Further studies based on direct child assessment are needed to validate these perceptions.

***Keywords****: dance, children, influences, extracurricular activity, harmonious physical development*.

## Introduction

Dance represents one of the most complex forms of movement, involving the collaboration of the central and peripheral nervous systems with the locomotor apparatus, as well as the integration of sensory stimuli and motor responses. Specialized studies (Schmidt & Lee, 2019; Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006) show that practicing dance stimulates the development of basic motor skills (walking, jumping), as well as motor capacities such as coordination, balance, precision, and rhythm. Through its playful, attractive, and varied nature, dance facilitates the involvement of children in motor exercises regardless of their initial level of preparation or abilities. Children participate enthusiastically in dance activities, which favor the repetition of movements without the monotony of imposed effort, accelerating motor learning and gesture automatization.

Folk dance simultaneously develops gross motor skills, fine motor skills, laterality, reaction speed, spatial orientation, and the ability to continuously adjust to external stimuli. Additionally, dance stimulates essential psychomotor functions, including sensory integration, motor memory, distributed attention, and emotional control during execution. Through dance, children learn to control their bodies, develop spatial orientation, respond to musical rhythm, and coordinate individual movements with those of the entire group.

Recent literature (Aivaz & Stănescu, 2024; Silaban & Manalu, 2024) confirms the positive effects of dance on kinesthetic and visual-spatial development. Systematic dance practice contributes to maintaining an active lifestyle, preventing sedentarism and conditions related to inactivity (Bompa & Haff, 2018). Dance promotes the development of cardiovascular and respiratory functions and increases overall endurance, constituting an effective way to promote health in children. Dance also serves as a means of developing social skills through collaboration, nonverbal communication, adherence to group rules, and stimulation of creativity. Participation in choreographic events improves self-esteem, motivation, a sense of belonging, and discipline. Dance facilitates children's integration by providing playful and interactive context, serving as a strong point in social relationships and inclusion (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006).

It can be asserted that dance is an extremely beneficial activity for children aged 9 to 11, offering advantages in motor, cognitive, emotional, and social development. At this

age, children have the capacity to learn and perform more complex movements, develop creativity and expressiveness, and through group belonging, they can learn discipline and collaboration.

In the context of Romanian education and culture, folk dance also plays the role of transmitting identity and cultural values, supporting the formation of attachment to tradition and community. The integration of folk dance into the educational process represents an opportunity for harmonious physical and motor development, as well as for strengthening the sense of belonging and respect for heritage (Șușu, 2018).

A 2020 study (Ciematnieks & Gulbe) investigated the impact of folk dance on the physical condition of children aged 9-11, grouping 117 children based on their participation in folk dances, other sports activities, or lack of regular physical activities. The results showed that, overall, the level of physical preparation was similar across all groups, with minor differences in abdominal strength tests. The conclusion was that the volume of folk dance practiced after school is not sufficient to produce significant differences in the average physical condition of the children, but dance contributes to harmonious physical development.

In another study published in 2021, Tomescu et al. analyzed a dance program for children aged 11-12 enrolled in school, reporting significant improvements in motor skills, reaction speed, lower limb strength, and spatial orientation after a nine-month dance program. This study highlights the positive impact of dance in optimizing complex motor skills and kinesthetic and visual-spatial intelligences in this age group.

In 2021, Jackson found that folk dance has a positive effect on the physical and social development of children aged 5-6, including coordination, balance, flexibility, and sense of rhythm. These conclusions support the beneficial effects of dance on the development of motor structures and skills in young children, with implications for age groups around 9 to 11 years.

More extensive studies on the effects of dance on children and adolescents support the fact that dance improves motor development, balance, artistic expressivity, and even mental state, with benefits on children's quality of life (Ito et al., 2024).

We also believe that dance movements train the coordination between different parts of the body, leading to better balance and agility. Through dance, children use their entire body, which contributes to a high level of harmonious physical development. Dance also helps maintain correct posture and equal distribution of body weight, while the stretches and fluid movements performed during dance help improve flexibility and prevent injuries. Additionally, other benefits include socialization, creativity, self-confidence, expression of emotions, and concentration.

**Material and Method**

*Premises of the Study*

The study is based on the premise that dance represents a complex physical and educational activity that positively influences the motor, cognitive, and emotional development of children. It is assumed that dance significantly contributes to improving motor coordination, balance, flexibility, rhythm, attention, and concentration, as well as increasing self-confidence and emotional expression.

Additionally, the study highlights the important role of dance in developing social skills and fostering integration into a community, as well as its potential benefits for school performance and the adoption of an active lifestyle.

These premises justify the need to evaluate the impact of dance on the educational process and on the harmonious development of the child, in the context of the diversity of styles and objectives of organized dance practice. Accordingly, the study aims to provide a comprehensive perspective on the benefits and challenges associated with children's participation in dance.

*General objectives of the study:*

- Identifying parents' perceptions and attitudes toward dance and its impact on motor, social, and emotional development;
- Evaluating how participation in dance activities contributes to the development of coordination abilities and other motor skills in children aged 9-11;
- Providing an empirical basis for the foundation and adaptation of educational programs that include dance as a means of motor development in the school environment.

*Specific objectives of the study:*

- Analyzing the level of involvement and frequency of children's participation in dance activities;
- Identifying motivational factors or perceived barriers related to dance;
- Investigating how parents perceive the impact of dance on coordination, balance, rhythm, and bodily expressiveness;
- Determining the influence of dance on socialization and group relationships among children;
- Assessing the level of knowledge and interest regarding dance.

*Organization and Conduct of the Research*

The research was conducted between 2024 and 2025 and consisted of administering an online questionnaire, on the platform docs.google.com. The questionnaire was distributed to parents whose children practice dance, as well to parents whose children do not practice dance. 127 parents voluntarily chose to participate in the study by responding to the questionnaire concerning their perception of dance on the development of children aged 9-11. The anonymity of the participants, their safety, and international ethical recommendations regarding the absolute confidentiality of data collected in the study were respected.

Data processing was carried out in accordance with current regulations. The research team was obliged to manage the provided data (socio-demographic information and questionnaire responses) solely for the specified purposes and under strict security conditions.

*Analysis and Interpretation of Results*

For question 1, 42 respondents (33.1%) stated that their child practices dance at least twice a week, 47 (37%) said their child attends dance classes occasionally, 23.6%, meaning 30 respondents, said their child does not practice dance but would be interested, and only 9 respondents (7.1%) said their child would not want to practice dance (Figure 1).

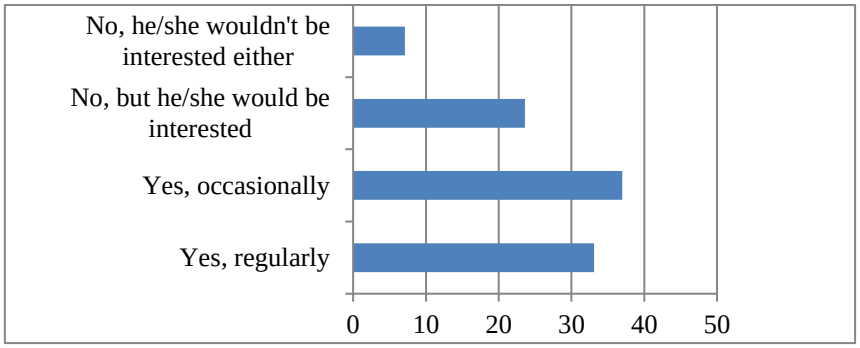


*Figure 1 – Q1: Does your child participate in organized dance?*

For question 2, only 5 respondents' children practice ballet (4.9%), 36 of them (35.3%) have their child enrolled in modern dance classes, 17 children (16.7%) practice sports dance, 7 children (6.9%) practice other types of dance, with the majority, 44 children (43.1%), practicing folk dance, indicating that interest in folk dance is present among children.

In the case of question 3, regarding the importance of dance for the child's development, 74 parents (58.3%) consider it extremely important, while only 3.9% do not attribute any importance to dance in the child's development, indicating that dance is very popular among children (Figure 2).

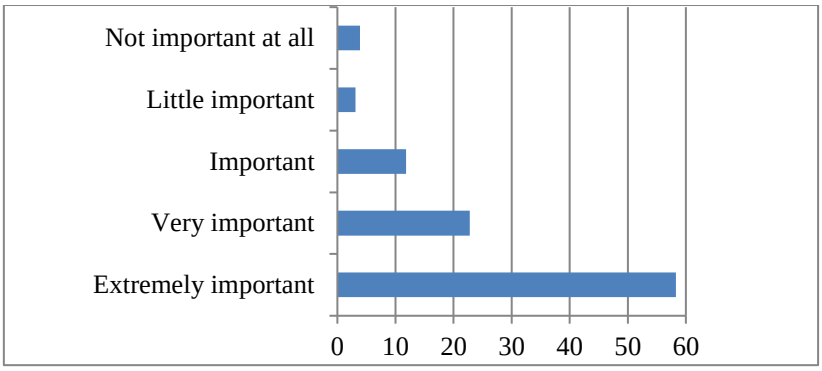


*Figure 2 – Q3: How important is dance for your child's development?*

In response to question 4, which explored whether dance aids in the development of motor coordination, 97 respondents (76.4%) affirmed the significant positive impact of dance. Only one respondent (0.8%) felt that dance did not contribute to improved coordination, highlighting widespread recognition of dance's benefits in this area (Figure 3).

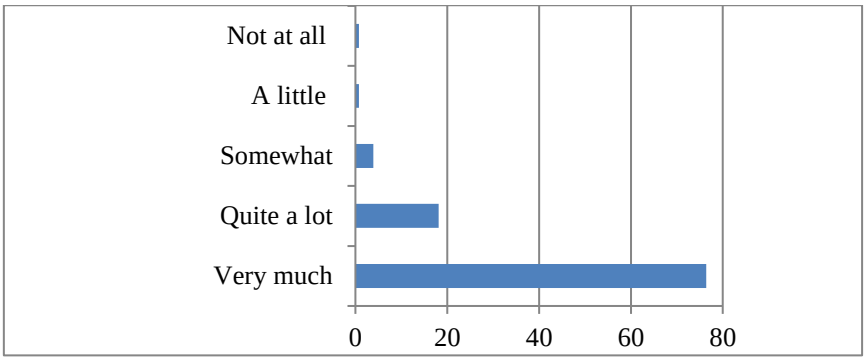


*Figure 3 – Q4: Does dancing contribute to improve balance and posture?*

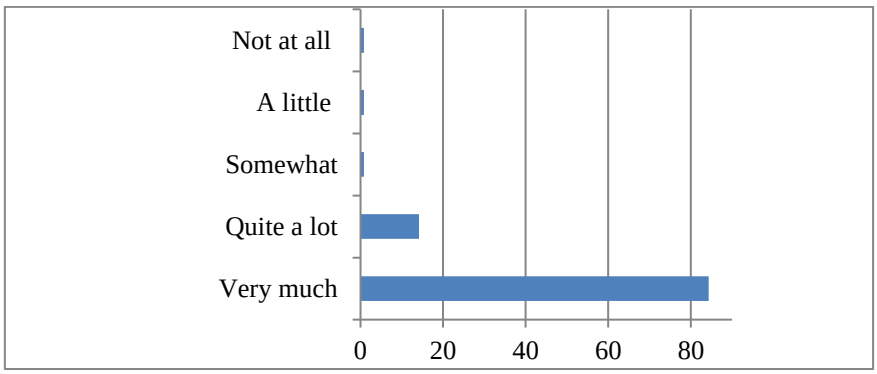


*Figure 4 – Q5: Does dancing help the development of the motor coordination?*

For question 5, 107 respondents (84.3%) stated that dance greatly contributes to improving balance and posture in children who practice it, which reinforced the rationale for this research (Figure 4).

With regard to question 6, 102 respondents (80.3%) acknowledged that dance is highly beneficial for improving flexibility and joint mobility in children (Figure 5).

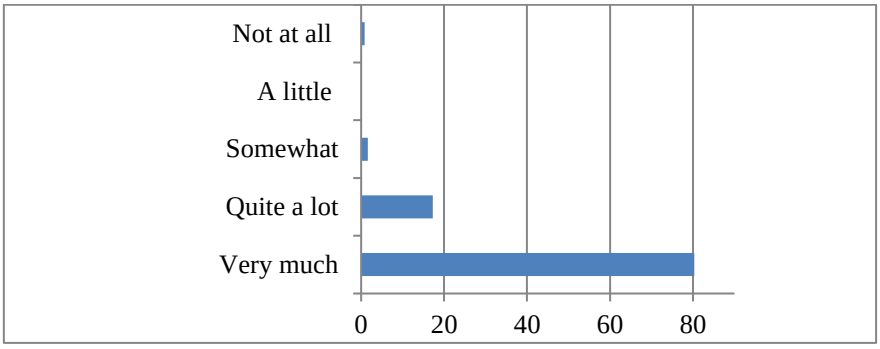


*Figure 5- Q6: Does dancing help improve flexibility and joint mobility?*

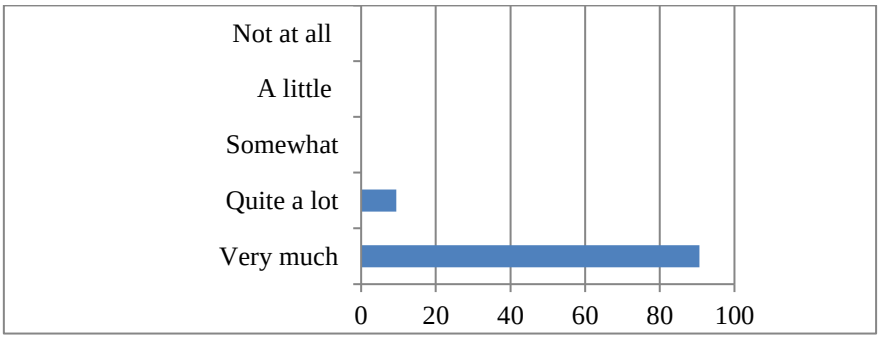


*Figure 6 – Q7: Does dancing help improve rhythm and synchronization of movements?*

Furthermore, for question 7 which addressed rhythm and movement synchronization, 90.6% of respondents acknowledged the contribution of dance (Figure 6).

Question 8, regarding attention and concentration, 98 respondents (77.2%) consider that dance greatly influences these aspects, while 0.8% do not observe this contribution; these aspects are essential for choreography execution (Figure 7).

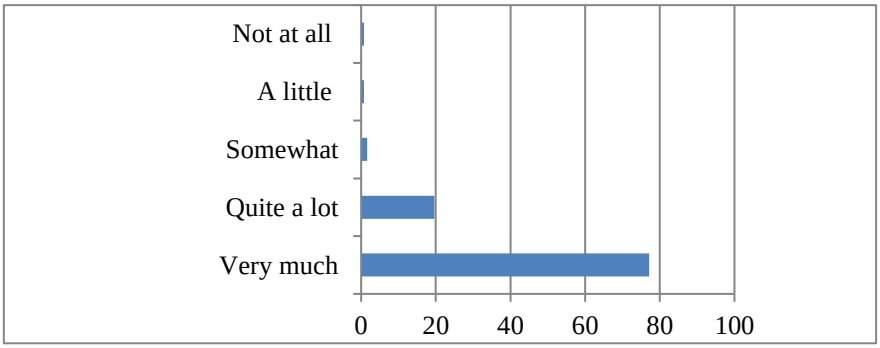


*Figure 7- Q8: Does dancing help improve attention and concentration?*

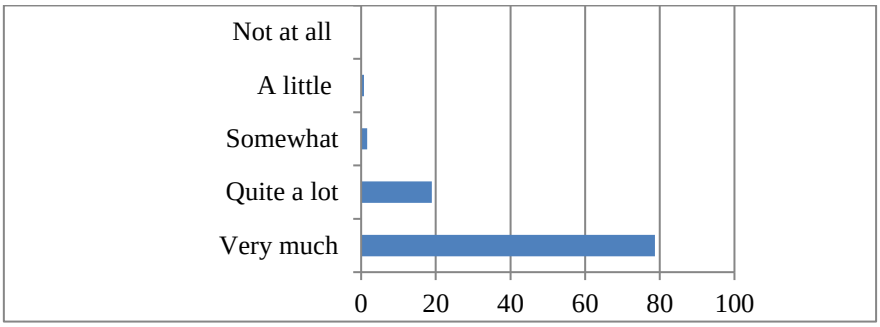


*Figure 8 – Q9: Does dancing help improve self-confidence and emotional expression?*

Regarding improving self-confidence and emotional expression, question 9 revealed that 100 parents (78.7%) believe that dance contributes significantly, while others are less convinced; dance helps children release emotions and experience feelings (Figure 8).

Regarding the inclusion of dance in the school curriculum, for question 10, 48 respondents (37.8%) believe it should be a mandatory subject, 80 respondents (63%) prefer it as an optional subject, and one respondent stated it should not be included at all. The majority favored making it optional, noting that not all children have the talent or inclination to practice dance.

Regarding question 11, whether dance contributes to the development of the child's social skills, 78 parents (61.4%) believe it contributes greatly, while the rest are more reserved about this contribution.

For question 12, 50.4% of respondents believe dance has a very positive impact on the child's school performance, while 5.5% do not attribute significant importance to dance.

For question 13, among the answers received, the reasons why children practice or do not practice dance include:

- Reasons for practicing dance: passion, enjoyment, movement, harmonious development, health, discipline, relaxation, socialization, physical condition, physical and emotional health, attention, concentration, mobility, etc.
- Reasons for not practicing dance: lack of time, interest in another extracurricular activity, non- optimal age, lack of transportation, overly busy school schedule, etc.

Regarding the optimal age to start dance classes, question 14, 54 parents (42.5%) say 3-5 years old, 51 parents (40.2%) consider 6-9 years optimal, only 6 parents would choose 10-12 years, and 21 parents (16.5%) do not believe there is an optimal age.

For question 15, which targeted the most important factors in a dance program, the results were skewed towards the quality of instructors and the child's pleasure and motivation, then by the rhythm and creativity of choreographies, the rigor and discipline of training, and the diversity of dance styles (Figure 9).

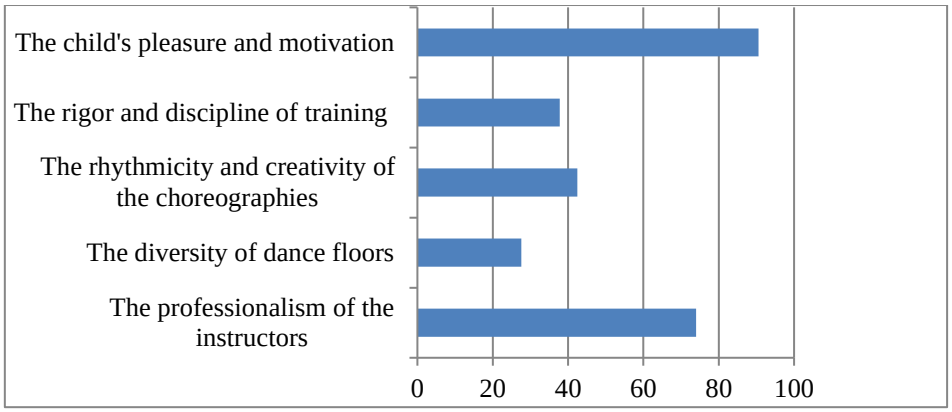


*Figure 9 – Q15: What factors do you consider to be the most important in a children's dance program?*

In question 16 which addressed barriers, several obstacles were identified, with the most common being lack of time, limited availability of suitable dance programs in their area, high costs, and low interest from the child. Lack of time is due to busy daily life, as not everyone can make enough time for such activities, although they are beneficial. Lack of suitable offerings is due to the fact that not all respondents live in cities, and such activities are rare in rural areas (Figure 10).

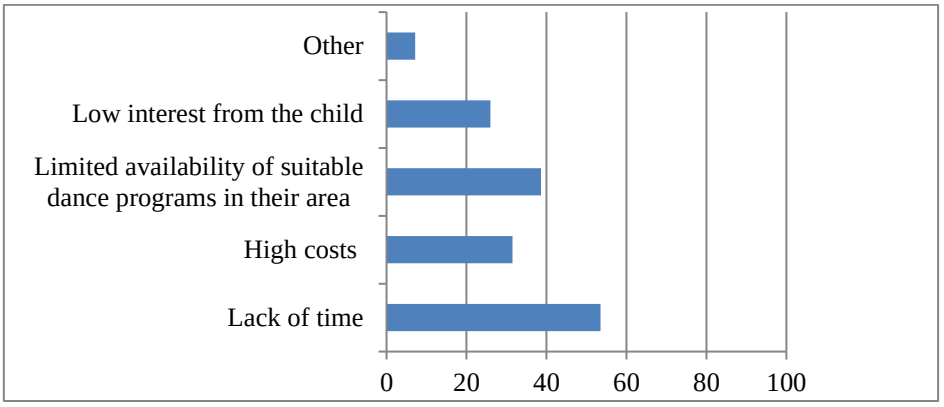


*Figure 10 – Q16: What are the main barriers to children's access to dance activities?*

For question 17, 79.5% of respondents stated they would recommend dance to other parents, 19.7% said it depends on the parent and child, and one parent is not convinced to recommend dance; these findings highlight the perceived importance of dance for children.

For question 18, if dance were present in school activities, 79.5% of parents stated they would support their child's participation, while the rest preferred it as an optional activity only.

The contribution of dance to reducing sedentarism and adopting an active lifestyle was recognized by 98 respondents, while 2 did not the role of dance in this regard.

Finally, for question 20, the vast majority of respondents, respondents (58.3%) stated that dance is extremely beneficial for their child's physical and mental development, being aware of dance's benefits for the human body.

**Discussions**

One of the contemporary pillars in understanding child development through dance is the research conducted by Borowski (2021), who highlighted that during preadolescence, dance becomes an essential channel through which children express their

emotions and cognitive frameworks. Borowski emphasizes that dance is not just a simple physical activity, but a language of the body, through which children learn to communicate nonverbally, develop a sense of rhythm, and gain self-confidence.

This connection between emotional expression and motor exercise makes dance a holistic form of development, facilitating sensorimotor integration and managing affective states in a natural and child-accessible way.

A pilot study conducted in 2024 on contemporary dance among children aged 6 to 9 demonstrated that structured choreographic activities can positively influence not only motor skills but also children's concentration ability (Ito et al., 2024).

Dance, by its creative and expressive nature, contributes to the development of cognitive abilities such as distributed attention and mental flexibility, along with body awareness and emotional self-regulation. According to the author, physical and artistic education through dance provides children with indispensable tools for balanced development, a fact that is particularly relevant during preadolescence, a stage marked by rapid and complex transformations.

In Romania, research conducted by Burlui (2023) and Aivaz & Stănescu (2024) highlight the profound influence of folk dance on the development of children in rural areas. Burlui (2023) emphasizes that traditional dances are not only motor exercises but also means of social and cultural learning, through which children acquire roles, values, and community norms.

Moreover, Aivaz and his collaborators underscore the pedagogical aspect of dance in developing coordination and bodily expression, showing that this practice contributes not only to improving motor skills but also to creating a strong sense of identity and belonging.

In the context of physical education in our country, Popescu (2025) emphasizes the integration of folk dances into school activities for children aged 9-11. Popescu observes a significant increase in motivation and enthusiasm among students when folk dance is included in the curriculum, compared to traditional physical education methods. Through the rhythmic and repetitive structure of dances, children not only develop balance and coordination but also form an emotional connection to cultural heritage, enhancing their sense of belonging. Active participation in these processes encourage children to perceive dance as a source of joy and social communion rather than as an obligation.

**Conclusions**

The survey results indicate that parents strongly associate dance practice with the development of motor coordination, balance, rhythm, flexibility, attention, and self-confidence in children aged 9–11. Parents also perceive dance as a valuable tool for fostering social skills, cultural identity, and active lifestyles. While enthusiasm for integrating dance into school curriculum was evident, most favored an optional format to account for children's diverse interests.

Although the study highlights the positive image of dance among parents, the findings are limited to subjective perceptions rather than direct measurement of outcomes. Future research should include objective assessments of children's motor, cognitive, and social development to provide stronger empirical evidence. However, the present study supports the promotion of dance as an accessible and enjoyable extracurricular activity that contributes to children's holistic development.

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