

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL SKILLS OF ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Dance activities are recreational activities which contribute to the vitality of a person who is thus capable of handling his/her emotions and develop social relationships. The experience acquired by a young person who participates in recreational activities contributes to his/her personal and social evolution. Teaching social skills through recreational activities improves the social behavior of children and adolescents in the best possible way. Cooperating skills and empathy are factors of positive social behavior, while quick temperedness and disruptiveness are negative factors (Junttila, Voeten, Kaukiainen & Vauras, 2006). The aim of the study was to investigate whether participating in dance activities and group physical activities contributes to the differentiation of the social skills of adolescents and whether this differentiation is influenced by the gender. The data collection was conducted with the School Social Behavior Scale (SSBS, Merrell, 1993). The sample of the research consisted of 180 adolescent, junior high school students aged 13 who were separated into three groups: a) dancers b) athletes c) non athletes. The results showed that adolescent dancers had better means in cooperating skills and were less disruptive in the group than non athletes. Concerning quick temperedness and empathy, there were no statistically significant differences among the groups. In addition, there were no statistically significant differences, concerning gender.

Key Words: *Physical activities, dance activities, social behavior, social skills*

Introduction

Recreational activities play a most important role in the personal well being of a person, covering values and necessities of life. Participating in recreational activities creates social relationships, develops positive emotions and offers additional skills and knowledge (Brajsa-Zganec, Merkas & Sverko, 2011). Dance activities are recreational activities which contribute to the vitality of a person who is able to manipulate his/her emotions and develop social relationships. That is why participating in such activities has been the subject of various researches (Bebetsos & Goulimaris, 2014; Goulimaris, Filippou & Koupani, 2016; Voutsina & Goulimaris, 2016). The benefits from participating in similar physical activities influence multiply both one's psychological level and his/her physical condition (Genti, Goulimaris & Yfantidou, 2009; Goulimaris, Mavridis, Genti & Rokka, 2014; Bebetsos & Goulimaris, 2015). Consequently, the above specific activity has been scientifically approached lately by various aspects (Dalakis, Yfantidou, Tsitskari, Costa & Tzetzis, 2016; Goulimaris, 2016; Goulimaris, 2015; Goulimaris, Koutsouba & Giosos, 2008; Papakostas, Goulimaris & Douma, in press). The development of social skills is an important process during childhood and adolescence. Any lack or reduction of social skills may be connected to development and behavior problems as well as psychological health problems (Lugnegard, Hallerback & Gillberg, 2011; Mahan & Matson, 2011; Matson & Wilkins, 2009; Worley & Matson, 2011). On the contrary, their enforcement leads to the desirable social results (Hay, Payne & Chadwick, 2004). Thus, teaching social skills through recreational activities improves children and adolescents' behavior in the best possible way.

During adolescence, young people spend a lot of time after school participating actively in structured or non structured recreational activities (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Whalen, 1993). The social skills of adolescents who participate in dance activities have hardly been studied and since adolescence influences social skills, it is interesting to investigate them. There are many definitions concerning social skills. The World Health Organization defines social skills as the ability obtained by people in order to adapt and negotiate effectively, depending on the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO, 1999). They are the necessary skills for the effective communication, verbal or non verbal, with other people, a fact which facilitates the establishment of relationships, the participation in small or larger groups such as social groups, the management of close relationships, the accurate expression of views and ideas etc (Brooks, 1984). Social skills facilitate human communication (Davies, Cooper, Kettler, Elliot, 2015; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Nelson-Jones, 1990; Erozkhan, 2013), they are connected with success in school (Kennedy, 1988; McClelland, Morrison & Holmes, 2000; Strahan, 2003; Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius & Presbrey, 2004; Sung & Chang, 2010) and they constitute a way of preventing unhealthy behaviors (Botvin & Griffin, 2014; Dennis, 1996; Popov, 1994; O'Hearn & Gatz, 1999; 2002). They also interact with social learning, shaping the personality of adolescents while they grow up (Cole & Cole, 2001; Totan, Ozyesil, Deniz & Kiyar, 2014). Acquiring social skills is a requirement in order to find a job and be professionally successful and productive (Mercier, 1992; Rosenberg, Helmer & Morote, 2012).

Social skills are obtained through mutual feedback and with the acquisition of cognitive skills which are developed by the social interaction among students, while trying to solve a problem responsibly. The acquisition of social skills is proved by the acceptance of a person in a group (Merrell, 1999) and is evaluated by his/her social behavior. Social behavior includes two dimensions, the positive and the negative one (Merrell, 2001). Positive social behavior is characterized by acts of inter-assistance, cooperation, unselfishness, support, positive encouragement and interest in others. Negative social behavior is characterized by acts which aim at disrupting the smooth ambience of a group or acts of violence, verbal or physical, selfish acts and acts leading to isolation. Factors of positive social behavior are cooperating skills and empathy, while factors of negative social behavior are quick temperedness and disruptiveness (Junttila, Voeten, Kaukiainen & Vauras, 2006). Cooperating skills constitute positive social behavior and are characterized by the exchange and mutuality of thoughts, emotions and acts, being connected to the interaction among members of a group in order to achieve a specific target or project (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Empathy, which is also a positive social behavior, is the ability to participate in someone else's psychological experiences, comprehend and identify with them and respond with discretion and sensitivity (Cliffordson, 2002).

Quick temperedness constitutes negative social behavior which is expressed with neural disruption, manifestation of anger and inability of a person to resist temptations and negative stimulations although it occurs without a conscious intention to annoy the others (Farmer, 2000). Disruptiveness, which is also negative, can be verbal, kinetic or both and aims at annoying and consciously disrupting the smooth ambience of a group (Farmer, 2000). Goudas, Magotsiou and Hatzigeorgiadis (2009) support that there are enough methods and scales which can be used to evaluate social skills. Magotsiou, Goudas, & Hasandra (2006) have adapted successfully the School Social Behaviour Scale (Merrell, 1993) for the Greek population. The scale measures clearly the social skills of students from their social behaviour.

It includes four factors of social behaviour that can evaluate social or anti-social student behavior directly, quickly and at low cost. The transitional period from primary school to junior high school influences socio-emotional and biological development since adolescents are gradually led to independence, searching and negotiating their social identity and passing from childhood friendships to inter-gender relationships (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Their primary school experiences must have already equipped them properly, so as to manage socio-cognitive and emotional difficulties of school and life adequately and to build solid and healthy social relationships with their peers (Cantin & Boivin, 2004).

Recreational activities are characterized by the regular participation in methodical programs, guided and organized by one or more adults, emphasizing on the development of skills which become more and more complex and challenging and require performances with constant, active attention (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Mahoney, 2000). The experience acquired by a young person who participates in recreational activities contributes to his/her personal and social development (Sevdalis, Keller, 2011; Temple, Crane, Brown, Williams & Bell, 2016). Participating in such activities can be an important contribution to the quality of life of young people and adults, even of those with developmental disabilities (Badia, Orgaz, Begona, Miguel, Ullan & Martinez, 2013). In addition, participating in recreational activities is connected to lower levels of delinquent behavior and higher levels of social behavior (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Acquaviva, 2012). Dance activities are part of recreational activities and can be used as a means to improve the physical condition of the participants, since they are considered an aerobic exercise (Pitsi, Smilios, Tokmakidis, Serbezis & Goulimaris, 2008). They constitute a social event, since sociability is present throughout the whole process. They demand the active expression of the entire group-community and they involve intense collective behavior despite someone's social or financial position (Bougiesi, Zisi, Grigoriou & Pollatou, 2011). Participating in dance activities offers an alternative way to complete students' education, with or without any special educational needs, by improving their physical condition and influencing socio-psychological and academic sections (Munsell, Bryant & Kimberly, 2016; Reinders, Bryden & Fletcher, 2015). Incorporating in a dance activity group requires communication, cooperation, team spirit, coordination, distinction of roles and generally a high level of social skills.

Quick-temperedness, self-centeredness, swearing, disruptiveness and violence are considered as dissuasive behaviors. Through dancing, participants develop cooperating skills and prepare for professional success regardless their choice of career (Schupp, 2015). The research of Ribeiro and Fonseca (2011), mentions that during modern dance improvisation there is a development of empathy. When dancers improvise, they understand one another's intentions and emotions. In one of their researches, Lobo and Winsler (2006) have evaluated an eight week educational program of creative dance/movement, aiming at developing the social skills of pre-school children. The results showed important long term benefits for the children's skills. Small group creative dance classes seem to facilitate and reinforce social skills and improve behavior. A sample of fourteen adolescents and their parents were evaluated, according to the adolescents' participation in group recreational activities, their friends, their parents' social relationships and their anti-social behavior. The results showed that participating in organized recreational activities is connected with low levels of anti-social behavior (Jones & Lavalee, 2009).

Barr's research (2013) investigates how dance students who participate in a special group project can learn. Among other things, the results support the values of cooperative learning which improve the participants' cooperating skills. The aim of the study was to investigate whether participating in dance activities and group physical activities contributes to the differentiation of adolescents' social skills and to check whether this differentiation is influenced by the gender.

Material & methods

Participants

The sample of the research consisted of 180 adolescent students from the first class of Junior High School, aged 13 (53 boys and 127 girls) and chosen randomly. The adolescents were matched to three groups: a) dancers, that is adolescents who participated exclusively in organized dance activities of dance associations for more than 2 years b) athletes, that is adolescents who participated exclusively in team sports (basketball, volleyball, soccer) of athletic associations for more than 2 years and c) non athletes, that is adolescents who did not participate in any organized physical activity. Each group consisted of 60 participants. In every group, there was a similar representation of boys and girls.

Measurement instruments

The data collection was carried out with the "School Social Behavior Scale" (SSBS - Merrell, 1993), adapted for the Greek population (Magotsiou, Goudas & Hasandra, 2006). The validity and credibility of the scale for the Greek population has been investigated in previous researches (Magotsiou, Goudas & Hasandra, 2006; Goudas,

Magotsiou & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2009; Katsanos, Kouvelas, Samara & Hasandra, 2008; Goudas & Magotsiou, 2009). The questionnaire consists of four factors. The first factor is called "Quick Temperedness" and has 6 items e.g. I often get annoyed and angry. The second factor "Cooperating Skills" has 5 items e.g. I work with my fellow students as a team. The third factor "Empathy" has 6 items e.g. I am interested in others' feelings. The fourth factor "Disruptiveness" has 6 items e.g. I am disruptive in class. In the questionnaire, the students were asked to evaluate themselves on a 5 grade scale, with 1 corresponding to "I totally disagree" and 5 corresponding to "I totally agree".

Procedure

The meetings with the dancers and athletes took place in the dance classroom and the courts accordingly. The meetings with the third group took place outside school and during the participants' free time. They were all given instructions, while they were about to fill in the questionnaire. There was also a 5 to 10 minute time for possible questions. The questionnaire was returned during the meetings.

Statistical analysis

To examine the differences among the factors of social behaviour according to gender and group, there was a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (two-way MANOVA). The dependent variables were the four factors of social behaviour. The independent variables were the gender (boy, girl) and the group (dancers, athletes, non athletes). There were also univariate tests to study the impact of gender and group for each factor separately, while to check the differences among the groups, Bonferroni's post hoc test was used.

Results

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of adolescent's perceptions for their social

Variable	dancers		athletes		non athletes		total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Quick temperedness	1.54	0.50	1.56	0.60	1.77	0.82	1.62	0.66
boy	1.61	0.51	1.61	0.51	1.87	0.84	1.69	0.64
girl	1.51	0.49	1.53	0.64	1.73	0.82	1.59	0.67
Disruptiveness	1.34	0.42	1.27	0.31	1.65	0.68	1.43	0.52
boy	1.39	0.42	1.28	0.42	1.82	0.87	1.49	0.63
girl	1.33	0.43	1.28	0.26	1.59	0.59	1.40	0.47
Cooperating skills	4.20	1.08	4.0	0.83	3.80	0.74	4.0	0.90
boy	4.22	0.95	3.80	1.43	3.64	0.82	3.91	1.10
girl	4.18	1.15	4.20	0.36	3.87	0.71	4.06	0.81
Empathy	4.04	0.84	4.15	0.84	3.83	0.76	4.01	0.82
boy	3.84	1.08	3.95	1.48	3.77	0.85	3.86	1.15
girl	4.13	0.71	4.23	0.28	3.86	0.74	4.07	0.63

In table 1, there is a presentation of the means and the standard deviation of the factors of social behaviour of the three groups, according to gender. There was a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (two-way MANOVA) to examine the differences of the social skill factors (Quick Temperedness, Disruptiveness, Cooperating Skills, Empathy), gender (boy, girl) and group (dancers,

athletes, non athletes). The results showed a statistically significant differences concerning the group [Wilk's $\Lambda=0.86$, $F(8,342) = 3.13$, $p < 0.05$]. There was no statistically significant differences concerning the gender [Wilk's $\Lambda=0.98$, $F(4,171) = 0.75$, $p > 0.05$], neither a statistically significant interaction between the group and the gender [Wilk's $\Lambda=0.96$, $F(8,342) = 0.94$, $p > 0.05$].

The univariate tests showed a statistically significant differences of the group concerning the factor "Disruptiveness" [$F(2,174) = 10.22, p < 0.05$] and the factor "Cooperating Skills" [$F(2,174) = 5.38, p < 0.05$]. Concerning the negative factor "Disruptiveness", Bonferroni's post-hoc test showed that non athletes ($M=1.65, SD=.68$) had a significantly higher means than dancers ($M=1.34, SD=.42$) and athletes ($M=1.27, SD=.31$). Concerning the positive factor "Cooperating Skills", Bonferroni's post-hoc test showed that dancers ($M=4.20, SD=1.08$) had a significantly higher means than non athletes ($M=3.80, SD=.74$) and athletes ($M=4.0, SD=.83$).

Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate whether participating in dance activities and group physical activities contributes to the differentiation of adolescents' social skills and to check whether this differentiation is influenced by the gender. The results showed that the adolescents who participated in dance activities had higher means in cooperating skills than athletes or non athletes. In disruptiveness, both dancers and athletes had better means than non athletes. Consequently, non athletes are those who cause the bigger disruption in a group. In quick temperedness and empathy, there were no statistically significant differences among the groups. In dance activities, interaction and cooperation among people is direct and inevitable, developing behaviors focused on "we" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). The concept of team is an element which characterizes social behavior through dance activities and reaches everyday life, something which cannot be achieved with participating in plain exercise programs (Bougiesi, Zisi, Grigoriou & Pollatou, 2011). Dance is chosen as a recreational activity with internal motives by the majority of children. Those who choose to participate consider dance activities as a social activity. They want to have fun, feel members of a team, make friends and meet them (Doulias, Kosmidou, Pavlogiannis & Patsiaouras, 2005).

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In opposition to sports, in dance activities there is no reinforced competition. Participating in dance activities requires communication, cooperation, sense of team, coordination, inter-assistance, respect for the rules, role sharing and generally a high level of social ability for the participants to achieve their goals. In group physical activities there is sense of team, cooperation and team spirit but in addition there is personal competition. Thus, adolescent dancers had higher means of cooperating skills than athletes and non athletes. The research showed that non athletes cause the biggest conscious agitation in a group, disrupting its smooth ambience. It is certain that adolescents who do not practice sports do not relief their energy and moreover, they do not know how to embody and function in a team, where there are rules which need adapting to. These findings are in accordance with those of the research by Bartko and Eccles (2003), who mention that participating in structured activities is connected to positive social behavior, as opposed to the behavior of the adolescents who are less occupied with structured activities. The research has also showed that gender does not differentiate the social behavior factors. Both boys and girls appear to have the same social behavior. This finding agrees with an older research by Magotsiou (2007), who studied the effect of cooperative teaching method on social behavior.

Conclusions

The sense of team created in most dances contributes to the development of collective spirit and cooperation, with all the beneficial effects on one's psychology, social attitude and behavior. After all, dance contributes to the multilateral development of young people (Sanderson, 1988, Likesas, 2002) creating good emotional relationships just like the one which connects the mutual movements among the members of a dance group (Goleman, 1995). The present study suggests that a further investigation could be carried out, concerning adolescents older than thirteen, who participate in dance activities.

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TJELESNE AKTIVNOSTI, REKREACIJSKE AKTIVNOSTI I SOCIJALNE VJEŠTINE ADOLESCENATA

Sažetak

Plesne aktivnosti su rekreativne aktivnosti koje doprinose vitalnosti osobe koja je stoga sposobna nositi se sa svojim emocijama i razvijati društvene odnose. Iskustvo koje je stekla mlada osoba koja sudjeluje u rekreativnim aktivnostima doprinosi njenom osobnom i društvenom razvoju. Poučavanje društvenih vještina kroz rekreativne aktivnosti poboljšava socijalno ponašanje djece i adolescenata na najbolji mogući način. Sposobne vještine i empatija su čimbenici pozitivnog društvenog ponašanja, dok su nagle brze temperamentne reakcije i psihičko remećenje negativni čimbenici (Junttila, Voeten, Kaukiainen & Vauras, 2006). Cilj istraživanja bio je ispitati utječe li sudjelovanje u plesnim aktivnostima i grupnim tjelesnim aktivnostima na diferenciranje društvenih sposobnosti adolescenata i je li ta diferencijacija pod utjecajem spola. Prikupljanje podataka provedeno je pomoću Škole socijalnog ponašanja (SSBS, Merrell, 1993). Uzorak istraživanja sastojao se od 180 adolescenata, srednjoškolaca u dobi od 13 godina, koji su bili podijeljeni u tri skupine: a) plesači b) sportaši c) nesportaši. Rezultati su pokazali da plesači adolescenti imaju bolje modele u suvremenim vještinama i manje su destruktivni od skupine onih koji nisu sportaši. Što se tiče brze temperamentnosti i empatije, među skupinama nije bilo statistički značajnih razlika. Osim toga, nije bilo statistički značajnih razlika u odnosu na spol.

Ključne riječi: tjelesne aktivnosti, plesne aktivnosti, društveno ponašanje, društvene vještine

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