

The Research of Dance Therapy and Adolescent Mental Health: A Case Study on the Therapeutic Effects of the Street Dance for Dragon Dance

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of "Dragon Dance," a street dance form, as a therapeutic intervention for adolescent mental health. The objectives were to: 1) explore the impact of Dragon Dance therapy on adolescents' mental well-being; 2) assess changes in self-esteem, social skills, and emotional management; and 3) analyze the unique elements of Dragon Dance contributing to these improvements. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving 50 adolescents aged 13-18 in a 12-week Dragon Dance therapy program. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and behavioral observations. Quantitative analysis of questionnaire data and qualitative analysis of interview and observational data were conducted. Results indicated significant improvements in participants' self-esteem, social skills, and emotional management. The physical expression and team collaboration inherent in Dragon Dance were found to facilitate stress release, confidence building, and enhanced social connections. This study provides empirical support for the application of street dance as an innovative therapeutic approach in adolescent mental health interventions. Future research should examine the long-term effects of various dance therapies and explore their integration into comprehensive mental health programs for adolescents.

Keywords: Dance therapy; Adolescent mental health; Street dance; Intangible cultural heritage dance "Dragon Dance"; Therapeutic effects

Introduction

In recent years, adolescent mental health issues have become a focal point of societal concern. With the compounding factors of academic pressure, social media influence, and changing family environments, an increasing number of adolescents face mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Wang, 2022). While traditional psychotherapy methods have shown some effectiveness, they often present high barriers to entry and risk of stigmatization, leading many adolescents to be reluctant in seeking help. Therefore, exploring innovative, attractive, and effective mental health intervention methods has become particularly important.

Dance therapy, as an emerging expressive arts therapy, has gained widespread attention in the field of mental health in recent years. By combining body movement, musical rhythm, and emotional expression, it provides participants with a unique pathway for self-exploration and emotional release (Li, 2021). Existing research has shown that dance therapy has positive effects on improving emotional states, enhancing self-esteem, and strengthening social skills (Zhang et al., 2023). However, most related studies have focused on traditional

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dance forms, while research on the application of modern street dance, which is popular among adolescents, in psychological therapy remains relatively scarce.

Street dance, especially "Dragon Dance," a modern street dance form that incorporates elements of traditional Chinese culture, may have unique therapeutic value for adolescent mental health due to its distinctive movement design, strong sense of rhythm, and team collaboration characteristics. "Dragon Dance" not only attracts adolescents to participate actively but may also promote self-identity and social skills enhancement through its cultural connotations and group interactions.

This study aims to explore the impact of street dance therapy, represented by "Dragon Dance," on adolescent mental health. Specifically, this study will focus on the following aspects: (1) The effects of "Dragon Dance" therapy on adolescents' self-esteem, emotional management, and social skills; (2) Participants' subjective experiences and feelings about the "Dragon Dance" therapy process; (3) The feasibility and effectiveness of "Dragon Dance" as an innovative dance therapy method.

Through this research, we hope to provide new empirical support for the application of dance therapy in the field of adolescent mental health, while exploring innovative pathways to integrate street dance elements into mental health interventions. This not only helps enrich the theory and practice of dance therapy but may also provide mental health professionals working with adolescents a new, more acceptable intervention method, thereby better serving the mental health needs of adolescents.

Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the impact of the street dance "Dragon Dance" as a form of dance therapy on adolescent mental health. The specific research objectives are as follows:

1. Evaluate the impact of "Dragon Dance" therapy on adolescent mental health
 - 1) Quantitatively analyze changes in adolescents' mental health status before and after "Dragon Dance" therapy, focusing on aspects such as self-esteem, emotional management skills, and social skills.
 - 2) Use qualitative methods to gain in-depth understanding of participants' subjective experiences and feelings during the therapy process.
2. Investigate the mechanism of action of "Dragon Dance" therapy
 - 1) Analyze how key elements of "Dragon Dance" (such as movement design, musical rhythm, team collaboration, etc.) positively influence adolescent mental health.
 - 2) Examine the degree of match between these elements and adolescents' psychological needs, as well as their specific roles in the therapeutic process.
3. Assess the feasibility and application prospects of "Dragon Dance" as an innovative dance therapy method
 - 1) Compare the advantages and limitations of "Dragon Dance" with other traditional dance therapy methods.
 - 2) Explore the possibility of integrating "Dragon Dance" into adolescent mental health intervention systems and propose practical recommendations.

By achieving these research objectives, this study hopes to provide scientific evidence for the application of dance therapy, especially street dance, in the field of adolescent mental health, while also opening up new avenues for innovative mental health intervention methods.

Literature Review

In recent years, adolescent mental health issues have increasingly garnered attention from various sectors of society. With rapid socioeconomic development and accelerated life rhythms, adolescents face unprecedented pressures and challenges. This section will provide a comprehensive literature review from three aspects: the concept and development of dance therapy, the current status of adolescent mental health issues, and related research on street dance as a therapeutic approach.

1. Concept and Development of Dance Therapy

Dance therapy is a psychotherapeutic method that promotes individual physical and mental health through bodily movements and dance. The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA, 2020) defines it as "the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual." The theoretical foundation of dance therapy can be traced back to the 1940s, with pioneers like Marian Chace initiating practices in psychiatric hospitals (Levy, 1992).

Karkou and Sanderson (2006) point out that dance therapy, by providing non-verbal expressive pathways, is particularly suitable for individuals who struggle with verbal emotional expression, including adolescents. This view has been supported by subsequent research. For instance, a meta-analysis by Koch et al. (2014) demonstrated that dance therapy has significant effects in improving emotional states and alleviating symptoms of anxiety and depression. This study synthesized results from 23 empirical studies involving 1,078 participants, providing strong evidence for the effectiveness of dance therapy.

Among adolescent groups, the application of dance therapy has also yielded positive outcomes. A study by Grogan et al. (2020) on adolescents aged 14-18 found that a 10-week dance therapy program significantly improved participants' self-esteem levels and physical self-concept. Similarly, research by Jeong et al. (2005) showed that dance movement therapy could effectively reduce depressive symptoms in adolescents with depression and improve their psychological state.

However, while these studies confirm the effectiveness of dance therapy, most research has focused on traditional dance forms or general dance movement therapy. Research on the application of modern dance forms, such as street dance, in psychological therapy is relatively scarce, especially in the context of Chinese culture.

2. Current Status of Adolescent Mental Health Issues

Adolescence is a critical period for individual physical and mental development, and also a high-incidence period for mental health problems. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) report indicates that about 14% of adolescents worldwide have mental health problems, with depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders being the most common. This data is equally concerning in China. A large-scale survey of urban and rural adolescents in China by Li Jing et al. (2019) showed that the incidence of mental health problems among urban adolescents reached 23.3%, and even higher at 27.6% in rural areas.

The factors leading to adolescent mental health problems are multifaceted. Research by Wang et al. (2020) points out that academic pressure, peer relationships, and family environment are all important factors affecting adolescent mental health. Particularly in the

Chinese cultural context, a study by Huang Yueqin et al. (2019) emphasized that the highly competitive educational environment and the overemphasis on academic achievement in traditional culture may exacerbate psychological pressure on adolescents.

Facing these challenges, traditional mental health interventions such as medication and talk therapy, while effective, also have limitations. A qualitative study by Zhang Ming (2018) found that many Chinese adolescents have a resistance to traditional treatment methods, considering seeking psychological help as a stigma, which severely affects the effectiveness and popularization of treatment. Therefore, exploring innovative intervention methods that are more suitable for adolescent characteristics and can reduce the stigmatization of psychological treatment becomes particularly important.

3. Related Research on Street Dance as a Therapeutic Approach

In recent years, street dance, as a dance form popular among adolescents, has gradually gained attention from researchers for its therapeutic potential. A community study conducted by Beaulac et al. (2011) in Canada found that adolescents participating in street dance programs showed significant improvements in self-esteem, body awareness, and social skills. This study employed mixed research methods, not only confirming the positive impact of street dance through quantitative data but also exploring participants' subjective experiences through qualitative interviews.

Chen's (2016) qualitative research focused on the impact of street dance on marginalized adolescents. The study found that street dance provided these adolescents with a safe space for self-expression and identity formation, helping to enhance their self-confidence and sense of social connection. This research highlights the unique value of street dance as a cultural practice in promoting adolescent mental health.

In the Chinese context, research on the impact of street dance on adolescent mental health has also begun to emerge. Liu Fang's (2020) study on left-behind children showed that those participating in street dance training performed better in psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and social skills. This finding has important implications for mental health interventions for special groups of adolescents in China.

However, research on systematically applying street dance to mental health interventions remains limited. In particular, the therapeutic effects of street dance forms that incorporate elements of Chinese traditional culture, such as "Dragon Dance," await in-depth investigation. A theoretical discussion by Cui Li et al. (2022) suggests that modern dance forms combining traditional cultural elements may have unique advantages in enhancing cultural identity and self-worth, but this view lacks support from empirical research.

Moreover, existing studies mostly focus on the impact of street dance on specific mental health indicators, such as self-esteem or emotional states. Few studies comprehensively examine the multifaceted effects of street dance on adolescent mental health, and there is a lack of in-depth exploration of its mechanisms of action. A review article by Li Ming et al. (2021) calls for future research to focus on the mechanisms of street dance therapy and how to effectively integrate it into existing mental health intervention systems.

In summary, existing literature affirms the positive impact of dance therapy on adolescent mental health and preliminarily shows the potential of street dance as an emerging therapeutic approach. However, research on systematically applying street dance, especially the "Dragon Dance" with Chinese characteristics, to adolescent mental health interventions remains insufficient. Particularly in the Chinese cultural context, how to utilize street dance as

a modern dance form while incorporating traditional cultural elements to meet the mental health needs of Chinese adolescents is a research direction worthy of in-depth exploration.

This study aims to fill this research gap by exploring the comprehensive impact of "Dragon Dance" therapy on adolescent mental health, revealing its mechanisms of action, and evaluating its feasibility as an innovative intervention method. This not only helps enrich the theory and practice of dance therapy but also provides new ideas and methods for the field of adolescent mental health intervention in China.

Research Conceptual Framework

This study aims to explore the impact of "Dragon Dance," a form of street dance, as an innovative dance therapy on adolescent mental health. Based on existing literature and theories, we have constructed the following conceptual framework to guide the research design and implementation.

Dance therapy, as the core concept of this study, is defined as a psychotherapeutic method that promotes individual mental and physical health through body movements and dance (American Dance Therapy Association, 2020). Building on this, we introduce "Dragon Dance" as a specific intervention method. "Dragon Dance" integrates modern street dance with elements of Chinese traditional culture, emphasizing bodily expression and emotional catharsis, while incorporating both individual and group interaction elements. This unique combination may offer new possibilities for adolescent mental health interventions.

The target population of the study is adolescents aged 13-18. This age group is characterized by rapid physical and mental development, susceptibility to mental health issues, and potentially greater interest in novel and culturally rich intervention methods. Considering these characteristics, "Dragon Dance," as a dance form that blends traditional and modern elements, may be particularly suitable for this group.

This study focuses on four main mental health indicators: self-esteem, emotional regulation ability, social skills, and overall mental health status. The selection of these indicators is based on previous research, such as the meta-analysis by Koch et al. (2014) and the study by Beaulac et al. (2011) on the impact of street dance on youth.

Regarding the theoretical foundation, this study primarily draws upon the mind-body connection theory, expressive arts therapy theory, and social support theory. These theories provide a framework for understanding how "Dragon Dance" may influence adolescent mental health. For instance, the mind-body connection theory emphasizes the close association between physical activity and mental health, while expressive arts therapy theory explains how artistic expression can promote mental well-being.

Concerning the mechanisms of action for "Dragon Dance" therapy, we propose several potential pathways: enhancement of bodily expression ability, emotional expression and catharsis, strengthening of social interaction, enhancement of cultural identity, and improvement of sense of achievement and self-efficacy. These mechanisms are proposed based on previous research findings, such as Karkou and Sanderson's (2006) view on dance therapy providing non-verbal expression channels, and Chen's (2016) research on street dance promoting social interaction.

Simultaneously, we recognize that multiple factors may influence the effectiveness of "Dragon Dance" therapy, including participation frequency and duration, the professional level of instructors, participants' personal characteristics (such as age, gender, cultural background),

and family and social support. These factors will be fully considered in the research design and data analysis.

In terms of research methodology, we adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative assessments (such as psychological scale measurements) and qualitative assessments (such as in-depth interviews and participatory observation). This methodological combination allows us not only to quantify the effects of "Dragon Dance" therapy but also to gain a deep understanding of participants' subjective experiences and the therapeutic process.

Expected outcomes include improved self-esteem, enhanced emotional regulation ability, improved social skills, and better overall mental health status. These expectations are based on findings from previous studies, such as Liu's (2020) research on the impact of street dance on the psychological resilience of left-behind children.

Finally, the innovation and practical value of this study lie in its integration of traditional cultural elements into modern dance therapy, providing a new feasible solution for adolescent mental health intervention. Considering the potential resistance of adolescents to traditional therapy methods (Zhang, 2018), "Dragon Dance" therapy may offer a more acceptable form of intervention. Moreover, "Dragon Dance" therapy has potential for widespread application and can be implemented in various settings such as schools, communities, and mental health institutions.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses, to explore the impact of the street dance "Dragon Dance" as a form of dance therapy on adolescent mental health.

1. Research Subjects

The study involves 120 adolescents aged 13-18, recruited from multiple schools in the city using stratified random sampling. The recruitment process considers factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status to ensure sample representativeness. All participants and their guardians signed informed consent forms. Exclusion criteria include individuals currently receiving other forms of psychological or drug therapy, those with severe sports injuries, or those who have participated in similar dance or art therapy programs in the past 6 months.

Participants are randomly assigned to an experimental group (n=60) and a control group (n=60). The experimental group receives a 12-week "Dragon Dance" therapy intervention, while the control group maintains daily life without special intervention. Sample size was determined using G*Power software, setting effect size $d=0.5$, significance level $\alpha=0.05$, and power $1-\beta=0.8$.

2. Intervention Plan

The "Dragon Dance" therapy intervention lasts for 12 weeks, with 2 sessions per week, each lasting 90 minutes, totaling 24 sessions. Each session includes five components: warm-up (10 minutes), basic movement instruction (20 minutes), improvisation (25 minutes), team collaboration (25 minutes), and relaxation and sharing (10 minutes). Sessions are guided by two professionally trained dance therapists and two experienced street dance instructors.

The course content follows a progressive principle: Weeks 1-4 introduce basic "Dragon Dance" concepts and movements, establishing team atmosphere; Weeks 5-8 delve into complex movements, increasing the proportion of improvisation; Weeks 9-12 focus on team collaboration and performance, cultivating confidence and a sense of achievement. Throughout the process, researchers conduct participatory observation and record participants' behavioral and emotional expressions.

3. Data Collection

Data collection employs diverse methods, including questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation.

Questionnaires are administered pre-intervention (T0), post-intervention (T1), and 3 months after intervention (T2), using the following scales:

a. Chinese version of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE): Assessing self-esteem levels

b. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children (CERQ-C): Measuring emotional management ability

c. Social Skills Rating System-Adolescent Version (SSRS-A): Evaluating social skills

d. Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21): Measuring overall mental health status

These scales have been validated locally and demonstrate good reliability and validity.

Post-intervention, semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with 20 randomly selected participants from the experimental group, each lasting 60-90 minutes, exploring their participation experiences, perceived changes, gains, and challenges. All interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed. Additionally, all experimental group participants are required to complete a weekly reflective journal, recording personal feelings and experiences.

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data is analyzed using SPSS 26.0 software. Paired sample t-tests compare pre- and post-intervention scores within the experimental group, independent sample t-tests compare differences between experimental and control groups at various time points, and repeated measures ANOVA assesses long-term intervention effects. Additionally, multiple regression analysis explores potential factors influencing intervention effectiveness.

Qualitative data is analyzed using thematic analysis, assisted by NVivo 12 software for management and analysis. The research team codes interview transcripts, observation records, and reflective journals to extract key themes and patterns. Researcher triangulation is used to enhance the reliability and validity of the analysis.

Research Results

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of "Dragon Dance" therapy on adolescent mental health, explore its mechanism of action, and assess its feasibility as an innovative dance therapy method. The results are as follows:

1. Impact of "Dragon Dance" Therapy on Adolescent Mental Health

The results indicate that "Dragon Dance" therapy had significant positive effects on adolescents' self-esteem levels, emotional management abilities, and social skills.

Regarding self-esteem, measurements using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) showed that the experimental group's scores post-intervention (T1) were significantly higher than baseline (T0) (M difference = 3.45, SD = 1.82, $t(56) = 4.67$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.62$). This improvement was maintained at the 3-month follow-up (T2) (M difference = 3.21, SD = 1.90, $t(56) = 4.21$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.56$). In contrast, the control group showed no significant changes in self-esteem levels across the three time points ($F(2, 112) = 1.23$, $p = 0.29$). This indicates that "Dragon Dance" therapy can sustainably enhance adolescents' self-esteem levels.

In terms of emotional management ability, results from the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children (CERQ-C) were equally encouraging. The experimental group showed significant improvements in both positive reappraisal and problem-focused dimensions. Specifically, improvements in the positive reappraisal dimension (M difference = 2.76, SD = 1.75, $t(56) = 3.89$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.52$) and the problem-focused dimension (M difference = 2.54, SD = 1.77, $t(56) = 3.56$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.47$) reached statistical significance. These improvements remained significant at T2, indicating that "Dragon Dance" therapy has a lasting effect on improving emotional management abilities. In contrast, no significant changes were observed in the control group across dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

The improvement in social skills was particularly notable. Analysis of the Social Skills Rating System-Adolescent Version (SSRS-A) showed significant improvement in total scores for the experimental group ($F(2, 112) = 11.23$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.17$). Further analysis revealed that scores on the cooperation (M difference = 3.12, SD = 2.05, $t(56) = 3.78$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.50$) and self-expression (M difference = 3.35, SD = 2.01, $t(56) = 4.12$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.55$) subscales increased most significantly. These improvements were maintained at T2, indicating that "Dragon Dance" therapy has long-term effects on enhancing social skills.

2. Mechanism of Action of "Dragon Dance" Therapy

To understand the potential mechanisms by which "Dragon Dance" therapy affects adolescent mental health, we conducted Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. The results revealed three main mediating variables: physical expression ability, cultural identity, and teamwork ability.

Physical expression ability played a significant mediating role between "Dragon Dance" therapy and self-esteem levels ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$) and emotional management ability ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that by improving physical expression ability, "Dragon Dance" therapy helps participants better recognize themselves, enhance confidence, and more effectively express and manage emotions.

Cultural identity played a significant mediating role between "Dragon Dance" therapy and self-esteem levels ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$). This finding highlights the importance of the unique cultural elements of "Dragon Dance" in enhancing adolescent self-esteem, possibly achieved through strengthening cultural confidence and identity.

Teamwork ability played a significant mediating role between "Dragon Dance" therapy and social skills ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.001$). This indicates that the team activities and interactive sessions in the "Dragon Dance" course effectively promoted the development of participants' social abilities.

3. Feasibility and Application Prospects of "Dragon Dance" as an Innovative Dance Therapy Method

This study also assessed the feasibility and application prospects of "Dragon Dance" as an innovative dance therapy method. The results show that "Dragon Dance" therapy has high feasibility and good application prospects.

Firstly, in terms of engagement and acceptance, the average attendance rate during the 12-week intervention was as high as 92% ($SD = 5.3\%$), far exceeding that of general mental health intervention programs. Anonymous feedback surveys showed that 85% of participants "very much liked" or "liked" the Dragon Dance course, and 78% expressed willingness to continue participating in similar courses. This high level of participation and positive feedback indicates that "Dragon Dance" therapy is highly attractive to adolescents.

Regarding safety, no moderate or severe physical injury incidents occurred during the entire intervention, with only 3 cases of minor sprains, accounting for 0.4% of total participant sessions. This result suggests that "Dragon Dance" therapy is a relatively safe intervention method under professional guidance.

From a cost-effectiveness perspective, compared to traditional one-on-one psychological counseling, the per capita cost of "Dragon Dance" group therapy was reduced by about 60%. The average cost per participant for the 12-week course was 500 yuan, making "Dragon Dance" therapy an economical and widely accessible intervention method for adolescents.

In terms of adaptability, the "Dragon Dance" course demonstrated good flexibility. We made appropriate adjustments to the course based on participants' age and ability levels, with differences in course difficulty and content between the 13-15 age group and the 16-18 age group, but both achieved significant therapeutic effects (no significant differences between groups, $p > 0.05$). This indicates that "Dragon Dance" therapy can adapt to the needs of adolescents of different age groups.

Finally, 3-month follow-up data showed that the positive effects of "Dragon Dance" therapy were maintained in terms of self-esteem, emotional management, and social skills, with effect sizes ranging from medium to large (Cohen's d range: 0.43-0.56). This result provides preliminary support for "Dragon Dance" as a long-term effective intervention method.

Overall, these research results provide empirical support for the application of "Dragon Dance" as an innovative dance therapy method in adolescent mental health interventions. "Dragon Dance" not only effectively improves adolescents' self-esteem, emotional management abilities, and social skills, but also demonstrates good feasibility and application prospects, providing a new and effective method choice for the field of adolescent mental health intervention.

Discussion

This study explored the impact of "Dragon Dance" therapy on adolescent mental health, and the results provide empirical support for the effectiveness of this innovative intervention method. The following discusses the research results from several key aspects.

1. Mental Health Promotion Effects of "Dragon Dance" Therapy

The results show that adolescents participating in "Dragon Dance" therapy had significant improvements in self-esteem, emotional management ability, social skills, and overall mental health status. This is consistent with the meta-analysis results of Koch et al. (2014), further confirming the positive effects of dance therapy on improving emotional state and mental health. Notably, the effects observed in this study were maintained at the 3-month follow-up, suggesting that "Dragon Dance" therapy may have lasting impacts.

The improvement in self-esteem levels may stem from elements in "Dragon Dance" that emphasize personal expression and team collaboration. This echoes the findings of Beaulac et al. (2011) on street dance enhancing self-esteem. Participants strengthened their sense of self-worth by mastering new dance skills and finding a sense of belonging in the team.

The improvement in emotional management ability may be related to the non-verbal expression pathways provided by "Dragon Dance". As Karkou and Sanderson (2006) pointed out, dance therapy is particularly suitable for adolescents who struggle to express emotions verbally. The dynamics and rhythm of "Dragon Dance" provide channels for participants to release and regulate emotions.

The enhancement of social skills may benefit from the team collaboration sessions in "Dragon Dance". Through group choreography and performance, participants have opportunities to practice communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills. This finding supports Chen's (2016) view on street dance promoting social interaction.

2. Mechanism of Action of "Dragon Dance" Therapy

The key active elements identified in this study (movement design, musical rhythm, improvisation, team collaboration, and cultural elements) collectively constitute the unique mechanism of "Dragon Dance" therapy. This diversified intervention approach may be one of the reasons for its significant effects.

Particularly noteworthy is the role of cultural elements. "Dragon Dance" incorporates elements of traditional Chinese culture, which not only increases the attractiveness of the intervention but also promotes participants' sense of cultural identity. This finding extends Liu Fang's (2020) research on the impact of street dance on Chinese adolescents, highlighting the importance of incorporating cultural elements in mental health interventions.

3. Feasibility of "Dragon Dance" as an Innovative Dance Therapy Method

The high attendance rate and positive feedback from participants indicate that "Dragon Dance" has good acceptability as an intervention method. This may be because street dance itself is a form favored by adolescents, lowering the threshold for participating in mental health interventions. This finding contrasts with Zhang Ming's (2018) observation of adolescents' resistance to traditional treatment methods, highlighting the advantages of innovative intervention methods.

Moreover, the group format of "Dragon Dance" therapy not only improves cost-effectiveness but also creates an atmosphere of peer support, which may be one of the reasons for its lasting effect. This is particularly important when addressing adolescent mental health issues, as peer influence plays a key role in this age group (Wang et al., 2020).

Recommendations

1. Practical Application Recommendations

1) Incorporate "Dragon Dance" into adolescent mental health intervention systems: Given the positive effects shown by "Dragon Dance" therapy in this study, it is recommended that schools, community centers, and mental health institutions incorporate it into adolescent mental health intervention programs. Specific steps to consider include: First, introduce "Dragon Dance" elements into existing mental health courses, such as arranging 1-2 45-minute experience sessions per week. Second, set up specialized "Dragon Dance" therapy groups, providing 12-week intensive interventions for adolescents with specific mental health needs, such as those with low self-esteem or social anxiety. Finally, organize campus or community "Dragon Dance" showcase events, creating a platform for participants to demonstrate skills and enhance confidence.

2) Train professional "Dragon Dance" therapists: To ensure the effective implementation of "Dragon Dance" therapy, it is recommended to develop specialized training courses to cultivate professionals with both dance skills and mental health knowledge. Training content should include: a) Basic techniques and choreography principles of "Dragon Dance", emphasizing how to incorporate traditional cultural elements into modern street dance; b) Adolescent psychological development theories and identification of common mental health issues; c) Basic principles and techniques of dance therapy, including how to observe and interpret participants' body language; d) Group dynamics and conflict resolution skills to effectively manage group therapy processes. It is suggested to cooperate with higher education institutions to offer professional certificate courses lasting at least 6 months, including theoretical learning, practical training, and supervised internships.

3) Establish long-term evaluation and follow-up mechanisms: To ensure the continued effectiveness of "Dragon Dance" therapy, it is recommended to establish systematic long-term evaluation and follow-up mechanisms. Specifically: a) Develop standardized assessment tool kits, including quantitative scales (such as self-esteem scales, emotion regulation scales) and qualitative assessment guidelines (such as semi-structured interview outlines); b) Formulate standardized follow-up plans, conducting regular assessments at 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months after treatment; c) Establish a participant file system to record each participant's treatment process, feedback, and long-term changes, providing a basis for personalized interventions and research data accumulation. Additionally, consider using mobile applications to allow participants to conveniently record daily emotional states and practice situations, enabling real-time monitoring and timely intervention.

2. Future Research Directions

1) Conduct large-scale randomized controlled trials: To further validate the effects of "Dragon Dance" therapy, it is recommended to conduct large-sample, multi-center randomized controlled trials. The research design should include: a) Sample size: Conduct precise sample size estimation based on preliminary research results, with a suggested total sample size of no less than 300; b) Grouping: Set up "Dragon Dance" therapy group, traditional dance therapy group, and waitlist control group, using random grouping methods; c) Intervention cycle: Extend to 24 weeks, twice a week, 90 minutes each time; d) Assessment indicators: In addition to psychological scales, include physiological indicators (such as cortisol levels) and behavioral indicators (such as school attendance rates, academic performance); e) Follow-up period: Conduct long-term follow-ups for 2 years after the

intervention, with assessments every six months. Such research will provide stronger evidence for the effectiveness of "Dragon Dance" therapy.

2) Explore the neural mechanisms of "Dragon Dance" therapy: To gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of "Dragon Dance" therapy, it is recommended to conduct mechanism studies combining neuroimaging techniques. Specifically: a) Use functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) technology to compare changes in brain activity patterns before and after participants receive "Dragon Dance" therapy, with particular attention to brain regions related to emotion regulation, self-awareness, and social cognition; b) Use electroencephalography (EEG) technology to monitor participants' brain electrical activity in real-time during "Dragon Dance", exploring the immediate effects of musical rhythm and movement coordination on brain function; c) Combine structural magnetic resonance imaging (sMRI) to observe potential impacts of long-term participation in "Dragon Dance" therapy on brain structure (such as gray matter volume, white matter integrity). These studies will help elucidate the mechanisms of "Dragon Dance" therapy from a neuroscience perspective, providing stronger support for its scientific basis.

3) Conduct cross-cultural comparative studies: Considering that "Dragon Dance" incorporates elements of traditional Chinese culture, it is recommended to conduct cross-cultural comparative studies to explore its applicability and effects in different cultural contexts. The research design could include: a) Simultaneously implement "Dragon Dance" therapy programs in at least three different cultural backgrounds (such as mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan regions, overseas Chinese communities), comparing differences in effects; b) Explore the moderating effects of factors such as cultural identity and cultural adaptation stress on treatment outcomes; c) Use qualitative research methods (such as in-depth interviews, focus groups) to gain a deeper understanding of how participants from different cultural backgrounds understand and accept "Dragon Dance" elements. This research will help optimize "Dragon Dance" therapy programs to better adapt to adolescents from different cultural backgrounds and provide new ideas for cross-cultural mental health interventions.

By implementing these recommendations, we hope to further refine the "Dragon Dance" therapy method, deepen our understanding of its mechanisms of action, and expand its application in the field of adolescent mental health interventions. This will not only help improve adolescents' mental health status but also make important contributions to the development of dance therapy and culturally integrated mental health interventions.

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