

Music and Dance Education and Its Contribution to Physical Well Being of Basic School Learners within Mampong Municipality in Ashanti Region of Ghana

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of Music and dance education on the physical well-being of primary school Learners within Mampong Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. A sample of 60 students from selected Schools within the Municipality was selected using a random sampling procedure. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the respondents. The study revealed that Music and dance education has a positive impact on students' physical well-being, improving physical fitness, energy levels, and overall happiness. The findings suggest that dance education can be a valuable tool for promoting physical activity and well-being among primary school students. The study recommends integrating diverse physical activities, including dance, into school curricula, allocating funding for equipment and facilities, providing teacher training, engaging parents and the community, and regular assessments and evaluations to enhance the impact of dance education on students' physical well-being.

Keywords: Music, Dance, Education, Physical, Well – being

Introduction

Background of the Study

Schools play a pivotal role in fostering holistic individuals by addressing various developmental needs such as self-esteem, self-concept, critical thinking, and creativity (Chacón-López and Maeso-Broncano, 2023). In addressing these needs, it is essential for schools to place a stronger emphasis on physical education within the regular curriculum, incorporating creative dance as a means of fostering communication through movement.

The significance of physical education in schools, particularly through music and dance programs, is underscored by the positive impact on children's physical and cognitive development (James et al., 2023). Recognizing the importance of encouragement in fostering learning interest, schools are advised to strive to create an environment that supports creative expression, integrating various art forms such as music, drama, and dance. This not only contributes to a joyful learning atmosphere but also enhances children's creative abilities, allowing them to apply learned concepts to real-life situations.

The developmental approach to introducing dance to children emphasizes starting with exercises closer to the ground, gradually progressing upward. Creative dance serves as an accessible tool for diverse forms of exercise, providing children with a better understanding of their bodies. Pulimeno et al. (2020) suggests selecting themes from subjects familiar to children, such as nature, fairy tales, or everyday life, as a way to enhance engagement and connection in their dance expressions.

The creative experience curriculum not only encourages independent thinking and problem-solving but also explores the potential for achieving these objectives through dance, emphasizing that the effectiveness of such experiences does not necessarily depend on the length of the dance piece. This perspective reinforces the

idea that dance can be a powerful vehicle for nurturing independent thinking and problem-solving skills among students.

Statement of the Problem

Within Mampong municipality of Ghana, the decline in physical activity, especially among the adolescent population in primary schools, poses a serious concern for their overall health and development. The existing challenges, influenced by societal perceptions of femininity and other cultural norms highlight the need for targeted interventions. Observations from community health reports, school health assessments, and discussions with educators brought attention to the fact that, there is substantial decrease in physical activity levels among adolescents. The societal perception of dance as a less conventional form of physical activity for girls could probably be associated with the decline.. The need for effective strategies to address this decline is evident, emphasizing the importance of a focused exploration into potential interventions, specifically Dance Movement Practice.

This study aims to explore the potential of Dance Movement Practice (DMP) as an effective intervention to address the decline in physical activity among adolescents in primary schools within Mampong Municipality

Objectives of the study

1. Assess the current level of physical activity among primary school students in Mampong Municipality.
2. Examine the impact of Music and dance education on the physical well-being of primary school students within Mampong Municipality.

Research Questions

1. What is the current level of physical activity among primary school students in Mampong Municipality?
2. How does Music and dance education impact the physical well-being of primary school students within the Mampong Municipality?

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Dance Education

Dance education is a multifaceted approach to teaching various forms of dance within educational settings. It encompasses cultural dances, contemporary styles, and creative movement, providing students with opportunities for physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development (Payne & Costas, 2020). At its core, dance education goes beyond the mastery of dance techniques; it fosters self-expression, creativity, and cultural exploration among students.

Dance education curriculum often includes elements such as technique classes, choreography workshops, dance history, and cultural studies. Through these components, students not only learn the technical aspects of dance but also gain insights into the cultural significance of different dance forms. This holistic approach to dance education allows students to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for various dance traditions and styles.

Moreover, dance education promotes physical fitness and health among students. Participation in dance classes improves cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, flexibility, and coordination. Beyond the physical benefits, dance also stimulates cognitive functions such as memory retention, attention span, and cognitive flexibility (Predovan et al., 2018). Students who engage in dance education often demonstrate improved academic performance, particularly in subjects requiring spatial reasoning and creative problem-solving skills.

Furthermore, dance education fosters social connections and emotional well-being among students. Collaborative dance activities encourage teamwork, communication, and empathy. Dance provides a platform for self-expression and emotional release, allowing students to develop confidence, resilience, and self-awareness (Salo, 2019).

Dance, Cognition, and Knowing

Expressive dance has been noted by Basso et al. (2021) to activate regions of the brain associated with heightened cognition. When children engage in dance activities involving the selection of movement options, they develop the ability to think in concrete, physical terms. Generating movement establishes a cognitive connection between ideas, problems, or intentions, and their outcomes or solutions. This somatic knowledge, as defined by Garaigordobil et al. (2022), plays a vital role in a child's development, supporting skills such as empathy, communication, and the interpretation of emotions in others. In contemporary times, children are spending less time engaged in outdoor play, face-to-face interaction with peers, or imaginative play, largely due to screen time, which may lead to a diminished somatic understanding, potentially hindering cognitive growth (Hinkley et al., 2018).

Somatic understanding is rooted in active learning derived from the body, encompassing its kinesthetic and sensory systems. This concept aligns with experiential learning, where active engagement and experimentation facilitate learning. Experiential learning frameworks advocate for opportunities to apply content through practices such as problem-based learning (Payne et al., 2015), positing that students benefit from guidance in applying content rather than mere exposition.

Neuro-education seeks to enhance learning by altering brain function related to perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and kinesthetic abilities (Martínez-Montes et al., 2016). Bryck and Fisher (2012) proposed a learning cycle grounded in neuroplasticity. According to this model, effective learning necessitates safe, supportive relationships; moderate sympathetic arousal; engagement of emotions, feelings, and thoughts; activities that encourage embodied self-reflection; co-constructed narratives that foster a positive self-image (Cozolino, 2013); and active learning—all elements inherent in experiential learning facilitated through creative dance.

Dance and Socio-emotional Learning

Despite the aforementioned concerns, schools also prioritize the development of social, emotional, and communicative skills. Echoing Goleman's assertion from 1995, the educational system remains predominantly focused on cultivating cognitive abilities, often overlooking emotional competencies, empathy, and flexibility originating from other brain regions (Goleman, 1995, p. 244). Goleman highlights the biological foundation of the social brain, emphasizing the intricate network of neuronal connections activated during interpersonal interactions (p. 80). These socio-emotional skills play a crucial role in navigating complex life situations and managing heightened stress levels. Integrating dance into a curriculum that leans heavily towards cognitive pursuits may facilitate the development of socio-emotional and communication skills among children. This inclusion can equip them with a sense of identity, increased self-assurance, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, empathy, creativity, and decision-making abilities. Moreover, heightened attention to bodily sensations can enhance interoceptive accuracy, a fundamental aspect of emotional regulation (Füstös et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2015). Additionally, physical activity has been linked to improved emotional and mental well-being, a pressing concern in many educational settings today.

Research by Bojner Horwitz et al. (2015) suggests that dance activities engage the body in emotional exchanges with others. Similarly, Pereira and Marques-Pinto (2017) investigated dance's role in socio-emotional learning, finding significant improvements in students' self-management and relationship skills. Collaboration in creative dance endeavors fosters nonverbal relationship development, enabling children to convey feelings and ideas through bodily movement, complementing verbal expression.

Furthermore, music and dance has the potential to enhance emotional literacy—the ability to perceive, interpret, and express emotions effectively. Through symbolic management of emotions, children develop the capacity for positive, enduring relationships. Creative dance serves as a conduit for emotional expression, contributing to psychological health, well-being, and maturity. It provides a structured, secure avenue for emotional release while promoting self-awareness and empathy towards others. This peer-to-peer interaction mirrors the collaborative nature of experiential learning, where interpersonal engagement is emphasized.

Physiological Benefits of Music and Dance Education

Music and Dance education has been recognized for its profound impact on the physical well-being of students, particularly in the primary school setting. This section reviews existing literature on the physiological benefits of dance education, focusing on its influence on cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, flexibility, and overall physical health. Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of dance education on cardiovascular fitness among primary school students. Koch et al. (2019) conducted a longitudinal study examining the effects of a dance education program on cardiovascular health in elementary school students. They found that regular participation in dance classes led to significant improvements in heart rate variability and aerobic endurance. Similarly, Basso et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of studies investigating the impact of dance education on cardiovascular fitness in children. Their findings indicated that dance education interventions resulted in notable improvements in cardiovascular parameters, such as resting heart rate and maximal oxygen consumption.

In addition to cardiovascular benefits, dance education has been shown to enhance muscular strength and endurance in students. Brown and Johnson (2017) conducted a controlled trial assessing the effects of a dance intervention on muscular fitness in primary school children. They found that participants who engaged in dance classes demonstrated significant gains in muscular strength and endurance compared to the control group. Furthermore, dance activities that incorporate resistance training and bodyweight exercises contribute to the development of muscular strength and endurance among students (Wołoszyn et al., 2023).

Flexibility is another area where dance education can have a positive impact on students' physical health. Wong and Chen (2021) conducted a systematic review of studies examining the effects of dance education on

flexibility in children and adolescents. Their review revealed that participation in dance classes led to improvements in joint flexibility and range of motion, particularly in areas such as the spine, hips, and ankles. The dynamic stretching and movement patterns inherent in dance routines contribute to increased flexibility and suppleness among students (García et al., 2019).

Movements and gestures as unique characteristics of young learners

Movements and gestures often accompany behaviours of young students. They try to express themselves better with the body movements and the gestures. According to Adomina et al (2019), learners do well in comprehension of their lessons when the lessons are associated with movements and gestures. They explain such movements as organized and non – organized. They discuss that, in the organized movements, the teacher or the instructor, guide the learners in relation to the focus of the lessons. Whilst in the non – organized movements, the students themselves explore the movements to accompany their activities. They discuss further that, the movements that could be used by a teacher to deliver lessons in class could also be classified as loco motor and non- loco motor. They share that loco motor movement involves the displacement of the body from one place to the other. Whilst non loco motor movement, involves movement when the body is at stationary position.

They explain that, depending on the instructor at the time, any of the body movement type could be used to deliver a lesson to students for easier understanding.

Effect of performing arts on teaching and learning in Ghana

Performing arts cut across all the daily activities of the people of Ghana.

According to Ndah (2018) performing arts are involved in the educational institutions. He discusses that in the formal education school system, music features during the assembly and worship period. He adds also that there are cultural festivals that are organized during the school annually in the first and second cycle institutions in Ghana by the Ghana Education Service. He opines that, many performing arts disciplines are showcased during such events which prepare the learners to appreciate the arts in addition to the cognitive development that the schools offer.

According to Adominah et al (2005) performing arts in teaching and learning help the learners to relate the abstract themes to reality resulting in the proper understanding of concepts. They opine that learners especially at the lower level learn better when the lesson involves music, dance and drama. They discuss further that, when lessons are delivered in performing arts, it aids the students to be active; hence understand the lessons better.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to explore music and dance education's effects within natural school settings in the study area.

Population

The population of this study refers to the complete group of individuals with specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Ahmad et al., 2023). This study specifically focused on some primary school learners within the Mampong Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana with a total population of 142 learners. These students constitute the primary focus of the research, providing insights into the relationship between dance education and physical well-being in primary school settings.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A sample of 60 students, with 20 students from each class (Basic 4, 5, and 6), were selected using a random sampling technique. Purposive sampling was equally employed to select schools based on accessibility, willingness to participate, and diversity in demographics and academic performance.

Research Instruments

This study employed semi-structured interviews, which is defined as interviews guided by a predetermined set of questions while allowing flexibility for elaboration and exploration of topics (Taherdoost, 2022). The interview was structured into two sections, each comprising 15 questions. The interviews were designed to elicit insights into the current level of physical activity among primary school students at the study area as well as the impact of music and dance education on their physical well-being.

Data Collection Procedure

Ethical clearance was sought from Municipal Education office. This clearance was then provided to the respective head teachers of the participated schools in ensuring compliance with ethical standards. Using a random sampling technique, students were selected from each cluster of schools to take part in the study.

Data Analysis Techniques

All collected data were organized, interpreted, and presented systematically for thorough analysis. Information from the field was initially sorted, coded, and computed. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. Qualitative data were organized into categories, themes, and patterns, which were then examined and interpreted. Quantitative data were presented using percentages and frequency tables to facilitate understanding.

Presentation and Discussions

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age

The following table presents the age distribution of students surveyed in relation to their engagement with physical activities and dance classes. This breakdown allows one to understand how different age groups perceive and participate in these activities within the school community.

Age Distribution	Frequency	Percentages
9-11 years	25	41.67
10-12 years	20	33.3
11-13 years	15	25

Source: Researchers field note (2024)

The age distribution of students surveyed shows that the largest group falls within the 9-11 years age range, with 25 students, representing 41.67% of the sample. The next largest group is the 10-12 years age range, comprising 20 students, which accounts for 33.3% of the sample. The smallest group is the 11-13 years age range, with 15 students, making up 25% of the sample.

Research Question 1: What is the current level of physical activity among primary school Learners at Mampong Municipality?

The table below illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their current level of physical activity outside of school hours. This breakdown provides insights into students' engagement in physical activities and their weekly time commitments to such activities.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by current level of physical activity

Statement	Agree Freq.	%	Disagree Freq.	%
1. I engage in physical activities outside of school hours regularly.	54	90	6	4
2. I spend 3-5 hours per week on physical activities.	27	45	33	55
3. I spend 6-8 hours per week on physical activities.	17	28.3	43	71.7

Source: The researchers (2024)

The table highlights that 54 respondents (90%) engage in physical activities outside of school hours regularly, while 6 respondents (10%) disagree. Additionally, 27 respondents (45%) spend 3-5 hours per week on physical activities, whereas 33 respondents (55%) disagree with this statement. Furthermore, 17 respondents (28.3%) spend 6-8 hours per week on physical activities, with 43 respondents (71.7%) disagreeing with this level of engagement.

Research Question 2: How does Music and dance education impact the physical well-being of primary school students within Mampong Municipality?

The table below presents the distribution of respondents based on their perceptions of the impact of music and dance education on physical well-being. This breakdown provides insights into students' experiences and attitudes toward music and dance classes and their effects on various aspects of physical health and wellness.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by dance education impact on the physical well-being

statement	Agree Freq.	%	Disagree Freq.	%
4. I enjoy participating in dance classes.	45	75	15	25
5. I feel more energetic after participating in dance classes.	42	70	18	30
6. I feel happier after participating in dance classes.	57	95	7	5
7. I feel healthier after participating in dance classes	41	68.3	19	31.7
8. I feel that my physical fitness has improved due to dance classes.	42	70	18	30
9. Dance classes have positively influenced my interest in physical activities outside of school.	45	75	15	25

Source: The researchers (2024)

The table reveals that a majority of respondents perceive positive effects from dance classes on their physical well-being. Specifically, 75% enjoy participating in dance classes, 70% feel more energetic afterward, and 95% report feeling happier. Additionally, 68.3% feel healthier and 70% believe that their physical fitness has improved due to dance classes. Moreover, 75% feel that dance classes have positively influenced their interest in engaging in physical activities outside of school.

Discussion of Research Findings

In this section, the findings are discussed in relation to:

1. Assess the current level of physical activity among primary school students in Mampong Municipality.
2. Examine the impact of Music and dance education on the physical well-being of primary school students.

Objective 1: Assess the current level of physical activity among primary school learners.

The survey findings indicated that while a majority of students engage in physical activities outside of school hours regularly, the duration and intensity of these activities vary among respondents. Notably, a significant proportion of students reported spending 3-5 hours per week on physical activities, with fewer students dedicating 6-8 hours weekly. These findings suggest a moderate level of physical activity among the surveyed students, reflecting patterns observed in similar studies (Rodríguez-Romo et al., 2022). Previous research has consistently highlighted the importance of regular physical activity for children's health and well-being. Studies have shown that higher levels of physical activity are associated with improved cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, and mental health outcomes in school-aged children (Rodríguez-Romo et al., 2022). The study results underscored the need for ongoing efforts to promote and support physical activity among primary school students through school-based programs and community initiatives.

Objective 2: Examine the impact of dance education on the physical well-being of primary school students.

The study revealed positive outcomes associated with participation in dance classes among students. A substantial majority of respondents reported enjoying dance classes, feeling more energetic and happier afterward, and perceiving improvements in physical fitness and interest in physical activities outside of school. These findings align with existing literature on the benefits of dance education for children's health and overall well-being (Tao et al., 2022). Research has shown that dance programs can contribute to physical fitness, coordination, and flexibility among children, as well as promote positive psychological outcomes such as self-esteem and social interaction (Tao et al., 2022). The survey findings underscore the potential of dance education to enhance holistic well-being and contribute positively to students' overall school experience.

Conclusions

From the study, it can be concluded that most primary school students in Ashanti Mampong Municipality are moderately engaged in physical activities. However, there is a need to increase the duration and intensity of these activities to meet health recommendations. Music and Dance education significantly benefits students' physical well-being by improving their energy levels, happiness, and overall physical fitness. It also encourages a greater interest in other physical activities.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the impact of Music and dance education on students' physical well-being:

1. Efforts should be made to integrate a variety of physical activities, including dance, into school curricula to ensure students achieve recommended activity levels. Schools should encourage community

- partnerships to provide additional opportunities for students to engage in physical activities outside of school hours.
2. Funding should be allocated to equip schools with necessary dance equipment, such as speakers, dance mats, and appropriate spaces for dance classes. Facilities should be regularly assessed and upgraded to support diverse physical activity programs, including dance education.
 3. Professional development opportunities should be provided for teachers to acquire skills and knowledge for effective dance instruction.
 4. Comprehensive training programs that include practical workshops, ongoing support, and access to resources and best practices in dance education should be developed.
 5. Parents and the community should be engaged in promoting the benefits of dance education and encouraging children's participation in physical activities. Events and activities involving families and community members should be organized to foster a supportive environment for physical well-being.
 6. Regular assessments and evaluations of dance education programs should be implemented to monitor their effectiveness and impact on students' physical well-being. Data from these evaluations should be used to inform policy decisions, program improvements, and resource allocation.

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