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## **Traditional Dance as a Determinant of Physical Fitness and Well-Being of the Elderly**

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BY

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study was conducted to examine how traditional dance determines physical fitness and well-being of the elderly. Participating in dance may allow the elderly to improve their physical fitness, health and well-being. Another advantage is that they can significantly improve their aerobic capacity, lower body muscle endurance, strength and flexibility, balance, agility and gait through the dancing. Regular physical activity is considered one of the most important factors for lifestyle, maintaining good health in older ages and increasing life expectancy. Dance as a musical-kinetics skill, requires the coordination of body movements with rhythmic stimuli, developing the adaptability of the movement. Elderly seem to enjoy dancing as an activity while maintaining their functionality. Probably the elderly in traditional dance cause prosperity in their lives by promoting active aging. The study revealed that traditional dance has a way of impacting on physical fitness and well-being of the elderly. Hence, the study concluded how traditional dance impact on physical fitness and well-being of the elderly, it was believed that traditional dancing could be an important and effective tool for the prevention and the fight against the health problems of the elderly. The study show that traditional dancing contributes to the well-being of the elderly with a view of independent and quality living. Maintaining their physical fitness and functional capacity at satisfactory levels, lead them to a more qualitative and independent lifestyle while the risk of various diseases is reduced. One of the recommendation was that elderly should engage in traditional dancing on a regular basis to have better balance, postural stability and flexibility.*

**KEYWORD: Traditional Dance, Physical Fitness, Well-Being and Elderly**

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### **Introduction**

Traditional Dance is considered an activity that offers the involvement of different senses and connects movement to music with self-expression and applies different aspects of personality (Kaufmann, 2011; Studer-Lüthi and Züger, 2012). Music, which is an important component of dance, improves physical performance. It's easier going to start moving, walking, dancing or to deal with any kind of exercise if some people choose their favorite music. Kattenstroth et al. (2011) showed that elderly people dancing on a regular basis have better balance, postural stability, flexibility and physical reaction time. Hui et al. (2009) shown that after 24 sessions for 52 adults aged 68 on average and trained in low-

impact aerobic dancing, the dancers had improved their dynamic balance in Time Up-and-Go test, but not their static balance. Moreover, dance has been proposed as an actual promising program for the development and improvement of balance and to prevent falls in the elderly people (Judge, 2003).

The percentage of people aged 60 and over is growing faster worldwide than any other age group, and the resulting aging population presents challenges and opportunities for all countries increased due to new social and economic demands. Countries adapting to this changing demographic, invest in healthy aging to enable people to live longer and have a healthy life. Healthy Ageing involves creating an environment that allows people to engage actively throughout their lives. Both the elderly and the environments in which they live are diverse, dynamic, changing and playing an important role in determining the physical and mental ability throughout a person's life. In interaction with each other, they possess incredible possibilities to allow or limit healthy aging (World Health Organisation, 2018). Regular physical activity is considered one of the most important factors for lifestyle, maintaining good health in older ages and increasing life expectancy (Lee et al., 2012).

In surveys with elderly people, it seems that physical fitness may have beneficial effects on cognitive and the physical functions (Villareal et al., 2011). In addition, physical activity in the elderly is associated with increased survival (Manini et al., 2006; Stessman et al., 2009). In another study it seems that physical activity when done regularly, delaying the reduction of functional abilities associated with aging and sometimes reverses the loss and morbidity (Nied and Fraklin, 2002). The activities proposed for the elderly should lead to the improvement or maintenance of physical and mental health (Stathi et al., 2004). Tsimaras et al. (2012) investigated the impact of a Greek dance program in 13 adults with hearing problems in their aerobic capacity and muscle tone. After 12 weeks of dance program observed significant progress in physiological peak parameters such as oxygen consumption and exhaustion time. Other research with Greek traditional dance, performed on people with breast cancer, showed improvement in their physical functioning, satisfaction with their lives as well as reducing depression symptoms (Kaltsatou et al., 2011).

The advanced age besides changes in physical fitness, increases sensitivity to chronic diseases and disabilities, and reduces the quality of life (Wanderley et al., 2015). In many studies it has been shown that the combination of exercise with nutrition is considered effective intervention for elderly people. Improving or maintaining their nutritional status combined with exercise is associated with many benefits, including increased physical fitness and strength, reducing the incidence of sarcopenia, reducing functional loss and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries, reducing the risk of falls and/or their frequency. Also, improving gait and balance, their quality of life and mortality and morbidity of diseases by 30% of all causes (Weening-Dijksterhuis et al., 2011; Cadore et al., 2013). The satisfaction of life is observed as a basic characteristic of well-being, constitutes a provision for physical health and has gradually entered a more central in healthcare systems (Fugl-Meyer et al., 2002; Daig et al., 2009). Alternative categories of

exercise programs have been performed in elderly people (Sofianidis et al., 2009). Dance of any type is being used for many years as a treatment modality. Dance involves elderly people and increases their motivation (Lima and Vieira, 2007). Furthermore, it has been shown in investigations that elderly people are excited when participating in dance programs, thus improving the quality of life, balance and mobility (Song et al., 2004; Federici et al., 2005).

## Concept of Physical Fitness

Physical fitness refers to the ability of your body systems to work together efficiently to allow you to be healthy and perform activities of daily living. Being efficient means doing daily activities with the least effort possible. A fit person is able to perform schoolwork, meet home responsibilities, and still have enough energy to enjoy sport and other leisure activities. A fit person can respond effectively to normal life situations, such as raking leaves at home, stocking shelves at a part-time job, and marching in the band at school. A fit person can also respond to emergency situations - for example, by running to get help or aiding a friend in distress. (Corbin, & Masurier, 2017). Physical fitness is a state of health and well-being and, more specifically, the ability to perform aspects of sports, occupations and daily activities. Physical fitness is generally achieved through proper nutrition, (Tremblay et al 2010) moderate-vigorous physical exercise and sufficient rest. (De Groot & Fagerström 2011 and Malina 2010). Physical fitness refers to maximum functional capacity of all system of the body. We are exercising whenever we move and keeping our body tuned and in a good running order. The body of human is framed in such a way that it can jump, climb, bend, stretch and do more tedious work. (Sportsjone 2018). The human body becomes stronger as it exerts more and muscles involvement matters a lot in shaping it. Exercise helps in improving our health and builds up our energy and stamina. In simple terms, "physical fitness" refers to the ability of the body to adapt to external environment and cope with daily activities. Good physical fitness not only enables a person to carry out daily works, but also gives extra energy to enjoy leisure, ensuring the body can adapt to unexpected environmental changes and daily pressures. (LCSD 2018).

Physical fitness has always been an important part of life. It is theorized that when people left a hunter-gatherer lifestyle and formed fixed communities based around agriculture that physical fitness levels declined. This is not to say that levels of physical labour decreased but that the type of work undertaken was not necessarily as conducive to a general level of fitness. (Wikipedia 2017). As such, regimented fitness regimes were either invented or became more common. This was especially the case in classical civilizations such as Ancient Greece and Rome. In Greece, physical fitness was considered to be an essential component of a healthy life and it was the norm for men to frequent a gymnasium. Physical fitness regimes were also considered to be of paramount importance in a nation's ability to train soldiers for an effective military force. Partly for these reasons, organized fitness regimes have been in existence throughout known history and evidence of them can be found in many countries.

## Concept of Well-Being

The concept of wellbeing is very broad and is applied to many situations for a variety of purposes (Paim, 2005). Applications of the concept range from specific domains of wellbeing, such as economic, material, social, and psychological, to all the domains impacting upon people. The diversity results from the different reasons there are for using the concept and different approaches to measuring it. The particular measure or measures that are used – or developed for use in any particular context reflect the purpose of the

measurement and the disciplinary and theoretical perspectives that inform the measurement. Veenhoven (2004) suggests that, very broadly, the term 'wellbeing' "denotes that something is in a good state." Beyond that, the term does not, in itself, specify what is in a good state, nor the criteria for being in a good state. As with other 'catchall' terms, such as 'progress' and 'welfare'. The term 'wellbeing' needs to be clarified by specifying what the term applies to and what constitutes it (a state of wellbeing). As far as the first question is concerned, the approaches to wellbeing that are discussed in this paper focus on the wellbeing of people, whether through the satisfaction of their preferences or the exercise of their capabilities.

Bradburn cited in Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Saunders, (2012) defined wellbeing as being present when an individual is high in psychological wellbeing, where an excess of positivity (positive affect) predominates over negative affect. In contrast, Shah and Marks (2004) argued that wellbeing is more than just positive affect (happiness, feeling satisfied), with feeling fulfilled and developing as a person an equally important aspect in defining wellbeing. Diener et al. (2000) extend the definition of wellbeing even further by defining wellbeing as *subjective wellbeing*, {SWB} more specifically as consisting of three essential interrelated components: life satisfaction, pleasant affect, and unpleasant affect. McCallum and Price (2016) propose an even more encompassing definition of wellbeing, outlining it as diverse and fluid, respecting the beliefs and values of individual, family, and community; and experiences, culture, opportunities, and contexts across time and change.

Wellbeing is in general a term used to describe a condition of an individual or a group, with reference to the social, economic, psychological, spiritual or medical attention. A high level of wellbeing is, in a sense, a positive experience of an individual or group. Similarly, a low level is associated with negative experience. But in general terms, the popular wellbeing is linked to and in close liaison with health. The two terms are used together; for example, in a report released in 2012 on a study of health determinants and social status, on young people aged between 11 and 15 years (Currie et al 2012). The approach of wellbeing from a subjective point of view actually means, asking individuals for opinions about their own perception on wellbeing. Thus, we can ask questions regarding the satisfaction in life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin 2007). or we can use an index based on questions relating to eight different aspects of life and how wellbeing influences health. Thus, we can collect data on how different dimensions of life influence wellbeing.

They also aver that wellbeing can be described in very broad terms as a holistic, balanced life experience where wellbeing needs to be considered in relation to how an individual feels and functions across several areas, including cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual wellbeing (McCallum & Price, 2016). Some accounts of well-being (Boehm, Peterson, Kivimaki, & Kubzansky, 2011) include optimism--the general expectation that one will experience more positive than negative outcomes in life (Carver & Scheier, 2003). The disposition to be optimistic is associated with greater satisfaction and happiness and lower levels of depression and stress, lower risk of health problems and faster recovery from illness (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012). Manderson (2005a) viewed that wellbeing is not just the state of individual bodies but of bodies in society. And: wellbeing includes more

than physical and mental health: it incorporates a sense of satisfaction, contentment, personal fulfilment and existential calm; much more so than health, it is a social construct (Manderson, 2005a; Tov, 2018).

### **Concept of Elderly**

Elderly refers to ages nearing or surpassing the life expectancy of human beings, and is thus, the end of the human life cycle. Terms and euphemisms include old people, the elderly worldwide usage, OAPs British usage which stands for Old Age Pensioner, seniors American usage, senior citizens American usage, older adults in the social sciences, and the elders in many cultures including the cultures of aboriginal people. (APA 2009). Elderly people often have limited regenerative abilities and are more susceptible to disease, syndromes, injuries and sickness than younger adults. The organic process of ageing is called senescence, the medical study of the aging process is called gerontology and the study of diseases that afflict the elderly is called geriatrics. The elderly also face other social issues around retirement, loneliness, and ageism. (BBC 2016). Old age is not a definite biological stage, as the chronological age denoted as "old age" varies culturally and historically. In 2011, the United Nations proposed a human rights convention that would specifically protect older persons. (OHCHR 2015).

Conventionally, "elderly" has been defined as a chronological age of 65 years old or older, while those from 65 through 74 years old are referred to as "early elderly" and those over 75 years old as "late elderly" (Orimo, Ito, Suzuki, Araki, Hosoi and Sawabe, 2006). Most developed world countries have accepted the chronological age of 65 years as a definition of 'elderly' or older person, but like many westernized concepts, this does not adapt well to the situation in Africa. Today, people are living longer than ever before due to advances in education, technology, medicine, food distribution, and sanitary conditions. Aging is a lifelong process of growing up and growing old. It begins at conception and ends with death. So, in this sense, we are all aging from the time of birth (Chalise, 2019). Old age comprises "the later part of life; the period of life after youth and middle age usually with reference to deterioration". At what age old age begins cannot be universally defined because it differs according to the context. The United Nations has agreed that 65+ years may be usually denoted as old age. World Health Organization (2016). This is the first attempt at an international definition of old age. However, for its study of old age in Africa, the World Health Organization (WHO) set 55 as the beginning of old age. At the same time, the WHO recognized that the developing world often defines old age, not by years, but by new roles, loss of previous roles, or inability to make active contributions to society.

Most developed Western countries set the age of 60 to 65 for retirement. Being 60–65 years old is usually a requirement for becoming eligible for senior social programs. (Barry, 2016). However, various countries and societies consider the onset of old age as anywhere from the mid-40s to the 70s. The definitions of old age continue to change, especially as life expectancy in developed countries has risen to beyond 80 years old. In October 2016, a paper published in the science journal *Nature* presented the conclusion that the maximum human lifespan is an average age of 115, with an absolute upper limit of 125 years. (Dong,

Milholland, & Vijg, 2016). However, the authors' methods and conclusions drew criticism from the scientific community, who concluded that the study was flawed. (Van Santen 2016)

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed how traditional dance impact on physical fitness and well-being of the elderly, it was believed that traditional dancing could be an important and effective tool for the prevention and the fight against the health problems of the elderly. The study show that traditional dancing contributes to the well-being of the elderly with a view of independent and quality living. Maintaining their physical fitness and functional capacity at satisfactory levels, lead them to a more qualitative and independent lifestyle while the risk of various diseases is reduced.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were deemed necessary:

1. Elderly should engage in traditional dance on a regular basis to have better postural stability, balance and flexibility.
2. Government should create a good environment or atmosphere for physical fitness, for the well-being of the elderly.
3. Disciplinary measures should be adopted in safeguarding the environment for the physical fitness and well-being of the elderly.

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