

Beyond Medical Alternative: Exploring Dance Therapy

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Abstract

Dance as an artistic genre is characterized in all cultures, both the past and present, as a form of relaxation or entertainment, ceremonies, rituals and rites of passage. Using a therapeutic theoretical framework of dance, this paper exposes how healing powers have been attributed to dance and movement. The paper unravels the mystery of the early civilizations where dancing and medicine were linked. The paper also explains vividly how Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is one of expressive arts, which can be a single specialization, or form part of a general expressive arts therapy programs that effectively treat or manage a wide range of emotional and physical ailments. Empirically, this places dance as a primal response to rhythm and music, such that the dance therapist uses the dance principles to help patients to become more in touch with different physical and emotional dimensions of themselves using non-verbal, movement-oriented techniques. The paper concludes that if well utilized by medical practitioners in Nigeria, dance could serve as an alternative therapeutic means, thereby creating collaboration between Health Institutions and the Theatre Industry.

Introduction

Dance, the patterned and rhythmic bodily movement usually performed to music, as a form of communication or expression is an essential aspect of the society. It is like traditional attires worn differently by people in various societies. From birth through death dance serves as navigator of man's way of life and the directional signs towards a better, peaceful and purposeful human existence. Dance is also presented as a controlled emotional outlet whose form reflects cosmology; as a creative experience that draws an extension of speech and gesture that add further levels of meaning to formal occasions. The functions of dance within a given social environment are innumerable. Dance is used for many occasions and reasons in regards to the context within a given social milieu and intents. This means that each dance exists within its own ritual origins, social milieu, and its performative functions and objectives within a given location, period and reason. According to Ediri, for example, many choreographers of recent configurations have been exploring the derivatives of dance with the express purpose of facilitating the healing diseased conditions using dance as pure therapy (200). This means that dance, a creative arts therapy, is rooted in the expressive nature of itself. Thus, dance is the most fundamental of the arts, involving a direct expression and experience of oneself through the body language. It is a basic form of authentic communication, and as such it is an especially effective medium for therapy, based in the belief that the body, the mind and the spirit are interconnected.

Thus, Dance/Movement Therapy is "the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual" (American Dance Therapy Association, 2006). In Dance/Movement Therapy practice therefore, movement is used to foster social interactions and expressions of feelings as well as to gain a sense of self-control (Koshland, Wilson, Wittaker, 69-90).

Again dance/Movement therapy has been used with children for the treatment of a variety of needs and disorders including aggression, sexual abuse, trauma, psychiatric disorders, pervasive developmental disorders, medically involved children and more. According to Erfer, broadening or expanding a child's movement repertoire provides him or her with a wider range of skills to use in understanding and coping with the environment (238-246). This goes that as a form of expressive therapy, dance movement therapy is founded on the basis that movement and emotion are directly related. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of dance movement therapy is to find a healthy balance and sense of wholeness which can be applied by the human race. In this direction, writing on the "Dynamics of African Dance", Atinuke asserts that:

As an emotional experience, African dance affects the quality of life and adjustment of an individual's self-existence and life. Dance creates the right atmosphere or mood or stimulates and maintains it. The application of experimentally deprived principles of music and dance therapy to the treatment of psychological disorders has been proved to be effective (70).

This therefore shows the healing attributes of dance if well used, that dancing is a great way for people of all ages to get and stay in shape. However, Atinuke is not precise of a particular ailment that the dance therapy may cure as he so claimed. However, Iyeh and Aluede in their article assert that *Ulor*, a dance from Asaba in Nigeria has a psychological dose for replenishing happiness and joy as well as lessening grief and worry (234). Iyeh and Aluede's talk actually reminds me of a ritual dance, *Jovastukwase* dance of the Tiv people of central Nigeria which my father was a chief priest. To the believers of *jovatsukwase*, their sicknesses would be healed by the spirit and powers of *adzov*, (the supernatural spirits) as my father would equally direct them into a cult dance that

would last for two hours. Subsequently, the following evening when all these sick people or patients were back for another round of the ritual performances, they used to express maximum recoveries and improvement on their various ailments like waist pains, chest pains, headache and many others. The belief in their recoveries and improvements in these various ailments were unconnected to the spiritual healing but rather the exercises that these patients/clients were used to during the dance sessions. The experience I had with the *joastukwase* dance is also related to what Adelugba puts while discussing the trance in *orukoro* ritual worship of the Ijaw people of Nigeria. According to him:

...with the inspiration of the possessed, the worshipers who are versed in knowledge and are on constant vigil assemble and sing the praise-songs and chant of the gods, while the possession deepens gradually into ecstasy. The possessed is thus transformed into the essence of the god. Thus a priestess who in ordinary life is known to be very effeminate, old and weak, can be transformed into a fierce, agile, bold and awe-inspiring character capable of commanding the whole group (210).

This quotation of Adelugba is aimed at comparing the *Orukoro* ritual worship with that of *jovastukwase* drawing a similarity in their entreaty through music and dance with their intents and purposes. The transformation of the old weak priestess into agility can also be likened to the therapeutic nature of dance.

My position above could be obvious and authentic because dance as kinesics art is capable of helping people develop a nonverbal language that offers information about what is going on in their bodies. Moreover, few scientific studies have been done to evaluate the effects of dance therapy on health, prevention, and recovery from illness. Clinical reports suggest dance that therapy may be effective in improving self-esteem and reducing stress. As a form of exercise, dance can be useful for both physical and emotional aspects of quality of life. Olalawale in his book, *Essentials of Human Kinetics and Health Education* summarizes the beneficial effects of exercises as:

(a) aiding circulation; (b) increasing red corpuscles and hemoglobin; (c) aiding the removal of waste from tissue; (d) clearing the skin; (e) strengthening the muscular system; (f) aiding digestion; (g) improving mental health; (h) relieving internal congestion; (i) straightening and enlarging the lungs; (j) strengthening the heart; (k) improving the hear-regulating mechanism; (l) providing valuable neuromuscular coordination; and (m) facilitating relaxation and sleep (5).

Therefore, therapeutically, the result of dance is a general improvement in health; hence dance can be used in a variety of settings with people who have social, emotional, cognitive, or physical concerns. It can often be used as part of the recovery process for people with chronic illness. Dance therapists thus could be employed to work with both individuals and groups, including hospitals, schools, refugee camps and even families.

Most essentially, in Dance/Movement Therapy practice, movement is used to foster social interactions and expression of feelings as well as to gain a sense of self-control and cure of many sicknesses as alternative and complementary health measure. This therefore reaches at a point to explaining more on the variables of this paper. This is to say that there are many terms used to describe alternative approaches to health care; other terms used to describe complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) include holistic medicine, alternative medicine, and integrative medicine. Complementary medicine is defined as alternative approaches used in combination with conventional medicine, while alternative medicine is used in place of conventional medicine. Integrative medicine is viewed as the evolution of CAM. It promotes a new philosophy in terms of the relationship between the patient and the physician as well as utilizing evidence-based CAM therapies in combination with conventional medicine. This paper holds that dance could also be considered as CAM but not supplementary to any conventional medicine.

Historical Survey

Dance has been an important part of self-expression, ceremonial and religious events, and health in most cultures throughout history. Serious diseases were of primary interest to early humans, although they were not able to treat them effectively. That is, many diseases were attributed to the influence of malevolent demons that were believed to project an alien spirit, a stone, or a worm into the body of the patient. These diseases were warded off by incantations, dancing, magic charms and talismans, and various other measures. For example, medicine men and women of many Native African tribes used and are still using dance as part of their healing rituals. The functions of dance were practiced as early as the antique times. However, the importance of dance therapy, as a curable physical activity, was not known until the middle ages. It was first mentioned around sixteenth century in Robert Burton's "Anatomy of melancholy." The English physician suggested dance as a therapy for the treatment of the condition of the melancholic; the second partition of the book lists several genres of cure. Here the dance is widely mentioned as a therapeutic use of exercise, both physical and spiritual. A century later another British author, Richard Browne in his "Medicina musica" first published in 1727, recommended dance

as being the most effective of all forms of exercise (Arcangeli, 24).

Again, a dance anthropologist Paul Spencer, the editor of “Society and the Dance”, also widely mentions about dance therapy saying that the notion that dancing may have some therapeutic value is at least as ancient as the dancing epidemics of the Middle Ages. “The literature on dance frequently emphasises its cathartic value, releasing pent-up emotions. This notion was developed in stages in the writings of Herbert Spencer when he explored the variety of emotions that expressed themselves in muscular action, first in relation to in genius theory of the origins of music, then of laughter, and then briefly of dancing. He viewed emotions

as a form of nervous energy that became intensified when denied its natural outlet, and had to be released through some other channel. This concept of dancing as a safety valve for releasing emotional steam foreshadowed Freud’s concept of the libido- a psychic force analogous to hunger that requires some direct or indirect physical outlet” (Spencer,4).

Although dance therapy was first mentioned as a therapeutic form of exercise by the British authors around 16th and 17th century, it truly came into existence in 19th century in connection with modern dance and psychiatry. It was pioneered by Marian Chace who lived between 1896- 1970, Marian Chace studied dance in New York City before establishing her own studio in Washington, DC, in the 1930sa (American Dance Therapy Association www.adta.org).

Because Chace’s dance classes provided unique opportunities for self-expression, communication, and group interaction, psychiatrists in Washington began sending patients to her. By the mid-1940s Chace was giving lectures and demonstrations, and other professional dancers soon followed her lead, using dance to help people with an array of emotional, mental, and physical problems. Another woman who was a dancer and mime, Trudi Schoop, volunteered to work with patients at a state hospital in California at about that time. It was not until 1966, when the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) was founded, that dance therapy gained professional recognition. This paper is of the opinion that Nigerian theatre artistes should carve a niche towards partnering with relevant agencies and individuals for better utilization of the dance therapy.

Theoretical Discourse

Dance therapy is an allied health profession and one of the expressive therapies, consisting of an interpersonal process in which a trained dance therapist uses dance and all of its facets—physical, emotional, mental, social, aesthetic, and spiritual—to help clients to improve or maintain their health. Dance therapists primarily help clients improve their health across various domains - cognitive functioning, motor skills, emotional and affective development, behavior and social skills, and quality of life - by using music experiences such as free improvisation and movement notation to achieve treatment goals and objectives. Thus, therapeutic dance theory, since its birth in the 1940s, DMT has gained much popularity and has been taken to more serious and beneficial levels. Over the years, the practices of DMT have progressed; however, the main principles that founded this form of therapy have remained the same. Influenced by the “main principles” of this therapy, most DMT sessions are configured around four main stages: preparation, incubation, illumination, and evaluation. Organizations such as the American Dance Therapy Association and the Association for Dance Movement Therapy, United Kingdom maintain the high standards of profession and education throughout the field.

Adherents of therapeutic dance theory is of the belief that dance can be used to heal serious disorders and diseases. Although dance is promoted to reduce stress and center the body, this therapy is very effective in helping to heal other disabilities and diseases.

The above explains that this theory is based upon the idea that “the body and mind are inseparable” and thus, rests on certain theoretical principles that; Body and mind interact, so that a change in movement will affect total functioning; Movement reflects personality; The therapeutic relationship is mediated at least to some extent non-verbally, for example through the therapist mirroring the client’s movement; Movement contains a symbolic function and as such can be evidence of unconscious process; Movement improvisation allows the client to experiment with new ways of being; DMT allows for the recapitulation of early object relationships by virtue of the largely non-verbal mediation of the latter. Therefore, through the unity of the body, mind, and spirit, therapeutic dance theory provides a sense of wholeness to all individuals.

Mind-body medicine focuses on the interaction between the mind and physical responses in the body. Emotions such as stress or depression can have a debilitating affect on health, affecting the body’s ability to fight off disease. Likewise, a chronic disease can affect mental outlook, causing emotional ills such as stress, depression, or loneliness. The scientific name for this type of medicine is *psychoneuroimmunology*, in which *psycho* refers to the mind, *neuro* refers to the brain and nervous system, and *immunology* refers to the body’s response to infections. Thus, Mind-body medicine uses dance therapies that help improve both mental and physical well-being. Therapies may be used to help boost the body’s infection-fighting abilities. These therapies include meditation, visual imagery, and group support that improves mental outlook while diminishing anger,

pessimism, or anxiety.

The creative process in this theory has four stages, which occur during DMT. Each stage contains a smaller set of goals which correlate to the larger purpose of DMT. The stages and goals of DMT vary with each individual. Although the stages are progressive, the stages are usually revisited several times throughout the entire DMT process. The four stages are: Preparation: the warm-up stage, safety is established; Incubation: relaxed, let go of conscious control, movements become symbolic; Illumination: meanings become apparent, can have positive and negative effects; Evaluation: discuss significance of the process, prepare to end therapy.

More significantly, besides being fun, dancing, according to the therapeutic theory has many positive health benefits. On this note this paper put into cognizance the medical dance/movement therapy, a growing subspecialty of dance/movement therapy. Goodill, the driving force behind this subspecialty stated

Dance/movement therapy is a mind/body approach to psychotherapy and increasingly offered in the conventional medical arena as a psychosocial service....It is logical to surmise that if phenomena and changes in the physical body are a source of pain, distress, anger, or isolation, then a somatically oriented method of psychosocial support and intervention will have meaningful impact. (52)

The American Cancer Society has their own definition of dance/movement therapy within the context of cancer care, similar to Goodill's: "It focuses on the connection between the mind and body to promote health and healing" (para 1). Medical dance/movement therapy follows the integrative model of health care that treats that whole patient - mind, body, and spirit.

Empirical Knowledge

Dance movement therapy can be used for the treatment of numerous different types of diseases, disorders and other medical conditions. It is used for the holistic birth preparation because it is actually an excellent relaxation technique. Those who suffer from Parkinson's disease (disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle control. Marked by trembling of the arms and legs, muscular rigidity, and poor balance) may benefit greatly from DMT because it is excellent in improving one's use of limbs, balance and motor abilities.

Dance movement therapy is also very efficient in treating various different sorts of eating disorders. Elderly population may benefit greatly from dance movement therapy because it is very efficient in providing them with exercise, expression and social interaction and also alleviates the fear of isolation and loneliness. Physically handicapped people may improve their body image and improve their motor skill by attending dance therapy classes. The same can be said for all those who are blind or visually impaired. People who are deaf or hearing impaired patients could also do themselves a big favor by attending dance therapy classes because by doing so they would reduce their feelings of isolation and improve the inspiration for new relationships. Mentally retarded persons usually enjoy dance therapy classes because they are very efficient in improving their communicative skills, motor skills, coordination, social skill and body image. Those who suffer from learning disabilities and autism can benefit greatly from dance therapy classes because they are excellent when it comes to building confidence, developing the organizational skills and providing a better sense of acceptance. There are various locations which may incorporate dance therapy classes into their daily schedules and those usually include health promotion programs, disease prevention centers, day care facilities, nursing homes, forensic settings, educational settings, medical settings and rehabilitation centers.

Although individual accounts provide most of the support for the value of dance therapy, a few experimental studies evaluating the effects of dance therapy on health have been done. In one recent study, a group of breast cancer survivors took part in a twelve-week dance therapy and movement class. The women who had dance therapy showed better range of motion in their shoulders than those who had not had the class. Regarding its unique connection to the field of medicine, many researches have been undertaken on the effects of dance/movement therapy in special settings with physical problems such as amputations, traumatic brain injury, and stroke, chronic illnesses such as anorexia, bulimia, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, cystic fibrosis, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, AIDS, and arthritis (Gurbuz Aktas and Filiz Ogce 408). The patients' perceptions of their bodies also improved after dance therapy. Clinical reports suggest that dance therapy helps in developing body image; improving self-concept and self-esteem; reducing stress, anxiety, and depression; decreasing isolation, chronic pain, and body tension; and increasing communication skills and feelings of well-being.

Some of the physical motions used in dance therapy can provide the same health benefits produced by other types of exercise. Physical activity is known to increase special neurotransmitter substances in the brain, called endorphins, which create a feeling of well-being. Total body movement also enhances the functions of other body systems, such as the circulatory, respiratory, skeletal, and muscular systems. Regular aerobic exercise helps with glucose metabolism, cardiovascular fitness, and weight control. Dance or movement therapy, when done regularly can confer the same benefits as other types of exercise. Moderate to vigorous exercise for thirty to forty-five minutes on most days of the week can reduce the risk of heart disease and certain types of cancer.

Dance therapy can help people stay physically fit and experience the pleasure of creating rhythmic motions with their bodies. Well-controlled research is needed, however, to confirm the effects of dance therapy on prevention of and recovery from other types of illness.

I wish to state here that during my dance practical with students I feel accomplished health wise as stress and tensions are dosed out through the initial exercises. Because I learn from my students as most dance vocabularies are introduced by the students since dance class is more of students centered that requires participation and students creativity. This therefore, challenges me to enter into certain extraneous body movements that tend to retain my healthy status. This is obvious because, in dance exercise, movement – especially the sensual, rhythmic response aroused by dance and music – is used as a way of bypassing the conscious mind and making contact with the inner emotional world. Through dance, hidden emotions can be expressed in a nonverbal way and accepted by the conscious self.

It is therefore expected that the dance teacher or therapist should observe a person's movements to make an assessment and then designs a program of movement to help the specific condition. The frequency and level of difficulty of the therapy is usually tailored to meet the needs of the participants.

Considering my experience as a dance teacher, I realized some basic facts about dance concerning the anatomy of the human body. The Following are what I have realized on my body and what I have observed in my students. Firstly, flexibility is an important part of being healthy hence dance requires a great amount of flexibility. All my dance classes begin with a warm-up including several stretching exercises. I insist that dancers must strive to achieve full range of motion for all the major muscle groups. The greater the range of motion, the more muscles can flex and extend. Most forms of dance require dancers to perform moves that require bending and stretching, so dancers naturally become more flexible by simply dancing. The reports I always receive from my dance students are positive concerning their bodies in terms of fitness, as many of them confessed to be able to wake up early during practical dance classes.

It is also very important to consider strength in dance as it is defined as the ability of a muscle to exert a force against resistance. Dancing builds strength by forcing the muscles to resist against a dancer's own body weight. Many styles of dance, including *bata sango* and *akuto* dances of the Yoruba people; *Gberchuul* and *hinga* dances of the Tiv people of Central Nigeria require jumping and leaping high into the air. Jumping and leaping require tremendous strength of the major leg muscles. My experience first as a dance student reveals that, no matter how dull and weak one is, a ten minutes piece of dance can restore back the energy.

Not to be left out is that dance is physical exercise, and exercise increases endurance. Therefore, endurance is the ability of muscles to work hard for increasingly longer periods of time without fatigue. Regular dancing is great for improving endurance, especially vigorous dancing such as line and ballroom dancing. Elevating the heart rate can increase stamina. Just as in any form of exercise, regular dancing will build endurance. The physical benefits of dance therapy as exercise are well documented. Experts have shown that physical activity is known to increase special neurotransmitter substances in the brain (endorphins), which create a state of well-being. And total body movement such as dance enhances the functions of other body systems, such as circulatory, respiratory, skeletal, and muscular systems and helps in developing body image; improving self-concept and self-esteem; reducing stress, anxiety, and depression; decreasing, chronic pain, and body tension; and increasing communication skills (Mendelsohn, 65-80). This reminds me of my experience as a student after each practical dance class with Ediri John while at the college of Education, Kastina-Ala, Benue state and with Tor Iorapuu and Bose Tsevende at the University of Jos. I used to feel accomplished and fulfilled physically and emotionally. All the practical dance classes with each of these lecturers were beginning with exercises that would build and prepare our bodies to dance which was unconsciously doing more good on our bodies.

More to be considered is that dancing is a social activity. My experience with students has shown to me that strong social ties and socializing with friends contribute to high self-esteem and a positive outlook. For example, I had a case of one of my students who reported to me of being a victim of HIV/Aids after the first introductory dance theory lecture. The reason for this openness was because in the lecture, I actually enumerated the benefits of dance to humans and urged all the students to prepare for the practical aspects of the course. Subsequently, I encouraged the student to be part of the practical dance classes even though the student's condition was not favourable even when the student was on antiviral drugs. However, within two weeks of our daily rehearsals, the whole class began to notice a great positive change in the student. The magic for this change was only known between two of us. This empirically shows that dancing provides many opportunities to meet other people and interact. Thus, joining a dance class by people living with HIV/Aids may increase their self-confidence and build social skills without stigmatization. Because physical activity reduces stress and tension, regular dancing gives an overall sense of well-being. Dance movements promote healing in a number of ways: in dancing we smile, and psychologically, smiling is the source of healing. Moreover, moving as a group brings people out of isolation, creates powerful social and emotional bonds, and generates the good feelings that come from being with others.

Moving rhythmically eases muscular rigidity, diminishes anxiety, and increases energy. The rhythmic beat, singing, and movement are therapeutic tools; through these, sick and depressed people find energy in their minds and bodies and smiles on their faces. They rediscover the feeling of wellness that is their goal. Hope and positive thinking is created and helps people cope with their illness (Boughton.).

Moving spontaneously helps people learn to recognize and trust their impulses, and to act on or contain them as they choose. Moving creatively encourages self-expression and opens up new ways of thinking and doing. On a purely physical level, dance therapy provides the benefits of exercise, improved health, coordination, and muscle tone; it helps people stay physically fit. On an emotional level, it helps people feel more joyful and confident, and allows them to explore such issues as anger, frustration, and loss that may be too difficult to explore verbally. On a mental level, dance therapy seeks to enhance cognitive skills, motivation, and memory.

Some experimental studies evaluating the effects of dance therapy on health have been published. Studies show that balance diet, caloric intake with physical activity and effective weight control will help to reduce and prevent the risk of types of cancers such as: - Breast (among postmenopausal women) (Eyre, Byers et al.) Dance can also be applied on children as therapy. For example, Mendelsohn mentioned that, dance/movement therapy encourages medically ill children to discover and use their full movement potential. She noted dance movement therapy principles serve well when working with young cancer patients or other seriously ill children who need to express stress. Since children who undergo lengthy hospitalizations are those who are most critically ill, the goals of long-term treatment aim to enable these children to express their feelings and anxieties and provide them with consistent emotional support. So it helps reduce the movement limitations that result from emotional tension, decreases anxiety, improves body image and enables these children to participate in an active, rather than passive, experience (Mendelsohn 68-80,). Obviously, this is to say in young children, sexual abuse may result in distorted body image, dissociative disorders, low self esteem, behavioral problems, eating disorders, and self mutilation. These six variables may be addressed in dance therapy interventions using varied dance movement vocabularies.

Most likely, for the motor development in children, imagery and improvisation may be useful in helping school children strengthen the bond between creativity and motor development. According to Magruder, Movement education helps normal and mentally handicapped children develop creative and self expression and positive body image (76-78). Kavalari authenticates Magruder's view that particularly useful when verbal communication is blocked; "dance therapy can channel tension toward bodily integration, appropriate affect, insight into behavior, and improved social interaction because it combines principles from bioenergetics and Gestalt therapy while emphasizing body activity" (2-5). Human beings respond holistically to experience; according to Gestalt therapists, any separation of mind and body is artificial. Gestalt therapists attempt to restore an individual's natural, harmonic balance by heightening awareness. The emphasis is on present experience, and direct confrontation with one's fears is encouraged.

Moreover, there are many different dance therapy techniques used with people with different sicknesses. The music therapy model is based on various theoretical backgrounds such as psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic approaches. Techniques can be classified as active vs. receptive and improvisational vs. structured. The most common techniques in use with people are movement and dance improvisation, the use of pre-composed movement and dance. This is because dance therapy is a creative arts therapy modality used by a trained professional to help further the integration of body, mind, and spirit. Thus, dance/movement therapy is a means of expression and is not the imposing of a form of dance on the body. It is psychotherapy like verbal therapy. Instead of using conversation between therapist and client, the dance therapist uses improvisational movement in a kinesthetically empathic way to meet a client where he or she is.

Dance teachers/therapists are expected to work with those concerns on increasing emotional and cognitive stability, identifying contributing factors of current distress, and initiating changes to alleviate that distress. Dance therapy may also focus on improving quality of life and building self-esteem, a sense self-worth, and confidence. Improvements in these areas can be measured by a number of tests, including qualitative questionnaires like Beck's Depression Inventory, State and Trait Anxiety Inventory, and Relationship Change Scale by giving patients cognitive and psychomotor assignments as most of them have negative feeling about themselves. Effects of dance therapy can also be observed in the patient's demeanor, body language, and changes in awareness of mood.

Conclusion

Dance, being a unique form of art, affects people spiritually and mentally. Then it refines them socially and physically. As a form of therapy it does not only help people with chronic illnesses, it also helps socially and physically abused people to cope with their emotion, anger and frustration, in a mental level. Because dance develops a gentle behaviour, calmness and powerful thinking, it is also widely used for child and youth development programs. After all, being a natural human behaviour, it can simply be a most pleasurable form of

activity for everyone.

Thus, dance movement therapy is also very potent in treating different sorts of sicknesses and disorders in people. Aged people are likely to benefit greatly from dance movement therapy because it is very effective in providing them with exercise, expression and social interaction and also alleviates the fear of isolation and loneliness. Physically handicapped people may also improve their body image and improve their motor skill by attending dance therapy sessions. The same can be applied to those who are blind or visually impaired and people who are deaf or hearing impaired could also do themselves a big favor by attending dance therapy classes because by doing so they would reduce their feelings of isolation and improve the inspiration for new relationships.

This can also be applicable for people living with HIV/Aids as dance therapy is likely to break the walls of inhibition and stigmatization. Mentally retarded persons are also likely to benefit from dance therapy because it seems to be efficient in improving their communicative skills, motor skills, coordination, social skill and body image. Those who suffer from learning disabilities and autism can benefit greatly from dance therapy classes because they are excellent when it comes to building confidence, developing the organizational skills and providing a better sense of acceptance. There are various locations which may incorporate dance therapy classes into their daily schedules and these usually include health promotion programs, disease prevention centers, day care facilities, nursing homes, forensic settings, educational settings, medical settings and rehabilitation centers. The paper is of the view that if well utilized by medical practitioners in Nigeria, dance could serve as an alternative therapeutic means, thereby creating collaboration between Health Institutions and the Theatre Industry.

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