

Harmony in Movement: Exploring the Cohesion of Dance Education and Psychology

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Abstract

Dance, which is sometimes referred to as a global language, is more than just physical expression. It explores psychological topics and creates a tapestry of feelings, thoughts, and overall well-being. This study endeavors to elucidate the complex interplay between the art form of dance and the field of psychology, thereby illuminating the profound influence that bodily movement can exert on the cognitive and emotional processes of the human psyche. At its very core, dance serves as a profound medium for emotional expression, enabling individuals to effectively communicate intricate sentiments often beyond verbal language's limitations. This article evaluates recent studies on the benefits of performing arts engagement, particularly dance practices and education, for improving physical and psychological health. It aims to examine the relationship between dance education and participants' well-being and determine the disparity between those who participate and those who do not. The research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach to explore the intricate relationship between dance and psychology/mental health. The study includes terms like health promotion, creativity, psychological health, mental well-being, better quality of life, anxiety prevention, and social participation.

Key words: Dance Education, Dance Genres, Psychological Well-being, Harmony, Movement, interpersonal relationships.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of movement, serving as a means of emotional release is observed in various forms of dance, such as the energetic and vibrant salsa or the elegant and flowing contemporary dance. From a psychological standpoint, it can be observed that this phenomenon functions as a

means of catharsis, facilitating the processing and manifestation of emotions in a manner that does not rely on verbal communication and provides a sense of liberation (Fatima, 2023). In addition to eliciting emotional responses, dance also involves various cognitive processes that have been found to contribute to improved brain function. The cohesion of dance education and psychology/mental health is incredibly significant. Engaging in the process of learning and acquiring choreography has been shown to have a positive influence on a range of cognitive functions, such as memory, concentration, and vice versa. The act of memorizing and performing dance routines can serve as a significant exercise that enhances the mental processes (Calica & Lobo, 2021). Choreography is a dynamic cognitive task that asks individuals to remember intricate movements, stay focused, and execute complex motor actions. It has the potential to enhance cognitive abilities through its multifaceted nature. The phenomenon of neuroplasticity is known to be enhanced through the practice of dance routines, as it necessitates a high level of coordination. This process of coordination in dance routines is believed to contribute to the development of a healthy brain as well as the positive psychological traits that can adapt to novel challenges.

1.1 Social Interactions and Better Mental Health

Exploring new avenues of recreational activities such as dance and productive entertainment has been proven to have numerous advantages for people of all ages. This includes children who are in the process of developing their cognitive skills, as well as senior citizens who are seeking to maintain their mental acuity. The phenomenon of dance is intrinsically rooted in its social nature, as it facilitates the establishment of interpersonal connections that transcend the physical boundaries of the dance floor. The formation of group dances, partnerships, and community events has been found to foster a profound sense of belonging and camaraderie and companionship among individuals. These social activities play a pivotal role in promoting psychological well-being, as they provide opportunities for individuals to connect with others and establish meaningful relationships (Fatima, 2023). Engaging in community activities, collaborations, and group dances may foster a feeling of belonging that can enhance one's sense of purpose and satisfaction in life. Furthermore, the companionship that these social contexts provide may improve people's general emotional stability and mental health. Consequently, these social activities are essential for promoting and preserving psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, it has been noted that moving in

time with other people creates a positive social environment, which reduces feelings of isolation and strengthens mental resilience.

2. Literature Review

Both dance education and dance movement therapy (DMT) are beneficial, particularly when it comes to improving psychological and physical health along with improving quality of life and mental health. According to the findings of [Douka et al. \(2019\)](#), dance is characterized by the activities of the body, interactions, expressions, and steps. Dance encompasses an individual's physical and emotional well-being, as well as their ability to effectively collaborate with others daily. According to this concept, dance can also be considered as a nursing intervention. Research has demonstrated that dance offers a wide range of advantages for both the mind and body. Exploring dance as a potential mood enhancer could be particularly beneficial for individuals who prefer to exercise in the comfort of their own homes. Researchers can explore the potential of Dance as a mental health intervention, alongside more conventional therapeutic methods and as a social prescription intervention [McKenzie et al., \(2021\)](#). During the pandemic of 2019, Various choreographers utilized digital media to showcase the dance works they had created [Yanuartuti & Handayani, \(2020\)](#). Dancing served as both a kind of rehabilitation for anxiety and sadness and a means of preventing boredom for dancers who were forced to rely on media movements within the cramped confines of their houses during the epidemic. Media is a cutting-edge medium that helps to improve dance performance. In a study conducted by [Kiepe et al. \(2012\)](#), the researchers examined the effects of dance movements. Ballroom dance has been found to have therapeutic benefits for individuals dealing with various health conditions such as cancer, heart failure, type 2 diabetes, dementia, Parkinson's syndrome, fibromyalgia, and depression as well as other a lot of psychological issues. The findings of this study by Keipe and others indicate that dance therapy can have a positive impact on individuals diagnosed with breast cancer, enhancing their overall well-being and alleviating symptoms of depression.

According to [Kiepe et al. \(2012\)](#), Dance has both physical and psychological effects. The association between the participant's increase in life quality, reduction in stress, and ability to cope with psycho dynamically oriented dance movement therapy was demonstrated using dance

movement therapy. Individuals who participated in dance improvisation and spatial synchrony, as well as those who got concentrated therapy sessions, showed improvements in their day-to-day lives, as well as a reduction in their levels of anxiety and despair. It is merely a demonstration of the fact that the findings suggest that dance movement therapy is related to an improvement in physical and mental health and dance education has a core connection with the psychological betterment of humans [Bruuninger, \(2014\)](#). Life is viewed as a beautiful dance. Some individuals possess an innate gift for the art of dance. On the other hand, when it comes to navigating through life's challenges, dance therapy emerges as a powerful tool with numerous advantages. Dance therapy has become incredibly popular and has proven to be effective in addressing various issues. It has the potential to greatly assist individuals facing various challenges in their lives, including physical, Psychological, social, and other difficulties. [Douka et al. \(2019\)](#), Dancing has the remarkable ability to unleash natural painkillers in the brain, providing a welcome relief from physical or mental discomfort.

Dancing and exercising have numerous benefits, including improving heart health enhancing physical fitness, and improving mental/ psychological capacity to improve the quality of life. Engaging in mental exercises can be incredibly beneficial for your well-being. Not only does it have the power to alleviate feelings of depression and anxiety, but it also serves as a healthy and productive form of distraction. Dance, a beautiful form of expression, has the incredible power to help individuals heal from their past wounds and overcome the challenges they have faced [Christensen et al., \(2016\)](#). Another study by [Sivvas et al. \(2015\)](#) aimed to explore the potential benefits of Dance on human health. The concept of "health" encompasses the overall well-being of individuals, including their mental, physical, and social aspects. To gather data, the researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review spanning the past decade, which revealed numerous studies investigating the effects of various forms of Dance on the health of dancers. The research focused on individuals with different health conditions, such as breast cancer, obesity, osteoporosis, hearing loss, and depression. The findings of these studies indicated that Dance could play a significant role in improving and maintaining human health. It not only helps to keep the physical state in good shape but also contributes to mental/psychological well-being by reducing depression and stress. Another research shed light on the remarkable potential of Dance Movement

Therapy (DMT) as a recognized and widely utilized form of treatment [Millman et al., \(2021\)](#). This innovative approach has garnered significant attention and has been embraced by healthcare professionals across various disciplines. It delves into the realm of physical and psychological well-being, catering to individuals who are grappling with physical, medical, or neurological ailments. By delving into the realm of contemporary cognitive neuroscience research, we were able to explore the fascinating effects of Dance movement therapy. We carefully examined the potential mechanisms through which this remarkable substance can alleviate psychiatric symptoms and DMT shows great promise as a potential treatment for those symptoms [Calica & Lobo, \(2021\)](#). Numerous studies have been conducted worldwide, exploring a wide range of sectors and populations.

3. Research objectives

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the most recent studies on the benefits of performing arts engagement, particularly in the areas of dance practices and dance education, for reserving and improving physical as well as psychological health and well-being. Examining the relationship between dance education and participants' physical and mental health is one of the primary goals of this research. Furthermore, the objective is to determine the disparity between individuals who participate in dancing activities and those who do not.

4. Research Design / Methodology

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive investigation of the substantial effect that dance, in its various forms, has on the psychological well-being of people. Through a qualitative-descriptive approach, this research aims to paint a vivid picture of the intricate relationship between dance and psychology/ Mental health. In May 2024, researchers explored the academic literature for studies that looked at the effects of dance instruction on health and wellness. We used the databases and library resources at the National College of Arts, as well as PubMed, EMBASE, and Google Scholar, to locate relevant papers for our study. Terms like "health promotion," "creativity," "psychological health," "mental well-being," "better quality of life," "prevention from anxiety," and "social participation" were included in the dance education program. This topic is

interdisciplinary, therefore we looked for materials in prestigious journals from different fields, such as the Journal of Arts and Health and the Journal of Music and Dance Therapy. Furthermore, additional research that met the inclusion criteria was identified via reviewing articles and systematic reviews linked to the overall subject area.

5. Dance is a Therapeutic Tool

The recognition of dance's therapeutic potential has been growing within the field of psychology in recent years. Dance therapy, alternatively referred to as dance movement therapy (DMT), encompasses the utilization of bodily movement to facilitate cognitive, emotional, and physical functions. It has demonstrated potential in addressing various conditions, including depression, anxiety, and trauma. It presents a comprehensive approach that incorporates both the physical and psychological dimensions of overall well-being ([Zhong et al., 2022](#)). One of the distinctive characteristics of dance is its capacity to serve as a conduit for connecting the body and mind and creating a cohesion between them. The mental well-being of dance education students is significantly more notable than others. The phenomenon of synchronicity between music and dance has been observed to generate a significant mind-body connection, thereby facilitating the cultivation of mindfulness and self-awareness ([Dwarika & Haraldsen, 2023](#)). The integration of therapeutic practices not only has a positive impact on one's well-being but also plays a significant role in fostering a sense of equilibrium and unity within oneself. The phrase "Harmony in Movement" is not simply a poetic expression, but rather a concise representation of the fundamental psychological influence exerted by dance ([Fatima, 2023](#)).

Discussion

The data about the beneficial effects of DMT and dance education on the mental health of participants are shown in Figure 1. These figures are presented on an annual basis. The search was conducted during the period of January 2021 and March 2024. Studies on dance and DMT were conducted in comparable numbers in 2021; however, the number of DMT studies was higher in the years 2021-22, while the number of dance education/studies was higher in the years 2022-2023.

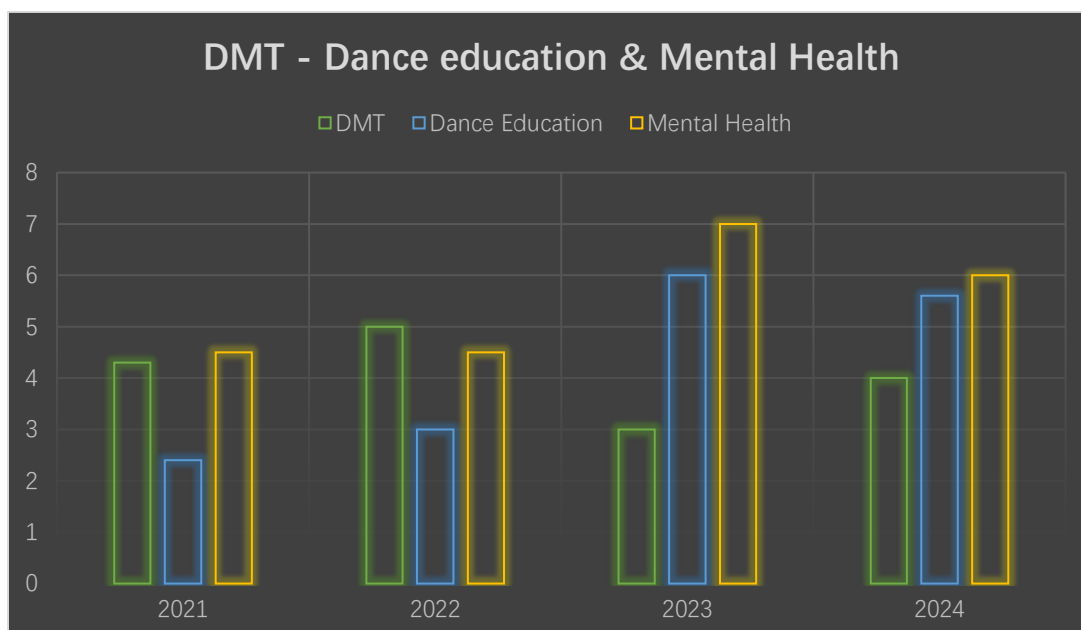


Figure. 1. This illustration is created by the researcher.

6. Harmony in Movement

Dance participation has a significant impact on overall well-being, encompassing various aspects such as social interaction, physical fitness, and personal growth. The most notable aspect, however, is the general enhancement in life quality and the feeling of fulfillment that arises from engaging in dance and learning dance education, whether individually or in a group setting. In a study conducted in Portugal, researchers observed a group of 57 women aged 35-40 years. The study aimed to explore and analyze the effects of a specific intervention on the participants. There was a noticeable improvement in the intervention group's life satisfaction and physical fitness compared to others after 24 weeks. They determined that the incorporation of various aspects such as mobility, physical abilities, cognitive skills, and social interaction in the dance classes was the main factor behind the enhancement in quality of life. In a study conducted by [Muro and Artero \(2017\)](#), a group of 87 young women, primarily university students with an average age of 22 years, were examined. These women were actively engaged in non-competitive dance practice for a minimum of 5 hours per week.

The objective of this cross-sectional study was to explore the potential correlation between dance participation and wellbeing and life satisfaction. Muro and Artero discovered that individuals who

engaged in regular dance practice exhibited higher levels of mindfulness and enjoyed an enhanced quality of life compared to those who did not participate in dance or any other form of physical activity. In a study conducted by [Nadasen \(2008\)](#), it was discovered that a group of 30 older women who took part in regular dance classes experienced a notable boost in their involvement in social activities and an expansion of their social networks. For many of these women (aged 60–82 years), joining the dance class was initially just a way to increase their weekly physical activity. The collaborative and socially supportive nature of dance not only makes it more enjoyable for those who participate in it, but it also provides opportunities for social interaction, accountability, and psychological relaxation. All these aspects may be beneficial in the management of mental diseases such as anxiety and depression among those who participate in dance [Yan et al., \(2024\)](#). Not only does socializing before, during, and after dance class serve to build a sense of community and family, but it also contributes to the dancer's sense of self-identity and ensures that they are mentally healthy.

However, they were pleasantly surprised by the unexpected improvement in their social lives and overall quality of life. Engaging in partnered tango dancing has been discovered to foster a state of mindfulness, offering significant implications for mental well-being. Moreover, it promotes a range of psycho-social, emotional, and physical advantages. Through a study involving 110 non-competitive participants of dance classes, Argentino in the Netherlands, and Germany, [Kreutz \(2008\)](#) discovered that participants were driven by more than just the physical advantages of the activity. They were also drawn to the emotional, psychological, and social benefits it offered. Dancers, in comparison to participants in other activities, demonstrate a higher level of mindfulness and awareness of themselves and those around them who are not engaged in dance practices. [Pinniger et al, 2012](#) conducted a pre-test-post-test randomized control trial to explore the effects of engaging in dance on reducing stress levels.



Figure. 2. this illustration is created by the Researcher.

A total of sixty-six participants were divided into three groups: an Argentine tango dance class, a meditation class, or a waitlist control group. The findings demonstrated that the tango group experienced notable decreases in their stress levels and reported higher levels of mindfulness compared to the meditation and waitlist control groups. Engaging in dance can also contribute to positive outcomes. Exploring the concept of body image and fostering self-acceptance. In a study conducted by (Moe 2014), a collection of 67 semi-structured interviews were analyzed. The participants were women over the age of 50 who were involved in belly dancing in the United States. She discovered that engaging in belly dancing had a positive impact on many participants' body image, especially as they grew older. She discovered that engaging in a vibrant art form and fostering a sense of community had a profound effect on the participants' body image and overall well-being. They expressed a greater sense of emotional and psychological ease within themselves. In a randomized control trial of 112 teenage girls aged 13-18 years, Duberg et. al, (2016) discovered comparable findings. The girls in the intervention group found dance classes to be a secure and delightful environment where they could freely express their emotions. The participants' perceptions of their quality of life and well-being were greatly influenced by their improved self-image and self-trust.

6.1 Cohesion in dance and psychology

Dancing and dance education seems to have a significant positive impact on participants' physical and mental health, according to reviewed data. In a study conducted by Coubard et.al, 2011, they explored the cognitive and physical advantages of engaging in contemporary dance, tai chi, and

fall prevention classes among adults aged 35-43. The study involved 110 participants. After engaging in dance for a period of 8 months, the participants experienced improvements in attention switching and cognitive flexibility. This activity proved to be the most effective in enhancing these psychological abilities. In a study conducted by [Jan-Christoph et.al, \(2010\)](#), it was discovered that a group of amateur dancers, consisting of 62 participants aged 51-69 years, showed significant improvements in cognitive tests, posture, and balance exercises. This study highlights the positive impact of engaging in dance as a form of intervention.

In a study involving 35 older individuals, [Kattenstroth et.al, 2013](#) discovered that participants who took part in the dance class intervention experienced enhancements in various areas, including cognition, attention, motor skills, posture, reaction time, and self-reported wellbeing. The findings of the study examining the role of dance in helping older adults maintain posture and balance were generally positive. However, the effects of dance on fall prevention were somewhat inconclusive. In a study conducted by [Rahal et al. \(2015\)](#), a randomized control trial was carried out with 76 participants to evaluate the effects of two group-based movement interventions on the balance of older adults (>50 years) after the intervention. The interventions included a ballroom dancing group and a tai chi group. It was discovered that both ballroom dancing and tai chi had a positive impact on balance performance, although they were effective on different tests. As an illustration, the ballroom dance group showcased their impressive balance by effortlessly standing on one leg with their eyes closed. On the other hand, the tai chi group excelled in maintaining static balance while standing on two legs. In a study conducted by [Filar-Mierzwa et.al, \(2017\)](#), it was discovered that a dance class program had a significant positive impact on the balance of 24 women over the age of 50. Although the importance of maintaining good balance to prevent falls is widely recognized, there is ongoing debate regarding the effectiveness of using dance as a targeted approach for fall prevention in older individuals. In a study conducted by [Granacher et al. \(2012\)](#), it was discovered that salsa dancing classes had a positive impact on the static postural control and gait patterns of dance students over the age of 60. This improvement in balance and movement could potentially help reduce the risk of falls.

On the other hand, according to a study by [Merom et al. \(2016\)](#), participation in dance programs did not have a significant impact on reducing falls among its participants. The ability of older

individuals to maintain balance was closely tied to their physical strength and their independence in movement. The impact of dance participation on physical activity and health is most effective when the style and context of the activity align with the cultural and social norms. Some studies on the effectiveness of different dance classes and genres by ([Pacheco et.al, 2016](#)) and [Dewhurst et.al, \(2014\)](#) in improving physical fitness in women aged 60 and above concluded that dance is a suitable and efficient method for enhancing physical health in college students and older women, if the dance style is culturally and socially appropriate.

[Murdock and Gary \(2008\)](#) also examined the use of culturally tailored dance courses with 142 American women to enhance physical fitness and functional ability as well as psychological well-being. After 18 weeks of dance courses, the researchers saw substantial benefits in the intervention group compared to the control group that did not participate in dancing. In a study conducted by [Vahabi and Damba \(2015\)](#), it was discovered that a dance curriculum inspired by Bollywood, tailored specifically for women, had a positive impact on the physical health of 27 South Asian immigrant women residing in the Greater Toronto Area in Canada. Participating in dancing improves physical health and makes the participant happier and livelier as well as active and social, according to research done in schools and college students. [Huang et.al \(2012\)](#) introduced a ballroom dance course at two primary schools and 3 colleges in New York City. The session included 79 participants and was conducted as a part of an arts-in-education initiative, distinct from the regular physical education programs. Participating in ballroom dancing enhanced the duration of physical activity, elevated heart rate, enhanced the happiness ratio, and offered youngsters an alternate and imaginative option to engage in physical activity throughout their school day.

7. Conclusion and Discussion

Engaging in dance has been found to have a positive impact on the wellbeing and health of individuals from various cultures and age groups. It appears to create a secure environment for social interaction and the formation of communities, allowing participants to actively nurture their own well-being and health in various ways. These include enhancing cognitive function, improving physical health, reducing stress, shaping self-perception, and promoting mental well-

being. The research has primarily focused on older adult women and their experiences. Exploring the impact of social, group-based dance participation on cognitive and physical health, as well as overall wellbeing and quality of life. On the other hand, A significant number of the studies focused on younger and middle-aged adults, with most of them being women. There seems to be a lack of male representation in the literature. It appears that only dance interventions that involve males, whether they are adults or children, are currently being implemented. There is a chance to explore and broaden the research to investigate the unique benefits of dance participation for a wider range of individuals, going beyond just females. Participants in various dancing courses provided the following statements, which are shown in the table that follows.

Table 1. Effects of dance participation in different genres

Statements	Genre
I find that dancing jazz helps me get rid of tension.	Jazz
My energy is increased when I dance to hip-hop.	Hip-hop
Contemporary dance is a wonderful way to relieve tension.	Contemporary
Contemporary dance boosts up my mood.	Contemporary
Everyone can wind down after performing folk dances.	Folk dance
Dancing the ballroom may help you focus better.	Ballroom

Based on the findings of previous research, it has been determined that most students who are enrolled in Performing Arts programs have a great enthusiasm for dance. According to the data, while there are some students who believe that dancing to contemporary dance helps them feel

more upbeat, most students believe that hip-hop music offers them more energy. Moreover, listening to jazz music and dancing might help students feel less stressed. The fact that dance, in whatever shape it may take, is a strong tool for people who need it is shown by the fact that this is the case. Clients who engaged in psycho dynamically oriented dance movement therapy reported increased levels of quality of life, decreased levels of stress, and improved coping strategies. In addition, dance treatments are effective in enhancing (psycho-)motor skills, while DMT can alleviate feelings of anxiety and depression, as well as increase quality of life, interpersonal skills, and cognitive capacities.

Although there is a significant amount of literature suggesting that engaging in dance can have positive effects on ageing, further research is necessary to fully support or challenge these claims. As an illustration, falling poses a significant health risk often associated with advanced age, leading to a considerable number of older individuals seeking emergency medical care in Australia [Merom et al., \(2016\)](#). Ensuring public health is of utmost importance, particularly when it comes to preventing falls [Fernandez et. al, \(2015\)](#). An individual's feeling of independence and self-assurance in maintaining their general health is significantly influenced by their level of mobility and physical and mental well-being.

For instance, being able to independently cook and clean, or effortlessly participate in social events and functions, are examples of expanding creatively. Additional research is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of how dance participation can positively influence the well-being and health of individuals, especially in younger populations such as children. This knowledge can help individuals better manage their overall health throughout their lives. Research indicates that engaging in dance has a positive impact on individuals, influencing various aspects of their well-being. This includes reducing stress levels and enhancing social connections, ultimately leading to improved overall health and well-being.

Participating in music and dance can greatly contribute to the overall well-being and health of individuals and communities throughout their lives. Harmony in movement is undeniable. Participating in the performing arts, specifically dancing and music has a significant impact on our mental health. It is closely connected to social factors that influence our health, such as developing social connections and cultural understanding. Additionally, engaging in the arts promotes healthy

habits like staying physically active and effectively managing stress and mental health. It also plays a role in reducing feelings of social isolation. The study found that dance is an effective coping mechanism for Performing Arts students' mental health problems, as it helps them feel energetic, alive, focused, and satisfied. Different dance genres affect the participants and students differently, with some helping to eliminate stress, improve mood, enhance concentration, and boost energy. This suggests that dance can have a significant role in the lives of Performing Arts students. It was shown that there was no significant difference in the mental effects of dance and its genre based on gender or year level.

This suggests that groups agree on the good impact that dance and its genre have on their mental health. Based on the consequences of the research, it seems that dancing not only focuses on the development of physical skills, but it also has a positive impact on the mental health of participating kids and individuals. It is advised that educators, professionals, and choreographers offer greater exposure to dance and its influence on future vocations to have a deeper understanding of the usefulness of dance in improving the mental health of students. In addition, professionals and choreographers should provide students with an explanation of the many types of dances via participation in events, webinars, and performances. A similar study may be conducted in a larger group of people to determine if the findings were the same in other settings, especially in schools offering Bachelor of Performing Arts programs. Further investigation is highly recommended.

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