

Body Images between Ballerinas and Modern Dancers:

The Role of Dance Style and Perfectionism

Abstract

Objectives. This study investigates the extent to which dance style (ballet or modern) and perfectionistic character have an effect on body image in adult female dancers in the general community.

Methods. Female dancers who fulfilled some selection criteria such as aged 18 or above and have been dancing for at least three years were recruited. Scales of body appreciation, body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness were adopted to measure positive and negative body images respectively, and the Perfectionism Inventory (PI) was used to measure clinical perfectionism. A series of questions on dance experiences were also included.

Results. A total of 79 ballerina and modern dancers (40 vs 39) completed the questionnaire. Independent sample t-test analysis showed that ballerinas had significantly higher drive for thinness compared with modern dancers, while there were no significant differences in the extent of perfectionism between the two groups. However, weak to moderate correlations were found between self-evaluative perfectionism with negative body image. Nevertheless, the effect of dance style on drive for thinness was still significant after controlling for self-evaluative perfectionism.

Conclusions. The results suggested that moderate participation in ballet dancing for interest in community dance studios might not result in a significantly higher body dissatisfaction than modern dancers. However, ballerinas with high self-criticism were more likely to develop negative body images. A larger sample of dancers without cross-style trainings and professional dancers should be included in further studies to reveal the relationship between dance styles, perfectionism and body images.

Keywords: Body image, perfectionism, ballet dancers and modern dancers