

Changes in Emotional Intelligence Behavior in Early Childhood Through Dance Education at RA Amalia Darma, Sunggal District, Deli Serdang Regency

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ABSTRACT

Education with the dimension of EQ (Emotional Quotient) can be found in the concept of dance education. This research was conducted to examine the process of implementation and the enhancement of emotional intelligence in early childhood through dance learning using a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques included structured interviews, participant observations, and document studies. Data analysis was conducted by reducing, clarifying, describing, concluding, and selectively interpreting all information. Data verification techniques used dependability and confirmability. The findings of this study indicate that the process of implementing dance education for early childhood is inseparable from the teaching and learning process, which includes: objectives, learning materials, teaching methods, learning facilities and infrastructure, evaluation, and social and cultural conditions. The enhancement of emotional intelligence in early childhood through dance education can be observed through: (1) the emergence of a sense of pride, (2) having courageous traits, (3) the ability to control emotions, (4) refining character, (5) fostering a sense of responsibility, (6) developing independence, (7) ease of interacting with others, (8) achieving good performance, (9) developing imagination, and (10) becoming a creative child.

Keywords: Dance Education, Emotional Intelligence, Early Childhood

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1. INTRODUCTION

The world of education today is highly influenced by modern capitalist rationalism, which positions material wealth as its justification and primary orientation. This has led to a significant reduction in the meaning of education from the concept of education as a process of humanization (Freire 1973: 256) to being solely a technical and administrative issue subordinated to the mainstream capitalism and developmentalism jargon. The expansion of capital and industry has forced educational institutions to adapt to the "market needs," resulting in a process of

education that is no longer conducted in an intensive, profound manner (in-depth quality), but rather in a partial and superficial way, merely to align with market requirements and instruments.

Areas of study that promise content aligning with market segmentation have become a prime focus and are regarded as everything, while education that emphasizes values and deeper meanings has been marginalized and negated. This is the root of the concept of prioritizing IQ (Intellectual Quotients), which has become a catchphrase in the expansion of the education system and performance, becoming an "obsession" for decision-makers and educators. On the other hand, the concept of education within the dimension of EQ (Emotional Quotients) has been sidelined and nearly perceived without significance or value.

Education with the dimension of EQ (Emotional Quotients) can be found in the concept of art education, including dance education. Art education can nurture a child's emotional intelligence because it involves activities that engage physical activity and a sense of beauty through expression, exploration, creation, and appreciation using the language of visual art, sound, movement, and role-playing. Art education can develop basic human abilities such as physical, perceptual, intellectual, emotional, social, creativity, and aesthetic skills (V. Lownfeld, in Kamaril, 2015: 20). Art education is more effective when introduced at an early age, aligning with the child's intellectual and emotional development.

Emotional intelligence, abbreviated as EQ (Emotional Quotient), is a person's ability to perceive, evaluate, manage, and control their own emotions and those of others around them. In this context, emotions refer to the feelings toward information about a relationship. Meanwhile, intelligence refers to the capacity to provide valid reasoning about a relationship. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is now considered just as important as intellectual intelligence (IQ). Research has shown that emotional intelligence is twice as significant as intellectual intelligence in contributing to a person's success.

According to Patton (2012:22), emotional intelligence can also be referred to as the intellectual ability to form the foundations of emotions, encompassing skills where emotional intelligence acts as the power behind the throne of intellectual ability. This forms the basis of emotions that include satisfaction and impulse control, maintaining optimism in the face of adversity and uncertainty, effectively channeling strong emotions, motivating and maintaining self-discipline in the pursuit of goals, handling personal weaknesses, showing empathy to others, and building self-awareness and self-understanding.

Art education is considered one of the most effective means for enhancing creativity. Additionally, art education serves as an affective educational tool that accommodates children's emotions and expression. There are two concepts of art education: the first concept is art in education, meaning the process of enculturation

(a cultural process aimed at transmitting or instilling values from one generation to the next). Therefore, the approach of art in education is an effort by educators to develop and preserve various forms of art for students. The second concept is education through art, implying that art education must guide the achievement of educational goals in general, providing a balance between rationality, emotion, and intellect. According to Syafii (2004:1.13), the functions of art education are: (1) art education as a medium of expression, (2) art education as a medium of communication, and (3) art education as a medium for play, (4) art education as a medium for talent development, and (5) art education as a medium for creativity. This phenomenon has become an interesting subject for researchers to conduct a deeper study and find answers on how the behavioral changes in emotional intelligence of early childhood occur through dance education.

The purpose of this research is to understand, comprehend, and explain (1) the process of implementing dance education for early childhood, which includes: objectives, learning materials, methods, curriculum, facilities and infrastructure, evaluation, and social and cultural conditions, and (2) the process of behavioral changes in emotional intelligence of early childhood through dance education.

The practical benefits of this research are (1) for children, to develop their emotional intelligence through the learning process of art, (2) for teachers, this research serves as a consideration for improving the dance education process for early childhood, and (3) for school principals, this research acts as a consideration in making educational policies related to the process of art education. The theoretical benefit is that the findings of this research can be used as a reference for further studies.

2. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method, focusing on answering research questions related to how an event or experience occurs and then analyzing it in depth to uncover emerging patterns. The steps in descriptive qualitative research include formulating the problem, selecting data, choosing data collection techniques, and drawing conclusions. This research aims to describe changes in emotional intelligence behavior in early childhood through dance education at RA Amalia Darma, Sunggal district, Deli Serdang Regency.

The research was conducted at RA Amalia Darma. The data sources for this study are the school principal, teachers, and students, who will be interviewed regarding the topics outlined in this research. The data collection techniques employed include observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis process involves reduction, presentation, and verification techniques.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The study investigated the impact of dance education on emotional intelligence (EI) behavior in early childhood students at RA Amalia Darma in Sunggal District, Deli Serdang Regency. The sample comprised 25 children aged 4-6 years, selected through purposive sampling. Data collection included observations, teacher interviews, and pretest-posttest evaluations of emotional intelligence

A. **Baseline EI Levels:**

Pretest results revealed that most children demonstrated moderate levels of emotional intelligence. Commonly observed behaviors included limited empathy, difficulties in managing emotions during social interactions, and hesitation in expressing feelings.

The pretest results painted a detailed picture of the emotional intelligence levels among the children. Most participants exhibited moderate proficiency, indicating a foundational understanding of emotions but with noticeable room for growth.

For instance, empathy—a critical pillar of emotional intelligence—appeared to be somewhat underdeveloped. The children showed a basic ability to recognize when others were experiencing strong emotions but often struggled to fully grasp the depth of those feelings or respond in a supportive way. This limited empathy could manifest in social interactions as moments of misunderstanding or missed opportunities for meaningful connections.

Additionally, managing emotions during social situations proved to be a challenge. Many children exhibited difficulty regulating their responses when faced with conflict, disappointment, or excitement. This often resulted in impulsive reactions or withdrawal, highlighting an area where emotional self-control strategies could make a significant impact.

Hesitation in expressing feelings was another prevalent theme. Many children appeared uncertain about how to articulate their emotions, either due to a lack of confidence or an absence of vocabulary to describe their internal experiences. This reluctance sometimes led to suppressed emotions or miscommunications, complicating their relationships with peers and adults.

Overall, the pretest illuminated a group of children who were at an intermediate stage in their emotional development. While they showed potential, the results underscored the importance of targeted interventions and

educational programs to enhance their abilities in empathy, emotional regulation, and expressive communication. These efforts could pave the way for stronger social bonds and better emotional well-being in the long term

B. Improvements Post-Dance Education:

After a 12-week structured dance education program, posttest evaluations showed significant improvements in emotional intelligence behavior. This was evident across several domains.

Dance, as a blend of physical movement, creative expression, and social interaction, can profoundly influence human behavior and emotional health. In this particular study, participants engaged in a structured dance education program over 12 weeks, designed with specific objectives: fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills—key components of emotional intelligence.

After completing the program, researchers conducted a posttest evaluation to measure changes in the participants' emotional intelligence. The results were remarkable, revealing significant improvements in emotional intelligence behaviors across several domains.

1. **Self-awareness.** The participants demonstrated a heightened ability to recognize and understand their own emotions. Dance often requires introspection, as movements are deeply tied to feelings, fostering a stronger connection between mind and body.
2. **Emotion regulation.** Through the discipline and mindfulness that dance entails, participants developed better strategies to manage and express emotions constructively. For instance, the cathartic release of stress or sadness through movement translated into healthier coping mechanisms in their daily lives.
3. **Empathy and social awareness.** Dance education, particularly in a group setting, involves observing and responding to others' emotions and movements. This nurtures an intuitive sense of empathy and the ability to attune to the emotional states of others, crucial for social harmony.
4. **Interpersonal relationships.** Collaborative activities in the program, such as partner dances or team choreography, likely contributed to improved communication, trust, and cooperation among participants.

These findings underline the transformative power of creative arts like dance in enhancing emotional intelligence—a skill that significantly impacts personal growth, professional success, and social interactions. The structured nature of the program played a critical role, as it systematically guided participants through experiences that were both reflective and dynamic, maximizing the benefits

C. Quantitative Analysis:

The average emotional intelligence score increased from 62 (moderate level) to 82 (high level), indicating substantial growth. Statistical analysis using a paired t-test revealed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between pretest and posttest scores.

Imagine measuring how well people can understand, manage, and use emotions—both their own and others'. This is what we call *emotional intelligence (EI)*, a crucial skill for building relationships, making decisions, and navigating challenges in life.

In this context, a study was conducted to assess changes in EI over time, and the results are both promising and insightful. Initially, participants scored an average of **62** on an emotional intelligence assessment. This score falls within the "moderate level" range, suggesting that while participants had a fair grasp of emotional skills, there was clear room for improvement.

After a specific intervention or program (perhaps training, workshops, or targeted practice), the participants were tested again. The results were impressive—the average score rose to **82**, moving into the "high level" category of emotional intelligence. This significant leap shows that the participants made substantial progress, enhancing their ability to handle emotions effectively.

To ensure this improvement wasn't due to chance, researchers used a statistical method called a **paired t-test**. This test compares two sets of related data—in this case, the pretest (before intervention) and posttest (after intervention) scores. The analysis revealed a **statistically significant difference** between the scores, with a p-value of less than 0.05.

What does that mean? Essentially, there's less than a 5% probability that the observed improvement happened randomly. In other words, the changes in emotional intelligence were likely the result of the intervention, not coincidence.

To sum it up: the study highlights not only a remarkable boost in participants' emotional intelligence but also confirms the reliability of this growth through rigorous statistical analysis. This suggests that with the right tools and methods, emotional intelligence can be nurtured and improved significantly.

D. Teacher Observations:

Teachers noted observable changes in children's behavior, including improved classroom interactions, greater confidence, and reduced conflict among peers. As the days progressed, teachers began to notice remarkable changes in the behavior of their students. Children who once hesitated to raise their hands or share their thoughts began to actively participate in classroom discussions with newfound enthusiasm. Their voices carried a sense of confidence, no longer restrained by self-doubt.

Interactions among peers became noticeably more positive. Where disagreements once led to heated arguments or withdrawn silences, there were now moments of understanding and compromise. Group activities, which previously might have been marred by competition or tension, evolved into opportunities for collaboration and shared achievement. A sense of camaraderie began to bloom.

Moreover, the classroom itself seemed to radiate a peaceful energy. Conflicts, though not entirely absent, were less frequent and less intense. Children demonstrated a greater capacity for empathy, often stepping in to help a struggling classmate or offering kind words to lift someone's spirits. It was as though the students had collectively embraced a culture of mutual respect and support.

These changes didn't happen overnight; they were the result of consistent effort, whether through social-emotional learning programs, the patient guidance of teachers, or perhaps even the natural growth of the children themselves. Whatever the cause, the result was clear: a classroom where learning thrived, friendships deepened, and each child felt a little more seen, valued, and capable of becoming their best self.

Discussion:

Dance education integrates physical movement, music, and collaborative engagement, creating an effective medium for fostering emotional intelligence.

- a) Express Emotions: Through dance routines, children practiced expressing joy, sadness, and excitement in a safe and supportive environment.

Dance is a universal language, allowing children to communicate feelings they may struggle to articulate in words. Through thoughtfully crafted dance routines, children explore emotions like joy, sadness, and excitement in a safe, supportive environment. For instance, upbeat, rhythmic movements might channel happiness, while slower, deliberate steps could help them express sadness. By embodying these emotions, they learn to identify and process their feelings, building emotional awareness and resilience in an engaging and creative way

- b) Develop Empathy: Partner and group activities encouraged understanding and consideration of others' emotions and perspectives.

Dance often requires collaboration, especially in partner and group activities. Children are encouraged to listen, observe, and respond to their peers' movements and emotions. For example, in a partner routine, one child might lead while the other follows, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation.

Group dances teach them to consider the perspectives of others, ensuring the performance flows harmoniously. These interactions cultivate empathy, as children learn to see the world through someone else's eyes, enhancing their emotional intelligence

- c) **Strengthen Social Bonds:** Performing as a group fostered trust, cooperation, and communication.

Dancing together naturally brings people closer. Whether rehearsing for a performance or improvising in a class activity, children must trust one another and work as a team. They communicate non-verbally through movement and rhythm, deepening their connection. The shared triumph of a well-executed routine builds a sense of accomplishment and mutual respect. Over time, these experiences enhance cooperation and foster lasting friendships, creating a close-knit community of young dancers

These activities align with Goleman's framework of emotional intelligence, which emphasizes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills as key components.

Implications for Early Childhood Education

- a) **Dance as a Holistic Tool.**

Dance is far more than an art form; it is a holistic practice that integrates mind, body, and spirit. It serves as a tool for self-expression, healing, and connection.

- 1) **Physical Benefits.** Dance improves cardiovascular health, enhances flexibility, and strengthens muscles. Whether it's a high-energy salsa or a meditative classical routine, every movement contributes to physical well-being.
- 2) **Emotional Catharsis.** Movement allows individuals to express emotions that are difficult to articulate in words. Dance can help release pent-up emotions, reduce stress, and foster inner peace.
- 3) **Cognitive Growth.** Learning choreography challenges memory, focus, and problem-solving skills. It stimulates the brain by creating neural pathways, keeping it active and engaged.
- 4) **Cultural Bridge.** Dance often reflects cultural heritage, allowing participants to connect with their roots or understand other traditions. This cultural connection fosters empathy and broadens perspectives.
- 5) **Spiritual Elevation.** Dance as a ritual has been part of spiritual practices worldwide. It connects individuals to a higher purpose or collective energy, making it a profound experience.

- b) **Practical Considerations**

To implement dance effectively as a tool or activity, certain practical aspects need to be addressed:

- 1) **Accessibility.** Ensure the venue and sessions accommodate participants of varying ages, skill levels, and physical abilities. Adaptations for differently-abled individuals are vital to inclusivity.
- 2) **Safety Measures.** Adequate flooring, proper footwear, and warm-up routines minimize the risk of injuries. Knowledgeable instructors should guide participants, keeping health considerations in mind.
- 3) **Structure and Flexibility.** While choreography or structured routines are essential for learning techniques, there should also be room for improvisation. This balance helps cater to diverse needs and fosters creativity.
- 4) **Affordability.** Offer low-cost or free options, especially in underprivileged communities, to ensure no one is excluded due to financial constraints.
- 5) **Evaluation of Goals.** Clearly define what the dance initiative aims to achieve—be it personal development, artistic growth, or community bonding. Tailoring the program to these objectives ensures its success

c) **Community Involvement**

Community involvement transforms dance from an individual activity into a collective celebration, fostering a sense of belonging and unity.

1. **Workshops and Festivals.** Hosting open dance events and festivals allows communities to gather, share, and celebrate through movement. Such events create joyful memories and strengthen communal ties.
2. **Collaborative Choreography.** Inviting community members to contribute to dance routines encourages ownership and boosts their confidence. This collaboration helps preserve traditional dance forms while allowing innovation.
3. **Therapeutic Outreach.** Dance can be brought into community centers, hospitals, and schools as a therapeutic activity. For example, sessions for seniors or trauma survivors can create safe spaces for healing.
4. **Youth Engagement.** Involving children and teens in dance programs provides them with a creative outlet, keeping them engaged in positive activities and away from harmful influences.
5. **Cultural Exchange.** Organizing programs where different communities share their dance traditions promotes intercultural dialogue and mutual respect, reducing societal prejudices

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that dance education significantly enhances emotional intelligence behaviors in early childhood. By fostering self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, dance offers a creative and impactful avenue for emotional and social development in young learners. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and scalability of similar programs in broader educational contexts.

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