

A Study of Gender Differences In Motivations of Indian Professional Classical Dancers

Dr RohiniThapar, Divya Jyoti

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Psychology, D.A.V College, Chandigarh, India
PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

Abstract: The roots of research in dance psychology can be traced down to early 20th century, which documented that dance has great power to motivate and strengthen the psyche of human beings (Capsali, 1932). But since then, the research has not only been scanty but also quite scattered especially in the area of assessing motivational basis of dance. Psychology of dance is an extremely interesting and burgeoning area but with a very limited empirical research backing. India, since time immemorial though has been an important citadel of a variety of forms of classical dance., there is dearth of literature pertaining to motivational aspects of this intensive field of art, even in the Indian context. Moreover in the present times, dance forms have moved out of the royal courts and temples, and have become not only a form of self expression, but also a significant source of earning. It is common to see dancers navigating an independent career in dancing. The present study hence was an attempt to assess the motivations of Indian classical dancers by exploring their passion, meaning in life and self actualisation of full time professional classical dancers. For the same purpose passion scale (Ryan and Deci, 2000), meaning in life scale (Steger, 2006) and self actualisation scale (Jones and Crandall, 1986) were administered. Passion scale consisted 2 subscales, harmonious and obsessive passion, whereas meaning in life consisted search for meaning and presence of meaning subscales. The study also made an attempt to examine the gender differences in motivational profile of the classical dancers. **Methodology:** In this study, a sample of 60 qualified classical professional dancers (30 male and 30 female) in the age range of 25-40 years with an

extensive work experience of atleast 5 years and working in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore was taken. Purposive sampling method was used for this study to ensure the homogeneity of the sample.

Results: Results revealed that all the professional classical dancers were found to be passionate about their dancing profession, more so, they possessed a passion that is harmonious and eudaimonic, which perhaps promotes a state of ecstasy and self actualisation amongst them. These professionals also seem to be almost equally obsessed with the dance activity which may be a rationale for the attainment of their peak experiences and self actualised state of being. Gender differences evinced that the motivational profile of male dancers was predominantly ruled by their harmonious passion, unlike their female counterparts who were high on both harmonious and obsessive passion for dancing but did not attribute their meaning in life to dance and passion related to it. Keywords: Classical dance, passion, meaning in life, self actualisation

Introduction:

India, with its rich cultural heritage, has always been proud of its classical forms of art, music and especially dance forms. Dance has always been an integral part of Indian ethos and has been flourishing as an undercurrent in many “gharanas” or as a part of our family culture. But in the recent past, Indian society, in its state of transition, has somehow pushed this once prominent form of artistic and spiritual expression to a back burner.

With changing times, forms of dance has also evolved, and in this present day scenario, dance again seems to be picking up, though in a very different and transformed form. It is being observed that young individuals are becoming quite enthusiastic about dancing- maybe not as a form of creative self-expression only, but also as a sport or physical activity to maintain their physical and psychological health/wellbeing.

The formalisation of dance education has also facilitated its revival. From the beginning of 21st century, a boom of dance awareness is being witnessed. The informal dance education of the past has now been shaped by setting up of formal schools of dance- both for classical and contemporary forms, specifically in Bengaluru and also other parts of India in the recent past. As a result dancing has grown in its status from a mere hobby to a full-fledged career option. People have started opting for a profession in dancing in the form of independent dance trainers or gurus, and even performing in various concerts.

Dance psychology is also gaining impetus as a new field of interest for researchers. Ample evidence exists about the broader field of dance as a therapy and even dance medicine and science. But the studies dealing with psychological factors underlying dance and that too as a profession are very limited in both number and scope. The research is all the more scant in the area of motivational analysis of dance as a full-fledged professional choice and that too in the capacity of a freelance dancer.

Classical dance

The emergence of classical dance started with “Natyashastra”, an oldest surviving Indian treatise on performing arts and dramaturgy which is a magnificent compilation of what in the western performing arts would include dance, drama, music, poetry and theatre.

Nowadays, classical dance has evolved into a concert hall art form, imbibing Hindu and Muslim influences from history. Technical virtuosity, scintillating rhythms, rapid turns and subtle expressions mark this yet ever evolving spectacular art form. In the present times classical dance has not only evolved in its form, but has also come out of the temples and royal courts, into a more professional form.

Independent professional dancer

The term independent professional dancer is used to describe a performing artist, training students and transitioning between projects and jobs (Aujla et al., 2014). According to Clarke (1997), “dance artists work as freelance entrepreneurs, often juggling many roles simultaneously and taking their expertise into numerous communities through their performance, choreography, teaching and facilitation”. These dancers need to develop skills in promoting and marketing, or take up an additional pursuit in order to supplement their earnings which may restrict their performance (Clarke and Gibson, 1998; Kogan, 2002). As a result, pursuing classical dance, which once enjoyed complete royal patronage, in present times needs a different set of motives. The present study was an attempt to explore the factors which make these professional dancers continue with this dying tradition.

Passion

Aujla, Norday-Bates & Redding (2015) in their study revealed that professional dancers were incredibly passionate about dance in general and their work. As dance met dancers basic need satisfaction it led to both harmonious and obsessive passion (Akehurst, 2014). Passion, irrespective of its harmonious or obsessive form was found to be deeply connected with notions of identity (Wilson, 2004) and hence the dancers derived a large part of their identity from it (Wainwright and Turner, 2004). Further studies evinced that dancers who were high on harmonious passion experienced more positive psychological outcomes (Vallerand, 2003), exhibited more problem focused health promotion and flexible behaviour, were less prone to injury (Blanca et al, 2006) and enjoyed better interpersonal relationships (Vallerand et al., 2003). On the other hand, dancers embracing obsessive passion were found to possess an uncontrollable urge to partake in the activity (Vallerand et al., 2003); exhibited more health undermining, injury prone, rigid behaviour.

Meaning in life

Yalom (1980) stressed, meaning in life was a person's creative response and could be achieved by engaging in work (Steger, 2005), creativity and hedonism (Yalom, 1980) or dedication to a cause. Dance could be a mean to gain meaning or sense in life (Borges-da-costa & Cox, 2016), while Zhang et al. (2013) proposed that the relation between dance and meaning in life was intervened by the type of passion. Harmonious passion lead to presence of meaning while obsessive passion was found to be related to search for meaning. Tsipursky (2016) indicated that people who had a clear meaning in life, experienced more positive emotions and lived healthier and longer lives.

Self actualisation

Self actualisation is the realisation or fulfilment of one's talents and potentialities, especially considered as a drive or a need present in everyone. Chahal (2007) observed the scores of eminent dance artists on different variables of creativity, psychopathology and self-actualization. Results revealed that the artists in the field of dance were relatively high on creativity and self-actualization, while they scored low on indicators of psychopathology as given in some standardised psychometric tests.

Taking into account the above mentioned facts about dancing, a fact that emerged was that dancing is certainly a technically sound, leisure activity, whether it be in its classical form, or the present day contemporary form. Pursuing dancing required a considerable purpose, passion and a set of motivational factors.

However, we know very little about what kind of involvement and motivational factors caused individuals to not only choose and continue classical and contemporary dance forms but also what kind of impact it had on their motivations that they choose this field as a full fledged profession. It was evident that motivation played a substantial role in our leisure behaviour (Maraz et al., 2015).

Research has also substantially revealed that motivation played an important (if not determining) role in sporting activities, exercising and gymming as means of leisure activities. On the basis of studies examining these other forms of leisure activities, the examination of the motivational background of dancing could be arguably just as important. Not only there have been very few empirical findings that have explored the motives of dancing, but also, most of these studies have used a descriptive-qualitative method of assessment (Gill, 1983; Gould, 1985; Klint and Weiss, 1986; Longhurst and Spink, 1987). There has been traced only one study that developed and tested a self-report questionnaire of dance motivation and paid attention to motivation of dancing (Nieminen, 2006).

The present study hence was an attempt to fill in this gap. It was aimed to study the motivational factor (meaning in life, passion and self-actualisation) underlying dancing as an independent full time professional choice. A freelance dancer's career may involve multiple roles, a variety of work patterns and long periods of uncertainty and instability. So it was felt to be intriguing to assess what was the meaning of life of these professional freelance dancers; whether they had attained a meaningful life or were still in the process; how passionate were they about their dancing; and what form of passion ruled them, also did dance aid them to attain self-actualisation?

Objectives:

1. To evaluate the motivations among professional classical dancers on the basis of their passion (harmonious passion and obsessive passion), meaning in life (presence of meaning and search for meaning) and self actualisation.
2. To assess gender differences amongst professional classical dancers in terms of their passion, meaning in life and self actualisation

Hypothesis

- 1) Professional classical dancers will be higher on presence of meaning than on search for meaning.
- 2) Professional classical dancers will be high on harmonious passion.
- 3) Professional dancers will be high on self-actualisation.

Methodology:

Sample:

In the present study, a sample of 60 qualified classical dancers (30 males and 30 females) in the age range of 25-40 years, who had an extensive work experience for atleast 5 years, and were working in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore were included. Dancers who had done schooling till at least higher secondary (10+2) and a graduation degree in classical dance (kathak/ bharatnatyam) from a recognized university or having a professional diploma of “Visharad” in kathak or bharatnatyam from an established dance institute or academy were considered. The two forms of classical dance i.e. kathak and Bharatanatyam were deliberately chosen due to popularity of these two forms amongst various classical dance forms and due to availability constraints of other less popular classical forms. Classical dancers who have atleast 2 years of active professional experience were selected. Further, by selecting only dancers maintaining at least a middle class status in society were selected to ensure homogeneity of sample, as it was presumed that strugglers living below this level of socio-economic status might have different psychological and motivational profile. Ethical considerations were kept in mind and prior permission was taken from the dancers before collecting the data. The method of purposive sampling was used for data collection, keeping in mind the context of study.

Tools:

1. Passion Scale by Carbonneau et al. (2008)

2. Meaning in life questionnaire (MLQ) by Steger and Frazier (2005)
3. Self-actualisation scale by Jones and Crandall (1986)

Statistical analysis

1. Descriptive statistics: Mean and standard deviations was computed for the following variables- Passion, meaning in life and self-actualisation amongst professional dancers
2. Pearson's product moment correlation was calculated to assess inter-correlations amongst Meaning in life, passion and self-actualisation.
3. t-ratio was computed to assess gender difference in Meaning in life, passion and self-actualisation in classical dancers.

Discussion of the results:

The major aim of the study was to look into motivational profile of Indian classical dancers. For this purpose descriptive statistics was used to assess gender differences and intercorrelations amongst these classical dancers.

Variables	Combined Means	Interpretation
General passion	22.62	High
Harmonious passion	32.87	High
Obsessive passion	26.78	High
Search for meaning	26.48	High
Presence of meaning	20.96	Moderate
Self actualisation	45.15	High

Table 1: Descriptive statistics: Means of Passion , Meaning in life and self actualisation of professional classical dancers.

Results exhibited in Table no 1, showing descriptive statistics revealed that these professional classical dancers were very passionate about their dancing profession (Mean= 22.62), and primarily they possessed a passion that is eudaemonic & harmonious (Mean=32.87), but they also seem to be almost equally obsessed with the dance activity (M=26.78) as their mean scores emerged to be high, according to the norms.

More so, dancing appeared to be adding some meaning to their lives as they scored moderately on presence of meaning (M=20.96), but it certainly emerged to be highly instrumental in their incessant search of meaning in their lives (M=26.48). These results gathered support from earlier findings by Borges-da-Costa et al (2016).

Alongside, dancing for these classical dancers also seemed to be a path towards attaining a state of self actualisation, a state of self realisation by exploring their real self and utmost potential. A high mean score of (M=45.15), may imply that, although done for professional reasons, dance practice was somewhere giving these dancers moments of ecstasy and mystical peak experiences as what Maslow (1954) once proposed. These results were also in line with earlier research findings of Chahal (2007), in context of Indian dancers.

Table 2: Significant intercorrelations between passion, meaning in life and self actualisation of professional classical dancers.

Variables	Correlation
Passion with harmonious passion	+ 0.510**
Passion with presence of meaning	+ 0.283
Passion with self actualization	+ 0.445**
Harmonious Passion with self actualisation	+ 0.260*

Further an attempt was made to explore the factors underlying the basic motives of these dancers to continue this challenging activity. Intercorrelated profile of these classical dancers (Table no 2) revealed the high degree of passion embracing them was mainly harmonious passion. ($r = .510^{**}$). Harmonious passion further lead to self actualisation in their lives ($r = .260^*$). Their passion was also found to be highly correlated positively with presence of meaning in life and their state of self actualisation. These results were very similar to earlier findings by Zhang et al. (2013) who proposed that relationship between dance and meaning in life was intervened by passion. Harmonious passion lead to presence of meaning, which could be a step toward the attainment of self actualisation.

Table 3: Gender difference in motivational profile (based on intercorrelation) of professional classical dancers.

Males	R	Females	R
1.General passion with harmonious passion	$r = +0.417^*$	1.Harmonious passion with general passion	$r = +0.622^{**}$
2.Harmonious passion with self actualisation	$r = +0.50^{**}$	2. Obsessive passion with harmonious passion	$r = +0.615^{**}$
3. Self actualisation with obsessive passion	$r = -0.465^{**}$	3. Obsessive passion with general passion	$r = +0.54^*$
4. Self actualisation with search for meaning	$r = -0.375^*$	4. Self actualisation with general passion	$r = +0.404^*$
5. Presence of meaning with search for meaning	$r = -0.49^{**}$		
6. Obsessive passion with search for meaning	$r = +0.404^*$		
7. Harmonious passion with search for meaning	$r = -0.458^{**}$		

Since, exploring gender differences in motives of these classical dancers was one of the major objectives of this study, results in Table no 3 revealed significant differences in motivational profile (intercorrelation based) of these male and female classical dancers.

Variables	Mean	SD	t ratio
Search for meaning	Males- 24.63 Females- 28.33	6.27 6.48	2.24*
Presence of meaning	Male- 16.97 Females- 24.90	6.78 7.14	4.41**
Passion	Male- 22.10 Female- 23.13	1.84 1.79	2.19*

P<0.5* P<0.1**

Table 4: Gender differences in motivations of professional classical dancers (significant t ratio)

Male profile

Gender differences in Table no 3, evinced that the motivational profile of male dancers was predominantly ruled by their harmonious passion for dancing, unlike their female counterparts who were high on both harmonious and obsessive passion for dancing. Passion amongst these male professionals was found to be significantly correlated with harmonious passion(.417*) . Male dancers enjoying self actualisation show a negative correlation with obsessive passion (-.465**) and search for meaning(-.375*), which means they are enjoying harmonious passion and have a sense of meaning in their lives and their state of being self actualised is in no way attributable to search for meaning or obsessive passion. It can also be said that perhaps their harmonious passion leads them to a self actualised state of being. Presence of meaning amongst these male classical dancers is

found to be negatively correlated with search for meaning(-.49**). We can interpret it from the scale itself that presence of meaning is positively related to well-being, intrinsic religiosity, extraversion and agreeableness whereas search is positively related to religious quest, rumination and negative affect, making these two to be negatively correlated with each other. Our findings elucidates that the male dancers who are still searching for meaning are the ones who are obsessive about dancing, but they are definitely low on these two aspects than their female counterparts. This in turn is supported by the finding that those who are high on harmonious passion are also high on presence of meaning and those who are high on obsessive passion will also be high on search for meaning(Aujla et al., 2015). Table no 4 shows that males are relatively less passionate for dance than woman (t=2.19*) and were also low on presence and search for meaning in life than their female counterparts. (t=2.24*).

Female profile

Presence of meaning was significantly correlated with both self actualisation(.39**) and passion (.401*). It can be said that these women did not attribute their meaning in life to their dance and passion related to it. More so their meaning in life also did not lead them to a state of self actualisation, which may imply that meaning in life attained by these women dancers was not simply confined to their passion towards dance activity, but perhaps they had some other ways of deriving/attaching meaning to their lives. These results become more evident in light of significant difference emerging between male and female dancers (Table no 4) where women dancers were found to be significantly more passionate about dancing(t= 2.1*) and were higher than the males in searching for a meaning in life (t=2.24).

Hence from the above section it can be concluded that Indian classical dancers are motivated in their profession because of their high degree of passion for it. They seem to enjoy a eudaemonic relationship for dancing which perhaps provides a meaning to their lives, thereby promoting a state of ecstasy and self actualisation. Gender differences evinced that males are predominantly ruled by harmonious passion for dancing as compared to female dance professionals. Males who were enjoying self actualisation were found to be low on obsessive passion. Those dancers who enjoyed self actualisation had already achieved meaning in life as negative correlation emerged with search for meaning. On the other hand females turned out to be ruled by both harmonious and obsessive passion. Their meaning in life was found to have no significant relationship with passion and self actualisation. This goes to show that they might derive their meaning in life from some other activity but it had no relation with their passion for dancing or dance.

References:

Akehurst, S., & Oliver, E. J. (2014). Obsessive passion: a dependency associated with injury-related risky behaviour in dancers. *Journal of sports sciences*, 32(3), 259-267.

Aujla, I. J., Nordin-Bates, S., & Redding, E. (2014). A qualitative investigation of commitment to dance: findings from the UK Centres for Advanced Training. *Research in dance education*, 15(2), 138-160.

Aujla, I. J., Nordin-Bates S. M., Redding E. (2015). Multidisciplinary predictors of adherence to dance: findings from the UK Centres for Advanced Training. *Journal of Sports Science*. 33, 1564–1573. 10.1080/02640414.2014.996183

Borges da Costa, A. L., & Cox, D. L. (2016). The experience of meaning in circle dance. *Journal of occupational science*, 23(2), 196-207.

- Capsali, F. (1932). Jocurile din comuna Fundul Moldovei (Bucovina). *Arhiva pentrui nterformarea sociala*, 1-4.
- Chahal, S. (2007). A study of creativity psychopathology and self-actualisation among Indian classical dancers. *Shodhganga.com*
- Clark T., Williamon A. (2011). Evaluation of a mental skills training program for musicians. *Journal of Applied Sports Psychology*. 23, 342–359. 10.1080/10413200.2011.574676
- Clarke, G. (1997). Supporting, Stimulating, Sustaining. *London: Independent Dance*.
- Deci, E. L., Ryan R. M. (1985). Intrinsic Motivation and Self-determination in Human Behavior. *New York: Plenum*
- Jones, A., & Krandall, R. (1986). self-actualization scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 12(1), 63-73.
- Klint, K. A., & Weiss, M. R. (1987). Perceived competence and motives for participating in youth sports: A test of Harter's competence motivation theory. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 9(1), 55-65.
- Kogan N. (2002). Careers in the performing arts: a psychological perspective. *Creat. Research Journal*. 14, 1–16. 10.1207/S15326934CRJ1401_1 [Cross Ref]
- Longhurst, K., & Spink, K. S. (1987). Participation motivation of Australian children involved in organized sport. *Canadian journal of sport sciences = Journal canadien des sciences du sport*, 12(1), 24-30.
- Maraz A, Király O, Urbán R, Griffiths MD, Demetrovics Z (2015) Why Do You Dance? Development of the Dance Motivation Inventory (DMI). *PLoS ONE* 10(3): e0122866. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0122866>

- Nieminen, P. (1998) Considering motivation, goals, and mastery orientation in dance technique. *European Journal of Physical Education* Vol. 3 , Iss. 1,
- Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., &Kaler, M. (2006). The meaning in life questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 53(1), 80.
- Tsipursky, G. (2016). Meaning and Purpose in a Non-Western Modernity.*International Journal of Existential Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 6(1), 13.
- Vallerand, R. J. (2008). On the psychology of passion: In search of what makes people's lives most
Vallerand, R. J. (2010). On passion for life activities: The dualistic model of passion. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 42, 97-193.
- Wainwright S. P., Turner B. S. (2004). Epiphanies of embodiment: injury, identity and the balletic body. *Qualitative Research* 4, 311–337. 10.1177/1468794104047232
- Wilson, A. W., &Potwarka, L. R. (2015).Exploring Relationships between Passion and Attitudes toward Performance Enhancing Drugs in Canadian Collegiate Sport Contexts.*Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, 8(2), 227-246.
- Wilson, E.O. (2013). Letters to a Young Scientist.The Passion Principle.*PLoS Biol*11. New York
- Yalom, I.D. (1980). Existential psychotherapy. Basic Books, ISBN 978.0465-02147-5