

# Analysis of Current Tests for Assessing Dance Aesthetic Performance: A Systematic Review

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## ABSTRACT

Dance has artistry and expression as its primary performance goals. In contrast with sports, measuring dancers' proficiency in the art form involves a subjective aesthetic component, rather more challenging to quantify and score. Qualitative measurement tools for assessing dance aesthetic performance have been previously proposed. This systematic review aims to examine the different test protocols that assessed aesthetic performance in modern or ballet dancers at vocational or professional levels in order to discuss methodological approaches for future development and application of dance aesthetic performance tools. The investigation followed the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Eight studies met the inclusion criteria. Quality of evidence was moderate, and methodological limitations in protocols were found. Accounting for genre-specificity and assessing for reliability, specificity, and sensibility could further develop dance aesthetic tools in future studies.

## KEYWORDS

Dance Performance, Dance Training, Dancer, High Performance, Performance Proficiency, Qualitative Measurement, Scoring, Screening, Skill

## INTRODUCTION

Dance, as an art form, has a unique performance goal. In contrast with athletes, the primary aim of a dancer is to achieve artistry and expression. A successful performance in dance is not based solely on physical components, but implies a subjective factor of aesthetic competence which is more challenging to quantify and score. Therefore, in order to assess the outcomes of any intervention on dance performance, reliable systems for evaluating the qualitative aspects of aesthetic competence should be administered (Krasnow & Chatfield, 2009).

The relevance of assessments of this kind have been widely discussed in the literature and qualitative measurement tools have been previously proposed by a number of authors (Angioi et al, 2009; Chatfield, 2009; Krasnow & Chatfield, 2009, Chatfield, 1993; Koutedakis 2006; Parrot 1993), however over the last ten years, few experimental studies have used these tests to measure aesthetic performance outcomes, leaving the question in regards to the impact of interventions and training programs in dancers' primary performance goal unanswered.

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## BACKGROUND

Primarily, the question must be raised: what is considered “performance” in dance? In order to investigate dance aesthetic performance tests, firstly the meaning of the term has to be put into the particular context of this modality, as the definition of a successful performance in dance is diverse and presents challenges. In the sports realm, a successful performance could be measured by analysing the number of gold medals, the scores of a game season or the speed of an athlete. As dance is a performing art, the main goal of the dancer is not to jump higher or win the game, but to transmit at their best the subjective content of a dance piece created by a choreographer. Similarly, the function of a dance piece is not to win a gold medal, but to express and inspire sensations and emotions to the audience (Krasnow & Chatfield, 2009, Rafferty, 2010). Thus, a successful performance in dance involves a qualitative aspect which is complex to identify, to quantify and to score accordingly. It is comprised of different elements that embrace technique skills and artistic expression skills. Therefore, in order to achieve a successful performance in dance, aesthetic proficiency is required. (Krasnow & Chatfield, 2009).

Difficulties in assessing aesthetic competence go beyond the artistic element but extend to the fact that today there is a diversity of dance styles and manifestations. Dance has few determined parameters that can categorically level and rank the multiple artistic manifestations of the art form. Classifying dance is a complex task: currently, the question “what is dance?” is common in several spheres of the sector: the debate goes beyond the academic environment and also encompasses dancers, choreographers and dance teachers (McDonaugh, 1990). The discussions are due to the multiplicity of artistic manifestations that today can be considered as representations of dance. From folkloric and traditional dance from each region of the world to theatrical dance styles and musical shows there is a great diversity of elements (Bourcier, 2001).

Considering the complexity and subjectivity of assessing dance aesthetic performance, previous authors investigated potential test protocols to measure this variable. Literature has attested the need to develop standard performance evaluation metrics, since without such parameters it is not possible to interpret the implications of an experiment in dancers or to track the development of a dancer across time (Angioi Et Al, 2009; Chatfield, 2009; Krasnow & Chatfield, 2009, Twitchett et al, 2011;). To the knowledge of the current authors, most of the interventional studies conducted with the aim to enhance dance performance do not test aesthetic proficiency: physical components or psychological parameters are assessed but the primary goal of dance performance is not evaluated. Therefore, the impact of those interventional studies on dancers remain unclear.

Hence, the aim of the present study was to systematically examine experimental studies that have developed and evaluated dance aesthetic performance tools in dancers at vocational or professional levels as to analyse differences in test protocols and methodological procedures.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Experimental Approach to the Problem

A systematic review of the literature was performed in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Shamsser et al, 2015). The systematic review was registered in PROSPERO (International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews) under the number: CRD42020157843. PUBMED, SPORTDISCUS and COCHRANE databases were searched until June 2021 with a limit to English, French, Spanish and Portuguese language publications for peer reviewed clinical trials utilizing human participants only. The terms “danc\*”, “modern danc\*”, “ballet danc\*”, “contemporary danc\*” were employed in combination with “aesthetic competence”, “dance performance”, “proficiency”

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