



The University of Oklahoma

Anne & Henry Zarrow School of Social Work

Grant Report

Relmagine Dance: Providing dance instruction to individuals with developmental disabilities

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This pilot study examined the influence of dance instruction on individuals with developmental disabilities and their caregivers. Researchers collaborated with two dance studios, Miss Shelly's School of Dance and Relmagine Dance. Miss Shelly's School of Dance is a for-profit dance studio located in Tulsa, Oklahoma that offers dance classes twice a month for individuals with disabilities at no cost. The ages of participants at the time of the study ranged from 3 to 38. The studio also hosts a year-end performance for the public. Relmagine Dance is not-for-profit organization in Sarasota, Florida with the mission of "reinterpreting what our society considers normal by removing the physical, economic, mobility and attitude barriers that hold back people with disabilities" by offering persons with disabilities "the opportunity to express themselves with dance and foster lasting relationships with others in the community" (*Relmagine Dance About*, 2021). The ages of the participants at the time of the student ranged from 6 to 22. In addition to weekly classes and a year-end performance, Relmagine Dance also participates in community events such as holiday parades and local festivals.

Research Methods

Researchers administered the Hope Scale and the General Self-Efficacy Scale to 11 dance participants, with parental consent, at the beginning and end of the year. The scales were administered at the studios during class time to reduce barriers related to scheduling and transportation. The Hope Scale is a self-report questionnaire that measures a child's self-perception and level of belief about personal goal attainment. It contains six items based on two components of hope, agency and pathways. Higher scores reflect higher sense of hope. The General Self-Efficacy Scale is a 10-item scale that measures self-perception of self-efficacy and is used to predict coping abilities. Higher scores reflect a greater sense of self-efficacy.

Researchers facilitated two focus groups with 15 caregivers at the end of the year to learn about their experiences with the dance class. Caregivers were asked a series of 10 questions focused on how dance instruction has impacted their loved one, themselves, and their family. The focus groups were also held at the studios during class.

Data analysis is in the beginning stages. Data from the Hope Scale and the General Self-Efficacy Scale is being cleaned and uploaded to SPSS to prepare for analysis. Next, the researchers will determine appropriate statistical tests and engage in analysis. The data will be compared across studios and to national statistics.

Data from the focus groups has been uploaded to NVIVO and has been preliminarily coded for major themes. The major themes identified at this time include: experiences with activities outside of the program, experience with the program, communication, relationships with other caregivers, feelings caused by the outside world, volunteers, experience with the outside world, impact of the program on the community, impact of the program on dancers, improvements in

confidence, improvements in independence, and improvements in regulation. Next, the researchers will conduct additional coding in NVIVO to further develop the codebook.

Milestones and Limitations

The pilot study experienced a delayed start due to IRB approval, but we were able to accomplish pre- and post-assessments and focus groups within the stated timeframe. Researchers intended to administer a third scale, the AIR Self-Determination Scale, to dance participants. Due to time constraints and language limitations, only the Hope Scale and General Self-Efficacy Scale were administered. Although intended to assess the impact of dance instruction on individuals with developmental disabilities, the participants varied in disability type including intellectual and physical. Researchers experienced barriers to communication with participants with limited language capabilities due to intellectual disabilities, resulting in a significant amount of missing data. Researchers agree that the tools selected did not match the needs of the population and alternative methods of communication were required. The focus groups were completed with fidelity and provided rich data regarding the experience of caregivers.

Graduate assistance and work study students were able to make or begin several community connections. The students created sponsorship letters which they turned over to the Relmagine Dance partners to handout. They also made connections with several local restaurants/shops who were willing to donate various items the team needed. Along with that two restaurants agreed to provide a portion of their profits to Relmagine Dance. The team was able to auction off many of the items bringing in approximately \$900. The team will receive 2% of the profits from a local restaurant later on in 2025. The students ran into challenges working with Relmagine dance as they were not responsive when the students were reaching out. They made reasonable efforts to complete their tasks despite many barriers that were put in place.

Researchers set a goal of securing external funding to expand this research to other parts of the United States and work towards increasing the evidence to support dance as an intervention for individuals with developmental disabilities. Although the focus groups were successful, it was determined to not seek additional funding due to the challenges administering the scales with this population. Future research should explore alternative assessment tools to measure the impact of dance instruction on individuals with a variety of disabilities, specifically focusing on individuals who are nonverbal.

Publications and Presentations

Researchers presented on this study at the Florida Chapter National Association of Social Workers Annual Conference in June 2023. Researchers will schedule and present at a Lunch and Learn for the University of Oklahoma School of Social Work and are submitting a proposal for the 2025 Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting. Researchers are exploring journals for publication and will submit upon completion of the data analysis.