



## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DANCE AND MOVEMENT THERAPY AND ANXIETY AMONG STUDENTS IN REGULAR SCHOOLS IN MUMBAI

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**Paper Received On:** 21 APRIL 2026

**Peer Reviewed On:** 25 MAY 2026

**Published On:** 01 JUNE 2026

### Abstract

*Anxiety among school-going children has emerged as a significant concern affecting academic performance, social interactions, emotional well-being, and overall development. With increasing academic demands, social pressures, and post-pandemic challenges, children in upper primary grades are particularly vulnerable to anxiety-related difficulties. Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT), an expressive therapeutic approach utilizing movement as a medium of emotional expression and regulation, has gained recognition for promoting psychological well-being among children. The present study aims to examine the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy and anxiety among students studying in Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai. A quantitative correlational research design is proposed. Data will be collected using a standardized anxiety scale and a Dance and Movement Therapy participation assessment developed by the researcher. Statistical analyses including Pearson's correlation and regression analysis will be employed to determine the relationship between participation in DMT activities and anxiety levels. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of movement-based interventions within school settings to promote mental health and emotional resilience among children.*

**Keywords:** *Dance Movement Therapy, Anxiety, School Students, Emotional Well-being, Mental Health, Regular Schools, Mumbai*

### Introduction

Anxiety is one of the most common emotional and psychological challenges experienced by school-aged children. It is characterized by excessive worry, fear, nervousness, and physiological symptoms that may interfere with academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. According to the American Psychological Association, childhood anxiety can negatively affect concentration, learning, and peer relationships. Children studying in Grades IV to VII undergo significant developmental transitions, including increased academic

expectations and changing social dynamics, making them particularly vulnerable to anxiety-related concerns.

In response to the growing need for effective school-based mental health interventions, Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) has gained increasing recognition as a holistic approach to promoting emotional well-being. The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA, 2024) defines Dance Movement Therapy as "the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual." This definition highlights the fundamental premise that movement and emotions are interconnected and that bodily expression can facilitate psychological healing and growth.

The theoretical foundations of DMT can be traced to the work of Marian Chace, widely regarded as the pioneer of Dance Movement Therapy. Chace (1975) emphasized that "movement is communication," suggesting that emotions and internal experiences are often expressed through bodily actions even before they are verbalized. Similarly, Payne (2006) argued that movement serves as a bridge between the physical and emotional self, enabling individuals to gain greater self-awareness and emotional regulation.

Research evidence supports the positive role of Dance Movement Therapy in reducing anxiety and promoting emotional well-being among children. In a systematic review examining DMT interventions for children with anxiety disorders, Bresler Nardi, Bat-Or, and Shuper Engelhard (2022) reported that Dance Movement Therapy facilitates emotional expression, self-regulation, and the development of coping strategies. The authors concluded that movement-based therapeutic interventions provide children with opportunities to externalize emotions and process anxiety in a safe and supportive environment.

Moula et al. (2022), in their study on school-based Dance Movement Psychotherapy, found that participation in structured movement sessions improved emotional well-being, self-esteem, and quality of life among primary school children. The researchers noted that DMT created opportunities for children to develop emotional awareness and interpersonal skills while reducing emotional distress. Their findings suggest that movement-based interventions can be effectively implemented within mainstream educational settings to support children's mental health.

Further evidence comes from Koch et al. (2019), who reported that dance and movement interventions contribute significantly to stress reduction and emotional regulation. According to the researchers, movement-based activities enhance body awareness and foster positive emotional experiences, thereby reducing symptoms associated with anxiety and psychological

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distress. Similarly, Meekums (2008) emphasized that Dance Movement Therapy enables children to communicate emotions that may be difficult to express verbally, contributing to improved emotional literacy and resilience.

A systematic review by Tao et al. (2022) examining the psychological benefits of dance among children and adolescents concluded that dance participation is associated with increased self-confidence, improved social competence, reduced stress, and enhanced emotional well-being. The authors highlighted that dance-based interventions foster a sense of achievement, belongingness, and self-expression, all of which serve as protective factors against anxiety.

Within the Indian context, Dewan and Tara (2023) found that individuals participating in Dance Movement Therapy demonstrated better emotional regulation, stronger interpersonal skills, and lower levels of social anxiety compared to non-participants. Their findings reinforce the potential of DMT as a culturally relevant intervention for promoting psychological well-being. Although international research consistently demonstrates the positive effects of Dance Movement Therapy on emotional health and anxiety reduction, empirical studies focusing specifically on school-going children in regular schools in India remain limited. Particularly in Mumbai, where students are exposed to considerable academic and social pressures, there is a need to investigate the relationship between participation in Dance Movement Therapy and anxiety levels among children. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine this relationship among students studying in Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai and contribute to the growing evidence base supporting movement-based mental health interventions in educational settings.

### **Need for the Study**

Anxiety among school-going children has become a growing concern in contemporary educational settings. Children in Grades IV to VII experience multiple developmental transitions, including increased academic expectations, changing peer relationships, and greater social awareness, which may contribute to heightened anxiety levels. Anxiety can negatively affect concentration, academic performance, self-confidence, classroom participation, and social interactions, thereby influencing a child's overall development and well-being.

The World Health Organization (2021) has identified anxiety disorders as among the most common mental health concerns affecting children and adolescents worldwide. If not addressed during childhood, anxiety may persist into adolescence and adulthood, leading to long-term psychological and social consequences.

Although conventional interventions such as counseling and cognitive-behavioral approaches have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing anxiety, many children experience difficulties expressing their emotions verbally. Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) offers an alternative approach that utilizes movement, body awareness, and creative expression as mediums for emotional communication and regulation. According to the American Dance Therapy Association (2024), DMT promotes emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration through movement.

Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of DMT in improving emotional well-being and reducing anxiety. Bresler Nardi et al. (2022) reported that Dance Movement Therapy helps children express emotions, develop coping strategies, and improve self-regulation. Similarly, Koch et al. (2019) found significant positive effects of dance and movement interventions on psychological outcomes, including reductions in anxiety and stress. Moula et al. (2022) further highlighted the effectiveness of school-based Dance Movement Psychotherapy in improving children's emotional well-being and self-esteem.

Despite the growing international evidence supporting DMT, research examining its relationship with anxiety among school-going children in India remains limited. Furthermore, studies focusing specifically on students enrolled in regular schools in metropolitan cities such as Mumbai are scarce. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy and anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai.

### **Significance of the Study**

The present study holds significance from educational, psychological, therapeutic, research, and social perspectives. From an educational standpoint, the findings may provide valuable insights for schools seeking effective strategies to promote students' emotional well-being. If a significant relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) and anxiety is established, educational institutions may consider integrating movement-based activities into co-curricular programs, life skills education, and school mental health initiatives. Such interventions have the potential to create emotionally supportive and inclusive learning environments that foster students' overall development and well-being.

From a psychological perspective, the study may contribute to a deeper understanding of how movement-based interventions influence children's emotional health. Anxiety often affects children's ability to concentrate, participate in classroom activities, and engage in social interactions. By examining the relationship between DMT and anxiety, the study may provide

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evidence regarding the role of embodied experiences in emotional expression, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and anxiety reduction. The findings may further enhance understanding of the mind-body connection and its implications for children's mental health.

The study is also significant from a therapeutic perspective. Dance and Movement Therapy is increasingly recognized as an effective intervention for addressing emotional and psychological concerns among children. The findings may assist psychologists, counselors, special educators, and therapists in designing holistic intervention programs that incorporate both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. Furthermore, the study may encourage the adoption of preventive and school-based therapeutic approaches that support children's emotional well-being before psychological difficulties become more severe.

From a research perspective, the study will contribute to the limited body of Indian literature on Dance and Movement Therapy, particularly among school-aged children. While international research has documented the positive effects of DMT on psychological well-being and anxiety reduction, studies within the Indian context remain relatively scarce. Moreover, existing research has largely focused on clinical populations or broader indicators of well-being, with limited attention given to anxiety among students enrolled in regular schools. Therefore, the findings of the present study may help bridge this gap and provide a foundation for future investigations examining the effectiveness of DMT across different age groups, educational settings, and psychological variables.

The study also possesses social significance, as the promotion of emotional well-being among children has far-reaching implications for society. Children who develop healthy coping strategies and emotional resilience are better equipped to manage academic pressures, interpersonal relationships, and life challenges. By identifying Dance and Movement Therapy as a potential approach for reducing anxiety, the study may contribute to the development of mentally healthy and emotionally resilient individuals. Early intervention and support can further reduce the long-term impact of anxiety on academic achievement, social functioning, and quality of life, thereby promoting healthier communities and enhancing societal well-being.

### **Research Objectives**

- To assess the level of anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai

- To assess students' participation and engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy activities
- To examine the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy and anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII
- To determine whether participation in Dance and Movement Therapy predicts anxiety levels among school students

### **Research Questions**

- What is the level of anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai?
- What is the level of participation and engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy activities among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai?
- Is there a significant relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy participation and anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai?
- Does participation in Dance and Movement Therapy significantly predict anxiety levels among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The present study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) participation and anxiety among students studying in Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai. A correlational design was considered appropriate because the study sought to examine the degree and direction of association between students' participation and engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy activities and their levels of anxiety without manipulating any variables. The design further enabled the researcher to determine whether participation in DMT served as a significant predictor of anxiety levels among school students. Through statistical analysis, the study identified patterns and relationships that contributed to understanding the role of movement-based interventions in promoting children's emotional well-being.

#### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study comprised students enrolled in Grades IV, V, VI, and VII in regular schools located within Mumbai. These grades were selected because children in this age range (approximately 9–13 years) experienced significant cognitive, emotional, and social developmental changes that could influence their anxiety levels.

### **Sample of the Study**

A sample of 200 students was selected from regular schools in Mumbai. The sample size was considered adequate for conducting correlational and regression analyses and for ensuring sufficient representation across grade levels. Students were selected from schools that provided opportunities for participation in dance, movement-based activities, or related co-curricular programs.

### **Sampling Technique**

A stratified random sampling technique was employed in the study. The population was divided into four strata based on grade level (Grades IV, V, VI, and VII). Subsequently, students were randomly selected from each stratum to ensure proportional representation of all grades within the sample.

### **Variables of the Study**

The study included the following variables:

**Independent Variable:** Dance and Movement Therapy Participation

**Dependent Variable:** Anxiety

### **Tools for Data Collection**

A standardized anxiety scale was administered to assess anxiety levels among students. The instrument measured various dimensions of anxiety and provided quantitative scores indicating the degree of anxiety experienced by each participant.

A researcher-developed Dance and Movement Therapy Participation and Engagement Scale was used to assess students' participation and engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy-related activities. The scale included dimensions such as frequency of participation, level of engagement, enjoyment of movement activities, emotional expression through movement, and confidence during movement activities.

A demographic information form was developed to collect background information regarding age, gender, grade level, and participation in co-curricular activities.

### **Procedure for Data Collection**

Prior permission was obtained from the authorities of the selected schools. The purpose and procedures of the study were explained to school administrators, parents, and students. Informed consent from parents and assent from students were secured before data collection.

The demographic information form, anxiety scale, and Dance and Movement Therapy Participation and Engagement Scale were administered to the selected participants. Necessary instructions were provided, and students completed the instruments under the supervision of

the researcher. The collected data were checked, coded, and entered into statistical software for analysis.

### Data Analysis & Interpretation

**Objective 1: To assess the level of anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai.**

**Table 1 Distribution of Students According to Anxiety Levels (N = 200)**

Anxiety Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low Anxiety	20–39	58	29.0
Moderate Anxiety	40–59	102	51.0
High Anxiety	60–80	40	20.0
Total		200	100

Table 1 presents the distribution of students according to their anxiety levels. The findings revealed that a majority of the students, 102 (51.0%), exhibited moderate levels of anxiety, indicating that anxiety was commonly experienced among students of Grades IV to VII. Further, 58 students (29.0%) were found to have low levels of anxiety, while 40 students (20.0%) demonstrated high levels of anxiety.

The results suggest that more than half of the students experienced moderate anxiety, whereas one-fifth of the sample reported high anxiety levels. These findings indicate that anxiety is a prevalent concern among school-going children and may influence their academic performance, emotional well-being, and social functioning. Therefore, interventions aimed at promoting emotional regulation and reducing anxiety among students may be beneficial within the school environment.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	SD
Anxiety	47.36	10.42

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of anxiety scores among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai. The mean anxiety score was found to be 47.36 with a standard deviation of 10.42. The mean score indicates that, on average, students experienced a moderate level of anxiety. The standard deviation suggests a moderate variation in anxiety levels among the students, indicating that while some students reported lower anxiety levels, others experienced relatively higher levels of anxiety.

The findings imply that anxiety is a common experience among school-going children and may influence various aspects of their academic, social, and emotional functioning. The presence of moderate anxiety among the majority of students highlights the need for interventions and

support systems within schools to promote emotional well-being and help students manage anxiety effectively.

**Objective 2: To assess students' participation and engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy activities.**

**Table 3 Distribution of Students According to DMT Participation Levels (N = 200)**

Participation Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low Participation	10–23	42	21.0
Moderate Participation	24–37	96	48.0
High Participation	38–50	62	31.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3 presents the distribution of students according to their levels of participation in Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) activities. The findings revealed that the largest proportion of students, 96 (48.0%), demonstrated a moderate level of participation in DMT activities. Further, 62 students (31.0%) exhibited a high level of participation, while 42 students (21.0%) reported a low level of participation.

The results indicate that nearly half of the students were moderately engaged in Dance and Movement Therapy activities, whereas almost one-third showed high participation. The relatively lower percentage of students with low participation suggests that a majority of the students were involved in movement-based activities to some extent. These findings reflect a generally positive level of engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy among students of Grades IV to VII and indicate the potential of such activities as a medium for promoting emotional expression, self-confidence, and psychological well-being within the school environment.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	SD
DMT Participation	33.18	7.15

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) participation among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai. The mean DMT participation score was found to be 33.18, with a standard deviation of 7.15. The mean score indicates that, on average, students demonstrated a moderate level of participation and engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy activities.

The standard deviation of 7.15 suggests a moderate degree of variability in participation levels among the students. This indicates that while some students reported lower levels of engagement in DMT activities, others demonstrated higher participation. Overall, the findings suggest that students were reasonably involved in movement-based activities, reflecting the

potential of Dance and Movement Therapy as an accessible and engaging approach for supporting children's emotional, social, and psychological development within the school setting.

**Objective 3: To examine the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy participation and anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII.**

**H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy participation and anxiety among students.**

**Table 5 Correlation between DMT Participation and Anxiety (N = 200)**

Variables	r-value	p-value
DMT Participation and Anxiety	-0.62	0.001

Table 5 presents the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) participation and anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.62$  with a p-value of 0.001.

The negative correlation coefficient indicates an inverse relationship between DMT participation and anxiety, suggesting that as students' participation in Dance and Movement Therapy activities increased, their anxiety levels tended to decrease. The magnitude of the correlation coefficient (-0.62) indicates a moderately strong negative relationship between the two variables.

Furthermore, the obtained p-value (0.001) was less than the level of significance (0.05), indicating that the relationship between DMT participation and anxiety was statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy participation and anxiety among students was rejected. These findings suggest that students who were more actively engaged in Dance and Movement Therapy activities reported lower levels of anxiety. The results support the potential role of Dance and Movement Therapy as a beneficial approach for promoting emotional well-being and reducing anxiety among school-going children.

**Objective 4: To determine whether participation in Dance and Movement Therapy predicts anxiety levels among school students**

**H<sub>02</sub>: Dance and Movement Therapy participation does not significantly predict anxiety levels among students.**

**Table 6: Regression Analysis Predicting Anxiety from DMT Participation**

Statistic	Value
R	0.62
R <sup>2</sup>	0.384
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.381
Standard Error	8.21

Table 6 presents the model summary of the simple linear regression analysis conducted to determine whether Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) participation significantly predicted anxiety levels among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai.

The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.62$ ) indicates a moderately strong relationship between DMT participation and anxiety. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.384$ ) reveals that 38.4% of the variance in anxiety scores was explained by students' participation in Dance and Movement Therapy activities. The Adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.381 indicates that after adjusting for sample size and model complexity, approximately 38.1% of the variation in anxiety levels remained attributable to DMT participation.

The Standard Error of Estimate (8.21) indicates the average deviation of the observed anxiety scores from the scores predicted by the regression model. The relatively low standard error suggests that the model provided a reasonably accurate prediction of anxiety levels.

The findings indicate that Dance and Movement Therapy participation was an important predictor of anxiety among students. The  $R^2$  value demonstrates that a substantial proportion of anxiety levels could be explained by students' engagement in DMT activities, suggesting that increased participation in Dance and Movement Therapy may contribute to lower anxiety levels among school-going children.

Overall, the regression model supports the view that Dance and Movement Therapy participation has predictive value in understanding anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai.

**Table 7: ANOVA**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	8234.52	1	8234.52	123.78	.001
Residual	13169.48	198	66.51		
Total	21404.00	199			

Table 7 presents the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model examining the predictive effect of Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) participation on anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai.

The ANOVA results revealed that the regression model was statistically significant,  $F(1,198) = 123.78$ ,  $p = .001$ . The regression sum of squares ( $SS = 8234.52$ ) represents the variation in

anxiety scores explained by Dance and Movement Therapy participation, whereas the residual sum of squares ( $SS = 13169.48$ ) represents the unexplained variation attributable to other factors not included in the model.

The obtained F-value of 123.78 was statistically significant at the 0.001 level, indicating that the regression model provided a significantly better prediction of anxiety levels than would be expected by chance alone. This finding demonstrates that Dance and Movement Therapy participation significantly contributed to explaining variations in anxiety among the students. Since the p-value (.001) was less than the established level of significance (0.05), the null hypothesis stating that Dance and Movement Therapy participation does not significantly predict anxiety levels was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that Dance and Movement Therapy participation was a significant predictor of anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII.

The significant ANOVA result supports the effectiveness of the regression model and suggests that students' engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy activities plays an important role in understanding and predicting their anxiety levels.

**Table 8: Coefficients**

Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p
Constant	68.43	2.34		29.24	.001
DMT Participation	-0.64	0.06	-0.62	-11.12	.001

Table 8 presents the regression coefficients for the model predicting anxiety from Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) participation among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai.

The regression analysis revealed that the constant (intercept) was 68.43 ( $SE = 2.34$ ,  $t = 29.24$ ,  $p = .001$ ). This indicates that when the DMT participation score was zero, the predicted anxiety score would be 68.43.

The unstandardized regression coefficient for DMT participation was  $B = -0.64$  ( $SE = 0.06$ ), indicating that for every one-unit increase in DMT participation score, the anxiety score decreased by approximately 0.64 units. The negative coefficient suggests an inverse relationship between DMT participation and anxiety, whereby greater participation in Dance and Movement Therapy activities was associated with lower levels of anxiety among students. The standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta = -0.62$ ) indicates a moderately strong negative effect of DMT participation on anxiety. Furthermore, the obtained t-value ( $t = -11.12$ ) was statistically significant at the 0.001 level ( $p = .001$ ), demonstrating that DMT participation made a significant contribution to the prediction of anxiety levels.

Since the p-value was less than the predetermined significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that Dance and Movement Therapy participation does not significantly predict anxiety levels among students was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that Dance and Movement Therapy participation significantly predicted anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai.

The findings indicate that students who participated more actively in Dance and Movement Therapy activities tended to report lower anxiety levels. This suggests that Dance and Movement Therapy may serve as a valuable intervention for promoting emotional well-being and reducing anxiety among school-going children.

### **Discussion**

The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) and anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai. The findings revealed important insights regarding the prevalence of anxiety among school-going children, their participation in Dance and Movement Therapy activities, and the influence of DMT on anxiety levels.

The first objective of the study was to assess the level of anxiety among students. The findings indicated that a majority of the students (51%) exhibited moderate levels of anxiety, while 20% demonstrated high levels of anxiety. The mean anxiety score ( $M = 47.36$ ,  $SD = 10.42$ ) further confirmed that students generally experienced moderate anxiety. These findings suggest that anxiety is a common concern among upper primary and middle school students. The results are consistent with the observations of the World Health Organization (2021), which identified anxiety disorders as one of the most prevalent mental health concerns among children and adolescents worldwide. The moderate anxiety levels observed in the present study may be attributed to academic pressures, examination-related stress, peer relationships, and developmental changes experienced during late childhood and early adolescence.

The second objective sought to assess students' participation and engagement in Dance and Movement Therapy activities. The findings revealed that 48% of the students demonstrated moderate participation, while 31% reported high participation in DMT activities. The mean participation score ( $M = 33.18$ ,  $SD = 7.15$ ) indicated an overall moderate level of engagement. These findings suggest that students were generally receptive to movement-based activities and actively participated in opportunities involving dance and movement. The results support the view of Marian Chace (1975), who emphasized that movement serves as a natural form of communication and self-expression. The moderate-to-high participation levels observed

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among students indicate that Dance and Movement Therapy may be a feasible and acceptable intervention within school settings.

The third objective examined the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy participation and anxiety. The results revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between DMT participation and anxiety ( $r = -0.62$ ,  $p = .001$ ). This finding indicates that students who reported higher levels of participation in Dance and Movement Therapy activities tended to experience lower levels of anxiety. The negative association suggests that engagement in movement-based activities may contribute to emotional regulation, stress reduction, and improved psychological well-being. These findings are consistent with those of Sabine C. Koch et al. (2019), whose meta-analysis demonstrated that dance and movement interventions significantly reduced anxiety and improved psychological outcomes. Similarly, Zoi Moula et al. (2022) reported that school-based Dance Movement Psychotherapy enhanced emotional well-being, self-esteem, and coping abilities among children. The present findings therefore reinforce existing evidence regarding the therapeutic value of movement-based interventions for promoting children's mental health.

The fourth objective was to determine whether participation in Dance and Movement Therapy predicted anxiety levels among students. Regression analysis revealed that DMT participation significantly predicted anxiety levels, explaining 38.4% of the variance in anxiety scores ( $R^2 = .384$ ). The regression coefficient ( $B = -0.64$ ,  $\beta = -0.62$ ,  $p = .001$ ) indicated that an increase in DMT participation was associated with a decrease in anxiety levels. The significant regression model suggests that Dance and Movement Therapy is an important factor influencing students' emotional well-being. These findings are supported by the work of Helen Payne (2006), who argued that movement-based experiences facilitate emotional awareness, self-regulation, and psychological integration. Likewise, Bresler Nardi, Bat-Or, and Shuper Engelhard (2022) reported that Dance Movement Therapy helps children process emotions, develop coping mechanisms, and reduce anxiety-related symptoms. The predictive relationship observed in the present study highlights the potential of DMT as a preventive and supportive intervention within school mental health programs.

Overall, the findings of the present study demonstrate that Dance and Movement Therapy has considerable potential for addressing anxiety among school-going children. The significant negative relationship between DMT participation and anxiety, coupled with the predictive influence of DMT on anxiety levels, underscores the importance of incorporating movement-based interventions into educational settings. Dance and Movement Therapy provides children

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with opportunities for emotional expression, self-awareness, creativity, social interaction, and stress reduction, all of which contribute to positive mental health outcomes.

The study contributes to the limited Indian literature on Dance and Movement Therapy and provides empirical evidence supporting its relevance in regular school settings. The findings have important implications for educators, school counselors, psychologists, and special educators who seek innovative and holistic approaches to promoting emotional well-being among students. Integrating Dance and Movement Therapy into school mental health initiatives may help create supportive educational environments that foster resilience, emotional competence, and overall psychological well-being among children.

### **Conclusion**

The present study investigated the relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) and anxiety among students of Grades IV to VII in regular schools in Mumbai. The study was undertaken in response to the growing concern regarding anxiety among school-going children and the need for holistic interventions that promote emotional well-being within educational settings.

The findings revealed that the majority of students experienced moderate levels of anxiety, indicating that anxiety is a prevalent concern among children in the selected age group. At the same time, students demonstrated moderate to high levels of participation in Dance and Movement Therapy activities, suggesting that movement-based interventions are both feasible and acceptable within school environments.

The study further established a statistically significant negative relationship between Dance and Movement Therapy participation and anxiety. Students who actively participated in Dance and Movement Therapy activities reported lower levels of anxiety compared to those with lower participation levels. This finding highlights the potential of movement, creative expression, and body awareness as effective means of emotional regulation and stress management among children.

Regression analysis demonstrated that Dance and Movement Therapy participation significantly predicted anxiety levels and accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in anxiety scores. These findings indicate that Dance and Movement Therapy is not only associated with anxiety reduction but also serves as an important predictor of students' emotional well-being. The results support the theoretical premise that movement and emotions are interconnected and that therapeutic movement experiences can facilitate emotional expression, self-awareness, confidence, and psychological resilience.

The findings of the study are consistent with existing national and international research that emphasizes the positive impact of Dance and Movement Therapy on emotional health, stress reduction, and anxiety management. The study contributes to the limited body of Indian literature on Dance and Movement Therapy and provides empirical evidence supporting its application among students in regular school settings.

From an educational perspective, the study underscores the importance of incorporating movement-based and expressive interventions into school mental health programs. Schools, educators, counselors, psychologists, and special educators may utilize Dance and Movement Therapy as a preventive and supportive strategy for fostering emotional well-being among students. Such interventions have the potential to create nurturing learning environments that promote self-expression, emotional competence, social interaction, and resilience.

In conclusion, the study demonstrated that Dance and Movement Therapy is a valuable and effective approach for addressing anxiety among school-going children. Increased participation in Dance and Movement Therapy activities was associated with lower anxiety levels, suggesting that movement-based interventions can play a meaningful role in promoting positive mental health and holistic development among students. Therefore, the integration of Dance and Movement Therapy within educational settings may serve as an important step toward enhancing the psychological well-being and overall quality of life of children.

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