

The influence of ballroom dancing on the formation of emotional resilience

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Received: 2025-06-05

Accepted: 2025-07-02

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17027336>

Abstract. *The article focuses on examining the impact of ballroom dancing on the process of developing emotional resilience in children and adolescents. The aim of the study is to explore how ballroom dancing contributes to the formation of emotional resilience in children and teenagers as a dynamic process of mobilizing internal and external resources in response to stressful situations. The research employed general scientific methods of cognition, including analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, and systematization of academic sources. The findings indicate that in modern science, emotional resilience is viewed as a complex and dynamic process based on the mobilization of personal resources when facing crises or stressful circumstances. It has been proven that its development depends on numerous factors, among which empathy, social support, anxiety levels, emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and self-confidence play a central role. Together, these characteristics form a foundation for restoring inner balance and adapting successfully to changing social and cultural conditions. The study highlights that ballroom dancing exerts a multidirectional positive effect on key aspects of emotional resilience. Its effectiveness is explained by biological mechanisms (endorphin and oxytocin release), psychological factors (flow state, fulfillment of basic needs for competence and self-expression), and sociocultural components (group support, collective cohesion). Regular participation in ballroom dancing has been shown to reduce social anxiety, enhance empathy, improve physical fitness, and foster a positive body image. The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that its results can be applied in pedagogical, psychological, and sociocultural practices to strengthen emotional resilience in children and adolescents through ballroom dancing.*

Keywords: *ballroom dancing, emotional resilience, social support, empathy, adaptation.*

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Introduction

Emotional resilience is one of the key psychological traits of an individual, reflecting the ability to withstand stressful and crisis circumstances while maintaining inner balance and productivity. In modern society, where social, economic, and informational pressures are steadily increasing, the problem of insufficient resilience becomes more urgent. Individuals with low levels of resilience often show heightened anxiety, difficulties in interpersonal interactions, rapid exhaustion, and vulnerability to psycho-emotional disorders, which negatively affect both personal and social functioning.

At the same time, scientific research emphasizes that emotional resilience is not a fixed trait but develops under the influence of a combination of internal and external factors. These include personality characteristics, the social environment, levels of empathy, the ability to regulate emotions, as well as physical activity and cultural interaction. Therefore, one of the pressing tasks of modern science is the search for innovative approaches and practical tools that can strengthen emotional stability. Ballroom dancing is increasingly recognized as one of these tools, as it combines physical activity, artistic expression, and social interaction, creating unique conditions for developing internal resources and psychological balance.

Literature Review

The impact of ballroom dancing on the formation of emotional resilience has been well studied in foreign academic literature, as evidenced by numerous empirical and theoretical works addressing both the physical and psycho-emotional aspects of dance. Significant contributions were made by J.R. Hall, B. Deery, E. Sciberras, M. Kern, and J. Quach [3], who provided a systematic review of scientific approaches to measuring resilience in children, establishing a methodological basis for exploring the role of dance in this process. Similarly, L. King, A. Jolicoeur-Martineau, D.P. Laplante, E. Szekely, R. Levitan, and A. Wazana [5] summarized current trends in the study of child resilience and outlined directions for future research, which is particularly relevant for evaluating the effectiveness of dance programs.

Physical activity is an essential aspect provided by dance. S.Y. Huang, J. Hogg, S. Zandieh, and S.B. Bostwick [4] demonstrated that participation in ballroom dance classes in elementary school encourages moderate to vigorous physical activity, which indirectly promotes resilience through improved physical health. Additionally, X. Liu, X. Wei, K.G. Soh, Y. Lu, and R. Li [7] observed a decrease in social physical anxiety among middle school girls engaged in Latin dancing, which can be seen as a mechanism of stress resilience development.

Among interdisciplinary studies, the work of S. Klaperski-van der Wal, J. Skinner, J. Opacka-Juffry, and K. Pfeffer [6] stands out, as it summarizes the influence of dance on stress regulation, showing that dance can serve as a tool of psycho-emotional self-regulation. In the same context, Z. Moula, J. Powell, S. Brocklehurst, and V. Karkou [8] confirmed the effectiveness of dance-movement therapy for children with emotional and behavioral difficulties, highlighting the therapeutic potential of dance in strengthening psychological resilience.

Equally significant are the findings of X. Wu, X. Lu, H. Zhang, X. Wang, Y. Kong, and L. Hu [11], who demonstrated through behavioral and neuroimaging data that ballroom dancing enhances empathic sensitivity. This confirms that dance not only affects individual resilience but also fosters harmonious interpersonal relations. Further empirical support comes from program evaluations of Dancing Classrooms [2; 9], which emphasize the socio-emotional benefits of introducing dance lessons in schools.

In addition to academic sources, the study also drew upon expert online publications, such as U. Vaidya [10], which discuss the psycho-emotional benefits of ballroom dancing in a modern context, emphasizing its role in reducing stress and building self-confidence. Despite a substantial number of academic and applied studies, there remains a lack of systematic research integrating physiological, psychological, and social aspects of ballroom dancing's

impact on emotional resilience. For this reason, this review analyzes, organizes, and presents information from different scholarly sources in light of the research topic.

Methodology and Methods

In academic literature, it is emphasized that approaches to measuring resilience in children and adolescents remain highly inconsistent. As highlighted in the systematic review by King, Jolicoeur-Martineau, Laplante, Szekely, Levitan, and Wazana [5], numerous tools are applied in studies, yet none can be regarded as universal or a “gold standard.” The authors note that most methodologies do not assess resilience as a holistic construct but instead focus on related indicators such as self-esteem (for example, measured by Rosenberg’s scale), the presence or absence of behavioral difficulties (SDQ, CBCL), or the ability to adapt and interact socially. These tools therefore reflect only certain aspects, while resilience itself is recognized in modern science as a dynamic process of mobilizing internal and external resources in response to stress or adversity.

In order to capture the entire range of tools used to measure the influence of ballroom dancing on emotional resilience, a range of academic sources was analyzed and the findings of different authors summarized, creating a fuller picture of how ballroom dancing shapes all components of resilience.

Purpose of the Article

The study aims to examine how ballroom dancing contributes to the development of emotional resilience in children and adolescents as a dynamic process of mobilizing internal and external resources in response to stressful situations. The objectives include identifying the factors influencing emotional resilience, outlining mechanisms of stress reduction through physical, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions of dance, and defining a sequence of actions that ensure resilience formation through integration into supportive environments, activation of internal resources, development of empathy, formation of adaptive strategies, and consolidation of these strategies into stable behavioral patterns, taking into account the role of psychological prevention.

Research Results

Ballroom dancing in the United States demonstrates a significant scale of distribution, which determines the relevance of studying its impact on the development of emotional resilience. According to research, there are more than 30,000 dance studios in the country where children and adolescents take part, while the organization USA Dance unites about 25,000 official members and influences nearly 200,000 dancers through educational programs and partnership initiatives. Such a broad presence of ballroom dancing in cultural and educational contexts highlights its accessibility for young people and emphasizes the potential of this activity not only as an artistic or athletic pursuit but also as a tool for building psychological resources, preventing stress disorders, and fostering emotional resilience [1].

Let us approach the study of the influence of ballroom dancing on the formation of emotional resilience by starting with a definition of the concept itself. Emotional resilience, according to psychologists, is a state in which a person, despite the effects of stressful or crisis factors, continues to function, adapt, and maintain inner balance. This phenomenon is shaped by several factors – empathy, levels of social anxiety, stress tolerance, and the ability to recover from negative experiences – which may vary depending on psychological challenges and environmental conditions. Numerous scholars have studied different aspects influenced by ballroom dancing, including improvement of physical activity, development of empathy, reduction of anxiety, and optimization of psycho-emotional well-being. This allows us to assert that ballroom dancing is one of the key factors positively affecting the development of emotional resilience.

The study by Huang S.Y., Hogg J., Zandieh S., and Bostwick S.B. [4] showed that integrating ballroom dancing into the school curriculum contributes to achieving a significant level of

moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) among younger schoolchildren. The authors recorded that children spent from 50% to 67% of class time engaged in active physical exercise and demonstrated a tendency toward lower body mass index (BMI) scores. This indicates that regular ballroom dance lessons not only stimulate motor activity but also positively influence physical fitness and weight regulation processes [4].

Based on scientific research, ballroom dancing can be viewed not only as a form of physical activity or artistic practice but also as a tool and method for developing resilience in children and adolescents. Its uniqueness lies in the integration of physical activity, social interaction, emotional expression, and cognitive development. At the same time, the effectiveness of such influence requires following a certain sequence of actions that corresponds to the modern understanding of resilience as a dynamic process of mobilizing internal and external resources to overcome challenges [3].

Table 1 – Sequence of resilience formation through ballroom dancing

Stage	Content and significance
1. Identification of environmental resources	Ballroom dancing integrates the child into a supportive social environment (school community, dance group, partner), creating an atmosphere of safety and acceptance
2. Activation of internal resources	Through music, rhythm, and movement, the child learns to recognize emotions, express them, and develop a sense of self-confidence
3. Interaction with external supports	The practice of partner dancing requires trust in a partner, fosters the ability to give and receive support, and strengthens social bonds
4. Formation of adaptive strategies	Regularly overcoming challenges in learning dance movements, focusing on tasks, and achieving goals develop cognitive flexibility and emotional regulation skills
5. Consolidation of the process	Systematic participation in ballroom dancing transforms these skills into stable behavioral patterns that enhance emotional resilience in real-life situations

Note: systematized by the author based on the study [3]

Another study by Wu X., Lu X., Zhang H., Wang X., Kong Y., and Hu L. [11] focused on the influence of long-term ballroom dance training on the development of empathy. The authors demonstrated that dancers who had trained for a long time with relatively constant partners showed higher levels of empathic sensitivity compared to the control group. Importantly, the authors emphasized that this increased empathy was not the result of individual personality differences but specifically of long-term experience in partner dancing. Empathy is an essential psychological resource that supports emotional regulation, facilitates understanding of one's own experiences through the ability to sense another person's state, and strengthens supportive social connections. Thus, the observed effect of heightened empathic sensitivity can be regarded as one of the key prerequisites for the development of emotional resilience: individuals with higher empathy adapt better to stressful situations, maintain psycho-emotional balance more easily, and interact with their social environment more effectively.

Equally important is the cultivation of etiquette skills and interaction culture, which helps children build relationships with peers and feel more comfortable in social situations [2]. As highlighted in the Dancing Classrooms Program Evaluation, such initiatives allow children not only to gain new experiences but also to discover hidden resources within themselves and enjoy the process [2].

The study by Liu et al. [7] revealed that Latin dance lessons help reduce social anxiety related to body image among adolescent girls. This effect results from the combination of rhythm, music, and expressive movements, which foster a more positive attitude toward one's body, lower anxiety levels, and create a supportive social environment. Unlike traditional sports, Latin dancing provides a more inclusive and non-judgmental space, helping teenagers feel more confident and comfortable in their own bodies.

Reducing body-related anxiety directly strengthens inner confidence, boosts self-esteem, and improves psycho-emotional balance. Therefore, Latin dances can be considered not only as a form of physical activity but also as a factor shaping the prerequisites for the development of emotional resilience in adolescents during a socially and psychologically vulnerable period [7].

The research by Klaperski-van der Wal, Skinner, Opacka-Juffry, and Pfeffer [6] focused on the influence of dance on stress regulation processes. The authors showed that stress reduction occurs through a combination of biological, psychological, and sociocultural mechanisms. The key mechanisms of stress reduction through ballroom dancing are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mechanisms of stress reduction through ballroom dancing

Mechanism	Description
Biological	Dance activates the release of β -endorphins, which reduce cortisol levels and generate feelings of pleasure, as well as oxytocin, which enhances trust, social bonding, and lowers anxiety. This supports physiological recovery after stress
Psychological	Dance sessions create a state of "flow" that distracts from stressful thoughts, reduces rumination, and promotes emotional relief. At the same time, satisfying basic needs for competence, autonomy, and self-expression strengthens psychological stability
Sociocultural	Dancing together fosters a sense of belonging, enhances group cohesion, and creates a supportive social environment. In addition, dance as a form of aesthetic and symbolic expression helps integrate emotional experiences and reduce inner tension

Note: systematized by the author based on the study [6]

Thus, the mechanisms of stress reduction through ballroom dancing operate in a complex way: the biological mechanism protects physiological systems from overload, the psychological mechanism builds individual coping resources, and the sociocultural mechanism strengthens external support resources. Together, they provide a holistic foundation for the development and maintenance of emotional resilience.

Based on the study by Moula, Powell, Brocklehurst, and Karkou [8], it becomes clear that during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the number of children with emotional and behavioral difficulties sharply increased, dance movement psychotherapy (DMP) proved to be an effective tool for supporting their mental health. The authors concluded that dance and movement help children express experiences they cannot always verbalize, promote self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, and self-regulation. Thus, dance serves as a therapeutic instrument that integrates emotional, cognitive, social, and personal dimensions, which directly aligns with the concept of developing emotional resilience.

Overall, the observations allow us to conclude that the components of ballroom dancing can influence emotional resilience through several key factors – from emotional expression to social interaction and the development of internal resources.

Table 3. Elements of ballroom dancing and their influence on emotional resilience

Element of ballroom dancing	Influence on emotional resilience
Emotional expression through movement and music	Helps relieve inner tension, regulate emotions, and develop the ability to self-soothe in stressful situations
Cognitive component (learning movements, rhythm, choreography)	Develops new coping strategies, fosters flexible thinking, and builds adaptability to new circumstances
Social interaction in pairs and groups	Enhances empathy, communication skills, and a sense of belonging to a community, which serves as an important protective factor during periods of stress and isolation
Personal development (self-esteem, confidence, self-awareness)	Promotes the formation of internal resources that support mental balance and strengthen resistance to external challenges

Note: systematized by the author based on the study [8]

In the context of prevention, ballroom dancing should be considered not only as a means of relieving stress in the moment but also as a systematic long-term tool that lays the foundation for developing emotional resilience. This is confirmed by the results of the Dancing Classrooms North Texas expansion pilot program [9], which demonstrated that children's participation strengthened their sense of social support, engagement, and significance. It is important to emphasize that the regular integration of dance into the educational process allowed students not only to experience positive emotions but also to develop new patterns of behavior and interaction that extended beyond the dance lessons themselves.

As the authors note [9], the program fostered the development of so-called developmental assets – social and psychological “assets” that provide the foundation for a child's harmonious growth. These assets include a caring and supportive school environment, role models in the form of teachers, clear rules and boundaries, high self-esteem, and a positive outlook on the future. According to the framework of the 40 Developmental Assets (Search Institute), the presence of such resources significantly lowers the likelihood of risky behavior and strengthens a child's ability to adapt successfully in challenging life situations. Thus, dance functions as a preventive tool that goes beyond temporary emotional effects and creates long-term prerequisites for resilience, since enhanced self-esteem, social support, and a sense of optimism become stable protective factors throughout life [9].

Conclusions

Emotional resilience is understood in modern science as a dynamic process of mobilizing internal and external resources in response to stressful or crisis situations. Its development is influenced by several factors, including empathy, social support, anxiety levels, the ability to regulate emotions, cognitive flexibility, and self-confidence. Together, these components form the basis for an individual's ability to restore balance and adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Scientific studies have shown that ballroom dancing positively affects the key parameters of emotional resilience: it reduces stress through biological mechanisms (endorphin and oxytocin release), psychological mechanisms (flow state, fulfillment of basic needs for competence and self-expression), and sociocultural mechanisms (group support, cohesion). In addition, systematic practice enhances empathy, lowers social anxiety, improves physical fitness, and develops a positive body image.

The sequence of developing emotional resilience through ballroom dancing includes integration into a supportive environment, activation of internal resources, building trust and interaction with partners, formation of adaptive strategies, and consolidation of acquired skills into stable behavioral patterns. An important aspect is the preventive role of ballroom dancing: its regular practice fosters long-term resources such as social support, increased self-esteem, confidence, and optimism, which reduce the risk of psychological disorders and ensure resilience in the future.

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