

## Therapeutic Rhythm: Dance Therapy, Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction of Academics at Lagos State University

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### Abstract

*This study investigated the effect of dance therapy on work-life balance and job satisfaction of academics at Lagos State University. Using the descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 528 academic staff through the questionnaire. Two hypotheses were stated and tested using the linear regression statistical technique with the aid of SPSS version 26. Also, a research question was stated and answered through written responses on the administered questionnaires. Results of hypothesis one revealed a statistically significant influence of dance therapy on the work-life balance of academics, with an  $R^2$  value of .565, and hypothesis two showed a statistically significant influence of dance therapy on the job satisfaction of academics, with an  $R^2$  of .675. Also, the research question was answered by remarking that academics at Lagos State University view dance therapy positively as a beneficial tool for enhancing mental well-being. The study concluded by noting that dance therapy is not only a method for stress relief and emotional regulation but also a catalyst for enhancing job satisfaction and overall quality of life. Therefore, it was recommended amongst others that institutions, especially those in the academic sector consider incorporating dance therapy into their wellness and employee assistance programs.*

**Keywords:** Academics, Dance Therapy, Job Satisfaction, Mental Well-Being, Work-Life Balance

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### 1.0 Introduction

The intersection of work-life balance and job satisfaction among academics has emerged as a critical area of inquiry in the realm of occupational health and well-being. Amidst the pursuit of scholarly excellence and institutional responsibilities, academics often grapple with stress, burnout, and the challenge of maintaining a harmonious balance between their professional and personal lives (Ren & Caudle, 2020). In this context, innovative approaches to enhancing work-life and job satisfaction are continually sought. Dance therapy, a modality of expressive therapy that integrates movement and dance to support intellectual, emotional, and motor functions of the body (American Dance Therapy Association, n.d.), offers a unique avenue for investigation. Dance therapy is grounded on the premise that body and mind are interrelated, and has been recognized for its therapeutic benefits, including stress reduction, emotional regulation, and improvement in mental health (Roberts, 2016). This innovative approach could potentially offer academics a pathway to not only alleviate stress but also enhance their overall job satisfaction and work-life balance. Moreover, the communal aspect of dance therapy can foster a sense of belonging and improve interpersonal relationships within academic communities (Koch et al., 2007).

Emerging studies have begun to shed light on the positive impacts of creative and expressive therapies in the workplace, highlighting reductions in stress levels and improvements in employee satisfaction and productivity (Reed et al., 2020; Saarinen & Broxterman, 2023). However, the investigation of dance therapy as a structured intervention for academics has not been extensively documented in the literature.

The need to address the well-being of academics is underscored by the increasing pressures of global competitiveness, publication demands, and the pursuit of funding, which collectively contribute to workplace stress (Kinman & Wray, 2020). Consequently, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding how academics perceive dance therapy, their willingness to participate in such programs, and the outcomes of these interventions in terms of stress relief and job satisfaction (Prieto et al., 2020). This study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the perceptions and experiences of academics with dance therapy as an intervention. By understanding these dynamics, the research seeks to inform the development of targeted programs that can effectively integrate dance therapy into the support systems for academics, ultimately enhancing their work-life balance, job satisfaction, and overall mental well-being.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

Dance therapy, also known as dance/movement therapy (DMT), operates on the principle that the mind and body are inseparable and interconnected. It is a psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance to support intellectual, emotional, and motor functions of the body (Barnet-Lopez et al., 2016). As a modality of creative arts therapies, DMT looks beyond surface movement to the deeper, emotional, and psychological dynamics of the participant, offering a unique approach to treatment that emphasizes the holistic interrelation of body and mind. This form of therapy, recognized since the 1940s is based on the understanding that body and mind are co-constructive and that movement can be both an assessment and intervention tool (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). Research supports the efficacy of DMT in various settings, highlighting its benefits across a wide range of populations, including those with mental health issues, neurological disorders, developmental delays, and more (Karkou & Sanderson, 2006). Studies have shown that DMT can improve self-esteem, body image, and cognitive function, while also reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and physical tension (Dulicai & Hill, 2007). The therapy sessions typically involve movement improvisation, the development of personal movement vocabulary, expressive dance, and the therapeutic use of dance rituals, all aimed at fostering emotional expression, self-awareness, and psychological healing (Wilkie, 2023). The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) emphasizes the importance of a trained therapist who can guide the process safely and effectively, ensuring that the therapeutic goals are met. This therapist navigates the delicate balance of providing structure and freedom within sessions, allowing participants to explore and express their emotions through the medium of dance in a safe and supportive environment (American Dance Therapy Association, n.d.). Through this guided investigation, DMT would facilitate a deepening of self-knowledge and the enhancement of interpersonal communication skills, thereby contributing to people's work-life balance, job satisfaction, and overall psychological well-being and health.

Work-life balance refers to the equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life, a concept increasingly significant in today's fast-paced work environments like academia. Achieving a healthy work-life balance is considered essential for the well-being of employees, impacting their productivity, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life (Rashmi & Kataria, 2022). Employers are beginning to recognize the importance of facilitating this balance through flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and policies that encourage time off. Such measures not only enhance employee satisfaction but also contribute to a reduction in work-related stress and burnout, fostering a more dynamic and engaged workforce (Kumar et al., 2023). The challenges to maintaining a work-life balance have been magnified by the digital age, with technology blurring the boundaries between work and home. This constant connectivity can lead to longer working hours and difficulty in disengaging from work-related tasks, thereby impacting personal relationships and health (Derks & Bakker, 2014). Research has indicated that clear boundaries between work and personal life, along with self-discipline in technology use, are crucial for preserving mental health and preventing burnout (Hughes & Burke, 2018). Moreover,

individuals who successfully manage a balance between work and life report higher job satisfaction and are less likely to intend to leave their jobs (Gagnano et al., 2020). Strategies to improve work-life balance include setting clear boundaries between work and personal time, prioritizing health, and leveraging flexibility offered by employers. Also, organizations can play a pivotal role by creating cultures that value balance, offering support through employee assistance programs, and promoting practices that allow employees to have control over their work and personal time (Jolly et al., 2021). Ultimately, achieving a sustainable work-life balance is a shared responsibility, requiring commitment from both employers and employees to foster environments where productivity and well-being are in harmony.

Job satisfaction refers to the level of contentment employees feel about their work, which influences their motivation, performance, and overall well-being. The concept encompasses various factors, including job roles, work environment, compensation, recognition, and opportunities for growth and development. Locke (1976) defines job satisfaction as a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences, indicating its subjective and multifaceted nature. Research has consistently shown that job satisfaction has significant implications for organizational outcomes, such as employee retention, productivity, and performance (Liu et al., 2021). Furthermore, satisfied employees are more likely to engage in positive behaviours toward the organization, including higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviour and lower instances of absenteeism and turnover. The determinants of job satisfaction are numerous and complex, reflecting the diverse needs and expectations of employees. According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Alam, 2021), job satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from two distinct sets of factors. Hygiene factors, such as salary, work conditions, and job security, do not necessarily motivate employees but, if inadequate, can lead to dissatisfaction. On the other hand, motivator factors, including achievement, recognition, and the work itself, can significantly enhance job satisfaction and motivation. This theory emphasizes that for employees to be truly satisfied and motivated; organizations must address both sets of factors effectively. Moreover, the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) suggests that job satisfaction is influenced by the characteristics of the job itself, including the variety of skills required, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Jobs that score high on these dimensions are believed to lead to higher personal satisfaction and better performance outcomes. This model further introduces the concept of psychological states that mediate the relationship between job characteristics and outcomes, highlighting the role of personal and job fit in determining satisfaction levels (Li et al., 2023). Moreover, the impact of job satisfaction extends beyond individual and organizational outcomes, influencing the broader socio-economic context. Satisfied employees contribute to a positive organizational climate, which can lead to improved organizational reputation, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. Additionally, job satisfaction plays a critical role in mental and physical health outcomes for employees, as high levels of dissatisfaction can be associated with stress, burnout, and other health issues (Kleine et al., 2019).

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

In this study, the self-determination theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (2012) offers a compelling theoretical foundation to understand how dance therapy can positively affect academics' professional and personal lives. SDT emphasizes the importance of fulfilling innate psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—for optimal well-being and motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In the realm of academia, where stress and burnout are prevalent, dance therapy could serve as a novel intervention to satisfy these needs, promoting greater job satisfaction and a harmonious work-life balance. For instance, autonomy is achieved as individuals actively choose to engage in dance therapy, embodying a sense of control over their well-being and leisure activities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Dance therapy's role in enhancing the sense of competence among academics is noteworthy. Through mastering dance movements and experiencing physical improvements, individuals may perceive an increase in their overall competence. This enhanced

perception can spill over into their professional lives, potentially elevating performance and satisfaction (Edwards, 2019). Furthermore, dance therapy provides a platform for emotional expression and coping with stress, indirectly fostering professional competence by reducing the mental and emotional barriers to performance (Nielsen, 2019). The aspect of relatedness is also significantly addressed in dance therapy sessions, which often promote social interaction and emotional support among participants. This social connectivity is crucial for academics who may feel isolated in their research and teaching responsibilities, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging and contributing to a supportive work environment (Bailey et al., 2018).

## **2.3 Empirical Review**

### **2.3.1 Dance Therapy and Work-life Balance**

Research endeavours have begun to examine the effect of dance therapy on employees' psychological well-being and its subsequent effect on work-life balance. These endeavours have put forward mixed results in different sectors and contexts. Bräuninger (2012) found that dance movement therapy significantly reduced stress and anxiety levels among participants, suggesting that it could offer valuable support for mental health in the workplace. This is particularly relevant given the high levels of work-related stress reported across various sectors, which can severely disrupt work-life balance. The physical activity involved in dance therapy not only reduces physiological stress responses but also promotes a sense of mental clarity and emotional release, thereby contributing to improved job satisfaction and personal well-being (Koch et al., 2007). Moreover, dance therapy's role in enhancing emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication skills has implications for workplace relationships and work-life balance. A study by Pinniger et al. (2012) demonstrated that tango dance therapy, in particular, improved emotional competence and social connectedness which are some of the factors that are crucial for effective work-life balance. Additionally, the improvements in emotional and social functioning could mitigate the effects of workplace stress and contribute to a more balanced and fulfilling work-life dynamic. Dunphy et al. (2014) provided evidence for the positive impact of arts-based wellness programs on employee morale and engagement, suggesting that dance therapy could similarly enhance organizational culture and foster employee retention, thereby addressing the holistic needs of employees. Furthermore, Paglione et al. (2023) noted that the collective experience of movement and dance fosters social support networks that can alleviate feelings of isolation and stress, therefore, it reinforces the social fabric of the workplace and contributes to a more cohesive work environment (Reed et al., 2020). Based on the foregoing, we hypothesized that:

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant influence of dance therapy on the work-life balance of academics at Lagos State University*

### **2.3.2 Dance Therapy and Job Satisfaction**

Initial theoretical perspectives suggest that dance therapy can enhance emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills, which are critical components of job satisfaction (San-Juan-Ferrer & Hípola, 2020). These improvements in personal and interpersonal dimensions are believed to translate into a more positive work environment and higher levels of job satisfaction. The therapeutic aspects of dance, including increased physical awareness and expression, offer pathways to better stress management, another key factor influencing job satisfaction (Acar et al., 2021). For instance, a pilot study conducted by Punkanen et al. (2014) found that depressed patients participating in a 12-week dance therapy program reported significant improvements in satisfaction with life compared to a control group. These findings suggest that the benefits of dance therapy extend beyond personal well-being to influence perceptions of satisfaction. Also, the mechanism by which dance therapy influences job satisfaction appears multifaceted, involving both physiological and psychological pathways. Physiologically, dance therapy has been shown to reduce cortisol levels, a marker of stress, thereby potentially improving job satisfaction by lowering stress levels (Randazzo, 2022). Psychologically, the expressive nature of dance allows individuals to process and

express emotions in a non-verbal manner, contributing to improved mental health and well-being (Dhaese & Gaskill, 2024). Based on these findings and submissions, we hypothesized that:

*H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant influence of dance therapy on the job satisfaction of academics at Lagos State University*

### **2.3.3 Perceptions and experiences regarding the use of dance therapy for mental well-being**

Empirical research highlights the positive perceptions of individuals who participate in dance therapy programs, noting significant improvements in mood, stress levels, and overall psychological well-being (Lyons et al., 2018). These findings are supported by qualitative studies that delve into the personal experiences of participants, revealing a sense of emotional release, increased self-awareness, and enhanced coping mechanisms as key benefits of dance therapy (Braun & Kotera, 2022). The sense of emotional release reported by participants in dance therapy programs speaks to the therapeutic potential of movement and expression. Through dance, individuals may find a medium for channeling and processing their emotions, leading to a sense of catharsis and relief. This aspect of dance therapy aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance of embodied practices in promoting psychological healing and self-expression (Windle, 2019). Based on this, we raised a research question:

*How do academics at Lagos State University perceive and experience dance therapy as a tool for promoting mental well-being?*

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

This study employed a cross-sectional method using a descriptive survey research design to gather a representative sample of data from the participants. The data for this study was collected from the academic staff of Lagos State University who were 843 as cited in Aremo et al. (2023). All academic staff members were invited to participate in the study using the comprehensive enumeration survey approach. Over six weeks (December 2023 – January 2024), research assistants distributed 843 copies of the questionnaire to the university campuses in Ojo, Epe, and Ikeja. Of those copies, 534 were recovered. Of the 534 (63.3%) copies that were recovered, 528 (62.6%) copies of the surveys were correctly completed and used in the final analysis. Two-part copies of the questionnaire were given to respondents to complete. Part A contains the demographic variables while Part B contains the scales and questions that were constructed by the authors based on existing scales and literature review. The participants gave responses to the measures using the 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 5. All scales were pilot-tested amongst 50 doctoral candidates and they yielded an acceptable reliability coefficient above the threshold of Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) .70. Cronbach Alpha Dance therapy scale ( $\alpha$ =.880), work-life balance scale ( $\alpha$ =.792) and job satisfaction scale ( $\alpha$ =.771). Also, a question (*describe your perceptions and/or experiences regarding dance as a well-being therapy in a few words*) was asked of participants to elicit their opinions and understand their perceptions and experiences regarding the use of dance therapy for enhancing mental well-being. To this end, it can be said that the measures are effective and dependable in gauging the factors being examined. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the collected and compiled data. The data obtained on demographic factors were examined using the descriptive statistical technique, and the two (2) stated hypotheses were tested using the inferential statistics of linear regression through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Answers provided by the participants were content analyzed to discuss and answer the stated research question. The LASU Research Ethics Policy (2020) was adhered to by this study in terms of safeguarding participant rights, preserving confidentiality, and preserving research integrity.

### **4.0 Results and Discussion**

This section delves into the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the gathered data to comprehend the interactions among the variables.

**Table 1: Analysis of Demographic Variables**

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	416 (79%)
	Female	112 (21%)
Age	20-30	59 (11%)
	31-40	197 (37%)
	41-50	203 (38%)
	51-60	40 (8%)
	61 & above	29 (5%)
Marital Status	Single	63 (12%)
	Married	427 (81%)
	Separated	23 (4%)
	Widowed	15 (3%)
To you, is Dance Therapeutic	Yes	497 (94%)
	No	31 (6%)

**Source:** *Field Survey (2024)*

Table 1 presents the demographic attributes of the study participants, illustrating notable trends in gender, age, and perceptions regarding the efficacy of dance therapy. The data shows a pronounced gender imbalance, with male participants making up 79% (416 individuals) of the sample, while females represent only 21% (112 individuals). This significant gender difference may indicate a higher propensity or willingness among males to engage with or acknowledge the benefits of dance therapy, potentially reflecting wider cultural attitudes towards gender, dance expression, and therapeutic engagement. When examining the age distribution, a clear preference for dance therapy among middle-aged individuals emerges, with 37% (197 individuals) falling into the 31-40 year age bracket and 38% (203 individuals) in the 41-50 year range. Collectively, these groups constitute 75% of the survey respondents, suggesting that dance therapy might hold particular appeal or relevance for those navigating the challenges of mid-life. The diminished representation from the younger (11% in the 20-30 year range) and older demographics (13% for ages 51 and above) may indicate variations in dance therapy's perceived relevance or accessibility among different life stages, perhaps reflecting its particular utility for those dealing with mid-life stressors or seeking health and physical engagement later in life. Concerning the therapeutic value of dance therapy,

a vast majority of 94% (497 individuals) acknowledge its benefits, with only a small fraction of 6% (31 individuals) expressing skepticism. This overwhelming support reinforces the broad acknowledgment and positive regard for dance therapy’s impact on mental health. Despite the marked skew towards male and middle-aged participants, the data reveals a wide-ranging affirmation of dance therapy’s effectiveness across diverse demographic segments, underscoring its potential as a universally applicable intervention for mental well-being.

**Test of Hypothesis**

**H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant influence of dance therapy on the work-life balance of academics at Lagos State University**

**Table 2: Model Summary of Regression Analysis**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.752 <sup>a</sup>	.565	.564	.45928	1.883

a. Predictors: (Constant), Dance\_Theraphy  
 b. Dependent Variable: Work\_Life\_Balance

**Table 3: ANOVA of Regression Analysis**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	144.024	1	144.024	682.784	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	110.952	526	.211		
	Total	254.976	527			

a. Dependent Variable: Work\_Life\_Balance  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Dance\_Theraphy

**Table 4: Coefficients of Regression Analysis**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.537	.131		4.098	.000
	Dance_Theraphy	.891	.034	.752	26.130	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Work\_Life\_Balance

**Source: Field Survey (2024)**

The results from the regression analysis as presented in Table 2 indicate a strong relationship between dance therapy and work-life balance. The model’s R-value of .752 suggests a robust positive correlation, explaining 56.5% of the variance in work-life balance ( $R^2 = .565$ ). The standard error of the estimate stands at .45928, and the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.883 suggests that there is no serious autocorrelation problem in the regression model. This implies that dance therapy is a significant predictor of work-life balance among the participants, highlighting its potential as an effective intervention for enhancing

individuals' ability to manage their professional and personal lives. Further examination through ANOVA (Table 3) supports the regression model's strength, with a significant F-value of 682.784 ( $p < .000$ ), indicating that the model is statistically significant. The regression sum of squares (144.024) points to the substantial effect of dance therapy on work-life balance, compared to the residual sum of squares (110.952), reinforcing the model's explanatory power over the variance in work-life balance. Table 4 details the coefficients of the regression analysis, illustrating the direct impact of dance therapy on work-life balance. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for dance therapy is .891, with a standard error of .034, and a significant t-value of 26.130 ( $p < .000$ ), indicating a strong positive effect of dance therapy on work-life balance. The constant term (.537) with a standard error of .131 and a significant t-value (4.098,  $p < .000$ ) suggests that even without the influence of dance therapy, other factors contribute to the baseline level of work-life balance among the respondents. Thus, the stated alternate hypothesis is accepted while the null is rejected.

The results underscore the importance of dance therapy as a significant predictor and enhancer of work-life balance. The statistical analysis provides compelling evidence of dance therapy's positive influence, suggesting that it could be an effective strategy for individuals seeking to improve their work-life balance. The significant interplay between dance therapy and work-life balance reflects the broader recognition of creative and movement-based therapies in promoting psychological well-being and managing stress. According to the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), dance therapy facilitates emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration, contributing to improved mental health and personal well-being (American Dance Therapy Association, n.d.). These findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the role of physical activity and expressive therapies in enhancing work-life balance, offering a non-traditional avenue for individuals to address the challenges of managing work and personal life demands (Lupo, 2022). Moreover, the positive influence of dance therapy on work-life balance could be understood within the context of stress relief and emotional regulation. Research by Koch, Kunz et al. (2014) suggests that dance and movement therapies can significantly reduce stress and improve mood, which, in turn, may contribute to a better balance between work and life responsibilities. The ability of dance therapy to offer a creative outlet for expression and stress management may explain its effectiveness in improving participants' work-life balance (Koch et al., 2014).

**H2: There is a significant influence of dance therapy on the job satisfaction of academics at Lagos State University**

**Table 5: Model Summary of Regression Analysis**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.821 <sup>a</sup>	.675	.674	.40032	1.997

a. Predictors: (Constant), Dance\_Theraphy

b. Dependent Variable: Job\_Satisfaction

**Table 6: ANOVA of Regression Analysis**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	174.911	1	174.911	1091.477	.001 <sup>b</sup>



Residual	84.283	526	.160
Total	259.204	527	

a. Dependent Variable: Job\_Satisfaction  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Dance\_Therapy

**Table 7: Coefficients of Regression Analysis**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.061	.114		.538	.000
	Dance_Therapy	.982	.030	.821	33.038	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction  
 Source: Field Survey (2024)

The results from the regression analysis shown in Table 5 suggest a very strong relationship between dance therapy and job satisfaction, with an R-value of .821. This high R-value indicates a substantial positive correlation, with dance therapy explaining approximately 67.5% of the variance in job satisfaction among participants ( $R^2=.675$ ). The standard error of the estimate stands at .40032, indicating the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line. Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.997 is close to 2, indicating that there is likely no autocorrelation in the residuals of the data, lending further credibility to the model's validity. Furthermore, the ANOVA results provided in Table 6 reinforce the regression analysis, with a significant F-value of 1091.477 ( $p < .001$ ), confirming the statistical significance of the model. The regression sum of squares (174.911) highlights the impact of dance therapy on job satisfaction compared to the residual sum of squares (84.283), which accounts for the variation not explained by the model. This significant F-value suggests that the model is highly effective at predicting job satisfaction based on the presence of dance therapy interventions. In Table 7, the coefficients of the regression analysis are detailed, showing the specific impact of dance therapy on job satisfaction. The unstandardized coefficient for dance therapy is .982 with a standard error of .030, and it has a very high standardized coefficient (Beta = .821), indicating a strong positive effect of dance therapy on job satisfaction. The significant t-value of 33.038 ( $p < .000$ ) for dance therapy further underscores its substantial positive impact on job satisfaction levels among participants. The constant term (.061), although small, is statistically significant ( $p < .000$ ), indicating the baseline level of job satisfaction when dance therapy is not considered. Therefore, the stated alternate hypothesis is accepted while the null is rejected.

The significant and positive influence of dance therapy on job satisfaction is indicative of the broader potential benefits of incorporating holistic wellness practices within the workplace. The high percentage of variance in job satisfaction explained by dance therapy suggests that such practices can significantly impact employees' overall satisfaction with their jobs. This aligns with research by Kobylińska et al. (2018), who found that integrative body-mind training, including practices like yoga and others similar to dance therapy, can enhance individuals' emotional regulation and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the strong effect of dance therapy on job satisfaction highlighted by the high standardized coefficient (.821) in the regression analysis

underscores the effectiveness of such interventions. This suggests that dance therapy could be considered a strategic component of organizational wellness programs aimed at enhancing job satisfaction.

### **Analysis of Research Question**

#### ***How do academics at Lagos State University perceive and experience dance therapy as a tool for promoting mental well-being?***

In investigating how academics at Lagos State University (LASU) perceive and experience dance therapy as a tool for promoting mental well-being, the findings reveal a spectrum of perceptions and experiences. For instance, the majority of participants expressed a positive impression of dance therapy. One lecturer mentioned, “I was intrigued by the concept of using dance as a form of therapy; it seemed like a joyful way to address serious issues like mental health”. This reflects a general optimism towards non-traditional therapeutic methods and their potential to enhance well-being (Bradshaw, 2015). Participants frequently cited stress reduction as a key benefit of engaging in dance therapy. “After a session, I felt a noticeable decrease in my stress levels. It was as if dancing had allowed me to physically shake off my worries”, shared one participant. Such personal anecdotes align with research suggesting that dance can significantly lower stress and improve mood (Koch et al., 2014). Many academics highlighted how dance therapy facilitated greater self-awareness and emotional expression. A lecturer wrote on the questionnaire, “Dance therapy helped me profoundly connect with my emotions, offering a form of expression that words could not”. This mirrors the findings that dance therapy provides a unique medium for emotional exploration and expression (Nielsen, 2019). Also, some academics observed that group dance (therapy) sessions contributed to a sense of community and increased sociability among lecturers. “There is something about moving together in a shared space that fosters a strong sense of connection”, commented an academic. This observation is supported by literature that identifies social interaction as a significant component of dance therapy's effectiveness (Karkou & Sanderson, 2006).

Despite many positive responses, some skepticism was present, particularly regarding the academic community's acceptance of dance therapy. “I wonder about the reception among my colleagues who might view it as less legitimate than traditional therapies”, a participant expressed, highlighting a common barrier to the wider adoption of creative therapies (Dulicai & Hill, 2007). The cultural context of Lagos State was mentioned as a factor influencing the perception and implementation of dance therapy. One academic pointed out, “In our culture, dance is already a significant form of expression. Integrating it into therapy seems natural, yet there are cultural norms around mental health that could pose challenges”. This underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in therapeutic practices (Apers et al., 2023). A common theme was the call for more rigorous, evidence-based research on the efficacy of dance therapy. “While my experience has been positive, I acknowledge the need for more empirical evidence to support its broader application”, a participant stated. This reflects an academic tendency to value research-based approaches to new therapies (Bräuninger, 2012). Participants emphasized that the benefits of dance therapy extended beyond physical well-being to encompass mental and emotional health. “It is not just about the physical act of dancing but how it makes you feel mentally and emotionally”, shared an academic, highlighting dance therapy's holistic impact (Honoré-Grauslund et al., 2023). Many academics reported integrating dance or elements of dance therapy into their self-care routines. “Dance therapy introduced me to a new form of self-care that I have since incorporated into my weekly routine”, mentioned a participant, suggesting personal adoption beyond professional curiosity (Critien & Ollis, 2006). Lastly, the potential for implementing dance therapy programs within academic settings was a point of interest. “There is a significant opportunity to integrate dance therapy into wellness programs for students and staff”, suggested an academic, indicating the perceived applicability within higher education institutions (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). Based on these discussions, it can be said that the perceptions and experiences of academics concerning the use of dance therapy as a veritable tool for enhancing mental well-being are positive and promising.

## 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The investigation into the perceptions and experiences of academics at Lagos State University (LASU) regarding dance therapy as a tool for promoting mental well-being has shown a largely positive and promising outlook. The significant positive influence of dance therapy on work-life balance, as well as its strong influence on job satisfaction, highlights the profound impact that dance therapy can have on individuals' professional and personal realms. This study concludes by noting the potential of dance therapy not only as a method for stress relief and emotional regulation but also as a catalyst for enhancing job satisfaction and overall quality of life. The findings from both the regression analyses and the qualitative feedback from participants underscore dance therapy's holistic benefits, which extend beyond mere physical activity to encompass emotional, cognitive, and social integration, contributing to improved mental health and personal well-being.

Based on this conclusion, the study recommended that given the positive implications of dance therapy for enhancing work-life balance and job satisfaction, institutions, especially those in the academic sector should consider incorporating dance therapy into their wellness and employee assistance programs. Initiatives could include regular dance therapy sessions facilitated by certified dance therapists to ensure that interventions are both effective and appropriately tailored to the participant's needs. Further, given the call for more rigorous, evidence-based research on the efficacy of dance therapy, academic institutions should encourage and support research studies aimed at investigating the impact of dance therapy on various outcomes, including stress, emotional well-being, and job satisfaction. Such research could help solidify the evidence base for dance therapy, potentially leading to its broader acceptance and implementation. Additionally, (academic) institutions should foster an environment of openness and acceptance towards non-traditional therapies such as dance therapy. Awareness campaigns and informational workshops could be instrumental in dispelling myths and addressing skepticism within the academic community. These efforts could help cultivate a culture that values and integrates holistic approaches to mental health and well-being. Finally, considering the cultural nuances highlighted by the study, it is crucial to ensure that dance therapy programs are designed with cultural sensitivity in mind. Tailoring sessions to reflect and respect the cultural backgrounds and preferences of participants can enhance engagement and effectiveness.

As suggestions for further studies, future research should: compare dance therapy to other therapies and activities for improving mental well-being in academics; track the long-term effects of dance therapy on mental health, job satisfaction, and work-life balance; determine how dance therapy benefits emotions and psychology, including the impact of dance type, session frequency, and group format and; include a broader range of academic disciplines and institutions to enhance the study's generalizability.

## Acknowledgment

The authors thank the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) for providing the grant that was used to conduct this study.

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