



Scope of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) as a Potential Tool for Development of Motor Skills in Mild Intellectual Disability Children: A Critical Discussion

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ABSTRACT:

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) has emerged as a promising intervention for the development of motor skills in children with mild intellectual disabilities. This paper critically examines the scope of DMT as a tool for motor skill development in this population, highlighting its potential benefits as well as limitations and future challenges. The discussion focuses on the assessment process, treatment planning, and the implementation of DMT for children with mild intellectual disabilities. The creative and playful nature of DMT is seen as a positive aspect, but the individualized nature of therapy and access to trained professionals pose challenges to the wider application of DMT. Despite these challenges, recent studies have provided evidence for the effectiveness of DMT for children with mild intellectual disabilities. Further research and development of evidence-based protocols for DMT interventions, along with increased access to DMT services, can help to maximize the potential of DMT as a tool for motor skill development in children with mild intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), Motor skills, Intellectual disabilities, Mobility, Cognitive development

1. Introduction

Therapy, also called psychotherapy or counselling, is the process of meeting with a therapist to resolve problematic behaviours, beliefs, feelings, relationship issues, and/or somatic responses (sensations in the body). Beginning therapy can be a big step toward being the healthiest version of yourself and living the best life possible—no matter what challenges you may be facing. Through therapy, you can change self-destructive behaviours and habits, resolve painful feelings, improve your relationships, and more.¹

Dance/movement therapy (DMT) is defined by the [American Dance Therapy Association](http://www.adta.org) (ADTA) as the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual, for the purpose of improving health and well-being.

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is a type of psychotherapy that uses movement and dance to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual. It is based on the belief that the body and mind are interconnected, and that movement can help to heal and enhance psychological and emotional wellbeing.¹

It emerged as a field in the 1940s as early innovators, many of whom were accomplished dancers, began to realize the benefit of using dance and movement as a form of psychotherapy. It is a holistic approach to healing, based on the empirically supported assertion that mind, body, and spirit are inseparable and interconnected; changes in the body reflect changes in the mind and vice versa. DMT as an embodied, movement-based approach is often difficult to describe, as it is necessary to actively engage in the process to get a true sense of what it is.^{2,3}

DMT is a client-centered therapy that focuses on the individual's unique movement expressions, and how they relate to their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. It can be used to address a wide range of mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, trauma, and eating disorders. During a DMT session, the therapist guides the individual through various movements and exercises that help them to explore and express their emotions and feelings in a safe and supportive environment. The therapist may also use music, props, and other sensory stimuli to enhance the therapeutic experience.^{1,4}

DMT can be practiced in individual or group settings and can be tailored to suit the needs of people of all ages and abilities. It is often used as a complementary therapy alongside other forms of treatment, such as talk therapy or medication.¹

In this scientific discussion, the writers first explain the basics of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for understanding the theoretical application and then focus how it helps as a holistic approach for health and well-being in children. The study then moves forward to figure out the latest development, limitations, and future challenges within this field of research. This article further explores the process of application of DMT for mild intellectual disabled children. It also highlights the beneficial effects of using DMT in mild intellectual disabled children.

2. Objective and Principles of Dance Movement Therapy:

The objective of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is to promote emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of individuals through the use of movement and dance.

DMT aims to help individuals explore and express their emotions, thoughts, and experiences through movement in a safe and supportive environment. The therapist facilitates this process by guiding individuals to use movement to connect with and express their inner selves, and to develop a greater sense of self-awareness, self-expression, and self-confidence.^{5,6}

In addition, DMT can help individuals:

- Improve their physical coordination and mobility
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Increase body awareness and relaxation
- Enhance social skills and communication
- Improve self-esteem and body image
- Enhance creativity and imagination
- Develop coping skills and resilience

Overall, the objective of DMT is to promote holistic health and well-being by integrating the mind, body, and emotions through the use of movement and dance.

Principles of Dance Movement Therapy:

The following are some of the key principles of Dance Movement Therapy:^{7,8,9}

Embodied Awareness: DMT places an emphasis on the connection between the mind and body. It encourages individuals to be more aware of their physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts through movement.

Non-Verbal Communication: DMT relies heavily on non-verbal communication, such as body language and gestures, to express and communicate feelings, thoughts, and experiences.

Authentic Movement: DMT encourages individuals to move in ways that are authentic and true to themselves, rather than following a set pattern or choreography.

Empowerment: DMT seeks to empower individuals by helping them develop a greater sense of self-awareness, self-expression, and self-confidence through movement.

Integration: DMT aims to integrate the mind, body, and emotions by addressing the whole person rather than just focusing on one aspect of their being.

Therapeutic Relationship: DMT emphasizes the importance of the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and client, and how it can facilitate the therapeutic process.

Creativity: DMT encourages individuals to explore their creativity and use movement as a means of self-expression and personal growth.

The core principles of DMT revolve around the idea that movement and dance have significant potential as therapeutic modalities, enabling individuals to heal, express themselves, and evolve on a personal level.⁹

3. Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for mild intellectual disable children

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) can be a helpful intervention for children with mild intellectual disabilities. DMT is a form of psychotherapy that uses movement and dance as a way to explore and express emotions and feelings. It can help children with intellectual disabilities to develop social and communication skills, as well as improve their physical coordination and body awareness.^{1,10}

In DMT sessions, a therapist works with the child to use movement and dance as a way to explore different emotions and feelings. The therapist may use specific movements and exercises to help the child develop a greater sense of body awareness and control. DMT can also help children with intellectual disabilities to develop social skills, such as taking turns, sharing, and interacting with others.^{11,12}

DMT can be particularly beneficial for children with mild intellectual disabilities who may have difficulty expressing themselves verbally. Through movement and dance, these children can communicate and express themselves in nonverbal ways, which can help them to develop a greater sense of self-awareness and self-esteem.¹²

It's important to note that DMT should be provided by a trained and licensed therapist who has experience working with children with intellectual disabilities. The therapist should also work closely with the child's parents or caregivers to ensure that the therapy is tailored to the child's individual needs and goals.

4. Benefit of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) in mild intellectual disability children

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) can provide numerous benefits for children with mild intellectual disabilities. Here are some of the key benefits of DMT.¹⁰⁻¹²

Improved physical coordination: DMT can help children with mild intellectual disabilities to improve their physical coordination and motor skills. Through guided movement and dance, the child can develop greater control and awareness of their body, which can lead to increased physical coordination and balance.

Improved social skills: DMT can help children with mild intellectual disabilities to develop important social skills such as communication, cooperation, and turn-taking. Through group dance and movement activities, the child can learn to interact with others in a positive and constructive way.

Increased self-awareness: DMT can help children with mild intellectual disabilities to develop greater self-awareness and self-esteem. Through movement and dance, the child can learn to express their emotions and feelings in a nonverbal way, which can lead to a greater sense of self-awareness and acceptance.

Reduced anxiety and stress: DMT can provide a safe and supportive environment for children with mild intellectual disabilities to express themselves and release any pent-up emotions or stress. This can lead to a reduction in anxiety and stress and an increase in overall well-being.

Enhanced creativity: DMT can encourage children with mild intellectual disabilities to explore their creativity and imagination. Through movement and dance, the child can tap into their inner creativity and express themselves in new and exciting ways.

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) can provide significant therapeutic benefits for children with mild intellectual disabilities, supporting their development in areas such as physical coordination, social interaction, emotional regulation, and creativity.

5. Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) in mild intellectual disability children for development of motor skills

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is a form of therapy that utilizes movement as a means of communication and expression. It has shown promise as an effective intervention for improving motor skills among children with intellectual disability. Children with intellectual disability often struggle with motor coordination, which can limit their participation in daily activities and affect their social interactions. DMT provides a unique approach to addressing these challenges.^{13,14}

Research has shown that DMT interventions can have a positive impact on the motor development of children with intellectual disability. For example, a study by Hwang and Choi (2017)¹⁵ found that DMT was effective in improving the motor and cognitive abilities of children with mild intellectual disability. Similarly, Basteris et al. (2011)¹⁶ found that a dance program led to improvements in social skills, self-esteem, and body awareness among children with mild intellectual disability.

DMT can be particularly beneficial for children with intellectual disability who struggle with verbal communication. Movement provides a non-verbal means of expression, allowing children to communicate their thoughts and emotions in a safe and supportive environment. The therapist can work with the child to develop movement sequences that express their inner experiences, helping them to build a stronger sense of self-awareness and emotional regulation.

In addition to improving motor and emotional functioning, DMT can also have a positive impact on cognitive development. For example, DMT interventions can help children with intellectual disability to develop a better sense of spatial awareness and body schema. This can improve their ability to navigate physical environments and engage in activities that require motor planning.

While DMT has shown great promise as an intervention for improving motor skills among children with intellectual disability, it is important to note that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Different children may respond differently to DMT interventions, and the therapist must work closely with the child to develop a personalized treatment plan that addresses their specific needs.

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) can be an effective intervention for the development of motor skills in children with mild intellectual disabilities. Here are some ways in which DMT can support the development of motor skills:^{15,17,18}

1. **Body awareness:** DMT can help children with mild intellectual disabilities to develop a better sense of their bodies, their movements, and their surroundings. This increased awareness can lead to improved motor planning and coordination.
2. **Gross motor skills:** DMT can help children to develop gross motor skills, such as jumping, hopping, and skipping, through rhythmic movements and dance sequences. These movements can also help to improve balance and coordination.

3. **Fine motor skills:** DMT can support the development of fine motor skills, such as hand-eye coordination and finger dexterity, through the use of props such as scarves, ribbons, and balls.
4. **Spatial awareness:** DMT can support the development of spatial awareness, such as understanding the location of objects in relation to the body, through dance movements that involve changes in direction, levels, and shapes.
5. **Sensory integration:** DMT can help children with mild intellectual disabilities to integrate sensory information from their bodies and their environment, which can support the development of motor skills.

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) has been shown to be a successful intervention for enhancing motor skills in children with mild intellectual disabilities. The use of creative and playful techniques in DMT can make it a fun and engaging experience for children, which can further foster their growth and development.

6. The process of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for mild intellectual disabled children

DMT interventions typically involve a therapist working with a child to develop personalized movement patterns that address their specific motor needs. Through the use of music, props, and rhythmic movement, children are able to improve their balance, coordination, and overall physical abilities.¹⁹ In addition to improving motor skills, DMT can also have a positive impact on emotional and social functioning. For example, children may develop a stronger sense of self-awareness and self-esteem, which can help them navigate social situations and build positive relationships with peers.²⁰

The process of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for mild intellectual disabled children typically involves the following steps:^{19,21}

1. **Assessment:** The first step is to assess the child's abilities, challenges, and goals. This involves observing the child's movements, interactions, and communication style, as well as gathering information from parents, caregivers, and other professionals involved in the child's care.
2. **Developing a treatment plan:** Based on the assessment, the therapist will develop an individualized treatment plan that includes specific goals and objectives for the child's DMT sessions.
3. **Establishing rapport:** It is essential to establish a strong rapport with the child before beginning therapy. This involves creating a safe and supportive environment where the child feels comfortable expressing themselves through movement and dance.
4. **Warm-up:** The therapist will typically begin each session with a warm-up that involves gentle stretches and movements to help the child get in touch with their body and connect with their breath.
5. **Dance and movement activities:** The therapist will guide the child through various dance and movement activities designed to help them express their emotions, build self-awareness, and develop social skills.
6. **Reflection:** After each activity, the therapist will encourage the child to reflect on their experience and discuss their thoughts and feelings.
7. **Closing:** The session will end with a cool-down activity and a debriefing session, where the therapist and child will review the session and discuss any insights or progress made.

Throughout the process, the therapist will also use various techniques such as mirroring, improvisation, and role-playing to help the child explore their emotions and develop new skills. The therapist will also work closely with the child's parents and other professionals to ensure that the therapy is integrated into the child's overall treatment plan.

7. Latest development, limitations, and future challenges of application of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for mild intellectual disabled children

Latest Developments:

Recent studies have provided evidence of the effectiveness of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for children with mild intellectual disabilities. Advancements in technology have also allowed for the development of virtual DMT interventions that can be accessed remotely, increasing accessibility and convenience for families. Additionally, there has been an increased focus on the use of DMT as a complementary therapy in conjunction with other interventions.²²

Limitations:

Despite its benefits, the application of DMT for children with mild intellectual disabilities also has some limitations. For example, the individualized nature of the therapy can make it difficult to implement on a large scale. Additionally, access to trained DMT professionals may be limited in some areas, and the cost of therapy may also be a barrier for some families.²³

Future Challenges:

As DMT continues to gain recognition as a valuable therapy for children with mild intellectual disabilities, there are several future challenges to be addressed. One challenge is the need for more research to establish evidence-based protocols for DMT interventions. Another challenge is the need to increase access to DMT services, particularly in underserved communities. Additionally, there is a need for ongoing professional development and

training to ensure that DMT practitioners are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective therapy for children with mild intellectual disabilities.²³

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, DMT is a valuable tool for improving motor skills among children with intellectual disability. We discussed the basic principles of using DMT and application of this therapy for motor development of intellectual disabled children. Through the use of movement as a means of communication and expression, DMT interventions can help children to improve their balance, coordination, and overall physical abilities. One key advantage of DMT over other interventions is its holistic approach to therapy. Rather than focusing solely on physical motor development, DMT addresses emotional and social components as well. This makes it a valuable tool for promoting overall well-being in children with intellectual disability.

DMT can also have a positive impact on emotional and social functioning, providing children with a non-verbal means of expression and improving their self-awareness and self-esteem. As research in this area continues to grow, it is likely that DMT will become an increasingly important intervention for children with intellectual disability.

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