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The Implications of Dance Movement Therapy on Well-being and Stress in the Corporate World

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Abstract

Studies show that a significant number of employees are facing high stress levels and not doing well in terms of well-being. Despite companies acknowledging the severity of the issue and placing a higher priority on employee well-being post-pandemic, studies indicate the insufficiency of their well-being initiatives. In this thesis, Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is advocated as an approach to well-being and coping with stress in the workplace due to providing a holistic approach that integrates mind and body, which is lacking in the current initiatives. DMT is offered to address working with the mind-body distinction in the workplace, providing employees space to express themselves safely, and creating healthy interpersonal communication to contribute to the well-being of the employees and coping with stress. The pilot study, which was conducted to understand how DMT can be integrated into the workplace and its possible effects, has revealed insights suggesting that DMT might be an effective tool for body awareness, sustaining empathy, group cohesion, and finding alternative ways to cope with their concerns. Even though, due to the small sample size and the single-session nature of the study, the results can not be generalized and conclude the positive impact, as a brand new approach in the corporate world, DMT promises possible positive outcomes on employees' well-being. Therefore, a 12-week DMT program for companies toward employee well-being is proposed.

Keywords: well-being, stress, dance movement therapy, mind-body distinction

Introduction

According to the Gallup World Poll (2022), an average full-time worker spends 81,396 hours working per life. The same poll also presents that 60% of people are emotionally detached at work, and 19% are miserable. Also, the study shows that employees who are engaged but not thriving face 48% more stress, 61% are more likely to experience burnout often or always, and 66% are more likely to experience daily worry than employees who are engaged and thriving (Gallup, 2022). The same study was conducted in 2023 by Gallup, and the results show that 44% of employees globally experience much stress.

As a full-time technology company employee, working as a human resource professional for more than ten years, an essential part of the author's job is to form a safe communication space for employees to share their experiences through one-on-one meetings. In light of the 200-250 yearly meetings, the author has realized that employees, despite dedicating a significant portion of their lives to work, often find themselves simply striving to reach the weekend. Some employees shared their stress experiences, struggles in coping with it, and their search for alternatives to cope with it in these meetings. Therefore, the author has been asking herself for many years: How can we improve employees' lives by making the work a better place –as this is where people spend most of their time?

According to research in the United States, 33% of individuals report experiencing high levels of stress, while 77% say stress has a noticeable impact on their physical well-being. Stress-related absenteeism is a significant concern, with approximately 1 million U.S. Americans missing work each day due to stress-related issues. The financial toll on U.S. American employers is substantial, with an estimated annual expenditure of \$300 billion on stress-related issues. Furthermore, 63% of U.S. American workers express a willingness to consider leaving their current jobs to escape the pressures of work-related stress. (The American Institute of Stress, n.d.)

U.S. employees suffer from stress, and other studies show that stress is also experienced globally by employees. Techniker Krankenkasse, one of several German statutory health insurances, found that 6 out of 10 people report experiencing stress privately or at work, with 23% feeling extremely stressed. Stress-induced absenteeism costs German companies about 20 billion euros annually (Martin et al., 2018). People in the United Kingdom miss 13.7 million work days yearly due to stress.

Besides physical and mental health concerns, stress and the well-being of employees are closely connected to the success of the companies. Gallup (2020) Q12 Meta-Analysis, conducted in 96 countries with 112,312 business units, found a strong link between well-being and performance, such as productivity, profitability, and retention. According to Gallup (2022), employee burnout costs \$322 billion yearly in lost productivity and turnover. The lost productivity costs \$14.2 billion in Australia and about \$20 billion annually in the UK (The American Institute of Stress, n.d.). According to the 2022-2023 Global Wellbeing Survey by Aon, enhancing employee well-being factors can boost company performance by a minimum of 11% and potentially as much as 55% (Aon, 2023).

Lately, well-being has become a topic that many professional companies focus on and cannot ignore. In the post-COVID-19 contemporary period, companies put a larger emphasis on topics related to stress and well-being. (e.g. Obuobisa-Darko et al., 2022; Morassaei et al., 2021; Tao et al., 2023; Wut & Lee, 2022). The 2022-2023 Global Wellbeing Survey results show that employee well-being will become the top priority for companies within the next five years and the second priority in Europe, the UK, and North America (Aon, 2023). Many companies have launched initiatives to enhance their employees' well-being, recognizing the need in this area (Pollitz & Rae, 2015). Some companies support their employees under the banner of wellness

programs, offering services such as sports and expanding health insurance coverage to include mental health and supporting activities like meditation (Jones et al., 2019; Waller & Motten, 2012). Specialized mobile applications are being developed to address the needs of employees (Jimenez & Bregenzer, 2018; Levy & Thorndike, 2019; Weber et al., 2019). The only well-being approach related to bodies is that some approaches consider working with nutritionists or physiotherapists (Song & Baicker, 2019). The author of this study observes that the incentives provided primarily target mental processes and believes that companies should incorporate more holistic approaches to employee well-being, the mind-body integration approach.

The aim of this thesis is to explore how Dance Movement Therapy can be used in a work environment to enhance employees' well-being and as a tool for coping with stress in a professional realm. In order to do so, the thesis will present the foundations of Dance Movement Therapy, along with prior research, theoretical insights, and a pilot study.

Literature Review

What Is Well-Being?

Health is defined by the World Health Organization (2006) as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Roberts, 2017). The WHO characterizes well-being as a “positive state experienced by individuals and societies... encompassing their quality of life and capacity to contribute to the world with a sense of purpose and meaning.” (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d).

In contemporary discourse, entities like the European Union advocate for a broader perspective for growth solely measured by economic wealth. For instance, The UK Office for National Statistics initiated well-being measurements in 2011. They proposed ten dimensions to measure well-being: Personal well-being, relationships, health, what we do, where we live, the

natural environment, personal finance, the economy, education and skills, and governance (Karkou et al., 2017). While this thesis primarily focuses on personal well-being and relationships, it acknowledges that changes in these dimensions can influence others. In his well-being theory, the founder of Positive Psychology, Martin Seligman, proposed five elements contributing to individuals' well-being: positive emotions, engagement, meaning, positive relations, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2012). Dodge et al. (2012) proposed an alternative definition of well-being, which regards well-being as a balance between confronting challenges and accessing psychological, social, and physical resources (Dodge et al., 2012). When individuals face more challenges than their available resources can handle, their well-being is adversely affected. This concept aligns with Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory (1997), which defines engagement as a state where individuals become deeply absorbed in an activity. In this state, a delicate equilibrium exists between being sufficiently challenged and having the necessary resources to accomplish a task. It is a state that exists between the realms of anxiety and boredom, characterized by a sense of control, active participation, and a distorted perception of time.

The spiritual aspect of feeling good should not be overlooked. Vitality, joy, energy, and enthusiasm to live are crucial aspects of feeling good and, thus, well-being. That means a flow of positive energy, a deep connection to the soul, and an authentic self, leading to a profound sense of happiness and contentment.

What Is Stress?

Gabor Maté (2003) defines stress as a condition where a measurable and objective series of physiological events directed by the nervous system occurs in the body, responding to the organism's perception of a threat to its existence or well-being. Stress is an imbalance that threatens the organism's homeostasis. There are two main types of stress: acute and chronic. Acute

stress represents the body's rapid response to a sudden and short-lived threat. In contrast, chronic stress reflects a situation where stress mechanisms remain active for more extended periods due to reasons such as unfamiliarity or inability to control the stressors (Maté, 2003). Chronic stress prevents the body from returning to its normal state, its homeostasis; it affects the immune and digestive systems and can cause significant illnesses like cardiovascular, muscular, or skeletal diseases, depression, and anxiety disorders (Hanna, 2017; Martin et al., 2018).

Stress is directed by the nervous system and the brain's emotional centers, including the immune system and many other organs (Hanna, 2017). The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis regulates the stress response (Jola & Calmeiro, 2017). The stress response initiates in the brain's limbic system, involving the amygdala and the hypothalamus, which signals the secretion of stress hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) (Hanna, 2017). This process, which also relates to the fight, flight and freeze response, affects the physiological and emotional health of the organism (Hanna, 2017). Chronic stress that changes the nervous system's structure affects a person's memory and learning processes (Hanna, 2017; McEwen et al., 2016).

According to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (1984), individuals constantly evaluate the environment. In this regard, stress is characterized by encountering stimuli perceived as potentially harmful, threatening, or challenging, surpassing an individual's ability to cope. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stressors are physical or emotional events that can be perceived as a threat to the organism's well-being (Maté, 2003). Three primary factors trigger stress: uncertainty, lack of information, and loss of control. These stressors often lead to feelings of inadequacy or failure by challenging an individual's coping abilities, causing them to perceive the absence or imminent loss of vital elements for sustaining life. (Maté, 2003)

In the Somatic Experience Self-regulation and Pendulation workshop, Sonia Gomez (2020) explained that the heart sends signals to the brain during stress. Depending on the nature of these signals, the brain makes decisions. If the signals result from positive emotions, the brain sends neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine that correspond to these feelings. On the other hand, if the emotions are negative, the body becomes alert, creating a state of resistance. Our blood is also affected by this disorganized wave. The brain alters the PH level in the blood, leading to inflammation (Gomez,2020).

Tara Brach (2020) puts in one of her weekly talks, Embodied Presence 2, that our default setting when faced with any form of stress is disconnecting from our bodies; we immediately turn to our brains. This instinctual response often stems from a desire to resolve an issue, a feeling of having insufficient time, or a subconscious sense of being unsafe within one's body. This survival mechanism triggers a flight response. When we dissociate from our bodies, several consequences unfold. Firstly, unprocessed fear and vulnerability linger, leading to a continuous drain of our energy, resulting in fatigue as it requires considerable effort to disconnect repeatedly. Secondly, anxiety persists, remaining unprocessed and gradually becoming chronic. Moreover, the act of dissociation often leads to feelings of judgment and shame, prompting individuals to seek substances or distractions as a means to escape these unpleasant emotions. This disconnection from the heart can also cause us to sever ties with our belly and pelvic areas, where our sense of empowerment resides, often resulting in the manifestation of anger rather than empowerment. Furthermore, this dissociation cuts off from our intuition and wisdom, impairing our ability to make sound decisions and connect with our inner selves (Brach, 2020). Stress can be understood as a bodily response with emotional and physiological effects. The body should be included in order to regulate stress.

According to Gabor Mate (2003), people who are affected more by stress are the people who are unconscious of their bodies and their bodily responses, people who are isolated or more alone, and people who are used to being stressed so that they need to feel stress in order to feel alive, who deny their emotions and do not let themselves to feel the feelings, people who are disconnected with themselves, who do not know their boundaries. As Plato's famous quote suggests: "The greatest mistake in the treatment of diseases is that there are physicians for the body and physicians for the soul, although the two cannot be separated." Incorporating body approaches alongside traditional mental health and wellness practices can provide a more comprehensive and integrated approach to well-being, acknowledging the intricate relationship between the mind and the body. Dance and Movement Therapy is a holistic approach and can be an alternative method for addressing the problems encountered in the business world.

Challenges of Well-Being at Work

The International Labour Organization (ILO) states: "Workplace well-being relates to all aspects of working life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and work organization." (The International Labour Organization, n.d). Workplace well-being has different components. One of the most well-known business magazines, Forbes (2021), states that holistic employee well-being consists of 7 elements: 1. Physical well-being, 2. Career well-being, 3. Financial well-being, 4. Social well-being, 5. Community well-being, 6. Emotional well-being, and 7. Purpose-driven well-being. As Forbes highlights, Physical well-being involves exercise, sleep, lifestyle, and dietary choices. Career well-being is associated with employees' preferences for remote work, better compensation, access to learning and development opportunities, and work-life balance over career aspirations. Financial well-being addresses solutions for financial concerns. Social well-

being emphasizes the importance of forming meaningful friendships at work and in personal life for long-term happiness. Community well-being entails voluntary actions that benefit others, such as volunteering. Emotional well-being is a top priority, mainly due to heightened stress levels during the pandemic, with companies focusing on supporting employees' mental health. Finally, Purpose-Driven well-being reflects employees' desire to align themselves with organizations that share their values and ethics (Meister, 2021).

The organization's culture plays an important role in forming the employee experience and achieving employee well-being (Corporate Wellness Magazine, n.d.). An organization's culture reflects its modus operandi, internal communication dynamics, the interactions between employees and managers, and the decision-making processes (Corporate Wellness Magazine, n.d.). Great Place To Work®, which has been a global authority on workplace culture for more than 30 years, defines a great place to work as “a workplace is one where employees trust the people they work for, have pride in the work they do, and enjoy the people they work with.” In companies boasting a positive corporate culture, high engagement, and employee retention are achieved (Great Place To Work® Institute, 2023). In his research, Paul Zak (2017) states that employees at high-trust companies have 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout than employees who work at low-trust companies (Zak, 2017). According to Corporate Wellness Magazine(n.d.), a positive culture that prioritizes well-being initiatives can be an appealing recruitment asset, attracting top talent that resonates with the organization's core values. When employees are in an environment where they feel comfortable seeking assistance when needed, it has a positive impact on their mental health, and fosters improved communication throughout the company. Employees who feel supported and appreciated are more inclined to

cooperate, share ideas, and work harmoniously, which leads to an increase in performance and growth (Owunna et al., 2023). Positive relationships within the company are essential for creating a positive working environment and thus affect the well-being of employees. (Fiaz & Qureshi, 2023). Employees cooperate more in work environments where people trust each other (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Organizations can cultivate a culture that values diverse perspectives and encourages collaboration among team members by promoting a sense of belonging and psychological safety (Corporate Wellness Magazine, n.d.).

According to Deloitte's latest research, the main determinants of well-being deficiency include micromanagement, lack of recognition, absence of empathy, and a lack of psychological safety (Deloitte, 2023). Organizations with a weak organizational culture that fails to support and instill trust do not promote strong interpersonal communication, do not value their employees, and neither prioritize employee well-being; consequently, high turnover rates, where employees leave a company and are replaced by new hires, are experienced (Men & Yue, 2019; Mohammad et al., 2022). High turnover can indicate challenges within a company that employees no longer want to take part in that organization. Some reasons for employee turnover are employee dissatisfaction, issues with management, or a competitive job market. Due to high demand and a relatively low supply of employees, the tech sector is known for high turnover levels.

In recent years, turnover has also been observed in emerging themes such as “quiet quitting” and “the great resignation,” particularly following the global pandemic and economic challenges. (Harvard Business Review, 2023). "Quiet quitting" refers to a trend where employees put forth minimal effort just to get through their work. "The great resignation" is a phenomenon in the job market where a significant number of employees voluntarily leave their jobs in various industries due to factors such as a competitive job market and burnout. This phenomenon reflects

employees' willingness to seek new employment opportunities, which are readily available in the current job market. Consequently, the sense of belonging and engagement with the companies they work for has significantly declined.

Work-related stress is one of the intrinsic factors of well-being. Changes in leadership, workload, and communication issues could be identified as factors affecting employees' stress levels in the working environment (Zauderer, 2023). The 2023 Workplace Stress Statistics portray that while changes in leadership and communication issues significantly contributed to the stress levels of 80% of the workers, 39% of the employees identified their workload as the primary source of stress. These statistics underscore the multifaceted nature of workplace stress and emphasize the need for proactive measures to address its various sources and impacts (Zauderer, 2023). Continuous work-related stress could lead to burnout (WHO, 2019).

The World Health Organization has officially attributed burnout to inadequately managed workplace stress (WHO, 2019). Christina Maslach (1999), the creator of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, identifies six primary contributors to burnout: unsustainable workloads, limited control, inadequate recognition of one's efforts, lack of a supportive work environment, perceived unfairness, and misalignment of personal values and skills with the job—each of these factors originating within the workplace (Rampton, 2015).

One of the renowned Big Four accounting firms, Deloitte (2023), highlights a significant shift in the perception of well-being. The traditional concept of work-life balance has transformed into a perspective where work is considered an intrinsic part of and actively shapes an individual's well-being. Moreover, it is no longer viewed solely as an individual's responsibility; organizations are now accountable for creating a work environment that fosters well-being, making it a shared responsibility with leadership. Previously, organizations focused on enhancing well-being through

perks and benefits. However, the approach has evolved into a more holistic strategy, encompassing benefits and perks and transforming into change in work processes and organizational design (Deloitte, 2023).

In recent years, many companies have been actively addressing these issues by implementing various practices such as meditation programs, mental health days, and additional leave policies to reach their employees (Jones et al., 2019; Pollitz & Rae, 2015; Waller & Motten, 2012). Even though in the 2020 Human Capital Trends report by Deloitte, company executives claimed that well-being was their top priority, Deloitte's research in collaboration with Harvard Business Review indicates that 90% of employees feel that their work lives have deteriorated, and according to a survey conducted in the US in November 2022, 68% of employees stated that they did not utilize the well-being resources provided by their companies. They attributed this to the resources being confusing, time-consuming, and impractical (Deloitte, 2023). While the efforts in this regard are promising, as research and reports show, the approaches and practices done so far are insufficient.

What is Dance Movement Therapy?

The European Association Dance Movement Therapy (EADMT) defines Dance Movement Therapy (from here on referred to as DMT) as

“the therapeutic use of movement to further the emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual and social integration of the individual. Dance, as body movement, creative expression, and communication, is the core component of Dance Movement Therapy. Based on the fact that the mind, the body, the emotional state and relationships are interrelated, body movement simultaneously provides the means of assessment and the mode of intervention for dance movement therapy” (EADMT, 2016).

DMT is a body-oriented form of creative art psychotherapy (from here on referred to as CAT). Like other CATs, DMT approaches people on a creative and nonverbal level (Koch & Fuchs, 2011). According to Koch (2017), five factors make creative therapies effective. These are hedonism (pleasure and play), aesthetics (beauty and authenticity), non-verbal meaning-making, symbolism and communication, enactive transitional support, and creativity (Koch, 2017). These elements have therapeutic effects on people. What sets DMT apart from other creative therapies is its focus on the moving body, its expression, and dynamic interrelatedness to comprehend the relationship between the body and mind (Lauffenburger, 2020).

DMT is an embodied psychotherapeutic treatment that can improve mind-body connection, social relationships, and self-regulatory skill development (Biondo, 2023). It uses the movement profile, increasing awareness of motor patterns and their links to emotional content. It also uses words to give meaning to experience in movement, enabling a person to increase awareness of him/herself, explore new relational modes, and incorporate coping strategies and emotional regulation (García-Callao et al., 2022). Dance Therapists use dance, movement, and body for expression, communication, and transformation of emotions (Chodorow, 1991).

The Premises of Dance Movement Therapy

Within the realm of Dance Movement Therapy, several fundamental premises underpin its practice:

- The mind and body are in constant reciprocal interaction (Schoop, 1974, p.44; Chodorow, 1991) and are interconnected (Karkou et al., 2017).
- Signals from the body to the brain substantially outnumber signals from the brain to the body, emphasizing the body's profound influence on our mental state (Van der Kolk, 2014).

- Movement reflects internal states, including thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Body sensations, postures, and gestures are seen as windows into one's history and current state (Halprin, 2003).
- Whatever resides in our body (despair, confusion, anger, joy) will emerge when we express ourselves in movement. When made conscious, movement becomes a vehicle for insight and change (Halprin, 2003, p.18).
- By using spontaneous body movement that arose from inner kinesthetic sensations, individuals recognized the symbolic nature of their communication, opening the door to self-awareness and possible changes (Chaiklin, 2009, p.7).

Features of Dance Movement Therapy: Dance, Creativity, Therapy

Dance Movement Therapy is a unique form of psychotherapy since it consists of different features: Dance Movement Therapy combines dance, psychotherapy, creativity, and movement.

Dance

Dance has been used for a long time as a means for individuals, groups, and communities to cope with the unknown (for religious reasons), sometimes to pray, to prepare for war, to celebrate, and to express their desires/problems and dance has become a tool for cultural unity (Chaiklin, 2009; Hanna, 1995). As an example, we can mention the popular Haka dance of the Māori culture and the indigenous people of New Zealand (Alim, 2023). The Haka dance is used to express the Māori people's emotions, share their enthusiasm, and express emotions such as anger, joy, respect, and others through body language and sound. Haka emphasizes the enthusiasm and unity of group members. At the same time, warriors have used Haka to prepare for war and intimidate their enemies. Haka represents strength, determination, and fearlessness. Even today,

the All Blacks, the New Zealand national rugby team players, emphasize the team's strength and unity by entering matches with the Haka (Alim, 2023).

Another example is in ancient Greece, where Terpsichore was known as the muse of dance and represented the pleasure/enjoyment derived from dance (Margariti et al., 2017). In the "Philosophy of Dance" article, Pont (2008) discusses that circular dances represent the circular movements of the stars. In Greek philosophy, dance and music are seen as the key to understanding the cosmos, with music and dance representing the reflection of harmony in the cosmos in the world. He mentions that individuals who receive training at a young age have inner and spiritual harmony, that is, a "well-balanced personality." (Pont, 2008, p. 271) We can see that in many different cultures, cultural dances are performed in a circular form, such as the Hora Dance (Israel/Jewish & Greek), Folklore (Turkey), and Powwow Dances (Native American Culture) (Axtmann, 2001; Elyagutu, 2020; Koch & Fischman, 2011).

The increase in research in the last decade that shows the “feel good” effect of dance and its effect on people’s health and well-being (Gardner et al., 2008; Jola & Calmeiro, 2017; Keogh et al., 2009; O'Neill et al., 2011). Dance is not only a physical activity but also a physiological, psychological, cognitive, creative, and emotional process (Burkhardt & Rhodes, 2012).

Dance uniquely combines thinking, feeling, sensing, and doing. It strongly affects physiological and psychological well-being, combining the benefits of physical exercise with heightened sensory awareness, cognitive function, creativity, interpersonal contact, and emotional expression – a potent cocktail (Elliott: 1998: p 253).

Peter Lovatt, also known as Dr. Dance, explains that when people dance, they use not only the motor areas but also the areas for spatial awareness, visual perception, learning, and memory (Lovatt, 2020). Dance is a complex process that simultaneously integrates the right and left brain

since dance combines movement, rhythm, and music (Hanna, 1995). As a physical activity, dancing has various benefits and can affect the health and well-being of a person biochemically (Jola & Calmeiro, 2017). Dancing can trigger the release of endorphins, hormones associated with pain regulation, and feelings of euphoria (Marieb, 2012, as cited in Jola & Calmeiro, 2017). The interaction with music adding agency and group coordination during dance can enhance endorphin release, contributing to a positive mood and well-being (Dunbar et al., 2012; Tarr et al., 2014, as cited in Jola et al., 2017). Regular dancing might help regulate the activation of the HPA axis and impact well-being by regulating our stress response (Jola & Calmeiro, 2017). Dancing as a physical activity can improve mood and well-being since physical activity and exercise are associated with an enhancement in the transmission of dopamine (DA), norepinephrine (NE), and serotonin (5-HT), which are vital for emotional functioning (Jola & Calmeiro, 2017).

Hanna (1995) states that dancing may affect wellness because dancing is a combination of muscular activity and a psychological course of action. She proposes:

Dance conditions an individual to moderate, eliminate, or avoid tension, chronic fatigue, and other disabling conditions that result from the effects of stress. Dance may help the healing process as a person gains a sense of control through (1) possession by the spiritual in dance, (2) mastery of movement, (3) escape or diversion from stress and pain through a change in emotion, states of consciousness, and/or physical capability, and (4) confronting stressors to work through ways of handling their effects (Hanna, 1995, p.323).

When people dance, they may feel alive and simultaneously sense a change in their mood (Jola & Calmeiro, 2017). This could be because the person dancing is engaging in physical activity; it may be related to music and rhythm, or it could be the connection established with the people they are dancing with (Hanna, 1995; Jola & Calmeiro, 2017).. A study in Germany (2007) found

that a single 30-minute session of lively dancing, specifically the Hava Nagila (upbeat dance in a circle), was enough to reduce symptoms of depression and increase feelings of vitality among patients in a psychiatric hospital (Koch et al., 2007). Interestingly, when the study was conducted again but with a difference, they only listened to the music without dancing; they became slightly more depressed, suggesting that the combination of dance and music played a crucial role in improving mood (Koch et al., 2007).

Dance could be a means to express complex and sometimes hard-to-explain human emotional experiences. According to Langer (1976), within a dance performance, there is a visible representation of the dynamic nature of feelings, emotions, and subjective experiences, illustrating their emergence, development, and complex integration, which ultimately contributes to the unity and individual identity of one's inner life.

Creativity

“The creative process must be explored as representing the highest degree of emotional health, as the expression of the normal people in the act of actualizing themselves.” (May, 1976, p.38)

Creative Arts Therapies are defined as “the creative use of the artistic media (art, music, drama, and dance/movement) as vehicles for non-verbal and/or symbolic communication, within a holding environment, encouraged by a well-defined client-therapist relationship, in order to achieve personal and/or social therapeutic goals appropriate for the individual” (Karkou & Sanderson, 2006, p.46). DMT is a form of Creative Arts Therapy. Creative therapies can enhance emotional well-being by offering individuals a heightened awareness and aliveness, encouraging active participation in life, and guiding us to consider alternative perspectives and choices (Chaiklin, 2009; Halprin, 2003). According to Winnicott, it is only in being creative that the

individual discovers the self (ibid., p. 63; Meekum, 2012). DMT metaphorically addresses real-life issues through expressive body movements, expanding our cognitive and emotional horizons (Halprin, 2003). In DMT, bodies are the source of information, objects, and the subject of creativity (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2009).

The symbols created in artistic expressions contain valuable messages that speak of the circumstances of our lives. By incorporating various art mediums alongside movements, such as drawing, writing, and music, DMT unveils hidden aspects of our stories and allows for expressing old narratives in new, healing ways (Halprin, 2003). Engaging with the unconscious through creative acts transforms suffering into embodied learning and change (Halprin, 2003). Creativity, therefore, acts as a bridge to the unconscious, providing access to images, memories, and sensations (Halprin, 2003). When confronting suffering and real-life issues is too hard, creativity and creative explorations help to express emotions, experiences, and memories that are difficult to express verbally (Van Geest et al., 2021). As a creative expression, dance allows for presenting feelings in symbolic forms, facilitating disconnection from usual meanings and responses (Chaiklin, 2009).

In the therapeutic relationship, the dance becomes a shared creative process, fostering a 'potential space' for exploration and play between client and therapist (Meekum, 2012; Winnicott, 1971). This place, where the unconscious and conscious meet, could be a space to create alternatives and new perspectives. For instance, clients struggling with decision-making can utilize props, movement, dance, and the symbolic meaning of their enactment to resolve their dilemmas (Koch & Fischman, 2011).

Therapy

Psychotherapy aims to assist individuals in identifying and modifying troubling emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d). Therapy can be conducted with 1-1 sessions or in a group setting. Individuals may seek psychotherapy for managing mental disorders. At the same time, it is for mentally healthy individuals who are trying to cope with their everyday problems like stress, compulsive behaviors or patterns, fears, challenges in various life events, and difficulties. The therapy aims to empower individuals to enhance self-awareness, foster resilience, and improve their mental well-being (NIMH, n.d).

DMT, as a form of psychotherapy, has the same aim but differs from other therapies. DMT recognizes the interconnectedness of the mind and body, using movement as a medium for expression and exploration (Chodorow, 1991; Karkou et al., 2017). It is a therapeutic process that involves exploring feelings, thoughts, and experiences through the language of movement, providing a unique way for individuals to connect with their emotions and promote psychological healing (Payne, 1992). DMT is unique in using movement and dance as a tool for nonverbal communication, interpreting and understanding bodily signals, providing dynamic nonverbal responsiveness to the client, and engaging in an interactive exploration of communication within the intersubjective space (Lauffenburger, 2020).

The phases of therapy are identification, confrontation, release, change, and growth (Halprin, 2003). DMT goes through the same phases with its unique tools and techniques. To identify the problem and difficulties, DMT uses movement and non-verbal communication to reach and work with unconsciousness (Halprin, 2003). It also uses movement analysis to identify the problem and understand the patient (Payne, 2017). The therapeutic relationship between therapist and patient is used for introspection (Wengrower, 2009). Embodied relationships foster

the therapeutic relationship through inter-corporality through techniques like mirroring and attunement (Payne, 2017). As stated before, as a creative therapy, DMT can make confrontation easier and bearable. By finding a safe space that expresses their needs, patients may feel safe to share their challenges through metaphors and symbols; they can release their challenges more easily than through verbal therapies (Tortora, 2009).

Kohut (1990) maintains that the driving force of the therapeutic process is determined by the reactivation of frustrated needs of the self in the transference through repetition. He says the patient searches unconsciously for a new chance to restore his damaged self through a new encounter with somebody who responds more emphatically than those relations experienced originally (Kohut, 1990). Change occurs when the basic needs of individuals who all through their lives search for acceptance, relationships, and personal worth are met through meeting someone (therapist) who mirrors and reflects what the individual experiences (Chaiklin et al., 1986; Winnicott, 1982). In DMT, Dance Movement Therapists, having this role, use movement, props, verbal and nonverbal communication, mirroring, and attunement.

Mind-Body Distinction at Workplace

Cartesian dualism—identifying a person with the mind and perceiving the mind as separate from the body, akin to a machine—is a significant part of Western culture and has permeated various aspects of life. One of these areas is the business world. Peter Drucker (1959) defines white-collar workers as *knowledge workers*. Davenport describes knowledge workers as “individuals with high levels of expertise, education, or experience whose primary job involves the creation, distribution, or application of knowledge” (Davenport, 2005, p. 10). According to traditional definitions (e.g., Davenport, 2005), knowledge workers rely more intensively on their minds, use more specialized knowledge, and engage in more complex mental processes.

In today's world, the business world favors the mind over the body. This emphasis on mental abilities has strengthened the tendency to downplay the importance of the body: individuals are hired based on mental qualities, and overtime work is encouraged, with employees working up to 100 hours per week—often neglecting the needs of the body, and dismissing contributions related to health and resilience (Michel, 2015). In a 13-year study conducted on bank employees on Wall Street, Michel (2015) investigated how work affects individuals. It is documented that participants overvalue the mental aspect of high-intensity work. They suppress bodily cues until the work pace forces the body beyond its capabilities and causes breakdowns. (Michel, 2015). He adds, “My work qualifies these ideas, which only describe how organizations socialize the mind to control and dissociate from a numb and passive body.” (Michel, 2015, p.65). While there have been changes in recent years, it is still evident that bodily signals are suppressed, and employees remain somewhat detached from their bodies in the workplace.

Professor Ray states, “There is no real division between mind and body because of networks of communication that exist between the brain and the neurological, endocrine, and immune systems.” (Brower, 2006, para.2). The reconciliation of body-mind interconnectedness has emerged and demonstrated across various scientific disciplines, including philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, neuroscience, AI, social psychology, memory, and developmental psychology (Koch, 2006).

Dance Movement Therapy uses embodiment through working with body awareness, emotions, movement, and movement dynamics to contribute to the integration of body and mind and promote well-being. The concept of embodiment comes from the interconnectedness of the mind and body, operating in close interaction (Dascal, 2015). Embodiment approaches point out the role of the body in perception, cognition, emotions, attitudes, and behavior by viewing the

body as a living organism (Koch, 2006). They suggest that cognition and emotions are connected to our body's sensorimotor processes (Barsalou, 2008). DMT is also based on integrating body and mind and can be seen as an embodied and enactive form of psychotherapy (Chaiklin, 2009; Koch & Fischman, 2011). Through *experiencing* (Dosamantes-Alperson, 1981), embodiment serves as a gateway to accessing unconscious material, influencing how individuals inhabit their bodies, shaping their self-perception, and playing a crucial role in the healing process (Kleinman, 2004).

DMT with Body Awareness

Being attuned to our bodies enables us to identify promptly and tend to their needs. A study indicates that individuals who prioritize their minds over their bodies exhibit less healthy behaviors and have less positive attitudes than those who do not (Forstmann et al., 2012). We can better manage potential stress reactions by paying heed to our bodies and their signals when interacting with them (Treves et al., 2019). Attending to emotional and environmental cues also allows us to consider alternative responses (Keogh & Davis, 2017). Awareness of the body can help us break away from limiting habits hindering our progress (Halprin, 2003; Keogh & Davis, 2017). By assisting people in reconnecting with their bodily responses, we may enhance their capacity to cope with stress and access the psychological, social, and physical resources essential for well-being (Hanna, 1995; Porges & Buczynski, 2011).

DMT may use body-centered techniques such as breathwork, mindfulness, and relaxation exercises to enhance body awareness (Bräuninger, 2014). These techniques help individuals become more present at the moment and attuned to their bodily experiences (Dieterich-Hartwell, 2017; Keogh & Davis, 2017). Mindfulness means awareness through “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). By paying close attention to physical sensations at the moment and getting away from mental

processes, mindfulness is believed that individuals can let go of habitual, automatic reactions that may be unhelpful and unhealthy- and choose alternative strategies that result in reducing their stress (Bishop et al., 2006). Christine Caldwell challenges the term *mindfulness* since the term emphasizes the mind, recreates mind superiority over the body, and introduces the term *Bodyfulness* (Caldwell, 2018). First, she identifies *bodylessness* as neglecting, objectifying, hating, or judging the body as a state of disconnection from oneself, leading to “suffering more, feeling less pleasure, treating others poorly, and experiencing more challenges in living a self-reflective life.” (Caldwell, 2018, p.276). Accordingly, through bodyfulness - by being present in bodily activities without judgment and acceptance- suffering can be reduced, and the potential of individuals may be unlocked (Caldwell, 2018).

Breath can be a litmus paper to understand the body's reactions regarding threat or safety, aloneness or connection, stress or resilience. Modern habits often involve breath-holding during inhalation, causing stress and anxiety. This habit, especially under stress, can create emotional unrest and a sense of being ungrounded (Singh, 2017). According to Porges' Polyvagal Theory (1995), being grounded in the ventral vagal pathway fosters feelings of safety and sociability. Breathing techniques promote an authentic sense of grounding (Singh, 2017). Paying attention to breathing and exercising with breathing can help individuals return to a centered, safe, and well-being state. (LaDyne, 2020). For example, slow breathing increases parasympathetic activity, which is known for relaxation and calmness (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005). Research conducted in 2018 showed connections between slow breathing and positive changes in the nervous system, brain activities, and emotional well-being in healthy individuals (Zaccaro et al., 2018).

DMT with Emotions

Previously, it was underlined that emotions were left behind, and most of the time, emotions could not find a place in professional settings. However, well-being and feeling good are related to emotions and emotional regulation. Therefore, when discussing the well-being of employees, it is crucial to talk about emotions and how to work with difficult emotions because emotion regulation is essential for healthy psychological functioning (Shafir, 2016). Studies show that emotions may be recognized through bodily expressions, and our bodies are the origin of emotions (Damasio, 1999; Dyck et al., 2014).

The study of the benefit of power posing before a high-stakes social evaluation (2012) investigates the impact of individuals' body postures and poses on emotional and behavioral responses in high-stakes social evaluations. The primary focus of the study is to understand how adopting powerful (power posing) and powerless (low-power posing) body postures influences individuals' feelings and performance. Participants were divided into two groups, one adopting power poses to induce a sense of strength and confidence. In contrast, the other group assumed low-power poses to induce a sense of weakness. Subsequently, both groups underwent a stressful social evaluation. The results indicated that adopting power poses led individuals to feel more powerful and confident, resulting in a decrease in cortisol (stress hormone) levels. Moreover, those who adopted power poses demonstrated more effective performance in stressful situations and an increased tendency to take risks. These findings suggest that body postures reflect not only individuals' feelings and self-perceptions but also produce them (Cuddy et al., 2012).

DMT uses the relationship between emotions and movements (Payne, 1992). DMT positively impacts expressing emotions, emotional regulation, and relating with others (Anderson et al., 2014; Bräuninger, 2014; Koch et al., 2014). During DMT sessions, individuals embody,

improvise, and express their problems, attitudes toward specific people or situations, and their behavioral or emotional responses to particular conditions or stimuli. (Bernstein, 1995). In DMT, emotional regulation is realized through expressing difficult emotions, observing and understanding one's movements, and creating desired emotions through posture or movements (Van Geest et al., 2021). Observing the patient's posture and movement may give us ideas about their emotional state (Van Geest et al., 2021). For example, if a person feels sad, their body posture could be slow, directed to the ground, like a hunched posture (Van Geest et al., 2021).

Dance movement therapists utilize movements to impact individuals' emotional states by encouraging the exploration and practice of new motor patterns, guiding them to expand their movement vocabulary, and leading to the experience of desirable feelings previously inaccessible to those people (Shafir, 2016). Through DMT, specific movements can evoke and intensify emotions, assisting individuals in exploring, fine-tuning, and processing related feelings (Mills & Daniluk, 2002). Research has shown that specific movements can evoke and regulate associated emotions (Van Geest et al., 2021). Therapists also guide individuals in regulating their emotions by suggesting specific movements that promote desired emotions and advising against motor patterns associated with undesired emotions (Fischman, 2015; Hanna, 1995). Exploration and practicing new motor patterns enable clients to experience novel feelings (Shafir, 2016). This may positively impact individuals by enhancing joy and well-being and producing positive emotional experiences (Gordon, 2014; Koch et al., 2007, 2019).

DMT With Body & Movement Dynamics

Laban (1950) states that movement shows inner impulses and energies through motion factors, space, weight, time, and flow (Laban & Ullman, 1988). Human movement patterns inherently carry emotional tonalities and meaningful expressions shaped by a person's relationship

with the environment (Fischman, 2015). Individuals' inner intent influences how a person's body moves and forms movement patterns (Meekum, 2012). Movement explorations are used to gain insight into a person's emotional state and movement repertoire, create a dialogue between the therapist and patient, and offer possible changes (Fischman, 2015; Hackney, 2002; Hanna, 1995; White, 2015).

Dance Movement Therapists understand and tune in, matching the individual's movement qualities to create dialogue and establish a trusting relationship (Fischman, 2015; White, 2015). Also, DMT has been proven to increase the range of movement (Levine & Land, 2016). Expanding movement range helps patients open new possibilities and ways of functioning (Fischman, 2015). DMT helps to recover inhibited movement in that some parts of the body are split or frozen or movements or lack movement qualities (Fischman, 2015). Movement repertoire is observed to see if any aspect is not used or omitted and introduce that quality for integrating those parts to have a fully functioning body and health. "The slightest change in any movement element (Body/Effort/Shape/Space) affects the functional as well as the expressive content of the communication." (Hackney, 2022, p.45).

Laban Movement Analysis is "a tool for identifying the patients' individual expressions and interactions with others (Bartenieff & Lewis, 1980, p.150). Laban Movement Analysis is observed in three categories: body, space, and effort. (Hackney, 2002). Dance Movement therapists observe the body to understand which parts are moving, which part initiates the movement, and the relationship between the body parts and their connectivity. Also, body shape is observed. As White (2015) states, recognizing the significance of body shape might offer insights into the individual's emotional state, such as the curve observed might be considered as burdened or psychiatric patients' bodies are fixed and static in the upper part of their bodies. When

there is a movement in that part, we may expect a change and possible improvements (White, 2015). Therapists observe the space and how individuals use their personal space and kinesphere when relating with other people and the environment. These observations are often written in a diary by the therapists after the session to leave a trace of the session and to be used for making meaningful interpretations about the patient. Small, medium, or large kinespheres might give insight into their relationships with others (White, 2015). Efforts, weight, space, time, and flow can either be indulged or fought and are observed to gain insights into their dominant characteristics, intents, and expressions (Meekum, 2012). The effort element relates to a different function: Space (indirect, direct) is related to the function of attention; time (sudden, sustained) relates to decision-making; weight (heavy, light) expresses the individual's intention; and flow (bound, free) is about emotion and relationship (Meekum, 2012).

Directional movements are observed to understand the link between the person and the environment (Hackney, 2002). They are associated with individual responses to the external stimuli (Loman & Sossin, 2009). The sagittal axis refers to forward and backward motion. The horizontal axis refers to left-right movement, and the vertical axis refers to up-down movement (Bartenieff & Lewis, 1980). Movement to the front is mainly related to being decided, going into action, and leaving behind other options, whereas to the back is related to indecision and avoidance (Koch et. al., 2011). Movement in the upward direction is mainly considered more positive, and in the downward direction, it is considered more negative. Nevertheless, meaning is unique for each individual; hence, therapy cannot solely dwell on movement dynamics. Therapists carefully observe the meaning of the movement for that individual and consider culture and context in their therapeutic approach.

Dance Movement Therapy as a Non-verbal Intervention in Professional Environments

The indicator of psychological and physical well-being is sharing one's thoughts and feelings about stressors and emotional expression as a widely employed coping strategy (Stanton, 2011). Usually, emotions that are believed to be positive are easy to express, but other emotions that are believed to be negative, like fear, anger, and disappointment, are hard to express (Plutchik, 1980). When emotions are not expressed comfortably, repressing this may lead to stress-related physiological reactions (Patel & Patel, 2019). In research (2009) about the social costs of emotional suppression, the results show that suppressing emotions reduces social support, diminishes closeness to others, and lowers levels of social satisfaction (Srivastava et al., 2009).

Especially in work environments where emotions are not easily shared, it is essential to emphasize the significance of expressing oneself and one's feelings when discussing well-being and stress. Expressing oneself and their needs may not always be straightforward in work settings (Cheshin, 2020). This reluctance to verbally express oneself can stem from various reasons, such as the fear of judgment, the desire to avoid misunderstandings that might jeopardize future work relationships, hierarchical concerns, or avoiding conflicts (Barsade & O'Neil, 2016; Cheshin, 2020). This situation is often observed in work cultures with poor communication, strained relationships with managers, or the inability to find an environment where individuals can express themselves freely (Men & Yue, 2019). This issue can persist even in environments with good relationships and freely shared ideas. Continual repression of emotions in the workplace, as studied by Cote (2005), is linked to increased stress, resulting in adverse effects like heightened heart rate, anxiety, and reduced commitment among employees (Cote, 2005).

Dance Movement Therapy is valuable for workplace well-being since it is a non-verbal creativity therapy that facilitates expression in a safe environment. Definition of Payne (1992)

Dance Movement Therapy explains how the nature of DMT is very much related to why it could be beneficial for well-being in business settings:

“The use of expressive movement and dance as a vehicle through which an individual can engage in the process of personal integration and growth. It is founded on the principle that there is a relationship between motion and emotion and that by exploring a more varied vocabulary of movement, people experience the possibility of becoming more securely balanced yet increasingly spontaneous and adaptable. Through movement and dance, each person’s inner world becomes tangible, individuals share much of their personal symbolism, and in dancing together, relationships become visible. The dance movement therapist creates a holding environment in which such feelings can be safely expressed, acknowledged and communicated” (Payne, 1992, p. 4).

The holding environment of DMT enables a safe space for individuals to express and regulate their emotions (Payne, 1992).

Regulating emotions through movement is an integral outcome of DMT (Bräuninger, 2014; Koch et al., 2014). One of the pioneers of regulation theory, Schore (2014), shows the role of the right brain in emotional regulation, resilience, and well-being. The right brain is central to the emotional sense of self, the attachment experiences involving nonverbal communication with the primary caregiver, and regulating emotions during infancy (Schore, 2014). The right brain's role in implicit, nonconscious processes becomes apparent in the therapeutic alliance, where the therapist tracks nonverbal cues and engages in right brain-to-right brain interactions with the patient (Schore, 2014). DMT works with the integration of the right and left brain. Some tools that are used in DMT to facilitate this integration are movement, dance, movement metaphor, symbols, improvisation, rhythm, props, play, and more. (e.g. Chaiklin, 2009; Meekum, 2012; Tortora, 2009).

Movement unveils the imprints of negative and positive experiences in our bodies (Halprin, 2003). Observing our posture, gestures, and movement reveals where we are stuck and how we hold ourselves, and it expresses the inner stories of our longing or joy (Halprin, 2003). Movement metaphor, a symbolic representation manifested in a specific movement or posture, can offer valuable insights into an individual's behavior patterns, beliefs, and relationships (Meekum, 2012). Repeating these movements or postures enables us to recall and re-embody the initial significance we associate with them (Meekum, 2012). Through improvisation, individuals express themselves by creating movements and gestures that arise from inner impulses and align with natural rhythms (Chaiklin, 2009). Movement, rhythm, and music simultaneously engage both sides of the brain for self-expression (Hanna, 1995). Play and props like scarves, balls, and elastic bands enable the exploration of feelings through imagination and symbolic expression (Tortora, 2009). Therefore, “movement is creative and improvisational, embodying the imagination whereby the body becomes a vehicle for self-expression and a bridge between emotion and motion for integration and healing.” (Payne, 2006, p.3).

Dance Movement Therapy for Creating Healthy Interpersonal Communication

Empathy

Empathy is the capacity to comprehend another person's inner experiences, which involves understanding their feelings, gaining insight into their situation, and responding accordingly (Fischman, 2015). Empathy in the workplace means employees understand each other's emotional states and perspectives, show understanding towards these situations to solve problems and work together effectively and efficiently (Matthewman et al., 2009).

Empathy is a significant business skill supporting workplace retention, innovation, and employee well-being (Zimmermann, 2022). Based on the 2023 State of Workplace Empathy survey

with over 150 CEOs, over 80% of CEOs believe empathy should be a performance criterion (Businesssolver, 2023). Empathy strengthens and improves our communication and helps to build trust-based relationships and, consequently, improves our well-being by improving our interactions with colleagues, customers, and business partners (Koch,2022). According to Jamil Zaki, an Associate Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, in his HBR article (2019), empathic workplaces experience higher collaboration, less stress, more motivation, and more resilient employees (Zaki,2019).

DMT uses kinesthetic empathy to understand a person's emotions and inner experiences (Fischman, 2015). The therapist attunes to the patient by imitating their movements or embodying specific movement qualities (American Dance Therapy Association, 2017). Therapists use body awareness and countertransference to understand and interpret patients' feelings by feeling them in their bodies and determining suitable methods for their needs (ADTA, 2017). Engaging in attuned and empathic mirroring of movements strengthens the connection between the patient and therapist (Dieterich-Hartwell, 2017). Through kinesthetic empathy, a relationship based on trust can be established (ADTA, 2017).

One of the key discoveries scientifically supporting empathy is the discovery of mirror neurons (Fischman, 2015). According to the simulation theory, understanding someone's behaviors or beliefs involves simulating their mental state in one's cognitive system (Gallese & Goldman, 1998; Gordon, 1986). Even though we do not physically execute the action, the same brain regions engage by simply observing the action (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004; Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2010). Simulating the emotional state of another person within one's brain enables individuals to resonate with the mental states and emotions of others (Gallese, 2014). The mirror mechanism allows for simulating identical emotional and somatosensory experiences witnessed in

others, and through mirror neurons, it involves the implicit knowledge acquired intercorporeally (Payne, 2017). This knowledge has the potential to impact and regulate individuals' interactions, fostering deliberate attunement and collaboration in inter-subjective experience (Payne, 2017; Samaritter & Payne, 2013).

Considering the literature on mirror neurons, mirroring is one of the methods used for kinesthetic empathy (Fischman, 2015). Mirroring involves copying another person's movements, rhythm, and movement quality. Marian Chase, one of the pioneers of DMT, contributed and employed this method to establish a dialogue through movement within a group. A circle is formed with participants, and they are asked to imitate the movements of the therapist and group members. This way, everyone copies the same movements simultaneously and in a similar rhythm. Marian Chase used movement to break verbal defenses, and by mirroring method, she aimed to sustain emotional acceptance and validate their experiences (Levy, 1988).

Another method for kinesthetic empathy is witnessing (Fischman, 2015). Witnessing involves observing the movements of others and focusing on the sensations one feels in their own body (Gallese, 2019). Another pioneer, Mary Whitehouse, developed the method known as Authentic Movement (AM), which entails observing and reflecting as a witness while supporting the mover (Hindi, 2012). The witness pays attention emphatically to what the mover communicates (Meekum, 2011). In the practice of AM, awareness of bodily experience occurs through inner listening, encouraging participants to be curious about their experiences and follow their impulses (Hindi, 2012). Empathy and compassion can be intensely experienced through AM (Payne, 2017).

Belonging

“Our bodies know that they belong; it is our minds that make our lives so homeless. Guided by longing, belonging is the wisdom of rhythm. When we are in rhythm with our own nature,

things flow and balance naturally... Our modern hunger to belong is particularly intense. An increasing majority of people feel no belonging. We have fallen out of rhythm with life. The art of belonging is the recovery of the wisdom of rhythm” (O'Donohue, 200, p.3).

It has been discussed that communication is one of the most important factors affecting stress, and one of the stress factors for employees is communication within their workplaces (Zauderer, 2023). One way to increase communication is by fostering empathy among individuals working together to enhance understanding and communication (Zimmermann, 2022). Additionally, crucial aspects of well-being include establishing positive relationships, trusting the people you work with, and expressing oneself authentically (Fiaz & Qureshi, 2023; Wengrower, 2009). Feeling that there is a team and creating a sense of belonging to the workgroup or the organization is important to create this environment (Fukuyama, 1995; Lamsa & Pucetaite, 2006).

According to psychologist Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, love and belongingness are our third fundamental needs. The need for love and belongingness represents the desire for interpersonal relationships, acceptance, connection, trust, and the need to be part of a group (McLeod, 2023). The Leadership Development Survey: The Importance of Belonging in the Workplace (2022) mentions five components of belonging: a) feeling valued, b) being included, c) being part of a team, d) being heard, and e) being accepted as one is (Simons University Institute for Inclusive Leadership, 2022). In other words, when an employee feels valued as an individual, when their achievements are recognized, when they are included in decision-making processes, when they build good relationships with their team when their ideas are heard, and when they are accepted as their authentic selves, they experience a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging is related to both well-being and job performance. According to a survey by BetterUp (2021),

employees who feel a sense of belonging show a 56% increase in job performance, a 50% decrease in turnover risk, and a 75% reduction in sick leave (BetterUp, 2021).

The American Psychological Association's 2023 Work in America survey reports that 94% of participants consider a sense of belonging in the workplace somehow important or very important (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Particularly with the increase in remote and hybrid work, individuals feeling isolated is being observed; for example, according to EY's research, 40% of participants feel isolated (Twaronite, 2019). Feeling isolated is a significant threat to well-being.

Another significant aspect of a sense of belonging is feeling psychologically safe. Individuals can only experience true belonging when they feel authentic and vulnerable (Ferrara, 2023). There needs to be a conducive culture and work environment where individuals can understand each other, express themselves comfortably, and have relationships where they are not afraid to give ideas to have a sense of belonging (Fiaz & Qureshi, 2023). Therefore, companies need to create this environment.

Dance Movement Therapy can be conducted one-on-one with a therapist and in a group setting. It can be said that DMT positively changes group cohesion and a sense of belonging (Chyle et al., 2020; Erfer & Ziv, 2005). Moreover, research has proven that dancing together with music reduces pain and strengthens social bonds (Stone et al., 2015). Dance, providing a sense of belonging to a culture or group, reduces stress and prevents feelings of alienation (Boris, 2001). Synchronized movements in the same rhythm enhance community and strengthen interpersonal connections (ADTA, 2017). Various tools and approaches of DMT, such as mirroring, witnessing, using metaphors and symbols for individuals to express themselves more comfortably, acceptance, and being open to differences by observing others' movements, can be given as examples

(Schmais, 1985). Additionally, the therapeutic relationship between the participant and the therapist through having nonverbal attunement and kinesthetic empathy makes it possible to have a safe space (Tortora, 2011). Such an environment can create a space where individuals feel comfortable, turning into Winnicott's transitional space, where the inner world is revealed and shared (Fischman, 2015), and becoming a safe space where individuals and relationships transform. Also, with increased movement repertoires, openness to differences can increase.

Healthy Boundaries

At the pandemic's beginning, with everyone staying home, many employees chose to work longer hours; subsequently, mental health problems were observed, both as a global phenomenon and among the author's colleagues (e.g., Lievens, 2021; Mutebi & Hobbs, 2022; Osborne, 2021). These articles recommended that employees take breaks at specific intervals, allocate time to different activities, and set boundaries (Lievens, 2021; Mutebi & Hobbs, 2022; Osborne, 2021).

Healthy boundaries are essential for well-being and positive relationships (Coppock, n.d.; Nash, 2018). For healthy boundaries, self-awareness and strong communication are crucial (Nash, 2018). From our initial relationships, we have developed methods to gain acceptance, feel loved, and create a sense of safety (Schoore, 2000). We continue to act upon these approaches in the workplace to gain acceptance, advance, and feel secure, as well as in the outside world. However, if we consistently prioritize others' needs over our own, say yes when we want to say no, or accept endless client demands and work long hours, there is a high likelihood that we will eventually feel exhausted, guilty, and burnt out (Nash, 2018). Therefore, when discussing well-being, discussing healthy boundaries is essential.

The most apparent boundary is our body (Nash, 2018). DMT works with our bodies, allowing us to observe how we act, think, behave through embodiment, understand our needs, and

develop different approaches. DMT primarily shows how we differentiate ourselves, our kinesphere, and our environment (Hackney, 2002). Through dance, movement, and props, we can observe how we communicate, solve our conflicts, and give and receive intersubjectively (Chaiklin, 2009; Pierce, 2014). The therapeutic relationship, as a reflection of our ways, helps us understand our boundaries and, once understood, guides us on how to communicate with another person.

Methodology

Overall Aim of The Study & Hypothesis

This DMT intervention pilot study is designed to investigate the effect of DMT on workplace stress and, consequently, well-being. This study explored the potential of DMT as a new and alternative method to address the problems of stress and well-being in the business environment. This study used qualitative and quantitative design to measure the effect of the DMT on stress and gain insight into participants' (employees) approach towards DMT. In the long run, this study aims to be used as a foundation for the 12-week DMT program.

This study asked these research questions:

- 1) Does Dance Movement Therapy affect employees' stress levels?
- 2) Can DMT provide practical tools and skills to manage stress better in their personal and professional lives?

Additional questions were also asked in order to conduct further DMT interventions at workplaces.

- 3) Can DMT be conducted at the workplace? Are employees interested in DMT at the workplace?
- 4) What limitations and problems could hinder conducting DMT at workplaces?

The hypothesis was that DMT positively affects employees' stress levels and can be a tool to manage stress in employees' personal and professional lives. The results of the pilot study, combined with the literature and the author's previous experience, will be used to introduce the 12-week DMT program to the companies.

Since DMT is a brand-new approach in the corporate world, this pilot study was seen as a way to anticipate the limitations and problems. With her business environment experience, the author foresaw some obstacles she needed to address. The obstacles she has foresaw:

- 1) The term “dance” in DMT could be repulsive for some people because they think they cannot or would not want to dance. Therefore, in the invitation, DMT is explained through e-mail and a presentation focusing more on movement rather than dance.
- 2) It takes more to get their attention through an e-mail. Therefore, the author used an eye-catching headline to attract employees' attention. Stress has been emphasized, and it is said that this study was for people who are dealing with stress.

By inviting employees for a DMT session, it is assumed that 10% of employees would be interested in attending a DMT session.

Study Design

This pilot study used a qualitative and quantitative design. The pilot study was conducted one time, and participants were analyzed pre and post-DMT intervention. A qualitative design was used before the DMT intervention to gather information about participants' stress levels, understand how they experience stress, and their perceptions about work-related stress. Only one quantitative data was gathered after DMT intervention to compare pre-post stress levels. A qualitative design was used to understand their perception about if and in what ways DMT is an

effective tool for coping with stress. Participants were asked to complete two questionnaires before the intervention: The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983) and a questionnaire (Stress Assessment Questionnaire Before Intervention) prepared by the author. The Perceived Stress Scale and Stress Assessment Questionnaire Before Intervention were sent to the participants through e-mail a day before. A one-hour-long DMT session was conducted, and after the session, another questionnaire, Stress Assessment Questionnaire After Intervention prepared by the author, was sent through e-mail on the same day and asked to be filled during the same day. In the post-intervention questionnaire, besides providing quantitative data, they were also required to complete open-ended questions about the DMT program. The questionnaires are presented in the Appendices (See Appendix A, Appendix B).

Participants were asked to complete a scheduling form a week before to identify a suitable time for everyone. The majority favored the lunch break on Wednesday, September 6th. However, two out of seven participants could not align their schedules and told the author they could not attend.

Informed consent was obtained from participants on the day the study was conducted before the DMT session started. In order to collect the most reliable information, the questionnaires were sent to the participants in English and Turkish. They chose the language in which they felt more comfortable to fill. The consent form was prepared only in Turkish (see Appendix G, Appendix H).

Sixty minutes of DMT intervention was conducted. They were asked to be present 15 minutes prior to the intervention. DMT intervention was conducted in Turkish since all the participants are native Turkish speakers.

Place

For convenience reasons, the DMT intervention was conducted in a meeting room in a co-working space in the same building as the company. Company X had no adequate space to conduct a DMT session. All the meeting rooms in Company X are separated by glass. The author asked the co-working space manager for a space to conduct a DMT intervention. The co-working space wanted to support the author's study, and the author was not charged for the meeting room. The room in the co-working space was a meeting room that could host up to 36 individuals. The room was asked to be emptied except for six chairs. The tables in the meeting room were asked to be removed. The room's privacy was obtained via the black-out curtains. The room was covered with carpet on the floor, and there were two big screens and a sound system connected to those screens (see Appendix I).

Recruitment

The author approached one company (Company X), and the company accepted. Participants were recruited from Company X through convenience sampling. Participants were informed through the company's official e-mail, and the invitation was sent to every employee. The author sent an e-mail about the program and attached a presentation about DMT. The author informed applicants about the exclusion criteria in the email. Partners of the company and people with hierarchical relations (manager - direct report) are intentionally excluded to create a safe space where people can freely express themselves. Those interested in the program applied using the form that was sent by e-mail. Interested people filled out the application form. The author selected the participants.

Eight employees applied through the application form. Seven participants were selected. A participant intentionally omitted from participating. The participant who was not selected works

as VP and was the manager of four participants. Two participants could not attend due to personal issues. Finally, among eight people applied the study was conducted with five participants.

Participants

| Participant | Role | Level | Age | Tenure (months) | Relations |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--------|-----|--------------------|--|
| P1 Selim | Senior Project Manager | Senior | 29 | 26 | Mentoring Sibel and overseeing her projects. |
| P2 Nisan | Software Developer | Mid | 23 | 29 | |
| P3 Sibel | Project Manager | Mid | 27 | 25 | In the same team with Lale and Selim |
| P4 Sema | Strategy & Execution Senior Analyst | Senior | 29 | 21 | |
| P5 Lale | Project Manager | Mid | 27 | 30 | In the same team with Sibel and Selim |

Note: Participants' names are changed for the sake of keeping participants' privacy.

Demographic data was taken from Company X's files since the author has access to these files as a Human Resources Manager. The employees consent to their files to be used on their first day at the company.

Company X is a scale-up company in Turkey's tech industry in Turkey. In September, the company had 115 employees. Company X has a turnover of more than 45% (high). The tenure is two years. Company X is a more horizontally structured company.

Definitions of Terms, Concepts

Roles: Roles can vary significantly depending on a company's industry. Some positions involve direct interaction with customers, while others require independent work. Some roles may primarily deal with data, while others focus on interpersonal interactions. Stress levels can differ across roles, as each comes with its responsibilities, deadlines, and pressures. While all roles involve a degree of stress, the intensity may vary, making some positions more demanding.

Levels of the Roles: Hierarchy defines an organization's authority, responsibility, and competencies levels within an organization. The hierarchical structure typically includes Top-Level Management (CEO, Executive Team), Managers/Leaders, and Senior, Junior, and Intern levels. Mostly, it shows the power relations between employees. The hierarchy in a workplace depends on the organization's size, industry, and culture. Some companies are more horizontally, and some are more vertically structured. Horizontally structured companies have a culture of less distinction in communicating, accessibility, and responsibilities between levels. These cultures are considered more sincere, fast, and young. On the other hand, vertically structured companies tend to have more bureaucracy, distinction in roles, and how to communicate and conduct their jobs. In this type of organization, employees call their colleagues Ms. or Mr. These organizations are primarily big companies with over 1000 employees and often have bulky structures. Some of those company cultures are considered old school.

It is assumed that as career levels increase, responsibilities grow, leading to increased perceived burden and stress.

Tenure: It is the length of time that they spend in the company. Companies are inclined to retain their employees, specifically high performers, recognizing the significant costs of replacing key positions. Employees with longer tenures possess a deeper understanding of their roles, having

job proficiency and institutional knowledge, enabling them to perform tasks more efficiently than newly recruited counterparts. Additionally, their familiarity with the organization's structure and key employees allows them to navigate their responsibilities effectively. However, employees with more tenures may experience heightened stress levels for various reasons.

DMT Intervention

A 60-minute DMT session was held on the company's lunch break (12:30-13:30).

Check-in:

The check-in part commenced with the participants being invited to sit in a circle on the floor without their shoes. Once the circle was formed, the participants were encouraged to verbally share what stress meant for them and the motivation behind their participation in the DMT session. Even though the verbal sharing was voluntary, all participants chose to express their thoughts. Participants spoke randomly; there were no specific sequences. In check-in, the author intended to understand the source of their stress.

Warm-up/Preparation:

The participants were asked to walk through the room and to get in contact with their bodies and breaths. During this phase, they were asked to observe their breaths, movements, surroundings, and contact with other participants. The author guided participants verbally.

Process:

Chase Circle & Mirroring: Chase circle was used. The participants were asked to share movements or gestures as a response to the question, "If stress has a movement or gesture, what would that be?". First, the author demonstrated her gesture, which the person on her right followed. In each turn, the person on the right side of the demonstrator followed. As each participant demonstrated their gesture or movement, the others were invited to mirror the movement or

gesture. By mirroring other colleagues' movements or gestures, the aim was to generate empathy and understanding of their stress. The activity was completed when every participant had completed two turns.

Improvisation: The author invited all participants to scatter around the room and move freely while the music was on. Initially, the participants were asked to move with their eyes closed to induce feelings of safety. Later on, they were given the option of opening their eyes. During the improvisation phase, props and objects, elastic bands, small balls, and dumble were used. All props were put in the middle of the room, and participants were invited to use them. The option to utilize props and objects was provided in order to make the movement less abstract since participants had no prior DMT experience. Interaction with other participants was encouraged through the author's guidance. The music had more tribal and rhythmic properties at the beginning, which gradually turned into a more soothing tune. All songs were instrumental and did not contain any lyrics. The change in the music aimed to release the stress in the first phase and later for relaxation and closure.

Transition: For the transition to check-out, the transition phase was implemented. The session ended with a body check-in.

Check-out:

Participants were asked about their experience. They had an open space to ask their questions about DMT.

Measurements

The Perceived Stress Scale and a simple questionnaire were used before the intervention to measure the participants' stress levels and their experiences when they have stress. Participants were also asked to complete another questionnaire after the DMT session to measure the effect of DMT on stress and participants' approaches towards DMT.

The Perceived Stress Scale

This pilot study used a 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to measure the individual's perception of his/her stress level (Cohen et al., 1983).

Questionnaires

The author developed the questionnaire to answer research questions and determine if the hypothesis is true.

Stress Assessment Questionnaire Before Intervention. (see Appendix A) This questionnaire was used to assess whether participants experience stress, the level of stress they experience, the impact of stress on their lives, their work-life balance, the effects of their job on stress levels, the approaches of the company they work for, and whether they have previously used any methods to cope with stress. The questionnaire consists of seven questions, six of which are scale-type questions where one (1) represents the least, five (5) the highest option, and one multiple-choice question where more than one option could be chosen. This questionnaire is designed for quantitative data.

Stress Assessment Questionnaire After Intervention. (see Appendix B) This questionnaire was used to determine the stress level experienced by participants after Dance and Movement Therapy, whether they could use Dance and Movement Therapy as a coping for stress method, and whether they would recommend Dance and Movement Therapy as a stress-coping method to their colleagues. Both quantitative and qualitative questions are included in this questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of seven questions, two of which are scale-type questions where one (1) represents the least, five (5) the highest option, three of which are open-ended questions, and two of which are yes/no/I don't know questions.

The Author's Diary. Right after the DMT intervention, the author wrote her observations in a diary. The diary included the process of DMT intervention, the author's observations about participants' movements, and the author's countertransference. The diary was used to support the findings and for the discussion part.

Laban Movement Analysis. During the DMT session, the participants' movements were observed using Laban Movement Analysis and they were written in the author's diary. The movement analysis aimed to gain insight into participants' emotional states and movement repertoires, create a dialogue between the author and participants, and offer possible changes (Fischman, 2015; Hackney, 2002; Hanna, 1995; White, 2015).

Data Analysis

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the data from two questionnaires were analyzed. All participants, without any exclusions, reported experiencing stress in their lives. The sole pre-post question focused on participants' stress levels, with the anticipation that they would report feeling less stressed after the Dance Movement Therapy session. It was also anticipated that when asked about their perception of the impact of the session on their stress levels, participants would rate it as 3 (moderate) or higher.

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative results were analyzed—participants' responses in the Stress Assessment Questionnaire After Intervention were analyzed. To further support the hypothesis, the author's diary was also utilized. The author wrote this diary after conducting the DMT session and included observations about the session.

Results

Major Findings

The initial expectation was that 10% of employees (eleven applicants) would be interested in participating in the DMT pilot study. However, eight individuals applied. The pilot study was conducted with five participants.

Although the small sample of participants (N=5) makes the numbers statistically insignificant, the findings are believed to be important. The findings may give insight into the aim of this thesis, may be representative of employees' approach toward DMT, and will be used for further studies.

Before DMT Intervention

Per the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), P1 exhibits the highest stress levels, categorized as High Perceived Stress. (See Appendix Table 4, Table 5) Notably, P1 is the sole male in the group and holds a mentorship role. P2 and P3 have Moderate Stress, P4 experiences a low stress level, and P5 did not complete the Perceived Stress Scale.

Upon analyzing participants' experiences with stress from the Stress Assessment Questionnaire Before Intervention, participants were experiencing some stress levels. Despite the commonality of having stress, variations exist in their stress levels, work-life balance, stress perception, coping mechanisms, and their views on how the company supports well-being (refer to Appendix Table 1, Table 2, Table 3).

Among the participants, 4 out of 5 engage in physical activities to manage stress and pursue hobbies for joy and relaxation. Additionally, 3 out of 5 practice meditation or mindfulness. Two participants seek social support from friends, family, or colleagues to cope with stress.

Interestingly, none of the participants feel that their company fully supports managing stress. One participant perceives some support, while two are uncertain, and two believe their company does not support employees in stress management.

All participants describe their work-life balance as moderate or less. 4 out of 5 frequently experience stress accompanied by fatigue, while 3 out of 5 experience stress with muscle tension or body aches. Occasionally, 3 out of 5 face stress-related sleep disturbances (insomnia, nightmares) and digestive problems (e.g., stomachaches, indigestion).

Every participant acknowledges feeling overwhelmed or burnt out due to stress in the past week. Moreover, 3 out of 5 report frequent irritability, mood swings, and increased anxiety or worry.

After DMT Intervention

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The only question that was held pre-post study was the stress level before and after the intervention. Positive changes, marked by a decrease in stress, were observed in 2 out of 5 participants initially identified as stressed. One participant, P1, who had High Perceived Stress before the intervention, showed no change.

Regarding the impact of DMT on stress levels, 2 participants (P2, P5) reported a high impact, while 2 (P1, P3) noted a moderate impact. Participant P4, who initially had low stress and had Perceived Low stress in PSS, mentioned a low impact. The following question about the impact of DMT was open-ended. They were asked how DMT impacted them and if they noticed any change or improvements; 4 out of 5 participants highlighted increased awareness of their bodies, body movements, habits, and ways of doing things.

Most (4 out of 5) believed that DMT equipped them with practical tools to manage stress better personally and professionally. One participant expressed uncertainty about using these tools

individually but saw potential positive effects within a group setting. She thinks these tools could be used within a group but is unsure if she can use them independently. The tools that DMT could provide included listening to the body, finding alternatives, and giving time before attempting to solve or cope during stressful times.

All participants expressed willingness to recommend DMT to colleagues or others experiencing stress. They were asked to explain the reasons behind their recommendation or non-recommendation of Dance and Movement Therapy to colleagues or other individuals experiencing stress. The common reason behind this recommendation was the positive impact on body awareness, bodily sensations, and responses, seen as a useful coping tool for stress. DMT was also perceived as distinct from traditional methods and a valuable pause from daily conflicts and chaos.

Analysis of the Author's Diary. Participants described stress as uncertainty, lack of resolution (sense of unsolvability), lack of time, the feeling of pressure, and restriction. The male participant mentioned feeling stressed as the only male in the group. One participant expressed that attending this study was a desire to cope with uncertainty.

Stress manifestations, when asked to show their stress with a movement or gesture, included physical expressions like touching (indicative of pain such as stomach or neck ache), breath-holding, dizziness, covering their face, and a feeling of needing to scream. When participants were mirroring each other's movements, participants exhibited subtle, small movements, with two participants not mimicking screaming, and overall, movements were small. Participants were hesitant in their movements.

“I (Author) asked everyone to create a circle. I inquired about a movement that would represent the stress they were feeling. I demonstrated one movement. I observed some hesitancy in performing the movement as if everyone was waiting for someone else to start. To guide them,

I counted "1-2-3" to guide them and asked them to do it simultaneously. With a slight difference, everyone repeated the movement. Participants were mirroring the movements subtly, so I encouraged them to exaggerate them more to enhance their sensations."

Two participants used the vertical plane, and everyone used the horizontal plane. No one used the sagittal plane. No one made eye contact. Everyone moved and stayed alone. Interestingly, everyone needed to explain their movements - what they were doing- until the music played. When the author guided them, there were some changes in their movements (for example, when everyone was walking in a circle, participants changed their walking direction after becoming aware, and they briefly looked at each other after being drawn to attention that they were not making eye contact). Even though the mental level of awareness was high, the physical level of awareness was less prominent.

Laban Effort. In the beginning, everyone used sustained time, but at the improvisation part, only one participant used quick time. The most noticeable part was that although participants seemed to be using a direct space, they did not have any focus. At the beginning of the session, it seemed like no one had any weight. Their bodies were going from one place to another in a certain way, but it felt like they were drifting from one place to another. In the improvisation part, two people moved lightweight, and the remaining person moved a heavyweight. Two people did not use any weight. Three people moved with bound flow, and two moved with free flow. At the beginning of the session, the group used a circular direction.

Verbal Assessments. According to the verbal assessments of the participants/employees, the benefits of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) include

Empathy: Mirroring helped participants connect with each other's feelings.

“Sema covered her face with her hands. When mirroring Sema’s movement, covering her face with her hands, Sibel commented ‘I felt her stress’ with amusement.”

Awareness and Finding Alternative Methods: They noticed the choices they always made automatically and unconsciously. They became aware of listening to their bodies. Once they were aware, they realized they had different options and could choose to do something different.

“Initially, everyone walked in a circle, and Selim asked if we had to move this way. I reminded him that we could choose what to do and encouraged him to pay attention to what he wanted to do. Then he left the circular movement.”

“Sema said she noticed she walked the same way she had moved. She explained that she threw the ball from right to left hand to relax. I also pointed out that at that moment she was doing the same movement with the ball in her hand. She smiled, and she agreed. When I asked if she did anything different after being aware of what she was doing, she mentioned that she tried to change from a circular movement to another while walking. “

“Sibel said she intentionally preferred being alone. She realized she liked speed but also found that stopping felt good.”

“Lale mentioned that she realized that did not like monotony and did not like staying the same.”

“Selim mentioned that he realized if he is doing something, he does not want to do the same thing again and tries to change his focus continuously.”

Author's Observations - Countertransference. Their bodies were there, but it seemed like they were not fully present then. The author wondered whether they were taking part in the session or drifted by the thoughts of their job or boredom when they were silent or doing the activities. The author was afraid of their boredom and concerned about their session satisfaction. She tried

to fill the gaps, guiding more than usual and disrupting the silence. She kept improvisation shorter. The most prominent feelings experienced by the author were anxiety, a need to speed up, and a desire to please and make them love DMT. During the warm-up part, she held her chest

Responding to the questions of the study.

- 1) The study does not conclusively establish that Dance Movement Therapy affects stress levels for all employees. However, it did decrease stress levels for 2 out of 3 participants whose primary stress level was more than moderate.
- 2) 4 out of 5 participants believe that Dance Movement Therapy equips them with practical tools and skills to manage stress better in their personal and professional lives.
- 3) While the primary assumption that 10% of employees would be interested and apply to DMT is unmet, 7% applied. However, all participants expressed their willingness to recommend DMT interventions to their friends, family, and colleagues.
- 4) In terms of limitations and problems that were experienced in DMT interventions, dance is still perceived as more for women. Participant P1 initially had doubts about attending a DMT session. Surprisingly, aspects like sitting on the floor and taking off shoes, which the author expected participants to refuse, were accepted.

The small sample and only one intervention of DMT make it impossible to generalize and prove the hypothesis. Therefore any conclusion could not be drawn from the qualitative data. The qualitative data is used to get insights about the participants and their numeric evaluations. Through this pilot study, we did not say there is a strong correlation between stress and DMT intervention at work. However, verbal sharing during and after the DMT session, observation of the author, and all participants' recommendation of DMT to their colleagues are promising for DMT as a valuable tool to achieve employee well-being at work.

Discussion

At the workplace, the mind is favored over the body. This Cartesian duality has been observed in two forms in this study. The first is the participants' efforts during the session. The efforts are used to gain insights into their intents (Meekum, 2012). The use of passive weight made the author feel that, even though they appeared to be doing something, it felt like they were doing something else simultaneously. This feeling was quite noticeable. Since weight is related to the sense of self, the lack of weight in their bodies could signify that they are dissociated from their bodies and distant from themselves. The second is the need to connect with their bodies. Their responses to the questions about the effect of DMT on their stress level and why DMT could be beneficial as a tool are related to their re-connection with their bodies.

The idea that connecting with the body would be a resource that allows individuals to cope with stress is open to discussion since companies already provide employees with meditation apps or physical exercise initiatives (Jimenez & Bregenzner, 2018; Jones et. al., 2019; Levy & Thorndike, 2019; Waller & Motten, 2012; Weber et al., 2019). However, the statistics show that employees' stress and well-being cannot be unlocked yet. The reason might be related to these apps being provided individually and without assigning any specific time for it to become a habit. One of the responses pointed out that the positive effect could be sustained by being in a group setting. Through positively changing group cohesion and creating a sense of belonging, DMT helps reduce stress (Boris, 2001, Chyle et al., 2020; Erfer & Ziv, 2005). Tools used in a group setting in DMT, like mirroring, witnessing, and synchronized movements in the same rhythm, create empathy and a feeling of acceptance and strengthen interpersonal relations, affecting individuals' well-being (ADTA, 2017; Schmais, 1985).

The author expected that participants would be more prone to express themselves non-verbally since expressing oneself verbally in a work environment may not always be straightforward (Cheshin, 2020). In this study, it was the contrary. The participants were more willing to express themselves verbally instead. This could be seen in the subtle, small movements during the session. The reason might be that connecting with their bodies and using bodily expressions are novelties. The verbal explanation of their decisions of the movements might be a defense mechanism toward being vulnerable in a work setting. They are more accustomed to explaining themselves in the business world. For example, employees need to explain what they did in the alignment meetings, write daily reports, and prepare analyses about the updates. These types of explanations are used to prove to the managers, colleagues, or customers that they are doing their job. Even though it was a setting without power dynamics since the manager-direct report relations were omitted, the workplace is an area where trust is a crucial but fragile component. Although participants do not have any power relations, it does not mean it is considered a safe environment. In this study, it was observed that participants verbally shared their feelings freely, showing that they considered that space as safe to share. However, they wanted to avoid being seen as vulnerable because they were inexperienced in the movement area. Two participants especially seemed unwilling to open up bodily compared to the others. One was the only male participant, who shared that being the only male among the participants stressed him, showing that gender could be another dynamic to consider. In some cultures, like Turkey, men who dance are not considered masculine, and men's bodies are stiff without moving the upper parts of their bodies.

The author's relationship with the employees must be considered when a safe space and trusting environment are the issue. Even though the study was presented as a separate study for

academic reasons and participation was voluntary, the relationship between employees and the author is two-sided. She was there as a therapist, but she was the company's human resources manager. Having previous positive relations with the author might have affected the open sharing, but it also might have affected participants' expressions.

Despite the author working in a workplace known for its positive culture, many individuals hesitate to share their feelings, concerns, and resentments unless prompted proactively (Tovim, personal communication, n.d.). In an exit interview, when an employee gave feedback during his offboarding process, he revealed lingering resentment over an incident a year ago (Tovim, personal communication, 2019). DMT could be a tool to proactively promote employees' self expression by giving a safe space.

Dancing together strengthens the social bonds (Stone et al., 2015). Participants did not want to connect with the author or their colleagues in this pilot study. The author wanted to have a dialogue through props, but after a couple of seconds of communicating with the participants using the props, the author felt they did not want to connect. The author pointed this observation out in the check-out. They said they wanted to be alone. This could be viewed as setting healthy boundaries; they embodied their boundaries with their movements. The author interpreted this as they first need to connect with themselves in order to connect with other people since, for creating healthy boundaries, self-awareness is necessary (Nash, 2018). One of the stress factors is also a lack of control (Mate, 2003). It can be argued that participants gained a sense of control when their decisions of being alone or not using props were respected. The author believes healthy boundaries are crucial but often overlooked. The author has witnessed processes leading to intense stress and burnout due to individuals not knowing their boundaries, struggling to set them, or being unaware that not setting them causes stress.

Body awareness helps to recognize needs, manage stress responses, and explore alternative reactions (Caldwell, 2018; Chaiklin, 2009; Halprin, 2003). In this study, connecting with their bodies helped employees to embody and understand their needs, which opened new alternatives to them, and they could choose their responses. One of the participants responded to the question of how DMT could be effective as a tool:

“Focusing on my movements during moments of stress and using that as a starting point to explore alternative solutions could be a tool/method for me.”

The meaning of stress for the participants was uncertainty, lack of resolution (sense of unsolvability), lack of time, the feeling of pressure, and restriction. In their movements, their definition of stress was observed. In the context of Laban Movement Analysis, space is related to attention. They did not have a specific direction, even though it seemed they were using direct space. Their uncertainty might be embodied in the usage of space. Time was very prominent in the session. The need for a change in rhythm was seen in the DMT session, where most of the session was observed within sustained time. No one moved in the sagittal plane, which is about reevaluation and slowing down (Hornthal et al., 2022). The lack of use of the sagittal plane might indicate their need to slow down. The fast pace of the working environment might be why they wanted to change their inner rhythm and use sustained time. A participant commented that she liked fast speed, but stopping felt good. The author felt, as a countertransference, a need to speed up.

Therapists use body awareness and countertransference to understand and interpret patients' feelings by feeling them in their bodies and determining suitable methods for their needs (ADTA, 2017). The author felt the pressure to please and make them love the session. This might be related to the author's first DMT session conducted in the companies, but this could also be

very much related to participants' feelings in the companies. The relations with the customers and the managers could reflect trying to gain acceptance.

Since this study is a one-time pilot study, it cannot be used to predict long-term results. The author wants to go beyond this study and design a long-term Dance Movement Therapy Program for companies. She proposes this three-month program implemented in weekly one-hour interventions as a whole well-being program for the companies. This proposed program will be a new approach in the business realm.

Limitations and Challenges of The Pilot Study

Finding an adequate space for conducting DMT sessions at the office and securing a suitable location for DMT proved challenging. The office lacked private, convenient spaces for DMT. The author needed to explore alternative options. The Company X is situated in a co-working space. The author rented a meeting room in this space. Most meeting rooms had glass walls, but curtains cut off the connection with the outside.

Another limitation was finding a time that was suitable for everyone. At Company X, employees follow a hybrid work arrangement, with individuals divided into Groups A and B. Group A members work from the office on Tuesdays and Fridays. In contrast, Group B members attend the office on Mondays and Thursdays. Although Wednesday is not an official office day, it remains accessible to those who prefer to be on-site. Participants preferred Wednesday for the intervention.

The biggest limitation was the number of the participants. The small number of participants made it impossible to do quantitative analysis. Therefore the analysis was focused on qualitative data.

Dance Movement Therapy is a brand-new area in business environments. Therefore, standard questionnaires for stress could not fully cover answering specifically the questions that this pilot study requires to do pre-post study. Thus, only the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was used. For further studies, more detailed, comprehensive standard questionnaires will be considered.

DMT is an unknown field in the business world, hence further studies should consider some other challenges. The first challenge would be reaching out to the companies and finding companies that are willing to support the well-being of their employees. To overcome this challenge, DMT is planned to be promoted on social media platforms for employees and companies, like LinkedIn, and attending to networking events where employees connect and share. The second challenge would be attracting employees to participate. To attack this problem, an introduction to a DMT session apart from the 12-week DMT program would be planned. Considering that all participants suggested DMT to their colleagues in the pilot study, it might be possible that after the introduction DMT session, more employees would be willing to attend.

Outline for future program

The purpose of this program is to offer a comprehensive approach to the well-being of employees in the workplace, going beyond recommending methods to only cope with stress. The topics considered necessary for this purpose are listed below. These topics will be planned to be presented in the order listed or in a different order based on the group's needs. This content is recommended based on a pilot study conducted in September 2023, the author's ten years of human resources experience of the author, and the literature.

Considering this, starting with pilot studies in companies and then introducing the suggested DMT program may be considered. The possible hypotheses could be:

- DMT can be perceived as effective for employees who experience moderate or more stress.
- DMT provides an effective method for the well-being of employees.
- DMT can help employees to generate empathy, thus understanding each other better and more, consequently increasing the quality of communication, and conflict can be solved more easily.
- Employees are distant from their bodies, and they need to focus more on their bodies and bodily sensations. Connecting with their bodies could be a way to increase their awareness of their habitual response, and employees can find alternative ways to solve their problems in their personal and business lives.
- Group therapies in workplace well-being programs create belonging and group cohesion.

Session 1: Introduction and Getting to Know Each Other

The first session is designed to increase participants' willingness to engage with DMT. It serves as an introductory session for participants to understand what Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is and to get to know each other differently. The focus of this session is to create content that allows participants to feel that DMT is beneficial and effective for them, establishing a comfortable environment. The emphasis is on enjoyment and having fun during this session.

Example: Participants are asked to walk first and then stop. After a few minutes of experiencing this, the meanings of these two words are changed. That is, when told to stop, they should walk, and when told to walk, they should stop. The instruction change will challenge participants to question their habitual thinking and behavioral patterns. After a couple of trials, jumping and clapping are added as additional elements. Similarly, participants are directed to clap

when told to jump and jump when told to clap. When the therapist directs all four elements simultaneously, participants are expected to make more mistakes, experience surprise and laughter, and engage in the session in a questioning manner. After making mistakes and laughing, employees are expected to let go of the seriousness often present in their professional lives. They would feel they do not have to swagger in this space.

Session 2: Going Back to Our Bodies

Given that employees often spend long hours sitting at computers, neglecting their physical and emotional needs, this session aims to reconnect with their bodies and become aware of their bodily needs again. Each session will offer various methods to increase physical and sensory awareness. This session will focus on sensory awareness, and gaining awareness about these senses will be the main focus, covering the seven senses: sight, hearing, touch (tactile), smell, taste, vestibular, proprioception, and interoception.

Example: Body check-in, mindfulness/bodyfulness exercises, breathing exercises, and activities involving objects to stimulate the senses can be used.

Session 3: Emotions

While the previous week aimed to develop a focus on sensory perception, this week's goal is to work on recognizing emotions, distinguishing them from one another, and naming them. Participants will explore what they think or feel when experiencing these emotions and discover the connection between what they think and when they experience these feelings. Following awareness of this connection, the aim is to create a gap between emotion and thought, allowing individuals to perceive this gap as a space to be used as an opportunity for making different choices.

Example: Working with emotion cards, where participants choose three dominant emotions they felt during the week, represent these emotions through movement or gesture, and let others guess. Participants then will explain the chosen emotions, discuss when they experienced them, and share examples of their thoughts when feeling them.

Session 4: Safe Space

This session explores what a safe space means for employees and how they can create it. Participants will be asked to define a safe space for them and how they feel here and outside that space. The group will decide which elements are needed to create this safe space.

Example: Participants are first asked to define what a safe space means and use objects to create such a space. They are then directed to move/dance within this space and, later, outside it. Participants are encouraged to draw a picture considering their feelings in both areas. After those who wish to explain their pictures do so, the group will discuss the collective need for a safe space and what the group can do to create it.

Session 5: Finding Authenticity

This session is designed to help participants understand their needs. Participants will explore what they want, how they express these wants, and how they would like to express them. This session will involve more strong rhythm and grounding exercises.

Example: Participants are asked to imagine themselves as a tree. They are supported with music and guidance to understand the changes in the tree during the four seasons.

Session 6: Communication (Nonverbal Communication, Symbols, Metaphors)

While the previous sessions focused on individuals and their needs, from this session onward, the focus shifts to understanding and interpreting participants' relationships with their

surroundings. The goal is to make participants aware of their communication methods and the approaches they take for granted and to embody this awareness.

Example: Participants are divided into pairs and given an elastic rope. They are asked to choose a topic and communicate nonverbally using the rope. Later, questions are asked about what they discussed, what they wanted to say, whether the other person understood them and whether they spoke in order. The same exercise is repeated, and any changes are noted. Finally, participants join other groups to raise awareness of how they communicate in larger groups.

Session 7: Stress Relief

This session is designed to replicate the pilot study. It covers understanding the meaning of stress, recognizing methods to cope with stress, and engaging in relaxation exercises. Music, particularly tribal and live music, plays a significant role in relieving stress. Depending on the group dynamics, participants may be encouraged to "wildly" dance.

Example: Chaos in 5 rhythms. In the 5 Rhythm in Chaos part, we practice releasing the body. The rhythm is used to liberate them from the way of being that they feel like being in the business world.

Session 8: Coping with the Unknown – Anxiety

The results have shown that employees experience uncertainty while coping with stress. This session is essential for defining this uncertain area and helping participants understand their usual methods. Participants will work on observing and exploring their concerns about the past, present, and future to discover their coping methods.

Example: Participants select a topic about their concerns. They are asked to sit or lie down and think about this concern, staying in that feeling for a while. The therapist provides the necessary guidance for them to focus on feelings and thoughts and stay in that emotion. Questions

are asked, such as whether a taste, song, name, or color is associated with this feeling. Participants are then prompted to express how they cope with this concern (through drawing, writing, movement, gesture, or object). They are asked to imagine what would happen if their fears came true and express the worst-case scenario using their chosen methods.

Session 9: Finding Another Way (Finding Alternatives)

After gaining various awareness throughout the sessions, the goal of this session is for the group to find their methods to find alternative methods to confront their problems based on this awareness.

Example: Participants are reminded of the concerns they worked on the previous week. They are asked to choose this concern or another one. After recalling this concern through movement/dance/posture, they are asked to find an alternative method. They are encouraged to ask themselves, "What can I do differently?" Participants are given time to explore how changing something in their movement/dance/posture makes them feel better than their previous movement or gesture. Later, 2-3-person groups are formed. Members of these groups are asked to show their concern movement/dance/posture or alternative movement/dance/posture to their group mates. Group members are asked to suggest alternative movement/dance/posture changes. Finally, participants discuss their feelings about their methods and the suggested alternative methods.

Session 10: Feedback - Observe - Evaluate (Authentic Movement)

After creating what is believed to be a safe space together for nine weeks, this session aims to facilitate participants in giving better and more efficient feedback to each other. The Authentic Movement method is used to learn observation, evaluation, and feedback methods in an embodied way and to apply these learnings to everyday life.

Session 11: Being a Group - (Belonging, Holding Space for Others)

A sense of belonging to a group or team is critical for a good team. Creating a sense of belonging is closely related to the process and providing a trusting environment. It is anticipated that this trust will be established after ten weeks. In the next stage, the question will be posed about how to hold a safe space for others. This session is planned with the knowledge that teams with supportive and uplifting dynamics are successful, and this sense of success contributes to the feeling of accomplishment and consequently increases their well-being.

Example: Several objects are selected, and participants are asked to represent a part of the object and create it physically. For example, if they are asked to create a train together, one person could be the steering wheel, another the seat, and another the tire. Time is given for them to move together and synchronize. At the end of this exercise, participants are expected to discuss their experiences and alternative methods.

Session 12: Compassion & Empathy

To experience well-being, creating and sustaining positive relations is crucial. Understanding the person in front of us is crucial for strengthening relationships. At this stage, the goal is to help the team empathize with each other and then increase participants' tolerance for each other. Mirroring and the Chase Circle will be used for this session.

Conclusion

Workplace stress has emerged as a global concern, affecting employees' well-being and straining organizational efficiency. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the spotlight on the need to prioritize employee mental health. Despite various initiatives, current interventions often fall short of adequately addressing employees' stress and well-being. This article advocates for Dance Movement Therapy as a holistic approach and potential solution,

grounded in theoretical insights and supported by a pilot study, aiming to enhance overall well-being and provide effective stress-coping mechanisms at the workplace.

Cartesian dualism, emphasizing mind over bodily needs, perpetuates well-being issues in business culture. Stress is a bodily response with emotional and physiological effects, and the inclusion of the body is recommended for effective stress regulation. DMT, as a body-oriented form of creative art psychotherapy, focuses on the relationship between the body and the mind and facilitates a profound connection between the mind, body, and emotions. DMT, working with body awareness, emotions, and movement dynamics, are elements that help to improve mind-body integration and play a role in the healing and well-being of an individual. Re-connecting with the body by attending to its cues enables people to identify their needs and helps to manage potential stress responses and consider alternative responses.

DMT helps to express feelings and regulates emotions. Exploring movement and working with the body helps express and process emotions and influences feelings. Reluctance to express oneself verbally at work is widespread, and continuous repression of emotions in the workplace is associated with increased stress and impacts overall communication and well-being. DMT offers a non-verbal approach in professional environments, addressing communication barriers, providing tools for emotional regulation, and fostering a safe space for expression.

DMT creates healthy interpersonal communication by promoting empathy, belonging, and healthy boundaries. Empathy enhances workplace retention, innovation, and employee well-being. It fosters effective communication, builds trust-based relationships, and positively impacts interactions. DMT positively impacts group cohesion and belonging; dancing together reduces pain and strengthens social bonds. DMT helps create healthy boundaries by understanding patients' needs. Setting and expressing boundaries are essential for coping with stress and burnout.

The pilot study, conducted in a company setting, aimed to explore the potential effects of Dance Movement Therapy on employee well-being and stress. The study did not conclusively establish a strong correlation between DMT and employee stress reduction; however, participants believed that DMT equipped them with practical tools for stress management. Participants emphasized their need for improved connection with their bodies. All participants expressed a willingness to recommend DMT to their colleagues. Despite the limitations of the small sample, verbal sharing, observations, and recommendations showed promise for DMT as a tool for employee well-being. The study provided insights into how DMT could function in a workplace setting, even though further studies should be conducted.

The quantitative data did not allow any testing of hypotheses due to the small number of participants. Thus no conclusion be drawn with regard to DMT's effect on their stress levels. However, insights gained from the qualitative part, theoretical approaches, and previous studies of DMT offer a promising foundation for future exploration of the effect of DMT at workplaces. The thesis proposes a 12-week DMT program for companies, including sessions on the DMT's tools and benefits: reconnecting with the body, working with emotions, creating a safe space, finding authenticity, coping with stress and anxiety, finding alternative ways, healthy communication, belonging, empathy, and compassion.

In conclusion, Dance Movement Therapy emerges as a holistic approach promoting overall well-being, stress coping, and healthy interpersonal dynamics within the workplace. Its emphasis on mind-body integration offers a paradigm shift, addressing the limitations of existing interventions and opening new possibilities for employee well-being.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Stress Assessment Questionnaire Before Intervention:

- 1) **Please assess your current stress level on a scale of 1 to 5.**
 - 1 - I don't feel stressed.
 - 2 - I am a little stressed.
 - 3 - I am moderately stressed.
 - 4 - I am stressed.
 - 5 - I am very stressed.
- 2) **How often do you experience the following physical symptoms associated with stress? Please rate each symptom from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often).**
 - a. Headaches or migraines
 - b. Muscle tension or body aches
 - c. Fatigue or low energy
 - d. Sleep disturbances (insomnia, nightmares, etc.)
 - e. Digestive problems (e.g., stomachaches, indigestion)
 - f. Rapid heartbeat or chest tightness
 - g. Other
 - 1- Never
 - 2- Rarely
 - 3- Occasionally
 - 4- Frequently
 - 5- Very often
- 3) **Please rate your perceived stress levels related to work-related factors (e.g., workload, deadlines, responsibilities) from 1 to 5.**
 - 1 - None
 - 2 - Low
 - 3 - Moderate
 - 4 - High
 - 5 - Very high
- 4) **How would you rate your work-life balance? Please select the option that best reflects your situation.**
 - 1- Very poor
 - 2- Poor
 - 3- Moderate
 - 4-Good
 - 5-Excellent
- 5) **In the past week, have you experienced any of the following due to stress? Please select all that apply.**
 - a. Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
 - b. Irritability or mood swings

- c. Increased anxiety or worry
- d. Feeling overwhelmed or burn-out
- e. Social withdrawal or isolation
- f. Loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy

- 1- Never
- 2- Rarely
- 3- Occasionally
- 4- Frequently
- 5- Very often

6) How supportive do you feel your work environment is in terms of managing stress?

Please rate from 1 (Not supportive at all) to 5 (Very supportive).

- 1-Not supportive
- 2-Somewhat supportive
- 3- I don't know
- 4- Supportive
- 5-Very supportive

7) Which of the following stress management techniques have you tried or currently use? Please select all that apply.

- a. Deep breathing exercises
- b. Meditation or mindfulness practices
- c. Physical exercise or movement (e.g., yoga, walking)
- d. Relaxation techniques (e.g., progressive muscle relaxation)
- e. Seeking social support from friends, family, or colleagues
- f. Engaging in hobbies or activities that bring joy and relaxation
- g. Dance Movement Therapy

Appendix B

Stress Assessment Questionnaire After DMT Intervention:

- 1) **Please assess your current stress level on a scale of 1 to 5.**
 - 1 - I don't feel stressed.
 - 2 - I am a little stressed.
 - 3 - I am moderately stressed.
 - 4 - I am stressed.
 - 5 - I am very stressed.
- 2) **Please evaluate the impact of participating in this Dance and Movement Therapy session on your stress levels using a scale of 1 to 5.**
 - 1 - None
 - 2 - Low
 - 3 - Moderate
 - 4 - High
 - 5 - Very high
- 3) **If your previous answer was 3 or higher, could you please describe how DMT has affected your stress level? Can you share any changes or improvements you've noticed?** (Open-ended question)
- 4) **Has Dance and Movement Therapy provided you with practical tools and skills to better manage stress in your personal and professional life?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 5) **Could you briefly explain your response to the previous question?** (Open-ended question)
- 6) **Would you recommend Dance and Movement Therapy to colleagues or other individuals experiencing stress?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 7) **Could you explain the reasons behind your recommendation or non-recommendation of Dance and Movement Therapy to colleagues or other individuals experiencing stress?** (Open-ended question)

Appendix C

Table 1

Answers of Stress Assessment Questionnaire Before Intervention - Questions 1,3,4,6,7

| Questions | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Please assess your current stress level on a scale of 1 to 5. | 4 - I am stressed. | 2 - I am a little stressed. | 4 - I am stressed. | 2 - I am a little stressed. | 4 - I am stressed. |
| Please rate your perceived stress levels related to work-related factors (e.g., workload, deadlines, responsibilities) from 1 to 5. | 5 - Very high | 3 - Moderate | 5 - Very high | 4 - High | 4 - High |
| How would you rate your work-life balance? Please select the option that best reflects your situation. | Very poor | Moderate | Poor | Moderate | Moderate |
| How supportive do you feel your company is supportive in terms of managing stress? Please rate from 1 (Not supportive at all) to 5 (Very supportive). | 1- Not supportive | 2-Somewhat supportive | 1- Not supportive | 3- I don't know | 3- I don't know |
| Which of the following stress management techniques have you tried or currently use? Please select all that apply. | Meditation or mindfulness practices | Physical exercise or movement (e.g., yoga, walking), Seeking social support from friends, family, or colleagues, Engaging in hobbies or activities that bring | Physical exercise or movement (e.g., yoga, walking), Engaging in hobbies or activities that bring joy and relaxation | Meditation or mindfulness practices, Physical exercise or movement (e.g., yoga, walking), Seeking social support from friends, family, or colleagues, Engaging in hobbies or activities that | Meditation or mindfulness practices, Physical exercise or movement (e.g., yoga, walking), Engaging in hobbies or activities that bring joy and relaxation |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| | | joy and relaxation | | bring joy and relaxation | |
|--|--|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|

Table 2*Answers of Stress Assessment Questionnaire Before Intervention - Question 2*

Question: How often do you experience the following physical symptoms associated with stress? Please rate each symptom from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often).

| Participant | Headaches or migraines | Muscle tension or body aches | Fatigue or low energy | Sleep disturbances (insomnia, nightmares, etc.) | Digestive problems (e.g., stomachaches, indigestion) | Rapid heartbeat or chest tightness | Other |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|---|--------------|
| P1 | Rarely | Rarely | Frequently | Occasionally | Occasionally | Frequently | Rarely |
| P2 | Rarely | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently | Never |
| P3 | Frequently | Frequently | Occasionally | Occasionally | Rarely | Rarely | Rarely |
| P4 | Rarely | Rarely | Frequently | Occasionally | Occasionally | Never | Never |
| P5 | Occasionally | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never |

Table 3

Answers of Stress Assessment Questionnaire Before Intervention - Question 5

Question: In the past week, have you experienced any of the following due to stress?

Please select all that apply.

| Participant | a. Difficulty concentrating or making decisions | b. Irritability or mood swings | c. Increased anxiety or worry | d. Feeling overwhelmed or burn out | e. Social withdrawal or isolation | f. Loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy |
|--------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| P1 | Very often | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently |
| P2 | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently | Frequently | Rarely | Rarely |
| P3 | Frequently | Occasionally | Frequently | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely |
| P4 | Occasionally | Rarely | Rarely | Frequently | Never | Never |
| P5 | Occasionally | Frequently | Rarely | Frequently | Occasionally | Occasionally |

Appendix D

Table 4

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) Results

| Questions | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 |
|---|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? | 4-Very often | 2- Sometimes | 3-Fairly often | 1-Almost Never |
| In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? | 4-Very often | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes |
| In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed? | 4-Very often | 2- Sometimes | 3-Fairly often | 2- Sometimes |
| In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes | 3- fairly often |
| In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way? | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes | 1-Almost Never | 3-Fairly often |
| In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do? | 4-Very often | 1-Almost Never | 1-Almost Never | 1-Almost Never |
| In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life? | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes | 3-Fairly often |
| In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes | 1-Almost Never | 3-Fairly often |
| In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control? | 4-Very often | 2- Sometimes | 2- Sometimes | 1-Almost Never |
| In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? | 4-Very often | 1-Almost Never | 2- Sometimes | 1-Almost Never |

Table 5*Results of Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)*

| Participant | Total Score | Perceived Stress Level |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| P1 | 32 | High Perceived Stress |
| P2 | 18 | Moderate Stress |
| P3 | 23 | Moderate Stress |
| P4 | 12 | Low Stress |

Appendix E

Table 6

Comparison of Participants' Stress Levels Before and After DMT Intervention

Question: Please assess your current level of stress on a scale of 1 to 5.

| Participant | Before Intervention | After Intervention |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| P1 | 4 - I am stressed. | 4 - I am stressed. |
| P2 | 2 - I am a little stressed. | 2 - I am a little stressed. |
| P3 | 4 - I am stressed. | 2 - I am a little stressed. |
| P4 | 2 - I am a little stressed. | 2 - I am a little stressed. |
| P5 | 4 - I am stressed. | 3 - I am moderately stressed. |

Appendix F

Table 7

Responses of After DMT Intervention Questionnaire

| Questions | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 |
|--|---|--|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Please assess your current level of stress on a scale of 1 to 5. | 4 - I am stressed. | 2 - I am a little stressed. | 2 - I am a little stressed. | 2 - I am a little stressed. | 3 - I am moderately stressed. |
| Please evaluate the impact of participating in this Dance Movement Therapy session on your stress levels using a scale of 1 to 5. | 3 - Moderate | 4 - High | 3 - Moderate | 2 - Low | 4 - High |
| If your previous answer was 3 or higher, could you please describe how DMT has affected your stress level? Can you share any changes or improvements you've noticed? | It has helped me become more aware. I believe it's important for managing stress. | I learned to listen to my body language. | I became aware of the physical reactions my body exhibits during stressful moments. I noticed that during stressful moments, I tend to turn inward. I realized that there could be movements that could benefit my body during stressful moments. | | I realized that I don't like being stable. I need to make changes from time to time to feel comfortable. Sometimes I need to pause, sometimes I need to be faster, and sometimes I need to stick to my routine. |
| Has Dance Movement Therapy provided you with practical tools and skills to better manage stress in your personal and professional life? | Yes | Yes | I don't know | Yes | Yes |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Could you briefly explain your response to the previous question? | I can try new methods to address my focus issues that contribute to stress. | I should listen to my feelings more and learn to give myself time. | My not knowing might be due to whether I can remember to do this during stressful moments. I'm not sure if I would be motivated to do it on my own, but the group setting encourages it. I'm uncertain if I would be motivated to do it alone. | Focusing on my movements during moments of stress and using that as a starting point to explore alternative solutions could be a tool/method for me. | I realized that during moments of stress, we can have different reactions as human beings, and sometimes it's important to enjoy the moment without overthinking it. |
| Would you recommend Dance Movement Therapy to colleagues or other individuals experiencing stress? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Could you explain the reasons behind your recommendation or non-recommendation of Dance Movement Therapy to colleagues or other individuals experiencing stress? | I believe that the other people also can find solutions by listening to their bodies in this way. | There are many people dealing with high levels of stress, and I believe they can gain awareness. | I recommend it. Firstly, it's different from conventional methods. Additionally, because it focuses a lot on the body, I believe it helps to balance the communication between the body and mind. | It can be a useful tool for coping with or overcoming stress. | It's quite challenging for people to notice things in the flow and chaos of life. With this therapy, they can have short moments to pause and reflect. |

Appendix G

Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu

Araştırma Projesi Başlığı: Stres ve Stresle Baş Etme Yöntemleri Üzerine Dans ve Hareket Terapisi Seansı

Baş Araştırmacı: Treysi Tovim

İletişim Bilgileri: tracytovim@gmail.com, treysi.tovim@companyx.com

Giriş:

Treysi Tovim tarafından X şirketinde yürütülen bir araştırma çalışmasına katılmaya davet ediliyorsunuz. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Dans ve Hareket Terapisi'nin çalışanların wellbeing'ine etkisini araştırmaktır. Bu çalışmaya katılma kararınız tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır ve istediğiniz herhangi bir zamanda çekilebilirsiniz.

Prosedürler:

Katılmayı kabul ederseniz, yaklaşık 10-15 dakika sürecek çevrimiçi iki anketi doldurmanız istenecektir. Anket, hayatınızda yaşadığınız ve algıladığınız stresi ve stresle baş etme yöntemlerinizi sormaktadır. Terapi seansının ardından iki anket ve bir açık uçlu soru sorulacaktır.

Riskler ve Faydalar:

Bu çalışmaya katılmanın öngörülen herhangi bir riski bulunmamaktadır. Katkılarınız Dans ve Hareket Terapisi'nin iş hayatındaki strese yönelik faydalarının daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkı sağlayacak ve benzer durumda olan diğer kişilerin deneyimlerini iyileştirmeye yardımcı olabilecektir.

Gizlilik:

Verileriniz kesinlikle gizli tutulacaktır. Toplanan tüm veriler anonimleştirilecek ve bu araştırmadan elde edilen herhangi bir raporda veya yayında kimliğinizi belirten herhangi bir bilgi bulunmayacaktır.

Gönüllü Katılım:

Bu çalışmaya katılma tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. İsteddiğiniz herhangi bir zamanda çekilmeyi tercih edebilirsiniz.

Sorular ve İletişim:

Araştırma çalışmasıyla ilgili herhangi bir sorunuz olursa, Treysi Tovim'e yukarıdaki iletişim bilgileri üzerinden ulaşabilirsiniz.

Onam:

Ankete devam ederek yukarıdaki bilgileri okuduğunuzu ve anladığınızı ve bu araştırma çalışmasına gönüllü olarak katılmayı kabul ettiğinizi belirtirsiniz.

[] Sağlanan bilgileri okudum ve araştırma çalışmasına katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

[] Sağlanan bilgileri okudum ve araştırma çalışmasına katılmak istemiyorum.

Katılımcının İmzası: _____

Tarih: _____

Appendix H

Translated Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title: Dance and Movement Therapy Session on Stress and Coping Methods

Principal Investigator: Treysi Tovim

Contact Information: tracytovim@gmail.com, treysi.tovim@companyx.com

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Treysi Tovim at Company X. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of Dance and Movement Therapy on the well-being of employees. Your decision to participate in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw anytime.

Procedures:

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete two online questionnaires, which will take approximately 10-15 minutes. The surveys inquire about the stress you experience in your life and your coping methods. After the therapy session, one questionnaire will be presented.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. Your contributions will help understand the benefits of Dance and Movement Therapy for work stress and may contribute to improving the experiences of others in similar situations.

Confidentiality:

Your data will be kept strictly confidential. All collected data will be anonymized, and any report or publication resulting from this research will not contain any information identifying you.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any time.

Questions and Contact:

If you have any questions about the pilot study, you can contact TreysiTovim using the provided contact information.

Consent:

By continuing with the survey, you confirm that you have read and understood the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

☐ I have read the provided information and consent to participate in the pilot study.

☐ I have read the provided information and do not wish to participate in the pilot study.

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I

The Meeting Room in the Co-Working Space

