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## **Social Dance in Support Groups for Female Victims of Male Violence against Women**

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# **Social Dance in Support Groups for Female Victims of Male Violence against Women**

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## **Abstract**

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Lately, the artistic world and the social world are more strongly linked. This article presents social dance being used as an instrument, a bridge and/or tool for groups of vulnerable people exhibiting the social characteristics of risk and/or exclusion. In social dance groups, dance is oriented towards different purposes; among one of which is therapeutic. In this paper, a sample obtained between 2010 and 2021 from support groups for female victims of male violence against women using dance therapy (DMT) is analysed. From this investigation, we observe the participants' evolution and the benefits gained through employing dance and movement as a support for reorganizing and restructuring situations, joining the trichotomy of thoughts, feelings, and acts so these women are empowered to make vital decisions that will positively affect their recovery. The results show that one of the keys for this recovery is the connection between movement and emotion.

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**Keywords:** social dance, dance therapy (DMT), male violence against women

# **La Danza Social en Grupos de Apoyo a Mujeres Víctimas de Violencia Machista**

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## **Resumen**

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Últimamente el mundo artístico y el mundo social están más ligados. Este artículo presenta la danza social como instrumento, puente y/o herramienta en grupos de personas vulnerables con características sociales de riesgo y/o exclusión. En los grupos de danza social, la danza se orienta hacia diferentes finalidades; entre ellas la terapéutica. En este trabajo se analiza una muestra obtenida entre los años 2010 y 2021 con la danzaterapia (DMT) en grupos de apoyo a mujeres víctimas de violencia machista. A partir de esta investigación, observamos la evolución de las participantes y los beneficios obtenidos al emplear la danza y el movimiento como apoyo para reorganizar y reestructurar situaciones, aunando la tricotomía de pensamientos, sentimientos y actos en la que se encuentran las mujeres para de este modo poder tomar decisiones vitales que las afectan positivamente en su recuperación. Los resultados muestran que una de las claves de la recuperación es la conexión entre movimiento y emoción.

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**Palabras clave:** danza social, danzaterapia (DMT), violencia machista

This investigation attempts to determine the value of dance, specifically social dance, and its usefulness as a tool and support for socially vulnerable groups.

The investigation is based on data gathered from support groups for female victims of male violence against women<sup>1</sup>.

To give the term ‘dance’ a single definition is complicated due to the multiplicity of accepted definitions, but it is worth emphasizing the important contributions dance has as a universal and associated language of learning. Dance, as art, allows us to enjoy our bodies, and to discover and enrich our abilities and skills (Cañabate et al., 2016). Dance as a resource and an instrument develops and encourages social abilities by promoting working towards objectives of a social nature (Arboleda et al., 2018; Berge, 2000; Rawdon & Moxley, 2016).

Dance as a method of intervention in the social field (Bilitza, 2021) provides aspects that allow us to delve deeper in our work with vulnerable groups. These experiences are halfway between artistic and social practices. (Arboleda et al., 2018).

The ‘social’ is linked with the individual as a social person; can be understood “in relation not only to their closest environment, the family, but also to their community and territory, since each person is part of a wider group that gives them their identity and property” (Àrea d'Acció Social i Ciutadania, 2010, p. 4).

Defining social dance, such as social theatre or social art, is complex and different authors accent different aspects (López, 2016; Cárdenas et al., 2017). For instance, we mention the relationship of the action in art-therapy, in the arts and the negotiation of conflicts and/or in the arts by the social change (Burney, 2019; Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018). In art-therapy, in general, and dance or dance therapy (DMT) in particular, we understand how the artistic action is connected to an individual’s personal processes, thus promoting a space of critical thought and reflection within social work education and supervision (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018, p. 7). As such, we attempt to separate the verbal from the bodily approach. From this standpoint, it makes sense to include dance and movement in social groups, allowing for the intervention of the global person i.e., integrating both body and mind (Damasio, 2006; Cruz, 2016).

### 30 *Iranzo-Domingo et al. – Social Dance in Support Groups*

Using the definition and concept of Iranzo-Domingo (2017, 3:15), who define dance with a social impact as projects for people or groups in situations of social risk, understanding social risk as a vulnerability that makes it difficult to fit into society, contributes to stimulating creativity and promoting social aptitudes through education, learning and the benefits of dance and movement.

With the work carried out within social groups, dance becomes an instrument (Rodríguez & Carmona, 2018; Monsegur, 2008) that, when applied to people in vulnerable moments, is a powerful expressive tool to act on which it is not possible to verbalize but needs to be or can be expressed through corporal language (Schott-Billmann, 2015).

While social dance has artistic objectives, its principal aims are psychotherapeutic (Arboleda et al., 2018) with a common denominator: the typology of the group with features of vulnerability, social risk, social exclusion, and inclusion.

Once the social groups have been identified, social dance is employed according to the purpose, characteristics, and elements of the specific group.

For instance:

- Psychotherapeutic work using dance therapy (DMT) with the prison population, older people at risk of exclusion, or people with addictions, marginalised or misfits (Schott-Billmann, 2015; Arboleda et al., 2018).
- Different social groups or collectives implementing the process to self-organize a community (Àrea de Drets Socials, 2018) could use social dance as a way to communicate (Bilitza, 2021).
- Groups comprised of people of different ages using Intergenerational Dance, as is possible in some dance spaces in Barcelona, for instance, Mercat de les Flors, Casa de la Dansa.
- Inclusive or integrated dance groups for people with different physical, cognitive/mental capacities (Canàlias, 2014).

In this investigation of social dance, we focused on dance as a therapeutic tool where the “discipline” was Dance Movement Therapy -DMT- (Herrera, 2014, p. 314) and was being applied in support groups for female victims of male violence against women.

DMT varies its nomenclature by historical moment or country where it is practised (Wengrower, 2008). Currently, some DMT associations and federations have focused their dance therapy towards psychotherapy (Vaysse, 2006; Cruz, 2016; ADTA, n.d.), including movement associated to dance and defining it as a psychotherapeutic use of movement that promotes the psychophysical integration of the individual (Iranzo-Domingo, 2020; Panhofer & Rodríguez, 2005; Vaysse, 2006). At the present time, the associative abbreviations of ADTA (n.d.) continue, where it is known as Dance Therapy rather than DMT.

For instance, in 2012 the UNESCO, through CID -Council International Dance-, organized the 3rd World Dance Research Congress which focused on the Dance Therapy Panorama. In this congress, 146 presentations were given in which the diversity of nomenclatures of dance therapy was clearly observed: 19 referred to Dance Therapy (Catalunya/Spain, Colombia, Greece, Italy, Turkey, France, Chile, USA and Germany); 15 to Therapy Dance Movement (Israel, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, Germany, Spain, USA and Martinican); two to Psychotherapy Dance Movement (USA) and four with other names: dance-rythme-thérapie (France), dance style therapy (Ukraine); integral dance (Spain) and dance movement exploration (Australia). Concretely in Spain, the change from Dance Therapy to Dance Movement Therapy is considered formalism (Wengrower, 2008). In France, Joselyn Vaysse (2006) investigated the different names and validated the one from the Société Française: Danse Thérapie (DT).

Of all of these 23 DMT Associations affiliated to the EADMT -European Association of DMT-: 13 state associations have chosen the name DMT (Portugal, Spain, Cyprus, Slovenia, Italy, Czech Republic, Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine); seven have chosen the name DT (Hungary, France, Norway, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Switzerland); four DMP (Rumania, the Croatia, Poland and UK); and another three have chosen names such as creative and expressive therapies, movement, dances or body therapies and arts therapy (Israel, Switzerland and Belgium).

For Cerruto (2018), therapeutic dance, dance therapy and DMT are the same. He, like Herrera (2014), considers them to be the language for deep emotions. We position ourselves in the idea that dance therapy, dance movement therapy, therapeutic dance, dance psychotherapeutic movement, and therapy through movement and dance are the same action where basic

principles are implied in this practice. These principles talk about the reciprocal relationship of the body-mind developed in the psycho-physical integration of the individual (Chaicklin & Schmais, 1979; Vella & Torres, 2012), therapeutic relationships (Calvo & Camacho, 2014; Melgar et al., 2021) and creativity (Arieti, 1978; Fux, 1998), and expression in movement (Wengrower, 2008; Iranzo-Domingo, 2020; Villena, 2008; Vaysse, 2006).

In the intervention proposal, which we will raise later in the paper, DMT appears as the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote the psycho-physical, cognitive, and social integration of the individual (ADTA, n.d.; Herrera, 2014). In this investigation we emphasize that dance therapy -DMT- is a complementary therapy, preventive, cohesive and used in support groups for female victims of male violence against women.

The sample with which we carry out the study is centered in Barcelona, therefore, to determine male violence against women we are governed by municipal, regional and national legislation, beyond international treaties. This refers to the Law 5/2008, 24 April, and its later modification and extension; Law 17/2020, 22 December, the right of women to eradicate male violence against women, defined as “the one that is exercised against women as a manifestation of discrimination and in a situation of inequality within the framework of a system of power relations of men over women and that, produced by physical, economic or psychological means, including threats, intimidation and coercion, results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, whether it occurs in the public or private sphere.” This definition agrees with the UN Declaration (1993) about the elimination of the violence against women and ratified in Article 1 of the Treaty of Istanbul (Council of Europe Treaty Series, 2011), thus being meant as a violation of human rights. With Law 17/2020 as recalled by Vidu et al. (2021), the first world legislation on the Isolating Gender Violence was approved unanimously. This concept is unmarked from the SOSH -Second-Order Sexual Harassment- concept to (Flecha, 2021; Melgar et al., 2021) in relation to second-order victims. "The IGV concept is tied to what science and legislation establish as gender-based violence." (Vidu et al., 2021, p. 185).

According to Statutory Law 1/2004, 28 December, Measures of Integral Protection against gender-based or male violence against women, according to article 173.2 Spanish Penal Code, and as named by authors Bosch-Fiol, and Ferrer-Pérez (2012): we understand by gender-based as that which is

exercised by men against women, who are or have been their partners or have been linked to them by relations of analogous affectivity, even without coexistence at the time of the events.

In this way, male violence against women, unlike gender-based violence, determines the masculine concept as “the behaviors of domination, control and abuse of authority by men over women and which, at the same time, has imposed a model of masculinity, which is still valued by a part of society as superior” (Law 17/2020), and can be manifested in the couple, family, work, social or community areas.

According to the above, the main objectives of this study are to provide evidence on the effectiveness of social dance through a case study and to provide evidence on the value of social dance and determine the benefits of the practice of dance in groups of people who are vulnerable and/or at risk of social exclusion. This is achieved through the example of dance with therapeutic purpose, DMT, specifically in support groups for female victims of male violence against women.

### **Investigation Methodology and Instruments**

The investigation is framed in a qualitative methodology, within the interpretative paradigm (Flick, 2012), usually identified with naturalistic or humanist perspectives (Bisquerra, 2014).

This research is based on participant observation (Salazar, 2006; Latorre, 2007) by obtaining data *in situ* in each of the weekly sessions carried out for 6 months and for each of the groups analyzed over 11 years.

The structure of observation and its systematization is divided into three packages: the first refers to the person and their physical-somatic and psychic-emotional actions. The second package refers to the evolution of the group on the interventions of the participants towards them and the relationships established between them. The third package refers to the action carried out with the DMT and the intervention of the interdisciplinary team that accompanies the group.

Therefore, the data collection is qualitative and descriptive, and it was carried out in a natural situation throughout the investigation process.



Evidence was collected systematically with registry techniques, the collection instrument being field diaries (Sierra-Bravo, 2001).

The analysis was made on non-numerical, qualitative primary data. For the reduction of data, categories and subcategories of predominant subjects were established through successive readings of the material obtained.

It is important to note a triangulation of the investigators involved i.e., one on-site and two from the university. To verify the validity of the data, the analysis and the conclusions were sent to the professionals of an interdisciplinary team and to the members of a participant collective to reinforce the choral character of the study (Kara, 2021).

### **Context of the Study**

This investigation covers eleven years, from 2010 to 2021. The sample consists of 36 support groups against male violence against women, with 35 groups of women and 1 group of men. The study focuses on the 35 groups of women (a total of 700 women treated), with an average of 20 women per group.

The sample is made up of women of different nationalities aged between 18 and 70, with an average of 40 years old. They are participants of the annual support groups for female victims of male violence against women of social services of Barcelona city council.

The teams running and supporting these groups are made up of different professionals: a psychologist, a social worker, a social educator and a family worker (if there is a group of children) and always the same dance therapist.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All the processes of the investigation took place with the previous authorization from the women who participated in the sample. All the participants were informed about the objectives, as well as the conditions for participation. Ethical principles assuring the anonymity of the participants were employed when using the data.

## **Procedure**

The study is structured around three phases (Table 1) allowing for systematized feedback and evaluation and continuity of the whole process.

Table 1.

*Project phases for the women of the support group for female victims of male violence against women*

<b>Phases (temporality)</b>	<b>Description/Tasks</b>
<b>October to December</b>	Reception of cases, evaluation, interviews, interdisciplinary meetings to present and validate the acceptance of each case (user) determined in the group. The entire program is explained to the users, i.e., objectives and development of the sessions.
<b>January to June</b>	Weekly sessions: first, this is a verbal/communicative bidirectional process between the users and the professionals and, in the second part, with the DMT in the body process through different dance activities directed to developing empathy, self-confidence, self-esteem, security, empowerment, and corporal and emotional conscience. The activities go to combine the trichotomy showing ambivalence (Chang and Leventhal, 1991).
<b>July</b>	Elaboration of a descriptive-evaluative document on the part of dance therapist given to the interdisciplinary team in order to add to the global evaluation of all the services, as well as to be included in the file of each user/participant. Interdisciplinary evaluation of the individual and group processes. Improvements of the project for the next edition from the analysis carried out by the interdisciplinary team. Finally, to discern the impact of this work, Social Services will hold individual interviews with each user at an agreed medium/long-term date.

Group intervention consisted of a weekly session of two hours over six months. These sessions were divided into a verbal process with the psychologist, and a corporal process with the dance therapist. With the spoken

word one enters a linear process and with the art one enters into a process where metaphors and symbols take action (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018).

The intervention of the specialist in DMT always considers the state of the women individually as well as that of the group at the start of each session. This group's state is determined by the verbal process added to that developed in the preceding session. It is essential to create, over the sessions, a space of security (Arboleda et al., 2018; Villena, 2008), as well as a specific climate to motivate group and individual participation (Echeburúa & De Corral, 2006). We take into consideration, as Bishop and Bettinson explain (2018), that the effects of the continuous abuse and trauma experienced by many victims causes psychological injuries and physiological effects. According to Alfaro in Monsegur (2018), the corporal space, for some participants, is an enabling space. This safe space allows them to act and present part of themselves, and to become aware of themselves. A safe space of containment of emotions where danger, either physical or emotional, does not exist (Villena, 2008).

### **Intervention Methodology**

The intervention is fitted into a structure of group movement with experiential and practical participation. We noted the evolution of each woman within its process. We worked with what they contributed, respecting their emotional state, being alerted to containing any situation that arises by mobilizing them to act on their behalf (Chang & Leventhal, 1991). It is key to integrate words following the corporal action on the experience of the moment. In dance therapy, it is about the symbolization (Villena, 2008; Chaiklin, 2008; Panhofer & Rodríguez, 2005; Herrera, 2014; García, 2018) of the verbal relation to the physical expression of feelings and emotions (Chodorow, 2008). DMT can provide access to “emotions that cannot be verbalized” (Hölter & Panhofer, 2005, p. 35). Working with objects, symbols, etc., allows for the excavation of the experience of one's self (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018; Winnicott, 2002).

Considering that during a traumatic incident the brain dissociates and separates “the conscience, memory, emotions, corporal sensations, thoughts and sensorial perceptions” (Bishop & Bettinson, 2017, p. 15), the work with dance is to once again structure that unstructured body, approaching the experiences to understand them, to recognise them, and to become detached from them (Hirigoyen, 2005) and reinhabit one's own body. “L'image

corporelle a aussi une dimension socialisante, que DT exploite.” (Vaysse, 2006, p. 206).

The corporal section is structured into three parts (Table 2) making sense of all the therapeutic process (Chaiklin, 2008; Wengrower, 2008): psychocorporal warm-up, central development of the session and final verbalization.

Table 2.

*Parts of the corporal section of the session*

Parts of the session	Development
<b>Psychocorporal Heating</b>	The purpose is to allow the participants to be very present in the moment, in the here and now, always with movement and dance as the fundamental axes. For instance, this is completed from a corporal recognition, from an awaking of the body, from a <i>-grounding-</i> root movement.
<b>Central development</b>	In this phase one works on the base of an objective starting off, for example, with the creativity of one's own movements through different dance activities. Stimulating the creativity playing with primary thoughts and evolving them towards secondary ones (Rubia-Vila, 2019). Each participant communicates and reflects part of their personality, their unconscious world becomes visible and conscious, gradually obtaining the movement repertoire to connect with new personal sensations, discovering emotions and interacting with the others. It is in this moment when the change and acceptance processes begin.
<b>Final verbalization</b>	To close the session relaxation, verbalization and reflection activities are carried out. In this part, it is very important that the participants can verbalize what happens, with the purpose to prosper and canalize through them and position themselves in relation to their experience. To be able to live the present.

### **Analysis of the Results**

The analysis covered the content of each of the sessions of male violence against women groups over 11 years. From the study objective we extracted three general themes, which we associated with three categories.

By classifying the analysis into three categories, we can more rigorously identify how the activity of movement and dance influences a woman's

recovery. Relating the context to what she expresses, we know how she experiences it, what mobilizes her interior, how she is regenerated and how she manages her process (Table 3).

Table 3.  
*Process of analysis*

Goal of the investigation	General subjects	Categories
To study the contributions dance and movement make in support groups for socially vulnerable or socially excluded. Using DMT a support group for female victims of male violence against women.	1. To recognize oneself, emphasizing expression through the body, becoming conscious of the unconscious one. (Schott-Billmann, 2015).	1. Recognition.
	2. To rediscover self-confidence and to learn to trust each other.	2. Confidence.
	3. To develop and maximize tools and personal resources to channel, contain and/or sublimate emotional reactions.	3. Maximize resources.

The subjects and categories are established in three rounds. In the first round, an intensive reading of field diaries was carried out. The research team extracted any relevant terms and phrases. These are the fruits of the reactions and manifestations in relation to the context -movement activity- being expressed freely by the women in the sessions. Some phrases are spontaneous, and others are revealed in the verbalization and final closure. From the analysis, a total of 272 textual sequences (assertions - words and phrases), related directly to the objective of the investigation, were obtained.

In the second round, through a process of discussion and reflection, all the sequences were inventoried into two parallel classifications:

- a) According to its content-meaning aimed at the individual process of the sequences of reconstruction. This first classification emerges from the three categories: recognition, confidence and maximizing resources (Table 3).

These categories were divided into 8 subcategories: reconnecting with one's own identity; expressing thoughts, feelings, and sensations; connection and expression through the body; individual empowerment; trust in the other; canalizing the emotion; managing the emotion and capacity to respond (Figure 1).

Each assertion obtained is related to a category and one or more subcategories. Consequently, the final analysis of the subcategories is made considering this indication.

The subcategories emphasize the own person, the individual itself and the way to recognize themselves physically and mentally. In summary, we treat the work soma-psyche (Damasio, 2006). As a sample, we took the participants' own text sequences.

- b) Depending on the context (Figure 2). According to what is expressed verbally, it is related to an action with the DMT. This second classification, named State, allows us to discern the repercussion of the movement and the dance interfered with the DMT, as well as to value the expression of the users when they imply soma -body- in the therapy. This second classification is divided into four states: the emotional (psycho), the physical (soma), the decision-making (decision) and the questioning in relation to the present and/or future state (questioning) (Table 4).

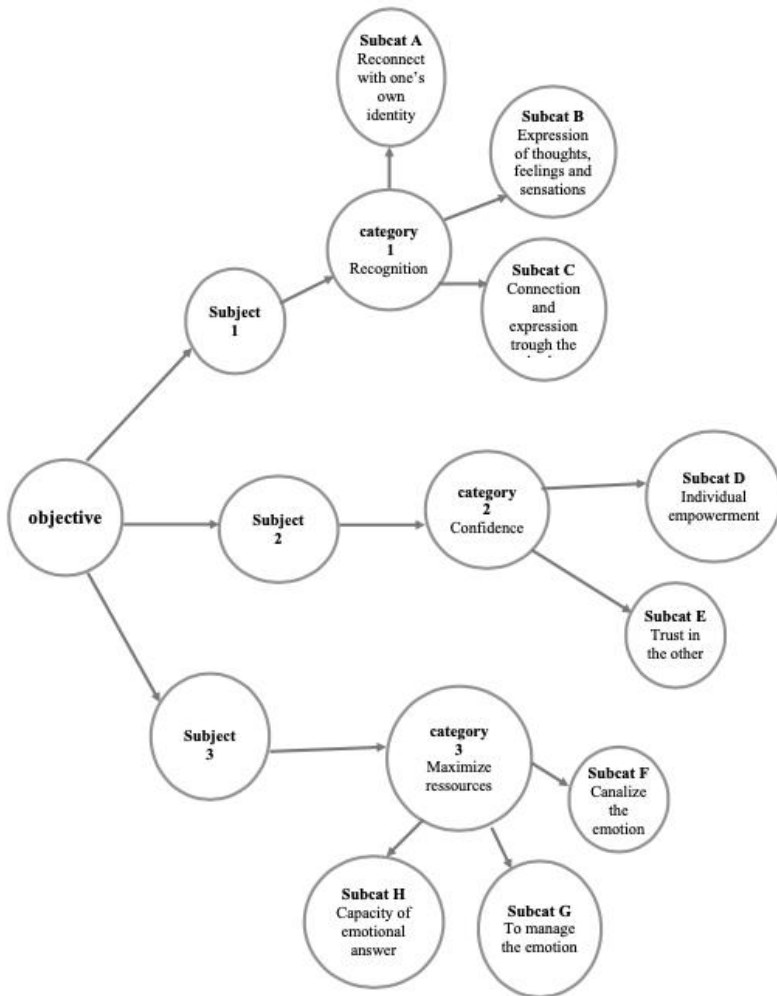


Figure 1. Subcategories breakdown

Table 4.  
States and Valuation Frequencies breakdown

State	Cat. 1 Recognition		Cat. 2 Confidence		Cat. 3 Maximize resources		TOTAL	% Total of assertions in each State
Psycho	26	21%	20	31%	40	47%	86	32%
Soma	46	37%	17	27%	27	32%	90	33%
Decision	24	20%	16	25%	14	16%	54	20%
Questioning	27	22%	11	17%	4	5%	42	15%
<b>TOTAL</b>	123		64		85		272	

The contexts depicted in Figure 2 derive from the activities carried out in the group sessions. Phrases were not extracted from all the activities, but those enabling contexts of the verbal expression were indexed. Any context can be represented in the three categories although they are tied neither to the categories, nor to the subcategories or states. It is interesting to observe that *contexts* are enabling of information, with the *empty context* being that in which the women expressed themselves without relation to any concrete activity, simply from that caused by its global interaction (body-mind) with the guidelines of the dance therapist. The *context* is the direct source of information that connects the action of the dance, DMT, with the participants of the social group.

### Results Obtained

Throughout all the process, there are women who can continue and participate, and others who cannot for different reasons; one of which is the difficulty of accepting that they are a victim of male violence against women. “To recognize what’s happening to me, the best defence against the stress that I had...” (Assertion 261. Empty context. Subcategory G. State Decision. Group 2019. GUI). Attendance to all the sessions is valued, at least attendance to most of them, as this is an indicator of group commitment and personal commitment. Besides acquiring a social commitment for the co-participation of and in the group, “Now that the group is over my struggle begins”



(Assertion 69. Empty context. Subcategory A-B. State Decision. Group 2019. GUI).

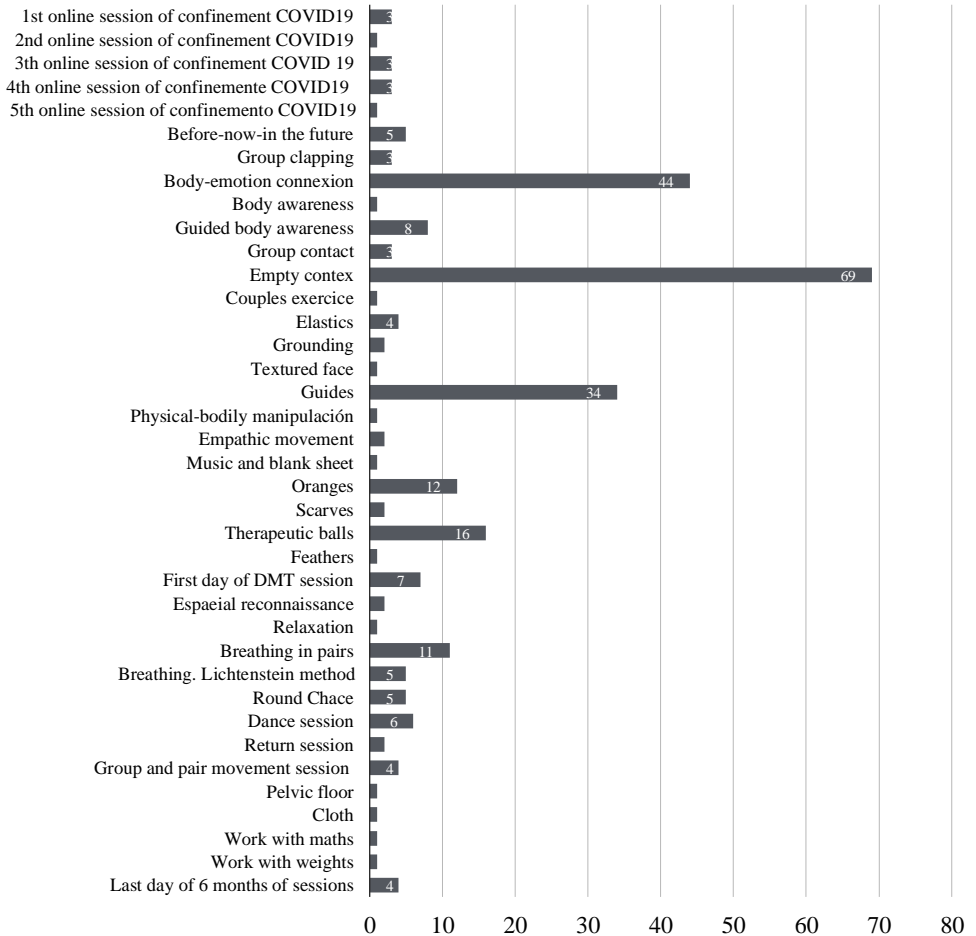


Figure 2. Contexts

In Table 4. States and Frequencies of valuation breakdown, the 272 assertions in each one of the states are classified. This classification explains

how women, working with the DMT, begin an identification route, the principal reality they are in, and how they recognize or confront being a victim of male violence against women. “Now? We are all processing things. Psychologically we say, “No, I am crushed”. Psychologically I must be positive, to enjoy life, to put on make-up and dress up...” (Assertion 33. Context before-now-in a future. Subcategory B. Psycho state. Group 2015. 9B).

This type of testimony indicates in which vital moment they find themselves. Recognizing oneself helps them to understand their situation from a psychological perspective; Psycho state: “I feel oppression.” (Assertion 50. Context guides. Subcategory B. Psycho state. Group 2018. 9B). It helps them to make decisions; Decision state: “To attend the group is 60% of the happiness of my life.” (Assertion 89. Empty context. Subcategory A. State Decision. Group 2019. SM). To question one’s life from the present moment; Questioning state: “I do not like the most aesthetic part of the people. So, what does it serves? What is it for? For whom?” (Assertion 151. Empty context. Subcategory D. Questioning state. Group 2016. SM). Finally, as they reinhabit their battered body, Soma state: “Calm- word said by the user when making the action.” (Assertion 238. Context connection body-emotion. Subcategory H. Soma state. Group 2016. SM).

The complicity of the global work with the person -body-mind- exercised with the dance and concretized with DMT, evidences the highest indexes of answer referred in 47% in the Psycho state of Category 3. Maximize resources, following a 37% result in the Soma state of Category 2. Recognition. In fact, the greater percentages allude to these two states, Psycho, and Soma.

Relating the four states to categories 1. Recognition and 2. Confidence, we detect a percentage similarity among them. This similarity demonstrates how women, through DMT, balance the information they receive, reacting based on their vital moment. “I associate it with the tunnel where I am now. In my tunnel there also exists an exit.” (Assertion 149. Context tissues. Subcategory D. Psycho state. Group 2015. 9B).

The misalignment reflected in category 3 attracts attention, to maximize Resources, between the two states Psycho (41%) and Questioning (5%). This fact gives a perspective into how each woman faces her own processes. It shows how the work with DMT is developed in the emotional part of training

and empowerment: in the Questioning state (5%) this figure indicates the indecision about one’s evolution. “I have a rage against a man, against the experience of a specific economic situation. I am furious at everything as it was before and of how it is now. I have rage against myself” (Assertion 190. Empty context. Subcategory G. Questioning state. Group 2010. 9B). This responds to the Psycho state (47%) focused on the emotion-sensation-rationalization of real progress, “I think about colliding with something - (the woman was being guided while her eyes were closed) -, I process what he was thinking and the thought disappears.” (Assertion 169. Context guides. Subcategory D. Psycho state. Group 2019. GUI).

Table 5.  
*Sample of content analysis of category 1. Recognition.*

Category 1. Recognition							
Num asc.	Numa sc. catg.	Sample of content analysis	Context	Year	Group	Sub-categories 1	State
2	2	I realize what is happening! My emotions and feelings are moving. Until now, I was not aware of them.	---	2010	9B	B	Questioning
18	18	We are in a forbidden zone.	Tissues	2014	9B	B	Decision
48	48	I’m a wall.	First day of DMT session	2018	HO	A	Soma
69	69	Now that the group has finished, my fight begins.	---	2019	GUI	A-B	Decision

The final result shows the Questioning of oneself is the most difficult aspect for the participants, followed by the Decisions taken. This makes us think that the women need more therapeutic help or more support in this direction. Despite this, there is a balance between the initial trichotomy: thought (32% Psycho state), action (33% Soma state) and verbalization (35% sum of the states: Decision and Questioning). Therefore, we observe that the DMT is a complementary therapy in the recovery of a woman who is the victim of male violence against women.

Tables 5, 6 and 7 show a representative sample of the content analysis of each category.

The analysis of the content in Table 5. Category 1. Recognition indicates the work carried out by the women on an intrapersonal level. They show negative or positive or distorted emotions through the body, “I realize what is happening! My emotions and feelings are moving. Until now, I was not aware of them.” (Assertion 2. Empty context. Subcategory B. Questioning state. Group 2010. 9B). As these emotions arise the participants recover, recognizing their circumstances, recognizing themselves in their emotions and interpreting what has happened to them.

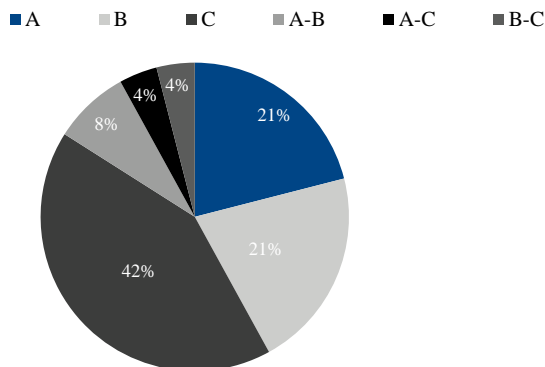


Figure 3.

*Subcategory A. Reconnect with one's own identity. Subcategory B. Expression of thoughts, feelings, sensations. Subcategory C. Connection and expression through the body. Subcategory A-B. Subcategory A-C. Subcategory B-C*

Table 6.  
*Sample of analysis of content in category 2: Confidence.*

Category 2. Confidence							
Num asc.	Num asc. catg.	Sample of analysis of content	Context	Year	Group	Sub categories I	State
136	13	I perceived that we were all feeling simultaneously.	Session of group and in pairs movement	2014	9B	E	Questioning
154	31	I've never danced! I don't believe what I'm doing! I'm quite surprised!	Ronda Chace	2018	9B	D	Questioning
160	37	On the first day, I couldn't close my eyes and now it is easy to do it.	---	2018	9B	D	Soma
181	58	Today I felt myself (its proper name). Not like a thing.	---	2019	GUI	D	Decision

The analysis of Figure 3. Subcategory A. Reconnecting with one's own identity is related to the self-inquiry, "I am surprised of where I have been able to get to today!" (Assertion 4. Context physical-corporal manipulation. Subcategory A. Psycho state. Group 2011. 9B). The women are defeated, and the experience helps them to reconnect with their self.

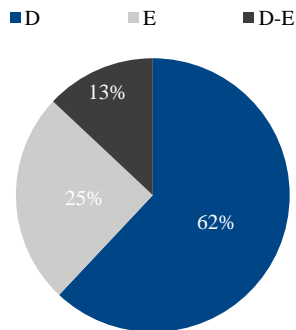
The analysis of Figure 3. Subcategory B. Expression of thoughts, feelings and sensations is related to the resurgence of the unconscious thing, "I have to return to the psychiatrist, I thought that everything was over, but I see that it still isn't." (Assertion 61. Context dance session. Subcategory B. State

Decision. Group 2018. SM). Everything that emerges throughout the sessions is eloquent.

We relate the analysis of Figure 3. Subcategory C. Connection and expression through the body with the self-discovery and body process category, “It wounds me, it wounds my whole body.” (Assertion 9. Empty context. Subcategory C. Soma state. Group 2012. HO) being particularly revealing. Through movement and dance the women can connect with soma.

The combinations of the subcategories in category 1. Recognition is directed towards the self-knowledge, “I don’t know. Very discouraged. Now I have clarified the doubts where before I didn’t find solutions.” (Assertion 91. Context before-now-in the future. Subcategory A-B. Questioning state. Group 2019. SM). Or also, “Very nervous and not because of the pregnancy. I am stressed, and the fact of receiving provides me with well-being.” (Assertion 87. Context oranges. Subcategory A-C. Soma state. Group 2019. SM).

In relation to Table 6, category 2. Confidence, they transit towards acceptance, self-confidence, “I was not able to and now I am”, (Assertion 182. Empty context. Subcategory D. State Decision. Group 2020. SM) along with empowerment to continue towards a second evolutive layer and to introduce to others. The interpersonal level begins from the moment the other person is introduced. The limits themselves are worked on by exploring what is wanted and how it is wanted to generate a relationship based on and within themselves.



*Figure 4.* Subcategory D. Individual empowerment. Subcategory E. Trust in the other. Subcategory D-E

Table 7.

Sample of analysis of content in category 3: Maximize resources

Category 3. Maximize resources							
Num asc.	Num asc. catg.	Sample of analysis of content	Context	Year	Group	Sub categories I	State
189	2	I can't stop doing things, when I finish doing one thing, I need to do another.	---	2010	9B	F	Questioning
227	40	I associate body and feeling, and it gives me another overall view and perspective of the environment and about what has happened.	---	2016	SM	G	Psycho
256	69	... in the group, before we began to move, we breathed sadness but with the movement, this sadness has been transformed into joy.	Empathic movement	2018	9B	F-G	Questioning
263	76	I have been able to find closure.	Oranges	2019	BCTA	H	Decision

In analysing Figure 4, Subcategory D, Individual Empowerment, we associate individual empowerment to one of the key aspects of the success of this proposal i.e., confidence, “I move well with my eyes closed; I feel good.” (Assertion 129. Context guides. Subcategory D. Soma state. Group 2013. GUI).

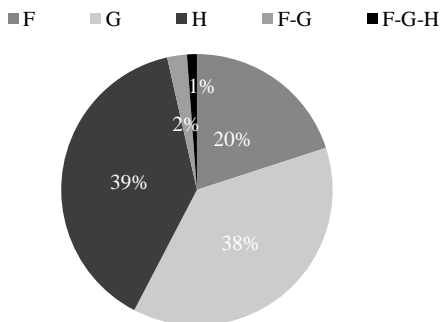
The Figure 4. Subcategory E, Trust in the other analysis reflects that the group work and the experience of the colleagues contributes to the evolution

of the individuals. Simply being able to express malaise and to put limits assertively. “I have felt invaded in my space - kinesphere-.” (Assertion 147. Context group clapping. Subcategory E. Psycho state. Group 2014. HO).

The combinations of the subcategories in Category 2. Confidence, interrelate and feed on their own and others' experiences, “The contact, the direct physical pressure and moving parts of the body that I never moved has helped me a lot.” (Assertion 125. Empty context. Subcategory D-E. Soma state. Group 2011. GUI).

Category 3. Maximizing resources, shown in Table 7, focuses on facilitating tools so that the participants can register what has happened to them and identify certain moments that are not favourable for them. “I have a sensation of continuous tension in my body, and I am conscious that it is due to the relationship I had with my partner. I have internalised the exercises for my day to day.” (Assertion 197. Empty context. Subcategory G. Questioning state. Group 2012 HO). As well as indicating resources to allow themselves to be good with themselves, to be alone with themselves, to be able to channel their emotions.

The analysis of Figure 5. Subcategory F. To channel emotions, reflects the reactions that the women have had in relation to what has happened in the session, “Today I was very tense, but now it is going very well.” (Assertion 251. Empty context. Subcategory F. Psyche state. Group 2018. HO).



*Figure 5.* Subcategory F. Canalize the emotion. Subcategory G. To manage the emotion. Subcategory H. Response training. Subcategory F-G. Subcategory F-G-H12



Analysis of Figure 5. Subcategory G. To manage the emotion is reflected in the process of emotional self-restraint and not harming themselves, “I pass my anguish to my child.” (Assertion 222. Empty context. Subcategory F. State Question. Group 2014. HO).

Analysis of Figure 5. Subcategory H. Qualification of answer related to the physical and emotional answer to the daily changes, “The fact of knowing how not to be.” (Assertion 220. Context relaxation. Subcategory H. Psyche state. Group 2014. 9B).

The combinations of the subcategories in Category 3. To maximize resources, are related to the acquisition of resources, “I have relaxed.” (Assertion 267. Context breathing. Lichtenstein method. Subcategory F-G. Soma state. Group 2019. 9B), and “My trauma. I have not been able to play with my children. I had very rigid parents, who were never tender with us emotionally: never laughing, nor crying. Absolute repression and zero body... A marriage of convenience with physical abuse... I wanted to caress my children, but my parents said to me that no, that they would lose their respect for me. Now it hurts me very much. I can’t carry this load.” (Assertion 224. Empty context. Subcategory F-G-H. Questioning state. Group 2014. HO).

The extracted results allow us to reaffirm the importance of social dance with groups for female victims of male violence against women which motivates us to keep on working at the same level with other social groups.

## Discussion

This investigation, in agreement with authors, such as Rawdon and Moxley (2016) or Burney (2019) shows that working with dance from a social approach generates a creative strategy that does not follow the traditional pre-established protocol in the social sphere. We also certify, according to Vassey (2006), that creativity involves leaving a scheme and a repetitive mechanism, which facilitates the emergence of emotions.

We observe, as in other studies (Arboleda et al., 2018; Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018), that the arts recreate the connection between cognition, emotions, and the senses. Consequently, dance becomes a mechanism that circulates in the internal conflict of the person and helps in the decrypting/rescuing work carried out in groups with social vulnerability (Monsegur, 2018).

The investigations carried out by Bybee and Sullivan (2005) and Melgar et al. (2021), demonstrate that to have participated in a therapy for male violence against women has a positive impact on both an individual and social level. Its supports them in accessing community resources and improves their quality of life. The therapeutic work is aimed at identifying psycho-physical-social signs to overcome SDM -syndrome of the battered woman<sup>2</sup>- (Área de Serveis Personals, 2007). The Ministry of Equality (2019) indicates that 88.2% of the women who looked for formal help ended their abusive relationships.

The innovation of this study lies in the recognition of the recovery of the social dance participants following the DMT intervention and how they relate their evolution to their experience in the experiment. The results demonstrate that the direct relationship between corporal action DMT related to the psycho-emotional part is 32% compared to 33% related to the somato-physical part. This fact corroborates the participant observation of how intervention with dance accompanied by therapy produces changes both in the participants' corporal structure -physical part- and in their body image, projected and introjected -psychological part-. Therefore, for the global concept of body-mind (Damasio, 2006) dance is an ally especially in processes where rehabilitation, changes (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018; Burney, 2019) and/or improvements are reflected upon and stated out loud. According to Winnicott (2002), structuring the individual, the body and movement are essential. The participants are surprised by themselves, they recognize themselves emphasizing expression through their body doing conscious and unconscious things.

Through group cohesion, the participants give themselves permission to be themselves and to participate with total freedom. Starting with the creative activities performed, the symbolization offers them approaches to change, to reflect and to connect their body with their emotions, thus confirming one of the keys to recovery is “the connection between movement and emotion (Reich, 1949; Bernstein, 1975; Navarre, 1982; Rossberg-Gemptom & Poole, 1992; Payne, 2006)” (named by Vella y Torres, 2012, p. 148). The women can reorganize themselves by combining the trichotomy thought-feeling-acts to structure themselves again, simultaneously acquiring awareness of their situation, being able to make vital decisions.

Over the 11 years of groups with DMT intervention, we perceived that dance used in a social context, social dance, favours problem resolution and aids resilience (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018).

### **Limitations and Future Lines of Research**

This study has limitations because the analysis is long-term, and the sample size is large, a lot of information has been obtained. This information has been selected and focused solely on the object of study, avoiding information of interest such as that referring to the characteristics of the population: place of birth with respect to immigration; years; or those related to the origin of the women: origin, economic level, training, social network, etc.

On the other hand, the data from this study opens the door to a future line of research focused on a dimension at the community and sociodemographic level that could serve to fine-tune the offer with the social services or with the public services necessary to prevent and/or detect male violence, as well as in other towns with the same support groups for female victims of male violence against women.

Another limitation is that the research has only been carried out with a group of specific characteristics of social vulnerability, for this reason it would be very interesting, in future research, to be able to replicate the study in other social dance groups.

### **Conclusions**

This article examines general questions about the use of dance in groups of social vulnerability, identifying it as social dance and exemplifying it with support groups for female victims of male violence against women.

We consider it necessary to frame the work done with dance in social vulnerability groups, understanding that social dance, with all its dimensions, integrates different narratives, such as therapeutic or artistic. To speak of social dance is to give artistic and social value to the work developed by the professionals in groups which have specific social characteristics.

This investigation emphasizes the fact that dance can be used as a tool, an instrument, a resource and not just a purpose. The data of the analysis corroborate that, when working towards objectives of a social nature, dance is

a support that facilitates, develops, and empowers the social abilities of the participants.

The relevance of dance and movement (in the DMT format) as a tool for female victims of male violence against women support groups is complementary and adds to the work carried out by the entire interdisciplinary team. The sample used here is that of the experiences of all the women who have participated in the different groups throughout the years covered in this investigation (2010-2021).

The analysis demonstrates how DMT, approaching the globality of the person, facilitates the expression of feelings and/or memories, with the recovery of self-esteem, own presence, and self-recognition. From the final sessions and the closing of the group, we observed that most of the participants who finished the group work have the tools and empowerment to begin to make their own way and their own decisions about their lives. With recognition and acceptance, the recovery of a woman who is a victim of male violence against women begins.

We conclude that using dance in the social field contributes directly and indirectly to the objectives established when working with vulnerable groups and/or groups at social risk. Proceeding with social dance in support groups for women victims of male violence against women and noting the results obtained, we can see that it is one of the cornerstones for their recovery.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Translated from Catalan: Male violence. According to Catalan legislation, Law 5/2008 and Law 17/2020 refer to p. 27 of this article, male violence expands the concept of violence against women. It's taken to translate male violence as male violence against women from the definition to the APA (American Psycho-logical Association).

<sup>2</sup> Translated from Catalan: Síndrome de la Dona Maltractada.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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