

Exploring Dance Movement Therapy and Creative Embodiment: A Scoping Review on Interdisciplinary Exploration in Arts and Education

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Abstract

This scoping review explores the interdisciplinary applications of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and creative embodiment within arts and education contexts. The study aims to map how embodied practices, movement exploration, and experiential learning contribute to students' emotional, cognitive, and social development. Following the PRISMA-ScR framework, ten peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025 were systematically analyzed across databases such as Scopus, Taylor & Francis, Frontiers, and Google Scholar. The findings reveal four thematic areas: (1) the therapeutic potential of dance in enhancing well-being and self-expression, (2) movement exploration as a framework for collaborative and reflective learning, (3) cultural and technological innovations in dance pedagogy, and (4) the integration of embodied practices in interdisciplinary education. These studies highlight DMT's significance as both an artistic and pedagogical approach that bridges creativity, emotional awareness, and inclusive learning. The review concludes that incorporating dance and embodiment in education promotes not only aesthetic appreciation but also psychosocial growth and intercultural understanding. Further research is recommended to expand empirical evidence and strengthen the implementation of DMT within educational systems.

Keywords: Dance Movement Therapy, Creative Embodiment, Movement Exploration, Arts Education, Interdisciplinary Learning



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Introduction

Within the field of arts education, dance movement is not merely perceived as an aesthetic form of expression but as a medium through which individuals can deepen self-understanding, regulate emotions, and cultivate meaningful social connections. One approach that emphasizes the inseparable relationship between body, mind, and emotion is Dance Movement Therapy (DMT). Rooted in the belief that bodily experience constitutes a vital foundation for learning and healing, DMT facilitates the development of self-awareness, empathy, and adaptability through intentional and reflective movement (Nur Azizah & Sampe Tondok, 2022)

As educational paradigms evolve, the concept of creative embodiment has gained increasing relevance within interdisciplinary arts practices. This framework positions the body as the central site of learning, integrating cognitive, affective, and social dimensions through the exploration of movement. Consequently, dance assumes a renewed function as a therapeutic and restorative practice commonly referred to as therapeutic dance (Nursilah et al., n.d.) In the context of arts education, such embodied exploration enables learners to construct meaning through lived experience rather than

through theoretical abstraction alone. Recent findings further suggest that body-centered pedagogies such as DMT can enhance emotional well-being and self-awareness by cultivating mindfulness and reflective engagement through movement (Cabeen, 2023). Thus, arts learning extends beyond the production of aesthetic outcomes, emphasizing instead the reflective processes that foster authenticity and embodied consciousness.

Recent scholarship also highlights how the integration of art, movement therapy, and technology has opened new pathways for more inclusive and collaborative forms of education. As noted by (Dunphy et al., 2021) in *Dance Therapy Today*, the global implementation of dance therapy has expanded the understanding of the interrelationships among movement, emotion, and cultural identity. Moreover, contemporary research on embodied mindfulness through movement demonstrates its potential to enhance mental well-being and to cultivate learning environments that are humane, participatory, and empowering (Zafeiroudi et al., 2025). These developments resonate strongly with 21st-century educational paradigms that prioritize creativity, empathy, and experiential learning.

Given this background, there is a need for a comprehensive scoping review to map and synthesize how DMT and creative embodiment have been applied in artistic and interdisciplinary educational contexts. Such a review aims to provide deeper insight into the role of movement exploration in fostering emotional well-being, cognitive growth, and social inclusion through arts-based learning.

Accordingly, this study seeks to map and critically analyze the implementation of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and creative embodiment within the intersecting domains of art and education. Employing a scoping review approach, the research aims to capture emerging trends, thematic orientations, and conceptual contributions that illuminate the relationship between movement, creative expression, and embodied learning.

The central issue addressed in this study concerns how Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and creative embodiment practices can be effectively integrated into arts education and interdisciplinary learning frameworks. The research identifies various forms of DMT application and artistic practice that contribute to students' emotional, social, and cognitive development. Furthermore, it examines the intersections of artistic, therapeutic, and pedagogical approaches within educational processes, while identifying prevailing themes and dimensions that characterize DMT and movement exploration research conducted between 2020 and 2025. More broadly, the study aims to articulate potential directions and theoretical implications of DMT in response to the evolving needs of 21st-century education particularly in promoting emotional well-being, creativity, and active learner engagement through art- and culture-based approaches.

Methods

This study employed a scoping review methodology guided by the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) framework developed by Tricco et al. (2018). The PRISMA-ScR protocol has been widely adopted in recent research across the fields of art, education, and mental health (Hanan Khalila, 2021). This approach was selected because it provides a comprehensive overview of the scope, characteristics, and developmental trends of studies related to Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and creative embodiment within the contexts of arts education and interdisciplinary learning (Nur Azizah & Sampe Tondok, 2022)

1. Data Sources and Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted systematically using several online databases, including Scopus, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar. The search was limited to articles published between 2020 and 2025, employing a combination of the following keywords: "*Dance Movement Therapy*", "*Creative Embodiment*", "*Movement Exploration*", "*Arts Education*", "*Interdisciplinary Learning*", and "*Embodied Learning*." The search strategy followed the Population Concept Context (PCC) framework recommended by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) for scoping reviews (Peters, 2020) (see Table 1).

2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The selection of articles was based on specific criteria to ensure both relevance and credibility of the data sources. Included studies were peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 that focused on Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), body-based practice, arts education, or interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches. Eligible articles were required to be written in either English or Indonesian and to have a Digital Object Identifier (DOI). Exclusion criteria encompassed opinion pieces or editorials lacking empirical data, duplicate publications, and studies that were not accessible in full-text form. The selection process adhered to the principles of data transparency as recommended in the scoping review methodology outlined by (Hanan Khalila, 2021) (*Table 2*).

3. Article Identification and Selection Process

The selection process consisted of three main stages. The first stage involved initial identification through screening of titles and abstracts to determine potential relevance to the research focus. The second stage comprised filtering and duplication removal, excluding articles that did not align with the inclusion criteria. The third and final stage involved full-text reading to ensure that each selected study met all inclusion requirements. The results of this process are illustrated in the PRISMA-ScR flow diagram, which details the number of articles identified, screened, and analyzed. From the total number of records retrieved, ten key articles met the inclusion criteria and were used for the final analysis (Dunphy et al., 2021) (*Figure 1*).

4. Data Extraction and Analysis

Each selected article was systematically analyzed using a data extraction chart that included: author(s), year of publication, research objectives, methodology, main findings, and relevance to the study focus. The data were then examined through a thematic analysis approach as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021), enabling the identification of recurring patterns and interrelated themes across studies. The results were categorized into four major thematic dimensions: *therapeutic*, *creative*, *technological*, and *cultural*, as reflected in recent studies ((Cabeen, 2023) (Nur Azizah & Sampe Tondok, 2022)). *Table 3* presents the thematic classification derived from the analysis of the ten reviewed articles.

Table 1.
PCC Framework (Population Concept Context)

Component	Description
Population (P)	Students or learners engaged in arts and dance education
Concept (C)	Dance Movement Therapy (DMT)
Context (C)	Arts and dance education settings

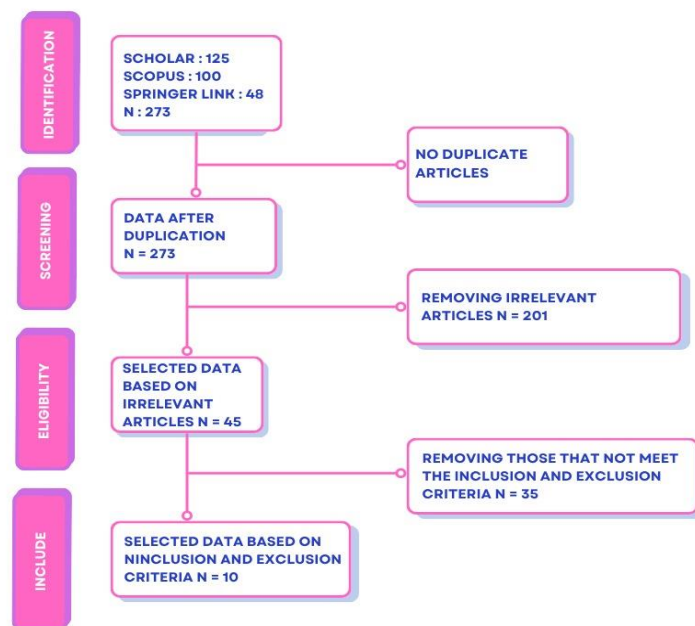
Table 2.
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1. Research articles discussing Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) within the contexts of health, arts, or education.	1. Non-academic or popular publications such as news articles, blogs, or opinion pieces.
2. Publications written in either Indonesian or English.	2. Articles not available in full-text format.
3. Articles published within the last five years (2020–2025).	3. Publications written in languages other than Indonesian or English.
4. Academic publications in the form of peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, theses, or dissertations accessible in full text.	4. Articles with low data quality, such as abstracts lacking clear methods or results.

Table 3.
Thematic Analysis

No.	Theme	Description	Relevant Articles
1	Therapeutic Dimension and Emotional Well-being	Describes DMT as a therapeutic approach that enhances mental health, emotional well-being, and body awareness among learners.	Nur Azizah & Sampe Tondok (2022); Dunphy et al. (2021); Cabeen (2024); <i>Healthcare</i> (2025)
2	Explorative and Creative Dimension in Learning	Highlights the importance of movement exploration and creative embodiment as frameworks for collaborative, reflective, and interdisciplinary learning.	Nelson et al. (2024); Parsons et al. (2023)
3	Technological Innovation in Dance Education	Examines the role of digital technology and artificial intelligence in expanding creative and pedagogical approaches to dance learning.	Liu & Ko (2022)
4	Cultural Dimension and Embodied Identity	Explores the integration of DMT within local cultural contexts and its role in strengthening identity and social values through embodied movement.	Vishwakarma (2022); Santosa et al. (2024)

Figure 1.
PRISMA Flow Diagram



Results and Discussions

1. Results

The literature search and selection process yielded a total of 273 articles collected from three major online databases: Google Scholar (125 articles), Scopus (100 articles), and SpringerLink (48 articles). Following a duplication check, the number of articles remained unchanged because no redundant entries were identified. From this pool, 201 articles were excluded for lacking relevance

to the research focus, while an additional 35 were removed for not fulfilling the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. As a result, ten core articles were retained for deeper examination.

Through systematic data extraction and thematic coding, the analysis revealed four overarching themes that characterize the current research landscape on Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and creative embodiment within arts education. These themes encompass the therapeutic dimension associated with emotional well-being, the explorative and creative dimension that supports reflective learning, the growing role of technological innovation in dance education, and the cultural dimension that shapes embodied identity. The synthesis and comparative analysis of these selected studies are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Analysis of Reviewed Research Articles

No.	Author & Year	Population / Sample	Instruments	Type of Study	Key Findings
1	(Nur Azizah & Sampe Tondok, 2022)	Psychology research on DMT interventions	Observation sheets & literature review	Systematic literature review	DMT positively affects psychological health and emotional relaxation.
2	(Dunphy et al., 2021)	DMT practitioners from multiple countries	Global survey & descriptive analysis	Descriptive review	DMT is applied internationally as a means of social and emotional healing.
3	(Cabeen, 2023)	Practitioners and participants in social choreography workshops	Participatory observation & narrative reflection	Descriptive qualitative	Mindful embodiment supports trauma recovery and enhances body awareness.
4	(Parsons et al., 2023)	Participants of the "Arts for the Blues" (art therapy) program	Interviews & reflective observation	Qualitative case study	Creative flow conditions improve emotional regulation and psychological well-being.
5	(Nelson et al., 2024)	Arts students in interdisciplinary learning	Observation, reflective journals, group discussion	Participatory qualitative study	Movement improvisation promotes cross-disciplinary collaboration and reflection.
6	(Liu & Ko, 2022)	Computational models and dance motion datasets	AI Deep Learning-based motion simulation	Quantitative experiment	Technology enables automated dance movements synchronized with music.

7	(Vishwakarma, 2022)	Classical Kathak dancers in India	Field observation & interviews	Descriptive qualitative	Integrating DMT into Kathak enhances spiritual and social dimensions.
8	(Santosa et al., 2024)	Children participating in Balinese dance classes	Observation & teacher interviews	Field qualitative study	Puspanjali techniques increase learning interest and expressive abilities in traditional dance.
9	(Zafeiroudi et al., 2025)	General population in dance-based recreational activities	Literature review & intervention evaluation	Scoping review	Embodied mindfulness improves mental well-being and positive emotions.
10	(Hung et al., 2025)	Audience of environmental communication programs through dance	Behavioral surveys & media content analysis	Interdisciplinary quantitative–descriptive	Integrating dance with the AIDA framework effectively enhances awareness and sustainable behavior through creative communication.

The findings summarized in Table 4 provide a comprehensive overview of the methodological diversity, participant characteristics, and key insights across the selected studies. This synthesis serves as the foundation for understanding how Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is conceptualized and applied within various educational, therapeutic, technological, and cultural contexts. By examining these studies collectively, a clearer pattern emerges regarding the multidimensional role of movement-based practices in supporting emotional well-being, fostering creativity, integrating digital innovation, and reinforcing cultural identity. These thematic patterns are further explored in the subsequent discussion to interpret their implications for arts education and contemporary embodiment practices.

2. Discussions

a. Therapeutic Dimension and Emotional Well-being

Several studies indicate that Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) exerts significant therapeutic effects on emotional and psychological health (Nur Azizah & Sampe Tondok, 2022), through a systematic review, emphasized that DMT helps individuals express emotions and reduce stress via structured and reflective bodily movement. Similarly, (Dunphy et al., 2021) illustrated that DMT practices have been widely implemented across multiple countries as a form of social therapy, facilitating post-trauma interpersonal reconnection. (Cabeen, 2023) expanded this perspective by highlighting *mindful embodiment* as a tool for healing and enhancing bodily agency. (Parsons et al., 2023) further underscored the importance of *psychological flow* in creative movement processes, which supports emotional regulation and strengthens participants' psychological well-being. Overall, the therapeutic dimension demonstrates that DMT functions not only as an artistic

medium but also as a vehicle for self-recovery and psycho-social balance, promoting holistic learning.

b. Explorative and Creative Dimension in Learning

This theme emphasizes the role of movement exploration as a foundation for collaborative and reflective learning. (Nelson et al., 2024) found that improvisation in dance fosters cross-disciplinary collaboration and enhances critical reflection among participants. Through embodied exploration, students not only create movement but also develop nonverbal communication skills and an awareness of the interconnectedness between art, emotion, and learning environments. (Parsons et al., 2023) also noted that the experience of flow in body-based creative activities enriches learners' emotional engagement.

Additionally, (Hung et al., 2025) introduced a new interdisciplinary perspective, demonstrating that integrating dance into the AIDA framework (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) effectively enhances environmental awareness and sustainable behaviors. These findings suggest that movement-based arts can serve as an educational strategy for social change while expanding the function of arts education into ecological and societal domains. Consequently, the explorative dimension develops both personal creativity and cross-disciplinary connections, positioning dance as a reflective, collaborative, and meaningful learning platform.

c. Technological Innovation in Dance Education

The role of technology in dance pedagogy has become increasingly prominent (Liu & Ko, 2022) developed a deep learning system capable of generating automated dance movements synchronized with music. This model illustrates how artificial intelligence can contribute to pedagogical innovation and digital aesthetic exploration in dance education.

In educational contexts, such technologies can expand students' learning experiences through motion simulation, posture analysis, or interactive, data-driven exploration. However, Liu & Ko emphasized that technology should not replace the human essence in art but rather support expressive values and cultural sensitivity inherent in the dancer's body. Therefore, the integration of technology and dance can create creative, adaptive, and digitally relevant learning models without compromising humanistic and cultural values.

d. Cultural Dimension and Embodied Identity

The study also highlights the significant role of culture in DMT practice. (Vishwakarma, 2022) demonstrated that applying DMT within classical Kathak dance in India strengthens the connection between movement, spirituality, and social identity. Through the integration of local cultural values, DMT transforms into a spiritually grounded medium that fosters a sense of connectedness with self and community.

Similarly, (Santosa et al., 2024) noted that exploring the Puspanjali technique in Balinese dance not only enhances motor skills but also increases children's interest and appreciation of traditional arts. This study shows that culturally based dance education can cultivate identity awareness while preserving local wisdom. Moreover, (Zafeiroudi et al., 2025) reinforced the link between culture, body, and well-being by demonstrating that mindfulness through movement enhances emotional well-being in recreational contexts. Collectively, the body can be understood as a dynamic cultural space where values, expression, and identity converge in the arts education process.

e. Synthesis and Implications

Overall, the findings indicate that DMT serves a dual role as both an artistic and pedagogical approach, integrating therapeutic, creative, technological, and cultural dimensions. DMT not only contributes to aesthetic development but also facilitates character formation, psychological well-being, and social identity enhancement. These results imply that arts education should regard the body not merely as a tool for expression but as a source of knowledge and personal transformation. Approaches that combine movement exploration, technology, and cultural context can foster reflective, holistic, and 21st century relevant learning experiences.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this scoping review, which analyzed ten articles that met the established inclusion criteria, it can be concluded that Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and creative embodiment practices contribute substantially to the development of holistic and interdisciplinary arts education. The evidence indicates that DMT functions not only as a medium for artistic expression but also as an approach that supports psychological well-being, enhances self-awareness, and strengthens students' social competencies. From the reviewed studies, four principal dimensions of DMT emerged. The first dimension, the therapeutic dimension, demonstrates that bodily movement serves as an effective medium for emotional recovery and plays a significant role in supporting students' mental health. The second, the explorative and creative dimension, shows that movement-based experiences and improvisation facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration and deepen reflective engagement in artistic creation. The third dimension, technological innovation, highlights the potential for integrating digital tools within arts education, thereby broadening opportunities for learning, experimentation, and participation. The fourth dimension, cultural and embodied identity, underscores the importance of maintaining local cultural values through movement practices that represent and affirm individual and collective identity within educational settings.

Overall, the findings show that DMT operates as a pedagogical approach capable of bridging the domains of art, psychology, technology, and culture. This perspective aligns with contemporary educational objectives that prioritize creativity, empathy, well-being, and inclusivity as core components of human development. Within this framework, the body functions not merely as an instrument for movement but as a source of perception, meaning-making, and healing. Through DMT, arts education can return to its essential purpose as a humanizing space where creativity, empathy, and self-awareness converge through embodied expression.

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