

Folk Dancing and Emotional Intelligence Abilities among Early Childhood-aged Children

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Humans are capable of using their bodies to express their ideas and emotions through movement (Ronen, 2011). In particular, children learn to move their bodies, develop their imagination and express their thoughts through dance (Bahat-Ratzon, 2004).

Movement is a basic form of gaining experience and communication through which children learn to cope with different tasks in their lives (Sharir, 2007). This research study focuses on the relations between motor skills and the area of emotions. The study examined the effects of folk dancing/circle dancing on emotional self-control and regulation and self-confidence among early childhood-aged children, while comparing circle dancing to dancing in an unorganized open space. In addition, the study examined the effect of circle dancing on the children's emotional intelligence abilities. Questionnaires were distributed to 60 children from a varied age range in two kibbutz kindergarten classes: in one kindergarten class, the children gained experience in dancing in an organized fashion throughout the year; in the second kindergarten class, the children were not exposed to folk dancing. The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire examined the emotional intelligence level of the children in both kindergarten classes and their progress in this area throughout the year.

The findings showed evidence of an improvement in emotional intelligence among children in both kindergarten classes; there were significant differences between children in the two classes regarding some emotional intelligence variables as a result of circle dancing. In addition, the findings point to a strong correlation between circle dancing and emotional regulation and self-control. On the contrary, no strong correlation was found between emotional regulation and self-control and the variables of gender and age of the children.

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