
Dance and Psychological Well-being

Lecture 1 - Personalities, Behaviours and Attitudes

“Individuals interpret and construe the world in unique ways, and an understanding of them is best achieved through eliciting how they make sense of events that confront them”

Richard J Butler - Sports Psychology in Performance

Dance Psychology

In its infancy but growing field of knowledge and research

Learning and taking from sports which learned and adapted from mainstream empirical psychology

What is Dance and Psychological Well-being?

Discuss

What is it?

What do we currently know?

Why do we study it?

Why is it important?

Two approaches:

Dancers and their mental health and well-being

Mental Health benefits of dancing

Our approach, in this module, will be to understand the various elements of the psychology of dancers and the dance environment, particularly by valuing and examining our own personal experiences

Why is studying dancers' psychological well-being important?

- To support dancers in their training, careers and post-career transition
 - Limit negative impact the dance environment might have
 - A dancer's experience is different from other performing artists
 - Dancers are athletes but creative and working in vulnerable performance contexts
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- Identity issues - i.e. relationship between dance and the dancer
 - Perfectionism – psychological inflexibility leads to identity crisis
 - Begin training at a young age
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- Continuous external examination by teachers and choreographers
 - Dancers spend a lot of time looking inward
 - Examining themselves physically, emotionally and psychologically

Why is studying dancers' psychological well-being important? Cont...

- Limit the impact and disruption of an injury that can become a crisis and trauma
- Injured dancers – ostracise injured dancers by non-injured dancers
- Burn out
- New working environments
- Stressful rehearsal environment
- Working with people who they are in competition with - auditions, parts
- Isolation
- End of career / transitions into new career
- etc...

Impact on mental health on dancers

- Anxiety and depression
- Identity and loss
- Eating disorders
- Performance anxiety
- Substance abuse
- Body dysmorphia
- Increase stress and arousal
- Panic attacks
- Insomnia and sleep disorders

What can we do or is being done now?

- Research into mind/body connection suggest it is as important to take care of the mind as well as body of the dancer
- Support the development of intentional self-care
- Develop better coping strategies with the stresses of dance career
- Equip dancers with coping strategies through mental skills training
- Acquiring a strong sense of self beyond dance/Build dancers up as people not just as a dancer (Identity)
- Positively navigate success and losses of career, auditions, performances
- Support for dancers who choose dance as a career at a young age before sense of self developed
- Better prevent injury - stress leads to tension which leads to injury prolonged and longer to heal
- Supporting dancers through injury and how to cope with it
- Counselling, outside help, ongoing - family, friends, networks

How can we do this?

- Self care devices and tools
- Encourage watchfulness and intention about own mental health
- Develop an understanding of self and self management so can deal with crisis
- Deepest work when the dancer isn't in crisis
- To build them up as a person
- Set up regular routines
- Develop coping skills that support this
- Emotional support
- Mentoring - short term, long term
- Community, relationships

Personalities, Behaviours and Attitudes

Understanding personality, behaviour and attitudes will help us support dancers (and ourselves) in the dance environment and will help us to choose the best approaches

Thinking about this is not intended for us to psychoanalyze ourselves, but rather to serve as a mechanism for understanding our behavior.

Common personality types/traits in dancers

- High achievers
- Perfectionists
- Introverts
- Highly emotional
- Strongly achievement motivated and orientated
- Exhibits less favourable self-attitudes i.e. self critical, low self-esteem

Behaviour (actions)

Behaviours are the actions of the personality/traits

Behaviour is a mirror in which everyone shows his image (Goethe)

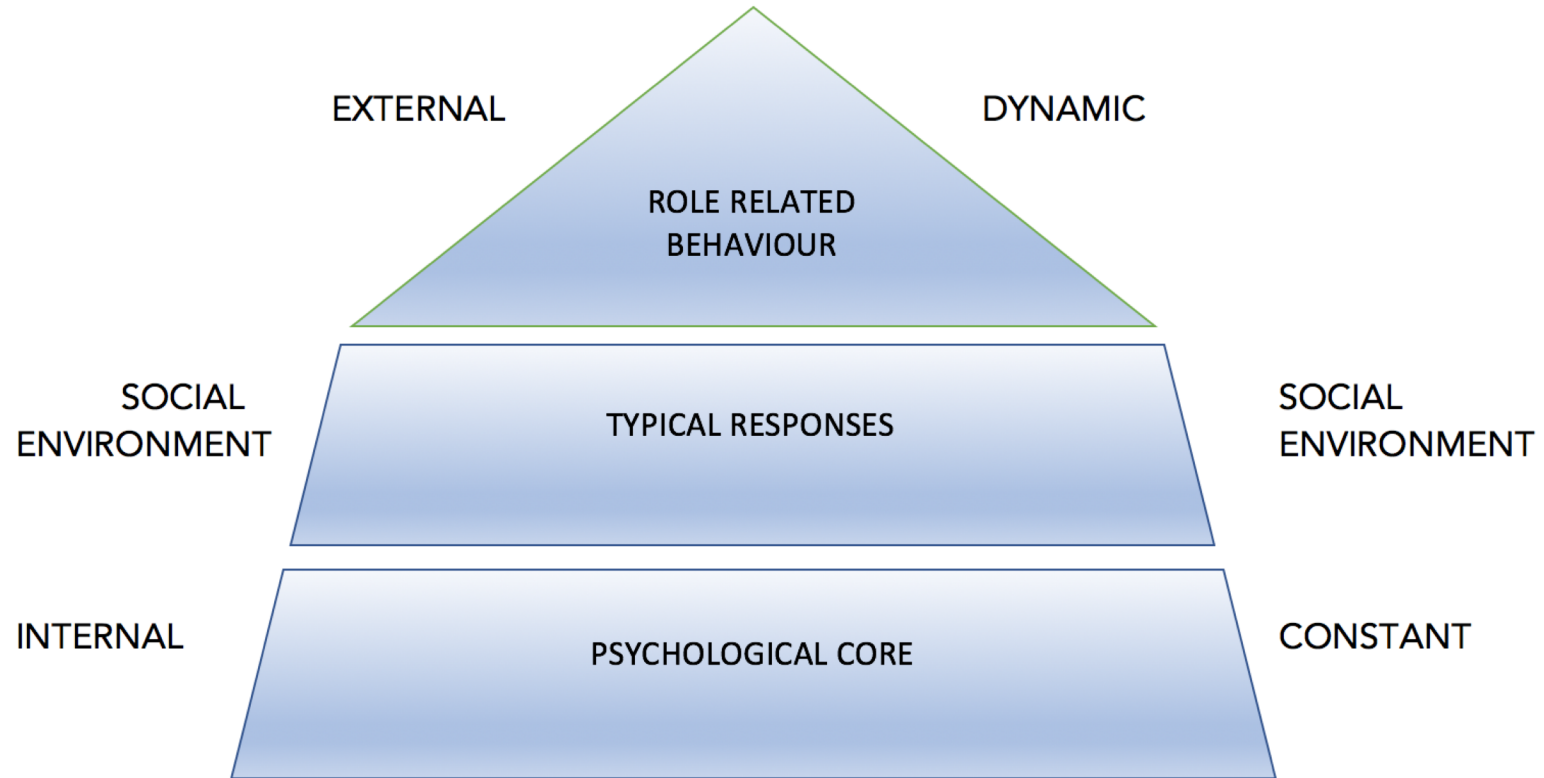
Attitudes (feelings towards something)

Attitude is the disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution or event.

Attitudes and personality traits affect behaviour

A schematic view of personality structure

Foundation of Sports and Exercise Psychology, 2015



Activity

Task 1

Pen portrait - split into 3

Personality, behaviour, attitude

Task 2

- How does this impact your performance, rehearsal, class?
- How does this impact wellbeing?
- Have they changed over time?
- How does the environment impact your attitudes, behaviours and well-being?

Follow up reading

Studying Personality from Five Viewpoints
Foundations of Sports and Exercise Psychology