

The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Anxiety and Perfectionism Among Dancers

Ananya^{1,*}, Smriti Sethi²

Abstract

The world of dance, though celebrated for its creativity and artistic freedom, often carries considerable psychological demands on performers. Beyond the physical rigor, dancers navigate pressures of performance standards, audience expectations, and internalized goals of perfection. This study examined how self-efficacy—an individual's belief in their own capability—shapes the experiences of anxiety and perfectionism among dancers, with a particular focus on gender differences. A balanced sample of 120 dancers (60 males and 60 females) was assessed using standardized psychological scales, and the data were analyzed through t-tests, Pearson correlations, and regression analyses to evaluate both relational and predictive dynamics. Results revealed no significant gender differences in the overall levels of self-efficacy, anxiety, or perfectionism. However, the patterns of relationships among these variables differ by gender. For male dancers, self-efficacy demonstrated a protective quality: it was positively correlated with both excellencism (adaptive perfectionism) and maladaptive perfectionism, while simultaneously showing a negative relationship with anxiety. Regression analyses further confirmed these links, as self-efficacy significantly predicted anxiety ($R^2 = 0.116$), excellencism ($R^2 = 0.219$), and maladaptive perfectionism ($R^2 = 0.176$) among males. In contrast, for female dancers, self-efficacy was positively associated only with excellencism, and regression results confirmed that it predicted this adaptive trait ($R^2 = 0.158$), but not anxiety or maladaptive perfectionism. These findings highlight gender-specific nuances in the psychological dynamics of dance. While self-efficacy functions as a buffer against anxiety and maladaptive tendencies in male dancers, its role for females appears more focused on fostering adaptive striving for excellence. Overall, enhancing self-efficacy may be a critical intervention strategy in dance training programs, promoting not only sustained performance and artistic growth but also mental well-being across genders.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, anxiety, perfectionism, excellencism, dance

INTRODUCTION

Self-Efficacy in Dance

According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory [1–9] (1977, 1997), self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to succeed. In dance, it is cultivated through mastery experiences, observation of others, verbal encouragement, and interpretation of emotional/physiological states. Environments such as Alvin Ailey and The Royal Ballet School actively promote self-efficacy through supportive training and psychological skill building. Research shows that even in recreational settings, dance enhances confidence and self-perception, proving that self-efficacy is not confined to elite performers (Table 1).

*Author for Correspondence

Ananya

E-mail: ananyaa1610@gmail.com

¹Student, Department of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

Received Date: June 06, 2025

Accepted Date: July 19, 2025

Published Date: February 10, 2026

Citation: Ananya, Smriti Sethi. The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Anxiety and Perfectionism Among Dancers. International Journal of Behavioral Sciences. 2026; 3(1): 37–44p.

Anxiety in Dance

Anxiety, whether situational (state) or chronic (trait), is prevalent in the high-pressure world of dance. Dancers face performance demands, aesthetic ideals, injury, fear, and constant evaluation. Anxiety

manifests itself cognitively (self-doubt), physiologically (muscle tension), and behaviorally (avoidance). Without emotional support or coping tools, anxiety can lead to burnout and impaired performance. Supportive teaching methods and mental health openness (as advocated by dancers such as Misty Copeland) help mitigate these effects (Table 2).

Perfectionism in Dance

Perfectionism is often normalized in dance, but it can be harmful. While adaptive perfectionism (excellencism) encourages growth, maladaptive perfectionism fuels self-criticism, fear of making mistakes, and dependence on external validation. This often erodes self-efficacy and increases anxiety. Institutions that encourage vulnerability and normalize mistakes help shift dancers toward healthier striving (Table 3).

Rationale of the Study

Despite the growing attention to mental health in dance, research lacks an integrated examination of how self-efficacy, anxiety, and perfectionism interact. This study aims to fill this gap by offering insights into evidence-based interventions that promote psychological resilience. The findings will benefit educators, psychologists, and choreographers seeking to balance performance excellence with mental well-being, redefining strength in dance as resilience, not the absence of vulnerability.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation, and t-values for self-efficacy, anxiety, and perfectionism among dancers (male and female).

	Mean		SD		t-value	Sig.
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
Self-efficacy	30.50	29.83	5.037	3.724	0.824	0.411
Anxiety	45.39	45.78	12.758	13.074	-0.165	0.869
Excellencism	5.05	5.33	1.265	0.957	-1.331	0.186
Perfectionism	4.48	4.29	1.253	1.30	0.832	0.407

Table 2. Correlation between self-efficacy and anxiety among male and female dancers.

	Males		Females	
	Self-Efficacy	Anxiety	Self-Efficacy	Anxiety
1. Self-Efficacy	1	-0.341**	1	-0.063
2. Anxiety	-0.341**	1	-0.063	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation is not significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3. Correlation between self-efficacy and perfectionism (excellencism and maladaptive perfectionism) among male and female dancers.

Correlation between self-efficacy and excellencism				
	Males		Females	
	Self-efficacy	Excellencism	Self-efficacy	Excellencism
1. Self-efficacy	1	0.468**	1	0.397**
2. Excellencism	0.468**	1	0.397**	1
Correlation between self-efficacy and perfectionism (maladaptive)				
1. Self-efficacy	1	0.419**	1	0.222
2. Perfectionism	0.419**	1	0.222	1

Correlation is not significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4. Regression between self-efficacy and anxiety among dancers.

Regression between self-efficacy and anxiety among male dancers			
Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared
1	0.341	0.116	0.101
Regression between self-efficacy and anxiety among female dancers			
1	0.063	0.004	-0.013

Predictors: (constant), self-efficacy

Table 5. Regression between self-efficacy and perfectionism among dancers.

Regression between self-efficacy and excellencism among dancers			
Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared
1 (Males)	0.468	0.219	0.206
2 (Females)	0.397	0.158	0.143
Regression between self-efficacy and perfectionism (maladaptive) among dancers			
1 (Males)	0.419	0.176	0.162
2 (Females)	0.222	0.049	0.033

Predictors: (constant), self-efficacy

Theoretical Foundations

This study draws on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights self-efficacy—belief in one's ability to succeed—as a key factor in shaping behavior, motivation, and emotions. In dance, high self-efficacy supports performance, emotional control, and resilience, whereas low self-efficacy may lead to anxiety and self-doubt (Table 4). The Multidimensional Perfectionism Theory further distinguishes between adaptive perfectionism (excellencism), which encourages growth, and maladaptive perfectionism, which is marked by fear of failure and self-criticism. These theories suggest that self-efficacy can act as a buffer against anxiety and influence perfectionism expression. This study also considers gender-based differences, acknowledging that social expectations may shape these psychological traits. Together, these frameworks guided the investigation of how self-efficacy, anxiety, and perfectionism interact within the high-pressure context of dance (Table 5).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Arbinaga (2025) [2] investigated the relationship between psychological factors and resilience in dance students. This cross-sectional study included 147 dancers with over three years of training. Resilience was measured alongside self-efficacy and perfectionism using standardized tools. The results showed that students with higher resilience had significantly greater self-efficacy ($t = 3.397$, $p = 0.001$), though no significant differences were found in perfectionism levels. This study emphasizes the importance of fostering resilience and self-efficacy in dance education, highlighting their role in enhancing performance and adaptability without necessarily increasing perfectionistic tendencies.

Arbinaga (2023) [1] studied 145 music students (57.9% female, $Mage = 27.77$) to examine the links between perfectionism, resilience, and self-efficacy. Using standardized scales, the results showed that females scored higher on both adaptive ($d = 0.41$) and maladaptive perfectionism ($d = 0.70$), although no gender differences appeared in self-efficacy or resilience. Students with high resilience reported significantly greater self-efficacy ($d = 1.30$), while those with low resilience showed more adverse responses to imperfections ($d = 0.49$). Regression analysis indicated that self-efficacy strongly predicted resilience ($\beta = 0.525$, $p < 0.001$), whereas dysfunctional perfectionism showed a weak negative trend ($\beta = -0.156$, $p = 0.063$). The findings highlight the role of self-efficacy in fostering resilience and suggest implications for music education interventions.

Won (2023) [10] studied 308 ballet students from three universities and examined how COVID-19 barriers affected learning, performance, and anxiety. Using standardized scales and regression

analysis ($p < 0.05$), the results showed that weight management and appearance-focused body image heightened perfectionism goals, achievement anxiety, and negative emotions such as fear and despair. Health concerns were linked to performance anxiety, while personal and parental expectations increased anxiety and communication difficulties.

Li, Zhou, et al. (2022) [5] explored the impact of shifting dance education to Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on its effect on students' 4C skills and self-efficacy. While creativity and collaboration improved, communication and critical thinking remained the same. However, students reported a notable drop in self-efficacy, likely due to reduced physical interaction, limited real-time feedback, and difficulty in adapting to online learning in a performance-based discipline. This study highlights the importance of supporting mental well-being alongside skill building in virtual dance education.

Dennis (2021) [3] investigated how social physique anxiety, perfectionism, and burnout are interrelated in collegiate dancers. Among 166 participants, body image concerns were strongly tied to maladaptive perfectionism, which contributed to emotional exhaustion in the nursing students. Although adaptive perfectionism supports motivation, it also heightens anxiety when linked to appearance. This study highlights the fine line between healthy ambition and self-critical tendencies in dance and emphasizes the need for wellness programs that address body image and perfectionism to support dancers' long-term well-being.

Min and Yu (2021) [6] explored how perfectionism affects competition anxiety and dance immersion in middle and high school dance students. Using data from 279 participants and various statistical methods, this study found a significant link between perfectionist traits, increased anxiety, and levels of dance immersion. The results suggest that perfectionism not only heightens anxiety but also directly influences the depth of students' engagement in dance. Understanding these psychological dynamics is crucial for promoting focused and healthy dance participation among adolescents.

Investigated how athletic self-efficacy and perfectionism influenced performance among Gazi University student athletes. Using a correlational design and data from 186 randomly selected athletes, this study found that self-efficacy and perfectionism significantly predicted athletic performance, accounting for 54% and 46% of the variance, respectively ($p < 0.05$). These results underscore the importance of integrating psychological traits, such as confidence and achievement orientation, with physical training in athlete development and evaluation.

Pentith et al. (2021) [7] studied perfectionism and injury coping strategies in 68 young competitive Irish dancers (mean age: 14). Among the 189 reported lower-body injuries, 79% of the dancers showed perfectionistic traits—40% mixed, 29% self-oriented, and 10% socially prescribed. Frequent coping strategies include planful problem-solving, self-control, and seeking social support. Notably, mixed perfectionists were significantly more likely ($p = 0.03$) to use planful problem-solving and confrontive coping. These findings highlight the need for medical professionals to consider perfectionist tendencies when treating injured dancers to better manage their psychological responses.

Diaz (2018) [4] studied the meditation habits of 255 college musicians and their connection to music performance anxiety (MPA), considering trait mindfulness and perfectionism. The findings revealed that weekly meditation was associated with lower MPA, even when mindfulness and perfectionism levels were controlled. Higher mindfulness correlated with reduced anxiety, while greater self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism were linked to elevated MPA. However, the type of meditation practiced did not have a significant impact on anxiety levels.

Sarıkaya and Kurtaslan (2018) [8] conducted a correlational study involving 541 undergraduate music student teachers in Turkey to explore the links between performance anxiety, perfectionism,

and self-efficacy. Their findings showed that perfectionism had a dual role: certain forms heightened anxiety, while others reduced it. Notably, high self-efficacy consistently emerged as a protective factor that helped lower performance anxiety.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

This study aimed to investigate the influence of self-efficacy on anxiety and perfectionism among dancers, examining whether higher self-efficacy reduces performance-related anxiety and moderates the effects of perfectionism.

Objectives

1. To examine gender differences in the levels of self-efficacy that influence anxiety and perfectionism among dancers.
2. To study the relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety among dancers.
3. To study the relationship between self-efficacy and perfectionism among dancers.
4. Self-efficacy will predict anxiety among dancers.
5. Self-efficacy will predict perfectionism among dancers.

Hypotheses

- H_1 : There will be no significant gender differences in the levels of self-efficacy, anxiety, and perfectionism among dancers.
- H_2 : There will be no significant relationship between dancers' self-efficacy and anxiety.
- H_3 : There will be no significant relationship between self-efficacy and perfectionism among dancers.
- H_4 : Self-efficacy will not predict anxiety among dancers.
- H_5 : Self-efficacy will not predict perfectionism among dancers.

Research Design

A research design is a structured plan that guides the research process while controlling variables to ensure validity. This study began with an exploratory design to identify the research gaps and formulate hypotheses. Once finalized, descriptive and correlational designs were used to analyze the relationships among the variables.

Variables

- *Independent variable*: Self-efficacy
- *Dependent variables*: Anxiety and perfectionism

Sample

Eight research papers and literature reviews that studied self-efficacy, anxiety, and perfectionism over the last decade were studied. The General Self-Efficacy Scale(GSE) by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) [11], the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) by Spielberger and colleagues (1970) [12, 13], and the Scale of Perfectionism and Excellencism(SCOPE) by Gaudreau and Thompson (2010) [12] were generated into a Google form and filled out by 120 dancers aged 18 to 30 who had undergone at least two years of formal dance training in Western dance.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were dancers aged 18 to 30 years with a minimum of two years of formal dance training in Western dance. They must be actively engaged in dance performances, competitions, or professional dance settings to ensure relevant experiences.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants below 18 or above 30 years of age, with less than two years of dance training, or diagnosed with severe psychological or medical conditions will be excluded. Dancers trained in classical or folk forms and those with chronic injuries will also not be included.

Tools

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) [11], is a 10-item instrument that assesses an individual's belief in their ability to cope with various challenging situations. Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale measuring confidence, resilience, and problem-solving skills. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory–Short Version (STAI) is a 6-item scale used to differentiate between temporary (state) and long-standing (trait) anxiety, especially in performance settings. Rated on a 4-point Likert scale, it offers a concise and reliable method for assessing anxiety in high-pressure contexts. Finally, the Scale of Perfectionism and Excellencism (SCOPE) distinguishes between *excellencism* and a flexible, adaptive form of high achievement and *personal standards perfectionism*, which is characterized by rigid self-imposed standards often associated with anxiety.

Procedure

The study will recruit 120 dancers aged 18–30 years with at least two years of formal training, sourced through academies and independent networks. After providing informed consent, participants will complete self-report measures, including the GSES, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory–Short Version (STAI), and the Scale of Perfectionism and Excellencism (SPE), administered online or in person. Data will be analyzed using correlation and regression to explore the relationship between self-efficacy, anxiety, and perfectionism. The findings aim to inform psychological interventions that promote resilience and a healthy performance mindset in dancers.

RESULTS

The results of the study indicated no significant gender differences in the mean scores for self-efficacy, anxiety, excellencism, or maladaptive perfectionism. However, self-efficacy showed stronger associations in males: negative with anxiety ($r = -0.341$, $p = 0.008$) and positively with both excellence ($r = 0.468$, $p < 0.01$) and maladaptive perfectionism ($r = 0.419$, $p < 0.01$). In females, self-efficacy was linked only to excellence ($r = 0.397$, $p < 0.01$). The regression results also confirmed the greater predictive power of self-efficacy in males, highlighting its stronger psychological role in this group.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated the relationship between self-efficacy, anxiety, and perfectionism (excellencism and maladaptive) among male and female dancers. The t-test results indicated no significant gender differences in mean scores for self-efficacy, anxiety, excellencism, or maladaptive perfectionism (Table 1). Correlation analyses revealed distinct relational patterns. Among male dancers, self-efficacy was negatively correlated with anxiety ($r = -0.341$, $p < 0.01$) and positively associated with both excellencism ($r = 0.468$, $p < 0.01$) and maladaptive perfectionism ($r = 0.419$, $p < 0.01$). In contrast, female dancers showed a significant positive correlation only between self-efficacy and excellencism ($r = 0.397$, $p < 0.01$), with no significant relationship between self-efficacy and either anxiety or maladaptive perfectionism. Regression analyses further confirmed these gender-specific trends. For males, self-efficacy significantly predicted anxiety ($R^2 = 0.116$), excellencism ($R^2 = 0.219$), and maladaptive perfectionism ($R^2 = 0.176$). For females, self-efficacy significantly predicted only excellencism ($R^2 = 0.158$), with minimal predictive power for other outcomes. These findings highlight self-efficacy as a key psychological resource, particularly for male dancers, and support the integration of mental training and gender-sensitive support in dance education.

CONCLUSION

The study found that self-efficacy significantly influenced dancers' psychological well-being, especially among males. Higher self-efficacy was linked to lower anxiety ($r = -0.341$, $p < 0.01$) and higher levels of both adaptive ($r = 0.468$, $p < 0.01$) and maladaptive perfectionism ($r = 0.419$, $p < 0.01$) among male dancers. Regression analysis showed that self-efficacy predicted 11.6% of anxiety and 21.9% of excellencism variance in males. Among females, self-efficacy was associated with excellence ($r = 0.397$, $p < 0.01$) but had minimal impact on anxiety or maladaptive perfectionism. These results underscore the importance of fostering self-efficacy and healthy perfectionism during dance training.

Limitations

- The research was conducted on a limited sample of 120 dancers, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of dancers.
- This study did not differentiate between dance styles or levels of professional experience, both of which could potentially influence psychological outcomes.
- Factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, and educational level were not accounted for, which may have introduced uncontrolled variability in self-efficacy and perfectionism scores.
- Owing to the cross-sectional nature of the study, causal relationships between the variables could not be established.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research could be extended to include dancers from varied dance styles (e.g., classical) and diverse backgrounds.
2. A longitudinal study would provide more robust evidence of how self-efficacy evolves and affects perfectionism and anxiety over time.
3. Further studies should explore the roles of coaching style, peer dynamics, and performance feedback in developing self-efficacy.
4. The inclusion of additional psychological constructs, such as resilience, motivation, and self-esteem, could provide a more comprehensive picture.

REFERENCES

1. Arbinaga F. Resilient behaviors in music students: relationship with perfectionism and self-efficacy. *Behav Sci.* 2023;13(9):722. doi:10.3390/bs13090722. PubMed PMID: 37754000.
2. Arbinaga F. Self-efficacy and perfectionism as a function of resilient behaviour in dance students. *Res Dance Educ.* 2025;9:1–19. doi:10.1080/14647893.2025.2465455.
3. Dennis A. Associations among social physique anxiety, perfectionism, and burnout in American collegiate dancers [bachelor's thesis]. Chapel Hill (NC): University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; 2021.
4. Diaz FM. Relationships among meditation, perfectionism, mindfulness, and performance anxiety among collegiate music students. *J Res Music Educ.* 2018;66(2):150–167. doi:10.1177/0022429418765447.
5. Li Z, Zhou M, Lam KKL. Dance in Zoom: using video conferencing tools to develop students' 4C skills and self-efficacy during COVID-19. *Think Skills Creat.* 2022;46(4):101102. doi:10.1016/j.tsc.2022.101102. PubMed PMID: 35912373.
6. Min YM, Yu YJ. The perfectionist tendencies of middle and high school students who major in dance impact on competitive anxiety and dance immersion. *J Digit Converg.* 2021;19(7):289–301.
7. Pentith R, Moss SL, Lamb K, Edwards C. Perfectionism among young female competitive Irish dancers – prevalence and relationship with injury responses. *J Dance Med Sci.* 2021;25(2):152–158. doi:10.12678/1089-313X.061521k. PubMed PMID: 33781376.
8. Sarıkaya M, Kurtaslan Z. Prediction of musical performance anxiety according to music teacher candidates' perfectionism and self-efficacy beliefs. *Int Online J Educ Sci.* 2018;10(4):183–198. doi:10.15345/ijoes.2018.04.010.
9. Çakiroğlu T. The role of athletic self-efficacy and athletic perfectionism in predicting athletic performance of Gazi University student athletes. *J Educ Issues.* 2021;7(2):300–309. doi:10.5296/jei.v7i2.19108.
10. Won HI. Relationship between dance performance anxiety, perfectionism propensity, and body image of the ballet class participants since 2020. *Asia-Pac J Converg Res Interchange.* 2023;9(4):385–398. doi:10.47116/apjcri.2023.04.31.
11. Schwarzer R, Jerusalem M. Generalized self-efficacy scale. In: Weinman J, Wright S, Johnston M, editors. *Measures in Health Psychology: A User's Portfolio. Causal and Control Beliefs.* Windsor, UK: NFER-Nelson; 1995. p. 35–7.

12. Gaudreau P, Thompson A. Testing a 2×2 model of dispositional perfectionism. *Pers Individ Dif.* 2010;48:532–537. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2009.11.031.
13. Spielberger CD. Manual for the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (Self-Evaluation Questionnaire). Palo Alto (CA): Consulting Psychologists Press; 1970.