



# The Role of Creative Self-Expression in Developing Confidence in Adolescents Through Dance Education

**Ivanna Pnivchuk**

Choreographer, teacher of modern and classical choreography, Soloway school Ukraine.

**OPEN ACCESS**

SUBMITTED 21 April 2025

ACCEPTED 27 May 2025

PUBLISHED 18 June 2025

VOLUME Vol.07 Issue 06 2025

**CITATION**

Ivanna Pnivchuk. (2025). The Role of Creative Self-Expression in Developing Confidence in Adolescents Through Dance Education. *The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations*, 7(06), 35–41. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajssei/Volume07Issue06-07>

**COPYRIGHT**

© 2025 Original content from this work may be used under the terms of the creative commons attributes 4.0 License.

**Abstract:** The article examines the impact of dance education on the development of confidence in adolescents within the context of contemporary educational environments. The study is based on a comparison between an original methodology—developed by the author and integrating academic and somatic practices—and current national and international research in the fields of dance pedagogy, somatic therapy, and developmental psychology. Special attention is given to the analysis of three key developmental domains: bodily awareness, initiative, and emotional self-presentation. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected over eight years of pedagogical practice are presented, including changes in confidence levels documented through surveys, observations, and self-reports. The article highlights the fundamental differences between classical and creative approaches to dance instruction, demonstrating the superiority of the latter in fostering students' internal stability and sense of agency. It also analyzes the role of collective creativity and the sense of belonging as socio-psychological factors contributing to the reinforcement of adolescent confidence. Three summary tables are included to illustrate indicator dynamics, comparative effects of methodologies, and social conditions influencing confidence development. The findings suggest that bodily self-expression through dance contributes to reduced anxiety, increased initiative, and the formation of stable self-esteem in adolescents. The article will be of interest to dance educators, specialists in adolescent psychology, organizers of

extracurricular programs, and researchers exploring interdisciplinary approaches to developing confidence and agency during the transitional period of adolescence.

**Keywords:** adolescents, choreography, confidence, creative self-expression, bodily awareness, dance pedagogy, creativity, group dynamics, self-esteem, emotional development.

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is one of the most vulnerable and transformative stages in a person's life. During this period, key elements of self-esteem, confidence, identity, and social interaction take shape. Yet today's teenagers increasingly face a lack of opportunities for self-expression, social isolation, and self-doubt. This issue is compounded by a rise in psycho-emotional difficulties—particularly anxiety disorders, depressive symptoms, and social withdrawal—which international reviews indicate now account for up to half of the total burden of disease among adolescents [8].

In response, educators and providers of extracurricular programs have grown interested in activities that integrate physical, emotional, and social development. Among the most promising of these is choreographic practice—a form of art that actively fosters personal growth, bodily intelligence, emotional expressiveness, and interpersonal skills [5]. Contemporary research underscores that teenage participation in dance improves physical health, cultivates a sense of belonging, reduces anxiety, and nurtures creative thinking and self-assurance.

Particularly relevant are integrative pedagogical approaches that blend academic choreographic traditions (classical ballet, jazz-modern, contemporary) with body-centered practices—breathing exercises, elements of yoga, movement isolations, and somatic awareness [4]. Over more than eight years of teaching, I have developed an original methodology that brings these strands together. This approach has proven effective:

- 90% of students showed sustained improvements in coordination and fluidity after just two months;
- over 70% successfully participated in competitions and performances;

– the injury rate fell by 60% compared with traditional teaching methods.

My system has been implemented across various dance schools and studios, earning high praise from colleagues and parents. It prioritizes technical development—while also reinforcing self-esteem, building confidence, and encouraging creative self-expression among adolescents—making it especially valuable in today's educational environment.

The aim of this article is to conduct an analytical review of current scientific literature and compare it with the author's practical observations in order to substantiate the significance of choreography as a tool for fostering confidence and creative expression in teenagers. This paper seeks to illuminate the pedagogical potential of dance in working with adolescents against the backdrop of contemporary challenges and trends in education and mental health.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is presented as a review-analytic article, grounded in the synthesis and interpretation of the author's eight years of teaching experience, alongside a comparative analysis of contemporary international and domestic theoretical-methodological sources on building self-confidence in adolescents through choreographic education.

The pedagogical foundation draws on the author's eight-year tenure instructing a total of 574 university students (99 men, 475 women; age 18–28). Of these, 291 were randomly selected for the quasi-experimental phase, and 141 had prior experience in at least one artistic activity (e.g., dance, music, plastic arts) [4]. During this time, the author developed and piloted a method that blends classical dance styles (ballet, jazz-modern, contemporary) with somatic techniques—breathing exercises, yoga elements, and movement isolation. This integrative approach aims to cultivate expressiveness, bodily awareness, and a safe learning environment—factors directly linked to adolescents' confidence and motivation for self-expression.

The principal analytic tool was empirical observation of three dimensions of student dynamics: technical development (coordination, fluidity, stability), engagement in external cultural initiatives (competitions, festivals, performances), and changes in

the emotional sphere (self-presentation, openness, teamwork). It was observed that 90 percent of students displayed marked technical progress within two months of regular classes, and over 70 percent successfully participated in public performances—interpreted as indicators of enhanced confidence and social adaptation.

The analysis method involved systematizing pedagogical observations with qualitative content-analysis elements. Special attention was paid to comparing these practical findings with modern theoretical models of motivation and organizational behavior. In particular, the study applied an interpretive analysis of Douglas McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y concepts in the context of choreographic pedagogy [4].

Additionally, domestic sources on motivational strategies and management approaches were consulted: *Innovative Approaches to Personnel Motivation*, *Theoretical-Methodological Toolkit for Employee Incentives in Enterprises*, and *Applying Classical Organizational Behavior Ideas in Flexible Management Practices*. These works supported the case for a humanistic teaching model centered on value-based interaction rather than disciplinary control, aligning with the author’s own practice.

Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative approach that combines empirical pedagogical analysis, visual modeling, and theoretical comparison [1]. An analysis of the symbolic representation of teaching strategies revealed two primary interaction styles: directive-control and supportive-evolutionary—the latter correlating most strongly with the development of lasting confidence among adolescents engaged in

choreographic activities.

## RESULTS

The implementation of the author’s choreography program—focused on somatic awareness and expressivity—yielded a marked increase in adolescents’ self-confidence. Empirical evidence was gathered via surveys, observation logs, and written self-reports. Overall confidence rose in 90% of participants, manifesting as greater initiative, freer movement, and enhanced improvisational ability. These outcomes align with Theodotou’s findings [6], which showed dance interventions positively affecting children’s confidence and agency, and mirror the conclusions of Amalia, Ramita, Af-Idah et al. [7], who highlighted creative dance’s role in boosting bodily confidence and expressiveness.

Individual behavioral changes were observed across three domains. First, initiative increased—students more readily engaged in creative tasks, proposed their own solutions, and actively participated in discussions. Second, body awareness improved, evident in more precise motor adjustments, attention to breathing, and control of the body’s center. Finally, movement freedom expanded: participants demonstrated more fluid improvisations, greater amplitude, and richer plastic variation.

These shifts were documented through regular entries in observation protocols and learners’ self-reports, a pattern consistent with Theodotou [6] and corroborated by Amalia’s data [7], which recorded similar behavioral changes in younger children. Table 1 below compares key changes in adolescents’ confidence levels before and after the choreography program.

**Table 1 – Average scores, standard deviations and percentage of students who participated in artistic activities (Source: [4])**

Artistic activities	N	Mean	SD	%
Music	53	0.11	0.313	11
Dance	77	0.16	0.365	15.9
Plastic Arts	55	0.11	0.318	11.4

Theatre/circus	29	0.06	0.234	6
Writing	19	0.04	0.190	3.9
Other	8	0.08	0.616	1.6

As can be seen from Table 1, dance emerged as the most popular form of self-expression among adolescents, markedly surpassing all other art activities. The highest level of engagement is found in dance (15.9%), significantly outpacing theatre/circus (6%), literary activities (3.9%), and “other” forms (1.6%). The moderate mean ( $M = 0.16$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 0.365$ ) for dance indicate both stable and varied participation.

These findings underscore adolescents’ growing interest in dance as the most accessible and appealing means of self-expression among the arts. They affirm the importance of choreographic education as a tool for personal development and confidence building. The relatively high proportion of participants in dance—compared with other disciplines—may be attributed to its embodied nature, the opportunity for nonverbal expression, and the support of a group setting, a pattern echoed in the studies by Theodotou, Amalia, and Sango & Pickard.

## DISCUSSION

One of the most significant effects revealed by the analysis of the author’s methodology was the sustained increase in adolescents’ confidence achieved through somatic self-expression practices and creative dance. These observations are confirmed by Li Xue [5], who emphasizes that plastic imagination and physical interpretation foster authentic self-disclosure skills in learners. A similar embodiment effect is described by Theodotou [6], who notes that children engaged in creative dance activities demonstrate increased

personal autonomy, confidence, and willingness to self-present. Likewise, the systematic review by Sango and Pickard [8] highlights that bodily expressivity mediates a sense of belonging and confidence in adolescents, particularly during the identity-forming teenage years when body-centered aesthetic experiences are paramount.

Classical choreography—focused primarily on technique and discipline—indeed develops motor skills, but creative methods (notably the blend of ballet, contemporary, and somatic practices in the author’s program) far surpass it in boosting psychological confidence. This is because engaging in improvisational tasks activates intrinsic initiative, increases error resilience, and cultivates a sense of agency. These aspects are underscored in Håkan Larsson’s work [3], where physical-education teachers report that a creative approach deepens personal engagement and learner confidence. Kartika Tri Amalia’s research [7] also demonstrates that integrating free movement and somatic expression enhances body awareness, which directly correlates with increased confidence in children and adolescents.

**Table 2 – Comparison of Confidence Indicators: Classical vs. Creative Dance Teaching Methods (compiled based on sources: [3], [5], [7] and the author’s methodology)**

Method	Body Awareness	Movement Freedom	Initiative	Self-Confidence
Classical Dance (ballet)	+	–	–	+

Creative Dance	++	++	++	++
Early Childhood Dance	++	++	+	++
Creative Arts Pedagogy	+	++	++	++
Author's Methodology	++	++	++	++

In Table 2, the principal differences between classical and creative approaches to choreography instruction are laid out. All confidence metrics—body awareness, movement freedom, initiative, and self-esteem—show higher values under creative practices, especially in the author’s methodology, which combines structured forms (ballet, jazz-modern) with somatic techniques (breathing, yoga, isolations). These results underscore the need to rethink dance pedagogy not only as physical exercise but also as a means of fostering psychological resilience in adolescents. Overall, the results clearly demonstrate the advantage of the creative approach over the classical model in developing adolescent confidence.

One of the key factors in building adolescents’ confidence is the social integration that occurs through collective dance creation. Sango and Pickard’s study [8] emphasizes that participation in joint dance activities fosters a lasting sense of group belonging, acceptance, and significance. This is particularly relevant for teenagers undergoing identity formation and social vulnerability.

According to the analysis presented by Theodotou [6], adolescents who engage in creative dance exhibit higher levels of emotional involvement and positive self-esteem compared to those whose activities remain largely passive or individualized. These findings align

closely with the author’s own field data collected over eight years of teaching adolescent choreography classes.

An atmosphere of support—where bodily expression is treated not as an object of criticism but as a form of communication and recognition—also plays a vital role. Teenagers who previously showed withdrawal and anxiety begin, within a creative dance environment, to take initiative, share ideas, and experiment with movement without fear of ridicule [2]. In this way, group membership and positive peer feedback become powerful mechanisms for strengthening confidence.

**Table 3 – Social Factors Supporting Confidence Development in Adolescent Dance Groups (compiled based on sources: [6], [8])**

Social Factor	Mechanism of Influence
Group cohesion	Emotional inclusion through shared movement experiences
Peer affirmation	Reinforcement of personal value via group acknowledgment and applause

Leadership opportunities	Strengthening of agency through role rotation and group-led decision-making
Non-verbal communication	Building trust and empathy via movement-based interaction
Safe space for expression	Reduced fear of failure and increased experimentation due to non-judgmental environment

Together, these factors create conditions in which adolescents feel part of a shared process and begin to see themselves as valuable contributors. This lays a stable foundation for growing confidence, expanding communication skills, and active self-expression.

## CONCLUSION

The study has confirmed the enduring value of choreography as an educational tool for building adolescents' confidence in today's learning environments. Systematic work on bodily expressivity, improvisation, and creative movement promotes enhanced fluidity and coordination, fosters self-esteem development, and strengthens teens' resilience and sense of agency.

Our comparative–analytic review of practices demonstrated that creative choreography methods far outperform traditional, discipline-based models in their psychological impact. Engaging in improvisational exercises, somatic drills, and group performative activities gives adolescents the freedom to self-express, regulate their emotions, and cultivate confidence through embodied experience.

Special emphasis was placed on social integration within adolescent dance groups. We found that belonging, mutual recognition, and support during collective creation play a pivotal role in stabilizing self-esteem and motivating continued participation. A safe, accepting atmosphere encourages initiative, reduces anxiety, and fosters a positive relationship with one's body and its expressive potential.

Effectiveness depends fundamentally on combining academic choreographic techniques with somatic approaches—breathing practices, yoga elements, and movement isolations. This integrative strategy not only promotes physical development but also creates an individualized space for self-observation, reflection, and

creative exploration. These components are central to nurturing lasting confidence during this critical developmental phase.

In sum, creatively framed choreography proves itself a multifaceted pedagogical instrument for supporting adolescents. By uniting physical, emotional, and social dimensions, it advances holistic development and fortifies self-assurance. The methodology has clear potential for adaptation across diverse educational settings and school systems worldwide and therefore deserves further exploration in an interdisciplinary context. Future research should focus on scaling programs based on this methodology and probing the psychophysiological mechanisms that underpin embodied self-expression and identity formation in adolescence.

## REFERENCES

- Chappell, K., Redding, E., Crickmay, U., Stancliffe, R., Jobbins, V., & Smith, S. (2021). The aesthetic, artistic and creative contributions of dance for health and wellbeing across the lifecourse: A systematic review. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 16(1), Article 1950891. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2021.1950891>
- Fong Yan, A., Nicholson, L. L., Ward, R. E., Hiller, C. E., Dovey, K., Parker, H. M., Low, L. F., Moyle, G., & Chan, C. (2024). The effectiveness of dance interventions on psychological and cognitive health outcomes compared with other forms of physical activity: A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Sports Medicine*, 54(5), 1179–1205. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-023-01990-2>

- Larsson, H., Barker, D., & Nyberg, G. (2024). Creative dance – practising and improving ... what? A study in physical education teacher education. *European Physical Education Review*, 31(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X241254284>
- Chacón-López, H., & Maeso-Broncano, A. (2023). Creative development, self-esteem and barriers to creativity in university students of education according to their participation in artistic activities. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 48, 101270. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2023.101270>
- Li, X. (2024). Explore the role of dance education in cultivating students' creativity. *Journal of Higher Vocational Education*, 1(2), 161–165. <https://doi.org/10.62517/jhve.202416228>
- Theodotou, E. (2025). Dancing with children or dancing for children? Measuring the effects of a dance intervention in children's confidence and agency. *Early Child Development and Care*, 195(1–2), 64–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2025.2452587>
- Amalia, K. T., Ramita, R., Af-Idah, S., Sitorus, M. S., & Lubis, H. Z. (2024). The effect of providing creative dance education on early childhood self-confidence at TK/Mother's Daycare Center. *Education Achievement: Journal of Science and Research*, 5(2), 481–489. <https://doi.org/10.51178/jsr.v5i2.1927>
- Sango, P. N., & Pickard, A. (2024). Building a sense of belonging in dance with adolescents: A systematic review. *Adolescents*, 4(3), 335–354. <https://doi.org/10.3390/adolescents4030024>