

## EXAMINING THE CHARACTER STRENGTHS OF DANCERS BASED ON THE VIA MODEL \*

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### Abstract

Dance is a complex artistic and physical activity that integrates psychological, emotional, and social processes beyond its physical aspects, thus playing a significant role in personal development and well-being. The aim of this research was to examine which character strengths are more prominent among people with dance experience within the framework of the Values in Action (VIA) model and how these relate to dance activity. The research was conducted using an online questionnaire and a cross-sectional design, with 80 participants (70 women, 10 men; average age: 36.1 years;  $SD = 13.2$ ). Based on the results, no statistically significant difference was found between the distribution of character strengths in the dancer and non-dancer groups. At the same time, creativity consistently appeared as the primary character strength in a higher proportion of those with dance experience, drawing attention to the self-expressive, creative nature of dance and the role of cognitive-emotional flexibility. The results of the study can contribute to a deeper understanding of the educational and character-building potential of dance and offer useful insights for dance education practice and strength-based developmental approaches.

**Keywords:** dance, character strengths, VIA model, creativity, positive psychology, personality development

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Dance is one of humanity's most ancient forms of expression (Kaeppeler, 2000), which not only has aesthetic but also psychological and social dimensions (Quiroga Murcia et al., 2010). In recent years, the study of character strengths has become increasingly important in positive psychology research (Fodor & Molnár, 2020; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These are personality traits that can promote well-being and fulfillment; despite being stable, they are also capable of being developed.

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Dance, as a complex artistic and psychological activity, provides a means of developing personal strengths. During dance practice, body awareness, creativity, self-expression, perseverance, and social intelligence are all activated (Vormwald, 2020). These qualities are closely related to several virtue categories in the VIA model, particularly the dimensions of “Wisdom and Knowledge,” “Bravery,” and “Humanity” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The aim of this study is to explore the character strengths most prevalent among dancers and compare them with the characteristics of non-dancers. Our goal is not to establish causal relationships, but to map correlations and trends. The study serves both to lay the theoretical foundations for dance pedagogy and to develop psychological interventions.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Character strengths

According to the positive psychology approach, improving the quality of human life involves not only the prevention of pathologies, but also the conscious development of individual resources (Fodor & Molnár, 2020; Seligman, 2011). One of the basic concepts of this process is *character strength*, which is a lasting, developable personality trait that promotes well-being, performance, and psychological resilience (Niemic & McGrath, 2019; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The significance of character strengths lies in their ability to promote personal development and psychological balance in both favorable and challenging life situations (Park et al., 2004). When individuals perceive that their lives are moving in a positive direction, these strengths enable them to recognize their own values and those of others, thereby promoting further development. In times of difficulty, applying character strengths can help individuals focus on positive aspects, rely on their own resources, and thus maintain psychological stability (Fodor & Molnár, 2020; Niemic & McGrath, 2019; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The optimal use of individual strengths contributes to the determinants of well-being, which are consistent with the elements of the PERMA model: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement (Niemic & McGrath, 2019).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) systematized character strengths in their comprehensive work *Character Strengths and Virtues* (Table 1). The authors identified six main virtues Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Humility, Justice, Temperance, and Transcendence—to which they assigned 24 character strengths. These strengths form the basis of positive human functioning and are measurable, developable, and culturally interpretable.

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Table 1 Virtue categories and character strengths

Virtue category	Character strength	Description
Wisdom and Knowledge	Creativity	Original ideas and their adaptive application for positive contribution. Not necessarily associated with high IQ. Creative people are open-minded, risk-takers, and flexible.
	Curiosity	Interest, seeking novelty, openness to new things. It is related to positive emotions, intelligence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and self-esteem.
	Open-mindedness	Consideration of multiple perspectives, questioning of prejudices. Can be developed through education and learning, increases with age.
	Love of learning	Associating positive emotions with learning and acquiring new things. Satisfies curiosity, contributes to well-being, and promotes independence.
	Perspective	Holistic thinking, good advisory skills. Takes emotions and rationality into account, indicates maturity and sociability.
Courage	Bravery	Voluntary action in fearful situations for the benefit of others or oneself, accepting loss or risk.
	Perseverance	Overcoming obstacles and difficulties necessary to achieve goals; increasing one's sense of achievement, resourcefulness, and self-efficacy.
	Honesty	Authenticity, honesty, loyalty to oneself; taking responsibility for one's actions and feelings.
	Zest	Vitality, energy, enthusiasm for life; related to autonomy, efficiency, and joyful human relationships.
Humanity	Love	Cognitive, behavioral, and emotional commitment to others; devotion, caring, providing a sense of security.
	Kindness	Generosity, caring, altruism, selfless actions for others.
	Social intelligence	Understanding one's own and others' feelings, managing emotions in social relationships, recognizing others' motivations.
Justice	Teamwork	Loyalty, social responsibility, prioritizing the interests of the community, striving to reduce inequalities.

	Fairness	Commitment to fairness, equality, impartiality, respect for others, and equal treatment.
	Leadership	Motivating others for collective success, planning group processes, conflict resolution, team cohesion.
Temperance	Forgiveness	Forgiving others' mistakes, reducing anger, achieving inner peace through forgiveness.
	Humility	Modesty, awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses, not craving attention.
	Prudence	Caution, making thoughtful decisions, weighing risks.
	Self-regulation	Controlling emotions and desires, reducing impulsiveness, discipline.
Transcendence	Appreciation of beauty and excellence	Recognizing joy and beauty in goodness, which enables individuals to form deeper connections with others and find meaning in their lives.
	Gratitude	Expressing gratitude and experiencing joy in response to gifts or kindness, recognizing the value of life and seeing opportunities even in difficult situations.
	Hope	A positive outlook and optimism that helps overcome challenges and plan and achieve goals.
	Humor	Seeing the bright side of life, making others laugh, and taking difficult situations in stride.
	Spirituality	Belief in a higher power that gives meaning to life and provides support and guidance to the individual.

*Note:* Based on the original VIA system (Fodor & Molnár, 2020; Zábó, Oláh & Vargha, 2023; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

*Character Strengths and Virtues* is a comprehensive work of more than 800 pages, written by forty authors, which presents a system of character strengths and lays out guidelines for their measurement as well as the evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at developing them. In systematizing positive traits, the authors defined specific criteria, according to which strengths must contribute to improving the quality of life of the individual and others, have positive consequences, and be measurable and enduring traits in human behavior. Based on these criteria, the “Values in Action” system was created, which contains 24 character strengths and six cardinal virtues (Fodor & Molnár, 2020).

The VIA system is divided into three levels. At the top level are the overarching virtues: Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and

Transcendence, which are biologically based and aid survival and adaptation. According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), all six virtues must be present to a minimum extent for someone to be considered to have good character. The second level of the hierarchy consists of 24 character strengths, some of which may be more dominant in a given personality, while others are less prominent. The lowest level of the hierarchy consists of situational themes, which describe how each strength manifests itself in specific life situations (e.g., *kindness* through empathetic behavior). These themes may also vary based on cultural and group differences, so measurements for comparability are rare (Fodor & Molnár, 2020).

Character strengths are stable yet developable personality traits, the manifestation of which reflects individual characteristics and can be improved through practice and conscious reinforcement, thereby improving the individual's subjective well-being (Fodor & Molnár, 2020). The relationship between well-being and certain strengths has been examined by numerous researchers using a variety of approaches. Their findings show that gratitude is associated with higher social support and fewer depressive symptoms (Ghielen et al., 2017; Harzer & Ruch, 2015). Other studies have shown that gratitude, forgiveness, and optimism are associated with lower social anxiety (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Niemiec & McGrath, 2019). Bravery, kindness, and humor play an important role in patient recovery, while gratitude, hope, and perseverance are the strengths that most influence life satisfaction (Fodor & Molnár, 2020).

In their analyses, Ghielen and colleagues (2017) highlight that interventions based on character strengths have a positive effect on happiness, life satisfaction, coping strategies, and stress management. In addition, the conscious use of strengths increases motivation (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), improves performance, and promotes the development of creative problem-solving (Cable et al., 2015). According to a study (Lee et al., 2016), applying character strengths has a positive effect on the work carried out under pressure, improves cooperation between individuals and groups, and contributes to the development of perseverance and resilience (Govindji & Linley, 2007), which helps individuals deal with challenges more effectively. The positive effect can also be seen in the field of education. In their studies, Quinlan and colleagues (2015) found that students' active involvement in classroom activities and group cohesion are due to the development of strengths. Válóczy (2022) also looked for correlations between character strengths and student well-being in the field of education. In examining the character strengths of language learners, he found that awareness and application of character strengths in language learning practices has a positive impact on well-being in language classes.

Applying character strengths in everyday life has numerous positive psychological benefits: it increases well-being (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Zábó et al., 2023), reduces stress (Ghielen, et al., 2017), and increases life satisfaction (Harzer & Ruch, 2015). Empirical results from a Hungarian sample also show that character strengths are positively related to global well-being, flourishing, and other health indicators (Zábó et al., 2023). In educational settings, awareness of character strengths can improve learning motivation and group cohesion (Quinlan et al., 2015; Válóczy, 2022).

These correlations are relevant not only in psychology but also in art education, as character strengths are not static traits but skills that can be shaped and developed through practice, which can be clearly observed in dance.

## 2.2 The connections between character strengths and dance

Dance provides a particularly rich field for examining character strengths as manifestations of personality traits. Although the causal relationship between dance and personality development and its direction cannot be determined, the correlations and interactions between the two areas have been identified in several studies (Koch et al., 2019; Vormwald, 2020). The following character strengths are presented based on the categories of the VIA (Values in Action) model (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and interpreted in the context of dance.

Within the virtue group of wisdom and knowledge, creativity and curiosity are particularly important in dance, as dancers constantly explore new movements, techniques, and improvisational solutions. Curiosity encourages discovery and self-reflection, while creativity forms the basis of artistic self-expression (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Within the virtue of bravery, perseverance and honesty play a decisive role in artistic development (Kaufman, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Perseverance supports the overcoming of physical and mental challenges, while honesty as a character strength can be interpreted in a specific way, as personal and artistic identities are often separated during performance (Hanna, 2008; Lakes, 2005). Among the virtues of humanity and justice, social intelligence and teamwork are particularly important in group and pair dance. The coordination of movements, nonverbal communication, and mutual trust are fundamental psychological resources in dance communities (Foster, 2018). Self-regulation, a virtue related to temperance, enables dancers to practice with discipline, consciously putting their emotions at the service of their movements while remaining in control on stage. Finally, the virtue group of transcendence, especially the appreciation of beauty and excellence, is closely related to the art of dance. Experiencing the harmony of movement, music, and body can provide dancers with an aesthetic experience and even spiritual immersion (Niemiec & McGrath, 2019).

These connections are relevant not only on a theoretical level, but also in dance education practice. The conscious cultivation of character strengths can help dancers develop not only technically but also psychologically. Such an approach could be integrated into dance education and choreographic processes, similarly to other artistic interventions (Ghielen et al., 2017; Vormwald, 2020).

Dance as a movement-based artistic activity can be interpreted based on the theory of *embodied cognition*, according to which physical experiences actively shape cognitive and emotional processes (Foster, 2018; Koch et al., 2019). Experiences gained through movement therefore not only develop physical coordination but can also contribute to the recognition of internal resources and the development of personal strengths (Koch et al., 2014; Quiroga Murcia et al., 2010). The connection between body awareness activated during movement and emotional expression helps dancers to use their character strengths, such as self-regulation, perseverance, and social intelligence, more consciously (Koch et al., 2014).

Different dance styles reinforce different categories of virtues (Lazányi, 2018; Pavlova, 2018; Pickard, 2012; Quiroga Murcia et al., 2010). Classical ballet and competitive dance require the virtues of temperance and courage, as they emphasize precision, discipline, and overcoming physical limitations. Improvisational or contemporary dance, on the other hand, activates the virtues of wisdom and knowledge

as well as creativity, as it allows more room for self-expression and the discovery of new movement patterns. The collective forms of ballroom or folk dance are particularly fertile ground for cultivating teamwork, social intelligence, and kindness, as these genres require constant attention and mutual trust between partners.

The dynamic nature of character strengths (Fodor & Molnár, 2020; Niemiec & McGrath, 2019) is particularly well illustrated by the practice of dance. Dancers not only use their existing strengths, but also continuously shape them through practice. Correcting mistakes, persistent repetition, and focusing on performance promote the development of self-regulation, perseverance, and humility, while stage presence and connecting with the audience strengthen the ability to appreciate spirituality and beauty (Croom, 2014).

From a neuropsychological perspective, the dopamine and endorphins released during dance enhance positive emotional states. This is consistent with Seligman (2011), who describes the five basic components of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. According to his model, these factors together contribute to the maintenance and development of psychological well-being. The flow experience, which represents a state of complete engagement, often appears in dance processes and, through positive emotional experiences, reinforces the conscious use of character strengths (Harzer & Ruch, 2015). As a result, curiosity, creativity, and life satisfaction, as components of the dancer's personality, may show a positive correlation not only with each other but also with the quality of dance practice.

### 3 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of our research was to explore which character strengths within the framework of the Values in Action (VIA) model best characterize individuals with dance experience, and whether their distribution differs from that of the non-dancing population. Our study paid particular attention to the character strengths of creativity and honesty, as well as to the relationship between the nature of dance activity—especially competitive or hobby-level dance—and the manifestation of these strengths. The hypotheses of the study were as follows:

**H1** – We assume that creativity as a character strength is more common among those with dance experience than among non-dancers, given that dance, particularly through choreographic and improvisational elements, can promote the development of cognitive flexibility and openness to novel solutions (Fink & Woschnjak, 2011; Torrents et al., 2015).

**H2** – Based on previous research emphasizing the complex technical, aesthetic, and problem-solving requirements of competitive dance (Kattenstroth et al., 2010; Kirsch et al., 2013), we assume that creativity as a primary character strength is more common among competitive dancers than among hobby dancers or non-dancers.

**H3** – We also assume that the character strength of honesty is less common among competitive dancers than among non-dancers, as in a performance-oriented, regulated dance environment, technical precision, role behavior, and aesthetic conformity may take precedence over authentic, direct self-expression (Levy, 1988).

## 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Sample and sampling procedure

The research originally involved 106 participants reached out to via various social media platforms. The sampling approach was justified by the exploratory nature of the study and the need to target the dancer population. The research was not aimed at drawing representative conclusions, but at examining intergroup patterns. As 26 of the participants were under the age of 18, their data was excluded from the analysis in accordance with ethical guidelines, resulting in a final sample of 80 individuals (70 women, 10 men). Their ages ranged from 18 to 73 ( $M = 36.1$  years,  $SD = 13.2$ ). Participants were divided into two main groups based on their dance experience. The dancer group consisted of individuals ( $n = 57$ ; 28.7%) who had danced regularly for at least two years or who currently dance regularly. The non-dancer group consisted of individuals ( $n = 23$ ; 71.3%) who had never participated in regular dance activities in their lives. During the study, we also formed further subgroups based on the intensity of the dancers' experience. We separated participants who have danced or currently dance competitively ( $n = 25$ ) from those who dance or have danced at a hobby level or have no dance experience at all ( $n = 49$ ).

The dancers participating in the study indicated the following dance styles among those they practiced: majorette, ballroom dancing, ballet, hip hop, folk dancing, belly dancing, kizomba, contemporary dance, bachata, salsa, show dancing, modern dance, Argentine tango, acrobatic rock and roll, jazz ballet, tap dancing, and movement art. Participation in the research was voluntary, and data collection was conducted using an online self-administered questionnaire.

### 4.2 Ethical considerations

The research was based on data collected using an online questionnaire, did not involve an intervention, and did not collect data allowing for the personal identification of the participants. In accordance with ethical guidelines, data from respondents under the age of 18 were excluded. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose, content, and methods of the research and gave their written consent to participate voluntarily and to have their data treated anonymously.

### 4.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed online (using Google Forms) following a convenience sampling procedure. The call for participants was shared with dance communities (dance associations, professional dance teachers) and on general, non-dance-specific social media platforms. The questionnaire package included questions on demographic data (age, gender), dance-related characteristics (current/past dance experience, dance style, frequency of dancing, effectiveness), and the Hungarian version of the VIA (Values in Action) questionnaire (Fodor & Molnár, 2020).

#### 4.4 Data processing and statistical analysis

The data were analyzed using Jamovi software (version 2.3.18). In the first step, we summarized the descriptive data for each character strength (mean, standard deviation, frequency). To examine the differences between groups, we used cross-tabulation analyses ( $\chi^2$  test) with a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ .

### 5 RESULTS

We compared the distribution of character strengths among current dancers ( $n = 23$ ) and non-dancers ( $n = 57$ ) using chi-square tests. The analysis showed no significant differences between the character strengths most frequently ranked first by the two groups ( $\chi^2(10) = 9.19$ ;  $p = 0.514$ ). However, creativity was more common among dancers: 39.13% of current dancers listed creativity as their primary strength compared to 22.8% of non-dancers.

A test comparing the group of current and/or former dancers ( $n = 45$ ) with the group of those who neither currently nor previously danced ( $n = 35$ ) showed similar results. Although the difference is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(10) = 9.30$ ;  $p = 0.504$ ), creativity again appeared at a higher rate among the first group (35.55%) than among those who never danced (17.14%). These consistent differences may indicate that the personality profile of dancers shows a specific pattern.

In contrast, honesty, ranked as the top character strength, occurred at a higher rate among those who do not currently dance (10.52%), while it did not appear as a primary strength in the dancer group. Among current and former dancers, honesty was ranked first in 8.88% of cases, while among those who had never danced, this proportion was 5.71%.

Table 2 Distribution of creativity and honesty among dancers and non-dancers

When did you dance?	Creativity ranked first	Honesty as primary strength
Currently	39.13%	0%
Currently no	22.8%	10.52%
Currently and/or in the past	35.55%	8.88%
Never	17.14%	5.71%

Note: The data show the proportions within each group.

Differences were also compared between the strengths ranked first by those who dance or had danced competitively ( $n = 25$ ) and those who only dance or had danced at a hobby level or not at all ( $n = 49$ ). Among competitive dancers, creativity was the dominant strength in first place (44%), while none of them (0%) ranked honesty as their most characteristic strength. In contrast, among hobby dancers or non-dancers, creativity was the primary strength for only 18.36%, while honesty was the primary strength for 10.20%.

Table 3 Proportions of creativity and honesty as strengths among competitive dancers and hobby dancers or non-dancers

	Frequency of creativity as a strength within the group	Proportion of the strength of honesty within the group
Competitive dancers/ former competitive dancers	44%	0%
Dance/danced at a hobby level or do not dance/did not dance at all	18.36%	10.20%

Overall, the results suggest that the distribution of character strengths varies depending on the existence and intensity of dance activity. Creativity as a primary strength was more prevalent among dancers, especially competitive dancers, while honesty as a leading strength was more prevalent among hobby dancers and those who had never danced. These differences indicate varying rankings in character strength depending on the level of dance experience.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the present study, no statistically significant difference was found in the distribution of character strengths between the dancer and non-dancer groups, neither in the comparison between current dancers and non-dancers, nor in the comparison between current and/or former dancers and those who had never danced. At the same time, a consistent difference in the occurrence of creativity was observed in both analyses: creativity appeared as a primary character strength at a higher rate among those with dance experience than among those without. This pattern may suggest that dancing is associated with psychological characteristics and skills that support creativity, cognitive flexibility, and self-expression.

An important point of reference for interpreting the results of our analysis is the Hungarian validation study of the VIA-H questionnaire, which analyzed the distribution of character strengths based on large-sample ( $N = 10,911$ ) average population data (Zábó et al., 2023). In the Hungarian sample, the virtue of humanity proved to have the highest average value, while temperance had the lowest. The differences between character strengths were moderate, resulting in a generally balanced profile in the adult Hungarian population. The superiority of creativity demonstrated in the present study among those with dance experience indicates a specific deviation, which suggests profile differences related to the activity rather than a general difference in character strengths (Zábó et al., 2023).

The higher rate of creativity among competitive dancers may indicate that they have more flexible patterns of thinking and behavior and are more likely to seek novel solutions. Competitive dancing can develop cognitive and emotional processes

such as problem solving while moving, rapid adaptation, and aesthetic sense, which are related to the psychological foundations of creativity (Fink & Woschnjak, 2011; Kattenstroth et al., 2010; Torrents et al., 2015). These correlations fit well with complex, multidimensional models of creativity, according to which creativity is not solely a cognitive ability, but rather the combined result of motivation, emotional regulation, and behavioral flexibility (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Dance, especially in its competitive forms, creates an environment where these skills can develop dynamically through practice and performance experience.

As a complex artistic and movement activity, dance integrates physical, cognitive, and emotional processes, creating an experiential space that encourages novel solutions and improvisation (Fink & Woschnjak, 2011; Torrents et al., 2015). Competitive dance can particularly strengthen these skills, as choreographic challenges and stage performance situations require constant adaptation and aesthetic sensitivity (Kattenstroth et al., 2010; Kirsch et al., 2013). Although the results do not allow for causal conclusions, the consistently higher rate of creativity among dancers offers two possible interpretations: (1) dance as an activity develops cognitive and affective mechanisms related to creativity, or (2) individuals who are more creative choose dance as a form of self-expression. Both interpretations fit with the positive psychology approach, which suggests that experiential, meaningful, and structured activities—such as the arts—strengthen personal resources and character strengths (Niemiec & McGrath, 2019; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Based on data from the average Hungarian population, creativity is not among the most common character strengths (Zábó et al., 2023), so the higher proportion observed in the present sample is particularly noteworthy. This may suggest that dance, especially in its competitive form, can activate psychological mechanisms that support a more pronounced manifestation of creativity as a character strength compared to the average Hungarian population.

While creativity was more prominent among dancers, a different trend emerged in the case of honesty. The absence of this strength as a primary characteristic among competitive dancers is not necessarily considered negative, but rather may indicate that in a performance-oriented, regulated competitive environment, other values such as perseverance, discipline, or aesthetic realization come to the fore. This result does not reflect a lack of moral values but rather can be related to the specific symbolic and stylized forms of self-expression in dance. On stage, emotions are conveyed artistically, which differs from everyday, direct emotional sincerity (Levy, 1988). In a competition-oriented environment, the values of discipline, perseverance, and performance orientation, which emphasize other types of strengths, may play a greater role. Among hobbyists and non-dancers, the higher rate of honesty may indicate that their self-reflection is based more on personal relationships and authentic self-expression than on the role behavior expected in a competitive situation.

Overall, the differences clearly illustrate that the level and context of dance influence the prominence of psychological strengths. Based on research, dance—especially competitive or improvisational forms—develops cognitive and emotional processes (e.g., attentional flexibility, movement coordination, or aesthetic sensitivity) that can contribute to the stronger manifestation of certain psychological strengths, such as creativity (Fink & Woschnjak, 2011; Kirsch et al., 2013; Torrents et al., 2015). From a theoretical perspective, the results support the positive psychology thesis that artistic

and movement-based experiences can promote the development of character strengths and deepen self-reflection (Koch et al., 2019; Vormwald, 2020). Dance as an activity simultaneously develops body awareness, emotional involvement, and cognitive flexibility, which provides a favorable background for personal development and the formation of resilience (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Vormwald, 2020). The Hungarian validation of the VIA-H showed that character strengths are positively related to global well-being, flourishing, and indicators of psychological immunity (Zábó et al., 2023). Consequently, the dominance of creativity observed in the dancer sample may be potentially related to well-being and resilience processes that are often reinforced in artistic activities.

The practical implications are particularly relevant in the fields of dance education and art therapy. The conscious integration of a strength-based approach—for example, in the form of reflective movement exercises, strength journals, or personal goals—can contribute to increased self-confidence, motivation, and group cohesion among students (Quinlan et al., 2015; Valóczy, 2022). Especially in adolescence and young adulthood, when identity and self-identity are forming, dance can be an exceptionally effective tool for developing psychological strengths.

## 7 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The main limitation of the present research is the relatively small size and heterogeneity of the sample. The participants represented different dance styles, which may have influenced the development of character strengths and the comparability between groups. A further limitation is that the data were obtained from a self-reported psychological test, meaning that character strengths were determined based on the respondents' own perceptions, thus allowing for the possibility of subjective bias. To address these limitations, further studies should examine the relationship between dance and character strengths using a larger sample, covering multiple dance styles, and employing a longitudinal method.

Future research should utilize longitudinal and qualitative approaches to explore how character strengths change at different stages of a dancer's career and how dancers experience the development of their own strengths. Cross-cultural studies can further enrich our understanding of the relationship between dance and positive psychology. In particular, it would be useful to analyze the impact of dance education programs on the development of creativity and honesty, as well as to explore the potential of dance as a psychological intervention (Ghielen et al., 2017; Niemiec & McGrath, 2019).

## 8 SUMMARY

Based on the results of the present study, there was no statistically significant difference in the distribution of character strengths between the dancer and non-dancer groups in terms of current dancer status, dance experience, or competitive dance experience. This suggests that dance activity alone is not associated with comprehensive differences in personality structure. At the same time, a consistent pattern emerged in all of

the comparisons: creativity appeared as a primary character strength in a higher proportion of dancers, especially among competitive dancers, while honesty was more prevalent among hobby dancers or non-dancers. Although these differences did not reach statistical significance, the recurring trend suggests that the intensity of the dancing experience may be associated with a relative shift in the emphasis on character strengths.

It is important to emphasize that the cross-sectional nature of this study and the relatively small sample size do not allow for causal conclusions to be drawn. The higher rate of creativity among dancers can be interpreted as meaning that dancing develops or strengthens the psychological mechanisms associated with creativity, but it is also possible that those who are more creative to begin with choose dance as a form of self-expression. Similarly, the lower incidence of honesty among competitive dancers should not be viewed as a moral deficit, but rather as a different value hierarchy in a performance-oriented and regulated context.

Overall, the present study did not identify a general difference in character strengths, but rather a consistently higher rate of creativity in groups with dance experience. The results support the view that dance should be understood not merely as an artistic or sporting activity, but as a potential psychological resource. However, further longitudinal studies with larger samples are needed to confirm the patterns identified.

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