Transforming Lives through Dance
Movement Therapy

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PHD Research Proposal Abstract

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ABSTRACT:

Women and girl children in India are marginalized in terms of their access to social, political, and economic power. They also lack autonomy over their own lives and are often restricted from making daily decisions. Over the last 20 years, the situation has begun to change but in comparison to men, women are still suppressed by inequality and the societal view of women is yet in need of change/transformation. Gender inequality creates an imbalance in women and girl children and they become victims of the patriarchal society structure. Females face inequality, various forms of violence, and are often powerless from birth. This is a vicious cycle in which women and girl children are in the center, surrounded by patriarchy, violence, society systems, social rules, regulations, and vulnerability that continuously imply how powerless women are. How marginalized is a woman or a girl child? How much does society rule over them?

History has shown many examples of how women have broken the cycle to create their own path but again, the number of women who have successfully broken social protocols in comparison to men is very low. The feminist studies on women and gender such as Anupama Roy (2005), Nivedita Menon(2007,2012), Meenakshi Thapan (2009), provide an analysis on women rights in related to body, society, politics, voice and agency. These studies created a foundation to think further that how many times women must be tested? Society has forgotten that women are human. Why do women always need to struggle for their own human rights? Why do women always need to struggle for existence? Must they struggle for a lifetime?

Women’s bodies are judged in terms of their beautification, purity, impurity, sexual violence and abuse. Violence against women restricts female mobility. It hampers the autonomy and access of power of the female body. Sexual violence violates the body-mind boundaries of women: physically, emotionally, cognitive and socially. For females, often their bodies are controlled by society. For females, their bodies are often controlled by society.
What happens if a woman or girl child is a victim of sex trafficking, gender based violence, poverty, stigma, trauma, and cannot go back to her own home? Where will she go? What will come next in her life? To lead a life of autonomy and dignity, the body is an important tool.

My 18 years of experience to work I observed that gender based violence relates to stigma, shame, and guilt that is carried by women in their bodies, hence have an impact on their minds. They disassociate their bodies from their minds and this disassociation can have an incredibly negative impact. The pioneering work in the field of Dance Movement Therapy showed that Movement and dance are important tools to express both the body and the mind. They offer an experience of bodily liberation and freedom, which help to reintegrate the body and mind while helping an individual reengage in life with power and autonomy.

This research will examine survivors of sexual violence and human trafficking in West Bengal and the impact of dance movement therapy on their lives. The study will explore how dance movement therapy helps these survivors transform their lives in their psychosocial rehabilitation process.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Studies showed that counseling process with a creative element will play an effective role on survivors physical and mental health and support the other processes of rehabilitation. Holistic approach to recovery which includes the survivors physical, emotional cognitive and social development is not consider as mandatory practice in the entire process of psycho-social rehabilitation.

The entire literature review is divided into six areas. The first section will be focusing on the issue. The second section will introduce the background of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), which includes the evolution, pioneer’s history and DMT practice in India. The third section will focus on the Psychologist’s theory and other work influenced to build the theories and approaches of DMT. The fourth section will analyze how the impact of DMT is assessed. The fifth section will outline current studies, research of the use of DMT in psycho-social rehabilitation specifically with survivors of trafficking and sexual violence. Finally, a gap
analysis will be showcased to define what is missing in current literature, thus state the importance of this study and how it will proceed to contribute to the sector?

This research exists to bring to attention to the social benefits of dance movement therapy in psychosocial rehabilitation, where the method applies a holistic approach. In this process, the program participants (survivors of sexual violence and trafficking) become leaders, therapists and healers. To prove/recognize this method, the organization Kolkata Sanved is applied to establish the context. Kolkata Sanved is one of the pioneering organizations in India, using dance movement therapy for psychosocial rehabilitation.

Research Concerns:
- Redefining DMT and scope of DMT in the Indian Context.
- What are the key factors of healing and transformation in DMT?
- What are the key indicators to studying Impact?
- How DMT inclusively integrated in Psycho-social rehabilitation?
- How to develop a DMT model for social development?

The purpose of this thesis is to develop new school of thought and create indicators to work with survivors of sex trafficking and violence for their empowerment, transformation and reintegration through Dance Movement Therapy (DMT). Most of the time it has been seen that Art based intervention bring change in survivor’s life, but there is no set of indicators to map the change. I hope to have a better understanding of the survivor’s psycho-physical and psycho-social reintegration through DMT which may help to establish and create a new area in social development.

Major objective: To explore life transformation stories of the survivors of sex trafficking and violence who have experienced DMT, and develop indicators for studying the change processes. To also develop a model for DMT practice in the Indian context.

Specific objectives
- Pre DMT Socialization process (pre trauma, violence, trauma, interventions/support systems, coping mechanism, DMT and the whole process of DMT and its impact on people’s lives includes copying)
- Other support systems
- The social and survivors’ perspective of trauma
- The socialization process through DMT
- The motivation to DMT
- The experience in DMT
- The changes and empowerment they have experienced in life
- To develop indicators for assessing change through DMT.
- To develop a model for DMT practice in the Indian context

**Methodology:**
Since the objectives are related to understanding in depth processes and experiences of the respondents, the qualitative research methodology would be used. Case studies of individual survivors will be done. Purposeful sampling will be used to select the respondents. Sample size will be eight and two significant individuals in each participant’s life for better understanding the process of change. The semi structured interview and FGD guide has been designed to collect the data. Psychological tests may be used to support the data. The population will be Survivors of Human Trafficking and sexual violence and the setting will be in Kolkata Sanved, Kolkata.