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Peer Review

Review of: "Latin Partnered Social Dance and Well-Being in the Qualitative Literature: A Framework-Based Scoping Review"

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Summary

This preprint examines the relationship between Latin partnered social dance and well-being, with a particular focus on how participation may contribute to flourishing in adults outside clinical and therapeutic settings. The manuscript aims to map and interpret the existing qualitative academic literature on this topic through a framework-based scoping review.

The paper addresses a relevant issue within dance for health, positive psychology, leisure studies, and well-being research. Using the PAGER framework, the authors synthesise qualitative evidence from 11 included studies and organise their interpretation around patterns, advances, gaps, evidence for practice, and recommendations for future research. The discussion is further structured in relation to Seligman's PERMA model of flourishing, considering positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

Overall assessment

Overall, the manuscript addresses a relevant and timely topic within the fields of dance for health, well-being, leisure participation, and positive psychology. The focus on qualitative evidence is valuable, particularly given the experiential, relational, cultural, and embodied nature of Latin partnered social dance.

The review is promising and presents a thoughtful framework-based synthesis. However, several aspects require clarification before the findings can be fully interpreted. In particular, the manuscript would

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benefit from a clearer explanation of the added value of the qualitative focus and a more explicit discussion of the scope and transferability of the included evidence across different Latin dance styles.

Strengths

The manuscript has several notable strengths. First, it addresses a relevant and underexplored topic by focusing on the relationship between Latin partnered social dance and well-being from a qualitative perspective. This is particularly appropriate given the experiential, embodied, relational, and cultural dimensions of social dance participation.

Second, the use of the PAGER framework provides a clear structure for organising the synthesis and identifying patterns, advances, gaps, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. This framework-based approach helps make the review more systematic and transparent.

Third, Figure 1, presenting the qualitative researcher reflexivity questions discussed after data extraction and analysis, is a valuable addition to the manuscript. It helps readers understand the reflective process underpinning the analysis and is especially relevant given the authors' constructivist orientation and their position as insider-outsider researchers in the field.

Major comments

- ***Major comment 1: Clarifying the added value of the qualitative focus.*** In the Introduction and Rationale sections, the authors clearly identify a gap in the literature regarding qualitative explorations of well-being or flourishing through engagement in Latin partnered social dance. However, I suggest that the rationale for adopting a qualitative focus could be further strengthened. At present, the manuscript explains that previous reviews have largely summarised quantitative studies and have therefore embedded quantitative values and principles in their interpretation. Nevertheless, it remains somewhat unclear what a qualitative synthesis is expected to add beyond filling an underexplored gap in the literature.

I would encourage the authors to clarify more explicitly why qualitative evidence is particularly valuable for understanding well-being in the context of Latin partnered social dance. For example, qualitative research may offer insight into dancers' lived experiences, the meanings they attach to participation, the relational and cultural dimensions of partnered dance, and the subjective processes through which social dance may contribute to flourishing. Making this contribution clearer from the beginning of the manuscript would help readers better understand the added value of the review and its relevance within dance, health, and well-being research.

- ***Major comment 2: Scope of the included evidence and transferability across Latin dance styles.*** In the Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions section, the authors may wish to reflect more explicitly on the fact that the included studies appear to focus predominantly on salsa and salsa-related practices, such as rueda de casino, rather than representing the full range of Latin partnered social dances mentioned in the Introduction and research questions, such as bachata or merengue.

This issue is also reflected in the Conclusion, where the authors refer specifically to "Latin partnered social dance, specifically salsa," and discuss the significance of this genre as a culturally grounded health intervention for well-being promotion. While this clarification is helpful, it also suggests that the findings may be more strongly supported for salsa than for Latin partnered social dance as a broader category.

This has implications for the transferability of the review findings. Although salsa, bachata, and merengue may share certain social, relational, musical, and cultural features, they also differ in movement vocabulary, partner connection, social contexts, gender dynamics, cultural histories, and modes of participation. Therefore, experiences of well-being or flourishing identified in salsa dancers may not necessarily be directly extrapolated to dancers of other Latin partnered social dance forms.

I would encourage the authors to discuss whether the predominance of salsa-related studies reflects the current state of the qualitative literature, the search and eligibility criteria, or the authors' conceptual framing of Latin partnered social dance. This would strengthen the limitations section and help identify a clear direction for future research, particularly qualitative studies exploring well-being in bachata, merengue, and other Latin partnered social dance genres.

- ***Major comment 3: Clarifying the role of the PERMA framework in the interpretation of findings.*** The Discussion is clearly structured around Seligman's PERMA model, addressing positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment in relation to the included studies. This structure is useful and helps organise the findings coherently. However, I would encourage the authors to clarify more explicitly whether PERMA functioned as an a priori interpretive framework or whether the five dimensions emerged inductively from the qualitative literature reviewed.

At times, the discussion may give the impression that the findings are being fitted into the PERMA model rather than allowing space for other possible interpretations of well-being or flourishing to emerge from the included studies. A brief reflection on how the authors balanced their positive psychology framework

with the constructivist and qualitative nature of the review would strengthen the analytical transparency of the manuscript.

- ***Major comment 4: Caution regarding proposed physiological and biochemical mechanisms.*** The section addressing the secondary research question provides an interesting discussion of possible social psychological, physiological, and biochemical mechanisms through which Latin partnered social dance may contribute to well-being. However, I suggest that the authors moderate some of the language used in this section, as these mechanisms do not appear to be directly examined in the qualitative studies included in the review.

References to neurotransmitters, endorphins, serotonergic systems, and the endogenous opioid system may be useful as theoretical explanations, but they should be clearly presented as plausible mechanisms drawn from broader physical activity, leisure, music, and dance literature, rather than as findings derived from the included qualitative evidence. Clarifying this distinction would help avoid overextending the conclusions of the scoping review and would better align the discussion with the qualitative nature of the included studies.

Minor comments

- ***Minor comment 1: Broader engagement with external literature.*** The Introduction would benefit from a broader engagement with external literature on Latin dance, social dance, dance for health, and well-being. While the sources currently cited are relevant, incorporating a wider range of independent studies would help strengthen the theoretical framework and situate the review more clearly within the broader academic literature. This would also allow the authors to better demonstrate how the present review builds on, extends, or differs from previous research in the field.

- ***Minor comment 2: Clarification of the study objective***. The objective would benefit from some clarification to ensure consistency with the research gap presented in the Introduction and Rationale sections. The manuscript indicates that qualitative explorations of well-being or flourishing through Latin partnered social dance remain underdeveloped, yet the current wording of the objective refers to exploring whether and how participation contributes to well-being "as demonstrated within the qualitative academic literature." This phrasing may give the impression that the qualitative evidence base is already sufficiently established or demonstrative.

The authors may wish to revise this wording to better reflect the exploratory and mapping purpose of a scoping review. For example, terms such as “as explored,” “as reported,” “as described,” or “as represented” in the qualitative academic literature may be more appropriate than “as demonstrated.”

- ***Minor comment 3: Earlier clarification of the selected Latin dance styles.*** The research questions are relevant and clearly aligned with the overall aim of the review. However, the manuscript would benefit from an earlier clarification of why salsa, bachata, and merengue are the specific genres highlighted within the broader category of Latin partnered social dance. Although the Methodology section later provides further explanation regarding the exclusion of genres such as Argentine tango, Brazilian samba, and Standard/Latin ballroom, this clarification appears only after the research questions have already narrowed the focus to salsa, bachata, and merengue.

Given that several other Latin or Latin American partnered social dances exist, the research question may initially generate some ambiguity as to whether these three genres are being used as illustrative examples or as the actual boundaries of the review. I would therefore suggest briefly clarifying this point earlier, either in the Introduction or immediately before the research questions. This would help avoid potential confusion and strengthen the conceptual transparency of the review from the outset.

- ***Minor comment 4: Clarification of the Results/Findings structure.*** The organisation of the manuscript would benefit from a clearer distinction between the methodological description of the analytical process and the presentation of the review findings. The section “Data Extraction and Analysis” appropriately describes how data were charted and interpreted using the PAGER framework. However, the subsequent section titled “Analysis” appears to present the results of the review, including the identification of included studies, academic discipline and research design, geographic origin, study population, epistemology, data collection methods, and study outcomes.

Since the manuscript does not include a clearly labelled “Results” or “Findings” section, readers may find it difficult to distinguish between the methods used to conduct the analysis and the findings derived from that analysis. I would suggest renaming the “Analysis” section as “Results,” “Findings,” or “Review Findings,” with subsections such as “Included studies,” “Study characteristics,” and “Study outcomes.” This would improve the readability of the manuscript and help clarify the transition from methods to findings.

- ***Minor comment 5: Clarification of dance style variants included within the review scope.*** The manuscript would benefit from earlier clarification regarding whether variants or substyles of the main dance

genres are included within the scope of Latin partnered social dance. For example, one of the included studies focuses on rueda de casino, which is later defined in Table 1 as a multi-couple style of salsa originating from Havana, Cuba. While its inclusion seems reasonable within the broader salsa/casino tradition, this point could be clarified earlier in the Concept section or in the eligibility criteria.

If the review includes not only salsa, bachata, and merengue as broad genres, but also recognised variants or substyles within these traditions, this should be explicitly stated. For instance, the authors could clarify whether forms such as rueda de casino, Cuban salsa/casino, salsa on 1/on 2, or different bachata styles would be considered eligible when they meet the review's social, recreational, and non-clinical criteria. This would improve transparency and ensure consistency in how the conceptual boundaries of Latin partnered social dance are applied.

- ***Minor comment 6: Moderating the strength of causal language in the Discussion.*** The Discussion provides a rich synthesis of how Latin partnered social dance may be associated with different dimensions of flourishing. However, some statements could be phrased more cautiously to better reflect the exploratory and qualitative nature of the review. For example, expressions suggesting that participation "does indeed lead to" positive emotion or that certain mechanisms "likely explain" improvements in well-being may imply a stronger causal interpretation than the included qualitative evidence can support.

I would suggest using more cautious wording, such as "may contribute to," "appears to be associated with," "was interpreted as supporting," or "may help explain." This would preserve the strength of the authors' interpretation while ensuring that the conclusions remain proportionate to the type of evidence reviewed.

Conclusion

I greatly enjoyed reading this manuscript, not only because it addresses a relevant and underexplored topic, but also because I am personally passionate about Latin partnered social dance. I found the article engaging and valuable, and I appreciate the authors' effort to conduct research in an area that I consider both meaningful and necessary.

I hope that my comments are received as constructive suggestions intended to further strengthen the manuscript. Overall, I believe that the article has considerable potential and makes a valuable contribution to the literature on dance, health, well-being, and flourishing. I am grateful for the

opportunity to review this work and would like to thank the authors for advancing research in this important field.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.