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INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' INTENTION FOR POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN A "MUSIC AND DANCE" DISTANCE EDUCATION MASTER PROGRAM

Dimitrios GOULIMARIS,
Evangelos BEBETSOS
School of Physical Education & Sports Science
Democritus University of Thrace
Komotini, Hellas, GREECE

ABSTRACT

The study uses the "theory of planned behavior" as a theoretical framework. The aim of this research is to ascertain if the demographic characteristics of students differentiate the factors of "planned behavior theory" concerning students' participation in a music and dance distance education master program. The sample consisted of 96 University undergraduate students with Major in Physical Education and Minor in Dance Studies, between the ages of 20-22. Planned behavior was assessed using the modified questionnaire, based on "planned behavior theory". The results confirmed that women express a stronger intention to participate in a "music and dance" distance education master program, than men. Further, students who had previous dance experience present higher levels of self identity and attitude strength. It is also confirmed that students who acquired their previous dance experience in dance clubs are more certain about participating in a "music and dance" distance education master programs than students who acquired their experience at school.

Keywords: **planned behavior theory, distance education, dance, music**

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, research focused on the relation of attitudes to behavior. According to the "theory of planned behavior", behavior is predated by an intention. The probability of performing a specific behavior is referred to as 'behavioral intention'. The stronger a person's intention, the greater the chance for that person to act on that intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Intention is determined by a combination of:

- **attitude towards the behavior (that is, a positive or negative predisposition towards a specific behavior) and**
- **subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972). These subjective norms represent:**
  - **behavioral beliefs (which reflect attitude towards the behavior); and**
  - **normative beliefs (which reflect social factors). Each behavioral belief reflects whether important others would approve or disapprove of the behavior (Tesser & Shaffer, 1990).**

Additionally, according to the theory (Ajzen, 1987; 1988), the execution of behavior does not relate only to the person's intentions. Although behavior can be totally under subjects' control, in most cases numerous situations/conditions are present which have an effect on person's decisions to execute that particular behavior. Such obstacles can be internal factors, such as agility, knowledge, and planning, or external factors, such as time, opportunity, cooperation with others, and so on (Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

Two variables have been added to the main model of "planned behavior theory" to predict exercise behavior (Theodorakis, 1994). These variables are self identity, a particular represents a particular social object that represents a dimension of the self, and attitude strength, a variable that expresses how positive, strong, and important are the attitudes towards a given behavior. Self identity serves as a link between the individual self and society (Callero, 1985). The concept is based on Burke's identity theory (1980) in which an individual's self-concept is organised into a hierarchy of role identities that correspond to one's position in the social structure. These might include being a parent, a spouse, a teacher or an employee (Charng et al, 1988).

Investigators have already used the "theory of planned behavior" is to predict numerous behaviors: intention to participate in sports and physical activities (Godin & Shephard, 1986), intention of pregnant women to exercise after giving birth (Godin et al, 1989), participation in sports and physical activities (Theodorakis et al, 1995; Theodorakis, 1994). Also, for healthy and unhealthy behaviours such as dieting (Povey et al, 2000), alcohol use (Rise & Wilhelmson, 1998), safer sex (Sheeran et al, 1999), health screening (Armitage & Conne, 2001; Sheeran et al, 2001) smoking, exercising, and eating-habit domains (Sheeran & Orbell, 2000; Bebetsos et al, 2002; Bebetsos et al, 2003), moral judgment (Bebetsos & Konstantoulas, 2006) and for distant education (Goulimaris et al, 2008).

A kind of behavior that can be studied in the frame of the "theory of planned behavior" is the participation of students in a music and dance distance education master program. The distinction between art and science, the connection of dancing with well-being and the satisfaction of psychological needs (Goulimaris et al, 2014) as well as the broader perception that dance is a pleasant, light activity, deprived it from a more scientific approach and study.

In Greece, the existing choices to attend pre-graduate studies on dance are limited. In the tertiary education there is no dance department or an educational program exclusively for dancing. The needs concerning this specific subject field are partially covered by the program offered by the Hellenic National School of Dance and the private dance schools, while the creation of an autonomous dance department in the School of Fine Arts of the Peloponnese University has only been announced.

A significant development for the study of dance on a university level has been the creation of the department of Physical Education and Sport Science which gives students the opportunity to specialize in Hellenic traditional dances (Serbezis, 1995). Although this specialization has been part of a more general educational program, it has instigated the transaction of a series of scientific researches (Goulimaris, 1998; Kardaris, 2002; Koutsoumbas, 1997; Lantzos, 2003; Lykesas, 2002; Serbezis, 1995; Tyrovola, 1994; Zografou, 1989;).

The only course in the tertiary education concerning Greek dance and music, which is taught with the distance education method, is carried out by the Hellenic Open University and it is an option for the fourth year students attending "Hellenic Civilization" (Bebetsos & Goulimaris 2014).

The study of dance acquires new potentials with the adoption of innovative methods of education, like distance education and the use of new technologies.

Nonetheless, the nature of the subject i.e. the increasing demands for the acquisition of new kinetic dexterities and the need for a personal guidance of the trainee creates certain difficulties in relation to the distance education method (Goulimaris et al, 2008).

The lack of exclusive dance programs is also obvious on a post-graduate level, with the exception of the course "Folklore – Dance Anthropology" which is included in the post-graduate syllabus of the department of Physical Education and Sport Science of Athens University ("University of Athens").

The establishment of an autonomous dance department as well as the creation of postgraduate cycle of studies concerning dance is the only way to cover the corresponding educational needs. The positive attitude of the students on the creation of such a department and their intention to participate in master studies has been ascertained by previous researches (Goulimaris et al, 2002).

The aim of this research is to ascertain whether the "planned behavior theory" of the students i.e. their attitudes, intention, self identity and strength attitude concerning their participation in a music and dance distance education master program are altered by their demographic characteristics such as gender, previous dance experience and the way it was acquired.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of 96 University undergraduate students with Major in Physical Education and Minor in Dance Studies, between the ages of 20-22 (M=21.18, SD=.665) (Table: 1).

Table: 1
Participants' Descriptive Statistics

Male		Female	
27 (28.1%)		69 (71.9%)	
Previous Dance Experience			
Yes		No	
78 (81.3%)		18 (18.8%)	
Years of Experience			
1	2	3	4
13 (13.5 %)	16 (16.7%)	32 (33.3%)	35 (36.5%)
Gained Experience			
School		Dancing Club	
60 (62.5%)		36(37.5%)	

Instrumentation

Planned behavior was assessed using the modified questionnaire (Bebetsos & Konstantoulas, 2006), based on "planned behavior theory" (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Theodorakis, 1994).

The questionnaire included questions on:

Attitudes

Attitude toward behavior was determined by the question "For me to participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program is...". Responses were rated on a 7-point scale, on five bipolar adjectives (good-bad, foolish-smart, useful-unuseful, nice-ugly, & pleasant-unpleasant).

Intention

Intention was estimated by the total score on the responses to three different items: "I intend/I will try/ I am determined to participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program". Responses to the first item were rated on a 7-point scale from likely to unlikely. A 7-point scale with endpoints labeled yes, sure to not at all, was used for the other two items.

Self-Identity

Four items were used to measure self-identity. The items were: "I consider myself to be able to participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program"; "I consider myself a person that will participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program"; "It's in my character (temperament) to participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program"; "Generally, I am the type who is going to participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program". Responses were given on 7-point scales agree-disagree.

Attitude Strength

Eight items were used to measure attitude strength. The items were: "Is it for sure that you are going participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program?"; "Is it right for you to participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program?"; "I feel very sure that I will participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program"; "Is it important for you personally, to participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program?"; "How interested are you in participating next year in "music and dance" distance education master program?"; "For me to participate next year in a "music and dance" distance education master program is..."; "With the knowledge I have, I think I will participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program"; "Do you find it interesting to participate next year in "music and dance" distance education master program?".

Responses were given on 7-point scales, for the first item very sure-very unsure, for the second item not at all-very much so, for the third item agree-disagree, for the fourth item very important-not important at all, for the fifth item very much-not at all, for the sixth item not at all-very much so, for the seventh item I agree-I disagree and for the last item very much so-not at all.

Additionally, in the end of the questionnaire sample indicated gender, previous dance experience, years of experience, and how this experience was gained (table 1).

Measurement Procedure

The method chosen to conduct the research was that of self-completed questionnaire. Researcher informed all subjects that their participation was completely voluntary and the individual responses would be held in strict confidence.

Statistical analyses

Initially, descriptive statistics were performed. Additionally, Univariate Anova Analyses were also introduced in order to examine any possible sample differences.

RESULTS

Psychometric Characteristics

Using the Cronbach coefficient α internal consistency, the results showed that: for "Attitudes" was .85, for "Intention" .85, for "Self-identity" .89, for "Attitude Strength" .94. All values are over .60 so reliability is accepted.

Univariate Anova Analyses

Gender and Previous Dance Experience

Univariate analyses were conducted in order to find any type of gender and/or previous dance experience related differences.

The analyses revealed statistically significant differences in both gender and dance experience variables:

- **For the factor "Intention" ($F_{1.96}$= 3.50; p< 0.05). More specifically, the post hoc multiple comparisons Bonferonni test indicated the differences only between the women (M=3.33, SD=.27), and men (M=2.45, SD=.39).**
- **For the factor "Self-Identity" ($F_{1.96}$= 7.07; p< 0.01). More specifically, the post hoc multiple comparisons Bonferonni test indicated the differences only between the experienced group (M=4.12, SD=.20), and the inexperienced group (M=2.97, SD=.39).**
- **For the factor "Attitude Strength" ($F_{1.96}$= 4.03; p< 0.05). More specifically, the post hoc multiple comparisons Bonferonni test indicated the differences only between the experienced group (M=3.99, SD=.19), and the inexperienced group (M=3.16, SD=.37).**

Gender and How Previous Dance Experience was Gained

Univariate analyses were conducted in order to find any type of gender and/or how previous dance experience was gained related differences.

The analyses revealed statistically significant differences only in the variable of how past experience was gained:

- **For the factor "Intention" ($F_{1.96}$= 25.1; p< 0.001). More specifically, the post hoc multiple comparisons Bonferonni test indicated the differences only between the people with experience through school (M=2.48, SD=.21), and the people with experience in dance clubs (M=4.32, SD=.30).**
- **For the factor "Self-Identity" ($F_{1.96}$= 13.1; p< 0.001). More specifically, the post hoc multiple comparisons Bonferonni test indicated the differences only between the people with experience through school (M=3.45, SD=.21), and the people with experience in dance clubs (M=4.79, SD=.30).**

- **For the factor "Attitude Strength" ($F_{1.96}$=15.72; p< 0.001). More specifically, the post hoc multiple comparisons Bonferonni test indicated the differences only between the people with experience through school (M=3.37, SD=.20), and the people with experience in dance clubs (M=4.74, SD=.28).**

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research is to ascertain if the demographic characteristics of students such as gender, previous experience and the way it was acquired differentiate the factors of "planned behavior theory" concerning students' participation in a music and dance distance education master program.

The results confirmed that the intention of students is differentiated according to their gender.

Women express a stronger intention to participate in a "music and dance distance" education master program, than men. This confirmation is in opposition to the results of a similar research on dancing (Goulimaris et al, 2008) and in computer usage and physical activity (Bebetsos & Antoniou, 2009), and are in accordance with the general perception of society that dancing is a rather female occupation.

In addition, it seems that the students who had previous dance experience present higher levels of self identity and attitude strength, which means that they consider participating in a distance education, master program on music and dance is part of their identity and they feel more secure about participating.

This attitude agrees with the results of a similar research (Goulimaris et al, 2008) and confirms the point of view that knowledge of the subject and increased dance ability due to previous experience contribute to the students' capability and certainty about participating in corresponding educational programs. Similar results were found in previous research concerning athletic behavior (Bebetsos et al, 2004) and computer use (Bebetsos et al, 2007).

It is also confirmed that students who acquired their previous dance experience in dance clubs are more certain about participating in corresponding master programs than students who acquired their experience at school. What is more, those who learned dancing in dance clubs feel that participating in master programs is part of their identity and are willing to realize it more than the others.

This specific confirmation comes from the fact that dancing is only a small part of the syllabus and the subject of Physical Education at schools.

Children usually learn how to dance in dance clubs, where there is greater specialization in various dance styles (Pitsiakou et al, 2002).

BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESS OF THE AUTHORS

Dimitrios GOULIMARIS, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at the Shcool of Physical Education and Sport Science of Democritus University of Thrace. He is coordinator and tutor at the Hellenic Open University. He graduated from the PE Department of Democritus University of Thrace. He completed his MA in adult education and his postgraduate diploma in distance learning education in Hellenic Open University. He also completed his M.A. in sciences of management of free time and cultural activities in the Vrije Universiteit of Brussel. He awarded a doctorate in cultural management from Democritus University of Thrace. He has studied the Labanotation system in the Labanotation Institute of University of Surrey. He is member of several scientific and cultural clubs. His researching job includes more than 130 scientific presentations in congresses and publications.

Dimitrios GOULIMARIS, Associate Professor (Correspondence author)
School of Physical Education & Sport Science,
Democritus University of Thrace,
University Campus, 69100 Komotini, GREECE
Tel.: +306937080878
Fax: +30 25310 39623
Email: dgoulima@phyed.duth.gr

Evangelos BEBETSOS, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Education and Sport Science at Democritus University of Thrace in Greece. His main area of interest and research is Sport and Exercise Psychology. He teaches the undergraduate courses of sport psychology, applied sport psychology on performance maximization, rehabilitation counseling, badminton, as well as the graduate courses of developmental psychology and rehabilitation counseling.

Evangelos BEBETSOS, Assistant Professor
Department of Physical Education & Sports Science
Democritus University of Thrace
Komotini, 69100, Hellas, GRECEE
Tel.: +3025310-39712
Fax: +3025310-39723
Email: empempet@phyed.duth.gr

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