

The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational and Social Sciences (EPESS), 2026

Volume 50, Pages 26-42

ICoNSED 2026: International Conference on Special Education and Diversity

The Role of Contemporary Dance as an Affective Stimulus: Critical Analysis in Psychoanalytic and Art Perspectives

Intan Damayanti

Yogyakarta State University

Kasiyan Kasiyan

Yogyakarta State University

Abstract: Contemporary dance has become an increasingly interesting subject in this modern era. However, many people still do not understand that contemporary dance can function as an affective stimulus and is closely related to psychology. The purpose of this article is to examine and analyze the role of contemporary dance as an affective stimulus by exploring the relationship between art, psychology, and psychoanalysis. This study uses a qualitative approach method through critical analysis. The results show that contemporary dance is not only considered a form of artistic expression that focuses on freedom in the creation and exploration of movement, but also serves as a medium and a means to express deep emotions as well as reflect on human psychological dynamics. From a psychoanalytic perspective, dance is considered a process of sublimation and emotional therapy that can bridge the gap between unconscious impulses and human physical expression. In this case, the dancer's body acts as a container for the representation of inner conflict, traumatic experiences, and the process of self-healing, which is expressed through the symbolism of movement, space, and intensity of expression. Through the creative process of contemporary dance creation, dancers and choreographers can pour their expressions and emotions into the movement and then channel it to the audience. From a pedagogical perspective, an understanding of the artistic and psychological dimensions of contemporary dance can encourage educators to develop learning strategies that integrate technical, affective, and aesthetic aspects in a balanced manner, so that they can understand dance as a medium of affective communication, self-exploration, and profound personal transformation.

Keywords: Contemporary dance, Affective stimulus, Psychoanalysis, Emotional expression, Art education

Introduction

Contemporary dance is a form of performing art that is present and functions as a response to the limitations and standards of classical and modern dance rules. Berman (2008, as cited in Kwan, 2017) states that in the realm of performance, the term contemporary dance is often used interchangeably which we know as the terms modern, postmodern, experimental, and conceptual both in the context of period and form. The word contemporary itself means "present", meaning that this dance has a function as a form of human experience in its time. Unlike traditional dance, which is very tied to certain cultural norms that focus on movement techniques, besides that through contemporary dance, dancers and choreographers have a very wide space of freedom to explore ideas, expressions and burdens in the human body

There are many characteristics of contemporary dance. One of the main characteristics of contemporary dance is the freedom to explore and express ideas, movements and anything related to the work that you want to create, and also

- This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

- Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the Conference

© 2026 Published by ISRES Publishing: www.isres.org

in terms of expression and expression of feelings. The body, which is considered a tool of movement and expression of the whole body, no longer has limitations on the standard and rigid choreographic structure. The movements created can be formed from everyday bodily experiences, direct improvisation, and experimentation from various forms of art. The existence of symbols in a movement becomes more prominent, this is because it is through symbols that dancers and choreographers can convey philosophical ideas, deep emotions, or social criticism that they want to convey. Just like other dances, contemporary dance of course also often utilizes dance elements such as themes, movements, patterns, space, properties, and experimental music, to combine them with multimedia technology, so as to present innovative and communicative performances. This statement is supported by the opinion of Martha Bremser in her book *Fifty Contemporary Choreographer* (2020, p. 7) who states that: "Contemporary choreography is a work created through the exploration of everyday movements, disorganized and irregular performances, for example dances with the theme of intercourse tasks, which use objects literally, and processes that involve elements in the performance, in which there is no narrative and emotion, and avoidance of high expression to get the attention of the audience".

If you look at previous research, this contemporary dance has undergone many changes and developments, namely from tradition to modern dance that first appeared in the first century of the 20th century as a manifestation and tangible form of resistance to existing artistic formalities, one of the real examples is the art of ballet. *Cunningham-Space__time-Libre*, (n.d.) who was one of the most important figures of the century, said that motion had freedom without having to follow music and other rules.

As we know, contemporary dance in Indonesia acquires its own form by uniting local cultural values with modern freedom. Like Bagong Kussudiardja who is known as a pioneer who dares to explore traditional dance forms with a contemporary touch in Indonesia. It is also supported by other artists such as Eko Supriyanto, where according to him by adding or expanding the knowledge of contemporary Indonesian dance with works of art that not only focus on the aesthetics of movement, but also can see and respond to issues in Indonesia such as social issues, politics, to globalization and existing developments. This can be one of the factors for Indonesian contemporary dance to look unique, because it always departs from tradition but still looks open to modernity and the development of the times so that it can follow market demand and become a work that is not monotonous. Abdurakhman & Sunarti, (2023)

Contemporary Dance is a dance work that is created today through a cultivation process that is not tied to any peculiarities and does not imitate an existing tradition or work". Contemporary dance also has quite a lot of functions and is not just an aesthetic spectacle. In addition, contemporary dance plays a big role as a medium and a tool of emotional expression, which is a forum for dancers and choreographers to pour out ideas or inner experiences that are difficult to express in words. If we look at it from the perspective of the audience, contemporary dance creates and clarifies affective experiences, namely a person's personal experience both in terms of feelings, emotions that may be experienced by many people and also arouses empathy, even opening up space for reflection on the issues raised. More than that, contemporary dance also has therapeutic value, as its movements can be a means of catharsis, release of tension, as well as psychological healing. Anisa et al. (n.d.) "In realizing a work of art, it is very necessary to have a critical, creative, and imaginative way of thinking because it is a fundamental part of a choreographer's exploration and creativity process in realizing unusual phenomena that often occur in life". This means that in this case it is also necessary to have things related to human psychology, which can be created based on life experiences that can be interpreted through a work.

From the description above, it can be concluded that contemporary dance can be seen and understood as a performing art that is quite rich in meaning and relevance. It is not only seen as a medium of entertainment in performance but also as a form of human life that is very complex. Nowadays, one of the art forms that is quite dynamic and transformative is contemporary dance which is able to create an artistic space where aesthetics, expressions, symbols, and psychic reflections become a whole unit. Tabrani (2019, as cited in Alfiyanto, 2024) explains human abilities, where every human has three main abilities, namely creative abilities, physical abilities, ratio abilities, and imagination.

Viewed from the perspective framework of psychoanalysis, this approach traces human thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and emotions through an understanding of the subconscious. This statement is supported by Sigmund Freud (1958) in his book who stated that psychoanalysis is concerned with the explanation and cure of so-called nervous disorders. In the context of contemporary dance art, psychoanalysis can be understood as an attempt to see dance as a means of symbolizing the unconscious *drive* that often cannot be expressed in daily life. Reflexive or spontaneous, fragmentary, or repetitive gestures, can be interpreted as a real form of the human psyche, such as the expression of id, ego, or

superego. Through this perspective, contemporary dance is not only seen as a beautiful container, but also a therapeutic vehicle that is able to connect the dancer with the audience or the artist with the unconscious aspect within them. The subconscious is one of the main forms of psychoanalytic study discovered by Sigmund Freud, so if it is associated with dance, especially contemporary, there is a lot that can be learned about the relationship between art, the human mind and his subconscious Conant, (2016) in his research stated that "Art studies oriented to psychoanalysis often try to study and analyze the meaning of the works created, as well as studying how the artist tries to understand the conflict or big problem, the passion and dynamics of his subconscious".

As we know, movement in contemporary dance always presents symbols that represent inner conflict, trauma, longing, and psychological healing efforts. These symbols function as a container to pour all forms of problems that allow dancers to channel unconscious feelings and emotions through the sublimation process, as well as presenting an emotional experience that can trigger emotional vibrations in the audience or known as affective resonance in the human body. Chaiklin and Wengrower (2009) stated that the psychotropic aspect of dance movements is very important, this is because in dance movements there is an entrance into experiences that are usually difficult to explore and trace because there are traumatic events in a person's life. Through this, contemporary dance performances can be seen and understood not only as spectacles, but also as affective experiences that touch the deepest layers of human feeling. Therefore, it is important to conduct a critical study of the role of contemporary dance as an affective stimulus, especially in the perspective of psychoanalysis and art.

This study will open up a deeper understanding of how dance works are not only aesthetic and entertaining, but also function as human psychic mirrors, spaces of creative sublimation, and bridges of emotional communication between dancers, works, and audiences. Based on the presentation in the previous section, there are several issues that need to be studied further. Therefore, this study formulates the following problems, (1) the essence and characteristics of contemporary dance, (2) the relevance of contemporary dance in the context of art as a medium of psychological expression, (3) the role of contemporary dance as an affective stimulus when viewed from the perspective of psychoanalysis.

Method

Research Approach

Research methods are a form of research efforts to obtain goals and solutions to the problems studied. The research method also provides stages in scientific knowledge which consists of data sources, research time, population and samples. On this occasion, the author uses a qualitative research approach with a critical analysis method. The author chooses a qualitative approach because this approach focuses on understanding concepts, ideas, and interpretations that are relevant to the discussion being studied. This statement is supported by Rukhmana and Darwis (2022) who states that research is always refined to overcome life attitudes and ways of thinking that are not in accordance with the times and developments. In contrast to Rukhmana, John Creswell (2008, as cited in Raco, 2010) said that research is a gradual and cyclical process that is followed by the identification of the problem or issue to be researched. So it can be concluded that the research method is a design and scientific activity that is planned, structured, systematic and has certain objectives both practically and theoretically. It is said to be a form of scientific activity because research is an aspect of science and theory that is planned and followed systematically. There are several objectives in qualitative research, namely in the form of understanding the facts that exist in society through facts that are completely reviewed. Creswell (2014, as cited in Abdussamad et al., 2024) research methods can be interpreted as the steps, techniques, and procedures used by researchers to plan and conduct research as well as to interpret the data obtained."

Types and Sources of Data

The data collection technique in this study is designed to capture the emotional dynamics and *unconscious discourse* of contemporary dance as a whole. After the research focus was determined, the researcher operationalized three complementary data collection techniques to ensure the depth of psychoanalytic and aesthetic analysis. First, the researcher conducted direct field observations to record the intensity of the dancers' movements and stage elements

that triggered affective stimulus. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with key practitioners and audiences to uncover the inner experiences and psychological ideas behind the work. Finally, the researcher applied a documentation study to dissect the psychoanalytic literature and staging archives. These three techniques are used in an integrated manner so that each data obtained can reinforce each other and provide a comprehensive picture of affective phenomena in this performance. The informants in this study are: (a) choreographers/directors, related to the process of sublimation and the concept of creation, (b) dancers, related to *embodied experiences* and emotional release, (c) audiences, related to affective perception and catharsis, (d) psychologists/art critics, related to theoretical validation. To obtain valid data, the researcher used the following techniques:

Observation

Observation is an action that is carried out through direct observation of an object or problem with the aim of obtaining the information needed. Observation is observation that is carried out carefully and systematically. In accordance with the needs of the research, the author conducted direct observations and indirect observations. This is done to obtain the data needed by the author for research. In this case, the purpose of direct observation conducted by the author is to see empirical factual descriptions of the intensity of movement, expression, and atmosphere of the contemporary dance stage being studied. The indirect observation carried out by the author is by looking at various information through data, such as image data and video recordings of the dance to be studied. The researcher directly observed the course of the performance, the emotional interaction that was built, and the affective response of the audience without being involved in the course of the production.

Interview

An interview is an interaction between two or more people with the aim of obtaining information. In this study, the author conducted direct interviews with resource persons or informants (Choreographers, Dancers, Audiences, Art Critics) using interview guidelines to explore critical thinking about the process of emotional transformation, subconscious memory, and psychic experiences that arise during the process of creation to contemporary dance performance.

Documentation

The documentation technique in this study is applied as a systematic effort to collect and dissect archives and written documents relevant to the object of study. In contrast to field observations, documentation studies focus on tracing authentic secondary data to strengthen the validity of psychoanalytic analysis. In the context of this contemporary dance performance, the researcher collected various key documents which include: First, artistic documents in the form of choreographic notes, synopsis of the work, and reflective journals of the choreographer's creative process. These documents are important for understanding the initial draft of emotional ideas before they are expressed through the body. Third, documentation studies also include searches of scientific articles, art criticism in the mass media, and literature on psychoanalytic theories (such as the works of Freud, Jung, or Lacan) and affective theory. The use of these documents serves to establish a comparative framework between psychological theoretical concepts and the practice of art that occurs in the field. By dissecting these archives, researchers can ensure that the analysis of affective stimuli is based on strong textual and historical data, rather than mere momentary observations.

Research Instruments

In this qualitative research, research instruments are divided into two main categories, namely human instruments as key instruments, and technical support instruments. With the existence of a research instrument, it will be known the source of data to be studied and the type of data, the data collection technique, the steps to prepare the research instrument and know the validity and inhibition of a data in the research.

Researcher as a Key Instrument (*Human Instrument*)

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the main instrument (*key instrument*). As emphasized by Kothari (2004), qualitative researchers must have the ability to provide subjective judgments based on deep insights and impressions. In the context of this research, the researcher plays a full role as a planner, data collection implementer, analyst, and critical interpreter. The researcher uses his theoretical (psychoanalytic) and aesthetic sensitivity to capture the phenomenon of "unconscious" and affective turmoil that manifests in the freedom of movement of contemporary dance, a psychological and artistic nuance that cannot be captured by statistical instruments or mechanical devices alone.

Supporting Instruments (Auxiliary Instruments)

Supporting instruments are used as a tool to minimize excessive subjectivity and ensure the validity of the data, the researcher uses the following supporting instruments:

1. *Structured Observation Guidelines*: This instrument is specifically designed to dissect aspects of emotional interaction and body expression. The focus of observation includes: a. The elements of motion (quality of energy, space, and time) that trigger tension or release of emotions (catharsis). b. The impact of supporting elements (music, lighting) on the creation of an affective atmosphere. c. The effectiveness of certain scenes in representing narratives of trauma, desire, or inner conflict.
2. *Semi-Structured Interview Guidelines*: The researcher uses a flexible question draft but remains focused on the core issue. This allows the informant to provide information openly about the subconscious impulses when creating movements, trauma that may be sublimated, and the inner experience of the audience. Through this instrument, researchers can dig up data on the psychological reasons behind the expression of art.
3. *Digital Documentation Devices and Field Notes*: High-quality digital cameras and *smartphones* are used to document every crucial emotional moment in the performance. This documentation serves as a static archive that allows researchers to conduct detailed *re-observation* of the dancers' facial expressions and micro-expressions. In addition, field notebooks are used to record spontaneous impressions and unique psychological phenomena that arise during observation.

Validity of Data

The validity of the data is used to ensure the originality of the findings; the researcher applies the triangulation technique. In this critical analysis, triangulation is not just a re-checking technique, but an attempt to dissect phenomena from various points of view in order to uncover the complexity of the relationship between contemporary dance and psychoanalysis.

Source Triangulation

The researchers compared data obtained from various informants who have different roles in the staging ecosystem. Source triangulation is the *cross-checking* of data by comparing facts from one source to another. This is done to find common ground or even a crucial point of difference for critical analysis.

- (1) *Creator Perspective (Choreographer)*: Exploring the aspects of aesthetic idealism and unconscious motives behind the creation of movement. The researcher found out whether this work was a form of sublimation of certain psychic experiences,
- (2) *Perspective of the Performer (Dancer)*: Examining the *embodied experience* of the dancers. This data is used to verify whether the dancer is actually experiencing an emotional transition (catharsis) when dancing the piece or simply performing a kinesthetic routine.

(3) *Expert Perspective (Psychologist/Art Critic)*: Involves the views of academics to provide an objective and theoretical framework in reading the symbols of dance movement as the language of the soul,

(4) *Public Perspective (Audience)*: Assessing the effectiveness of dance as an affective stimulus. Does the emotional turmoil that the choreographer wants to convey succeed in triggering an affective response (empathy/sadness/tension) in the audience?

Triangulation Technique

The researcher cross-referenced the data obtained through different techniques to ensure the consistency of the field findings. Triangulation techniques mean using different data collection to obtain data from the same data source. Researchers used participatory observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation for the same data sources simultaneously.

If the informant (choreographer) states that a particular scene aims to represent a sense of depression or confinement, the researcher will prove it through direct observation on stage. Data from the video recording of the performance was analyzed repeatedly. The results of this video analysis were then compared with field notes made during the performance. This process is crucial for evaluating body language details that are missed by the naked eye during live performances. The findings of the field were again confronted with psychoanalytic theories (such as Freud's theory of *Id*, *Ego*, *Superego* or Affectation theory) to see if the emotional phenomena on the stage were in line with the construction of the theory of art psychology.

Data Analysis Techniques

This study applies an interactive data analysis model as developed by Miles & Huberman (2014). This model consists of three main activity flows, namely: *Data Condensation*, *Data Display*, and *Conclusion Drawing/Verification*. The use of data condensation aims to process, select, simplify, and transform data sourced from field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical findings. Through this process, the resulting data becomes stronger and sharper. Through this condensation technique, qualitative data analysis is expected to be able to accommodate all psychological and artistic information comprehensively without eliminating important findings obtained during the research. The following are the stages of data analysis carried out:

1. *Data Collection*: In the early stages, the authors collected data through direct observation of visual aspects, movement, and emotional intensity in contemporary dance performances, conducted in-depth interviews with choreographers, dancers, and audiences, and collected literature related to psychoanalytic and aesthetic theories to support in-depth critical analysis.

2. *Data Condensation* (a) *Selecting*: The researcher acts selectively by determining the crucial dimensions of dance movement and affective responses, as well as discarding narratives that are not related to the emotional or psychological aspects of the performance. b) *Focusing*: As a pre-analysis stage, the researcher focuses the data to be in line with the formulation of the problem regarding the role of dance as an affective stimulus and its psychoanalysis perspective. Data that are not relevant to the focus of the study of art psychology will be set aside (*Note: this section has been adapted to your topic*). c) *Abstracting*: The researcher compiles a core summary of the data that has been focused. At this stage, the quality and adequacy of the data are evaluated. The abstraction process is assisted by providing code to separate the audience's emotional data, choreographer's intention data, and psychoanalytic literature data to ensure the accuracy of interpretation. d) *Simplifying & Transforming*: Data that has gone through the process of abstraction is then simplified and changed through classification into broader patterns (e.g., sublimation patterns, repression patterns), descriptive summaries, and strict conceptual categorization.

3. *Data Display* The researcher presents data that has been processed into the form of an analytical descriptive narrative, a matrix table of the relationship between motion and psychological meaning, interview transcripts, and photographic documentation of the scene. This presentation is systematically arranged according to the focus of the research so that the dialectic between art and psychoanalysis is easy to understand.

4. Conclusion Drawing and Verification The final stage is to formulate conclusions based on data collected from the results of interview synthesis, motion observation, and psychoanalysis literature reading. Through this conclusion, researchers can test the validity of the findings to answer how contemporary dance actually operates as an affective stimulus medium for the human soul.

Results and Discussion

The Essence and Characteristics of Contemporary Dance

a. Definition and Concept of Contemporary Dance

Contemporary dance is a form of performing art that was born from the spirit of artistic freedom and reflection on the development of the times. The term "contemporary" itself means present or contemporary, which indicates that this dance always tries to adapt to the social, cultural, and political context of its time. In contrast to traditional dances that are bound to certain rules, contemporary dance rejects conventional boundaries, both in terms of form, movement, and meaning. Contemporary dance emerged as a response to the limitations and norms inherent in classical and modern dance. It becomes a new space for artists to present freer forms of movement, ideas, and expression. This describes that Contemporary dance is a form of freedom of expression that is no longer limited by tradition, but is open to cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary influences.

The negotiation of the body in contemporary dance is not only limited to the form of performative texts but also to the experiential aspects involving the role of choreographers and performers Muliati & Udasmoro, (2017). The concept of contemporary dance not only displays the beauty of body forms on stage, but also conveys messages, criticisms, and reflections on life. It becomes a forum for dancers and choreographers to express ideas freely, often involving elements of theater, music, visuals, and even digital technology in the creation process. Alfiyanto et al. (2025) "Every process requires an effective method and step so that the resulting work has depth and strength from various aspects, both conceptual and artistic". Contemporary dance not only emphasizes the aesthetic aspects of movement, but also emphasizes conceptual and reflective meanings of social and humanitarian realities.

b. Social, Aesthetic, and Expressive Functions in Contemporary Dance

1) Social Function

There are several functions of contemporary dance, one of which is as a medium of communication and social reflection. "Art is an order that can create a communication process"(Nuriman et al., 2024).



Figure 1. Contemporary dance lost

Through dance works, choreographers can convey criticism of issues that occur in society, such as social, political, gender, or environmental inequality. Dance is a space for dialogue between artists and the public to build critical

awareness of social reality. One of the forms of contemporary dance that functions as a social means such as the Barangan dance by Otniel Tasman which is a contemporary form of the lengger dance which was originally a folk dance, where this Barangan dance uses semiotics to communicate social life in the lower class by using very simple costumes. In this study, the author also researched contemporary dance work by one of the North Sumatra choreographers as well as the resource person for this research, namely Aulia Zikri, whose work raises the theme of one of the social issues and how humans need each other to rise from the trauma they feel.

The picture above is a contemporary dance work by Aulia Zikri with the title loss. Based on interviews, this dance work tells about the experience of a group that is fighting against itself from the trauma of loss due to poverty, and the dark period until finally finding a place to vent to each other's emotions that are being felt.

2) Aesthetic Function

Just like anything else, aesthetics also has a positive value, that is, the perception of what is good in the perception of what is beautiful that is always intrinsic based on direct experience and never consciously considers the value of its usefulness. Aesthetically, contemporary dance offers a form of beauty that is not bound by traditional rules. Beauty in this context is relative and subjective, no longer based on harmony or harmony of movement alone, but on the ability of the work to present an aesthetic and intellectual experience for the audience. Subayono & Sofian, 2022, (. 5) "Experimentation with space, time, rhythm, and body is the most important thing in establishing the distinctive aesthetic value of contemporary dance".

3) Expressive Function

Contemporary dance is a medium of free expression for choreographers and dancers to convey ideas, feelings, and personal experiences. Through the body and movement, they can channel emotions, reflections, and even criticism of complex modern life Saragih et al., (2024) "Dancers' facial expressions can add an emotional and narrative dimension to the performance, allowing the audience to better connect with the characters and stories conveyed through body movements".

This expressive function makes contemporary dance personal, communicative, and often emotionally arousing the audience because it is able to create an emotional and intellectual connection between the performer and the art connoisseur. Not only facial expressions, it is necessary to have dynamics in contemporary dance that can be achieved through various elements such as variations in movement, body expressions, energy, personal expressions, emotions and costumes that can support a deeper atmosphere (Saragih et al., 2024).

c. Development of Contemporary Dance in Indonesia

The development of contemporary dance in Indonesia cannot be separated from the social, political, and cultural dynamics that occurred in the mid-20th century until now. The existence of contemporary dance is a form of feedback to the development of the times, especially to the boundaries that have limited expression in traditional and modern dance. In Indonesia, the presence of contemporary dance is considered to be the result of a meeting between local traditions, the influence of Western modernism, and the spirit of process in the arts for Indonesian artists. The art of dance present in the modernized world in the West is a form of reciprocity to the establishment of classical ballet dance, estimated around the 1920s to the 1960 s. The beginning of its formation was pioneered by artists or important figures of modern dance in the United States. This process is realized by exploring each person's style, new ways of creating a dance technique, and new ideas in each work.

1) Early Emergence

The presence of contemporary dance in Indonesia began in the 1960s. Choreographers and dance artists began to perform and explore traditional dance forms with a new approach that was more free and conceptual. Figures such as Bagong Kusudirdja, Retno Maruti, and Sardono W. Kusumo showed important roles in this period. This explanation

is also supported by Nurchaerani (2016) in his dissertation at the University of Indonesia. Bagong Kussudiardja is known as a pioneer who was directly involved in trying to unite traditional values with the novelty of modern movement. Sardono W. Kusumo, with his educational background and international experience, combines elements of Javanese and Balinese traditions with global social, ecological and spiritual issues.

2) Period of Experimentation and Internationalization

In the 1990s–2000s, contemporary Indonesian dance began to develop with a more diverse character. Many young artists are emerging and starting to expand artistic approaches by involving technology, multimedia, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Choreographers such as Hartati, Fitri Setyaningsih, Didik Nini Thowok, and Eko Supriyanto are part of the generation that brought Indonesian contemporary dance to the international arena. Eko Supriyanto, for example, through his works such as *Cry Jailolo* and *Balabala*, not only highlights the aesthetics of movement, but also explores local identity and social issues of coastal communities. There are also festivals such as Indonesia Menari which is organized by Indonesia Kaya which is highly appreciated by the community and is an important forum for dance artists to network and experiment freely to pour out their creativity both through movement, fashion, expression and artistry.

3) The Development of the Modern and Digital Era (2010–present)

The presence of the era of modern globalization and the rampant use of digital has made contemporary Indonesia have an impact and experience the expansion of modern and digital forms. Forms of digital technology such as video art, and social media such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and others open up new spaces and avenues for artists to express and explore ideas and reach a wider audience. Ajeng et al. (2024) clarifies that technology is a form of overall method or method that rationally leads to a modern form and has characteristics in every human activity. Therefore, in today's era, dance works are no longer limited by conventional stage spaces, but are also present in the form of installations, dance films, and virtual performances such as Virtual reality.

Contemporary Dance as a Medium of Psychic Expression

a. The Body as a Vehicle for Expression and Representation of the Mind

The body is the most important part of the human being to carry out an activity. However, in a contemporary dance the body is not only seen as a physical instrument to produce movement, but also as a vehicle for inner expression, symbols, and subconscious language. Experiences, feelings, and thoughts that cannot always be expressed through words can be poured into movement through the body as the main medium.

1) The Dancer's Body as the Language of the Subconscious

The subconscious realm is the most intangible part, the body is a container that is considered the language of the subconscious so that it can be felt by humans. This is considered because through spontaneous, impulsive, and intuitive movements, the body can channel emotions and experiences hidden in its subconscious. This concept is in line with the view (Smith, 2025) in *the Phenomenology of Perception*, that "the body is not just an object, but also a subject capable of thinking and feeling the world through movement". If we associate it in a contemporary dance, the body is one of the communication tools that is able to penetrate the boundaries of logic. Every muscle tension, breathing rhythm, and small movement can channel any form of emotions, inner conflicts, or memories that exist in the past. Therefore, the body can speak through sensations and affections that can become a language that can be felt, not just a speech.

2) The Relationship Between Personal Experience and Motion Forms

There are many cases of mental health, especially in this day and age. Often people ignore a person's psychiatric problems, even themselves, even though there are many forms of treatment that can be done without having to go to the hospital, for example by getting to know yourself, doing positive activities and channeling their personal experiences into hobbies. A philosopher named Sigmund Freud stated that personal experiences or problems can be cured through creativity. In this case, contemporary dance movements often grow from the personal experiences of the dancers and choreographers themselves. Like life experiences, trauma, memories, and inner struggles become a source of inspiration in creating a form of movement. "The body can also be called an archive of experience, a place where emotional and social memories are stored and accessible through choreographic processes" Foster, (2003). This shows that every movement created is not just aesthetic construction, but the result of an introspection process an effort to bring the experience of the body back into the artistic space.

The body and space have a strong symbolic connection. The body can not only be in space, but also shape space through the dynamics of its motion. For example, small or narrow movements can represent feelings of anxiety or confinement, while large, open movements can explain the existence of emotional freedom or release. Space is one of the forms that can enrich the meaning of dance, making it more than just a spectacle, but also an affective experience for the audience. In addition, "another function of performing arts is as a form of *cultural resistance*, which is a symbolic resistance to prominent things that cannot be done frontally, but through narratives, expressions, and symbols that are interpreted collectively by society" (Rahmawati, 2020, as cited in Nikmah & Suryandari, 2025)

b. Creative Process and Affection in Dance Creation

The affective realm is a psychological (psychic) side that is relatively difficult to measure into an action or behavior of a person that can be determined by each individual and changes according to the emotions that arise. Contemporary dance places the creative process at the center of the creation of the work, not just the end result. This process involves the interaction between the body, mind, and feelings, where the affections or deep feelings or emotions of the body that we know are the main source of the development of a work of art. choreography in a technique is adjusted to the term work, or a creative process that can give birth to a dance work to a dance work (Hidayat, 2011, as cited in Fajar, 2023). The affective aspect in the creation of a dance work has a considerable influence on the choreographer and dancer, supported by the creative process that occurs, where these two things help the artist to express his creative ideas through the feelings and emotions that exist in his realm which will unconsciously form a very beautiful work.

1) Exploration of Spontaneity, Improvisation, and Body Experience



Figure 2. Forms of stamina and body experience
Contemporary Dance Lost

Exploration of motion is often shaped through spontaneity and improvisation. In contemporary dance, there are no rules to follow an existing movement pattern but rather give freedom to the body to respond to space, time, and emotions spontaneously, this will give the body the possibility to become more emotionally present when moving, so that the work created is more emotionally authentic. Body habits such as breathing, pressure, or muscle tension are the foundation for the creation of reflective and personalized movements. There are three stages of the process of creating works which consist of exploration, improvisation, and formation or composition obtained from the experience of the body (Hawkins, 2003, as cited in Dermawan, 2025).

2) The Relationship between Ideas, Emotions, and Choreographic Forms

The relationship between ideas, emotions, and choreographic forms can affect each other, meaning that these three components come together naturally. Initial ideas and concepts become an unplanned emotional impulse. Emotions are also a supportive energy, which is then poured into the form of movement or choreography where the body is the medium. The task of a creator is not only to create, but also to discover. In this case, the choreographer must also be able to find the movement that exists in his body, the movement itself can be present because of the body's response to its inner experience. Through this method, it is possible for each work of art to reflect the process of dialogue between the body, feelings, and conceptual danide.

3) Dance Works as a Reflection of Inner Conflict or Trauma

As is known by the general public, conflict is a form of social fact that is the opposite of individual facts, where in social facts there are three main characteristics, namely external to the personal, forcing individuals to enter the social sphere, and general to society (Kurniasari, 2019). Quite a lot of contemporary dance works are born out of inner struggles, traumas, and deep emotional experiences. One of them is the contemporary dance work *Lost* by Aulia Zikri, which depicts the existence of trauma present in a person's body. The body becomes a medium for emotional release and a way out to channel and heal inner wounds. Through movement, feeling, expression, the dancer indirectly performs a kind of painful inner healing process. There are other dance works that lead to psychiatric problems such as *Body Without a Brain* (Melati Suryodarmo) or *Cry Jailolo* (Eko Supriyanto). In their work they show that contemporary dance can be seen not only as an aesthetic form, but also as a means of emotional and existential therapy for its artists.



Figure 3. Inner conflict or trauma
Contemporary Dance *Lost*

The Role of Contemporary Dance in the Perspective of Psychoanalysis

Art and psychoanalysis are understood as the emotional forces underlying aesthetic experience. Affective is not the same as emotions, meaning that it is more of a bodily force that can be felt directly before realizing it. Freud, (1958) in his book *Creativity and the Unconscious*, explained that "The subconscious influences human thoughts, feelings and behavior, and can be channeled into creative expression".

There are several forms of emotions in humans, one of which comes from our own subconscious. A real example is anxiety. Of course, every human being has experienced anxiety, and if we experience anxiety or panic in certain situations, indirectly humans will definitely find ways to overcome these things. But not everyone is able to cope with anxiety well. If we cannot deal with this anxiety properly, then the anxiety will turn into fear and trauma and will slowly continue to be embedded in the subconscious.

It is possible that the feeling of panic or trauma can disappear in a short or long period of time. Such anxiety or trauma can reappear at any time. Therefore, we need to know how to overcome this, for example by doing ego defense (Koeswara, 1991, as cited in Mukarromah & Zamroni, 2018). In addition, Sigmund Freud also found a similar method to overcome these things that we know as psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is the main form of school in the field of psychology and there is a personality theory or known as psychoanalytic theory of personality. This psychoanalysis has been widely associated with the world of art and education (Ardiansyah et al.,2022).

Table 1. Matrix table of motion relationships and psychological meaning

Motion Dimensions	Physical Manifestations	(Artistic) Psychological Representation/Psychoanalysis	Function as an Affective Stimulus
Freedom Exploration	Non-linear improvisation, and detached from traditional dance routines.	movements, Id Release: Symbolizing the impulse that is suppressed by social norms (<i>Superego</i>).	Trigger Taste catharsis (emotional release) for the dancer and the audience.
Dynamics Tempo	& Contrasting rhythm changes and broken movements.	Internal Conflict: Reflects emotional ambivalence, anxiety, or inner anxiety.	Describe the emotional fluctuations of humans in dealing with trauma/stress.
Body & Floor Contact	The use of <i>floor work techniques</i> intimate/intense contact.	Grounding & Ego: The subject's or attempt to find a foothold in reality through physical or interpersonal connection.	Build kinesthetic empathy through visual and physical closeness.
Expression Face & Gestur	Personal micro-gestures and expressions that are not always "pretty" (distortion).	Sublimation: Transforming traumatic experiences or negative emotions into aesthetic forms.	Distribution trauma (<i>Self-healing</i>) through the symbolic representation of the body.
Space Usage	The use of a wide space or is very narrow (isolated).	Manifestations Unconscious: Narrow spaces as a symbol of repression; A large space as a symbol of liberation.	Creating a psychological atmosphere that is gripping or liberating (atmospheric).

a. Definition of Affective and Emotional Stimuli

Affective stimuli in the context of dance are part of the visual, movement, and atmospheric elements that trigger the audience's emotional response directly or spontaneously. Emotional connectedness can occur when the audience feels the same overflow of emotions that the dancer conveys. This means that the dance performance creates an affective bridge between the dancer's body and the audience's perception of a non-verbal communication that works through empathy that is disseminated by the body. Creativity can be understood as the ability to give birth to new ideas and apply them in problem solving.

The cognitive aspect of creativity is reflected through fluency in thinking, flexibility or breadth in seeing various possibilities, originality of ideas, and the ability to develop and enrich the ideas owned. Meanwhile, the affective aspect appears to be high curiosity, habit of asking questions, desire to seek new experiences, imagination, courage to face challenges, and willingness to take risks (Munandar, 1987, as cited in Cahyadi & Suwandi, 2023).

b. The Relationship Between Dancers' Expressions and Audience Responses

The expression of a work between the dancer and the audience is very important. The presentation of contemporary dance into a performance, the role of the audience is not only to see and enjoy, but also to feel what is presented by the dancers. The success of the delivery was due to the dancers' facial expressions, movement quality, and body energy being affectively transmitted to the audience. This is called affective resonance, where the audience's body subconsciously imitates or responds to the dancer's movement energy, thus presenting an emotional form in the performance space. In this case, the dancer's ability to express their movements, expressions and stories is very much a consideration in a performance, meaning that all messages that want to be conveyed to the audience must be channeled properly.

c. Affective Mechanisms in Aesthetic Perception

The role of art has a very important role in the process of forming a beautiful experience. As we know that beauty in contemporary dance comes not only from the harmonious forms of movement, but also from the emotional experiences that are produced. Freud said art is a form of sublimation. In the affective realm, it is explained that pure beauty arises when the audience can feel great emotions without having to understand the meaning rationally. Therefore, an aesthetic experience of contemporary dance must be emotional, empathetic and psychic, not just visual, movement and beauty of the body.

d. The Role of Contemporary Dance as an Affective Stimulus

The emotional presence of the audience is because contemporary dance is considered to be able to combine visual elements, kinesthetic movement, and free space exploration. Expressive gestures and break away from conventional patterns make the audience not only see and watch a performance entertainment but also feel what the dancers convey through emotional and physical movements. There are a number of studies that show that the process of body experience in practice or dance experience can increase affective responses, which means that dancers who are active in dance tend to experience increased pleasure, interest, and movement.

The audience's emotional presence towards contemporary dance performances is also seen through responses that cannot be seen as real, with expressions of silence that reflect full absorption of the work being watched. In addition, dance activities have been proven to be able to reduce negative emotions, increase positive experiences, and strengthen social relationships, even in a virtual context.

As an art of dance creation, Miroto (2022) said that choreography not only plays a role in shaping the structure of movement, but also serves as an affective trigger that is able to elicit emotional responses through the processing of ideas into beautiful experiences. Themes or ideas in the choreography process are the basis for creating expressions and movements that are able to evoke feelings, both for dancers and audiences. When a choreographer develops a strong enough idea and realizes it through artistic elements in dance such as motion composition, lighting, clothing, and music, each of these elements creates an intense emotional atmosphere. Therefore, choreography is not solely a representation of ideas, but also serves as an emotional stimulus that fosters imagination, empathy and emotion and the audience's emotional involvement with the dance performance.

e. Artistic and Psychological Implications

Through spontaneous and reflexive movement experiments, contemporary dance works can produce visual beauty values and reinforce the symbolic meaning and emotional experience conveyed to the audience. The artistic implications of the dance lie in the ability to think, explore the forms of movement, space and expression that create the birth of new innovations and the development of the meaning of contemporary dance itself. This places dance artists as creators or creators as well as communicators who use the body as a container to express socio-cultural ideas, feelings, and ideas. In the process of realizing ideas into a work, the creator will go through a process that takes a very long time to get the desired results. The process is an activity starting from determining the target to the end of the target or the ease is the achievement of the goal.

There are a number of studies such as contemporary dance work *butterfly hug* in the MBKM program that has profound artistic and psychological implications. From the artistic side, the processing of motion comes from psychological methods and shows how the body becomes a means to transform emotions into meaningful forms of aesthetic expression. The alternating patting of the chest in *a butterfly hug* is not just a visual symbol, but also presents an affective experience that reflects the process of self-healing, emotional acceptance, and inner balance.

In addition, the application of this technique describes that dance can be a space for dialogue between body expression and human psychological conditions. Through a simple but meaningful exploration of movement, this work makes it clear that the body has a natural ability to process and transform feelings into touching aesthetic experiences. Thus, this dance work inspired by *the butterfly hug* is very valuable and can be seen from the artistic side, as well as providing psychological contributions by fostering emotional awareness, calmness, and strengthening the relationship between body, mind, and soul in creative and appreciative processes.

There are several research studies that show that when viewed from a psychoanalytic perspective, contemporary dance is beneficial for development, both in terms of self-awareness, the form of an emotion, and the mental balance of choreographers, dancers and audiences. As previously explained, dancing can relieve stress, strengthen confidence, and foster a sense of empathy. This is because there is an interaction between the body, mind and feelings which become a unit. In the butterfly hug dance work, movement is utilized and adapted from therapeutic techniques that affirm the role of contemporary dance as an affective stimulus, where the body has an impact as a tool to regulate emotions and release inner tension. Both dancers and spectators can feel the emotional vibrations created by the changeable, repetitive, gentle, firm, and reflective movements. Thus, this work has artistic significance as an effort to explore the form and meaning of movement, and has significant therapeutic value, and makes contemporary dance a means of connecting artistic expression and psychological healing processes. *Butterfly hug* is a term in psychology that was coined by Lucina Artigas and Ignacio Jarero, butterfly hug is a psychotherapy technique used for someone who has experienced extreme trauma or attacks who have anxiety problems (Artigas & Jarero, 2014, p. 5, as cited in Tari et al., 2024).

Dancing can help promote the release of endorphins and promote positive moods, thus serving as an effective therapeutic means. In the realm of learning, knowledge of the artistic and psychological components allows educators to design a learning process that focuses on several mastery of movement techniques, such as focusing on developing aesthetic sensitivity and emotional stability of students as part of the formation of artistic character as a whole.

f. Synthesis and Critical Reflection

From several previous research studies, there are synthesis results regarding the function of contemporary dance as an affective stimulus. Where the results of the study synthesis show that emotional forms in dance art are not only created from the form of movement and visual beauty, but also from the involvement of the body, spatial experience, and the dynamic relationship between dancers and audiences. With its free and expressive form, contemporary dance acts as a link between artistic expression and psychological experience, where affection is the main part of the process of communication and the creation of meaning. Reflectively, this clarifies and emphasizes the importance of dance education which not only focuses on technical skills, but also on fostering emotional awareness and empathy of students. When viewed in today's educational framework, the application of technology such as Virtual Reality can enrich affective experiences by creating immersive learning spaces that allow students to dive and experience dance more deeply without the limits of physical space. Because of this, a critical study of contemporary dance as an affective stimulus emphasizes the need to combine aesthetic, emotional, and technological elements in dance learning to create a holistic, meaningful, and transformative learning experience.

Conclusion

In essence, Contemporary dance is a form of performing art that focuses on several aspects, namely aspects of visual beauty and freedom in expressing expression and movement, as well as containing a deep meaning and are emotional, psychological and spiritual. Through the exploration of the body, space, time, and the expression of feelings, Contemporary dance serves as a space for dancers and choreographers to channel what is in their subconscious, as

well as re-express inner experiences and process psychic problems so that they become aesthetic expressions that can be conveyed and absorbed to others.

Contemporary dance from a psychoanalytic perspective can be seen as a form of sublimation, which is a process of change and diversion of psychic energy that is formed due to anxiety, trauma, or subconscious impulses and becomes a productive and meaningful artistic expression. Through this sublimation process, dance activities not only become a means of expression, but also function as a catharsis of an emotional release that causes a therapeutic effect. Body and motion act as a healing medium that allows individuals to rearrange the balance between the inner world and self-awareness.

As an affective stimulus, contemporary dance has the power to evoke an emotional experience not only for its dancers, but also for its audience. Through the quality of body expression, intensity of movement, use of space, music, lighting, and the atmosphere of the performance presented, there is an emotional resonance that connects dancers and spectators in the same space of affection. This resonance is able to bring about empathy, self-reflection, and even emotional transformation in the audience, so that the viewing experience is no longer limited to enjoying visual beauty, but becomes an aesthetic experience that touches the affective and intellectual realms at the same time.

Thus, contemporary dance has a very important role as a link between the worlds of aesthetics, psychology, and also education. When connected to the context of art learning, understanding affective stimuli in contemporary dance is essential to help students develop emotional sensitivity, body awareness, and reflective ability to the meaning and experience of movement. Through a creative process involving emotional and psychological aspects, learners are not only trained to become skilled and artistic creative individuals, but are also directed to cultivate empathy, emotional balance, and psychological maturity.

However, this perspective not only has an impact on the world of education but also has an impact on the inner conflicts felt by every human being. Thus, contemporary dance has a considerable role, namely as a medium for the formation of a complete artistic character, which not only highlights aesthetic creativity, but also brings to life the awareness of humanity and inner balance through deep bodily and emotional experiences.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

* The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

Conflict of Interest

* The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest

Funding

* The author would like to thank the Indonesian Education Endowment Fund (LPDP) for financial support through the Affirmasi Prasejahtera scholarship.

Acknowledgements or Notes

* This article was presented as an oral presentation at the International Conference on Special Education and Diversity (www.iconsed.net) held in Konya/Türkiye on April 02-05, 2026

* Special thanks are also conveyed to Yogyakarta State University for the facilities and environment provided to the author. In addition, the author would like to thank the choreographer as well as the resource persons and the participants who participated in the contemporary dance session for their time and cooperation.

Reference

- Abdurakhman, & Sunarti, L. (2023). Riding the waves of history: Edits of memories for Professor Susanto Zuhdi. In D. Pradjoko et al. (Eds.), *Meniti ombak sejarah: Suntiungan kenangan untuk Profesor Susanto Zuhdi*. Serat Alam Media.
- Ajeng, D., Badaruddin, S., & Rifky, M. (2024). The short dance film work *Broken* as a form of digital transformation of contemporary dance. *Ringkang: Dance Arts Studies and Dance Arts Education*, 4(1), 139–148.
- Alfiyanto. (2024). The creative process of contemporary dance as a media for children's education outside of formal education. *Idea*, 11(212), 28–40.
- Alfiyanto, O., Mardiansyah, E., Al, R., Dance, C., Bersilat, W., & Pencak, J. (2025). Artistic relations: The integration of values and aesthetics in the contemporary dance work “Bersilat.” *Delaey*, 212, 67–81.
- Anisa, O., Mirazqi, Z., & Noviansya, D. (n.d.). *Anisychos is a contemporary dance creation*.
- Ardiansyah, Sarinah, Susilawati, & Juanda. (2022). A study of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. *Journal of Education*, 7(1), 25–31.
- Cahyadi, O., & Suwandi, T. (2023). Movement creativity through the process in the form of choreography. *Ringkang: Dance Arts Studies and Dance Arts Education*, 4(1), 120–134.
- Chaiklin, S., & Wengrower, H. (Eds.). (2009). *The art and science of dance/movement therapy: Life is dance*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Conant, J. (2016). *Movement and the unconscious: An applied psychoanalytic exploration of modern dance*.
- Cunningham. (n.d.). *Space, time and free movement*.
- Dermawan, W. (2025). Experimentation in the process of creating the dance work “Body of No Master.” 24(1), 1–13.
- Fajar A, M. T. (2023). The concept and process of creating a depression dance film. *Solah Journal of Performing Arts*, 1(1), 51–63.
- Foster, S. L. (2003). *Choreographies of protest*. London, England: Routledge.
- Kurniasari, H. (2019). Visualization of post-traumatic stress in dramatic dance types in the dance work “Psychoneurosis.” In *Proceedings of the National Seminar on Performing Arts* (pp. 1–11).
- Kwan, S. (2017). When is contemporary dance? *Dance Research Journal*, 49(3), 38–52.
- Miroto, M. (2022). *Dance dramaturgy*.
- Mukarromah, B. N., & Zamroni, M. (2018). A study of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis in the Javanese opera film (Phase analysis of the real Ludiyo's character). *Publika Budaya*, 6(2), 110–114.
- Muliati, R., & Udasmoro, W. (2017). The body that creates moments: The practice of body negotiation in facial dance. *Jurnal Kajian Seni*, 4(1), 64–78.
- Nikmah, M., & Suryandari, N. (2025). Mimic expressions and movements in Thengul dance: Multimodal analysis as a symbol of people's resistance through nonverbal communication. *Journal of Academic Media (JMA)*, 3(6), 1–18.
- Nurchaerani, S. (2016). *The development of choreography in Indonesia* (Doctoral dissertation). Universitas Indonesia.
- Nuriman, D. A., Octory, G., & Juliadi, R. (2024). Contemporary dance as a communication media between generations: Case study of empowering family welfare in Dadap Village, South Tangerang City. *MSJ: Majority Science Journal*, 2(2), 197–202.
- Saragih, N. H., Manalu, R. I., Andira, A., Sinaga, S., Hasibuan, M. D. I., & Dalimunthe, S. F. (2024). Analysis of the influence of expression in improving the aesthetics and dynamics of contemporary dance art. *JIIIC: Journal of Intellectuals and Scholars*, 1(4), 436–442.
- Smith, C. (2025). *Phenomenology of perception*.
- Subayono, & Sofian, M. (2022). Gumregah concept of working on contemporary dance works. *JSM*, 9(2), 11–19.
- Tari, P. S., & Indah, J. N. (2024). Contemporary dance work *Butterfly Hug*. 4(2), 119–125.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (2nd ed.). New Delhi, India: New Age International Publishers.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Raco, J. R. (2010). *Metode penelitian kualitatif: Jenis, karakteristik dan keunggulannya*. Jakarta, Indonesia: PT Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia.

Rukhmana, T., & Darwis, D. (2022). *Metode penelitian kualitatif*. Sukabumi, Indonesia: CV Rey Media Grafika.

Author(s) Information

Intan Damayanti

Yogyakarta State University
Jalan Colombo No.1, Karangmalang, Depok District,
Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta 55281,
Indonesia
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6750-4743>

Kasiyan Kasiyan

Yogyakarta State University
Jalan Colombo No.1, Karangmalang, Depok District,
Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta 55281,
Indonesia
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/000-0001-6002-9428>
Contact e-mail: kasiyan@uny.ac.id

To cite this article:

Damayanti, I., & Kasiyan, K. (2026). The role of contemporary dance as an affective stimulus: Critical analysis is psychoanalytic and art perspectives *The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational and Social Sciences (EPES)*, 50, 26-42.