



Original article. When masculinity polices the body: body image as a mediator of dance self-efficacy among university students. Vol. 12, n.º 4; p. 1-31, August 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/qh8jbq07>

When masculinity polices the body: body image as a mediator of dance self-efficacy among university students
Cuando la masculinidad regula el cuerpo: la imagen corporal como mediadora de la autoeficacia en danza entre estudiantes universitarios

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Abstract

Dance participation in higher education supports physical, psychological, and social development; however, gendered norms may constrain male students' engagement and confidence in expressive movement contexts. Rigid masculine expectations may shape how male bodies are perceived and performed, potentially influencing both body-related perceptions and dance self-efficacy. This study examined whether body image mediates the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance self-efficacy among Filipino male university students. A quantitative cross-sectional mediation design was employed with 104 male undergraduate students enrolled in PATHFIT dance-related courses. Data were collected using the Toxic Masculinity Scale (TMS), Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2), and Dance Self-Efficacy Scale, and analyzed using PROCESS Model 4 with bootstrapping and the Sobel test. Results showed that toxic masculinity significantly and negatively predicted dance self-efficacy ($B = -0.21$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .025$), while body image significantly and positively predicted dance self-efficacy ($B = 0.47$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$). However, toxic masculinity did not significantly predict body image ($B = -0.12$, $p = .361$), and the indirect effect was not significant ($B = -0.06$, 95% CI $[-0.21, 0.11]$; $z = -0.91$, $p = .36$). These findings indicate that toxic masculinity directly undermines dance confidence, whereas body image independently enhances it, highlighting the need for gender-inclusive and body-positive pedagogies in physical education.

Keywords: toxic masculinity; body image; dance; self-efficacy; expressive movement; sport psychology

Resumen

La participación en danza en la educación superior favorece el desarrollo físico, psicológico y social; sin embargo, las normas de género pueden limitar la participación y la confianza de los estudiantes varones en contextos de movimiento expresivo. Las expectativas rígidas de la masculinidad pueden influir en la forma en que los cuerpos masculinos son percibidos y ejecutados, afectando potencialmente tanto la percepción corporal como la autoeficacia en la danza. Este estudio examinó si la imagen corporal media la relación entre la masculinidad tóxica y la autoeficacia en danza entre estudiantes universitarios filipinos de sexo masculino. Se empleó un diseño cuantitativo transversal con análisis de mediación, en el que participaron 104 estudiantes varones de pregrado matriculados en cursos de danza relacionados con PATHFIT. Los datos se recopilaron mediante la Escala de Masculinidad Tóxica (TMS), la Escala de Apreciación Corporal-2 (BAS-2) y la Escala de Autoeficacia en Danza, y se analizaron utilizando el Modelo 4 de PROCESS con bootstrapping y la prueba de Sobel. Los resultados mostraron que la masculinidad tóxica predijo de manera significativa y negativa la autoeficacia en danza ($B = -0.21$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .025$), mientras que la imagen corporal predijo de manera significativa y positiva la autoeficacia en danza ($B = 0.47$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$). Sin embargo, la masculinidad tóxica no predijo significativamente la imagen corporal ($B = -0.12$, $p = .361$), y el efecto indirecto no fue significativo ($B = -0.06$, IC del 95% $[-0.21, 0.11]$; $z = -0.91$, $p = .36$). Estos hallazgos indican que la masculinidad tóxica afecta directamente la confianza en la danza, mientras que la imagen corporal la mejora de manera independiente, lo que resalta la necesidad de pedagogías inclusivas en términos de género y orientadas a la positividad corporal en la educación física.

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Keywords: masculinidad tóxica; imagen corporal; danza, autoeficacia; movimiento expresivo; psicología del deporte.

Introduction

Expressive Movement, Gender Norms, and Dance Self-Efficacy

Dance and other expressive movement activities constitute an important component of physical education and holistic development in higher education, supporting not only physical competence but also emotional expression, creativity, and social connection. Within university physical education contexts—including Filipino higher education programs where PATHFIT and wellness-oriented curricula increasingly integrate expressive movement—engagement and confidence in dance appear shaped not only by technical skill or prior experience but also by sociocultural gender expectations surrounding bodily expression. Dominant constructions of masculinity often regulate how male bodies are expected to move, appear, and be interpreted in educational environments, sometimes positioning expressive movement as gender-incongruent. Such expectations may foster heightened body surveillance, discomfort, or dissatisfaction that can undermine confidence in performing dance-related tasks. Accordingly, understanding dance self-efficacy requires consideration not only of skill acquisition but also of gendered embodiment processes shaping participation in expressive movement contexts, particularly within non-Western educational settings where masculinity norms remain strongly associated with sport participation, strength, and emotional stoicism.

Conceptual Foundations: Toxic Masculinity, Body Image, and Dance Self-Efficacy

Clarifying relationships among toxic masculinity, body image, and dance self-efficacy requires theoretically grounded definitions, as these constructs emerge from intersecting traditions in gender studies, psychology, and performance research. Toxic masculinity is commonly conceptualized as a restrictive subset of masculinity ideology characterized by rigid norms—such as emotional restriction, dominance, aggression, misogyny, homophobia, suppression of vulnerability, and devaluation of traits labeled feminine—that become harmful when strongly enforced; importantly, the construct critiques harmful normative practices rather than masculinity or male identity itself (Sanders et al., 2024). Ongoing conceptual ambiguity, particularly conflation with hegemonic masculinity or general masculine norm conformity, has prompted calls for

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clearer operational boundaries and improved measurement precision (Remsburg, 2023). Recent developments address this need through validated instruments such as the Toxic Masculinity Scale, which operationalizes dimensions including masculine superiority, gender rigidity, emotional restriction, domination, and repressed suffering (Sanders et al., 2024). Evidence across educational, media, and digital contexts further demonstrates how these norms are reproduced through institutional practices and sociocultural narratives (Maloney et al., 2024).

Body image is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing perceptions, cognitions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors toward one's body, including both negative components (e.g., dissatisfaction, shame) and positive dimensions (e.g., appreciation, respect, acceptance), which are theoretically distinct rather than opposite ends of a continuum (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Contemporary scholarship increasingly highlights positive body image and body image flexibility—the capacity to experience body-related thoughts without maladaptive regulation—with meta-analytic evidence linking these constructs to psychological well-being and adaptive functioning (Linardon et al., 2022).

Dance self-efficacy, grounded in Bandura's self-efficacy theory, refers to perceived capability to execute dance movements and expressive performances. Related constructs such as movement confidence reflect perceived competence in embodied performance contexts, although measurement challenges persist because dance self-efficacy varies across styles, environments, and sociocultural expectations (McCann, 2022). Collectively, the literature conceptualizes toxic masculinity as harmful masculine normativity (Sanders et al., 2024), body image as a multidimensional system of body-related perceptions (Linardon et al., 2022), and dance self-efficacy as a domain-specific performance belief (McCann, 2022), while debates regarding operationalization across disciplines remain (Remsburg, 2023).

Masculinity Norms as Barriers to Dance Participation

Despite growing scholarship on dance participation and psychosocial outcomes, empirical research directly linking masculinity ideology to dance self-efficacy remains limited. Quantitative studies simultaneously measuring masculinity norms using validated instruments (e.g., CMNI) and relating these constructs to dance confidence or

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participation outcomes have not been documented. Systematic reviews consistently report beneficial effects of dance participation on self-esteem, self-concept, self-confidence, and self-efficacy but rarely disaggregate findings by masculine norm endorsement or conceptualize masculinity ideology as a predictor (Yu et al., 2025). Reviews addressing dance and mental health highlight gender-role pressures, homophobia, and harassment toward male dancers yet typically do not operationalize masculinity ideology using validated scales or statistically link these experiences to self-efficacy outcomes (Dwarika & Haraldsen, 2023). Qualitative evidence further suggests that male adolescents often negotiate dance participation through “sporting masculinity,” balancing expressive movement with traditionally masculinized sports to maintain social acceptability (Harding, 2022). Beyond dance contexts, substantial research indicates that conformity to masculine norms predicts reduced help-seeking, poorer treatment engagement, and heightened social anxiety among young men (Burns et al., 2025), with certain norms such as self-reliance and violence linked to adverse mental health outcomes including suicidal ideation (King et al., 2020). Collectively, these findings suggest masculinity norms may function as barriers to expressive movement participation; however, quantitative mediation modeling linking masculinity ideology to dance self-efficacy remains lacking..

Masculinity Norms, Body Image, and Embodied Self-Perceptions

Parallel research indicates that stronger endorsement of traditional masculine norms and muscular ideals is consistently associated with poorer body image outcomes among male adolescents and young adult men. Meta-analytic evidence shows positive associations between masculine norm adherence and muscularity dissatisfaction, particularly among individuals with body dysmorphic symptomatology (Blashill et al., 2020), while studies using the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory highlight differentiated relationships between specific norms and body image, underscoring the multidimensional nature of masculinity ideology (Yu et al., 2025). Broader youth research links masculine norm conformity with muscle dysmorphia symptoms and anabolic-steroid use (Ganson et al., 2024) and large-scale models further show that peer and media pressures increase body surveillance and negatively influence body satisfaction (Frederick et al., 2022). Qualitative evidence suggests masculine norms may



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discourage acknowledgment of body dissatisfaction while reinforcing muscularity as a marker of masculine identity (O'gorman et al., 2020).

Body Image and Dance Self-Efficacy

Empirical evidence linking body image or self-objectification to dance self-efficacy remains limited, particularly among male samples, although research across dance and sport contexts suggests that favorable body perceptions are associated with greater confidence in movement performance. Reviews indicate that dance interventions enhance self-confidence, body perceptions, and self-trust, though sex-specific analyses remain limited (Schwender et al., 2018). Quantitative evidence further shows body image predicting dance self-efficacy and behavioral loyalty (Wang et al., 2024), and sport psychology research indicates body appreciation predicts higher sport confidence and subjective performance (Ricketts et al., 2025). Conversely, qualitative studies highlight body-image pressures among male performers (Carr & Lewis, 2025)) as well as dissatisfaction linked to clothing practices among dancers (Boyes & Cornelissen, 2024). Overall, available findings suggest body-related perceptions influence confidence in movement contexts, yet quantitative male-focused dance research remains limited.

The Unexamined Mediation Pathway

To date, no empirical study has formally tested body image or self-objectification as mediating mechanisms between masculinity norms and dance self-efficacy among men, as existing research typically examines these constructs independently. Evidence from non-dance samples indicates that conformity to masculine norms predicts muscular ideal internalization and body surveillance (Davids et al., 2019), while sociocultural-objectification models identify body surveillance as a central mediating mechanism linking sociocultural pressures to body dissatisfaction (Frederick et al., 2022). Dancesport investigations show positive body image predicting self-efficacy (Wang et al., 2024), and other work identifies dissatisfaction predictors without linking masculinity norms to confidence outcomes (Boyes & Cornelissen, 2024). Collectively, these strands suggest a theoretically plausible mediation pathway in which masculinity norms shape embodied self-perceptions that subsequently influence dance self-efficacy, yet this integrated model remains empirically untested. dance self-efficacy, yet this integrated model remains empirically untested.



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Research Gap, Contribution, Objectives, and Hypotheses

Despite expanding literature on dance participation, body image, and masculinity, several interconnected gaps warrant further empirical investigation. First, no quantitative study has operationalized toxic masculinity or masculine norm conformity using validated instruments to examine their potential effects on dance self-efficacy among male university students; therefore, the present study will model masculinity norms as antecedents of dance self-efficacy. Second, although masculinity norms have been associated with poorer body image and body image has been linked to confidence in movement contexts, mediation models integrating these pathways remain absent; accordingly, this study will examine body image as a potential mediating mechanism. Third, dance research has frequently underrepresented male participants and has tended to examine masculinity and body image separately; this study will integrate these constructs within a unified analytical framework focusing on Filipino male university students. Fourth, masculinity research has traditionally emphasized sport, mental health, or help-seeking behaviors rather than expressive movement contexts; thus, this study conceptualizes dance as a gender-regulated educational setting. Finally, culturally grounded evidence from non-Western contexts remains limited; by focusing on Filipino university students, this study aims to contribute context-specific evidence relevant to physical education, embodiment research, and sport psychology.

Objectives

This study aims to examine the role of masculinity norms and body image in shaping dance self-efficacy among Filipino male university students. Specifically, it will:

1. Determine the levels of toxic masculinity, body image, and dance self-efficacy among Filipino male university students.
2. Examine whether toxic masculinity will significantly predict dance self-efficacy (Path c).
3. Determine whether toxic masculinity will significantly predict body image (Path a).
4. Examine whether body image will significantly predict dance self-efficacy when controlling for toxic masculinity (Path b).



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5. Test whether body image will mediate the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance self-efficacy (indirect effect).

Hypotheses

- H1. Toxic masculinity will significantly predict dance self-efficacy among male university students.
- H2. Toxic masculinity will significantly predict body image among male university students.
- H3. Body image will significantly predict dance self-efficacy among male university students.
- H4. Body image will significantly predict dance self-efficacy after controlling for toxic masculinity.
- H5. Body image will significantly mediate the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance self-efficacy among male university students.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative, correlational mediation design to examine whether body image mediated the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance self-efficacy among Filipino male university students. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed, with data collected at a single point in time within the university physical education context to assess concurrent associations among toxic masculinity, body image, and dance self-efficacy. Mediation analysis was conducted to test the indirect effect of toxic masculinity on dance self-efficacy through body image. The Sobel test will be used to evaluate the statistical significance of the mediating pathway based on the product of the relevant path coefficients and their standard errors. This approach allowed for a focused examination of body image as a mediating mechanism within the proposed masculinity–body image–dance self-efficacy model, which remained empirically untested in expressive movement research.



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Respondents

The study involved male undergraduate students enrolled at a public university in Region III, Philippines, during the second semester of Academic Year 2025–2026. Participants were drawn from students currently enrolled in physical education or wellness-related courses that included dance or expressive movement components (e.g., PATHFIT), ensuring alignment with the study's focus on dance self-efficacy within university instructional settings.

Inclusion criteria **required** that participants be: (1) male undergraduate students currently enrolled at the selected university; (2) officially registered in a physical education or wellness course involving dance or expressive movement; and (3) willing to participate voluntarily and complete all study instruments assessing toxic masculinity, body image, and dance self-efficacy. Exclusion criteria **included**: (1) female students or students who did not identify as male, given the study's focus on masculinity norms; and (2) students with medical conditions or physical limitations that prevented participation in dance or expressive movement activities, as these could confound self-efficacy perceptions.

Participants **were withdrawn** from the study if they (1) voluntarily withdrew at any point; (2) provided incomplete or substantially missing responses on key study instruments; (3) failed to meet the inclusion criteria upon verification; or (4) submitted responses indicating response bias or patterned answering (e.g., straight-lining).

A convenience sampling technique was employed to recruit eligible participants. Data collection was conducted via a Google Form survey link distributed through official class group chats or learning management systems used in physical education courses. Prior to participation, all respondents were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, in accordance with ethical standards for human research.

Sample Size Determination



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An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power version 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) to estimate the minimum sample size required for detecting statistically meaningful effects in the proposed mediation model. The analysis was based on a multiple linear regression framework suitable for mediation testing, with toxic masculinity as the independent variable, body image as the mediating variable, and dance self-efficacy as the outcome variable. Assuming a two-tailed test, a large effect size ($f^2 = 0.30$), a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, and a desired statistical power of $(1 - \beta) = 0.95$, the minimum required sample size was estimated at 43 male university students.

To enhance the stability, robustness, and generalizability of the mediation analysis, the study recruited a sample larger than the minimum requirement. A total of 110 potential participants were considered for inclusion. However, one student did not participate, two students were not enrolled in a PATHFIT dance course, and three students had prior dance training, making them ineligible for the study. Thus, the final sample consisted of 104 male university students. This sample size exceeded the minimum required number and provided adequate statistical power, improved the precision of parameter estimates, and ensured sufficient sensitivity for detecting both direct and indirect effects within the proposed masculinity–body image–dance self-efficacy model.

Research Instruments

Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity was assessed using the Toxic Masculinity Scale (TMS) (Sanders et al., 2024). The TMS is a multidimensional self-report instrument designed to operationalize toxic masculinity as the endorsement of rigid and harmful masculine norms. The scale consists of 28 items loading on four factors: Masculine Superiority, Gender Rigidity, Emotional Restriction, and Repressed Suffering. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores may be computed by summing or averaging all items to generate a total toxic masculinity score, with higher scores indicating stronger endorsement of toxic masculine norms. The TMS has demonstrated excellent internal consistency (overall $\alpha \approx .93$; subscale $\alpha = .87-.94$), high test–retest reliability ($r \approx .93$), and strong construct, convergent, and discriminant

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validity, evidenced by positive correlations with established masculine norm measures (e.g., CMNI, MRNI) and negative correlations with contrasting constructs (Sanders et al., 2024)(Sanders et al., 2024).

Body Image

Body image was measured using the Body Appreciation Scale–2 (BAS-2) (Tylka et al., 2022). The BAS-2 is a unidimensional measure of positive body image, assessing acceptance, respect, and favorable attitudes toward one's body. The scale comprises 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). All items are positively worded, and total body appreciation is computed by summing or averaging item responses, with higher scores indicating greater body appreciation. The BAS-2 has demonstrated strong internal consistency across diverse samples ($\alpha \approx .86-.96$), good test–retest reliability, and robust construct validity, supported by positive associations with self-esteem and well-being and negative associations with body dissatisfaction, eating disorder symptoms, and social physique anxiety. Additionally, the scale has shown measurement invariance across sex and cultural contexts, supporting its applicability in diverse populations (Linardon et al., 2022; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015).

Dance Self-Efficacy

Dance self-efficacy was assessed using the Self-Efficacy Scale for Dancers (SESD) (Silva et al., 2015). The SESD is a dance-specific application of Bandura's self-efficacy theory, designed to measure individuals' perceived capability to successfully perform dance-related physical and psychological tasks. The instrument consists of 15 items loading on two factors: Physical Self-Efficacy (7 items) and Psychological Self-Efficacy (8 items). Items are rated on a Likert-type confidence scale, with higher scores indicating greater perceived dance competence. Subscale scores may be computed by summing or averaging items within each factor, and a total dance self-efficacy score may be derived by combining all items. The SESD has demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha \approx .81-.82$), strong content validity based on expert evaluation, and acceptable factorial validity supported through exploratory factor analysis, indicating sound psychometric properties for assessing dance self-efficacy in performance contexts (Silva et al., 2015).

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Refitting of instruments

To ensure linguistic, cultural, and contextual appropriateness for Filipino male university students engaged in dance and expressive movement, all instruments—the Toxic Masculinity Scale (TMS), Body Appreciation Scale–2 (BAS-2), and Dance Self-Efficacy Scale—were translated into Filipino using AI-assisted translation (ChatGPT) and were subsequently reviewed by a Filipino language expert with training in physical education or sport science. This review ensured semantic accuracy, conceptual clarity, and cultural equivalence within dance and physical education contexts. The translation and adaptation process followed established cross-cultural guidelines for self-report measures (Beaton et al., 2000; Brislin, 1970). In lieu of a separate pilot study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted on the main study sample to evaluate factorial validity within the proposed masculinity–body image–dance self-efficacy framework. Items exhibiting weak factor loadings, poor internal consistency, or inadequate conceptual alignment with gendered and embodied dance experiences were removed. This procedure allowed context-specific revalidation of the TMS, BAS-2, and Dance Self-Efficacy Scale, establishing their psychometric robustness and cultural relevance for Filipino male university students.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Bulacan State University Ethics Review Committee (BulSU-ERC) to ensure compliance with institutional and international standards for research involving human participants. Upon approval, coordination was conducted with physical education instructors, PATHFIT coordinators, and program heads to secure permission to distribute the survey to eligible male students enrolled in dance or expressive movement components of physical education courses.

Data were collected through a Google Form consisting of the following sections: (A) Informed Consent, (B) Demographic Information, (C) Toxic Masculinity Scale (TMS), (D) Body Appreciation Scale–2 (BAS-2), (E) Dance Self-Efficacy Scale, and (F)



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Thank You Note. Participants were required to indicate electronic informed consent before accessing the questionnaires, ensuring voluntary participation.

The survey link was disseminated via official class group chats, learning management systems, and institutional email platforms commonly used in physical education courses. A convenience sampling technique was employed to recruit Filipino male university students actively engaged in dance or expressive movement activities during the academic term. Survey completion took approximately 10–15 minutes.

Responses were automatically recorded and stored in a password-protected, encrypted Google Drive folder accessible only to the researcher. No personally identifiable information was collected to ensure anonymity. Incomplete, duplicate, or patterned responses were excluded from analysis. All data were screened and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS, retained securely for one year after study completion, and permanently deleted thereafter. Throughout the research process, principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection were strictly observed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS and Jamovi. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) summarized the demographic characteristics of Filipino male university students and the levels of toxic masculinity, body image, and dance self-efficacy. Assumptions of normality were assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test, supported by inspection of skewness and kurtosis, to guide the selection of appropriate inferential procedures.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to establish the factorial validity of the adapted Toxic Masculinity Scale (TMS), Body Appreciation Scale–2 (BAS-2), and Dance Self-Efficacy Scale. Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were computed to assess internal consistency and convergent validity within the Filipino university context.

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To test the hypothesized mediation model, path analysis was performed, specifying toxic masculinity as the predictor, body image as the mediator, and dance self-efficacy as the outcome (Paths a, b, c, and c'). The Sobel test will be used to determine the significance of the indirect effect of toxic masculinity on dance self-efficacy through body image. All inferential analyses employed two-tailed tests with the level of significance set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Ethical Considerations

This self-funded study aimed to examine how masculinity norms shape dance self-efficacy among Filipino male university students by testing body image as a mediating psychological mechanism, contributing to understanding gendered embodiment and confidence in expressive movement within higher education.

Participants were recruited through the dissemination of an online survey link via official class group chats, learning management systems, or institutional communication channels associated with physical education, PATHFIT, or dance-related courses. The survey included sections on informed consent, demographics, toxic masculinity, body image, and dance self-efficacy. Prior to participation, respondents were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and their right to withdraw or skip any item at any time without penalty. Electronic informed consent was obtained before accessing the questionnaire.

The study involved no conflicts of interest and provided no financial compensation. It was non-invasive and posed minimal risk; however, participants were informed that they could discontinue participation if they experienced any discomfort related to body image or gender-related questions. Although there were no direct personal benefits, the study was expected to contribute to research in physical education, gender studies, and sport psychology, and to inform inclusive dance pedagogy and student well-being initiatives.

All data were treated with strict confidentiality and anonymity. No identifying information was collected, and responses were stored in password-protected, encrypted files accessible only to the researcher. Results were reported in aggregate form. Data were



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retained securely for one year following study completion and permanently deleted thereafter.

The study was conducted with cultural sensitivity to Filipino masculinity norms and aimed to promote inclusivity and psychological well-being in expressive movement contexts. Participants were allowed to request a summary of the findings upon study completion. Ethical approval was obtained from the Bulacan State University Ethics Review Committee prior to data collection, and participation proceeded only after informed consent was voluntarily provided.

Result

This section presents the statistical findings of the study examining the relationships among toxic masculinity, body positivity, and dance self-efficacy among male university students. The results are organized into four parts: measurement model evaluation, reliability assessment, descriptive statistics, and mediation analysis. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the factorial validity of the adapted measurement instruments and to identify indicators that met the required loading threshold. Second, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were computed to assess internal consistency and convergent validity of the constructs. Third, descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the levels of toxic masculinity, body positivity, and dance confidence among participants. Finally, mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 was performed to test the hypothesized relationships and examine whether body image mediates the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance self-efficacy.

Omitted Items

Table 1 summarizes the retained and omitted indicators after confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using a factor loading threshold of .70. For the Toxic Masculinity Scale, the Masculine Superiority dimension retained 6 of 10 items, while 4 were omitted due to weak loadings. The Gender Rigidity dimension was entirely removed, as all 10 indicators failed to meet the loading criterion. The Emotional Restriction dimension retained 2 of 4 items, while 2 were omitted, whereas the Repressed Suffering dimension retained all 4 indicators, indicating stronger measurement stability. For Body Positivity, 6 of the 10



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items were retained and 4 were removed, while Dance Confidence retained 4 of the original 9 items, with 5 indicators omitted. Overall, the removal of weak indicators improved the factorial validity of the measurement model while preserving the core constructs represented by the retained items.



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Table 1. *Summary of retained and omitted indicators after confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).*

Scale / Dimension	Initial Items (n)	Omitted Items	Retained (Actual) Items in Final Model
Toxic Masculinity Scale – Masculine Superiority	10	“Men cheating on their partner is natural”; “Men should not work for women”; “Lying to my partner is okay, because I am a man”; “Men talking over women isn’t rude”	“Men are superior to women”; “My opinion as a man is more important than that of a woman’s”; “I don’t value the opinions of women”; “A woman’s ideas are not as important as a man’s”; “On average, men are smarter than women”; “Men are more capable than women”
Toxic Masculinity Scale – Gender Rigidity <i>(dimension removed)</i>	10	“I see it as a challenge when someone refuses my sexual advances”; “Gender and sex are the same thing”; “There are only two genders”; “Gender is not different from sex”; “It is propaganda that there are more than two genders”; “Men should use only masculine pronouns (e.g., he/him)”; “Sex workers have no self-respect”; “Sex work isn’t a career”; “There is no such thing as male privilege”; “Men don’t have inherent advantages in life”	Dimension omitted from the final CFA model
Toxic Masculinity Scale – Emotional Restriction	4	“Expressing sadness publicly makes me weak”; “Public displays of sadness mean I am not masculine”	“If I cry, I am weak”; “Crying means I am weak”
Toxic Masculinity Scale – Repressed Suffering	4	—	“If I am in pain, I don’t let people know”; “I ignore pain when I feel it”; “If I am sick, I refuse to go to the doctor”; “If I don’t feel well, I just ignore it”
Body Positivity	10	“I respect my body”; “I feel that my body has at least some good qualities”; “I am attentive to my body’s needs”; “My behavior reflects my positive attitude toward my body (e.g., I walk confidently)”	“I feel good about my body”; “I take a positive attitude toward my body”; “I feel love for my body”; “I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body”; “I feel comfortable in my body”; “I feel good about my body even if it differs from media ideals”
Dance Confidence	9	“I enjoy moving my body to music”; “I am willing to participate in dance activities”; “I am open to learning new dance movements”; “I can follow dance steps without feeling anxious”; “I feel embarrassed when I dance”	“I feel confident using my body when I dance”; “I can coordinate my movements with music”; “I have a good sense of rhythm when dancing”; “I feel free and comfortable when I dance”



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Validity Check

In Table 2, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported the factorial validity of the measurement models used in the study. For the Toxic Masculinity Scale, the retained indicators demonstrated standardized factor loadings ranging from 0.703 to 1.024, indicating acceptable to strong relationships between the observed indicators and the latent construct, although the overall model fit indicated moderate fit. For the Body Positivity construct, the retained indicators showed strong standardized factor loadings ranging from 0.839 to 0.935, while the Dance Confidence construct exhibited loadings ranging from 0.825 to 0.893, indicating strong associations between the indicators and their respective latent variables. The models demonstrated strong incremental fit, as reflected by high CFI and TLI values and low SRMR values. However, RMSEA values were relatively elevated (.156 for Toxic Masculinity, .115 for Body Positivity, and .140 for Dance Confidence). Although these values exceed conventional recommendations ($CFI/TLI \geq .90$, $SRMR \leq .08$, $RMSEA \leq .08$), RMSEA is known to be sensitive to models with few indicators and low degrees of freedom, which can inflate estimates of model misfit. Given the strong factor loadings, high incremental fit indices (CFI and TLI), and acceptable residual fit (SRMR), the measurement models were considered to demonstrate acceptable construct validity for the purposes of the study.

Table 2. Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results

Construct	Standardized Factor Loadings	Model Fit Indices	Remarks
Toxic Masculinity Scale	0.703 – 1.024	$\chi^2 = 180$, $df = 51$, $p < .001$; CFI = .846; TLI = .801; SRMR = .068; RMSEA = .156 (90% CI [.131, .181])	Moderate model fit
Body Positivity	0.839 – 0.935	$\chi^2 = 21.4$, $df = 9$, $p = .011$; CFI = .978; TLI = .964; SRMR = .024; RMSEA = .115 (90% CI [.052, .179])	Strong incremental fit
Dance Confidence	0.825 – 0.893	$\chi^2 = 6.10$, $df = 2$, $p = .047$; CFI = .985; TLI = .956; SRMR = .018; RMSEA = .140 (90% CI [.013, .274])	Strong incremental fit

Reliability Check

In Table 3, The Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) results indicate that the constructs demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity. For the Toxic Masculinity Scale, the Masculine Superiority



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dimension achieved $CR = 0.880$ and $AVE = 0.550$, indicating acceptable reliability and adequate convergent validity. The Emotional Restriction dimension demonstrated $CR = 0.886$ and $AVE = 0.670$, while the Repressed Suffering dimension obtained $CR = 0.812$ and $AVE = 0.683$, both suggesting strong reliability and substantial shared variance among the indicators. For the Body Positivity construct, the scale showed excellent internal consistency with $CR = 0.947$ and strong convergent validity with $AVE = 0.748$, indicating that the indicators strongly represent the latent construct. Similarly, the Dance Confidence construct demonstrated strong reliability ($CR = 0.912$) and adequate convergent validity ($AVE = 0.722$). Overall, all constructs exceeded the recommended thresholds of $CR \geq .70$ and $AVE \geq .50$, providing evidence that the refined measurement model demonstrates adequate internal consistency and convergent validity, and that the retained indicators effectively capture their respective latent variable

Table 3. Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the Measurement Model

Construct / Dimension	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Interpretation
Toxic Masculinity – Masculine Superiority	0.880	0.550	Acceptable reliability and convergent validity
Toxic Masculinity – Emotional Restriction	0.886	0.670	Strong reliability and convergent validity
Toxic Masculinity – Repressed Suffering	0.812	0.683	Strong reliability and convergent validity
Body Positivity	0.947	0.748	Excellent reliability and strong convergent validity
Dance Confidence	0.912	0.722	Strong reliability and convergent validity

Note. CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Recommended thresholds suggest $CR \geq .70$ for acceptable internal consistency and $AVE \geq .50$ for adequate convergent validity. All constructs satisfied these criteria, indicating that the retained indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs and that the measurement model demonstrates sufficient reliability and convergent validity.

Descriptive Statistics

In Table 4, Participants reported generally low levels of toxic masculinity across its subscales, with masculine superiority ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 0.76$) and emotional restriction ($M = 1.47$, $SD = 0.91$) reflecting minimal endorsement of beliefs related to male



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dominance and emotional suppression. Repressed suffering showed a comparatively higher mean ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.16$), suggesting a moderate tendency among respondents to endure pain or discomfort without seeking help. The overall toxic masculinity score remained low ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 0.65$). In contrast, body positivity was relatively high ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.88$), indicating that participants generally held favorable attitudes toward their bodies. Dance confidence was moderately high ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.75$), suggesting that respondents generally felt comfortable and confident engaging in dance-related activities.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics of Toxic Masculinity, Body Positivity, and Dance Confidence ($N = 104$)*

Variable	M	SD
Masculine Superiority	1.65	0.76
Emotional Restriction	1.47	0.91
Repressed Suffering	2.96	1.16
Toxic Masculinity (Total)	2.03	0.65
Body Positivity	3.81	0.88
Dance Confidence	3.41	0.75

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

In Table 5, the mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 examined whether body image mediates the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance self-efficacy among male university students. Results indicated that toxic masculinity did not significantly predict body image ($B = -0.122$, $SE = 0.133$, $t = -0.917$, $p = .361$, 95% CI $[-0.387, 0.142]$), indicating that endorsement of toxic masculine beliefs was not associated with students' evaluations of their bodies. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. In contrast, toxic masculinity significantly and negatively predicted dance self-efficacy ($B = -0.209$, $SE = 0.092$, $t = -2.272$, $p = .025$, 95% CI $[-0.392, -0.027]$), suggesting that higher levels of toxic masculinity were associated with lower levels of dance self-efficacy among male students; thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Body image significantly predicted dance self-efficacy ($B = 0.469$, $SE = 0.068$, $t = 6.887$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[0.334, 0.605]$), indicating that students with more positive body perceptions tended to report greater confidence in performing dance-related movements. This finding supports both Hypothesis 3, which posited a direct relationship between body image and

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dance self-efficacy, and Hypothesis 4, which proposed that body image would remain a significant predictor of dance self-efficacy even after controlling for toxic masculinity. However, the indirect effect of toxic masculinity on dance self-efficacy through body image was not significant ($B = -0.057$, $\text{BootSE} = 0.078$, 95% CI $[-0.205, 0.108]$), as the bootstrapped confidence interval included zero. This indicates that body image did not mediate the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance self-efficacy; therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Overall, the results suggest that while body image independently contributes to higher dance self-efficacy, toxic masculinity directly undermines dance self-efficacy rather than exerting its influence through body image.

Inferential Statistics

Table 5. *Mediation Analysis of Toxic Masculinity Predicting Dance Confidence Through Body Positivity (PROCESS Model 4, $N = 104$)*

Hypothesis	Path Tested	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	Result
H1	Toxic Masculinity → Dance Self-Efficacy (c')	-0.209	0.092	-2.272	.025	-0.392	-0.027	Supported
H2	Toxic Masculinity → Body Image (a)	-0.122	0.133	-0.917	.361	-0.387	0.142	Not Supported
H3 / H4	Body Image → Dance Self-Efficacy (b)	0.469	0.068	6.887	< .001	0.334	0.605	Supported
H5	Toxic Masculinity → Body Image → Dance Self-Efficacy (Indirect Effect)	-0.057	0.078	—	—	-0.205	0.108	Not Supported

Note. TMS = Toxic Masculinity Scale; BODPOS = Body Positivity; DANCON = Dance Confidence. Indirect effects were tested using 5,000 bootstrap samples with 95% confidence intervals. Mediation is significant if the confidence interval does not include zero.

In Table 6, Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect of toxic masculinity on dance self-efficacy through body image was not statistically significant ($z = -0.91$, $p = .36$). This suggests that body image did not significantly mediate the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance self-efficacy, thus Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Table 6. *Sobel Test Results*

Path	Indirect Effect (ab)	SE	z	p	Interpretation
Toxic Masculinity → Body Image → Dance Self-Efficacy	-0.057	0.063	-0.91	.36	Not Significant



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Discussion

Levels of toxic masculinity, body positivity, and body esteem

The present study examined the relationships among toxic masculinity, body positivity, and dance confidence among male university students and tested whether body positivity mediates the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance confidence. The findings indicated that participants generally reported low levels of toxic masculinity, relatively high levels of body positivity, and moderately high levels of dance confidence. These patterns suggest that although rigid masculine dominance beliefs were not strongly endorsed in the sample, certain traditional expectations associated with masculine toughness and emotional restraint remain present. Previous research among university populations similarly indicates that many young men do not strongly endorse extreme forms of hegemonic masculinity; however, norms emphasizing emotional control, stoicism, and self-reliance continue to influence attitudes and behaviors (Sikweyiya et al., 2025). Systematic reviews also identify these norms as persistent barriers to help-seeking and emotional openness among men (Sheikh et al., 2025). At the same time, university students increasingly report positive body attitudes, with body appreciation associated with improved psychological well-being, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Zhou et al., 2025). Positive body image has also been linked to greater engagement in physical activity and higher exercise self-efficacy among college students (Shi et al., 2024), while sport psychology research indicates that body appreciation contributes to stronger sport confidence and perceived performance competence (Ricketts et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings suggest that contemporary university students may simultaneously maintain positive body perceptions while still negotiating certain traditional masculine expectations, reflecting increasingly diverse constructions of masculinity among younger (Pérez-Martínez et al., 2023; Valsecchi et al., 2023).

Toxic Masculinity and Body Positivity

The mediation analysis further examined the mechanisms linking toxic masculinity and dance confidence. The results showed that toxic masculinity did not significantly predict body positivity, indicating that endorsement of toxic masculine beliefs was not directly associated with how positively students evaluated their bodies. One explanation lies in the multidimensional nature of masculinity norms. Gender Role



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Conflict Theory suggests that different masculine norms influence psychological domains in varied ways rather than uniformly shaping self-perception. When these norms are combined into a broader toxic masculinity construct, the overall association with body positivity may therefore appear statistically weak or non-significant. In addition, contemporary masculinity research suggests that many young men reinterpret traditional masculine expectations and adopt more flexible identities that allow for emotional openness, self-care, and positive body perceptions (Connor et al., 2021). From a positive body image perspective, body appreciation is also shaped by embodiment, self-compassion, and supportive social experiences rather than solely by gender ideology (Zhu & Wen, 2025). These factors may help explain why body positivity among university students can develop independently of their endorsement of toxic masculine beliefs.

Body Positivity and Dance Confidence

In contrast, body positivity emerged as a significant predictor of dance confidence. Students who reported greater appreciation and acceptance of their bodies also demonstrated higher confidence when performing dance-related movements. This finding is consistent with Embodiment Theory, which proposes that feeling comfortable and connected with one's body promotes agency, movement engagement, and expressive confidence. When individuals perceive their bodies as functional and capable, they are more likely to participate confidently in visible physical activities such as dance. Empirical research supports this perspective, demonstrating that positive body image and embodiment experiences are associated with increased physical self-esteem, movement confidence, and participation in physical or expressive activities (Zhu & Wen, 2025). The finding also aligns with Self-Efficacy Theory, which suggests that individuals' beliefs about their capabilities influence their confidence in performing specific tasks. Studies involving dance and movement interventions have shown improvements in physical competence, body esteem, and perceived performance ability among university students (Hu et al., 2025). Thus, body positivity may function as an important psychological resource that enhances confidence in expressive movement contexts.

Toxic Masculinity and Dance Confidence



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The results also indicated that toxic masculinity negatively predicted dance confidence. Students who reported stronger endorsement of rigid masculine norms tended to report lower confidence in participating in dance. This relationship can be interpreted through Gender Role Conflict Theory and Hegemonic Masculinity Theory, which suggest that traditional masculine norms often emphasize emotional restraint and avoidance of behaviors perceived as feminine. Because dance is frequently socially framed as expressive and aesthetically oriented, individuals who strongly adhere to rigid masculine expectations may experience identity tension when engaging in such activities. Research on contemporary masculinities indicates that adherence to orthodox masculine ideals may discourage participation in gender-atypical activities and limit expressive behavior (Connor et al., 2021). From a Social Identity Theory perspective, individuals who strongly identify with traditional masculine in-group norms may perceive participation in dance as potentially threatening to their gender identity or social status, which may undermine their confidence in performing publicly (Tanner & Gillardin, 2025). These perspectives suggest that toxic masculinity may directly reduce dance confidence by reinforcing identity-based constraints on expressive movement.

Indirect Effects: Body Positivity as a Non-Mediator

Despite these relationships, the mediation analysis indicated that body positivity did not significantly mediate the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance confidence. The absence of a significant indirect effect suggests that toxic masculinity may influence dance confidence through mechanisms other than body-related evaluations. Consequently, men who strongly endorse rigid masculine norms may feel less confident engaging in expressive movement because such activities challenge internalized expectations about masculinity, regardless of their perceptions of their physical appearance. At the same time, body positivity appears to function as an independent promotive factor that enhances dance confidence through feelings of embodiment, bodily comfort, and perceived competence. Previous research suggests that positive body image can develop through supportive movement experiences, functionality appreciation, and self-compassion even within sociocultural contexts that maintain traditional gender norms (Zhu & Wen, 2025). These findings indicate that toxic



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masculinity and body positivity may influence dance confidence through distinct psychological pathways.

Implications for PATHFIT Dance Courses

The findings also have implications for Physical Activity Towards Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) dance courses in higher education. Because toxic masculinity was associated with lower dance confidence, instructors may benefit from fostering psychologically supportive learning environments where expressive movement is framed as a legitimate form of physical competence rather than a gendered activity. Emphasizing dance as a skill-based physical activity that develops coordination, rhythm, agility, and neuromuscular control may help reduce stigma and encourage participation among male students. In addition, the significant role of body positivity suggests that teaching strategies that promote body appreciation and body functionality—such as highlighting balance, rhythm, and movement capability rather than appearance—may help students feel more comfortable and confident during dance performance tasks. Integrating brief discussions on body image, confidence, and self-expression within PATHFIT dance modules may further support the holistic wellness goals of physical education by acknowledging the psychological dimensions of movement participation.

Filipino Context of Masculinity and Dance

Masculinity norms and attitudes toward expressive movement may also be shaped by cultural context, particularly within Filipino psychosocial frameworks. In Sikolohiyang Pilipino, concepts such as *kapwa* (shared identity), *pakikisama* (social harmony), and *hiya* (social sensitivity or modesty) emphasize relational identity and collective belonging rather than dominance-based masculinity (Cervantes, 2025). Within this relational orientation, participation in collective and expressive activities such as dance may reinforce social connection and shared experience rather than threaten masculine identity. At the same time, cultural expectations surrounding *hiya* and masculine toughness may influence how comfortably men express themselves in public performance contexts. Thus, masculinity among Filipino university students may be negotiated between traditional expectations of strength and contemporary expressions of identity that allow participation in embodied and expressive activities.

Limitations and Future Research



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Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the cross-sectional design prevents conclusions about causal relationships among toxic masculinity, body positivity, and dance confidence. Although mediation analysis was conducted, the results reflect statistical associations rather than temporal causal pathways. Second, the study relied on self-report measures, which may be influenced by social desirability or response bias, particularly when assessing sensitive constructs such as masculinity norms and body perceptions. Third, the sample consisted of male university students from a single public university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts or cultural populations. Fourth, the use of convenience sampling may introduce sampling bias because participants were drawn from specific physical education classes that included dance-related activities. Finally, although the instruments were culturally adapted and validated through confirmatory factor analysis, the removal of several items during scale refitting may affect comparability with the original measurement instruments used in other studies. Future research may address these limitations by employing longitudinal or experimental designs, including more diverse university populations, and examining additional psychosocial variables—such as social physique anxiety, peer norms, or perceived gender expectations—that may further explain dance confidence among male students.

Conclusion

The study found that male university students generally reported low toxic masculinity, high body positivity, and moderately high dance confidence, with toxic masculinity negatively predicting dance confidence while body positivity positively predicted dance confidence; however, body positivity did not mediate the relationship between toxic masculinity and dance confidence. These results suggest that body positivity functions as an independent psychological resource that enhances confidence in expressive movement, while rigid masculine norms may directly reduce students' confidence in participating in dance activities. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of creating supportive and body-positive environments in PATHFIT dance courses, where expressive movement is framed as a legitimate physical skill rather than a gendered activity. However, the study was limited by its cross-sectional design, self-report measures, single-university sample, and convenience sampling, and future research



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is recommended to use longitudinal or experimental designs, broader samples, and additional psychosocial variables (e.g., social physique anxiety or peer norms) to further explain dance confidence among male students.

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