



The Slow Regard of Silent Things: Building Mental & Emotional Resilience in Dancers



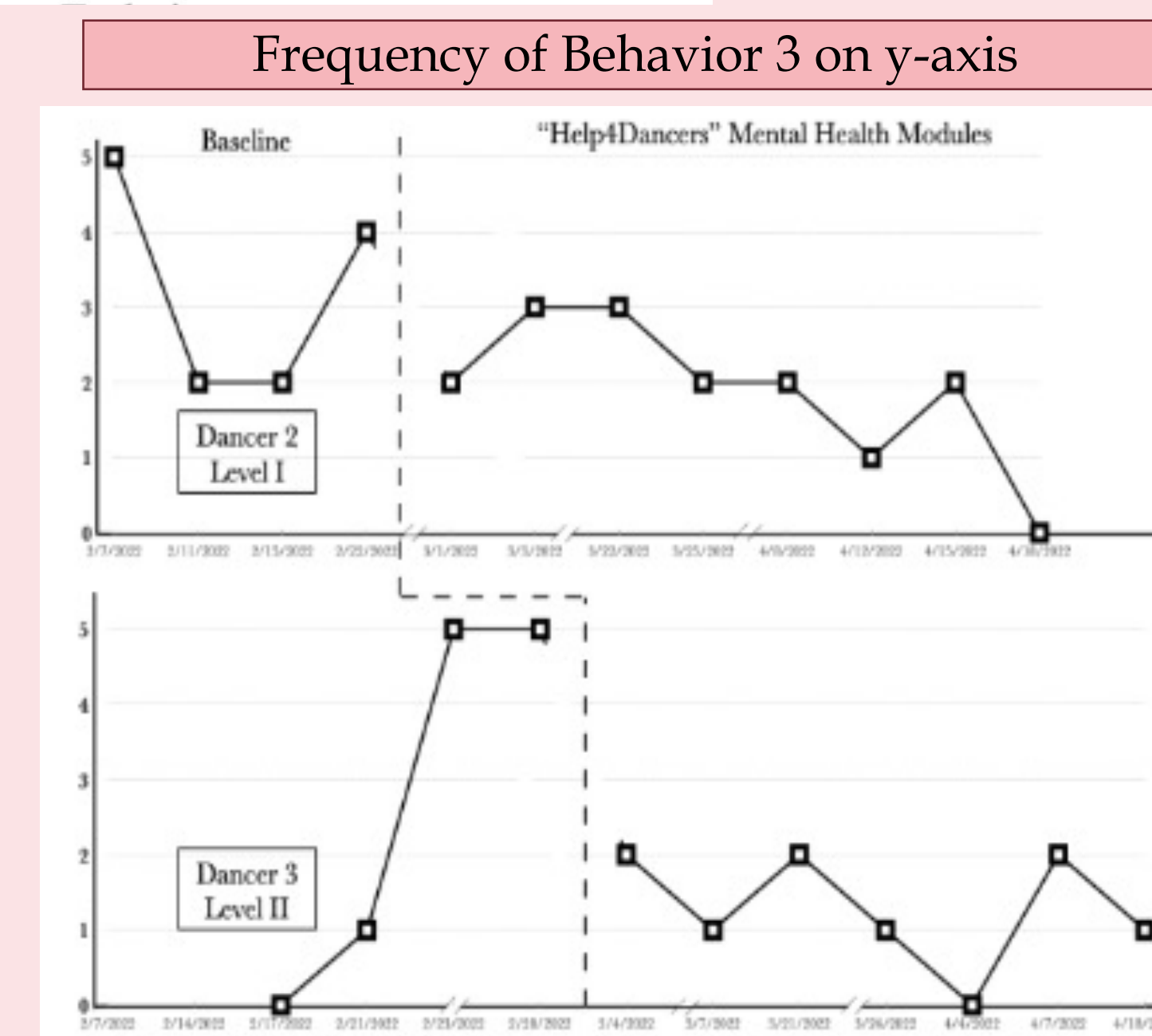
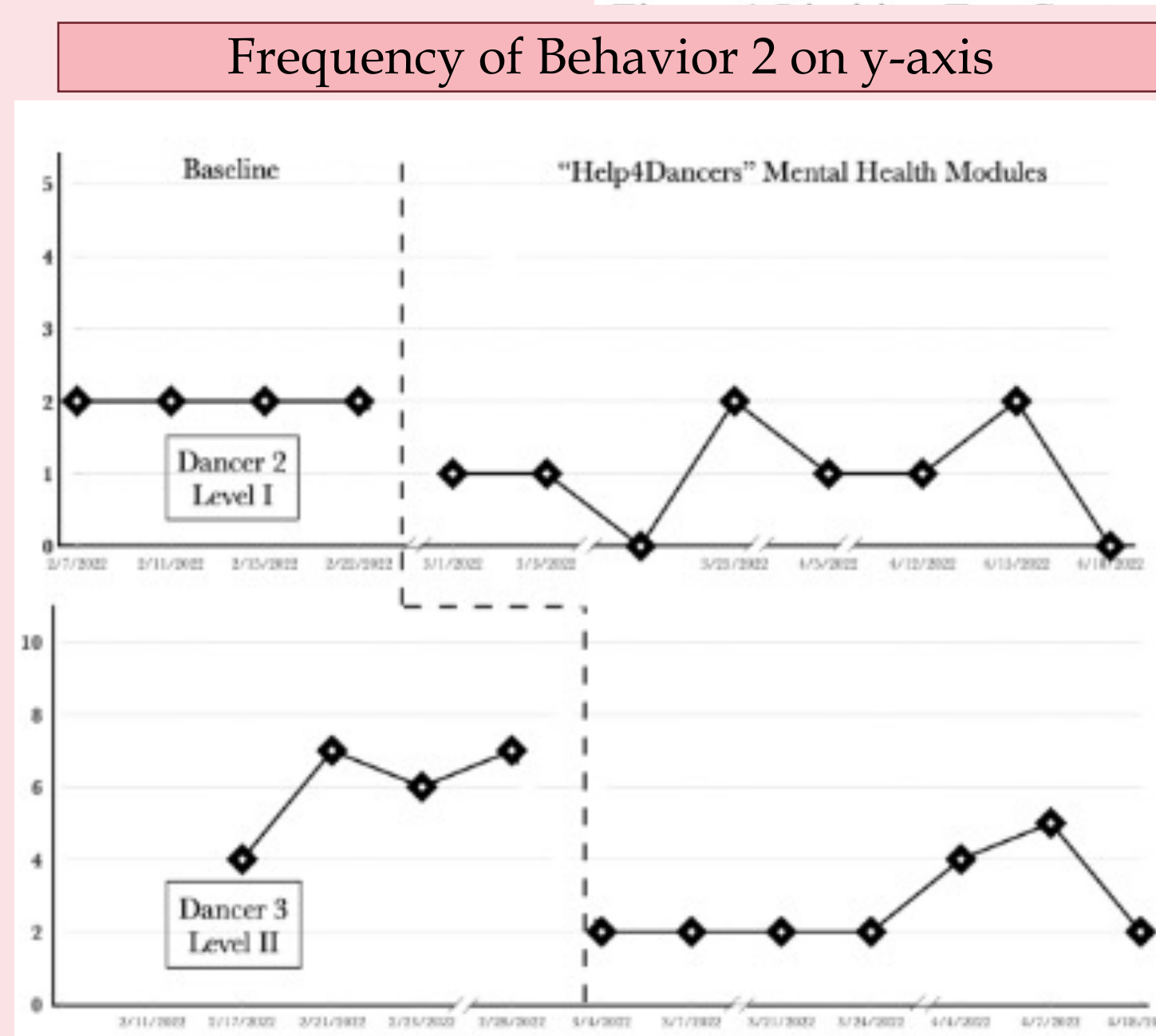
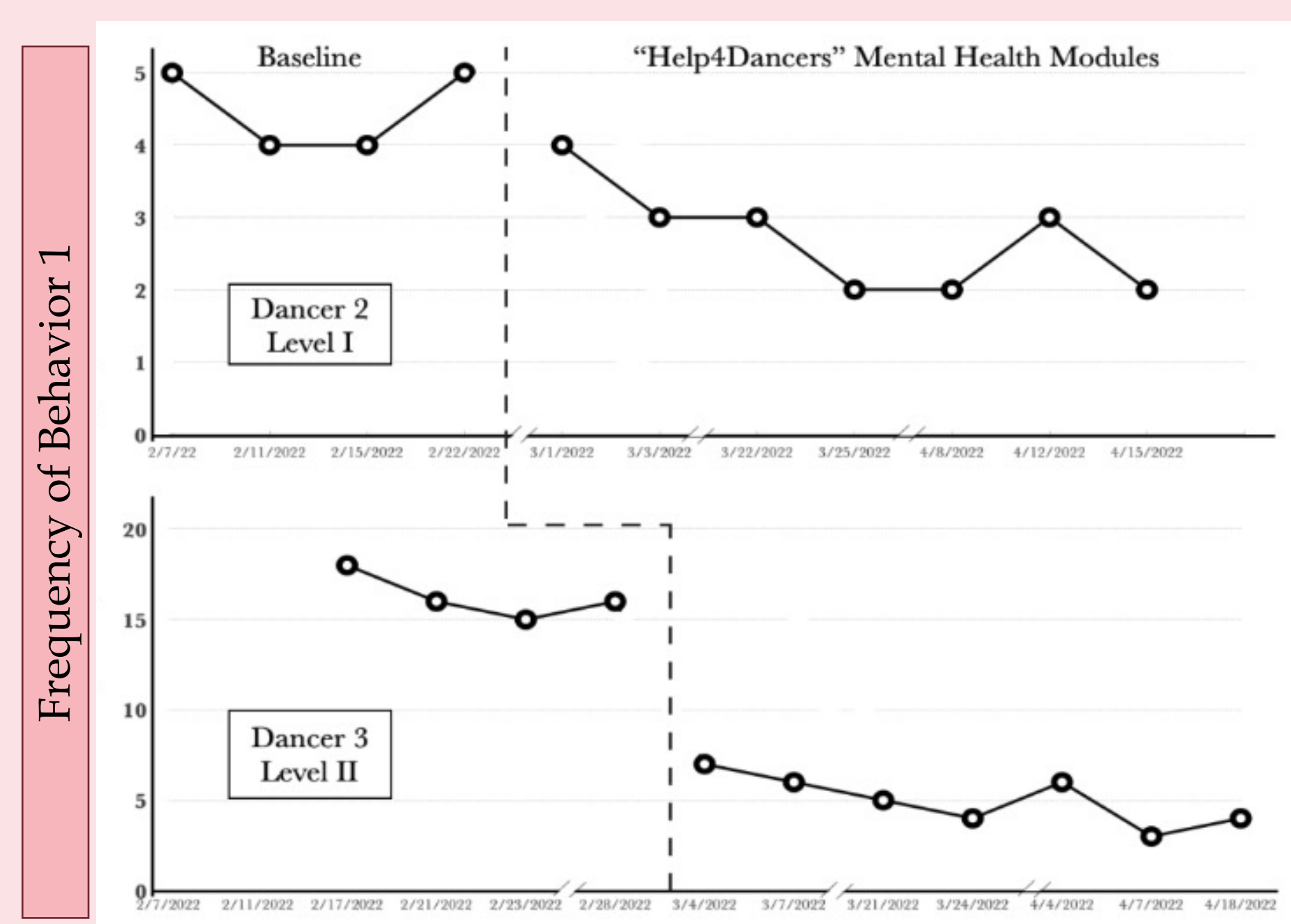
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Abstract

This study evaluated an educational intervention targeted at building mental and emotional resilience in dancers and documents the prevalence of mental health stress in a university dance environment. Five BFA dance majors completed the intervention: six modules in an application developed by a clinician who works with dancers and one-hour weekly meetings. This study observed the influence of mental resilience training on behaviors relevant to dance performance. Training was evaluated using a multiple-baseline-across-dancers experimental design with secondary measures of the RAND Mental Health Inventory, a Mental Health Knowledge Base Questionnaire, and Social Validity ratings. Results show targeted behaviors improved for every dancer who completed training with mean improvement of 50%. Scores on the RAND and Knowledge Base questionnaire improved by averages of six and thirteen points respectively. Results support previous research, corroborating that dancers are facing mental stress. Findings also suggest that completing six application-based, individually coached, weekly mental resilience training sessions improved the quality of pre-professional dancers' interactions with their training environments and self-reported mental health levels. This study was run as a systematic replication of the study done in the 2021-2022 school year with similar results expected.

Introduction

- Hamilton (2006) recommended through research that dancers undergo psychological and physiological screening.
- Hyde's *Help4Dancers* app (2021) is a platform that provides modules to address the concept of mental & emotional resilience that we further evaluated in this study.
- Current literature and the previous study conducted at FSU has shown evidence that dancers may be predisposed to mental health stressors which can be treated with an intervention.
- The purpose of this study was to:
 1. Document the need for mental resilience training.
 2. Evaluate the benefit of mental resilience training using an online application.
- This study is important because the topic of mental health in the dance community is under-researched. Physical health tends to overshadow the conversation of emotional resilience in sports.



Methods

- Five BFA dance majors at a major research institution were observed by trained observers- an adjunct faculty member (PI) and four undergraduate research assistants- prior to and throughout intervention in dance technique classes (contemporary and ballet) 60-90 minutes.
 - A 6-week training period was required for each research assistant which included 2 observations and 1 weekly meeting.
- DV:**
- Behavioral observations by trained research assistants of 3 separate behaviors relevant to dance performance.
 - RAND Mental Health Inventory Survey & a separate Mental Health Knowledge Questionnaire was used to evaluate participants.
 - Both tests were completed anonymously before and after the training period.
- IV:**
- An intervention based on the 6 modules in the *Help4Dancers* app was given to each participant in the form of weekly meetings.
 - Dance-specific Modules: anxiety, depression, body dysmorphia, eating disorders, grief, & building resilience.

Results

- Anticipated results based on the previous study ran in the 2021-2022 academic year show that after training, all dancers self-reported improved mental health levels by an average of 6% and 6.5% respectively.
- The dancers in their questionnaires reported during the last study feelings of awareness, resilience, and control.
- During the last study, Behavior 1 decreased in Dancer 1 from an average of 4.5 occurrences during baseline to 2.7 with the "Help4Dancers" training modules. The same pattern can be seen in Behaviors 2 & 3. Dancer 3 paralleled this pattern in all behaviors as well.

References

- Hamilton L, Solomon R, & Solomon J. A proposal for standardized psychological screening of dancers. *Journal of Dance Medicine & Science*. 2006;10(1);40-45.
- Hyde T. *Help4Dancers*. 2021. Accessed July 16, 2022. <https://help4dancers.passion.io>.

