

PERSONAL TRAINER AND PHYSICAL CONDITIONING: catalysts for emotional balance

PERSONAL TRAINER E CONDICIONAMENTO FÍSICO: catalisadores para o equilíbrio emocional

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Abstract

Studies have shown that regular physical activity is associated with significant improvements in mental health. Personalization of training is one of the most valued aspects in this context, as it takes into account the particularities of each client, such as physical limitations, personal objectives and emotional state. This research adopts a qualitative and quantitative design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore and analyze the topic in question. The use of these approaches aims to capture both the breadth and depth of the data, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon studied. It is interesting to note that, despite a significant number of participants recognizing the benefits of physical activity for mental health, a significant number still exercise insufficiently or irregularly.

Keywords: Physical training; Personal trainer; mood states.

Resumo

Estudos têm demonstrado que a prática regular de atividades físicas está associada a melhorias significativas na saúde mental. A personalização do treinamento é um dos aspectos mais valorizados nesse contexto, pois leva em consideração as particularidades de cada cliente, como limitações físicas, objetivos pessoais e estado emocional. A presente pesquisa adota um delineamento qualiquantitativo, combinando abordagens qualitativas e quantitativas para explorar e analisar o tema em questão. O uso dessas abordagens visa captar tanto a amplitude quanto a profundidade dos dados, oferecendo uma compreensão mais abrangente do fenômeno estudado. É interessante notar que, apesar de um número expressivo de participantes reconhecerem os benefícios da atividade física para a saúde mental, uma parcela significativa ainda pratica exercícios de forma insuficiente ou irregular.

Palavras-chave: Treinamento físico; Personal trainer; Estados de humor.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Physical conditioning, combined with the guidance of a personal trainer, has proven to be an effective approach for improving individuals' emotional well-being. Regular physical exercise not only provides physiological benefits but also contributes to mental health, aiding in the management of stress, anxiety, and depression. Moreover, the personal trainer plays a crucial role by offering personalized guidance that considers individual needs and goals, thereby enhancing the outcomes of physical conditioning.

1.1 Effects of physical conditioning on mental health

Physical exercise is an effective non-pharmacological intervention for improving mental health. Research indicates that regular physical activity is associated with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as an overall improvement in quality of life (Cooney, 2013; Anderson; Shivakumar, 2023). One of the mechanisms through which exercise influences mental health is the release of endorphins, neurotransmitters that generate sensations of pleasure and well-being (Hansen, 2011).

Depression is one of the most prevalent mental disorders globally, and physical exercise has been extensively studied as an effective intervention for both preventing and treating this condition. Meta-analyses show that aerobic and resistance exercise programs can significantly reduce depressive symptoms (Morres, 2021). A landmark study by Blumenthal (2019) demonstrated that exercise can be as effective as pharmacological therapy in reducing depressive symptoms in adults.

Physical conditioning, defined as the body's ability to perform physical activities with vigor, is essential for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Studies have shown that regular physical activity is associated with significant improvements in mental health (Cooney, 2013). Regular physical activity releases endorphins, which act as natural analgesics and contribute to a sense of well-being (Hansen, 2011).

Exercise is increasingly recognized as an important complementary strategy for promoting psychological well-being. Research highlights that regular physical activity reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety and improves overall quality of life across different age groups and fitness levels, benefiting both clinical populations and healthy individuals (Cooney, 2013; Anderson; Shivakumar, 2023).



The positive effects of exercise on mental health are mediated by mechanisms such as the release of endorphins, which act as natural painkillers and mood enhancers, reducing stress and improving overall emotional well-being (Hansen, 2011). Additionally, regular physical activity can boost self-esteem, improve sleep quality, and foster social interactions, all of which are linked to positive mental health outcomes.

Depression, a globally prevalent mental disorder, has been widely studied in the context of physical activity. Exercise stands out as an effective intervention for both preventing and treating this condition. Recent meta-analyses indicate that structured aerobic and resistance exercise programs can significantly reduce depressive symptoms (Morres, 2021). Consistent with this evidence, a seminal study by Blumenthal (2019) showed that exercise can achieve levels of efficacy comparable to pharmacological therapy in alleviating depressive symptoms in adults, underscoring its therapeutic potential.

Physical conditioning, understood as the body's ability to perform physical activities with vigor and efficiency, is essential not only for physical health but also for maintaining mental balance. Studies show that individuals with good physical conditioning tend to exhibit lower levels of psychological distress and greater resilience in stressful situations (Cooney, 2013). Regular physical activity stimulates the production of endorphins, contributing to a prolonged sense of well-being and serving as a protective factor against emotional disorders (Hansen, 2011).

Conversely, the absence of physical conditioning, often associated with sedentary behavior, can represent a significant risk factor for the development of mental disorders. Research indicates that sedentary individuals are more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression (Morres, 2021). Thus, beyond its evident physical benefits, physical conditioning plays a crucial role in preventing psychological issues, serving as an accessible, low-cost tool with minimal adverse effects for promoting mental health.

It is evident that the lack of physical conditioning may increase the risk of developing mental disorders. This highlights the dual role of physical conditioning in improving physical fitness and serving as a preventive measure for mental health.



1.2 The role of the personal trainer

The personal trainer is a qualified professional who guides and supports individuals in their fitness programs. Personalization is one of the most valued aspects of this context, as it considers each client's unique characteristics, such as physical limitations, personal goals, and emotional state (Weinberg; Gould, 2021).

The relationship between the client and the personal trainer is a key factor in the success of the training program. A study by Sackett and Sachs (2017) revealed that the trust and emotional support provided by the personal trainer positively influence client adherence to the exercise program and, consequently, their results. Additionally, continuous feedback and motivation from the trainer contribute to the development of a more resilient and positive mindset.

The ability of the personal trainer to adapt to fluctuations in the client's emotional state is essential for ensuring a safe and effective experience. Clients often arrive at training sessions carrying stress, anxiety, or discouragement, and the trainer's role extends beyond merely prescribing exercises. Active listening, empathy, and encouragement can transform the exercise session into a therapeutic experience, improving mood and self-esteem (Weinberg; Gould, 2021).

Another important aspect is the sense of competence clients develop as they observe their physical and mental progress. Proper guidance from the personal trainer, through realistic and measurable goals, allows clients to experience incremental achievements. These small victories fuel intrinsic motivation and strengthen the relationship with physical exercise as a continuous practice, promoting benefits that extend beyond the body to the emotional sphere (Sackett; Sachs, 2017).

Furthermore, the training environment created by the personal trainer can become a space for emotional safety and self-fulfillment. The sense of belonging, trust, and attentive guidance help clients associate physical activity with positive experiences, increasing the likelihood of maintaining the habit. Thus, the personal trainer's work assumes a multifaceted role, combining technical expertise and interpersonal sensitivity as fundamental tools for the practitioner's overall well-being (Weinberg; Gould, 2021).



1.3 Emotional state and physical performance

The relationship between emotional state and physical performance is well-documented in the literature. During periods of stress or anxiety, the body may react in ways that impair physical performance, such as increased heart rate and muscle tension (Anderson; Shivakumar, 2023). Conversely, a positive emotional state can enhance performance by improving focus, motivation, and energy levels (Taylor, 2011).

The guidance of a personal trainer can be particularly beneficial in this regard, as they can identify signs of emotional imbalance and adjust the training accordingly. In this way, training not only promotes physical conditioning but also contributes to emotional stabilization.

1.4 Benefits of combining physical conditioning, personal trainer, and emotional well-being

The combination of physical conditioning, personal trainer guidance, and emotional well-being can be regarded as a holistic approach to health. Studies show that individuals who combine physical exercise with the support of a personal trainer experience significant improvements not only in physical fitness but also in their quality of life and emotional well-being (Jiménez, 2019).

For instance, a study by Moraes and Gonçalves (2020) demonstrated that participants who engaged in physical activities under the supervision of a personal trainer reported lower levels of stress and anxiety compared to those who trained alone. Additionally, these individuals exhibited greater resilience in overcoming challenges and maintaining motivation over time.

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The guidance of a personal trainer can be particularly valuable in this regard, as this professional is capable of identifying signs of emotional imbalance and tailoring the training to meet the client's needs. In this way, training not only promotes physical conditioning but also contributes to emotional stabilization. Active listening, empathy, and sensitivity to behavioral variations are integral to the personal trainer's role, reinforcing their importance as a facilitator of not only physical health but also psychological well-being.

This synergy between physical conditioning and emotional well-being, mediated by the role of the personal trainer, is especially relevant in contexts of high physical or emotional demands, such as returning to activities after periods of inactivity, rehabilitation processes, or phases of heightened psychological vulnerability. Guided and emotionally sensitive practice can create a safe space for self-development, strengthening the connection between body and mind, resulting in a broader and more meaningful personal transformation (Taylor, 2011; Anderson; Shivakumar, 2023).

2 PROCEDURES AND METHODS

2.1 Research design

This study adopts a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore and analyze the topic at hand. The use of these approaches aims to capture both the breadth and depth of the data, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The quantitative method was employed to measure objective variables, while the qualitative approach sought to capture participants' subjective perceptions and experiences.

2.2 Population and sample

The target population of the study consisted of university students enrolled in exact sciences, humanities, and biological sciences programs at a university center located in the interior of São Paulo state, Brazil. The sample comprised 200 male and 217 female students, randomly selected, aged between 18 and 25 years. The sample size was determined to ensure statistical representativeness and the depth of qualitative responses.



2.3 Data collection instrument

Data were collected using a questionnaire developed on Google Forms. The questionnaire was structured into two main sections:

- Quantitative Section: Composed of closed-ended questions and Likert-type scales, aimed at obtaining numerical data on the variables analyzed, such as satisfaction, frequency, and opinions on specific topics.

- Qualitative Section: Included open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their opinions and experiences more freely and in greater detail. These questions were designed to complement the quantitative data, providing richer context for interpreting the results.

2.4 Data collection procedure

Data collection was conducted between March and May 2025, with the questionnaires distributed via email and social media. Each participant received a unique link to access the Google Forms questionnaire, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed about the study's objectives, as well as their right to withdraw at any time without penalties.

2.5 Data analysis

Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods with the aid of SPSS software. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated, and additional analyses were performed as appropriate.

Qualitative Analysis: Qualitative responses were analyzed through content analysis, following the steps of categorization, coding, and data interpretation. Emerging categories were defined based on the recurrence of themes and their relevance to the study's objectives.



2.6 Ethical considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical principles, ensuring informed consent from participants, data confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time. The research was submitted to and approved by the Research Ethics Committee. The questionnaire explicitly stated that participation was voluntary and that participants could leave the study if they felt uncomfortable with any aspect.

2.7 Study limitations

It is acknowledged that the use of Google Forms may limit participation among individuals with limited internet access or low digital literacy. Additionally, the sampling method employed may introduce biases that affect the generalizability of the results.

This methodological procedure was carefully designed to ensure the validity and reliability of the collected data, enabling a robust and comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under study.

Table 1 - Demographic Profile of Participants

Characteristic	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	200	47.96
Female	217	52.04
Age Range (years)		
18-20	150	35.97
21-23	180	43.17
24-25	87	20.86
Program		
Exact Sciences	140	33.57
Humanities	130	31.17
Biological Sciences	147	35.26

Source: Provided by the authors, 2025

In addition, physical exercise contributes to sleep regulation, increased self-esteem, and improved cognitive function, all of which positively impact mental health (Weinberg; Gould, 2021). Regular physical activity also promotes greater social engagement, which is particularly important for individuals suffering from social isolation, a risk factor for the development of mental disorders (Paffenbarger, 2014).

Table 2 - Frequency of Physical Activity Practice

Frequency	Male (n)	Female (n)	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
Does not practice	50	70	120	28.78
1-2 times per week	70	90	160	38.37
3-4 times per week	50	40	90	21.58
5 or more times per week	30	17	47	11.27

Source: Provided by the authors, 2025

Physical conditioning, often associated with cardiovascular health and muscular fitness, also plays a significant role in mental health. Regular physical exercise is widely recognized for its positive effects in preventing and treating mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. This text explores the relationship between physical conditioning and mental health, highlighting scientific evidence that reinforces the importance of physical activity as a tool for promoting psychological well-being.

Table 3 - Impact of Physical Activity on Mental Health

Perceived Impact	Male (n)	Female (n)	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
Significant improvement	120	140	260	62.35
Moderate improvement	60	50	110	26.38
Little or no improvement	20	27	47	11.27

Source: Provided by the authors, 2025

In addition to its direct effects on mood, physical exercise contributes to the creation of a structured routine, increased motivation, and improved social interactions, all of which aid in the recovery of individuals with depression (Sackett; Sachs, 2017).

4 DISCUSSION

The data presented reveal a diverse sample of 417 university students, with a slight predominance of females (52.04%). Most participants are aged between 21 and 23 years (43.17%) and are distributed across exact sciences, humanities, and biological sciences programs. This diversity of academic fields reflects a population of students with varying routines and academic demands, which may influence their patterns of physical activity.

Table 2 shows that 28.78% of participants do not engage in regular physical activity, while the majority (38.37%) exercise 1 to 2 times per week. A trend of lower activity frequency among women compared to men is observed, particularly in the category of 5 or more times per week, where only 8.02% of women fall, compared to 15% of men. This finding may indicate the need to encourage physical activity among female students (Anderson; Shivakumar, 2023), considering the widely documented benefits of physical activity for mental health.

Regarding the perceived impact of physical activity on mental health (Table 3), the majority of participants (62.35%) reported significant improvement. This finding aligns with studies that associate physical exercise with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as overall well-being (Cooney, 2013). It is noteworthy, however, that despite a significant number of participants recognizing the benefits of physical activity for mental health, a substantial portion still engages in insufficient or irregular exercise.

The combined analysis of these tables suggests that, although the benefits of physical activity for mental health are widely recognized, there are barriers preventing regular practice, especially among women. Factors such as academic workload, lack of time, or even demotivation may influence these behavioral patterns. These results highlight the need for more targeted interventions that consider the specificities of each demographic group and promote greater adherence to physical activity among university students, thereby maximizing the benefits for their mental health and quality of life.

Additionally, the distribution of students across different fields of study may directly influence their relationship with available time and the type of physical activity practiced. Students in exact sciences programs, for instance, often face more rigid schedules and intense workloads, which may limit their availability for exercise.



Meanwhile, students in humanities and biological sciences programs may experience different demands, which also affect how they organize their time and prioritize self-care practices. This heterogeneity underscores the importance of developing specific strategies for each academic group, respecting their distinct routines and realities to promote more effective engagement with physical activity.

The difference in activity frequency between men and women also points to a gender issue that deserves attention. Cultural barriers, insecurity in sports environments, or the absence of positive role models may negatively influence female participation in regular physical activities. The low representation of women in the highest frequency category may be related not only to external factors but also to subjective issues such as self-esteem and perceived physical competence. Therefore, it is essential to consider affirmative actions that create more welcoming and motivating environments, especially for female university students, encouraging the sustainable development of healthy habits.

Finally, the fact that a large portion of students recognizes the benefits of physical activity for mental health but still maintains an irregular practice frequency reveals a disconnect between knowledge and behavior. This may be related to the absence of institutional policies that facilitate the integration of physical activity into academic life, such as flexible schedules, adequate spaces for exercise, and motivational programs. Promoting mental health in the university environment, therefore, cannot be limited to discourse: it requires concrete, accessible, and contextualized actions that make physical exercise a viable and desirable practice for all students.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Physical conditioning, when combined with the guidance of a personal trainer, offers benefits that extend beyond improving physical fitness, directly impacting individuals' emotional well-being. The personal trainer plays a crucial role in personalizing training and providing emotional support, factors that amplify the benefits of physical exercise. Therefore, this combination can be seen as an effective approach to promoting holistic health, uniting body and mind.

Physical conditioning is an essential component in promoting mental health. Regular physical activity not only improves physical fitness but also plays a critical role

in preventing and treating mental disorders. Given the significant impact of exercise on mental health, it should be considered a key strategy for fostering psychological well-being and enhancing individuals' quality of life.

Physical conditioning has a profound and positive impact on individuals' mood, especially when accompanied by a personal trainer. This professional plays a vital role in providing personalized guidance, tailoring workouts to the specific needs and goals of each client.

The presence of a personal trainer not only ensures the correct execution of exercises but also provides emotional and motivational support—essential elements for maintaining consistency and commitment to physical activity. Studies demonstrate that regular physical exercise, guided by a professional, leads to the release of endorphins, neurotransmitters responsible for sensations of pleasure and well-being, which significantly contribute to reducing symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression.

Furthermore, the personal trainer helps create an exercise routine that is both effective and enjoyable, maximizing the benefits of physical conditioning for mood. The personalization of training, taking into account factors such as initial fitness levels, preferences, and client limitations, results in a more positive and motivating experience.

This individualized support can transform the perception of exercise, turning it into an enjoyable activity rather than an obligation, which increases adherence to the training program. Over time, this regular practice, combined with the guidance of a personal trainer, strengthens self-confidence and promotes a continuous sense of well-being, creating a virtuous cycle of improvements in mood and mental health.

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