

# The Effect of Physical Activity on Mental Health: Literature Review and Implications for Daily Life

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## The Effect of Physical Activity on Mental Health: Literature Review and Implications for Daily Life

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### 12 Abstract

**Study purpose.** Sport and physical activity have a great impact on an individual's mental well-being. This suggests that in challenging situations, individuals can find ways to stay physically active, which in turn can help reduce stress and anxiety. Through this literature review, this study aims to explore the effects of physical activity on mental health and understand how it contributes to everyday life.

**Materials and methods.** This study utilised the Guidelines for Systematic Reporting and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) method to ensure completeness and accuracy. The period covered in this study was from 2019 to 2024, total articles n=15.

**14 Results.** There is a strong link between physical activity and mental well-being. Physical activity can serve as an effective intervention to address mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. In addition, regular physical activity can also help boost self-confidence and improve body perception, which in turn supports more optimal mental health.

**Conclusion.** Regular engagement in exercise can lead to significant improvements in mood, reductions in anxiety and depression, and improvements in overall psychological well-being. Increased awareness and support for physical activity is expected to lead to a healthier society, both mentally and physically.

**Keywords.** Physical activity, Daily life Mental health

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### Introduction

Physical activity significantly affects an individual's mental health, as evidenced by various others also supporting the importance of physical activity in the context of mental health. For example indicates that social support and physical activity can contribute to improved quality of life, which in turn can positively influence mental health (Saptandari et al., 2022). Physical activity can improve the body's functional capacity and aid in weight control, which in turn can contribute to better mental health (Sitoayu et al., 2021). In addition, Wijayanto emphasised that exercise can improve an individual's emotional stability and ability

to navigate social relationships, which are important aspects of mental health (Wijayanto, 2022).

According to research conducted by Santoso, motivation to exercise tends to increase during the COVID-19 pandemic, with students trying to maintain their immunity through physical activity (Ramadhani & Susanto, 2022). This suggests that in challenging situations, individuals can find ways to stay physically active, which in turn can help reduce stress and anxiety. The importance of accessibility of sports facilities in encouraging participation in physical activity, which can have a positive impact on people's mental health (Aji et al., 2023).

In the context of the work environment, research by Sunarsi and Kusjono shows that a good work environment can increase employee productivity, which is also related to their mental health (Sunarsi & Kusjono, 2019). An environment that supports physical activity, such as a workplace exercise programme, can help employees feel better mentally and physically. This finding is in line with which reveals that a positive work environment contributes to increased productivity and employee well-being (Halijah et al., 2022).

Furthermore, research conducted by Dany revealed that appropriate exercise intensity can improve sleep quality, which is a key factor in managing stress and maintaining mental health (Dany, 2022). Quality sleep contributes to better mental well-being, and physical activity can be one way to achieve this. In addition, research conducted by Ismail et al. revealed that physically active individuals have stronger mental resilience, which is crucial for coping with stress and various challenges in life (Ismail et al., 2023). Through this literature review, this study aims to explore more deeply the influence of physical activity on mental health, as well as its implications in everyday life.

In everyday life, physical activity can be applied as an effective strategy in maintaining mental health, both individually and in social settings. Recent studies have shown that integrating exercise into daily routines, such as walking, yoga or moderate-intensity exercise, can improve mood and reduce stress levels. In addition, holistic approaches that combine physical activity with other techniques, such as meditation or cognitive therapy, are increasingly recognised in the literature as more effective methods in managing mental disorders. Therefore, the novelty of this study as well as its scientifically-based recommendations can help people adopt healthy living habits. These habits not only contribute to improved psychological well-being, but also support productivity and overall quality of life. This research will also examine various strategies that can be implemented in everyday life to improve mental health through physical activity, thereby providing greater benefits to both individuals and society as a whole.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Study participants***

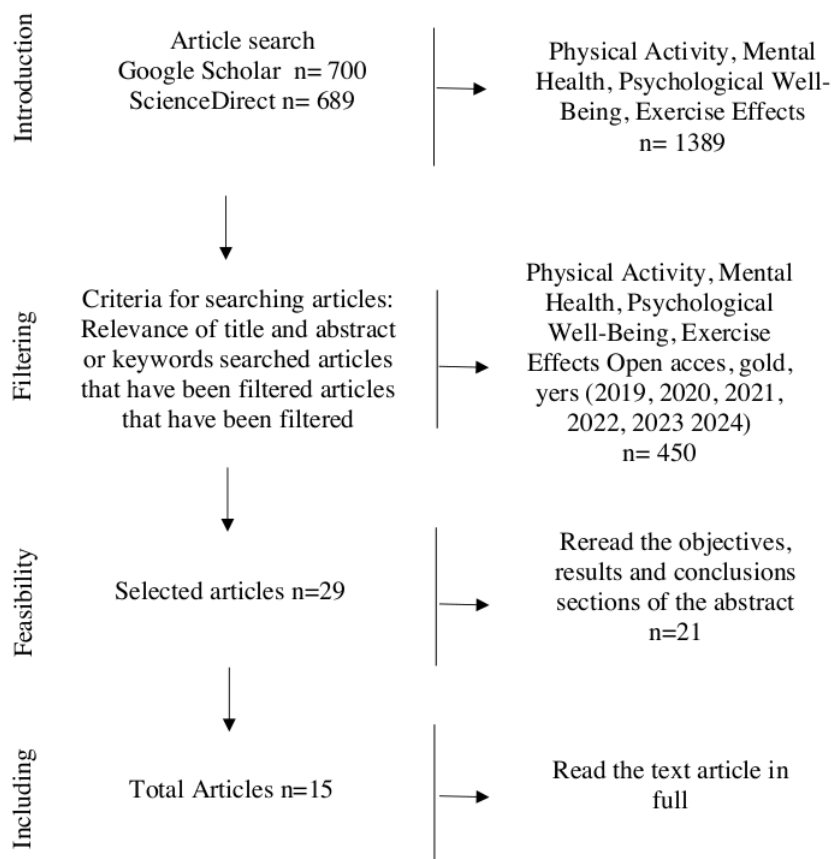
The articles reviewed were selected based on English language publications published since 2019. Databases used included Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. Some of the keywords used in the search included 'Physical Activity,' 'Mental Health,' 'Psychological Well-Being,' and 'Exercise Effects.' The period covered in this study was from 2019 to 2024. The article presents the research objectives research methods and research results.

### ***Study organization***

The literature search process was conducted by reviewing the 'keywords,' 'title,' 'abstract,' as well as the 'full text' of relevant articles. This study utilised the Guidelines for Systematic Reporting and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) method to ensure completeness and accuracy.

**Statistical analysis**

The final sample of this study consisted of 15 articles (n=15) (Table 1). Articles from 2019 (1), 2020 (5), 2021 (2), 2022 (0), 2023 (4), 2024 (3) were included. The number and proportion of publications that were part of the investigation are shown in the figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Prisma Article Selection Diagram

**Results**

The data from the screening of articles is presented and can be seen in Table 1 below:

**Tabel 1.** Presentasi ulasan artikel

No	Author	Title	Research type	Research results
1.	(Neill et al., 2020)	The effects of interventions with physical activity	Systematic and Meta-Analysis	Physical activity interventions have been shown to significantly improve adolescents' mental health, including reducing symptoms of depression,

	components on adolescent mental health: Systematic review and meta-analysis		anxiety and improving well-being. Their effectiveness is influenced by the type, duration and frequency of activity.
2. (Watana be & Tsutsumi, 2023)	Workers' perceptions of mhealth services for physical activity and mental health: A qualitative study using a text-mining method	Kualitatif Metode Text-Mining	Research shows mHealth services help workers with exercise motivation and mental health through features such as activity reminders, tracking and health resources. However, challenges include difficulty integrating into daily routines as well as privacy and data security concerns.
3. (Murphy et al., 2020)	Physical Activity and Sports Participation in Irish Adolescents and Associations with Anxiety, Depression and Mental Wellbeing. Findings from the Physical Activity and Wellbeing (Paws) Study	Survei Cross-Sectional	Research shows that physical activity and sports, especially team sports, significantly reduce levels of anxiety and depression in adolescents. Participation more than twice a week improves mental well-being through a sense of social connectedness, making it an effective protector against mental health problems.
4. (Giando nato et al., 2021)	Improving Mental Health through Physical Activity: A Narrative Literature Review Joseph	Naratif	A review of the literature shows physical activity, including low-intensity such as walking, significantly improves mental health by reducing depression, anxiety and enhancing mood. Mechanisms include increased serotonin and endorphins, reduced inflammation, better sleep quality, and improved self-confidence and social skills.
5. (Desak Made et al., 2023)	A Descriptive Study of Mental Health and Physical Activity in Adolescents	Survei Cross-Sectional	Research shows that regular physical activity and participation in team sports significantly reduce anxiety and depression in adolescents, while improving social connectedness and mental well-being. Participation more than twice a week was associated with higher mental health scores, confirming the role of physical activity as protective against mental health problems.

6. (Bagum et al., 2024)	Effectiveness Of Physical Activities In Students' Mental Health At Elementary Level	Kuantitatif Eksperimen	6 Research shows that regular physical activity and participation in team sports significantly reduce anxiety and depression in adolescents, while improving social connectedness and mental well-being. Participation more than twice a week was associated with higher mental health scores, confirming the role of physical activity as protective against mental health problems.
7. (Ahsan & Abualait, 2024)	4 Mental Health and Physical Activity during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review Salud mental y actividad física durante y después de la pandemia de COVID-19: una	Sistematis Literatur	6 Research shows that physical activity during the pandemic, whether structured exercise or daily activities, reduces anxiety and depression and improves mood. During lockdown, many individuals adapt to activities such as home exercise, walking or cycling. Social support also plays an important role in encouraging continuation of physical activity despite social restrictions.
8. (Omer Faruk Inecli Mehmet Akif Ziyagil, 2019)	9 Effects of regular physical activity on physical and mental health in high school students Omer	Kuantitatif Survei	6 Research shows that students who regularly engage in physical activity have better physical health, including a normal body mass index and better cardiorespiratory fitness. In addition, they tend to have lower levels of depression and anxiety, with physical activity contributing to improved mood and psychological well-being.
9. (Davidson et al., 2024)	Parental physical activity, parental mental health, children's physical activity, and children's mental health	Kuantitatif Survei	13 Research reveals a significant relationship between parents' physical activity and mental health and their children's mental health. Parents who are regularly physically active tend to have more active children, while good mental health in parents is often linked to better mental health in children, highlighting the important role parents play in shaping healthy habits in children.
10. (Molcho et al., 2021)	Levels of Physical Activity and Mental Health in Adolescents in Ireland	Kuantitatif Cross-Sectional	6 Research shows that regular physical activity in adolescents significantly reduces anxiety and depression and improves mood and emotional well-being. Both structured exercise and

			daily physical activity have a positive impact on mental and physical health.
11. (Mehrabani & Fayaz, 2023)	Physical Activity During the Corona Period and Its Relationship with the Physical and Mental Health of Children and Adolescents	Kuantitatif	Research shows a significant decrease in children and adolescents' physical activity during the pandemic, which is associated with increased anxiety and depression. Physical activity has been shown to be important not only for physical health, but also as a coping mechanism against the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic. The statistical data presented strengthens the argument that physical activity can reduce anxiety symptoms and improve mood.
12. (Petruzzello & Box, 2020)	The Kids Are Alright—Right? Physical Activity and Mental Health in College Students	Kuantitatif	Research shows that higher levels of physical activity are associated with reduced anxiety and depression in university students. In addition, regular physical activity has also been shown to be effective in reducing stress.
13. (Åvitsland et al., 2020)	The association between physical fitness and mental health in Norwegian adolescents	Cross-Sectional	Research shows that higher physical fitness is associated with lower anxiety and depression in adolescents. Regular physical activity also improves mood and psychological well-being. Team sports, which involve social interaction, have a more positive impact on mental health compared to individual exercises.
14. (Xu, 2023)	Healthy Lifestyle and Exercise: How to Promote Physical and Mental Health through Physical Exercise	Literature Review	Xu's research shows the physical and mental health benefits of exercise, such as lowering the risk of chronic diseases, improving mood and reducing stress. Exercise improves blood flow, supports brain function, and increases serotonin and endorphins. Xu emphasises the consistency of exercise and a holistic approach, including accessible facilities and community programmes. In addition, exercise helps manage stress and anxiety through the regulation of stress hormones and the effects of active meditation.
15. (Muhsen, 2020)	The Impact of Physical Activity	Kuantitatif Survei	Research shows that higher levels of physical activity are associated with reduced levels of depression, anxiety

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and stress. Group exercise has a greater impact on mental health than individual activity. Furthermore, consistency in exercise has also been shown to improve psychological well-being, in line with the theory of endorphins, which function as 'happy hormones' that are released during physical activity and help improve mood.

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that physical activity has a significant positive impact on mental health. Various studies have shown that physically active individuals tend to have better mental health, with lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression. The implications of these findings are significant, especially in the context of everyday life, where the promotion of physical activity can be one of the key strategies in improving people's mental health.

It is important to educate people about the benefits of physical activity and encourage them to integrate exercise into their daily routine. By creating a supportive environment and providing better access to sports facilities, we can help more people to benefit from physical activity, not only for their physical health but also for their mental health.

### Discussion

A review of the literature shows a strong link between physical activity and mental health. Physical activity can serve as an effective intervention to treat mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. Furthermore, physical activity also has the potential to boost self-confidence and improve body image, which in turn supports better mental health.

The implication of this study in daily life is the importance of integrating physical activity into daily routines. People need to be encouraged to participate in physical activity, both individually and in groups. Programmes that promote physical activity, such as community exercise classes or walking groups, can help improve people's mental health.

#### 1. Positive Effects of Physical Activity on Mental Health

Various studies have revealed that physical activity has a significant positive impact on mental health. Physical activity can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as improve mood and overall quality of life. This is further supported by other studies that show that physical activity not only reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, but also improves sleep quality and cognitive function (Rahmaputri et al., 2022).

#### 2. Mechanism of Influence

Some of the mechanisms that explain the positive influence of physical activity on mental health include:

##### a. Endorphin Release

Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins, known as happiness hormones, which in turn can increase positive feelings.

##### b. Improved Sleep Quality

Regular physical activity can improve sleep quality, which contributes to better mental health.

##### c. Social Interaction

Physical activity is often done in groups, which can improve social interaction and support mental health.



### 3. Implications in Daily Life

The implications of the findings of this case are very relevant to be applied in everyday life. Some practical suggestions that can be taken include:

- a. Inclusion of Physical Activity in Daily Routines  
Encourage individuals to incorporate physical activity, such as walking, cycling, or attending exercise classes, into their daily routine.
- b. Raising Awareness  
Raise public awareness about the importance of physical activity not only for physical health but also for mental health.
- c. Intervention Programmes  
Develop intervention programmes that integrate physical activity as part of therapy for individuals experiencing mental health issues.

### Challenges and Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should incorporate these contextual variables to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that support or hinder the mental health benefits of physical activity. Furthermore, the role of technology and digital platforms in promoting physical activity during times of social distancing presents both opportunities and challenges. As highlighted by (Rahayu et al., 2023), Social media use can have mixed effects on psychological well-being, which complicates the narrative around digital engagement and physical activity. Future research should explore how digital tools can be utilised to encourage physical activity while reducing potential negative impacts on mental health, especially among vulnerable groups, such as adolescents and individuals with a history of mental health conditions.

While physical activity has significant benefits for mental health, there are various factors that influence the extent to which physical activity can have a positive impact. One important factor is the intensity and type of physical activity undertaken. Research by (Neill et al., 2020) showed that interventions involving high-intensity physical activity were more effective in improving mental health compared to low-intensity activity. Therefore, it is important to consider the type and intensity of exercise undertaken for maximum benefit.

Another influencing factor is social support (Davidson et al., 2024) found that support from parents and peers can increase participation in physical activity, which in turn contributes to better mental health. Adolescents who feel supported in their physical activity tend to be more active and have better mental health. This suggests that creating a social environment that supports physical activity can be an effective strategy to improve mental health.

In addition, the accessibility of sports facilities also plays an important role. Research by (Desak Made et al., 2023) shows that good access to sports facilities is associated with higher levels of participation in physical activity and better mental health. Therefore, it is important for governments and communities to ensure that sports facilities are available and accessible to all.

Based on the findings above, there are several important implications for health policy. First, the government needs to encourage programmes that promote physical activity in schools and communities. These programmes should be designed to increase students' participation in sports and other physical activities, taking into account factors such as social support and accessibility of facilities.

Second, it is important to raise awareness of the mental health benefits of physical activity. Educational campaigns that highlight the link between physical activity and mental health can help people understand the importance of exercising regularly. A better understanding of these benefits may encourage more people to engage in physical activity.

Third, interventions that combine physical activity with psychological support can be an effective strategy in improving mental health. For example, programmes that combine exercise

with counselling or psychological support can help individuals experiencing mental health issues to more easily overcome their problems.

Overall, physical activity has a significant impact on mental health. Research shows that physical activity can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and improve mood. However, factors such as the type and intensity of physical activity, social support, and accessibility of sports facilities also play an important role in determining the extent to which physical activity can benefit mental health. Therefore, it is important for stakeholders to consider these factors in designing programmes that aim to improve mental health through physical activity.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, the evidence strongly supports the idea that physical activity is an important component of improving mental health. Regular engagement in exercise can lead to significant improvements in mood, reductions in anxiety and depression, and improvements in overall psychological well-being. As such, it is imperative for individuals and healthcare providers to make physical activity a key approach to mental health management in daily routines. Future research should continue to explore the nuances of this relationship, including the optimal type and intensity of exercise that yields the greatest mental health benefits. With increased awareness and support for physical activity, we hope to create a mentally and physically healthier society.

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### Conflict of interest

The authors hereby declare that there are no conflicts of interest to report in this study.

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