



## **Body image perception of pilates practitioners in the municipality of Ponto Belo-ES: A case study**

### **Percepção da imagem corporal de praticantes de pilates no município de Ponto Belo-ES: Um estudo de caso**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** Body image consists of the multidimensional elaboration of the measurements, contours and shapes of the human body correlating with the mental perception of how the person understands, feels, and perceives himself and one of the main activities that arise to improve the perception of body image is Pilates. **Objective:** to present the body perception of the individual who performs the practice of Pilates in the municipality of Ponto Belo, in the north of the State of Espírito Santo. **Methodology:** this is a descriptive, exploratory and quantitative study, where in the first moment a bibliographic survey was carried out and in the second, field research through a questionnaire applied to sixteen people practicing Pilates. **Results:** Pilates has the role of correcting body posture, toning muscles and improving motor stability, as well as a key role in aesthetics and body image. **Conclusion:** At the end of the research it was evident that the objective proposed in the study was achieved, because it was clear to the readers the body perception of the individual who performs the practice of Pilates in the municipality of Ponto Belo, in the north of the State of Espírito Santo, in addition, it was possible to identify the opinion of the interviewees about their self-assessment of body image.

**Keywords:** Body, Pilates, Perception, Body image.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the current world, the concern with the body and the daily achievements of the individual makes people worry about their perception of body image, which also stimulates people to develop physical activities or the search for some activity that improves this perception (PANELLI, 2009).

Body image consists of the multidimensional elaboration of the measurements, contours and shapes of the human body correlating with the mental perception of how the person understands, feels, and perceives himself. Such perception can vary according to biological influences, media, religion, personal values, and the emotional part (MARQUESS *et al*, 2004).

The most harmful factors currently in relation to the perception of body image are linked to eating disorders, weight, and the quality of life of this individual, which can impact generate body dissatisfaction, in addition to low adherence to the practice of any physical activity (ZAMPGRONA and SIMOES, 2016).

Therefore, the insatisfaction of the corporal image makes individuals seek to perform some type of physical activity, being one of the main reasons for adherence to physical exercise and abandonment of sedentary activity. Thus, one of the main activities that arise to improve the perception of body image is Pilates (RUSSO, 2005).

Pilates is a technique that has been around for decades, originating in the middle of the first world war, with the purpose of practicing physical exercise aligned with the improvement in concentration, center of strength, breathing, self-control, motor coordination and mental balance. However, over the years this technique has been improved and has become important for several things, among them, the treatment of various diseases, postoperative, improvement of dynamic balance and body image (SERAFINI, 2014).

Thus, this study aims to present the body perception of the individual who performs the practice of Pilates in the municipality of Ponto Belo, in the north of the State of Espírito Santo.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 BODY IMAGE X SELF-ESTEEM

The stage of body image elaboration can be modified by biological variables, means of communication, beliefs, personal customs and emotional situations. With beginning in childhood the Body Image is a primary function with regard to self-esteem and the complex mechanism of person identity, the person experiences the reality of the world through his body (TAVARES, 2003).

Body image is characterized by the perception of our own body that is formed in our mind,



that is, the way in which the body identifies itself to ourselves or how we present it. However, self-esteem is related to positive or negative perception that the person has of his own body, that is, self-esteem is what the person feels of himself (NOGUEIRA *et. al*, 2010).

Body image is never stable, which means that it is part of the external world and, for this justification, it is not only the issue of alterations related to pathologies that has relevance to the body image, but also all the everyday happenings of our lives. Therefore, with the constancy in the physiological and behavioral changes, in the face of the appropriate life situations, there may be a change in the modification of this body image (DINIS, 1996).

Another factor that can alter body image is the practice of physical activities, such as gymnastics, dance, bodybuilding, swimming, among other practices that can cause changes in the body posture of the human being. These physical activities developed correctly and accompanied by a specialized professional can bring psychological benefits, among them the increase in self-esteem, feelings of well-being, self-confidence, changes in mood, reduction of stress, risk of anxiety, wakefulness and increased proatividade and energy in daily activities (DAMASCENO, 2005).

The individual perform the perception of his own body dimension along with the experience of himself is fundamental to define his behavior and how this will improve his mood, making him able to reach a better balance between body and mind even in the conditionalities of health (TAVARES, 2003).

The perception of body image allied to the practice of physical activity considerably reduces public health problems worldwide, such as obesity inadequate living standards, causes a greater concern with body image possibilitando the preventive intervention in relation to these problems (DAMASCENO, 2005).

In today's world, the number of problems resulting from dissatisfaction with one's own body image has been increasing significantly, making it one of the main challenges for health science professionals. One of the points that lead people to worry about body image is dissatisfaction with their own body, or rather, with the perception they have about it, this makes people participate in physical activity programs, among them, Pilates, which plays a fundamental role and generates benefits for body image perception (BERTOLA, 2007).

## 2.2 THE PILATES TECHNIQUE AS AN ALLY IN BODY IMAGE

Pilates began to be developed in the first world war, by Joseph H. Pilates, with the purpose of exercising the warriors and increasing their powers of strength, concentration, breathing,



balance, movement control, rhythm and contrology, being indispensable for the stimulation of motor coordination, the exercises that control the body and mind. The work of the mind so that it improves concentration and focus are very important for the development of body awareness and the elaboration of exercises with movement effectiveness (MARQUES *et al*, 2014).

In addition, the practice of Pilates has been an important ally in the treatment and prevention of various diseases, such as pathology, patients with a history of cerebral palsy, postoperative bariatric surgery, improvement in dynamic balance in healthy adults (SERAFINI, 2014).

The world of Pilates has several interpretations and several types and methods employed, one of them is the Traditional method, which work with the repertoire of exercises elaborated by Pilates and in the same way that she worked, with specific number of repeated exercises and a sequence also already defined, and most of the time there is no change in the way in which this form is employed, where the patient himself must adapt to Traditional Pilates (BERTOLA, 2007).

Already the Modern Pilates uses mechanisms, tools and concepts guided by Pilates and its exercises so that each client develops the best physical form, in this way, the Modern Pilates classes the technique adapts to the clients (BERTOLA, 2007).

### 2.3 BENEFITS OF PILATES ON BODY IMAGE

The current media works with a society that seeks the ideal physical appearance, based on an adequate anatomy and without errors, making people always look for this "ideal body" always worrying about aesthetic issues and their perception of body image, being even more frequent in women (PANELLI, 2009).

Body image is characterized by the individual's perception of his own body, that is, the way in which it presents itself to the individual or how we live, and can undergo constant changes throughout life. It is worth mentioning that when this body image is impaired they can lead to various inappropriate behaviors, depression, eating disorders, sedentary lifestyle or even excessive physical activities (ADAMI, 2004).

Body image can be modified by the practice of physical activities, including Pilates, which can significantly alter body image. This activity entails benefits linked to the psychological part being positively related to self-image, the feeling of well-being, self-confidence, positive changes in behavior, stress, personality disorders, energy elevation, among others (MARQUES *et al*, 2004).

When Pilates is related to body image, there is a different perception by some authors, and Cruz-Ferreira *et al* (2011) present that the practice of Pilates significantly improves the perception



about your body, as well as the other perceptions and how it is perceived by other people. Serafini *et al* (2014) clone that this activity does not improve or reduce the individual's dissatisfaction with his body.

ZAMPGRONA and SIMOES (2016) also mention benefits in relation to body image, because, in addition to correcting body posture, toning the muscles and improving motor stability, Pilates plays a fundamental role in the aesthetic part and body image, especially of women who perceive better significant in muscle mass gain and weight reduction.

The practitioner himself is aware of his improvement and benefits in his body image, as presented by Zamproгна and Simões (2016), who point out that after 9 days of Pilates practice women have already witnessed better recognition of their body image, positive changes in their perception and body awareness of the volunteers, with a 33% reduction in dissatisfaction with their body image.

This improvement in body image and aesthetic perception of individuals stimulates the practice of Pilates serving as motivation, because the individual feels good about himself and improves his physical self-concept, that is, the perception of his body image (RUSSO, 2005).

### 3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The methodology is based on a descriptive, exploratory, and quantitative study, therefore, which aimed to present a study on the perception of body image of Pilates practitioners in the municipality of Ponto Belo-ES.

The first stage of the study was carried out data collection based on bibliographic reviews, manuals, scientific articles, and criteria and guidelines established in the profession of Physical Therapy, in order to contribute to the initial understanding of the theme that was proposed, based on a bibliographic research, having as main source articles, dissertations and journals on the subject, as well as manuals, books and other materials available on the internet.

In the second moment, seeking to support the bibliographic research, a field study was applied through a questionnaire applied to a Pilates Studio located in the municipality of Ponto Belo, in the state of Espírito Santo. The questionnaire used was based on the study of the author Rosana Lemos Fernandes, who published the study with the theme "Perceptive analysis of body image in women who attend the gym in the Federal District" which facilitates and speeds up the answers, as well as the results of the information that was raised, being directed to Pilates practitioners in the age group of 20 to 75 years, , for the number of 16 people, distributed by 4 males and 12 females and had 13 questions. According to Gil (2008, p. 10), a field study or



research is defined as "the realization through direct observation of the activities of the studied group and interviews with informants to capture the explanations and interpretations of what happens in that reality."

Regarding the nature of this information, the research research is quantitative, by the fact of having the need for the analysis of resources and static techniques. Quantitative research is "characterized by the use of quantification, both in the modalities of information collection and in the treatment of them through statistical techniques" (RICHARDISON, 1999, page 8).

The volunteers who were analyzed in this study signed a free and informed consent form, which is the model used by the University Center of Caratinga-MG.

#### 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the research, 43.75% of the interviewees answered about a lack of control of their physique and body image, this is presented Diniz (1996, p.1), who highlights that with the constancy in the physiological and behavioral changes, in the face of the appropriate life situations, there may be an alteration in the modification of this body image.

In the research highlights that 56.25% questioned do not worry about being with thin people and being at a disadvantage with other people, that is, this is not the main reason for the perception in their body image and the practice of Pilates. In the research of the theoretical framework, no justification was found that would indicate that this would be one of the reasons for concern with their perception of body image.

In question 5 50% of the interviewees were ashamed to wear clothes at events due to their perception of body image and in question 6 68.75% presented that they are not ashamed of their body, in these questions addressed about the reaction of the individual about his body, whether he feels good or not with this analysis.

Table 1 – Most relevant search results

Question	I completely agree	Agree	I neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Does worrying about your body image make you feel like you should exercise?	93,75 %	-	-	-	-
2.Do you think that Pilates contributes to the best of your body?	81.25 %	-	-	-	-
3.Se you think you've improved, do you believe it contributes to your health?	87,50	-	-	-	-
4.Se do you think you've improved, do you believe it	75 %	-	-	-	-

contributes to your body shape?					
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Source: Survey data, 2023.

Table 2 - Perception of body image of Pilates practitioners in the municipality of Ponto Belo - ES

Question	I completely agree	Agree	I neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Does worrying about your body image make you feel like you should exercise?	93,75 %	-	-	-	-
2. Do you worry that your body is not firm enough?	-	50 %	-	-	-
3. Does being with thin people make you feel worried about your physique?	-	-	-	43,75 %	-
4. Have you noticed other people's physiques and, when comparing yourself, do you feel at a disadvantage?	50 %	-	-	-	-
5. Have you avoided wearing clothes that make you notice the shapes of your body?	-	37,50 %	-	-	-
6. Have you ever been ashamed of your body?	-	-	-	56,25	-
7. Does worrying about your physique lead to dieting?	-	-	-	50 %	25%
8. Did you stop attending social events because you felt bad about your body?	-	25 %	-	-	25 %
9. Do you think your current physique stems from a lack of self-control?	-	-	31,25%	-	-
10. Do you think that Pilates contributes to the best of your body?	81.25 %	-	-	-	-
11. Se you think you've improved, do you believe it contributes to your health?	87,50	-	-	-	-
12. Se do you think you've improved, do you believe it contributes to your body shape?	75 %	-	-	-	-

Source: Survey data, 2023.

As mentioned by the author Tavares (2013), the perception with the body image makes people worry about the practice of some physical activity, among them, Pilates, serving as a stimulus. This fact was identified in the research, where 93.75% of the individuals surveyed (15 people) expressed that they agree that the concern with their body image makes them seek some type of exercise.

Another point observed that was desrido by Damasceno (2005), emphasizes that postural stability is an important context for the perception of body image, something that the practice of



Pilates develops with the activities performed by this type of physical exercise, being primordial to achieve significant results in this practice.

However, Marques *et al* (2004), highlights that this body image can be modified by the practice of physical activities, including Pilates, which can significantly alter body image. In addition, it emphasizes the benefits linked to the psychological part being positively related to self-image, sense of well-being, self-confidence, positive changes in behavior, stress, personality disorders and energy elevation.

This fact was evident in the description of the authors Cruz-Ferreira *et al* (2012), Zamprona and Simões (2016) and Russo (2005), who highlighted that Pilates has the role of correcting body posture, toning the muscles and improving motor stability, in addition to a fundamental role in the aesthetic part and body image.

Highlighted by Adami *et al* (2005) body image is a union of several factors that connect with each other, which encompasses social, cognitive, cultural, affective and motor aspects, being primordial its influence and interaction both with the internal environment as well as the external environment of this practice.

For Panelli (2009) the aesthetic role of Pilates is fundamental, however, it is worth highlighting the benefits generated to the health of the practitioner, such as the uniformity of the body, the strengthening and definition of the existing musculature, and consequently, makes the prevention of pain and possibility of various injuries, becoming even more evident with the results obtained that identified this perception on the part of the individual.

The literature points out discusses even more several health benefits with the practice of Pilates, among them, the stimulation of circulation and mehora in physical conditioning, flexibility, muscle amplitude, posture alignment, perception and levels of body awareness and motor coordination (SACCO, 2005).

When you point out that Pilates may or may not have improved your body, in addition to the issue involving body perception and improvement in health, another point that deserves to be highlighted is pain, since Pilates is a great ally for pain reduction, which can generate from stress to a physical disability (HEREDITA and RODRIGUES, 2008).

## 5 CONCLUSION

At the end of the research it was clear the body perception of the individual who performs the practice of Pilates in the municipality of Ponto Belo, in the north of the State of Espírito Santo, in addition, it was possible to identify the opinion of the interviewees about their self-assessment



of body image.

The study also allowed the Pilates practitioner to realize about the contribution of Pilates in improving their body, improving their quality of life, and also helping to the shape of their body, being unanimous in the response of the 16 respondents in the survey, which makes it clear that the practitioner understands about the benefits of Pilates.

In the research it was evident that the preoccupation with your corporal image, that is, the self-perception of your body, the concern of the fact that the body is not totally firm and does not use clothes that make you notice the shapes of your body, makes the individual seek the practice of Pilates.

It is worth mentioning as a suggestion the next surveys the veracity of the interviewees in the answers to some questions, as highlighted the part answering in relation to the shame of their body where it was found controversa in this item with the answers to other questions that dealt with similar subjects, being with suggestion the improvement in the elaboration of the questions presented to the participants of the research.

The results identified in the research were satisfactory to understand the body perception of the individual about the practice of Pilates, that is, from these results, identified the improvement in the perception of the body image of the people interviewed and approximation of the recognition of this image.



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