

Dance and Self-Care

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ABSTRACT: At first glance, dance and sports appear to be distinct forms of expression and communication; however, the search for nuances which bring them closer together reveals a fascinating universe of possibilities. The objective of this study was to understand the relationship between the experience of dance and self-care among volleyball athletes. To this end, a methodological framework was established using qualitative research, grounded in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach and the strategy of the situated phenomenon. The study involved 15 athletes from the men's and women's volleyball teams at the Federal Institute of Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN-CNAT) in Brazil. The intervention consisted of nine sessions centered on dance classes, followed by semi-structured interviews which sought to fully understand the participants' subjectivity. Based on the research conducted, we found that the experience with dance helped with emotion regulation and provided a break from the routine, fostering a sense of self-actualization and inner connection among the athletes, which made the practice of volleyball significantly more enjoyable. We conclude that the experience with dance establishes a direct relationship with self-care, allowing athletes to gain a deeper understanding of their own subjectivities.

KEYWORDS: Volleyball players, Body, Self-care, Dance, Sports

I. INTRODUCTION

At first glance, dance and sports are two different forms of expression and communication. The movement aesthetics involved in both of these movement culture practices is a point that brings them together. As components of physical education, these manifestations of movement culture are developed separately in a didactically systematized manner, each in their own domain (Darido, 1999; Darido, 2012).

Dance is a form of artistic expression, but it is also a mode of symbolic communication that develops within society (Purwinarti, 2025). Sports are currently being redefined through the use of artificial intelligence to help increase athletes' precision and performance, as well as to improve injury prevention (Roy; Barlian; Donie; Sepriadi; Endang Sepdanius, 2026).

However, reflecting on and attempting to understand the common nuances between these two worlds can lead to a fascinating unfolding of countless possibilities. In this context, exploring this connection between dance and volleyball can be an experience which transcends the conventional boundaries of educational and athletic performance.

In the school setting, it has become evident (especially nowadays) that students experience anxiety crises due to the demands of the learning process. It is difficult for them to take a test or present an assignment without experiencing symptoms of anxiety. This was highlighted by athletes in a study involving volleyball players from a public school in Brazil. These athletes described the pressures they face during competition, including: personal competition, in which the athlete must overcome their own limitations, fears, and expectations; group-level competition, as they face competition for a starting or regular spot in the lineup and on the team; and finally, the competition itself, tournaments and sporting events that are characterized by a high level of psychological pressure and expectations.

Given the scarcity of studies exploring connections between dance and volleyball and the difficulties faced by volleyball athletes before tournaments, our research question in this study is as follows:

- Is it possible to draw a connection between volleyball athletes' experience with dance and the concept of self-care?

The concept of self-care has been evolving to the present day, even in the context of significant historical moments when "Practices of Freedom" guided existence in both social and personal contexts. However, unlike in the present day, practices such as "concentration techniques, examinations of conscience, and breathing techniques" are still viewed as means for self-preparation, self-repair, and self-construction, and from this perspective caring for oneself, knowing oneself, and only then being able to care for others, as previously stated: "[...] Self-knowledge. To concern oneself with oneself is to know oneself" (Foucault, 2006).

We must therefore embrace and hold fast to the ways of reflecting on Michel Foucault's explorations of the concept of self-care. At this point, we also present the reflections of Mendes and Gleyse (2015), who highlight the implications of self-care for the

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field of Physical Education, emphasizing that this concept is an important philosophical foundation for the field, capable of reconnecting knowledge and practice.

With a view to answering the study's guiding question, the objective of this study is to understand the relationship between the experience of dance and self-care among volleyball athletes.

II. METHODOLOGY

This article is characterized as a qualitative study. Given the sensitive perspective and perception that this study aims to explore, we designed a methodological approach which allows us to achieve such sensitivity.

We grounded our research in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach seeking to bring this cross-cutting perspective to the subjects. As a methodological approach, phenomenology allows for a more tangible perspective when considering the subject's subjectivity. Our intention is to give voice to and listen to the subjects involved in the study in order to understand them. Phenomenology returns to the most vivid sense of what it means to be human, distancing itself from ideas that dichotomize the body through Cartesian thought. We are, first and foremost, our own bodies, and because we are these bodies, the entire existential context is conditioned by the direct relationship with the body, or the subject. The whole is the subject; the body is the whole (Merleau-Ponty, 1994; Surdi, 2019).

It is through the phenomenological movement that we seek a more mindful approach, reflecting and making our research more sensitive. Not in the practical sense of something fragile, but rather in the sense of a keener attention, a careful gaze at details, shadows, contours, and the external; at the whole, not just at what is immediately apparent. Thus, we highlight the fundamental themes and concepts of phenomenological research, namely: the lived world, intentionality, description, and reduction.

In turn, we need to think of the lived world as observing what came before, namely the context prior to reflection in order to gain some understanding of these fundamental themes. It is a reflection on one's own existence, one's own living space, and its context, or a view of the whole. Originating in the German language, the term "lived world" is known as *Lebenswelt*, which in turn refers to the pre-reflective world; the subject's own immediate experience, or everyday experience. It is the foundation of our actions and behaviors, knowledge, and perceptions (Merleau-Ponty, 1994; Mendes, 2013; Surdi, 2019).

In this sense, intentionality is a movement which follows a single direction, signifying the (re)actions undertaken in response to a lived circumstance, such as a decision made or reflected upon in the face of an everyday situation. For Merleau-Ponty, this intentionality is not solely restricted to something rational or intellectual, but is linked to the body itself, serving as the general medium, the means of connection with the whole (Merleau-Ponty, 1994; Mendes, 2013).

When we consider the concept behind the term "description," we tend to think simplistically that to describe is to recount, to write down events step by step, a comprehensive account of everything. In phenomenology, which is descriptive by its very nature, description is used to capture and express the essence of lived experience as it is in its truest form, reflecting the body-world relationship. Regarding reduction, it does not supersede truth; rather, it examines reality by distancing itself from it. Even though we understand that this distancing is necessary to grasp the truth, it will never be complete, and so reduction is an action we perform while still within the context of our existence; it is the opportunity to engage in communication with our embodied relationship to the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1994; Mendes, 2013).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that this methodology allows for a detailed description of all actions undertaken to construct the study. This section addresses the collection of information regarding the research site, the individuals involved, the study object, and the techniques and instruments used. In other words, it outlines the path taken to achieve the research objective (Kauark, 2010).

In this context of seeking to understand the subjects in their entirety (who will be the focus of the study), we employ the "situated phenomenon" strategy as a research technique. This technique weaves together relationships with the context of the lived world in order to facilitate better understanding of the experience itself, giving rise to the units of meaning embedded in the study. It constructs a path that engages with the perspectives that will be described by the athletes through interviews; according to Mendes (2013), this strategy is unique and vital for understanding these subjects:

To describe the situated phenomenon is to describe what is perceived, what makes sense to the subject who observes or speaks, taking into account lived experience. In the description, it is the initial question that indicates the trajectory to be followed by the investigation, insofar as it is capable of defining procedures and subjects, as well as pointing the direction of analysis and interpretation (Mendes, 2013, p. 19).

It is through this perception, this sensitive observation of the resulting phenomena, that we can guide and structure the stages of our study. We seek to bring to light the whole, the visible and invisible truths from within the innermost depths of the subjects' subjectivity, giving voice and space to what has not yet been perceived, and discovering the subject behind what has always been seen as an athlete.

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About the subjects and the setting

The study was conducted at the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Norte, Natal Central Campus (IFRN-CNAT) in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. The target audience consisted of the students/athletes who compose the men's and women's volleyball teams. All 40 students who were part of the volleyball teams were invited to the intervention sessions. Thus, everyone would have access to and the opportunity to attend the dance sessions that were part of the study. We emphasize that only athletes between the ages of 18 and 19 were included as volunteers to answer the interview questions, in accordance with the age group targeted by this study. All students were enrolled and were part of the student body of the various integrated technical high school programs offered by IFRN-CNAT.

The intervention sessions took place in the IFRN-CNAT Dance Studio with the aim of organizing sessions and experiences to achieve the study objectives. Consequently, the aforementioned teams were involved in an intervention process consisting of 10 sessions, each lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes. However, only 8 sessions were held; the last of these was conducted over a duration equivalent to 2 sessions, bringing the total number of sessions conducted with the athletes to 9.

Following an initial, welcoming introduction during which the entire study proposal and the intervention process were presented, and culminating in the interviews, the consent forms were then also provided to those wishing to participate. The purpose of this first session was to encourage the athletes to voluntarily agree to participate in the study. We also emphasized that the participants' identities would be kept confidential and that their participation was contingent upon signing the consent forms.

These sessions were scheduled to take place on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. (Brazilian time) and lasted until 7:30 p.m. They were held in a suitable room equipped with mirrors and ample space that allowed for movement, experimentation, and self-expression, while also providing the necessary privacy for the activities.

After the documentation (Informed Consent Form and the Authorization Form for Audio and Video Recording) was signed and submitted by the volunteer athletes, we began the sessions striving to maintain the sequential organization of the schedule. The beginning of each session was designed as a welcoming moment, always in a circle format, with the intention of making them feel at ease, comfortable, and open to the proposals that would be presented. We also began the process of active listening within this space, with the aim of truly understanding them. This is where the central theme of each experience was presented to them.

Observation and listening: methods of investigation

The data collection tools for this study primarily consisted of semi-structured interviews (Gil, 2008). We were able to observe and understand the experience as it unfolded and the participants involved through the accounts provided in the interviews which took place after the intervention.

In addition, photographic records (images/photos) were taken as a secondary method, and records were made of the use of posters (cardboard) for writing and self-expression during one of the sessions addressing emotions.

The ethics of care and the protection of the experience

Before beginning the investigation, this research project was submitted to and approved by the Ethics and Research Committee (CEP) for research involving human subjects. The study was approved under opinion number: 7,337,580, and in compliance with and following Resolution 510/2016 of the National Health Council (CNS).

Mapping the initial sensations

The interviews took place after the series of meetings. This process resulted in a total of 15 interviewees (athletes) who volunteered to answer the questions.

We identified the athletes by gender (male and female) to preserve their anonymity, with 7 being girls and the other 8 being boys. As with the dance sessions, the interviews were also conducted outside of school hours to avoid causing any disruption to the students' studies. The interviews consisted of three sociodemographic questions, and the remaining five questions were designed to address the objectives of this study. In addition, the athletes were assigned pseudonyms based on the relationships they developed during this process to maintain the subjects' anonymity.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We asked the interviewed athletes what they understood by "self-care," and based on their responses, we were able to create the following categories: 1) Holistic self-care, both mentally and physically; 2) Self-care as respecting oneself and one's limits; 3) Recognizing problems and taking action.

Self-care in a holistic way

The athlete referred to here as "Entrega," within this category of self-care, says:

It's about taking care of yourself. I usually describe it as putting myself first. Prioritizing myself, no matter what, and not putting other people above me. I'm going to take care of myself; I can take care

of other people, but I won't forget that I can take care of myself too; I won't forget about my self-care (Entrega, 2025).

It is important to note in Entrega's statement that it is clear that paying attention to oneself is her priority; even if there is a relationship with another person and that relationship involves caring for them, we must not forget to take care of ourselves and make that a priority: "I usually think of it as prioritizing myself. Prioritizing, no matter what." In this sense, Entrega speaks of placing oneself at the center, as a priority, meaning focusing attention on oneself.

Thus, we have already turned to the Concept of Self-Care. The human practices of self-care in their earliest socio-historical periods in Western society were studied by a philosopher of the last century, Michel Foucault. In his words on self-care: "One must not place the care of others ahead of self-care; self-care comes first ethically, insofar as the relationship with oneself is ontologically primary" (Foucault, 2010, p. 271). That said, prioritizing oneself over other demands means reflecting on one's own needs; not in an egotistical way, but in a manner that strengthens oneself (Foucault, 2010).

Michel Foucault was already bringing important and all too relevant debates back into the public discourse for humanity. Drawing a connection to the value that must be placed on "practices of freedom" in the contemporary world, we associate the issues of self-care, individuality, and practices and actions that can be part of daily life and that serve as opportunities for reflection, observation, self-listening, and a better perception of oneself; not merely physical, but in a more comprehensive sense, a subjective observation of oneself (Foucault, 2009).

It was also possible to observe that even when prioritizing self-care, we can still pay attention to others, as expressed in the statement: "I'm going to take care of myself; I can take care of other people, but I won't forget that I can take care of myself too." This reinforces the idea that care extends beyond individuality.

It is in this sense that Foucault emphasizes that self-care is also achieved through caring for others, based on a social dimension; he stresses that caring for others stems from complex social relationships that exist among peers and groups (Foucault, 2010).

Self-care: how to respect yourself and respect your limits

In this second category, the athletes' conception of self-care reveals a discourse regarding personal limits. Two particularly powerful statements stand out from the rest:

I think it's about knowing your limits in certain situations. So, you don't push yourself too hard; you know that everything has a limit. So, how can I put it? It's about not pushing yourself too hard, you know? You have to be aware of that and also always try to think, for example, I'm someone who gets very anxious, so I think it's [...] like, other people help me a lot with this, because when I see someone who's nervous or something like that, I go over and try to calm them down. Then they do that a lot with me, you know? I think taking care of yourself also has a big influence on how you take care of others (Emoção, 2025).

Emoção highlights how important it is to be self-aware and recognize one's limits. In her statement, she emphasizes that even though she is an anxious person, she realizes that by observing others who are experiencing anxiety, she is able to pay attention to them and care for them by offering support. And that this action is reflected in the act of taking care of herself.

Another statement which also points to a different perspective on oneself regarding personal expectations and recognizing one's own limits comes from Respeito:

I think self-care, I don't know, is because I see myself more than other people do, but I think, like, not being so hard on myself. Like, ah, as I said, when I was starting out in volleyball, I'd think, "My God, these girls have been playing longer than I have," and stuff like that, I could really "be hard on myself," like, with my own thoughts, saying: "My God, I have to get these things right because I have to move forward and try my absolute hardest." But no, like, I have to respect my own pace, know that it's different from theirs, and not, like, rush myself, like "Oh, I can do that, but on my own time," because since I'm starting later, I have to respect my limits, what I know, and what I don't know. So, I think that respecting and taking care of yourself means understanding yourself. Like, I know how to do some things and there are things I don't know. That's okay, I can learn them later; I don't need to rush to keep up with other people's pace (Respeito, 2025).

In these two statements from Respeito and Emoção, it is clear that recognizing one's own limits, understanding oneself in relation to the world, and having one's own pace of action and reaction are different from those of others. This reinforces the idea that by pausing and trying to understand oneself, it is possible to be more attentive and caring toward oneself.

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Recognize the problems and take action

In the statements from the third category of recognizing problems and taking action, this theme is also present in the athletes' remarks. Sensibilidade says:

"Oh, that's a really complicated question, isn't it? Yeah, but I think taking care of yourself means recognizing who you are, the problems you have, and taking action based on that, right? Like, if you're going through something, you really have to accept it, try to accept what you're going through, to start taking care of yourself, right? Because otherwise, it's no use" (Sensibilidade, 2025).

Sensibilidade demonstrates a certain precision in stating that self-care involves having the awareness and attitude to recognize what one is facing at the moment and taking action to change it: "if you're going through something like that, you have to really accept it, try to accept what you're going through to start taking care of yourself." Thus, it becomes clear from her words that self-care is self-recognition, or recognizing yourself, as a way to understand your limitations, barriers, and potential.

Still on the topic of understanding and recognizing your limits, Sutileza's words make us reflect on how self-care can protect us from certain situations or circumstances:

It's about protecting yourself at certain times. It's like preventing bad things, or things which might interfere with what you're going to do from happening to you. So by taking care of yourself, you'll prevent those things from disrupting the process or something like that (Sutileza, 2025).

This preventive aspect is also highlighted by Alívio, who links self-care to holistic well-being, but emphasizes that adopting self-focused attitudes is not a matter of individualism or selfishness, but rather of thinking about yourself once more:

Self-care, in my view, is when we make decisions not only thinking about ourselves, but also about our well-being. And these decisions have to involve something that truly does us good, both physically and mentally. Well-being has to be something we do to take care of ourselves, not just to look out for ourselves, you know, like not making selfish decisions, but thinking a little more about ourselves sometimes (Alívio, 2025).

In this sense, we emphasize that the idea that self-care is not directly linked to individualism is, in our view, a misconception. After all, for Foucault (2014, pp. 69–70), self-care is directly related to caring for others. In his words: "Self-care thus appears intrinsically linked to a service to the soul that entails the possibility of an exchange with the other and a system of reciprocal obligations." Furthermore, in this context, we can emphasize that self-care is manifested within social relationships; it occurs through these interactions among peers, groups, and within society. According to the author: "Self-care, or the care one takes regarding the care that others should take of themselves, thus appears as an intensification of social relationships" (Foucault, 2014, p. 69). Thus, we emphasize that the interactions experienced during the dance-based intervention sessions fostered moments of strengthened bonds in interpersonal relationships and among the groups. As indicated in the statements above, the way participants viewed one another was transformed; this shift in perspective took on a new meaning that affected the athletes not in terms of individuality, but rather in terms of the collective.

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In reflecting on these perspectives raised in the interviewees' statements about self-care, we asked the athletes whether, in their view, is there any connection between dance and self-care? Some of the responses were particularly striking, highlighting the relationship between dance and self-care as a form of expression and emotional outlet. One which we cannot fail to highlight was Fluidez's account:

For me, there is definitely a connection between dance, and speaking from my own perspective here, I'm kind of a layman, but this is just my view. Dance is a form of physical expression, and there's also a lot of emotion behind it. So, when you apply this to self-care, it speaks to the mind I just mentioned and to the body as well. So, you can use dance to express yourself sometimes. You release some of that weight by dancing. And I can even bring up something else which actually came up in your presentation. I remember, I think it was the first session I attended, there was an exercise where you had us imitate each other by making rhythmic dance movements. So that was interesting to me, because I... I don't know how to dance, not even a little bit; I don't have the confidence to move, and I feel like everyone is watching me. But that was interesting because everyone was moving there, even those who didn't know how, and those who did. And even if I led the other person at one moment, they'd lead me at another.

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Then I realized that, like, I don't need to have that fear, that nonsense. So I brought that mental comfort back to myself, you know? (Fluidez, 2025).

This is an interesting statement; it conveys Fluidez's perception and understanding that dance, as a form of physical expression, also allows expressing felt and experienced emotions. He emphasizes: "Dance is a physical expression, and there's also a lot of emotion behind it. [...] So you can use dance to express yourself sometimes. You lift a burden off yourself by dancing." When he mentions that he is able to lift a "burden off himself," I think he is referring to feelings related to personal pressure, since, at the end of his statement, he also highlights how he puts pressure on himself by comparing himself to his fellow dancers in the studio.

It is interesting to consider that this reflection stems from the experience of this athlete who, as he himself stated, had no prior experience with dance and still describes himself as someone who doesn't know how to dance, or who doesn't dance at all. Yet, for him, there came a specific moment during the intervention that made him realize there was no need for shyness or embarrassment, and he soon realized that this brought him a sense of lightness and comfort.

Another comment which stood out for following the same line of thought regarding the relationship between the expression of feelings and the connection to movement in dance was Alívio's:

I believe that sometimes in dance we really express how we're feeling. So, if we're happy, sometimes our movements are different from when we're sad, a little down, or tired, and "stuff like that." I think, in my view, there's a connection: when we're happy, we can create something livelier, and when we're sad, it's something more peaceful and calmer, like that (Alívio, 2025).

These words make it clear that the action of a gesture or movement in dance can reveal the dancer's feelings. Another statement that aligns with this same perception comes from Sutileza:

Yes, yes. Yeah, I've realized that through dance you can express yourself, and even if you have a hard time expressing yourself with words, you can show it through dance. And I think that by showing it, by expressing yourself, you can lift a huge weight off your shoulders. So, I think it's really important for mental health, not to mention physical health as well, you know? Just moving your body is already very important. So, I think it's very closely related to this issue of self-care (Sutileza, 2025).

Both of the statements above highlight a relationship in which dance is an expression, and through which there are ways to externalize feelings.

For Laurence Louppe (2012), the art of movement, referring to dance, brings much more depth than merely performing a movement. Thus, in dance, the meaning of movement is shaped by the individual's relationship with the world and their own history. Thus, the body itself becomes the medium of knowledge.

In relation to this existence, we can draw a connection to Siedler's (2021) study, in which she offers another perspective in the quest to weave relationships between dance and self-care which frames this connection as a means of resisting the social process of automation, a political act of resistance against imposed norms.

In turn, another statement that highlights the relationship between self-care and dance as a political act and a form of self-awareness that enabled reflection and change came from Tato:

I think I believe so, because that was exactly when I realized things weren't flowing. Like, dance was a moment when we felt ourselves, felt our bodies, really felt. Yeah, we'd stop to think about what we'd done with our lives. And actually, I remember that you, I think it was something you mentioned to us, talked about what we'd made of our daily routine, whether it had been something more, during that exercise where we had to imitate or reenact the movements we did in our day-to-day lives. And I think I'd never stopped to think that I was always doing the same thing. I wasn't really feeling it, I was just doing it, like on autopilot. I think the dance, like, helped me realize that, it was kind of crazy, too... I stopped to think that, like, when I eat something, I overthink it a lot, a lot, a lot, but I just eat it without really savoring it; like, I was just eating for the sake of eating. I thought about it, wow, am I doing that? Like, automatically, I'm not really feeling what's happening, or, I'm just doing it for the sake of doing it. So I think that helped a lot. Like, every morning when I wake up, I spend about two minutes in bed, just stopping to think, "Should I do it now?" Then I get up and start doing things more mindfully, like "Oh, I'm doing this." Not in a robotic way, but actually being aware of what I'm doing (Tato, 2025).

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In his own words, Tato realizes that he hadn't been taking care of himself or paying attention to himself, and through this experience, he realized that his actions weren't felt, they were automated. And because he was acting automatically, when he danced, he realized he could feel. He felt what he was doing; he felt as if it were something experienced differently given his background. I draw a connection between this insight in Tato's description and his lack of self-care, that sometimes doing things just for the sake of doing them, which had prevented him from recognizing the importance of self-care when reflecting on everything, including his own perception.

It is also important to reflect on how an athlete's history affects their relationship with the moment they are experiencing. In his remarks, Respeito discusses his context with dance and the sensations it evokes in him:

I think so, because many people dance as a way to relieve stress, to kind of free themselves from all the things that are bad for them. I also use dance for that, even though I don't dance much, but when I was little, every time I felt sad, things like that, I'd go dance. I loved to dance. Dancing was the thing that made me happiest, even though I didn't actually dance, I didn't take classes or anything, but just, you know, standing in front of the TV, with the music playing, whether it was **Chiquititas** or anything else I liked. I'd be right there dancing and singing. The art of dance has always been something I really enjoyed, and even though I wasn't the best or very good at it, I didn't take classes or anything, my body always adapted really well to dancing, so I always felt very comfortable. So it was a way of taking care of myself through dance, like "Oh, I'm feeling down, I'll dance, I'll listen to some music," because I think listening to music is also a way of taking care of yourself. So when I listened to music and moved to it, letting my feelings guide me, I think it really helped me a lot (Respeito, 2025).

In her own words, Respeito emphasizes that dancing serves as a form of self-expression and also as an outlet, a way to relax and disconnect from her emotions. She therefore draws a connection between this perspective and her understanding of it as a form of self-care, through self-knowledge and a connection to practices of freedom. Another statement which also highlights a perception of the self, a self-awareness that arises from the act of reflecting on oneself, is that from Emoção:

Yeah. It's like, when we're dancing, for example, as I was saying about limits, you know, that kind of thing, we realize that our bodies have limits: how far they can go, how much they can handle, that sort of thing. So, I think, I don't know, you can really sense that through dance, you know what I mean? You've done a lot of exercises, stretching, for example, and I really notice that, like, I really needed to stretch, because I think I have a lot of tight muscles, but I think that, like, when we're dancing sometimes, our minds just open up; you don't just stay focused on that one thing, you just let it flow, you know? So dance is more like... it's where I feel free. I feel a sense of freedom (Emoção, 2025).

Still on the subject of limits and self-awareness, Emoção points out that it is not just about physical issues (which the athlete relates to stretching exercises), but also the connection to an "open mind," where dance allows for this sense of freedom. In this sense, it is possible to draw a direct connection to the "practices of freedom" described by Michel Foucault (2010) as necessary. Freedom, in this sense, is not merely about being free, but about maintaining a space within this relationship that allows one to break free from the confinement caused by emotional overload.

At this point, we present Prumo's account:

Certainly, because whether we wanted to or not, what we were doing there was dancing, and, as I said, it helped a lot with our routine in terms of concentration, calmness, and mental well-being. So, I believe so; I believe that dance helps a lot with this issue of self-care (Prumo, 2025).

Prumo's words led me to a connection that creates yet another link regarding self-care practices, a direct connection to the observations made by Mendes and Gleyse (2015) who discuss practices of listening, reading, speaking, concentration techniques, meditation, memorization, and even self-examination. Foucault identifies these practices in Greco-Roman antiquity, yet they are still reflected in contemporary society. These practices are best encapsulated when the authors state that "to occupy oneself with oneself is to know oneself"; thus, knowing oneself is caring for oneself (Mendes and Gleyse, 2015). It is evident in Prumo's account that dance helped him slow down, breathe, close his eyes, take a deep breath, and look at himself anew with a different energy.

Sensibilidade also shares another account that links dance to self-care:

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Yeah, ever since I was a little kid, I've always really liked to dance, you know? Near where I lived, I lived in the countryside, there was a Zumba program, you know? People would gather in the square, dance, and stuff. And I always liked going. And that made me feel good about myself, you know? Like, I'd go with my friends back then and stuff, and it was really fun and made me happy. Dancing has that aspect to it, right? Those moments of happiness and stuff. Everyone gets cheerful, and I think it does influence taking care of yourself, you know? It's a moment of leisure that we have (Sensibilidade, 2025).

From Sensibilidade's statement, we can understand that his realization that dance provides him with personal satisfaction dates back to when he was younger. Even though his remarks about the experience of dance reflect on a past experience in the context of Zumba, he reports that social interaction with friends brought him satisfaction and a sense of lightness. It is evident that the collective action within this context of dance that he recalls, and the meaning he attributes to his experience of feeling at ease with himself, reinforces that dance is a connection to self-care.

CONCLUSION

We believe that our study achieved its objective of understanding the relationship between the experience of dance and self-care among volleyball athletes. We highlight that there is a relationship between dance and self-care based on the respondents' answers. We were able to demonstrate that dance provided a realization for the athletes that they were able to see themselves both on and off the court, thereby changing their perception of themselves. Another relationship identified was the expression of feelings, in the sense of a space that enables emotional reorganization, an outlet, or a focusing of feelings, thereby deepening the connection to self-care.

The study further demonstrated that reflection on self-care based on these experiences is an urgent need in sports practice, in the school environment, and in the current social context. We understand that self-care lies in the subjects' perception of their relationship with themselves, with others, and with their well-being, encompassing the space, practices, and routine.

We observed that a greater frequency and number of sessions involving dance experiences would broaden the implications of this experience, enabling new reflective perspectives for the participants. However, despite the limitations regarding time and frequency observed, the findings of this study play a pioneering role in demonstrating the feasibility and potential of integrating art and sports in relation to self-care.

Finally, we recognize that this study provides a snapshot of the experience of a selected group. Therefore, further research and new approaches involving other groups are necessary to broaden the debate on the aesthetic relationship between dance and sports. We understand that the concept of self-care is of paramount importance for a better relationship with one's own existence, and that broadening this debate will continue to reshape the concept of self-care in the field of Physical Education, in professional activities within the field, and in the training of individuals.

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