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UNDERSTANDING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, ANXIETY, AND BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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COVID-19 pandemic led to a period of isolation and quarantine worldwide, which entailed several physical and psychological negative consequences. The aims of this cross-sectional study were threefold: 1) to characterize the anxiety and basic psychological needs (BPN) of adults during this period; 2) to examine if different levels of physical activity (PA) were related to different anxiety levels and perception of BPN satisfaction; 3) to examine variation in anxiety levels and BPN satisfaction according to PA category. A sample of 1404 adults (36.4 ± 11.7 years; 69.6% female) self-reported sociodemographic data, the International Physical Activity Questionnaire, the Basic Need General Satisfaction Scale, and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. Gender differences were found with males presenting higher values for the total energy expenditure and for the level of satisfaction of competence. Females showed higher scores for the anxiety-state and anxiety-trait. Higher values for the anxiety-trait were found in the 18–34 years-old group compared to all the other age groups, also presenting significantly higher values of total energy expenditure when compared to the 35–44 years-old group. Significant differences were observed between the 18–34 years-old group and the other age groups for the satisfaction of competence, except for the >65 years-old group. Significant differences were found with individuals presenting higher level of PA revealing lower levels of anxiety-state. Differences between elements from different levels of PA were found for the autonomy, competence and relatedness psychological needs, suggesting that those who feel their BPN as more satisfied have higher levels of PA. Strategies for promoting well-being during periods of social isolation should consider the role of psychological dimensions and lifestyle habits according to gender and age. These results support the importance that PA has in the anxiety levels during social isolation, emphasizing the importance of multidisciplinary teams in an individual-based approach.