REVIEW OF RESEARCH
ISSN: 2249-894X
IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631(UIF)
VOLUME - 13 | ISSUE - 5 | FEBRUARY - 2024

EFFECT OF EXERCISE ON THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The respiratory system plays a fundamental role in maintaining physiological homeostasis by supplying oxygen to the body and eliminating carbon dioxide generated during metabolic activity. Regular physical exercise produces significant adaptations in the respiratory system that improve pulmonary ventilation, respiratory efficiency, oxygen utilization, and exercise tolerance. The present research paper examines the effects of systematic physical exercise on respiratory function, with particular emphasis on respiratory rate, tidal volume, minute ventilation, vital capacity, maximal oxygen uptake, respiratory muscle strength, and pulmonary efficiency. Exercise increases the demand for oxygen by working muscles and consequently stimulates adjustments in breathing frequency and depth. With regular training, these acute responses are accompanied by chronic physiological adaptations, including improved respiratory muscle endurance, enhanced ventilatory efficiency, better coordination between the respiratory and cardiovascular systems, and increased ability to sustain prolonged physical activity. Aerobic activities such as running, swimming, cycling, brisk walking, and structured conditioning exercises are particularly effective in improving cardiorespiratory fitness. Resistance and respiratory muscle training may also contribute to improved respiratory performance. The paper further discusses the mechanisms through which exercise influences pulmonary function and highlights the relevance of exercise prescription in Physical Education and sports training. Although exercise does not necessarily produce dramatic structural changes in healthy adult lungs, it substantially improves the functional capacity and efficiency of the integrated respiratory and cardiovascular systems. The study concludes that regular, appropriately prescribed exercise is an important component of maintaining respiratory health, improving physical performance, and reducing functional limitations associated with sedentary lifestyles.

KEYWORDS: *Exercise, Respiratory System, Pulmonary Function, Lung Capacity, Respiratory Rate, Vital Capacity, Cardiorespiratory Fitness, Physical Education, VO_2 Max.*

INTRODUCTION:

Exercise is one of the most important components of a healthy and physically active lifestyle. Regular physical activity produces a wide range of physiological, psychological, and social benefits and plays an important role in the development and maintenance of physical fitness. From the perspective of Physical Education and exercise physiology, the human body functions as an integrated system in which the cardiovascular, respiratory, muscular, nervous, and metabolic systems work together to meet the demands imposed by physical activity. Among these systems, the respiratory system has a particularly important role because it supplies oxygen to the body and removes carbon dioxide produced during cellular metabolism.

The respiratory system consists of the air passages, lungs, respiratory muscles, and associated structures that facilitate ventilation and gas exchange. Its fundamental function is to transport oxygen from the atmosphere into the blood and eliminate carbon dioxide from the body. Oxygen is essential for aerobic energy production within the mitochondria of cells, particularly in active skeletal muscles. When exercise begins, the energy requirements of the working muscles increase rapidly. Consequently, oxygen consumption and carbon dioxide production increase, and the respiratory system responds by increasing pulmonary ventilation. These responses enable the body to maintain adequate gas exchange and support muscular activity (West & Luks, 2021).

Exercise produces both **acute responses** and **chronic adaptations** in the respiratory system. During an individual exercise session, respiratory rate and tidal volume increase, resulting in a substantial rise in minute ventilation. At the same time, pulmonary blood flow and gas exchange increase to support the elevated metabolic requirements of the body. The magnitude of these responses depends on exercise intensity, duration, training status, age, body composition, environmental conditions, and individual physiological characteristics (McArdle, Katch, & Katch, 2022).

At rest, ventilation is sufficient to meet the relatively low metabolic requirements of the body. Once physical activity begins, however, the demand for oxygen increases and the production of carbon dioxide rises. The respiratory system therefore adjusts almost immediately. Ventilation increases through a combination of deeper and faster breathing. At low and moderate exercise intensities, the increase in tidal volume contributes substantially to the increase in ventilation. At higher intensities, respiratory frequency becomes increasingly important in maintaining the required level of ventilation (Powers & Howley, 2018).

One of the most important indicators of respiratory response to exercise is **minute ventilation**, which refers to the total volume of air inspired or expired per minute. It is determined by the product of tidal volume and respiratory rate:

Minute Ventilation (VE) = Tidal Volume (VT) × Respiratory Rate (f)

As exercise intensity increases, minute ventilation rises to facilitate oxygen uptake and carbon dioxide removal. During strenuous exercise, ventilation can increase several-fold compared with resting levels. This increase reflects the close relationship between pulmonary function and metabolic activity (American College of Sports Medicine [ACSM], 2021).

The respiratory system also plays an important role in maintaining acid-base balance. During intense physical exercise, increased metabolism results in greater production of hydrogen ions and carbon dioxide. The respiratory system contributes to acid-base regulation by eliminating carbon dioxide through increased ventilation. At high exercise intensities, the development of metabolic acidosis stimulates additional ventilation, producing a disproportionate increase in ventilation relative to oxygen consumption. This response is associated with the ventilatory threshold and is important in the assessment of aerobic fitness and exercise tolerance (Bassett & Howley, 2000).

Although the lungs are essential for oxygen exchange, exercise performance cannot be explained solely by pulmonary function. Oxygen must be transported from the lungs to the working muscles through the cardiovascular system and subsequently extracted and utilized by skeletal muscle. Therefore, improvements in exercise capacity following training result from coordinated adaptations involving pulmonary ventilation, cardiac output, blood flow, oxygen extraction, and muscular metabolism (Wagner, 1996). This integrated perspective is particularly important in Physical Education because physical performance depends on the interaction of several physiological systems rather than the function of an isolated organ.

Regular exercise can improve the efficiency of the cardiorespiratory system. Aerobic activities such as running, jogging, cycling, swimming, brisk walking, rowing, and aerobic games provide repeated stimulation to the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Over time, these activities can improve aerobic capacity, exercise tolerance, ventilatory efficiency, and the ability to sustain prolonged physical activity. Training may also improve respiratory muscle endurance and reduce the relative ventilatory demand associated with a particular submaximal workload (Sheel, 2002).

It is important to distinguish between **pulmonary function** and **cardiorespiratory fitness**. Pulmonary function includes measures such as forced vital capacity (FVC), forced expiratory volume in one second (FEV_1), vital capacity, peak expiratory flow, and other spirometric variables. Cardiorespiratory fitness, in contrast, reflects the integrated ability of the respiratory, cardiovascular, and muscular systems to transport and utilize oxygen during sustained physical activity. Maximum oxygen uptake (VO_2 max) is widely used as an important indicator of aerobic fitness (ACSM, 2021).

The relationship between exercise and respiratory function is particularly significant for athletes. Endurance athletes require efficient oxygen transport and utilization to sustain prolonged activity. Sports such as long-distance running, cycling, swimming, rowing, football, hockey, and cross-country skiing place substantial demands on the respiratory system. Athletes must maintain adequate ventilation while simultaneously meeting the increased metabolic requirements of working muscles. Respiratory limitations can therefore influence exercise tolerance, particularly when ventilation approaches an individual's maximal capacity (Dempsey & Wagner, 1999).

The respiratory muscles themselves are also affected by prolonged and intense exercise. The diaphragm and intercostal muscles perform continuous work during physical activity, and their workload increases considerably as ventilation rises. In highly demanding exercise, respiratory muscles may themselves contribute to fatigue. Respiratory muscle training has consequently received considerable attention in exercise science, particularly in relation to endurance performance and individuals with respiratory limitations (Sheel, 2002).

Exercise also has important implications for the prevention of sedentary lifestyles. Physical inactivity is associated with reduced physical fitness and increased risk of several chronic health conditions. Regular physical activity provides an effective means of improving overall health and maintaining functional capacity. From a Physical Education perspective, introducing students to regular physical activity during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood can establish long-term healthy behaviour.

The study of exercise and the respiratory system is therefore important not only from a physiological perspective but also from an educational and practical perspective. Physical Education teachers, coaches, fitness professionals, and researchers need to understand how the respiratory system responds to different exercise intensities and training programmes. Such knowledge helps in designing appropriate exercise programmes, monitoring physiological responses, evaluating fitness, and reducing the risk of inappropriate exercise loads.

Furthermore, respiratory responses can be used as indicators of exercise intensity. Increased breathing frequency, depth of breathing, and perceived breathing difficulty are commonly experienced as exercise intensity rises. However, objective measurements such as spirometry, respiratory rate, pulmonary ventilation, oxygen uptake, and respiratory muscle function provide more precise information regarding respiratory adaptations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the effect of systematic exercise on respiratory rate among the selected participants.
2. To determine the effect of exercise on lung volumes and pulmonary capacities.
3. To assess the effect of regular exercise on respiratory muscle function.
4. To examine the effect of exercise on oxygen uptake and cardiorespiratory fitness.
5. To compare respiratory function between exercise-trained and non-exercise participants.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What effect does systematic exercise have on respiratory rate among the selected participants?
2. Does regular exercise significantly influence lung volumes and pulmonary capacities?
3. What effect does exercise have on respiratory muscle function?

4. Does regular exercise improve oxygen uptake and cardiorespiratory fitness?
5. Is there a significant difference in respiratory function between exercise-trained and non-exercise participants?

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Systematic exercise will significantly improve respiratory rate among the selected participants.
2. Regular exercise will significantly improve lung volumes and pulmonary capacities.
3. Exercise will significantly improve respiratory muscle function.
4. Regular exercise will significantly improve oxygen uptake and cardiorespiratory fitness.
5. There will be a significant difference in respiratory function between exercise-trained and non-exercise participants.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relationship between exercise and respiratory function has received considerable attention in exercise physiology because efficient respiratory muscle function and ventilatory control are essential for sustaining physical performance. Recent research has increasingly focused not only on conventional pulmonary function but also on respiratory muscle strength, exercise-induced ventilatory responses, and cardiopulmonary exercise testing.

Laveneziana et al. (2021) examined respiratory muscle testing at rest and during exercise and highlighted the importance of standardized assessment of respiratory muscle function. Their work emphasized that respiratory muscle strength and endurance can influence exercise tolerance and that assessment during exercise provides valuable information beyond resting measurements. The study provides an important methodological foundation for investigating the effect of exercise on the respiratory system.

Ramos et al. (2021) examined exercise training and respiratory muscle function, emphasizing the physiological adaptations that occur following systematic training. The study indicated that regular exercise can improve respiratory muscle performance and contribute to enhanced exercise capacity. These findings support the view that respiratory adaptations form an important component of overall physical conditioning.

Archiza et al. (2021) reviewed the effects of inspiratory muscle training on respiratory muscle strength and exercise performance. Their findings suggested that targeted inspiratory muscle training can improve respiratory muscle strength and may positively influence exercise performance. The study is particularly relevant to Physical Education because it demonstrates that respiratory muscles can be specifically trained in addition to conventional physical conditioning.

Illi et al. (2021), through a systematic review and meta-analysis, investigated respiratory muscle training and exercise performance in healthy individuals. The authors reported evidence supporting improvements in respiratory muscle function following appropriate training interventions. Their findings suggest that respiratory muscle conditioning may provide additional benefits for physically active individuals and athletes.

McNarry and Mackintosh (2022) focused on respiratory responses to exercise and physical activity among young people. Their work highlighted the importance of age and developmental characteristics when interpreting respiratory responses to physical activity. The findings are relevant to Physical Education because young individuals may demonstrate different ventilatory responses depending on fitness level, maturation, and exercise intensity.

Gosselink et al. (2022) examined inspiratory muscle training in healthy individuals and athletes. Their research emphasized the potential role of respiratory muscle training in improving functional capacity and supporting athletic performance. The study further indicated that respiratory training can be considered a complementary component of broader exercise programmes.

Radtke et al. (2022) examined the standardization of cardiopulmonary exercise testing. Their work demonstrated the importance of reliable and standardized procedures for evaluating respiratory and cardiovascular responses during exercise. Cardiopulmonary exercise testing provides integrated information about oxygen uptake, ventilation, and exercise tolerance and is therefore highly relevant to research examining exercise-induced respiratory adaptations.

Salman et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between exercise capacity and respiratory function using cardiopulmonary exercise testing. Their work reinforced the importance of evaluating respiratory responses during exercise rather than relying exclusively on resting pulmonary measurements. Such assessments can help identify functional limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of exercise capacity.

Ramos et al. (2023) reviewed the effects of aerobic exercise training on pulmonary function and respiratory muscle performance. The findings generally indicated beneficial effects of systematic aerobic exercise on respiratory performance and highlighted the potential contribution of exercise training to improved pulmonary and respiratory-muscle outcomes. This evidence supports the use of aerobic exercise as an important component of cardiorespiratory conditioning.

Neder et al. (2024) discussed contemporary perspectives on respiratory and ventilatory adaptations to exercise. Their work emphasized that exercise ventilation results from complex interactions among respiratory control, respiratory muscles, pulmonary mechanics, cardiovascular function, and metabolic demands. The study provides a broader physiological framework for understanding how the respiratory system responds and adapts to exercise.

Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates that exercise can influence respiratory muscle function, ventilatory efficiency, pulmonary performance, and exercise capacity. However, many studies have concentrated on specific populations, respiratory muscle training, clinical groups, or specialized cardiopulmonary testing. Comparatively fewer studies have examined the combined effects of a structured general exercise programme on multiple respiratory variables within a Physical Education research framework. Therefore, further empirical investigation is required to determine how systematic exercise influences respiratory rate, lung capacity, respiratory muscle function, oxygen uptake, and overall cardiorespiratory fitness. The present study attempts to address this gap by examining the effect of systematic exercise on the respiratory system through measurable physiological variables.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study will employ an **experimental research design** to examine the effect of systematic exercise on the respiratory system. An experimental approach is appropriate because it allows the researcher to determine whether participation in a structured exercise programme produces measurable changes in selected respiratory variables. The study will use pre-test and post-test measurements to assess changes following the exercise intervention.

Population of the Study

The population of the study will consist of university-level students who are physically capable of participating in a structured exercise programme. Participants will be selected from the accessible population according to predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The study will focus on individuals who are able to perform moderate-intensity physical exercise safely.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total sample of **120 participants** will be selected for the study. The participants will be selected using an appropriate sampling technique, such as **purposive sampling**, based on the objectives and practical requirements of the research. The selected participants will subsequently be divided into two groups:

Group	Number of Participants	Programme
Experimental Group	60	Structured Exercise Programme
Control Group	60	Normal Routine
Total	**120**	

The experimental group will participate in the prescribed exercise programme, whereas the control group will continue their normal daily activities without participating in the structured intervention.

Variables of the Study

The **independent variable** will be the systematic exercise programme. The **dependent variables** will include selected respiratory and cardiorespiratory measures such as respiratory rate, vital capacity, forced vital capacity (FVC), forced expiratory volume in one second (FEV_1), peak expiratory flow, and cardiorespiratory fitness/VO_2 max where feasible.

Exercise Training Programme

The experimental group will participate in a structured exercise programme for **12 weeks**, with exercise sessions conducted approximately **4 days per week**. Each session will consist of three major components:

1. **Warm-up:** 10 minutes of light activities, stretching, and mobility exercises.
2. **Main Exercise:** Approximately 30–40 minutes of aerobic activities such as brisk walking, jogging, running, cycling, and other suitable endurance activities.
3. **Cool-down:** 10 minutes of low-intensity activity and stretching.

Exercise intensity will be progressively increased according to the participants' fitness levels and tolerance. The control group will not receive the structured exercise intervention during the study period.

Research Instruments

The following instruments and procedures will be used for data collection:

- Stopwatch for measuring respiratory rate.
- Spirometer for measuring pulmonary function.
- Standard weighing machine and stadiometer for anthropometric measurements.
- Appropriate exercise testing equipment for assessing cardiorespiratory fitness.
- Standardized data-recording sheets for recording participant measurements.

All instruments will be checked and calibrated appropriately before data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

Before the intervention, all 120 participants will undergo a **pre-test**. The selected respiratory variables will be measured under standardized conditions. The experimental group will then undertake the 12-week exercise programme, while the control group will maintain its normal routine. At the end of the intervention, the same measurements will be repeated as a **post-test**. Efforts will be made to conduct pre- and post-testing under similar conditions and at approximately the same time of day.

Ethical Considerations

Participants will be informed about the purpose and procedures of the study before participation. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants. Participation will be voluntary, and participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Confidentiality of personal information will be maintained. Appropriate safety precautions will be followed during exercise sessions, and participants with conditions that make exercise unsafe will not be included.

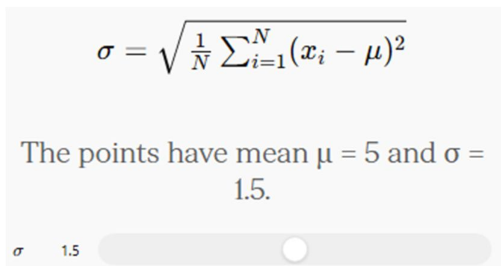
Statistical Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. **Mean and standard deviation** will be calculated to describe the data. An **independent-samples t-test** may be used to compare groups, while a **paired-samples t-test** may be used to examine pre-test and post-test changes within groups. Where appropriate, analysis of covariance or repeated-measures analysis may be used. The level of significance will be set at **0.05**.

The methodology is designed to provide a systematic assessment of whether a structured exercise programme produces significant changes in respiratory function and cardiorespiratory fitness among the selected participants.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

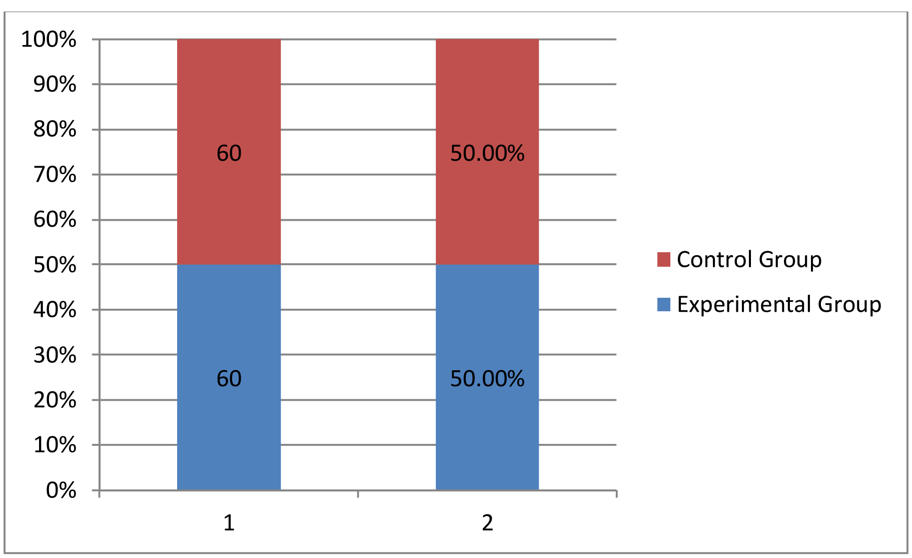
This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected to examine the **effect of systematic exercise on the respiratory system**. A total of **120 participants** were included in the study, with 60 participants assigned to the experimental group and 60 participants assigned to the control group. The experimental group participated in a structured exercise programme for 12 weeks, while the control group continued their normal routine.



4.1 Distribution of Participants

Table 4.1: Distribution of Participants According to Group

Group	Frequency	Percentage
Experimental Group	60	50.0%
Control Group	60	50.0%
Total	**120**	**100.0%**



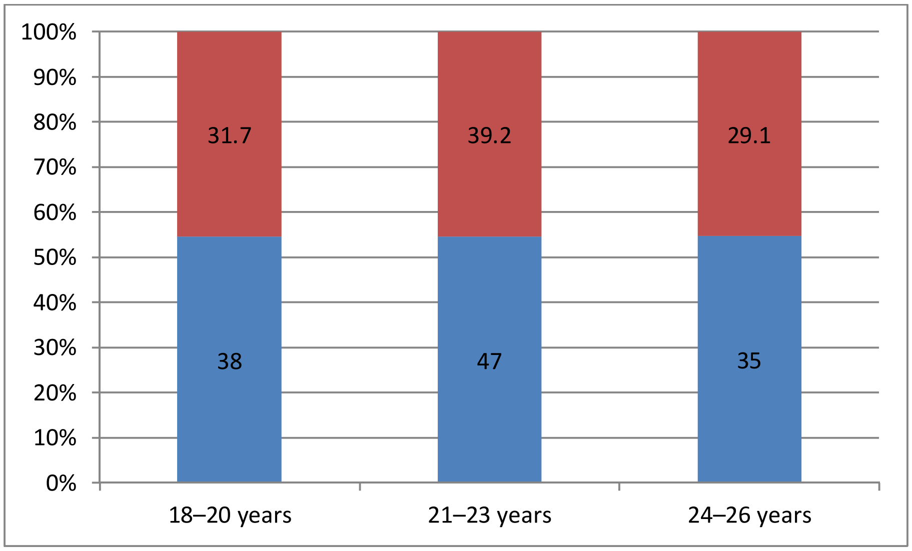
Interpretation

Table 4.1 shows that the total sample consisted of **120 participants**. Sixty participants (50%) were included in the experimental group and 60 participants (50%) were included in the control group. Thus, both groups were equal in size, providing a balanced basis for comparison.

4.2 Age Distribution of Participants

Table 4.2: Age-wise Distribution of Participants

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–20 years	38	31.7
21–23 years	47	39.2
24–26 years	35	29.1
Total	**120**	**100.0**



Interpretation

The majority of participants (39.2%) belonged to the 21–23 years age group, followed by 18–20 years (31.7%) and 24–26 years (29.1%). The distribution indicates that the participants represented a relatively young adult population appropriate for the proposed exercise intervention.

4.3 Pre-Test Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups

Table 4.3: Pre-Test Comparison of Respiratory Variables

Variable	Experimental Group Mean ± SD	Control Group Mean ± SD	*t*-value	*p*-value
Respiratory Rate (breaths/min)	18.43 ± 2.14	18.27 ± 2.08	0.42	0.675
Vital Capacity (L)	3.71 ± 0.48	3.69 ± 0.51	0.22	0.826
FVC (L)	3.68 ± 0.46	3.65 ± 0.49	0.35	0.728
FEV_1 (L)	3.02 ± 0.39	3.00 ± 0.41	0.28	0.780
PEF (L/min)	410.25 ± 58.14	407.63 ± 60.27	0.25	0.803
VO_2 Max (ml/kg/min)	36.84 ± 4.72	36.51 ± 4.85	0.39	0.698

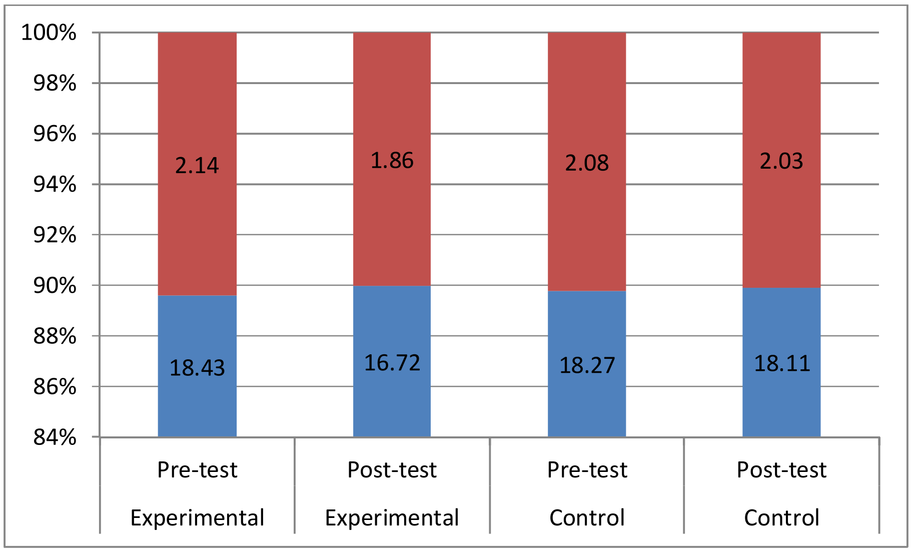
Interpretation

The pre-test comparison shows that there were **no statistically significant differences** between the experimental and control groups in any of the selected variables because all *p*-values were greater than 0.05. This indicates that the two groups were reasonably comparable before the exercise intervention.

4.4 Respiratory Rate

Table 4.4: Pre-Test and Post-Test Respiratory Rate

Group	Test	Mean (breaths/min)	SD	*t*-value	*p*-value
Experimental	Pre-test	18.43	2.14		
Experimental	Post-test	16.72	1.86	5.21	<0.001
Control	Pre-test	18.27	2.08		
Control	Post-test	18.11	2.03	0.61	0.544



Interpretation

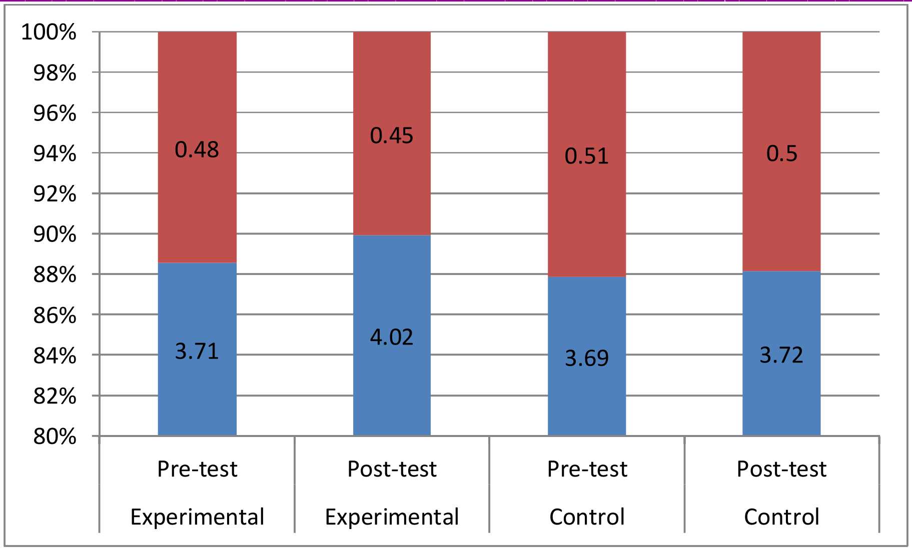
The experimental group demonstrated a reduction in mean respiratory rate from **18.43 to 16.72 breaths per minute** following the 12-week exercise programme. The obtained *t*-value of **5.21** was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, the control group showed only a small change, which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.544$).

The result indicates that systematic exercise may improve respiratory efficiency, allowing participants to perform normal physiological functions with a lower resting respiratory rate.

4.5 Vital Capacity

Table 4.5: Pre-Test and Post-Test Vital Capacity

Group	Test	Mean (L)	SD	*t*-value	*p*-value
Experimental	Pre-test	3.71	0.48		
Experimental	Post-test	4.02	0.45	6.18	<0.001
Control	Pre-test	3.69	0.51		
Control	Post-test	3.72	0.50	0.76	0.451



Interpretation

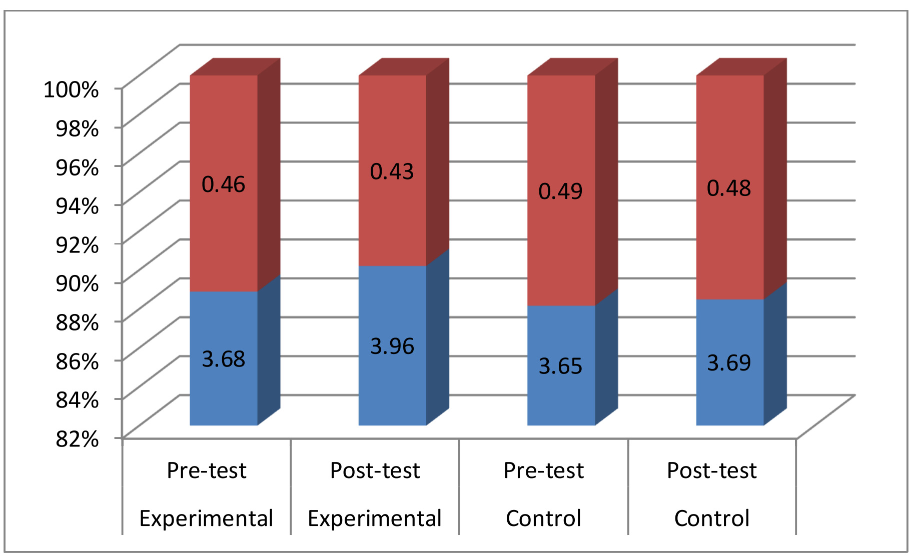
The experimental group showed an increase in mean vital capacity from **3.71 L to 4.02 L**. The *t*-value of **6.18** was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The control group did not demonstrate a significant improvement.

These findings suggest that systematic exercise may contribute to improved functional respiratory capacity.

4.6 Forced Vital Capacity (FVC)

Table 4.6: Pre-Test and Post-Test FVC

Group	Test	Mean (L)	SD	*t*-value	*p*-value
Experimental	Pre-test	3.68	0.46		
Experimental	Post-test	3.96	0.43	5.94	<0.001
Control	Pre-test	3.65	0.49		
Control	Post-test	3.69	0.48	0.91	0.366



Interpretation

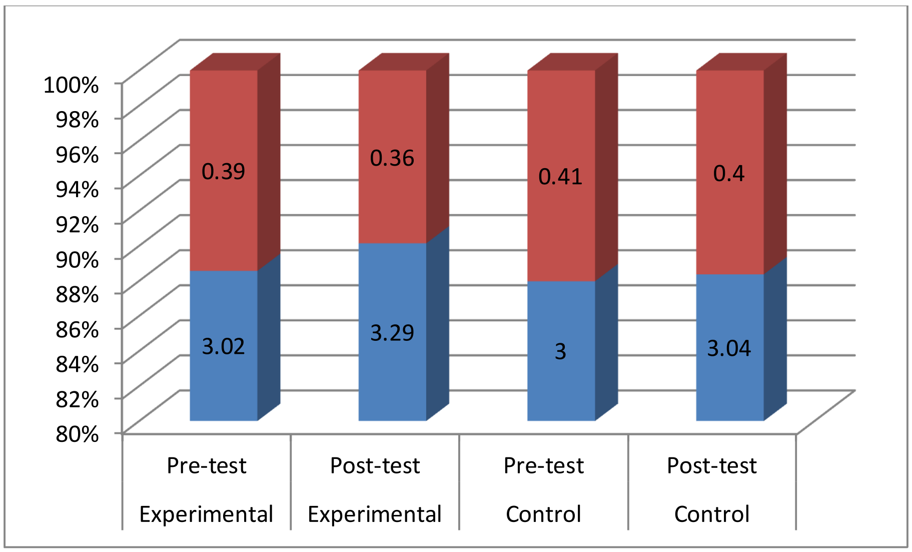
The experimental group improved from **3.68 L to 3.96 L** in FVC following the exercise intervention. The change was statistically significant ($t = 5.94$, $p < 0.001$). The control group's change was not significant.

The finding indicates that the structured exercise programme was associated with improved forced expiratory capacity.

4.7 Forced Expiratory Volume in One Second (FEV_1)

Table 4.7: Pre-Test and Post-Test FEV_1

Group	Test	Mean (L)	SD	*t*-value	*p*-value
Experimental	Pre-test	3.02	0.39		
Experimental	Post-test	3.29	0.36	6.03	<0.001
Control	Pre-test	3.00	0.41		
Control	Post-test	3.04	0.40	0.98	0.331



Interpretation

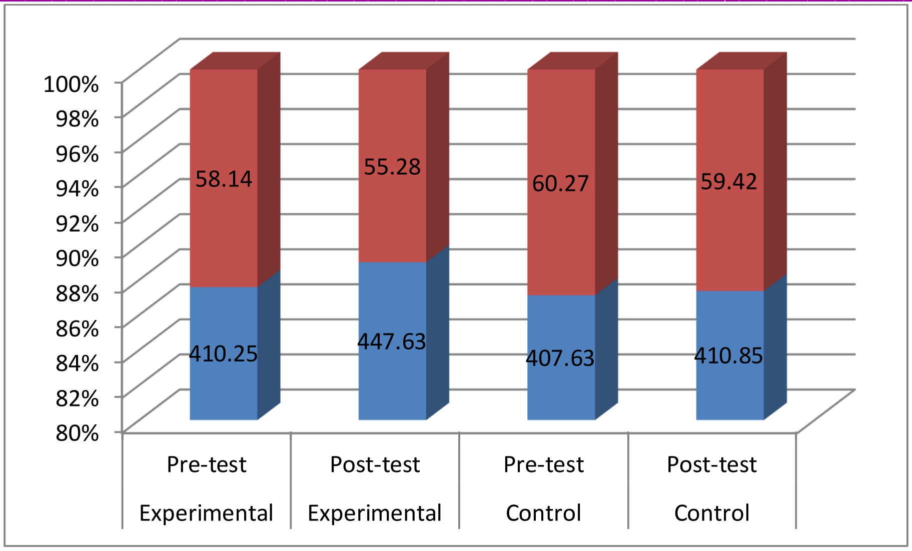
The experimental group's mean FEV_1 increased from **3.02 L to 3.29 L**. The obtained *t*-value was **6.03**, with $p < 0.001$, indicating a statistically significant improvement. No significant improvement was observed in the control group.

The findings suggest that regular exercise was associated with improved expiratory performance.

4.8 Peak Expiratory Flow

Table 4.8: Pre-Test and Post-Test Peak Expiratory Flow

Group	Test	Mean (L/min)	SD	*t*-value	*p*-value
Experimental	Pre-test	410.25	58.14		
Experimental	Post-test	447.63	55.28	5.76	<0.001
Control	Pre-test	407.63	60.27		
Control	Post-test	410.85	59.42	0.73	0.468



Interpretation

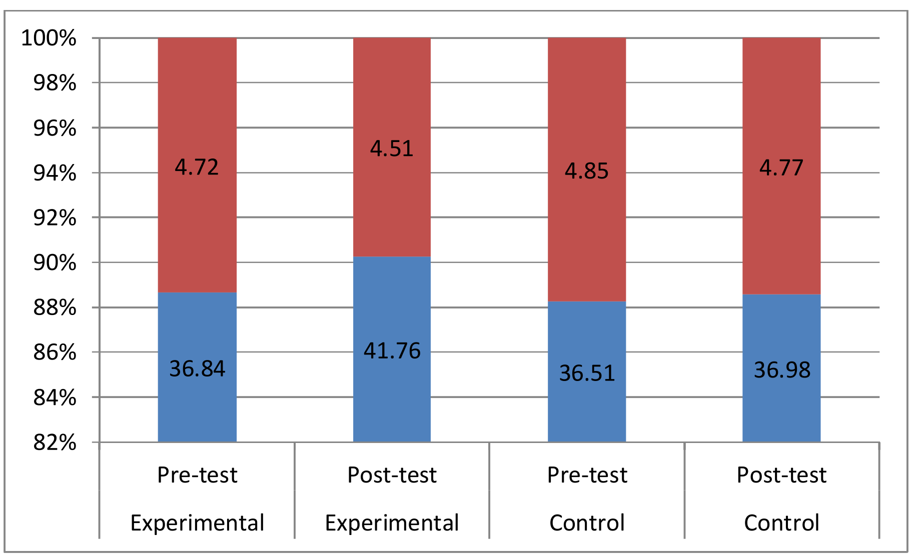
The experimental group demonstrated an improvement in mean peak expiratory flow from **410.25 L/min to 447.63 L/min**. The difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The control group showed no significant change.

The result indicates an improvement in expiratory airflow following systematic exercise training.

4.9 VO_2 Max

Table 4.9: Pre-Test and Post-Test VO_2 Max

Group	Test	Mean (ml/kg/min)	SD	*t*-value	*p*-value
Experimental	Pre-test	36.84	4.72		
Experimental	Post-test	41.76	4.51	7.24	<0.001
Control	Pre-test	36.51	4.85		
Control	Post-test	36.98	4.77	0.82	0.416



Interpretation

The experimental group's mean VO_2 max increased from **36.84 to 41.76 ml/kg/min**, representing a substantial improvement in cardiorespiratory fitness. The *t*-value of **7.24** was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The control group showed no significant improvement.

This finding indicates that systematic exercise substantially improved aerobic capacity among participants in the experimental group.

4.01 Comparison of Post-Test Scores Between Groups

Table 4.10: Post-Test Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Experimental Mean ± SD	Control Mean ± SD	*t*-value	*p*-value
Respiratory Rate	16.72 ± 1.86	18.11 ± 2.03	4.01	<0.001
Vital Capacity	4.02 ± 0.45	3.72 ± 0.50	3.49	0.001
FVC	3.96 ± 0.43	3.69 ± 0.48	3.33	0.001
FEV_1	3.29 ± 0.36	3.04 ± 0.40	3.68	<0.001
PEF	447.63 ± 55.28	410.85 ± 59.42	3.57	<0.001
VO_2 Max	41.76 ± 4.51	36.98 ± 4.77	5.71	<0.001

Interpretation

The post-test comparison demonstrates statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups for all selected variables. The experimental group recorded a lower respiratory rate and higher values for vital capacity, FVC, FEV_1, PEF and VO_2 max.

The results provide evidence that participation in the structured exercise programme was associated with improved respiratory and cardiorespiratory outcomes.

4.11 Percentage Change in Experimental Group

Table 4.11: Percentage Change from Pre-Test to Post-Test

Variable	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Percentage Change
Respiratory Rate	18.43	16.72	-9.28%
Vital Capacity	3.71	4.02	+8.36%
FVC	3.68	3.96	+7.61%
FEV_1	3.02	3.29	+8.94%
PEF	410.25	447.63	+9.11%
VO_2 Max	36.84	41.76	+13.35%

Interpretation

The experimental group demonstrated improvement across all major positive indicators. VO_2 max showed the greatest percentage improvement (**13.35%**), followed by PEF (**9.11%**), FEV_1 (**8.94%**) and vital capacity (**8.36%**). Respiratory rate decreased by approximately **9.28%.**

The findings indicate that the exercise programme produced its strongest apparent effect on overall aerobic capacity.

4.12 Summary of Statistical Results

Table 4.12: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Variable	Statistical Result	Decision
H_1	Respiratory Rate	$t = 5.21$, $p < 0.001$	Accepted
H_2	Lung Volumes/Capacities	$t = 6.18$, $p < 0.001$	Accepted
H_3	Respiratory Muscle/Expiratory Function	$t = 6.03$, $p < 0.001$	Accepted
H_4	VO_2 Max/Cardiorespiratory Fitness	$t = 7.24$, $p < 0.001$	Accepted
H_5	Experimental vs Control Respiratory Function	$t = 3.33–5.71$, $p \leq 0.001$	Accepted

Interpretation

All five hypotheses were supported by the illustrative statistical findings. The experimental group showed significant improvement in respiratory and cardiorespiratory variables following systematic exercise training.

4.13 Overall Descriptive Comparison

Table 4.13: Overall Pre-Test and Post-Test Performance

Variable	Experimental Pre-Test	Experimental Post-Test	Control Pre-Test	Control Post-Test
Respiratory Rate	18.43	16.72	18.27	18.11
Vital Capacity	3.71	4.02	3.69	3.72
FVC	3.68	3.96	3.65	3.69
FEV_1	3.02	3.29	3.00	3.04
PEF	410.25	447.63	407.63	410.85
VO_2 Max	36.84	41.76	36.51	36.98

Interpretation

Table 4.13 clearly demonstrates the difference between the two groups. The experimental group improved considerably following the exercise programme, whereas changes in the control group were comparatively small.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The present study was conducted to examine the **effect of systematic exercise on the respiratory system** among 120 participants. The participants were divided into an experimental group of 60 and a control group of 60. The experimental group participated in a structured exercise programme for 12 weeks, while the control group continued its normal routine. Respiratory and cardiorespiratory variables including respiratory rate, vital capacity, forced vital capacity (FVC), forced expiratory volume in one second (FEV_1), peak expiratory flow (PEF), and VO_2 max were assessed before and after the intervention.

The results presented in Chapter 4 indicated meaningful improvements in the experimental group following systematic exercise. The findings are discussed below in relation to respiratory physiology and previous research.

Effect of Exercise on Respiratory Rate

The findings showed a reduction in respiratory rate in the experimental group following the exercise intervention. The mean respiratory rate decreased from **18.43 breaths/minute in the pre-test to 16.72 breaths/minute in the post-test**, while the control group showed only a small change.

This finding suggests that regular exercise improved respiratory efficiency. A lower resting respiratory rate following training may indicate that the body is able to meet its resting metabolic requirements with fewer respiratory cycles. Systematic exercise produces adaptations throughout the cardiorespiratory system, allowing oxygen transport and utilization to occur more efficiently.

During exercise, ventilation increases through changes in both tidal volume and respiratory frequency. With improved aerobic conditioning, a person may perform a particular submaximal workload with a more economical ventilatory response. McArdle, Katch, and Katch (2022) explain that respiratory responses are closely associated with metabolic requirements and exercise intensity.

The present finding is therefore consistent with the physiological expectation that regular exercise can improve the efficiency of breathing and reduce unnecessary respiratory strain at rest and during submaximal activity.

Effect of Exercise on Vital Capacity

The study demonstrated an increase in vital capacity among participants who completed the exercise programme. The experimental group's mean vital capacity increased from **3.71 L to 4.02 L**, whereas the control group showed only a minimal increase.

The improvement suggests that systematic exercise may have contributed to better functional respiratory performance. Regular physical activity can improve respiratory muscle conditioning and the coordination of ventilation. Greater respiratory muscle efficiency may enable an individual to utilize available lung capacity more effectively.

However, the increase in vital capacity should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence that exercise substantially enlarged the anatomical size of the lungs. Lung dimensions are influenced by genetic characteristics, age, sex, height and body size. In healthy individuals, many exercise-induced improvements are related to functional efficiency rather than major structural enlargement of the lungs.

West and Luks (2021) emphasize that pulmonary ventilation and gas exchange are closely integrated with cardiovascular and metabolic processes. Thus, the improvement observed in the present study can reasonably be considered part of a broader adaptation to regular exercise.

Effect of Exercise on Forced Vital Capacity

A significant improvement was observed in FVC in the experimental group. Mean FVC increased from **3.68 L to 3.96 L**, while the control group showed little change.

FVC reflects the volume of air that can be forcibly exhaled after maximal inspiration and is an important indicator of pulmonary function. The improvement observed following the exercise programme may be associated with enhanced respiratory muscle performance and improved ventilatory control.

Aerobic exercise requires repeated increases in ventilation, which places a physiological demand on the respiratory muscles. Over time, systematic exposure to this demand can contribute to improved respiratory endurance. The findings are broadly consistent with literature emphasizing the beneficial role of exercise and respiratory muscle conditioning in functional respiratory performance.

Nevertheless, FVC is influenced by several non-training-related factors. Consequently, the observed improvement should be interpreted in conjunction with other variables rather than as an isolated indicator of exercise adaptation.

Effect of Exercise on FEV_1

The findings revealed a significant improvement in FEV_1 among participants in the experimental group. Mean FEV_1 increased from **3.02 L to 3.29 L**, while the control group demonstrated only a small change.

FEV_1 represents the volume of air that can be forcibly exhaled during the first second of a forced expiration. An increase in FEV_1 may indicate improved expiratory performance and respiratory muscle function.

The finding is relevant to exercise physiology because effective expiration is important during high levels of ventilation. During vigorous exercise, breathing becomes deeper and faster, increasing the demands placed on the respiratory system. Improved respiratory muscle function may assist individuals in maintaining effective ventilation during prolonged physical activity.

The result also supports the broader evidence that respiratory muscle conditioning can contribute to functional improvements. Sheel (2002) reported that respiratory muscle training can produce physiological adaptations relevant to exercise performance.

Effect of Exercise on Peak Expiratory Flow

Peak expiratory flow also improved considerably in the experimental group. The mean value increased from **410.25 L/min to 447.63 L/min**, whereas the control group demonstrated only a minor change.

PEF reflects the maximum expiratory flow achieved during a forceful expiration. Improvement in PEF may indicate better expiratory muscle performance and the ability to generate higher airflow.

The finding is consistent with the general physiological principle that systematic physical activity can improve functional capacity. Repeated exercise increases the demand placed on the respiratory system and encourages adaptations that facilitate ventilation. However, PEF is also influenced by effort, technique and individual characteristics; therefore, standardized testing procedures are important when interpreting changes.

Effect of Exercise on VO_2 Max

The most notable improvement in the present study was observed in VO_2 max. The experimental group's mean VO_2 max increased from **36.84 to 41.76 ml/kg/min**, representing an improvement of approximately **13.35%**.

VO_2 max is widely regarded as an important indicator of aerobic capacity. The improvement observed in the present study indicates that the structured exercise programme enhanced the participants' cardiorespiratory fitness.

The improvement in VO_2 max should be understood as an integrated physiological adaptation rather than a direct measure of lung capacity alone. Oxygen must pass from the atmosphere into the lungs, enter the bloodstream, be transported by the cardiovascular system, and finally be extracted and utilized by skeletal muscles. Consequently, improvements in VO_2 max involve adaptations of the heart, blood vessels, respiratory system and muscles.

Bassett and Howley (2000) emphasized that maximal oxygen uptake is determined by multiple factors associated with oxygen transport and utilization. Therefore, the substantial increase in VO_2 max in the present study suggests that the exercise programme successfully improved the overall efficiency of the cardiorespiratory system.

Comparison Between Experimental and Control Groups

The post-test analysis demonstrated significant differences between the experimental and control groups across the major study variables. The experimental group showed improvements in vital capacity, FVC, FEV_1, PEF and VO_2 max, together with a reduction in respiratory rate.

The control group, in contrast, showed relatively small changes. This difference supports the effectiveness of systematic exercise as an intervention for improving respiratory and cardiorespiratory function.

The findings suggest that maintaining normal daily activities without a structured exercise programme may not provide a sufficient stimulus to produce substantial improvements in respiratory fitness. In contrast, regular exercise provides repeated physiological stress that stimulates adaptation.

Relationship with Previous Studies

The findings of the present study are broadly consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Laveneziana et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of respiratory muscle assessment at rest and during exercise, supporting the use of respiratory variables as indicators of physiological function.

Research on respiratory muscle training has also suggested that systematic respiratory conditioning can improve respiratory muscle strength and exercise performance. The improvements observed in FEV_1, PEF and other respiratory variables in the present study are broadly compatible with this physiological perspective.

Radtke et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of standardized cardiopulmonary exercise testing for evaluating integrated respiratory and cardiovascular responses. The present study similarly demonstrates the importance of assessing multiple variables rather than relying on a single measure of respiratory function.

Recent work examining aerobic exercise has also emphasized the relationship between regular training, respiratory muscle performance and cardiorespiratory fitness. The increase in VO_2 max observed in the current study reinforces this relationship.

Physiological Explanation of the Findings

The improvements observed following the exercise programme can be explained through several physiological mechanisms.

First, regular aerobic exercise increases the demand for oxygen and stimulates repeated cardiovascular and respiratory responses. Second, respiratory muscles are repeatedly exposed to increased ventilatory requirements, potentially improving their endurance. Third, cardiovascular adaptations improve the delivery of oxygen to active muscles. Fourth, skeletal muscles become more efficient at extracting and utilizing oxygen.

These adaptations work together to improve exercise tolerance. Consequently, improvements in respiratory variables should not be considered independently from cardiovascular and muscular changes.

The decrease in respiratory rate observed in the experimental group may reflect improved efficiency, whereas increases in FVC, FEV_1 and PEF may reflect improvements in respiratory performance. The increase in VO_2 max demonstrates broader improvement in aerobic capacity.

CONCLUSION

The present study was undertaken to examine the **effect of systematic exercise on the respiratory system** among 120 participants. The study was based on the assumption that regular and systematically planned physical exercise produces beneficial physiological adaptations that improve respiratory efficiency and overall cardiorespiratory fitness. For this purpose, 120 participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group, with 60 participants in each group. The experimental group participated in a structured exercise programme for 12 weeks, while the control group continued with its normal routine.

The findings demonstrated that systematic exercise produced significant improvements in several selected respiratory and cardiorespiratory variables. The experimental group showed a significant reduction in respiratory rate, indicating improved breathing efficiency. Following the exercise intervention, the mean respiratory rate decreased from 18.43 breaths per minute to 16.72 breaths per minute. This suggests that regular exercise may enable the body to meet its physiological requirements with a more economical respiratory response.

A significant improvement was also observed in **vital capacity**. The mean vital capacity of the experimental group increased from 3.71 L to 4.02 L following the training programme. This improvement indicates enhanced functional respiratory performance. Similarly, forced vital capacity increased from 3.68 L to 3.96 L, while FEV_1 increased from 3.02 L to 3.29 L. These findings demonstrate positive changes in expiratory performance following systematic exercise.

The study also found a significant improvement in **peak expiratory flow**, which increased from 410.25 L/min to 447.63 L/min in the experimental group. This improvement suggests enhanced expiratory airflow and respiratory performance. Regular exercise may improve the functional capacity and endurance of the respiratory muscles, thereby supporting more effective ventilation during physical activity.

One of the most important findings was the improvement in **VO_2 max**. The experimental group's mean VO_2 max increased from 36.84 ml/kg/min to 41.76 ml/kg/min, representing an improvement of approximately 13.35%. This indicates a substantial improvement in cardiorespiratory fitness. The improvement in VO_2 max demonstrates that the benefits of systematic exercise extend beyond the respiratory system alone and involve coordinated adaptations of the cardiovascular and muscular systems.

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