

Article

“If You Didn’t Exercise during Lockdown, What Were You Even Doing?”: Young Women, Sport, and Fitness in Pandemic Times

Holly Thorpe ^{1,*} , Grace O’Leary ¹ , Nida Ahmad ² and Mihi Joy Nemani ¹ ¹ Te Huataki Waiora School of Health, University of Waikato, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand² Independent Researcher, Denver, CO 80201, USA

* Correspondence: hthorpe@waikato.ac.nz

Abstract: Sports and physical activity organizations around the world have expressed concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted girls and young women’s participation, with relatively fewer young women returning to sport post-lockdowns than their male counterparts. The purpose of this research is to understand how young women’s experiences of sport and physical activity were impacted by extended and repeated lockdowns, considerable social disruption, and ongoing risks of contagion. Our research draws upon interviews and focus groups with 44 young women (16–24 years) living in Aotearoa New Zealand during the pandemic. Recognizing that young women’s opportunities and experiences of sport and fitness (before, during and after the pandemic) vary considerably based on a range of socio-cultural factors, our sample was intentionally diverse, inviting young women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, from rural and urban settings, and with a range of pre-pandemic sport and fitness experiences. Engaging an intersectional and affective sensibility, we reveal the complex ways that the pandemic impacted the young women’s embodied, relational and affective experiences of sport and fitness. Contrary to recent concerns about young women dropping out from sport and physical activity, our research reveals the varied ways the pandemic shifted young women’s relations with their own and others’ moving bodies, transforming their relationships with sport and fitness, with renewed understandings of the importance of physical activity for joy, connection, and wellbeing.

Keywords: young women; sport; fitness; body image; pandemic; affect; intersectionality



Citation: Thorpe, H.; O’Leary, G.; Ahmad, N.; Nemani, M.J. “If You Didn’t Exercise during Lockdown, What Were You Even Doing?”: Young Women, Sport, and Fitness in Pandemic Times. *Youth* **2023**, *3*, 847–868. <https://doi.org/10.3390/youth3030055>

Academic Editor: Julia Coffey

Received: 3 June 2023

Revised: 22 June 2023

Accepted: 14 July 2023

Published: 19 July 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Sports and physical activity organizations around the world have expressed concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted girls and young women’s participation, with relatively fewer young women returning to sport post-lockdowns than their male counterparts [1,2]. Such trends are particularly concerning as, even prior to the pandemic, young women typically had higher levels of drop-out from sport than young men due to a range of individual, social and environmental factors [3–5]. Responding to the post-pandemic situation, some sports organizations have invested in developing new policies and campaigns to ‘reimagine’ ‘build back better’, ‘reframe’ and ‘reboot’ sport and physical activity, with a specific focus on encouraging girls and young women to return to sport and physical activity [6]. While these campaigns are often informed by large-scale survey data, few such initiatives have taken the time to listen to young women and to understand how the pandemic has impacted their relationships with their moving bodies.

Building upon and extending international research examining the impact of the pandemic on the organization of sport [7–10], our research draws upon interviews and focus groups with 44 young women (16–24 years) living in Aotearoa New Zealand during the COVID-19 pandemic to understand how their experiences of sport and physical activity were impacted through a time of great social disruption, extended and repeated lockdowns, and ongoing risks of contagion. Recognizing that young women’s opportunities and

experiences of sport and fitness (before, during and after the pandemic) vary considerably based on a range of socio-cultural-economic factors [11–15], our sample was intentionally diverse, inviting young women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, from rural and urban settings, diverse lived experiences, and with a range of pre-pandemic sport and fitness rhythms and routines. Engaging an intersectional and affective ‘sensibility’—as a way of attending rather than a theoretical framework per se—we reveal the complex ways that the pandemic impacted the young women’s embodied, relational and affective experiences of sport and fitness.

2. Literature and Conceptual Framework

Across sport sociology and management studies, a considerable body of scholarship has focused on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted professional sport [7,8,16,17]. Under this umbrella, some researchers have focused particularly on youth sport. At the start of the pandemic, researchers predicted that COVID-19 would further exacerbate “a continuation and reinforcement of the already shifting trend of youths’ preferences from organized to non-organized contexts”, with “transformations of the reasons for participating in sport and physical activity (i.e., autotelic and instrumental)” [18]. Others, focused their attention on the experiences of parents [19] and coaches [20] supporting youth sport, and their efforts to respond to rapidly changed policies and radically new social, health and physical environments.

Large scale surveys were a particularly popular method for documenting the impact of the pandemic on youth sport. In a study of 544 young Spanish athletes (median age of 15.9 years), Pons et al. [21] found the cluster most at risk of the pandemic having a high negative impact on their sporting participation with significant mental health consequences was “female student-athletes from medium or low socioeconomic status with high academic demands and poor or inexistent training conditions during lockdown” (n.p). While gender was not the focus of their analysis, Pons and colleagues [21] make the case that “future research in the field of youth sport should explore in more detail the sociological factors causing these gender differences beyond the impact of COVID-19 lockdown” (n.p). Another large survey (completed by 6800 young people and parents) focused on youth community sport in Ontario, Canada, highlighted how the pandemic exacerbated existing inequities. According to the authors, “when controlling for other demographic factors, girls and young women . . . are less likely to be participating relative to youth overall” [22] (p. 14). As well as calling for more qualitative research that is able to offer deeper understanding and insight into the themes identified in such surveys, the report also identifies the need for more research that examines “the intersection of sport and sense of community belonging, and the frustration, sadness and emotions resulting from the loss of sport” (p. 18).

Research has identified that pandemic lockdowns had a more severe impact on female athletes than their male counterparts [23]. According to Bowes and colleagues [24], a range of factors contributed to the disproportionately negative effect on women’s sport, including a later resumption of their sports training and competition, greater difficulties for training at home, and less financial support before, during and after the pandemic. Others have examined how the pandemic has impacted women fitness professionals’ embodied, affective and relational experiences of wellbeing [25]. Curiously, despite sports organizations identifying girls and young women as the groups least likely to return to sport and physical activity after lockdowns, to date very little qualitative research has focused specifically on young women’s experiences of sport and physical activity during and beyond the pandemic.

Two nationwide studies deserve particular mention here. A research report from UK-based organization Women in Sport used both ethnographic methods following 18 young women (aged 13–16) and a survey (1518) to document the impact of the pandemic (between October 2020–February 2021) on teenage girls’ relationships with physical activity [26]. While just over half (52%) of the girls surveyed agreed that doing physical activity and keeping fit is more important than ever, because it helps them feel happier, less stressed and

provides protection against illness, 62% of survey respondents were doing less physical activity during the pandemic than before (only 19% were doing more). Half of the girls surveyed (51%) reported being concerned that they were losing their fitness; 45% were worried that it would be hard to get back into the habit of sport and exercise after the pandemic; and 41% had lost confidence in their sporting ability. A Canadian nationwide survey identified that 90% of girls' (6–18 years) sporting experiences were negatively impacted by COVID-19 through "closed facilities, sidelined in-person coaching, and stunted social connections", with one in four girls (25%) expressing a lack of commitment to return to sport after the pandemic [1]. Surveys are important in providing a snapshot of patterns across girls and young women and have been used to guide and develop post-pandemic policies and interventions to support girls and young women back into sport. However, in this paper, we adopt a feminist qualitative approach that orients away from statistical trends and towards nuanced, empirical insights into the varied ways the pandemic shifted young women's relations with their own and others moving bodies, transforming their relationships with sport and fitness.

Intersectional and Affective Pandemic Feminisms

Feminist scholars have argued for the importance of intersectional approaches to deepen understanding of how pre-pandemic inequities and injustices associated with race and gender coincided with the pandemic to impact women's physical and mental health risks, their economic and social security, their experiences in the home, in public spaces, and the workplace [27,28]. Some have taken up and extended intersectional approaches to understand how the pandemic has impacted the everyday lives of young women. For example, Ncube and colleagues [29] examined young Black women's experiences of mental health during dual pandemics of COVID-19 and gendered anti-Black racism in the United States, with a particular focus on the emotional and physical toll of their multiple and conflicting roles as students, daughters, care-givers and active community members. Various other scholars working at the intersections of youth and gender studies are examining the variable impacts of the pandemic on girls and young women's lives, including school, home, safety and wellbeing, social lives and identity development [30].

An increasing body of feminist research is taking seriously the 'intersectionalities' (or the cross-cutting of diverse axes of identity) affecting the pandemic lives of girls and women around the world, yet we are unaware of such approaches in relation to the complexities of young women's experiences of sport and physical activity. While pre-pandemic research has demonstrated the variable ways that culture, ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic status impact girls and young women's participation in sport and physical activity [11–15], few have considered how diverse socio-cultural positionings impact their experiences of sport and fitness during and beyond the pandemic. In this paper we adopt an "explicitly post-structural variant of intersectional thinking", exploring intersecting discourses of gender, culture, ethnicity and class, and their performative effects and affects [31] (p. 575).

Some feminist sport and movement scholars have drawn upon new materialisms and more-than-human approaches to examine how the gendered phenomenon of wellbeing through pandemic times is (re)produced and re-turned through entangled embodied and affective relations with space, place, movement and matter [32]. In so doing, some are examining how women's experiences with familiar spaces and places of sport and fitness changed during the pandemic, and how these new spatial arrangements impacted their affective, subjective, and embodied experiences of wellbeing [33]. Drawing specifically from Deleuzian and feminist thinking, Clark [34] has explored the affective dimensions of Australian adults' experiences of physical activity and fitness during lockdowns. Affect here refers to the generative forces or intensities produced when bodies encounter one another, with affective intensities referring to the movement of forces that bring bodies, emotions, sensations, objects, technologies, place and people into particular relations and assemblages [34] (p. 1226). As Clark [34] reveals, the pandemic surfaced unique affective

respondings to spaces and places of fitness and movement, including desire, longing and connection.

In this paper we take inspiration from feminist intersectional pandemic scholarship, and feminist affective pandemic research, to examine how young women living in Aotearoa New Zealand came to understand their own sporting and moving bodies differently through pandemic disruptions. In so doing, we also build upon and extend pre-pandemic feminist scholarship that has advanced powerful analyses of girls embodied, affective and relational negotiations of gendered risk and opportunity in a range of contexts, including schools and social media spaces [31,35–38]. This research reveals the varied ways young women from diverse social, cultural and gender positionings are embodying and performing rage, shame, guilt and desire in their affective, relational, ethical and political engagements with their own and other bodies.

Of particular relevance to our study is the work of Coffey [35,39]. Examining women's affective relations of body concerns in the context of neoliberalism, Coffey [35] identifies the powerful ways that 'ugly feelings' (worry about bodily appearance) can turn into bodily 'disgust', leading to more "'damaging', rigid affective relations which constrain a body's capacities" (p. 636). In another study focusing particularly on young women's relational encounters with their bodies and gendered body image pressures and expectations, Coffey [40] examines the "embodied process" of "creating distance" from appearance concerns (and 'ugly feelings'), which involved "new practices and encounters" (e.g., walking for leisure) and "relationships and engagements with others" (e.g., friends, family) (p. 72). Furthermore, Coffey's [39] more recent work engaging new materialisms to (re)assemble bodies, affects and the 'conditions of possibility' of wellbeing has inspired the approach we take herein.

Working specifically in young women's embodied and affective experiences in sport and physical activity, we also engage the work of feminist sport scholars such as Pavlidis and Fullagar [41], who have made important connections between feminist theories of affect and intersectionality. In a pre-pandemic study of women's narratives of roller derby, the authors reveal "complex affective relations (passion, frustration, pride, shame) that women negotiate in forming leisure identities in relation to the social context of their lives" (p. 422). More recently, Pavlidis and colleagues [42] drew upon feminist new materialist inspired methodologies to develop time capsules with young Australian girls (aged 14 to 17) who play club sport to understand their affective respondings (i.e., hope, loss, longing) to their radically changed sporting lives. The authors conclude by considering the "disruptive effects and affects of the crisis for girls' participation, as well as gender equity for future generations in post-pandemic sport" (p. 241). Herein we draw upon feminist sport scholars working with both intersectionality and affect theories to explore the impacts of the pandemic on young women's relations with their own and others moving bodies.

3. Context: COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand

During the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the New Zealand government adopted a highly effective science-informed approach to firstly eliminate the virus, and then to minimize contagion and mortality rates [43]. Such an approach was necessary, particularly as the country has significant health inequities, with Indigenous Māori and Pacific communities at considerably heightened risk because of "the compounded effects of underlying health conditions, socioeconomic disadvantage and structural racism" [44]. Combined with a chronically underfunded health system, a strong approach from the New Zealand government was necessary to avoid tens of thousands of deaths. Thus, with the first recorded domestic cases of COVID-19 in March 2020, the border closed indefinitely to anyone except returning national citizens, and the country went into "lockdown" for at least four weeks [45]. The lockdowns included a directive for the public to stay at home in their 'bubble', leaving only for essential services (i.e., food, medical supplies) or 'safe' exercise close to home. Businesses were closed except for essential services, all gatherings and events were cancelled, and all public venues closed.

In late 2021, the country responded to the Delta-variant with various national and regional lockdowns, with Auckland (107 days) and Waikato (65 days) experiencing particularly extended lockdowns. While many other countries' health systems struggled under the weight of high case numbers and mass deaths, Aotearoa was able to keep case numbers relatively low during the first two waves. By 2022, the New Zealand government began reopening borders, removing vaccine mandates, and largely putting the onus on citizens to navigate the risks individually. By mid-2023, New Zealand had recorded a total of 3038 confirmed deaths [46]. It was during the first two years of lockdowns and other lasting levels of restricted social measures put in place that young women experienced significant changes to their participation in sport and fitness, and long-lasting affective impacts.

4. Methods

The purpose of this research is to understand how young women's experiences of sport and physical activity were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary research question guiding this study was: How have radical pandemic disruptions to social life (i.e., school, sport, leisure practices) affected young women's relationships with sport, physical activity, and their moving bodies? With ethical approval from the University of Waikato, we conducted interviews and focus groups with a total of 44 young women aged 16–24 years. Requirements for participation were that they self-identify as a woman, were within the age range (16–24), were living in Aotearoa New Zealand during the pandemic, and they "participate in some forms of sport, fitness or physical activity on a regular basis". We did not ask participants to quantify their sport and physical activity participation. We were not trying to measure the impact of the pandemic on their sport and fitness levels, but rather their interpretations, reflections and embodied experiences during this time. Each member of the research team contributed to the data gathering, reaching out to young women in their social, work and familial networks to invite participation. In so doing, we engaged in convenience sampling, shaped by a feminist ethic of care during pandemic times [33]. All who expressed an interest in participating and met the criteria were provided with an Information Sheet that detailed their ethical rights as participants, and all participants completed an online or hard-copy Informed Consent.

It was important that we provided the young women with the opportunity to self-identify as to the important aspects of their sporting, social, cultural, and ethnic identities. The sample included a range of cultural and ethnic identities, including mixed ethnicity (i.e., Māori–Samoan, Samoan–Chinese, Fijian–Indian) (13), Pākehā/NZ European (12), Māori (11), African heritage (4), Asian heritage (3), or with lineage to specific Pacific nations (i.e., Samoan, Tongan) (2) (see Table 1 below). The majority of participants were students either in high school (32) or tertiary education (11) and participated in a range of sports and physical activities before and during the pandemic. Close to half were involved in competitive sports (i.e., netball, hockey, waka ama/outrigger canoeing, rowing, rugby, athletics, football, trampolining, horse riding) via school or clubs before the pandemic, with all participants involved in regular physical activity and fitness practices (i.e., 'gyming'/going to the gym; CrossFit; running, walking the dog, hiking). Some were mothers with young children (9), with many also working part- or full-time (i.e., supermarket, sport and fitness trainers, community work, hospitality). Some took on additional paid work during the pandemic to help their families through times of financial hardship, often managing this alongside online education and domestic duties. All the young women described heightened caring roles and responsibilities during the pandemic, including minding younger siblings, taking care of elderly and disabled family members, additional cleaning, and shopping for families. Pseudonyms are used for all participants, except those who explicitly stated a desire to use their first name.

Table 1. Participant Information.

Pseudonym	Age	Self-Selected Ethnic/ Cultural Identification	Occupation
Hahana	16	Welsh–Māori	High school student
Porsche	16	Māori–Cook Island	High school student
Aroha	16	Māori–Cook Island	High school student
Hodan	16	Somali	High school student
Zahi	16	Somali	High school student
Samsam	16	Somali	High school student
Jamilah	16	Somali	High school student
Yasmiin	16	Fijian–Indian/Muslim	High school student
Kalani	16	Samoa–Chinese	High school student
Alannah	16	Indian	High school student
Ana	17	Māori–Samoa	High school student
Shanti	17	Māori	High school student
Gabby	17	Asian	High school student
Olivia	17	Pākeha	High school student
Skyla	17	Māori	High school student
Lily	17	Pākeha	High school student
Paige	17	Māori	High school student
Anna-Bell	17	Pākeha	High school student
Taylah	17	Pākeha	High school student
Abby	17	Pākeha	High school student
Courage	18	Cook Island–Māori	Tertiary student
Turquoise	18	Māori–European	High school student
Avi	18	Māori–Tongan	Tertiary student
Kayla	18	Pākeha	High school student
Lena	18	Māori	High school student
Angel	18	Māori	High school student
Isabel	18	Pākeha	High school student
Cate	18	Pākeha	High school student
Tayla	18	Māori	High school student
Sofia	18	Māori	High school student
Riley	18	Pākeha	High school student
May	18	Pākeha	High school student
Huda	19	Sri Lankan	Full-time work in hospitality
Justyce	19	Māori	Tertiary student
Sofia	19	Malay–Kiwi	Tertiary student
Armanii	19	Māori–Filipino	Tertiary student
Tee	19	Cook Island–Māori	Tertiary student
Manaia	19	Māori	High school student
Kate	20	NZ European	Tertiary student
Daniella	21	Māori	University student
Sandy	21	Māori	Tertiary student
Princess	21	Tongan	Tertiary student
Lady	23	NZ European	Part-time work
Mailei	24	Samoa	Tertiary student
Narla	24	Māori–Samoa	Stay-at-home mother

The diversity of our sample was facilitated by the social, cultural and sporting networks of our research team who identify as cis-gender Pākeha, Māori–Pākeha, American–Muslim and Māori–Samoa. We are each active participants in a range of sports and fitness communities (i.e., Yoga, CrossFit, weightlifting, climbing, hiking, surfing) with extensive personal and professional connections across the Aotearoa New Zealand sport and fitness sector. Throughout the project, we reflected individually and collectively on how our various positionalities were shaping this project in a range of ways. As feminist scholars, we were never seeking to remain objective, but rather to critically engage our relationships and connections with participants, and our own experiences of sport and

fitness during pandemic times, to develop more ethical, responsive, and caring relations with the young women. We also worked to practice utmost respect of participants' cultural and religious practices throughout. As per Māori and Pacific cultural practices, kai (food) was provided in each interview and focus group, and where appropriate, karakia (Māori or Pasifika cultural and/or religious prayer) were offered as a blessing over the kai and/or the meeting. As an acknowledgment of their time and expertise, all participants were given a gift voucher (kohā) of their choice (i.e., supermarket, book, clothing).

The interviews and focus groups were conducted over a six-month period from mid to late 2022. While most of the interviews and focus groups took place in person in spaces of convenience to the young women (i.e., private rooms at schools, cafes, home), some occurred digitally using Zoom. The interviews and focus groups ranged in length (from 50 min to 1.5 h) based on the availability and energy of participants, with each digitally recorded and then professionally transcribed. Throughout the interviews, the research team used the same interview guide as a base, but with considerable flexibility for the discussion to evolve depending on the intersectional identities, follow-up questions and interest shown by the participants. The interview guide included 22 questions organized into five sections designed to explore how the pandemic impacted the young women's overall wellbeing, their experiences in the home, school, work, their relationships with friends and family, engagement with social media and digital technologies, and activities and practices they used to support their wellbeing during the pandemic. The fifth section focused specifically on the role of sport and physical activity in their lives, though many of the young women also spoke to this topic in other parts of the interviews. The analysis presented herein draws upon any comments made throughout the interview specific to the role of sport and fitness in their pandemic lives.

5. Analysis and Discussion: Moving Bodies in Pandemic Times

In this paper we engaged Braun and Clark's [47] reflexive thematic analysis, conducting a multi-phased process of analyzing the transcripts individually and then bringing the transcripts into dialogue with literature on pandemic sport and physical activity, with feminist writings on intersectionality and affect shaping and guiding the later stages of our analysis. Through this multi-phased process of analysis, we identified four key interrelated themes that reveal how the pandemic impacted young women's embodied and affective experiences of sport and physical activity: (i) Joy and connection, (ii) Loss and longing, (iii) Apathy to affective solidarity; with each of these contributing to the final theme, (iv) Desiring differently, examining the emergence of new affective and embodied ways of knowing moving bodies in pandemic and post-pandemic times.

Adopting an "intersectional lens", bringing our varied cultural and gender positionings into dialogue with the data, we remained "attentive to discursive, material and affective elements" in each research encounter, and throughout the analysis process [48] (p. 4). Rather than engaging intersectionality or affect as a theoretical framework per se, we engage a feminist affective and intersectional 'sensitivity' to our data. We were not explicitly looking for and making comparisons based on age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, but rather our analysis seeks to acknowledge the complex, multiple and intersectional positionings of young women.

The 'themes' presented herein did not 'emerge' from the data, but rather through an iterative process of re-turning—individually and collectively—with the transcripts. The literature, theoretical sensitivity, and our own lived experiences each shaped our attending to and with the young women's pandemic stories. The process of analysis continued throughout the writing process, and as we moved with (and were moved by) the ideas, voices, and affective and embodied relations surfaced through the project. Working to weave a reflexive and intersectional approach throughout the research design [49], we acknowledged both similarities and differences with our participants and each other as collaborators, carefully navigating our researcher positionings through the interviews, analysis and writing phases. We were not trying to distance ourselves from the data, but

rather to sit with the tensions, and to feel it deeply in and through our own moving bodies. Indeed, thinking and writing together was an affective, relational, and embodied process, integral to refining and assembling the ‘themes’ presented herein.

5.1. Joy and Connection: Participation in Sport and Fitness during Lockdowns

Many of the young women who were active in a range of sports before the pandemic continued their training at home, often modifying their home environment for workouts, or using spaces within their local neighborhood to maintain their fitness levels. Some described the important role of coaches in supporting and motivating their continued training practices:

Exercise was a massive part of both lockdowns. We’ve got a really good hockey coach and he was really good at setting us team challenges, who can walk most ks (kilometers) and stuff like that. (Cate)

For many of the young women, digital interaction with their teammates also supported their training practices, maintaining motivation with a focus on accountability and fun:

We were sent our training schedules out via some app. Then every time we would complete a training session we’d have to post a sweaty selfie or a view of our rowing machine results or something to the group chat; just proof we’d done it and also to keep us all motivated. That helped a lot just to keep us on track. We also had team challenges, we’d try and make them fun. When we were to do a run or something we’d have to make our running pattern into a shape or something, so one person would do a run as a shape of an oar, so that became a competition. Our girls’ squad was continuously communicating. (Kate)

Others described how their experiences of training changed without the social pressures of, and the disciplinary ‘gaze’ within, competitive sport (i.e., coaches, teammates), finding new joys in their modified movement routines:

I feel like for me, when I went on my runs, I got a little bit better because I wasn’t comparing myself to anybody and getting anxious or nervous. When you get nervous, I feel like my time slows down so much. I think going out training for myself was kind of good. (Alannah)

I missed going to trainings with all my teammates and doing our little circuits that we would make, and then what the coach made. But I was running heaps. I think it was just because I had nothing to do, so I’d go for a run then come back home get the dog and then go for a walk. As soon as we came out, I was one of the fittest ones. (Ana)

The changed social dynamics (without coaches or teammates) gave the young athletes more control over their training. For some, pandemic workouts also offered a temporary reprieve from the social judgment (“I wasn’t comparing myself to anybody”) they experienced in formal, organized training settings, and thus opened new opportunities to experience joy and pride in their movement practices and achievements (“I was one of the fittest ones”).

For both the athletes and many others in our sample who were not athletes but regularly engaged in fitness practices (i.e., gym), they turned to new physical activity practices (i.e., walking, biking) as movement substitutes during lockdowns. They did so for a range of reasons, including escaping the social and digital intensities of the home, and mental health and wellbeing:

I would just go for long walks and see how long I could go for a walk for . . . I’d be out for about four or five hours, and I’d come back, and I was like ‘oh, that was a good walk’ and my parents would go, where did you go, what’s wrong with you? Then I started to go for bike rides up the road and it would be fun; you biked all the way up and then not have to bike back because it is all downhill. It was good, just trying not to be on my phone as much. (Riley)

In the first lockdown, going to work was good and I would go for walks as well. By my house we've got this big walk and I would go over it two times in a row just to stay out of my house for four hours at a time. (Paige)

As well as opportunities for escapism, these new physical activity practices were also an important form of social connection during sustained periods of isolation:

I joined the neighbors with their exercise outside ... just to get some exercise, meet new neighbors, also just the socialization part, and to get healthy. It looked fun. Boxing, running up, running back, so I just joined in. (Narla)

A few of the participants noted the importance of maintaining an active healthy lifestyle to minimize health risks of COVID-19 and other comorbidities. As the following comment highlights, some young wāhine (women) were aware of the increased health risks for their communities, and this further motivated their own physical activity practices:

I did a lot more exercise or just things around the house. Just to try to stay active ... It was important to reach my weight goals, but it is also just for the mental clarity it gives, especially with studying. ... And just knowing that having a healthy lifestyle, especially being Māori, just makes things so much better for me, statistically, when I'm older. (Daniella)

For Daniella, physical activity was important for her holistic health and wellbeing, but there is also a political impetus to such acts of self-care. Herein, we see physical activity as an intentional response to her anecdotal, embodied and academic knowledge of the significant health inequities for Māori as a result of processes of colonization and ongoing structural and everyday racism [50]. Such examples bring to the fore the importance of intersectionality for understanding the ways gender, culture, and ethnicity surface different affective and relational ways of knowing moving bodies during and beyond the pandemic.

Further highlighting the intersectional dimensions of young women's embodied experiences during the pandemic [29], some participants spoke to the importance of religion, spirituality and cultural knowledge as shaping and supporting their physical activity practices. For example, Princess acknowledged the importance of family, community and her faith for motivating her physical activity practices during the pandemic:

I want everything I do to be more meaningful. I want a meaning behind what I do and then when people ask me, what motivates you to do sports ... it is like, my family and ... continuing that on for next generations to come. ... If I don't prioritize my church, my faith, and my family, what's my whole point of doing this?

For many of the Māori and Pacific young wāhine (women), religious, spiritual, and cultural ways of knowing health and wellbeing shaped their fitness practices during the lockdowns [51,52].

All the young women in our sample spoke to the changing role of social media and digital technologies in their lives through the pandemic [53]. Reflecting international research findings on adult populations [34,54,55], our participants described how their social media engagement inspired and supported their physical activity practices during lockdowns. In so doing, they utilized a range of (mostly free) online resources from different platforms (i.e., TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, fitness apps):

I was on Gym TikTok at one point, so I was continuously getting new gym ideas which was exciting and then I'd go out into the garage and try them with the weights. Actually, I did make a couple of TikToks, just of me doing gym workouts. I normally wouldn't do that, but it was just something different, I was bored, it made the time go by faster, it distracted me. (Kate)

I would watch those 10-min cardio workouts at home on YouTube and I would just try doing one of those each morning when I wake up. TikTok also had a lot of challenges going on at the time and I would try and participate in that. There was one that was you start

a plank and each day you add a minute to it, and you see how you go with that. It was really cool. (Iqlas)

For me, I was at the gym five days a week (before the pandemic), but then when the lockdowns started, I found some fitness app that totally helped me. Even if I had no dumbbells, no nothing, but at least I still had my phone to use that app for me to still be active in a way. (Aroha)

For many young women, free online workouts offered a valuable alternative to their pre-pandemic fitness practices.

Many of the young women, across ethnicities and socio-cultural backgrounds (but particularly popular among those of Asian heritage) spoke specifically of engaging with fitness influencer Chloe Ting's online workouts:

There was this trend around for this workout thing on YouTube. Everyone was doing the Chloe Ting workouts to get abs and stuff, and that was what I was doing as well. But only for about a week. I just felt quite dull in my room doing it. I wanted to be outside. There was no scenery—it was just me, my laptop and it was quite boring. (Alannah)

She (Chloe Ting) released videos during the first pandemic. And she was literally just like, “get abs in two weeks.” Like, obviously you're not gonna get abs that quickly but I did it because it was something to do at home, easy, no equipment and they were all free because she would post them. (Huda)

While some found these videos motivational and fun, others acknowledged the body image ideals being promoted as damaging to their own health and wellbeing. As Kalani recalled: “The Chloe Ting workouts were bad for my body image. It was false information, like you would get it in two weeks, but two weeks later I didn't get it!” Kalani is not alone in experiencing increased body image concerns as a result of social media engagement during the pandemic [56]. Other young women spoke of how their motivation for such programs dissipated quickly, particularly as they came to realize that some of the achievement claims were overstated and unrealistic:

My motivation while doing these workouts was the end outcome. I wanted a flat tummy so I was waiting for that, but not seeing the results as fast as I wanted put my motivation down and caused me to stop. (Iqlas)

I've tried the Chloe Ting challenge, but I got three weeks in and then I stopped doing it. It is just a bunch of hard cardio and cardio and cardio. You'd be sweating, you could probably fill a whole pot of sweat by doing it. I stopped doing it, just the lack of motivation, to be honest. . . . I tried Facetime calling my friends while I'm doing the workout, but it didn't seem to work out, so we just stopped doing it and we just talked half the time. Instead of the online workouts, I just did squats and sit ups and stuff and ran around the house. (Samsam)

Here our findings align with those from the Women in Sport [26] UK-based report that showed, while 46% of girls took part in some form of online exercise during the pandemic, 63% said it was hard to keep motivated online. Extending such insights, however, our participants highlight the negative feelings (i.e., frustration, disappointment, body shame, apathy) that such online fitness trends, and the unrealistic body ideals and fitness achievements promoted by some fitness influencers (such as Chloe Ting), surfaced among some young women. The digitally mediated ‘perfect’ bodies of fitness influencers affected the young women's relations with their own moving bodies, prompting ‘ugly feelings’ [35] of ‘not enough’, body shame and even anger. As Deleuze [57] writes, “a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that . . . defines a body in its individuality” (p. 625). Before, during and beyond the pandemic, young women's looking, doing, and desiring of fit bodies—their own and others—surfaces a range of affective respondings that impact capacities for being and becoming moving bodies.

While many of the young women used digital technologies to connect with their friends and support their physical activity, others engaged in new movement practices with family members. Many described going for walks with their parents and siblings, adding more physical activity into their daily routines than pre-pandemic: “I did a lot of exercise, which I don’t usually do. I was going on a lot of walks with my family” (Lena). Others worked with family members to modify the home environment in highly creative ways, or used facilities within the neighborhood for physical play, fun and social connection:

I would play badminton with my little sister outside over the clothesline as a net. And I have brothers so they would do some football drills and little games outside in the backyard as well. So, I would join in with them. (Iqlas)

Me and my brother, we just went to a court nearby. it is a little park so nobody was there and we just played basketball every few days . . . just to get out of the house. (Hodan)

It was pretty lonely. I didn’t get to go outside much. I had to find a way to entertain myself other than going on my phone . . . so I would play soccer with my brothers. (Samsam)

Some of the young women described these new movement practices and routines as supporting positive relationships with family members with whom they would not otherwise be working out with:

During the lockdown my dad made us do family workouts together. Whether that was doing the Les Mills things, or we’d go out into the backyard and run from one place to another and do sit ups and push ups and stuff like that. Being with my family while doing those activities was actually kind of fun because it is all laughs but also being able to stay active. (Shanti)

My brother and I would work out together. So that was kind of cool. Like we would do boxing workouts, or we would do weights. So that was a special bonding, family moment because like my brother and I don’t usually do that stuff together, especially because he’s a bit older. (Sofia)

The types of fitness and physical activity, and with whom young women participated, varied considerably based on personal preferences, opportunities (i.e., equipment and space at home for workouts; parks nearby; leisure time) and constraints (i.e., work, school, caring responsibilities within the home).

Adopting an intersectional sensibility, we came to understand that the trend for young women to embark on new fitness journeys and body projects during the pandemic was not being experienced in the same ways by all. Whereas those from more privileged homes had greater levels of access to home-based fitness equipment and technologies, quiet space within the home to engage in private exercise regimes, and more leisure time (outside of schoolwork and family responsibilities) to engage in physical activity, young women from lower socioeconomic families were engaging in more whānau-based fitness practices outside the home, thus nurturing relationships with family and neighbors through their movement practices. For many young women from diverse social, economic, and cultural positionings, the lockdown/s surfaced creative adaptations for physical activity practices that enabled new forms of joy, connection, and wellbeing. For others, however, pandemic closures, cancellations and ongoing disruption and uncertainty prompted feelings of loss, anger, frustration, and longing.

5.2. “I Was Shattered When I Couldn’t Do It”: Loss and Longing

While some of the young women involved in competitive sports were well supported by their coaches, teammates, schools and/or sports organizations, others described feeling disappointment, anger and frustration about the cancellation of sporting events that they were looking forward to and training towards. With age-based competitions, many felt sadness in the realization that they would not get some opportunities again, even after lockdowns ended. For some, such disappointment derailed their motivation, hopes and commitment to their sporting participation:

I was first XV with our [school name] High girls, sevens, touch, ki o rahi. I made the national teams for those sports, but then COVID came in and wiped out the tournament. So, my last year of high school, I was sitting there mad as because everyone before me got to go to Nats (nationals), and then when it came to our year, we couldn't go. I was furious. I was captain in most teams. The day I want to go and play ki o rahi, it gets canceled. The day I want to go to touch, it gets canceled. Finals for first XV rugby, canceled. Oh! I was bummed. I think it stopped me from playing sport. Just that hyped feeling that you get—yeah, you made the team, yeah, you're about to go on a travel out of town and then it gets chopped and then you're like, "nah, I'm not going to do that again". I think it just stopped me from playing sport again. (Tee)

I was shattered when I couldn't do it (waka ama events) because everything got canceled. That set me back a lot. The second lockdown, I didn't do anything at all. I kind of locked myself in my room. (Skyla)

Before the pandemic I was coaching netball. That was probably three times a week. COVID did actually kill our season. When the last lockdown happened, we were in the middle of training for our season and we didn't even play. Our season was about to start and then COVID hit and all the training went down the drain. (Princess)

As well as struggling with disappointment, anger and feelings of lost opportunities, others were trying to navigate ongoing uncertainty as to upcoming events and competitions, which impacted feelings of commitment and motivation:

I was really worried throughout the pandemic that we wouldn't have rowing nationals, and then we wouldn't be able to trial to go overseas, and then overseas opportunities became cancelled. . . . It was hard on her (coach) training us physically, but it was also really hard on us mentally because we were in the zone to race and then we got let down. It was just like, is this season going to happen anymore? Who cares, do we keep training, do we give up? (Kate)

Before COVID happened, I was still in high school and we were able to have tournaments and stuff, be more active. Then once it first came . . . there was less opportunities to do tournaments and stuff. It was dumb. It affected my motivation. Because before I was really fit. I was always active, I played so many sports but when lockdown happened, I got so lazy that I lost interest, I lost motivation to go out and do anything. Before the lockdowns, I was doing waka ama, kick boxing, touch, netball, and I'd only just started playing tag. (Manaia)

I play hockey and I umpire hockey at a national level. And it just sucked that all the tournaments you'd be going to would get cancelled because of COVID. And so you just weren't quite able to maintain your build up preparing you for anything, because you just had a big break for so long. I just completely dropped motivation to try to do what I wanted to do originally. (Daniella)

With the pandemic disruptions, many of the young athletes found themselves having to reassess their goals as well as their sporting hopes and aspirations. Even after lockdowns ended, the young women described having to 'hold back' and restrain from emotional investment in upcoming events, always carrying the worry that competitions would be cancelled:

Yeah, we didn't get to do any hockey school tournaments for the last two years. When we were planning this year's tournament, pretty much all the way up to it, it was an if, if we can go. I think we're just lucky we did get to go, so I got to play my last tournament. But it was stressful as well and worrying because all the way up to it, it was just an if. You can't get too excited about it because if the coaches get COVID, you can't go without a coach or the manager. You're even more reserved in case something comes up. And then it is like, oh, I knew it was going to get cancelled anyway, it is not like, oh damn. (Isabel)

In such comments we hear of the ways some young women were engaging in emotional regulation, suppression of hopeful and happy feelings, as a self-protection mechanism during a time when cancellations, disruptions and disappointment had become the affective norm [58].

These feelings of disappointment were exacerbated by their (lack of) opportunities to continue training with equipment and coaching support during the lockdowns. The following comments highlight the young women's awareness of inequities in opportunities to continue training and access to equipment:

(During lockdowns) we were always doing ergs, rowing machine trainings. I have my own but otherwise the club gave out machines to anyone who needed one just so we were able to keep training and keep up the fitness. We were also doing lots and lots of strength training. I was lucky enough to have gym equipment, but a lot of girls were definitely getting creative using different things as weights. (Kate)

We couldn't really train at home because we didn't have the equipment for it. All the competitions were cancelled. Nationals were cancelled and the international competitions were cancelled. It was gutting because I probably won't ever get that opportunity again. (Abby)

My sister used the free fitness apps . . . She was doing a full body workout and it was telling her to do a goblet squat, but she didn't have anything to hold. So, I told her to go find a bottle (and) fill it up with water, and then use that. I just said, 'we're in a pandemic, we can't do anything about it, use what we have'. (Princess)

Whereas Kate felt 'lucky enough to have gym equipment' at home, Princess was from a less wealthy family, and thus was prompted to become more creative in her adaption of space, bodies, and matter (e.g., using water bottles as weights). Such examples again bring to the fore the need for intersectional approaches to understanding young women's embodied and relational sport and fitness experiences during the pandemic.

In sum, for many young women across socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, particularly those involved in competitive sport, the pandemic surfaced affective responding of longing, loss, and disappointment, which for some transferred into feelings of apathy and a lack of motivation to continue participating in their organized sports.

5.3. From Apathy to Affective Solidarity

With such disruptions to school, work, family, and social life, alongside closure of gyms and fitness studios and cancellation of sporting events, many of the young women described feeling new forms of apathy, disconnection, exhaustion and disillusionment towards physical activities they had once been highly passionate and motivated for:

Before the pandemic, I was definitely really motivated, going to gym like studying hard, you know, eating well, but then the pandemic definitely . . . Yeah, I just lacked motivation. Not eating as well. Not going to the gym. You know? It is like "oh, it is bad!" It is hard getting back into that as well. (Sandy)

During lockdown, I drifted away from sports because I knew that I could always get back into that but if I mess up my studies then I won't have a second chance at it. (Ayesha)

Some described feeling highly inspired and creative during the initial weeks of lockdown, but as time went by, the novelty of their pandemic workout routines wore thin, and the emotional, educational and social stress of the lockdown and disrupted routines took their toll:

At the start, when I had the motivation, I actually organized some fitness sessions with my mates. And we FaceTime'd each other. We video chatted and expanded a little bit to a few other people. And did some workouts together. That might have lasted like a week and a half until I was like "mmmmm, can't be bothered anymore". (Daniella)

As pandemic routines set in and motivation dipped, many young women turned to their friends. As the following quotes suggest, friends were important in helping young women reconnect and engage with regular exercise during lockdowns:

It was really hard for me to stay fit and do stuff at home because I wasn't motivated at all. My motivation went out the window. Nothing motivated me to do stuff during lockdown. All I wanted to do was just sleep. Just sleep, wake up, go back to sleep. I was gaining a bit of weight and couldn't even do five burpees anymore. For me, something that got me back on track was talking with my best friend. We were on the phone texting each other and she'd say, 'are you doing anything to stay fit?' 'What do you think we should do, some home exercises?' We were actually motivating each other to actually do it. If we were just doing a quick bodyweight workout outside, we would just call each other while we were doing it. That did help both of us because we were back to being how we were before (lockdowns), being gym rats, we love going to the gym every single day now. (Princess)

I find it hard to find motivation to do things if it is not with other people . . . (During lockdown) my friends and I had this little challenge thing going on, where it was, like, make sure you go out for a run every day. And we tried to keep each other accountable. (Huda)

Many of the young women actively created social networks and relationships to support one another in maintaining/regaining their fitness routines, in so doing, affecting one another through their individual and collective moving bodies.

Here Hemmings' concept of 'affective solidarity' [59] is useful in drawing our attention to the ways young women used digital connections (via phones, apps, social media) to enable new forms of solidarity, care and support for one another during the pandemic. According to Hemmings [59], a range of affects, including rage, frustration, discomfort and/or the desire for connection, can be generative and transformational. While the 'affective solidarities' of the young women in our study did not lead to a collective feminist politic [36], their relations of care and connection through digital technologies and moving bodies were enabled through shared experiences of discomfort, frustration and isolation during the pandemic. Such affective solidarities were important in transforming negative affect (i.e., apathy, loss of motivation, depressive thoughts, and feelings) to positive feelings through their collective movement practices.

5.4. Desiring Differently: Changing Relationships with Sport and Fitness

The changes to everyday routines (i.e., school, work, fitness, nutrition, sleep) was felt in and through the bodies of the young women. Many spoke of gaining weight during lockdowns which made some feel less comfortable in their moving bodies, and further impacted their confidence in sport and fitness environments after lockdowns ended:

I mostly used to just go to the gym and just do like, you know, weightlifting training mostly for like physique based goals. During the lockdowns, I tried to maintain my physical activity because that's what I like do, it is part of my everyday life. But then slowly it kind of got more neglected and you get more unmotivated. Just sitting at home every day . . . I ended up gaining a lot of weight and you know, all that fun stuff as well. (Sofia)

My main physical exercise was from PE and walking home from school. When I really missed out on that, it took a toll on my weight and everything else, because you'd just be sitting at home and watching things and binge eating. (Samsam)

Before lockdown, I used to be really fit, my body was in shape and then I kind of fell out and had a little 'curry baby' (tummy fat) and everything. Seeing social media, it was pressuring trying to get back into it . . . I would stay up at night because I can never go to sleep and then at 3 am, I would have all this random motivation for the next week, but then I never achieved it. (Ayesha)

I definitely did have those body image worries. I struggled with that a lot . . . because I'm not as active now. Like, I need to be eating right, like, because if I'm not being active, I need to be eating better. . . . It is like a standard that I'm holding to myself that I don't even need to be. (Huda)

Such findings align with international research that has shown adolescent girls living in the United States heightened “concerns about changes to appearance through disruptions in routines (e.g., gym and salon closures)” were associated with “higher depressive symptoms” [56] (p. 481). As well as weight gain, a few of our participants described experiencing health complications after having COVID-19 that was further affecting their sporting participation. For example, Ayesha proclaimed: “now it is hard to breathe sometimes, especially with training I'll get short breathed really easily”.

Physical changes, combined with lack of time training, COVID-19 related risks and health complications, and new social anxieties, caused some young women to lose confidence in their sporting bodies and rethink their participation:

I experienced so much anxiety when it came to coming back to having to race against people and stuff. It caused me to spiral a little bit. It was really bad to the point where I didn't like it anymore, I didn't enjoy racing and stuff. I think I left it too late because I felt like maybe it was a normal thing, so I just kept it to myself until I had to step back because I realized that it was so bad that I couldn't go on again. I spent so much time alone and then having to go out, it was just really not that nice. (Alannah)

I feel like during lockdown I just lost motivation . . . my fitness went really down. Coming back, I felt a lot of pressure because I felt overall my fitness decreased and then straight out of lockdown there's competitions and we were signing up for everything, but I wasn't really ready. I kind of got used to not really doing anything and just relaxing the whole lockdown, so it was a bit shocking for me to adapt to that pressure again, get your time, train here, go there, you need to eat properly and all this stuff. When I first came out of lockdown, I had an athletics comp for my school, but I ended up pulling out because I wasn't ready. I was way too nervous, and I just didn't want to put myself out there because I was scared I was not going to win or embarrass myself. You just feel like you have to meet everyone's expectations of you as well, I just feel like I need to impress everyone in a way, or I won't feel good about myself. It has been going on for a year and a half now. (Ayesha)

Football was always a huge part of my life. Like, it was literally the other half of me. I have been playing since I was four years old. I have never imagined not playing, I was like 'I'm gonna play for as long as I can.' It was my whole life, but last year was a difficult time for me. And I wasn't being very reliable . . . I wasn't turning up to training as often . . . I wasn't there for the team. I was just overburdened with this weird anxiety for some reason. I was just rethinking it, wondering why I was feeling so anxious to go to the games and turn up to trainings . . . I stopped enjoying it because I was so anxious about it rather than being like, I'm doing this fun. So I stopped playing. (Huda)

Researchers and health professionals have documented the rise in mental health issues experienced by young people, and particularly young women, and ethnic minority young women, during the pandemic [60]. While many have evidenced the mental health benefits of sport and physical activity, for some young women in our study, returning to sport was a source of anxiety. For some, the pandemic-related stress, extended periods of isolation, exhaustion and ongoing uncertainty and disruption, affected their relationships with sport, with the pressures of competition triggering further anxieties, causing some to delay their return, or to leave their sports entirely.

Research in Aotearoa New Zealand has documented the significantly higher rates of mental health concerns among young women (almost double the rates of depressive symptoms than those reported by their male peers), with such rates further heightened among ethnic minority young women and those living in higher deprivation [61]. Although mental health was not the focus of our study, through our conversations with young

women of South West Asian and North African (S.W.A.N.A) heritage and Islamic religion, we came to understand “unspoken” cultural expectations of upholding family honor as being heightened during the pandemic [62]. For example, reflecting on her experiences of sport-related anxiety during and post-lockdown, Ayesha explained: “I feel that pressure that I need to do really well otherwise I’m going to be letting everyone down, my parents might get mad at me for not winning”. Other young Muslim women noted that their families were not happy with them walking outdoors alone or with friends during the lockdowns [63,64]. For example, Iqlas explained that her parents didn’t want her doing physical activity outdoors for “religious and ethnic reasons”, “my parents see if you’re walking around town with friends . . . other people will think you’ve gone off the rails, you’re doing something bad. They just didn’t want my name to be dirtied in the process. It was for my safety at the time”. As well as maintaining family honor, the rise in xenophobic abuse across Aotearoa meant that public spaces were not ‘safe’ for many ethnic minority young women during and after the lockdowns [65]. For some young women from ethnic-minority backgrounds, gender, culture, and religion intersected to affect their embodied experiences of sport and physical activity during the pandemic in a range of ways, surfacing as fear, anxiety, honor and responsibility, as well as joy and connection.

In the focus group with Iqlas, Hodan, Samsam and Hafsa, they spoke enthusiastically about an all-girls social sports program that their parents approved of post-lockdown because the program was run in a closed gym (only girls and women), with their team consisting of only Muslim women [66]. For this group, social sports (i.e., Futsal, badminton, basketball, netball) were the “highlight of my week”, with these “little communities” offering a “great way to blow off steam”, “pull away from reality” (Iqlas), and important for “getting us out of the house (because) we mostly stay home and go to school” (Hafsa). As these examples illustrate, for some, post-lockdown competitive sport was a source of additional pressure, cultural expectation, and anxiety. In contrast, social sports programs that recognize the cultural, social and emotional needs of young women post-lockdowns were a much-needed space to reconnect with friends, have fun, process complex emotions, and escape the affective intensities of the home.

As predicted by researchers early in the pandemic [18], some of the young women turned away from competitive team sports, instead taking up more recreational forms of physical activity. Finding new joys in such movement practices, many opted to continue their more informal fitness practices after lockdowns ended:

Recently my fitness has been a bit low . . . I didn’t join football this year . . . But yeah, during the pandemic, I went on runs and would go up to my local park to do drill work. I liked just being on my own. (Huda)

While some might consider young women’s withdrawal from organized sport as a ‘problem’ needing to be addressed with more gender responsive campaigns and policies, for some of the young women in our study, the pandemic prompted more meaningful relationships with movement. Being forced to renegotiate their relationships with physical activity, some came to reassess their motives for participation (i.e., from aesthetic motives to mental health and wellbeing, joy and connection):

Before the pandemic, I was either at the gym everyday or I was out on hikes. . . . I’d just get into my mindset and make sure I get through my workout. I liked to go to the gym just for time for myself and for me to better myself as well as to get the summer body. . . . But during the lockdowns, I saw my motivation go out the window (and) I was gaining weight. But it was just the whole thing of getting my mindset back, making sure I do things to make myself happy and make myself feel good at the same time. Before (the pandemic) it was, ‘I want to look good because of this’, ‘I want to look good because of that’. But then the lockdown actually got me to realize that I wanted to do exercises and stay fit because I wanted that for my own health and wellbeing. (Princess)

I just feel like if anything, it has helped me change my mind set on health and fitness, and how you don’t have to be exactly perfect all the time. Also, after COVID, going back

into it (fitness), I am trying to make a more sustainable kind of routine with training, nutrition and all that kind of stuff. Because before lockdown, I was training seven times a week and I was super skinny. And now I feel like I'm just a lot more breezy, like just go with it. I still work hard when I'm in the gym, I absolutely love it. I'm lifting heavy! But it has definitely made me realize I need to just chill. Yes, I am trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle but, also it is okay to treat yourself and enjoy life. (Sofia)

I guess I had to let go of striving towards these hockey aspirations or umpiring aspirations. But I've just been focusing it all back on myself and doing things like exercising for me and for my mental health. It took time to kind of reflect on it all and be like, right. "You just need to do it for you". I felt like I enjoy it so much more now. (Daniella)

In such comments, we hear the young women actively problematizing some of the gendered discourses that had been internalized and embodied before the pandemic (i.e., "exactly perfect" "super skinny") [67]. The pandemic encouraged some young women to "reflect on it all", to question the negative effects and affects of unrealistic gendered bodily ideals and highly disciplined exercise and nutritional regimes, and to pursue new "more sustainable" and "healthy" relationships with fitness that prioritize joy, pleasure and happiness ("it's okay to treat yourself and enjoy life", "I enjoyed it so much more"), and more holistic understandings of health and wellbeing. Building upon and extending Coffey's [35] work on young women's affective relationships with their bodies, and particularly 'ugly feelings' of body dissatisfaction, our research highlights the ways the pandemic prompted some young women to create "new practices and encounters" with their own and others moving bodies, opening "possibilities to imagine the (moving) body otherwise" [40] (p. 72) as a site of pleasure and care rather than discipline and striving for unrealistic gender body ideals.

According to some participants, the pandemic prompted renewed interest among their peers to engage in fitness-related body projects:

Everyone was going through their fit stage. Everyone was into their home workouts. I felt like, 'oh yeah, I should do that too'. But afterwards, it kind of just made that ideology that if you didn't exercise during the pandemic, what were you even doing? Now it is such a big thing now. Going to the gym especially, that's quite a big trend now. (Amanii)

For some young women, the lockdowns offered additional free time, which many utilized to engage in new and modified exercise regimes and body work. For others, however, they picked up additional paid and unpaid labor during lockdowns, caring for young children and vulnerable family members, while also managing online schooling or education. For this latter group, free time to exercise was not a luxury that they had unlimited access to, and feelings of apathy and exhaustion were commonly expressed. Regardless of the social, cultural, and economic differences of their pandemic lives, new pressures to engage in body transformation (through exercise, diet, home beauty treatments), identity re-creation, or the 'glow up' (a pop cultural term for a significant personal transformation or identity makeover), were felt widely among young women, particularly as they returned to school and social life. As the comment from Amanii above highlights, the pandemic surfaced heightened social expectations for many young women to be/come 'fit' post-lockdowns.

Importantly, the return to sport and physical activity after national and regional lockdowns was not a linear process, with young women experiencing fluctuating affects during a time of significant uncertainty, disruption, and new and old social pressures and expectations:

I still haven't gotten completely back on track and like a good routine for my health and fitness. Since the pandemic started, I'd have maybe a month of training properly and starting to kind of get my shit together. And then I would kind of fall off again for months and then come back and try it again. I still just never got that discipline and motivation back. I feel like I still am not in love with it the way it was before. (Sofia)

Others commented on how the return to sport and fitness evoked new feelings about spaces and places (i.e., gyms, fields, courts) of familiarity ‘made strange’ through new pandemic rules and regulations, and social interactions:

When we came out of lockdown, we did eventually go back into hockey but yeah, it was different. You couldn’t go and watch because they didn’t want people on the grounds. But yeah, it was different. (Anna-Bell)

I’ve started going to the gym. It was a bit of a slow start, because you’re like “ew” at first, you’re like, “COVID! I don’t want to catch it from the gym”, like all of that stuff. So it took me a while to want to do that again. (Daniella)

Such findings align with recent research that reveals how indoor fitness spaces (i.e., gyms, studios) were reconceptualized as ‘riskscapes’ during and after lockdowns, which women navigate differently depending on their embodied, affective relations and connections with bodies, objects and spaces [33].

For some, returning to spaces of sport and fitness surfaced new anxieties, fears, and uncertainties, but for many other young women, the pandemic prompt renewed passion and appreciation for the joys of sport:

Honestly, I don’t know how I stayed motivated (to train during the lockdowns). I think it was because I was enjoying it. The season before, I was at a different club and it became a chore, and I think over lockdown it became a highlight so it became my favorite thing to do again. I guess the motivation was that it was my highlight of the day compared to anything else. I just began to love it again. (Kate)

Me and my mate had made a pact that we’ll try as much sports as we can this year, do everything and anything, because everything got cancelled last year. (Amanii)

I think it (sport training and fitness) was the highlight of the pandemic. I think it was the most important thing because it gave me something to do, and it made me more motivated to be fit. I think the role it played was just affecting my wellbeing in general, and just lifting it up. I was really down because of the pandemic, because of how it just stopped everything. So doing all those things and remembering all those techniques, and then carrying it through and then coming out, it just lifted it up and made me still believe I can still do something. (Ana)

Through the looking, doing, feeling and connecting of moving bodies through pandemic times, the young women came to know their relationships with sport and fitness differently through affective relations and renegotiations of and with bodies. For many, the pandemic surfaced new desires and longings to move in ways that are meaningful to them, encouraging new bodily capacities to feel (“love it again”) and act (“I can still do something”), during and beyond pandemic times.

6. Conclusions

Bringing interviews with 44 young women into dialogue with a feminist intersectional and affective sensibility, this paper revealed how the pandemic impacted relations with sport, physical activity and moving bodies in a range of ways. While large surveys have been conducted in various countries documenting the impact of COVID-19 on young people’s sport and physical activity participation, with some documenting the exaggerated impacts on young women, we offer a different perspective. Herein, we provide nuanced insights into the embodied, relational and affective dimensions of young women’s sport and fitness practices through pandemic times. While we avoided making generalizations across ethnicity, cultural and religious backgrounds, or socioeconomic circumstances, we shed light on the multiplicities of young women’s positionalities and their evolving relationships with sport and fitness. Engaging an intersectional affective sensibility, we came to recognize the various ways ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic positionings were interacting with gender, affecting young women’s moving bodies in a range of ways.

With a feminist focus on affect, we revealed the pleasures, as well as ‘ugly feelings’, that surfaced through the pandemic, as young women turn back to/away from familiar movement practices. Radically disrupting familiar places, practices and routines, the pandemic prompted young women to create new relationships with sport, fitness and moving bodies. In so doing, some reflected upon previously unhealthy gendered ideals and highly disciplinary bodily practices, and in seeking alternatives, they found new pleasures, care, and connection in their moving bodies. In sum, we hope this paper highlights the value in moving beyond “the traditionally individualized and psychological remit” of young women’s health, wellbeing, and sporting participation in pandemic times, instead revealing the value in examining the “socio-material and affective dynamics which mediate the conditions of possibility in young (women’s pandemic) lives” [39] (p. 67). The affective intersectional approach adopted in this study was useful in disrupting individualistic participation narratives and deepening understandings of the relational and community aspects of young women’s sport and fitness participation during and beyond the pandemic. Future research might similarly engage such theoretical and methodological perspectives towards more broadly co-constituted and entangled notions of young women’s movement practices, health, and wellbeing.

For sports organizations, schools and health providers seeking to understand the reasons why some young women may not be rushing back to their pre-pandemic sport and fitness practices, it is important to consider the complex affective, emotional, and embodied disruptions of COVID-19 on young women’s everyday lives. In sum, the young women felt the effects of the pandemic in and through their moving bodies; they felt sadness, loss, anger, frustration, and disappointment, as well as joy and connection. Most importantly, however, young women were agentic in their respondings to the radically changed social world around them. Through their revised and reimagined sport and fitness practices, we see the capacities of moving bodies to respond to, resist, and transform the conditions of their everyday lives. Future policies, interventions and support systems aimed at promoting gender equity and wellbeing in sport and physical activity settings would do well to not only listen to and learn from the intersecting complexities of young women’s embodied and affective experiences of sport and fitness, but also to explore alternative theoretical and methodological approaches that move beyond individualistic narratives and towards more relational conceptualizations of wellbeing in uncertain and disrupted times.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, H.T.; Data curation, G.O., N.A. and M.J.N.; Formal analysis, H.T.; Funding acquisition, H.T.; Methodology, H.T., G.O., N.A. and M.J.N.; Project administration, H.T.; Writing—original draft, H.T.; Writing—review & editing, H.T., G.O., N.A. and M.J.N. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by Royal Society of New Zealand James Cook Fellowship, grant number JCF-21-UOW-001.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato (HREC/Health 2022#05, 22 March 2022).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Some of the data presented in this study may be available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to ethical considerations and privacy of participants.

Acknowledgments: The authors are grateful to the young women for sharing their pandemic stories with us.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Canadian Women and Sport COVID Alert: Pandemic Impact on Girls in Sport. 2021. Available online: <https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/COVID-Alert-final-English-July-2021.pdf> (accessed on 2 March 2023).

2. Zarrett, N.; Veliz, P.T. *The Healing Power of Sport: COVID-19 and Girls' Participation, Health, and Achievement*; Women's Sports Foundation: New York, NY, USA, 2023; Available online: https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/articles_and_report/the-healing-power-of-sport/ (accessed on 18 March 2023).
3. Craike, M.J.; Symons, C.; Zimmermann, J.A.M. Why Do Young Women Drop out of Sport and Physical Activity? A Social Ecological Approach. *Ann. Leis. Res.* **2009**, *12*, 148–172. [CrossRef]
4. Flintoff, A.; Scraton, S. Stepping into Active Leisure? Young Women's Perceptions of Active Lifestyles and Their Experiences of School Physical Education. *Sport Educ. Soc.* **2001**, *6*, 5–21. [CrossRef]
5. Sport New Zealand Young Women Profile. 2021. Available online: https://sportnz.org.nz/media/4446/young-women-profile-2021_v22.pdf (accessed on 1 March 2023).
6. UN Women. *COVID-19 Women, Girls and Sport: Build Back Better*. 2020. Available online: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Brief-COVID-19-women-girls-and-sport-en.pdf> (accessed on 3 March 2023).
7. Andrews, D.; Thorpe, H.; Newman, J. *Physical Culture in Global Pandemic: COVID Assemblages*; Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK, 2023.
8. Frawley, S.; Schulenkorf, N. *Routledge Handbook of Sport and COVID-19*-Google Books; Taylor & Francis: Oxford, UK, 2021.
9. Glebova, E.; Zare, F.; Desbordes, M.; Gécz, G. COVID-19 Sport Transformation: New Challenges and New Opportunities. *Phys. Cult. Sport Stud. Res.* **2022**, *95*, 54–67. [CrossRef]
10. Hedenborg, S.; Svensson, D.; Radmann, A. Global Challenges and Innovations in Sport: Effects of COVID-19 on Sport. *Sport Soc.* **2022**, *25*, 1227–1230. [CrossRef]
11. Azzarito, L.; Hill, J. Girls Looking for a 'Second Home': Bodies, Difference and Places of Inclusion. *Phys. Educ. Sport Pedagog.* **2013**, *18*, 351–375. [CrossRef]
12. Knez, K.; Macdonald, D.; Abbott, R. Challenging Stereotypes: Muslim Girls Talk about Physical Activity, Physical Education and Sport. *Asia-Pac. J. Health Sport Phys. Educ.* **2012**, *3*, 109–122. [CrossRef]
13. Palmer, F. Body Image, Hauora and Identity: Experiences of Maori Girls in Sport. *Child. Issues J. Child. Issues Cent.* **2007**, *11*, 12–19. [CrossRef]
14. Hill, J.; Azzarito, L. Representing Valued Bodies in PE: A Visual Inquiry with British Asian Girls. *Phys. Educ. Sport Pedagog.* **2012**, *17*, 263–276. [CrossRef]
15. Walseth, K. Young Muslim Women and Sport: The Impact of Identity Work. *Leis. Stud.* **2006**, *25*, 75–94. [CrossRef]
16. Evans, A.B.; Blackwell, J.; Dolan, P.; Fahlén, J.; Hoekman, R.; Lenneis, V.; McNarry, G.; Smith, M.; Wilcock, L. Sport in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Towards an Agenda for Research in the Sociology of Sport. *Eur. J. Sport Soc.* **2020**, *17*, 85–95. [CrossRef]
17. Rowe, D. Subjecting Pandemic Sport to a Sociological Procedure. *J. Sociol.* **2020**, *56*, 704–713. [CrossRef]
18. Teare, G.; Taks, M. Exploring the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth Sport and Physical Activity Participation Trends. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 1744. [CrossRef]
19. King-White, R.; Giardina, M.D. Parenting in Pandemic Times: Notes on the Emotional Geography of Youth Sport Culture. In *Sport and Physical Culture in Global Pandemic Times: COVID Assemblages*; Andrews, D.L., Thorpe, H., Newman, J.I., Eds.; Global Culture and Sport Series; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2023; pp. 445–469. ISBN 978-3-031-14387-8.
20. Maclean, J. Reorienting the Cartography of Coaching to Pandemic Times. In *Sport and Physical Culture in Global Pandemic Times: COVID Assemblages*; Andrews, D.L., Thorpe, H., Newman, J.I., Eds.; Global Culture and Sport Series; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2023; pp. 373–394. ISBN 978-3-031-14387-8.
21. Pons, J.; Ramis, Y.; Alcaraz, S.; Jordana, A.; Borruco, M.; Torregrossa, M. Where Did All the Sport Go? Negative Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on Life-Spheres and Mental Health of Spanish Young Athletes. *Front. Psychol.* **2020**, *11*, 611872. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
22. MLSE Foundation; Heal, B.; Sailofsky, D.; Warner, M.; Darnell, S.; Robinson, J. *Change the Game Research: A Study Focused on Youth Sport Access, Engagement, and Equity Factors in the Wake of the Pandemic*; MLSE Foundation: Toronto, ON, Canada, 2021; Available online: https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/110045/1/60f5a049b617f857b0d14be4_Change%20The%20Game%20Research_FINAL.pdf (accessed on 4 May 2023).
23. Di Fronso, S.; Costa, S.; Montesano, C.; Di Gruttola, F.; Ciofi, E.G.; Morgilli, L.; Robazza, C.; Bertollo, M. The Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Perceived Stress and Psychobiosocial States in Italian Athletes. *Int. J. Sport Exerc. Psychol.* **2022**, *20*, 79–91. [CrossRef]
24. Bowes, A.; Lomax, L.; Piasecki, J. The Impact of the COVID-19 Lockdown on Elite Sportswomen. *Manag. Sport Leis.* **2020**, *27*, 513–529. [CrossRef]
25. Thorpe, H.; Jeffrey, A.; Fullagar, S.; Pavlidis, A. Reconceptualizing women's wellbeing during pandemic: Sport, fitness and more-than-human connection. *J. Sport Soc. Issues* **2023**. [CrossRef]
26. Women in Sport. *Life in Lockdown: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teenage Girls' Lives and Physical Activity*; Women in Sport: London, UK, 2021; Available online: <https://womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Impact-of-the-Covid-19-Pandemic-on-Teenage-Girls-Lives-and-Physical-Activity-REPORT.pdf> (accessed on 5 June 2023).
27. Baig, K. Contextualising Gender Intersectionality with the COVID-19 Pandemic-ScienceDirect. *Public Health* **2021**, *198*, 171–173. [CrossRef]
28. Ryan, N.E.; El Ayadi, A.M. A Call for a Gender-Responsive, Intersectional Approach to Address COVID-19. *Glob. Public Health* **2020**, *15*, 1404–1412. [CrossRef]

29. Ncube, N.N.; Evans Winters, V.; Greenlee, E.G.; Francis, A.; Crooks, G.; McCallum, E.; McIntosh, C.; Taylor, H. The “Strong Black Girl” Dilemma: Reflections on Young Black Women’s Mental Health during Dual Pandemics. *J. Afr. Am. Women Girls Educ.* **2022**, *2*, 65–85. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
30. Mitchell, C.; Smith, A. *The Girl in the Pandemic: Transnational Perspectives*; Berghahn Books: Oxford, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2023; ISBN 978-1-80073-807-2.
31. Ringrose, J.; Renold, E. Normative Cruelties and Gender Deviants: The Performative Effects of Bully Discourses for Girls and Boys in School. *Br. Educ. Res. J.* **2010**, *36*, 573–596. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
32. Fullagar, S.; Pavlidis, A. Thinking through the Disruptive Effects and Affects of the Coronavirus with Feminist New Materialism. *Leis. Sci.* **2021**, *43*, 152–159. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
33. Thorpe, H.; Jeffrey, A.; Fullagar, S. Re-turning to fitness ‘riskscapes’ post lockdown: Feminist materialisms, wellbeing and affective respondings in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Gend. Place Cult.* **2023**. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
34. Clark, M. On the Politics and Embodiments of Longing: Snapshots from a Digital Photo Diary Study of Australians’ Movement Experiences during Lockdown. In *Sport and Physical Culture in Global Pandemic Times: COVID Assemblages*; Andrews, D.L., Thorpe, H., Newman, J.I., Eds.; Global Culture and Sport Series; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2023; pp. 597–622. ISBN 978-3-031-14387-8.
35. Coffey, J. Ugly Feelings: Gender, Neoliberalism and the Affective Relations of Body Concerns. *J. Gend. Stud.* **2020**, *29*, 636–650. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
36. Keller, J.; Mendes, K.; Ringrose, J. Speaking ‘Unspeakable Things’: Documenting Digital Feminist Responses to Rape Culture. *J. Gend. Stud.* **2018**, *27*, 22–36. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
37. Ringrose, J. *Postfeminist Education?: Girls and the Sexual Politics of Schooling*; Routledge: Oxford, UK, 2013.
38. Ringrose, J.; Renold, E. “F**k Rape!”: Exploring Affective Intensities in a Feminist Research Assemblage. *Qual. Inq.* **2014**, *20*, 772–780. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
39. Coffey, J. Assembling Wellbeing: Bodies, Affects and the ‘Conditions of Possibility’ for Wellbeing. *J. Youth Stud.* **2022**, *25*, 67–83. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
40. Coffey, J. Creating Distance from Body Issues: Exploring New Materialist Feminist Possibilities for Renegotiating Gendered Embodiment. *Leis. Sci.* **2019**, *41*, 72–90. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
41. Pavlidis, A.; Fullagar, S. Narrating the Multiplicity of ‘Derby Grrrl’: Exploring Intersectionality and the Dynamics of Affect in Roller Derby. *Leis. Sci.* **2013**, *35*, 422–437. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
42. Pavlidis, A.; Fullagar, S.; Nichols, E.; Lupton, D.; Forsdike, K.; Thorpe, H. Experimenting with Research Creation During a Pandemic: Making Time Capsules with Girls in Sport. In *Sport and Physical Culture in Global Pandemic Times: COVID Assemblages*; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2023; pp. 241–267.
43. Jefferies, S.; French, N.; Gilkison, C.; Graham, G.; Hope, V.; Marshall, J.; McElnay, C.; McNeill, A.; Muellner, P.; Paine, S.; et al. COVID-19 in New Zealand and the Impact of the National Response: A Descriptive Epidemiological Study. *Lancet Public Health* **2020**, *5*, e612–e623. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
44. Sharma, S.; Walton, M.; Manning, S. Social Determinants of Health Influencing the New Zealand COVID-19 Response and Recovery: A Scoping Review and Causal Loop Diagram. *Systems* **2021**, *9*, 52. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
45. Jamieson, T. “Go Hard, Go Early”: Preliminary Lessons from New Zealand’s Response to COVID-19. *Am. Rev. Public Adm.* **2020**, *50*, 598–605. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
46. WHO (World Health Organization). Available online: <https://covid19.who.int/region/wpro/country/nz> (accessed on 29 June 2023).
47. Braun, V.; Clarke, V. One Size Fits All? What Counts as Quality Practice in (Reflexive) Thematic Analysis? *Qual. Res. Psychol.* **2021**, *18*, 328–352. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
48. Ringrose, J.; Regehr, K. Difficult Research Effects/ Affects: An Intersectional-Discursive-Material-Affective Look at Racialised Sexualisation in Public Advertising. In *Difficult Conversations*; Routledge: Oxford, UK, 2023; ISBN 978-1-00-308841-7.
49. Windsong, E.A. Incorporating Intersectionality into Research Design: An Example Using Qualitative Interviews. *Int. J. Soc. Res. Methodol.* **2018**, *21*, 135–147. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
50. Moewaka Barnes, H.; McCreanor, T. Colonisation, Hauora and Whenua in Aotearoa. *J. R. Soc. N. Z.* **2019**, *49*, 19–33. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
51. Nemani, M. “My Thighs Can Squash You”: Young Māori and Pasifika Wāhine Celebration of Strong Brown Bodies; Symposium Presentation, Reimagining Fields of Play: Hamilton, New Zealand, 21 July 2023.
52. Carlson, T.; Calder-Dawe, O.; Jensen-Lesatele, V. ‘You Can’t Really Define It Can You?’ Rangatahi Perspectives on Hauora and Wellbeing. *J. R. Soc. N. Z.* **2022**, *52*, 409–425. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
53. Thompson, J.A.; Fraser, S.L.; Perez, R.M.; Paquette, C.; Frohlich, K.L. Girls and Young Women Negotiate Wellbeing during COVID-19 in Quebec. *Girlhood Stud.* **2020**, *13*, 48–63. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
54. Hayes, M. Social Media and Inspiring Physical Activity during COVID-19 and Beyond. *Manag. Sport Leis.* **2022**, *27*, 14–21. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
55. Mutz, M.; Müller, J.; Reimers, A.K. Use of Digital Media for Home-Based Sports Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Results from the German SPOVID Survey. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2021**, *18*, 4409. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

56. Choukas-Bradley, S.; Maheux, A.J.; Roberts, S.R.; Hutchinson, E.A.; Lu, C.; Ladouceur, C.D.; Silk, J.S. Picture Perfect during a Pandemic? Body Image Concerns and Depressive Symptoms in U.S. Adolescent Girls during the COVID-19 Lockdown. *J. Child. Media* **2022**, *16*, 481–492. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
57. Deleuze, G. Ethology: Spinoza and US. In *Incorporations (Zone 6)*; Zone: New York, NY, USA, 1992; ISBN 978-1-00-306033-8.
58. Scott, S.; McGowan, V.; Bradley, A.; Visram, S. 'How I'm Feeling Today, I Probably Won't Be Feeling Tomorrow'. Using I-Poems to Explore Young People's Changing Emotions during the COVID-19 Pandemic—A Qualitative, Longitudinal Study. *SSM Qual. Res. Health* **2023**, *3*, 100239. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
59. Hemmings, C. Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation. *Fem. Theory* **2012**, *13*, 147–161. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
60. Mendolia, S.; Suziedelyte, A.; Zhu, A. Have Girls Been Left behind during the COVID-19 Pandemic? Gender Differences in Pandemic Effects on Children's Mental Wellbeing. *Econ. Lett.* **2022**, *214*, 110458. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
61. Menzies, R.; Gluckman, P.; Poulton, R. *Youth Mental Health in Aotearoa New Zealand: Greater Urgency Required*; Kōi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures: Auckland, New Zealand, 2020.
62. Gunasinghe, C.; Hatch, S.L.; Lawrence, J. Young Muslim Pakistani Women's Lived Experiences of Izzat, Mental Health, and Well-Being. *Qual. Health Res.* **2019**, *29*, 747–757. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
63. Green, E.; Singleton, S. Safe and Risky Spaces: Gender, Ethnicity and Culture in the Leisure Lives of Young South Asian Women. In *Geographies of Muslim Identities: Diaspora, Gender and Belonging*; Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.: Hampshire, England, 2012; pp. 119–134. ISBN 978-1-4094-8747-0.
64. Hamzeh, M.; Oliver, K.L. "Because I Am Muslim, I Cannot Wear a Swimsuit": Muslim Girls Negotiate Participation Opportunities for Physical Activity. *Res. Q. Exerc. Sport* **2012**, *83*, 330–339. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
65. Bedeschi-Lewando, B.; Nandedkar, G.; Lima, S.; Brown, S.; Tagicakibau, E.; Afadama, A.; Hollingsworth, R. *Migrant and Ethnic Women's Perspectives on COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand: Employment, Wellbeing and Resilience*; Women Talking Politics: Auckland, New Zealand, 2021.
66. Ahmad, N.; Thorpe, H. Building Cultural Inclusion in Active Recreation and Sport: Insights from Muslim Women. 2021. Sport New Zealand. Available online: <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/3432/building-cultural-inclusion-in-active-recreation-and-sport-5-10.pdf> (accessed on 23 May 2023).
67. Hill, J. Girls' Active Identities: Navigating Othering Discourses of Femininity, Bodies and Physical Education. *Gend. Educ.* **2015**, *27*, 666–684. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.