EXERCISE CONTINUATION AND DISCONTINUATION WITHIN SWISS FITNESS CLUBS

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INTRODUCTION

In today’s western society, men and more people are sedentary. This lifestyle is related with many health problems. Physical activity has been identified as a factor that enhances public health. On this particular issue, sport and exercise psychology has been introduced as an important body of knowledge about the determinants of long term physical activity, and has come up with a series of theoretical models (for an overview: Piffaretti, Lenzen, and Kayser, 2006). Because most of the existing studies have investigated exercise continuation as related to competitive sports and community-based programmes, there is a lack of knowledge about the role of fitness clubs in promoting long-term physical activity. To contribute to a better knowledge about the efficiency of fitness club programmes to promote physical activity in the long term, we decided to conduct a study in Switzerland. The first step of the study (Piffaretti et al., 2006) step A in the scheme below allowed us to come up with the theoretically-based profile of new fitness clients, the first subsection of which is present in a fitness club.

Figure 1: Types of dropout (n=14; general vs specific)

B) TYPES OF DROPOUT

Individual interviews allowed us to raise more than four different categories of dropouts:

1) Seasonal dropout: basically, clients tend to exercise in the fitness club only during the “cold” season (summer, winter and spring), leaving summer for outdoor activities. In other words, these kinds of dropouts are temporary.

2) Permanently dropout: clients did not have an adequate reason to cause their involvement to last, because they would not be able to continue after school or work. In other words, this type of dropout is temporary.

3) Disenchantment with new fitness club clients (not deriving from the time of initial subscription).

4) Willful dropout: clients do not do not have an adequate reason to cause their involvement to continue in the fitness club.

METHODOLOGY

An interview guide was elaborated to question fitness clients 3, 6 and 12 months after their initial subscription. The interview guide was held by hand, between 15 to 25 minutes and included the following questions: (a) continuation or discontinuation, (b) the frequency of their visits at the fitness club at the time of their initial subscription, (c) the occurrence of contacts with the fitness personnel, (d) the principal reason for their continuation or discontinuation.

RESULTS

A) DROPOUT RATES

Figure 1: evolution of participation rates 3, 6 and 12 months after initial subscription.

1) Analysis of variance (Student T; for data treated numerically) were their related reasons. Then, a more qualitative analysis was run - Are there different types of exercise discontinuation, and what are the figures and rates about the determinants of long term physical activity, and have the sport activity, and the individual among those people who start their involvement principally towards exercise are superior in dropouts (1.86) than in the individual with a more social orientation: 1.) set themselves new exercising goals.

2) Student T-test: dropouts significantly outnumber cases of (dis-)continuation.

3) Smoking habit: Smoking habit significantly lower in the continuation group (20 cigarettes a day) than the smokers in the discontinuation group (20 cigarettes a day).

4) Age: Smoking habit is significantly lower in the continuation group (20 cigarettes a day) than the smokers in the discontinuation group (20 cigarettes a day).

5) Sex: smoking rates are significantly lower in the continuation group (20 cigarettes a day) than the smokers in the discontinuation group (20 cigarettes a day).

6) The transtheoretical model: Are there differences among those people who start their involvement principally towards exercise are superior in dropouts (1.86) than in the individuals (only 26% had reported positive attitude).

7) Self-determined motivation: Dropouts are overrepresented among those people who start their involvement principally because they come with other friends (26%; p<.05) and have discontinued their participation in the fitness club (26%; p<.05) after a 3-months programme.

8) Age: Adolescents (15-18 years-old) drop out more frequently (48%) than adults (15%) after a 3-months programme.

9) Stage of change: dropouts are significantly younger than those people who remain in the programme (p<.01). In addition, dropout rate is significantly higher for those who had practiced less than once a week in the months 3 previous to the interview (p<.01).

10) Smoking habit: Finally, the percentage of people who like smoking is significantly lower in the continuation group (11.3%) than in the dropout group (66.1%; p<.05; Student T=-2.19, p=.03).

PREDICTING FACTORS OF (DIS-)CONTINUATION

The ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis analysis allowed to highlight some possible predicting factors of continuation and dropout: Age: Adolescents (15-18 years-old) drop out more frequently (48%) than adults (15%) after a 3-months programme.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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