



DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN PRESCRIBING EXERCISE PROGRAMS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY: A STUDY IN MALAYSIA

Jesslyn Choon Peng Oi*

Graduate School of Business
SEGi University
Malaysia
SUKD1901103@Segi2u.my

*Corresponding Author email: jess@rbozeman.com

Submission: 20 November 2020

Revised: 24 December 2020

Accepted: 19 January 2021

Peer-review under responsibility of 6th Asia International Conference 2020 (Online) Scientific Committee

<http://connectingasia.org/scientific-committee/>

© 2021 Published by Readers Insight Publisher,

Office # 6, First Floor, A & K Plaza, Near D Watson, F-10 Markaz, Islamabad, Pakistan,

editor@readersinsight.net

This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/4.0/>).



ABSTRACT

The increased awareness of benefiting from exercising stimulates the demand for fitness training professionals' expertise. Fitness professionals (FTP) serve clients in one-to-one personal training or group training in commercial fitness centers. Even though uncertain certification quality and paths to become a certified FTP could affect exercise program development and instruction, little is available on fitness profession expertise in prescribing and teaching exercise programs to members in commercial fitness centers. It is not entirely clear to the public what knowledge and skills apply to FTPs in conducting safe and practical exercises. This study responds to the increasing growth of people with young career experience and doubtful technical knowledge in Malaysia. This study plans to employ semi-structured interviews to examine how decisions are made with the fitness profession's knowledge and skills. With the lens of the Cognitive Continuum Theory, this research will recognize FTPs' decision-making processes lacking in the business and fitness literature. This study will generate a practical framework for the fitness profession, the public, and fitness operators to understand the importance of judgment and competencies in prescribing exercise programs.

Keywords: *Decision-Making Processes, Fitness Training Professional, Competency, Cognition, Fitness and Wellness*

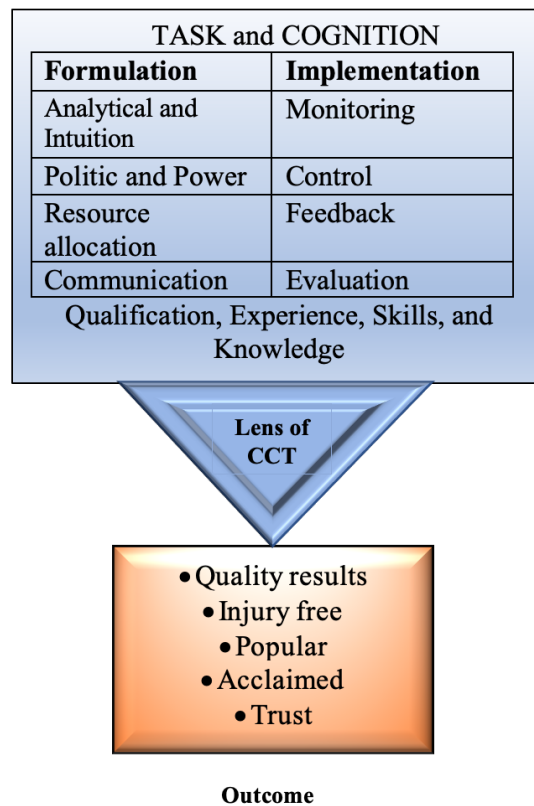
RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

The study has several research highlights, and they are as follows,

- This research has a theoretical contribution to the adaption of Cognition Continuum Theory to study FTPs' decision-making processes (Dhami and Thomson, 2012).
- Information about trainer/member management style, particularly the effects on skills implementation, could be useful for FTPs, supervisors, and coaches (Robles et al., 2020).
- FTPs, exercise members, and fitness operators can apply a new framework to recognize the application of scientific knowledge, skills, and field experience to ensure exercise program efficacy (Koustelios, 2003).
- Integrating explicit decision-making processes into managing members' exercise program development would probably make FTPs more credible, increase the perceived image, and increase public trust to exercise consultation and wellbeing betterment (Malek et al., 2002; Rosado et al., 2014).
- To the researcher's knowledge, there is no study to explore decisions into FTPs' judgment, daily teaching, coaching processes. Qualitative exploratory research is the first study of this nature and purpose (Elbanna et al., 2020).

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

Strategic Decision Making Processes



Research Objectives

Research showed that scientific knowledge and relational skill are essential competencies in professional fitness success (Malek et al., 2002; Rosado et al., 2014). However, some studies show that most FTPs were unprepared to function effectively (De Lyon and Cushion, 2013; Melton et al., 2008). Despite many notable research efforts, few have made headway in resolving issues in FTPs' competencies in practice in recent years. Another negative aspect affecting professionalism is the public's difficulty verifying FTPs' performance due to a certified trainer's low barrier entrance.

Wayment and McDonald (2017) suggest that FTPs consider curating exercise programs and protocols that meet social needs. Given the exhibited complexity in various qualifications and the fitness profession's formal education background, understanding how FTPs makes decisions with experience may elucidate specific competencies relevant to professional performance. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are the decision-making processes of FTPs in curating exercise programs for members?
- To what extend FTPs are likely to change the way exercise program is curated?

Methodology

Adopting the constructivist paradigm, this paper employs a qualitative research methodology to explore FTP's decision-making processes in curating exercise programs for members (Yin, 2011). Face-to-face interviews with FTPs in commercial fitness centers in Greater Kuala Lumpur will allow the researcher to garner interviewees' experience, incidence, and contexts of their work (Creswell, 2018). The sample population is FTPs working in the commercial fitness center. The Greater Kuala Lumpur will be the purposive sample area for in-depth interviews.

The interviews will be conducted with semi-structured questions and be voice recorded. The researcher will verbatim transcribe the recorded interviews into MS-words (Elliott, 2018; Lester et al., 2020). As the interview data is based on human experiences is descriptive, complex, and often carries multiple meanings. The researcher plans to adhere to Braun and Clarke's (2020) suggestion of the thematic analysis method. A theoretical framework with Cognitive Continuum Theory underpins the theory-driven data analysis to generalize themes for the study. QDA Miner, as computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software, will be used for the content analysis. This software is an excellent tool to analyze the text data, explore the contents in answers, code them within unique themes, and reveal sound findings. (LaPan, 2013).

Findings

The study aims to discover some interesting insights and themes from FTPs' decision making processes. Interesting insights particularly, the formulation and implementation of curating exercise programs for members, will enable FTPs, members, and fitness operators to recognize the significant scientific knowledge and competencies on effective exercise programs. Themes discovery will highlight fitness profession traits that work in the commercial fitness centers in Malaysia.

References

- Braun, V., Clarke, V., 2020. Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. *Couns. Psychother. Res.* 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12360>
- Creswell, J.W. & C.J.D., 2018. *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th Editio. ed. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- De Lyon, A.T.C., Cushion, C.J., 2013. The acquisition and development of fitness trainers' professional knowledge. *J. Strength Cond. Res.* <https://doi.org/10.1519/JSC.0b013e3182653cc1>
- Dhami, M.K., Thomson, M.E., 2012. On the relevance of Cognitive Continuum Theory and quasirationality for understanding management judgment and decision making. *Eur. Manag. J.* 30, 316–326. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2012.02.002>
- Elbanna, S., Thanos, I.C., Jansen, R.J.G., 2020. A literature review of the strategic decision-making context: A synthesis of previous mixed findings and an agenda for the way forward. *Manag.* 23, 42–60. <https://doi.org/10.37725/mgmt.v23i2.4621>

- Elliott, V., 2018. Thinking about the coding process in qualitative data analysis. *Qual. Rep.* 23, 2850–2861.
- García-Fernández, J., Bernal-García, A., Fernández-Gavira, J., Vélez-Colón, L., 2014. Analysis of existing literature on management and marketing of the fitness centre industry. *South African J. Res. Sport. Phys. Educ. Recreat.* 36, 75–91.
- García-Fernández, J., Elasri-Eijaberi, A., Pérez-Tur, F., Triadó-Ivern, X.M., Herrera-Torres, L., Aparicio-Chueca, P., 2017. Social networks in fitness centres: the impact of fan engagement on annual turnover 17, 1068–1077. <https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2017.03164>
- Koustelios, A., 2003. Identifying important management competencies in fitness centres in Greece. *Manag. Leis.* 8, 145–153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360671032000123672>
- LaPan, C., 2013. Review of QDA Miner. *Soc. Sci. Comput. Rev.* 31, 774–778. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439313492711>
- Lester, J.N., Cho, Y., Lochmiller, C.R., 2020. Learning to Do Qualitative Data Analysis: A Starting Point. *Hum. Resour. Dev. Rev.* 19, 94–106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484320903890>
- Malek, M.H., Nalbone, D.P., Berger, D.E., Coburn, Jared WDavid, P., 2002. Importance_of_Health_Science_Education_f.pdf 4287. [https://doi.org/10.1519/1533-4287\(2002\)016<0019](https://doi.org/10.1519/1533-4287(2002)016<0019)
- Melton, D., Dail, T.K., Katula, J., Mustian, K., 2008. The current state of personal training: an industry perspective of personal trainers in a small southeast community. *J. Strength Cond. Res.* 22, 883–889. <https://doi.org/10.1519/JSC.0b013e3181660dab>
- Robles, M.T.A., Collado-Mateo, D., Fernández-Espínola, C., Viera, E.C., Fuentes-Guerra, F.J.G., 2020. Effects of teaching games on decision making and skill execution: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17020505>
- Rosado, A., Araújo, D., Mesquita, I., Correia, A., Mendes, F., Guillén, F., 2014. Perceptions of fitness professionals regarding fitness occupations and careers: A phenomenological analysis. *Rev. Psicol. del Deport.*
- Wayment, H.A., McDonald, R.L., 2017. Sharing a personal trainer: Personal and social benefits of individualized, small-group training. *J. Strength Cond. Res.* 31, 3137–3145. <https://doi.org/10.1519/JSC.0000000000001764>
- Yin, R.K., 2011. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. The Guilford Press, London & New York.

Author's Biography



Jesslyn Choon Peng Oi is a final-year Ph.D. student at SEGi University. She received a bachelor's degree in Accounting from Flinders University, Australia, and a master's degree in Business Administration from Charles Sturt University, Australia. She serves in the industrial expert advisory panel for TAR University College for the Programs: Diploma in Sport and Exercise Science and Bachelor of Science (Honors) in Sports and Exercise Science. She is interested in research related to fitness and wellness, human resources management, and information technology.