

An Investigative of Personal Fitness Trainers' Training Strategies in Planning and Implementing Fitness Programming

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ABSTRACT

Personal fitness trainers (PFTs) are widely in demand to provide personalized fitness training in many countries, including Malaysia. PFTs who are qualified and experienced are capable to help their clients to achieve exercise goals, ensure their clients' health and wellbeing, and reduce sedentary lifestyles. However, the services delivered by PFTs have not been reliable across the fitness industry. This has resultant reservations about PFTs' acumen notably their decisions on exercise programmes for the public. An investigation on how PFTs strategizes exercise programmes for their clients have previously been overlooked. This research is a qualitative phenomenology study on PFTs decision-making processes in curating exercise programmes. The researcher utilised a semi-structured interview method to gather data on thirteen (13) PFTs from six commercial fitness centre within the Klang Valley during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were three (3) females and ten (10) males ranging in age from twenty (20) to fifty-two (52) years old. Most of the interviews were conducted in the fitness centres themselves while two interviews were conducted at a cafe nearby. Each interview took around 30 to 45 minutes. Both face-to-face interviews and observations obeyed strict COVID-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs) and were reserved to capture the significance of every interviewee's experience. Data saturation was attained when there was no new experience emerged when analysing the 13th participants' data. Theory-driven data coding was performed using a data analysis tool, QDA Miner. Trustworthiness features and strategies, in particular transparency, methodical and adherence to evidence were systematically established throughout the data collection and data analysis stages. Certified PFTs operate in a multifaceted setting and practise with scientific-based knowledge. Their decisions exemplify a higher level of cognitive skills, analysis and strategies. PFTs have to navigate all the technical know-how to design effective exercise programmes for their clients. Fundamentally, PFTs are strategic planners in exercise programming. They scientifically customised exercise execution to meet individual's goals. This study helps PFTs, fitness educators, and the general public understand the four monumental themes with the lens of Cognitive Continuum Theory (CCT) to make suitable decisions in exercise programming. Such new insight and tool could explicate how qualified PFTs should function to raise the bar to be the trusted exercise and healthy lifestyle advocates besides the health professionals.

Keywords: personal fitness trainers, strategies, decision-making, cognitive continuum