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An Investigation Study About Characteristics of Fitness Centres in Tirana City

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Abstract

Background: Nowadays, physical exercise is recognised as an opportunity to help reduce obesity and chronic disease. Research on physical activity recommendations from fitness instructors is somewhat confusing. Intense exercise has long been advised to be more effective and beneficial. Still, in reality, these training approaches are mostly employed to increase performance with competitive purposes in various fitness or bodybuilding competitions.

Objective: This study aims to investigate the characteristics of fitness centres in Tirana city.

Methodology: The researchers used descriptive survey research in this study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Copies of the questionnaire were sent to 75 gyms in Tirana. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the variables in this study.

Results: The study results show that the gym space has an average area of 610.7 m^2, with the maximum space of the gym 1200 m^2 and the minimum space of 80 m^2. While the gym's average height is 3.45 meters, all gyms have a min. height of 3 meters and a max. height of 5 meters, according to fitness centres with one, two, three and four fitness instructors. The average value of the age of the instructor in fitness gyms of Tirana city is 31.16 years old, ranging from 21 to 52 years. Also, 61.78% of fitness instructors in gyms with a fitness instructor are male, about 97 instructors. Meanwhile, 38.22% of fitness instructors in gyms with a fitness instructor are women, and about 56 instructors are female.

Conclusion: The prevalence of fitness centres in Tirana is mainly by male instructors, which, compared to female instructors, is almost 1.6 times more. This research is useful for fitness

centre managers when designing and managing their activities. In conclusion, there are many fitness centres in Tirana, but it is necessary to have more gyms with a larger area and more fitness instructors for each gym, and the promotion of women should be a priority in the future.

Unique contribution: The study has identified the significant role of fitness centres in creating awareness of the importance of physical activity, its benefits in promoting a healthy lifestyle and reducing chronic illness, and its positive impact on society.

Key Recommendation: Fitness centre services should be extended to general and specific devices and specialized staff to provide users with timely information and opportunities, including all kinds of populations and, in particular, those with limited ability.

Keywords: fitness centres, fitness instructors, gym, questionary form.

Introduction

Research on physical activity (PA) recommendations from fitness instructors is somewhat confusing. It has long been believed that rigorous exercise is the key to increased effectiveness; in reality, these kinds of training are primarily utilised to improve performance for competitive goals in bodybuilding or fitness contests.
In addition, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends more reasonable and healthy exercise regimens that emphasise moderate to intense PA for health benefits. These regimens should involve at least 10-minute segments of moderate to intense PA most days of the week (Sharkey & Gaskill, 2013). Fitness centres are popular places for PA and healthy lifestyles (Sekendiz et al., 2014).

Nowadays, in the health and fitness industry, it is being recognised as an opportunity to help decrease chronic illness and obesity Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA, 2013). As evidence for this statement is people's awareness to become healthier and more physically active. In participant sport and recreation service quality models, the importance of service quality outcomes has frequently been minimised. Encouraging more individuals to engage in PA, such as participating in sports and recreation, has been one way to address this health pandemic (Howat & Assaker, 2016). Government policies are oriented towards the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, and for this reason, the number of fitness centres is continuously increasing. As a result, there is increasing pressure on service providers to maintain a competitive edge by providing highly satisfactory services (Anderson et al., 2004). Regular exercise and physical activity positively impact physical and mental health (Teixeira et al., 2012). While it is well-recognised that regular aerobic exercise is essential for improving a person's cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal health, it also significantly impacts cognitive abilities like memory, information processing speed (IPS), and decision-making (Amaya et al., 2021).
Physical inactivity is still a major global issue even though it has long been recognised as a behaviour that is necessary for important physical and psychological health effects (Penedo & Dahn, 2005); (Cavill et al., 2006). Many people have competing demands on their time from their jobs, families, and schooling, which may be at the expense of time and resources that could be used for regular exercise. Some people may not feel physically competent enough to exercise,

believing they are either not skilled or fit enough, or they may have health issues that prevent them from exercising (Korkiakangas et al., 2009).

It is well-recognized that regular exercise lowers the risk of obesity, anxiety, depression and heart disease. (Haskell et al., 2007). Engaging in PA is crucial for achieving favourable health outcomes, particularly for those at risk of cardiovascular disease. Most studies on the topic were conducted in high-income nations, where activity patterns differ from those in low- and middle-income countries. Nevertheless, very few have examined the factors linked to physical inactivity in men and women (Azevedo et al., 2007). The health benefits of PA are supported by research evidence, and current PA guidelines recommend a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activities or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activities PA per week, or some combination with equivalent energy expenditure to achieve such health benefits (Poggio et al., 2016). The ACSM states that when an individual's heart rate hits 40–59% or 64–76% of their age-predicted maximum heart rate (220–age), they are ready for moderate-intensity aerobic exercise (ACSM, 2018).

A thorough understanding of the relationship between occupational categories, PA, and health risk levels is crucial for developing initiatives that encourage exercising, which in turn requires measuring occupational physical activity. It is well-accepted that the best way to address public health issues is to put evidence-based treatments into practice that are successful and effective in enhancing individual and population health (Armstrong et al., 2013; Faggiano et al., 2014). With obesity and overweight becoming a serious and widespread health concern, it is crucial to take the development of programs aimed at preventing these conditions into account (Have et al., 2013). The primary care sector plays a vital role in preventing sickness and promoting good health along the health care continuum. Policies and programs that support preventative health action can be developed and implemented by government sectors other than health, such as education, sport and recreation (Wutzke et al., 2018). Fitness facilities must comprehend the elements that affect patron loyalty (García-Fernández et al., 2014). If pleased with all the amenities, contented clients will speak well of the service (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Brady et al., 2005). Service quality includes the fitness centres' environment and the fitness instructors' service. A study has established a correlation between customer satisfaction and service quality (Brady &Cronin, 2001). The desire for higher-quality services in fitness centres has grown along with the propensity for PA. This study investigates the characteristics and prevalence of fitness centres in Tirana city.

Materials and Methods

Design of the study

This quantitative approach to descriptive study uses descriptive characteristics of gyms, averages, prevalence, and trends. At the same time, it could gather a sample of fitness centres and the number of instructors employed there. Quantitative research gains a detailed understanding of specific context measures of these gyms classified into four different kinds and instructors' variables. It describes them in average, standard deviations, minimal and maximal values, and frequencies. Designing this research study is reliable and valid for producing findings that have an impact and are important for the investigation purposes of fitness centres.

Population

The population of this study includes four different types of fitness centres, in which 1-4 instructors are employed, according to their characteristics related to the height and space of the gyms. In total, 75 fitness gyms are part of this study, and 157 instructors are employed in them.

Sample size

The sample size is related to one of these four kinds of gyms, with one, two, three, or four instructors, respectively. Based on the gym's sample size, its dimensional characteristics and instructor data are further analysed.

Instrument for data collection

A questionnaire method was used to assess the characteristics and the prevalence of fitness centres. In cooperation with ASSA (Albanian Sports Science Association), the questionnaire forms were delivered to the managers of seventy-five fitness centres in Tirana. Part of the questionnaire was questions about the space and height of the gym in fitness centres with one, two, three and four fitness instructors. They were also asked about the age of the instructors for fitness centres with one, two, three, and four fitness instructors and the number of female instructors and male instructors. The study received ethical approval with protocol no. 2465-1, from the Ethical Committee of the University of Sports of Tirana. The approval for the questionnaire form was obtained from the managers of each fitness centre gym.

Reliability

Internal consistency reliability refers to the degree to which the questions in a questionnaire measure the same fitness gym parameters and instructor's data, such as age and gender. This type of reliability is important in this study, where the use of questions has to assess the characteristics of fitness gyms and their prevalence, and the research results are consistent and stable over time across the descriptive methods.

Validity

External validity refers to the extent to which the results of this study may be applied to other fitness centres. It ensures that a study's findings are applicable to more than just the particular fitness facilities and the people who work there. Statistical validity is related to the precision of the statistical data analysis, and it provides confidence that the conclusions drawn from the data are reliable and accurate and that the research study measures what it claims to measure without being affected by extraneous factors or bias. In reality, all fitness centres that are subject to this study function in approximately the same conditions, humidity, and temperature between 18-25°, so the impact of external factors is not taken into consideration.

Method of data analysis

The statistical analysis of the study's data was conducted using SPSS version 26. The mean, SD, minimum, maximum, and gym height were determined using descriptive statistics. The percentage and frequency were also employed to determine the participation of men and women as gym teachers. Furthermore, the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum gym height, and gym space were determined using descriptive statistics for fitness facilities with one, two, three, and four fitness instructors.

Results

Table 1 shows the height and space of the gyms in Tirana, along with their lowest, maximum, average, and standard deviation (SD) values.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of fitness gyms parameters.

Gym Parameters Total gym (N = 75)	Min. Value	Max. value	Mean value	SD
gym height (m)	2.5	5	3.45	0.52
gym space (m^2)	80.0	1200.0	610.7	258.2

The minimum and maximum gym heights as well as the gym space in Tirana are displayed in Table 1. Seventy-five fitness centres in Tirana are included in the study. The minimum height of the gym is 2.5 m while the maximum height of the gym is 5 m. The average height of the gym is shown at 3.345 m (SD = 0.52 m). The gym space has an average area of 610.7 m^2 (SD= 258.2 m^2). The maximum space of the gym is 1200 m^2 while the minimum space of the gym is 80 m^2.
Table 2 shows the minimum and maximum gym height and space, along with the mean and standard deviation, according to fitness centres with one, two, three and four fitness instructors.

Table 2. Kind of Fitness gyms and their parameters.

Kind of gym Total gym (N = 75)	Parameter	Min. value	Max. value	Mean value	SD
Gym 1 (N=24)	gym height (m)	2.5	4.0	3.20	0.41
1 Fitness Instructor	gym space (m^2)	80	200	167.4	36.7
Gym 2 (N=28)	gym height (m)	2.5	4.0	3.20	0.41
2 Fitness Instructors	gym space (m^2)	201	400	346.8	73.2
Gym 3 (N=15)	gym height (m)	3.0	5.0	3.74	0.59
3 Fitness Instructors	gym space (m^2)	401	800	546.3	148.3
Gym 4 (N=8)	gym height (m)	3.0	5.0	3.74	0.59
4 Fitness Instructors	gym space (m^2)	801	1200	715.0	234.0

According to the table above, the number of fitness centres with a fitness instructor is 24 gyms. The minimum height of the gym and the space of the gym with one instructor is 2.5 m and 80 m^2, while the maximum is 4 m and 200 m^2. The average gym space with a fitness instructor is 167.4 m^2. Meanwhile, the average height of a gym with a fitness instructor is 3.2m (SD = 0.41).

Twenty-eight is the number of fitness centres with two fitness instructors, with an average value of 346m^2 of space with a value of (SD = 73.2). The minimum value of space is 201 m^{2,} and the maximum is 400 m^2. Regarding the height of the gym with two fitness instructors, the mean is 3.2 m (SD = 0.41), which is practically the same as those centres with a fitness instructor. The minimum and maximum values for the height of the gym with two fitness instructors are 3 m and 4 m, respectively. The gym space with three fitness instructors has an average area of 546.3 m^2 (SD =148.3). The maximum space of the gym with three fitness instructors is 800 m^2, while the minimum is 401 m^2. Fifteenth fitness centres in Tirana have three fitness instructors. The height of the gym with three fitness instructors has a mean of 3.74 m (SD = 0.59). The minimum and maximum for this variable are 3 m and 5 m, respectively. The average space of the gym with four fitness instructors is 715 m^2 (SD = 234), with a minimum of 801 m^2 and a maximum of 1200 m^2. The study encompasses eight fitness centres with four fitness instructors, with an average height of 3.74 m (SD = 0.59) and a minimum and maximum height of 3 and 5 m, respectively. Table 3 shows the mean, SD, maximum and minimum age of instructors in fitness centres with one, two, three, and four fitness instructors.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on the age of fitness gym instructors.

Age of fitness gym instructors Total gym (N = 75)	Number of subjects (n)	Min. value Age (years)	Max. value Age (years)	Mean value Age (years)	SD Age (years)
Gym 1 (N=28) 1 Fitness Instructor	28	22.0	46.0	35.62	8.53
Gym 2 (N=24) 2 Fitness Instructors	48	21.0	52.0	32.41	7.46
Gym 3 (N=15) 3 Fitness Instructors	45	21.0	39.0	27.67	5.27
Gym 4 (N=8) 4 Fitness Instructors	32	23.0	48.0	34.22	9.34

With one, two, three, or four fitness instructors per fitness centre, Table 3 displays the mean and standard deviation and the instructors' lowest and maximum ages. The mean value of age instructors in gyms with a fitness instructor is 35.62 years (SD = 8.53), while the minimum and maximum are 22 years and 46 years. The minimum and maximum ages of instructors in gyms with two fitness instructors are 21 and 52 years, while the mean is 32.41 years (SD = 7.46). With a minimum of 21 years old and a maximum of 39 years old, the mean age of the gym instructor among the three fitness instructors is 27.67 years (SD = 5.27). The mean age of instructors in fitness centres with four fitness instructors is 34.22 years (SD 9.34 years), while the minimum and maximum are 23 and 48 years. Table 4 shows the percentage and frequency of male and female instructors in fitness centres with different numbers of instructors.

Table 4. The number and percentages of fitness gym instructors are determined by gender.

Kind of fitness gym	Number of female subjects (n)	Number of male subjects (n)	Number of subjects (n)	Percentage of subjects
Gym 1 (N=24) **1 Fitness Instructor**	16	8	24	15.3 %
Gym 2 (N=28) **2 Fitness Instructors**	32	24	56	35.7 %
Gym 3 (N=15) **3 Fitness Instructors**	29	16	45	28.6 %
Gym 4 (N=8) **4 Fitness Instructors**	20	12	32	20.4 %
Total gym (N = 75)	97 (61.78 %)	60 (38.22 %)	157	100 %
Total subjects (n)	157			

Discussion

The results of this study showed that 66.67% of fitness instructors in gyms with a fitness instructor are male about 16 instructors. On the other hand, 33.33 % of fitness instructors in gyms with a fitness instructor are women, about eight instructors. In gyms with two fitness instructors, the frequency and percentage of women is 42.86%, around 20 instructors, while the percentage and frequency of men is 57.14%, around 32 instructors. The percentage of women in gyms with three fitness instructors is 35.56 %, while that of men is 64.44%. The frequency of women in gyms with three fitness instructors is 16 subjects, and the value of 29 subjects is for men. 37.5 % is the percentage of women who work as instructors in a gym with four instructors, and 62.5 % value is for men. The frequency for men and women in gyms with four fitness instructors is twenty male and twelve female instructors. From the total number of fitness instructors, it can be seen that 97 of them are male and 56 female subjects. Comparing the genders of the fitness instructors participating in the gym, it can be concluded that 61.78% belong to the male category and 38.22 % to the female category, so male participants are almost 1.6 times more than female participants. This tendency is seen in another study, which has concluded that intervention encouraging PA should consider gender-specific characteristics because men and women differ in their levels of PA, and the variables linked with activity levels are not constant across genders. Policymakers will use the data to support and create measures to raise the population's activity level during leisure time (Azevedo et al., 2007). The results of this study are also confirmed by a similar study, which has reported that a considerable number of gyms employ more than one instructor, gyms with one instructor and up to four employed instructors (Kukeli & Spahi, 2023).

The results are in line with another study's efforts to recognise the patterns of PA activity in many domains related to cardiovascular disease risk factors (Poggio et al., 2016).

Various factors influence exercise participation, affect being one of them. Research has shown that PA has been associated with a decreased risk of depression, stress, and anxiety and improvement in mood and emotions (Kyral et al., 2019).

A study has reported that determining the factors influencing occupational variability in recreational physical activity will help us better understand the reasons behind the variations in health risk profiles among population subgroups and aid in the creation of health promotion programs aimed at lowering rates of inactivity and health diseases (Burton & Turrell, 2000).

In order to understand the relationships between occupational categories, physical activity, and elevated levels of health risk and to develop strategies for promoting physical activity, it may be necessary to assess both household and occupational levels of activity in addition to leisure-time activity (Salmon et al., 2000). Given the abundance of information available online and elsewhere, there is always competition between the use of research evidence and other forms of evidence, and research evidence appears to be the only kind of evidence considered when making decisions about public policy (Hämäläinen et al., 2015).

Research findings indicate that examining the consistency among assessors might identify potential areas for enhancement or modification of the assessment criteria, thereby improving the quality of the assessment tool (Vinko & Radoš, 2024), which is very important regarding fitness centres. In order to improve comparability and generalizability, future research should have larger sample sizes with equal subjects in each group. The results of this study are also in line with another study that found statistical analysis was unable to explain the non-uniformity of sample sizes (Amaya et al., 2021). Interventions that have demonstrated positive results in enhancing health in real-world contexts are referred to as best practices in public health, and standardisation will increase the validity and utility of practice-based evidence compared to research-based evidence supporting healthy lives (Ng & de Colombani, 2015). According to the study's findings, encouraging women to engage in physical exercise and having more female members at fitness centres are crucial and should be top priorities going forward.

Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the characteristics and prevalence of Tirana fitness centres. Our study's findings indicate that the average age of fitness gym instructors in Tirana is 31.16 years old, with minimum and maximum ages of 21 and 52 years old, respectively. 61.78% of fitness instructors in gyms with a fitness instructor are male, about 97 instructors. Meanwhile, 38.22% of fitness instructors in gyms with a fitness instructor are women, and about 56 instructors are female. Professionals in the management of fitness centres should consider this study, as it highlights the prevalence of fitness centres in Tirana, mainly by male instructors, which, compared to female instructors, is almost 1.6 times more. Future research could also include more cities and countries under study and more questions so they can do multi-group analyses. The framework presented in this research is helpful for fitness centre managers when designing and managing their activities. In conclusion, there are many fitness centres in Tirana. However, having more gyms with a larger area and more fitness instructors for each gym is necessary. Promoting women instructors should be a priority in the future.

Study limitations

There are some limitations which need to be validated for future research. These limitations include the size of the sample used, so it is necessary to involve a wider sample size, including more fitness centre subjects of different characteristics and employed subjects, in order to see the results over a longer period and to reduce comparisons between them. Another limitation of this

study is to include more cities in Albania to give more accuracy and reliability in the result and conclusion.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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