

The Processes of Self-Monitoring and Self-Discipline Instilled in the Body of Fitness Clubs' Members through Sport Sciences Knowledge and Practices.

กระบวนการในการสอดส่องและควบคุมกำกับร่างกายด้วยองค์ความรู้ และปฏิบัติการทางวิทยาศาสตร์การกีฬาที่เกิดขึ้นกับสมาชิกในฟิตเนสคลับ

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The objective of this study was to clarify the refined processes of self-monitoring and self-discipline instilled in the body of fitness clubs' members through sport sciences knowledge and practices. Three fitness clubs in Bangkok suburb were purposively selected. Participant observation technique and informal interview with some members were used to acquire and interpret processes of self-monitoring and self-discipline gradually absorbed and reinforced in each member's body within the fitness clubs.

Results showed that even though the three clubs offered different ambiance and facilities, practices and activities relating to process of body monitoring and discipline were mostly similar. First, sport sciences knowledge regarding physical fitness, body fat, and ideal body figure were introduced. Then, the standard fit test, the right means to assess and categorize each member's physical fitness was offered. In order to achieve the fit body shape and physical fitness, personal guidelines for routine cardiovascular workout and strength training programs were first set and encouraged by fitness trainers. Ultimately, with the help of all indicators vividly presenting on the monitor of each and every exercise device, self-monitoring, self-discipline, and self-evaluating practices of each member were effectively reproduced and intensified. While each client reckoned that they was "the great actor" who had absolute potential to control his/her body and achieve the fit and firm body shape by monitoring and disciplining his/her own workout performance strictly and continuously, they were involuntarily transformed into an object of sport sciences knowledge, emphasizing on physical fitness, fit and firm body shape, and rigorous body discipline practices.

Keywords: Body surveillance, body discipline, fitness clubs, sport sciences

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มนทยา สุหนันทิวพันธ์, ลือชัย ศรีเงินยวง, อภิญญา เฟื่องฟูสกุล, พิมพวัลย์ บุญมงคล. กระบวนการในการสอดส่องและควบคุมกำกับร่างกายด้วยองค์ความรู้และปฏิบัติการทางวิทยาศาสตร์การกีฬาที่เกิดขึ้นกับสมาชิกในฟิตเนสคลับ วารสารเภสัชกรรมโรงพยาบาล 2553; 20(1):55-64.

งานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่ออธิบายรายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับกระบวนการในการสอดส่องและควบคุมกำกับร่างกายอันแยบยลที่เกิดขึ้นกับสมาชิกที่เข้ามาใช้บริการในฟิตเนสคลับ โดยอาศัยองค์ความรู้ทางวิทยาศาสตร์การกีฬาและการปฏิบัติเป็นหลักสำคัญ ผู้วิจัยเลือกฟิตเนสคลับอย่างเฉพาะเจาะจง 3 แห่งในเขตปริมณฑลของกรุงเทพมหานคร การศึกษานี้ ใช้เทคนิคการสังเกตอย่างมีส่วนร่วมของผู้วิจัยและการสัมภาษณ์สมาชิกของฟิตเนสคลับแบบไม่เป็นทางการ เพื่อเข้าถึงและตีความกระบวนการสอดส่องและการควบคุมจัดระเบียบร่างกายด้วยตนเองของบรรดาสมาชิกที่ค่อยๆ ได้รับการหล่อหลอมและตอกย้ำภายในฟิตเนสคลับ

ผลการศึกษาแสดงว่า แม้ว่าคลับทั้ง 3 แห่งจะนำเสนอบรรยากาศ บริการ และสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกในระดับที่ต่างกัน แต่การนำเสนอวัตรปฏิบัติและกิจกรรมต่างๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับกระบวนการสอดส่องและควบคุมกำกับร่างกายของบรรดาสมาชิกเป็นไปในลักษณะเดียวกัน เริ่มตั้งแต่การให้ความรู้ทางวิทยาศาสตร์การกีฬาที่เกี่ยวข้องกับสมรรถภาพทางกายและเรื่อในร่างกายในอุดมคติ ตามด้วยการทดสอบสมรรถภาพความฟิตทางกายให้กับสมาชิกแต่ละราย และครูฝึกจะจัดโปรแกรมออกกำลังกายและเสริมสร้างความแข็งแรงของกล้ามเนื้อให้กับสมาชิกแต่ละคน พร้อมโน้มน้าวและกระตุ้นให้สมาชิกออกกำลังกายอย่างสม่ำเสมอ เพื่อให้บรรลุซึ่งสมรรถภาพทางกายและเรื่อในร่างกายที่ฟิตและกระชับอันพึงปรารถนา กระบวนการสำคัญคือ ตัวเลขที่ปรากฏอย่างเด่นชัดบนหน้าจอเครื่องออกกำลังกายทุกประเภท จะทำหน้าที่เป็นตัวกระตุ้นและตอกย้ำให้สมาชิกเข้มงวดกับกระบวนการสอดส่อง ควบคุมกำกับและประเมิน ผลร่างกายและการออกกำลังกายด้วยตนเองเป็นไปอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ ดังนั้น ขณะที่สมาชิกประเมินว่าตนเองมีอำนาจเบ็ดเสร็จเด็ดขาด ในการควบคุมจัดการร่างกายด้วยการพยายามเฝ้าสอดส่องร่างกายพร้อมไปกับการพยายามควบคุมกำกับกิจกรรมการออกกำลังกายอย่างเข้มงวดและต่อเนื่อง เพื่อบรรลุซึ่งเรื่อร่างกายที่กระชับสมส่วนตามความปรารถนา ทว่าในความเป็นจริงสมาชิกเหล่านั้น กำลังถูกแปรสภาพเป็นวัตถุที่รองรับองค์ความรู้ทางวิทยาศาสตร์การกีฬา ที่เน้นย้ำให้ความสำคัญกับสมรรถภาพทางกายเรื่อร่างกายฟิตและกระชับสมส่วน และการจัดระเบียบร่างกายอย่างเข้มข้นโดยไม่รู้ตัว

คำสำคัญ: การเฝ้าสอดส่องร่างกาย การควบคุมกำกับร่างกาย ฟิตเนสคลับ วิทยาศาสตร์การกีฬา

Introduction

Since 1980's businesses providing fitness services in the United States and Japan have achieved tremendous success.¹ In Japan, the number of fitness clubs increased more than six times in a twelve-year period, from 246

in 1980 to 1,564 in 1992. Despite economic recession in early 1990's, almost 1,800 clubs in Japan were in operation today. In the United Kingdom (UK), during the last 10 years, the well-known fitness chain (*Fitness First*) has witnessed the phenomenon boom and become

the largest fitness club operator in Europe, with 166 clubs in UK alone.² Furthermore, since 2000's its branches have been expanded to Asia (including Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand). It has over 1.2 million members and over 450 clubs worldwide, 50 of these in Asia.

Despite the great economic recession in 1997, the ambience of fitness boom in Thailand has been vividly observed, particularly the renowned fitness chains such as *Californiawow Xperience*³ and *Fitness First*.² Within the only two-year period of 2004-2005, number of members enrolling at *Californiawow Xperience* fitness club have almost doubled from 33,917 to 61,000. Nowadays famous fitness clubs providing all-inclusive facilities are not observed only in downtown Bangkok, along the main roads of renowned business centers, but also in famous shopping malls and office buildings of the suburb area. In addition, small fitness places offering modest services are sporadically found along the minor roads, in the alleys, or in the communities to serve members' increasing demand.

Throughout the last 15 years, information, knowledge and practices around the word "fitness" within the "Fitness Ambiance" have dramatically changed. Definition and significance of fitness was substantially transformed by the cooperation of many health experts (e.g. physicians, physical therapist, nutritionist, and sport sciences personnel)

focusing on appropriate aerobic exercise and strength training schedules.⁴ On the other hand, a glut of knowledge from researches in health and medical sciences have successfully created the negative image of obesity as the crucial factor that potentially generates a variety of serious complications, such as cirrhosis, osteoarthritis, diabetes mellitus, sleep apnea, even colon cancer.^{4,5} Until now, this knowledge regarding physical fitness vs. obesity has been rapidly and widely recognized by almost all people as the new truth about fitness and fatness.

Even though various means to lose body weight and slim up body figure offered by numerous institutions have been proposed, health professionals generally recommended that the proper means to attain the fit and firm body shape is aerobic exercise, the effective way to burn and remove extra body fat out of individual's body. Knowledge and practices about aerobic exercise and strength training performance have not emerged in the vacuum but have been gradually infused through sport sciences, the new knowledge imported from the United States to Thailand since 1993. It emphasizes on applying various concepts of scientific-based knowledge to explain all aspects of physical activity rationally. Significance of this knowledge is that it offers not only the systematic methods to assess individual's physical fitness but also the efficient means and techniques to enhance physical fitness and achieve the fit body shape and firm body parts.⁶

With knowledge of aerobic exercise and its influence on fitness and firm body shape from the last ten years, most contemporary Thai females have been persuaded into believing that the fit and firm body is one type of ideal body shape, and aerobic exercise is the effective way to lose weight and reach the fit body. Several people are inclined to increasingly choose cardiovascular training and strength training activities in the fitness clubs as one of their first choice to lose weight and achieve the fit and firm body. However, the refined and comprehensive strategies of sport sciences used to encourage members to follow the aerobic workout schedule, to continue the weight training activities, and to continually monitor and record their performance in the fitness clubs have never been clarified.

Objectives

To clarify the refined and comprehensive processes of self-monitoring and self-discipline instilled in the body of clubs' members after receiving and embodying sport sciences knowledge and practices within the fitness clubs.

Method

A qualitative research method, participation observation and informal interview, was used. For study sites, three fitness clubs in Bangkok suburb were purposively selected (after searching for information from the internet, calling the fitness clubs and asking

for more information from my friends). Each club offers different services in different environments.

The study was started around October 2004. Within in each club, I spent approximately three months on observing, familiarizing, and participating in different fitness environs, several cardiovascular and strength training instruments, and various fitness sessions. I utilized the participation observation technique as "*one of the fitness members*" in order to acquire and collect information regarding sport sciences knowledge and practices; including complying to a package of "standard fit test" encouraged by fitness trainer to assess my physical fitness condition, receiving the personal guidelines and recommendations from the trainer to achieve the standard physical fitness and fit body shape, observing various kinds of performance from the trainers and other members, and participating in cardiovascular and strength training activities like other fitness members. I used "*my boy and myself*" as one of the key informants to observe, understand, and experience various refined strategies employed by the fitness clubs. In addition, I, together with my body, absorbed and embodied the process of body surveillance and body discipline within each particular fitness club.

Since the environment with the clubs are very private, in-depth interview is not an appropriate technique to gather information

from the trainers and other clubs' member, therefore, informal interview was used instead. The interview was done after they finished their workout and had more relaxing time in the changing room, the sauna and the steam room. For trainers, I asked about specific knowledge and professional skills of sport science, and their career expectation, but for clubs' members, I asked about fitness performance, feelings, and their responses after witnessing the real life of fitness clubs. Most important, all kinds of manners and activities from instructors and members within the fitness clubs were recorded and gradually interpreted after arriving home, for examples, instructor's manners and tone encouraging each member to present their workout performances on the board, or some member's concerns about her perceived gigantic thighs. Ultimately, my daily exercise performance and my feelings while gradually absorbing and experiencing fitness life regarding fitness activities facilities and services were recorded and interpreted almost everyday.

Results and Discussions

1. Sport Sciences, Physical Fitness, and the Trainers. When approaching the reception counter of fitness clubs, it was the responsibility of the fitness trainers to introduce the entire ambiance of the club to members. Even though the three clubs offered different environs and facilities, the main theme

of aerobic exercise and strength training practices, such as various cardiovascular training instruments, strength training and freeweight training zone, and aerobics room, can be observed. Then, each member was encouraged to join the "*standard fit test*" deriving from sport sciences knowledge in order to evaluate his/her physical fitness, starting with a treadmill walk for at least 20 minutes under the detailed guidance and periodical surveillance of fitness trainers in order to assess individual's cardio-respiratory endurance (the capacity of the heart, blood vessels, and lungs to deliver oxygen and essential nutrients to the working muscles and to eliminate the waste products during vigorous activity). Before pacing, tips for effectively controlling member's paces were recommended. After finishing the test, clients were advised to step down the machine carefully in order not to feel the sense of inertia like still walking on a treadmill. Afterwards, each client's body strength, body fat, flexibility, lung capacity and agility were tested with specific equipments. Objectives of fitness evaluation process were clarified by the trainers. Individual's body shape and physical fitness was then categorized, ranked and reported to each member.

Then, several issues concerning sport sciences knowledge,⁵ particularly appropriate body fat proportion, detailed information about main muscles, efficient duration of performing

and continuing aerobic exercise, significance and advantages of aerobic exercise, and strength training program were gradually and vividly presented in order to induce all members to perform routine workout. A qualified and appropriate program guide to improve physical fitness of a particular client was developed and proposed clearly and systematically by the trainers. Within each program guide, the trainer utilized various fields of knowledge in sports sciences to recommend the proper conducts of consumption and exercise for a particular customer. For example, he used nutrition sciences to recommend the appropriate type and quantity of nutrients and employed knowledge in physiology to select the effective and safe cardiovascular training and weight training equipment to enhance a particular member's body shape.

Since almost all cardiovascular and strength training instruments were quite complicated to do, it was the main responsibility of the trainers to demonstrate "*the right technique*" in using these equipments effectively, properly, and safely and to explain every step of how to operate the equipment gradually. For examples, the safe breathing rhythm while "*lifting*" and "*resuming*" weight, the proper mode of exercise according to each member's preference and fitness condition, and the right tactics to increase workout intensity without experiencing any kind of injuries and jarring effects. These trainers were usually found within the gym area in order to constantly

monitor the manners of new members and to help them adjust the right position and perform the right technique of sport sciences practices during their exercising activities. Although members were accustomed to workout practices, the trainers were usually in the gym in order to encourage their customers to continue their exercising guidelines, self-monitor their performances and specific body parts, and self-report their calorie-burned outcomes regularly in order to compare to their expectations.

2. Self-Monitoring and Self-Discipline Practices. Within the cardiovascular zone in the club, process of body monitoring and body discipline began when the member first stepped on the exercising machine. All members were gradually and regularly taught by their trainers of how to press the button systematically, how to pace correctly and safely, how to swing their arms and balance their steps, how to self-observe their workout performances on the monitor, how to increase speed and intensity of cardiovascular instruments in order to burn fat effectively, even how to end their exercises smoothly. Furthermore, the monitor of each cardiovascular instrument that graphically showed all efforts and outcomes of the individual acted as an efficient tool in encouraging fitness members to constantly calculate and compare their efforts invested and their fitness outcomes achieved. As a result, in order to attain many more calorie-burned outcomes, exercisers were

persuaded to increase their workout speed and intensity actively and automatically. Ultimately, each walking pace, each cycling manner, and each movement and skill was steadily learned, adjusted and reproduced through individuals' bodies to form the appropriate movement of cardiovascular routines. For the veteran members, despite the absence of the trainers, the processes of calculability, constant self-surveillance, and selfdiscipline were observed and reinforced throughout exercising.

Furthermore, the table illustrating cardiovascular performance after finishing the workout can reinforce individuals to calculate and monitor their cardiovascular workout performances constantly and effectively. Not only did these data illustrate workout efforts and calorie-burned outcomes of each member vividly, they also portrayed individual's fitness potential and comparison of his/her improved fitness capacity with others. Once the record of cardiovascular performance was presented, the exerciser was persuaded to continue their workout activities and try to maintain or enhance his/her performance continuously and enthusiastically. Even though I did not respond to the instructor's persuasion nor did present my burning calorie and exercise duration on the board, her suggestion encouraged me to focus on each of my cardio-performance and regularly record my daily workout in my calendar as a routine. After continuing record my workout again and again, the process of regular self-monitoring, self-management in

exercising and exercise recording was absorbed and reproduced automatically.

Moreover, the process of self-surveillance in workout performance was also found in those who were exercising beside us. I usually noticed that many clients tended to glance at the monitor of other members in order to compare his/her performance with others. Some were inclined to look around to observe the exercising ambiance within the cardiovascular zone. If perceiving that someone worked harder and more rigorously, or the exercising atmosphere was so fervent, many clients tried to increase their paces in order to catch up the enthusiastic steps. I had to admit that I was the one who attempted to follow the brisk steps of others whenever observing that they could exercise energetically and burned many more calories than me.

In the strength training zone, processes of strict body surveillance, body discipline and body adjustment were obviously observed. Since weight training practice focused on positioning each part of the body of the individual precisely in order to lift weights safely and effectively, members were slowly taught by the trainers of how to safely adjust their body on the bench, how to lift weight and resume weight correctly and smoothly in order to prevent muscle or joint injury, and how to breathe correctly while lifting weight and resuming weight. Then, each part of the body was gradually adjusted, each breath was slowly learned, and each posture was absorbed,

trained and rectified again and again through their bodies to form the safe, correct, and effective movement of strength training practices. For most female members who were so concerned about their abdomens and thighs but had little basic knowledge about sports sciences and its complicated practices, they were easily convinced by the trainers' guidance to follow all steps of strength training activities and practices strictly and continuously in order to make her abdomens and thighs fit and firm. On the contrary, for male clients who focused on their shoulders, chests, and abdominal muscles, and had enough basic knowledge about complicated strength and free-weight training practices, they were usually found discussing with the trainers about the fast and effective techniques to achieve their desirable muscle bundles.

Detailed instructions in strength training practices attached to training stations were another effective tool in clarifying the proper positions and movements to each fitness member in order to strengthen each particular muscle bundle safely and efficiently. In addition, both male and female fitness magazines informing all tips about free weight training performance were provided within these zones of the fitness clubs. If the member followed these instructions step by step or discussed about the efficient tactics to enhance his/her muscle forms and strength with their instructors, his/her particular muscle bundles and capacity would be effectively trained, and

the processes of self-monitoring, self-adjustment, and self-discipline were emphasized, embodied and reproduced gradually and automatically.

In short, there were various informations and channels to achieve physical fitness as well as the fit and firm body shape within the fitness clubs, ranging from precisely memorizing trainers' demonstration to gradually learning from all tips offered in fitness magazines. The more enthusiastically individuals joined various kinds of aerobic exercise and strength training programs, the more their bodies, their postures, their movements, and their exercising performances were intensively monitored, adjusted, and disciplined. Therefore, each member was completely transformed into "*the object*" of sport sciences knowledge through its intricate practices of cardiovascular and strength training exercise.

3. Significance of Trainers. Since skills for operating most of the exercise instruments in the fitness club are complexed and refined; it cannot be learned and absorbed within 1-2 weeks. New-comers would feel safer and more confident if their trainers spend most of their time in explaining the purpose of "*personal program*", giving various tips to control each weight training station smoothly and safely, closely monitoring each member's performance and improvement, and actively encourage their customers to follow their programs.

In order to maintain the ambiance of

privacy and concentration, after the first introduction and demonstration, most trainers were predisposed to play the role of “*the observer*” standing nearby but ready for members’ requests. With the manner like this, many clients interpreted that they were left alone without any signs of assistance from any trainer. Many felt disappointed and frustrated because they thought that the trainers did not give enough informations and recommendations about the safe and effective tactics to perform weight training practices. Furthermore, the trainers were inclined to substantially reduce their guidances and monitoring activities for new members within a short period. Since all detailed techniques and tips for safe and effective outcomes of both cardio and strength training programs were not gradually and regularly monitored and rectified by trainers, several clients had little confidence to perform, continue, and adjust their cardiovascular and strength training practices. As a result, strength training techniques of some fitness members were not achieved, and processes of self-surveillance, self-adjustment, and self-discipline in exercising activities in fitness clubs cannot be completely absorbed and reproduced.

Members’ responses to the indifferent manner of the fitness trainers varied. I noticed that several clients chose to seek guidances and recommendations from their friends or other members who had more knowledge, experiences, and skills in sport sciences. Some tried to look for detailed instructions about

weight training practices in fitness magazines and tapes. However, many clients admitted that though they changed the fitness club, most trainers’ manners were alike, hence, all they could do was to “tolerate”. I noticed that after failing to perform weight training practices by themselves, some quit and move out to other instruments that was much easier to operate while others tried to approach the nice trainers and asked for their help. Some were so frustrated with this kind of manner that they chose to be in aerobics class instead because they felt that they could communicate with the trainers and other participants and had more power to request guidances from the trainers. In conclusion, though members’ responses to trainers’ substandard manners were different, they all mentioned the perception of powerless to negotiate or request for full attention and caring that were presented in the form of continuous recommendations and demonstrations, particularly when they were in the initial period of cardiovascular and strength training practices. Hence, all processes regarding self-surveillance and self-discipline in their bodies and workout performances were not completely accomplished.

Conclusion

After discussing various topics and observing workout performances of several members, as well as experiencing the real life of fitness member by myself in three fitness clubs, the detailed processes self-monitoring,

self-discipline that were encouraged, absorbed and reinforced by sport science-based knowledge and practices in the members' body were clarified.

After enrolling in the clubs, the clients were persuaded by their trainers that aerobics and strength training activities, derived from sport sciences knowledge and practices, were the effective way to attain the desirable physical fitness of fit and firm bodies. They were then encouraged by their trainers to do regular cardiovascular and strength training practices. In doing so, they had to follow the trainers' guidances and familiarize with the instruments, all digital indicators shown on the monitor; and with all the regular exercise, the calculability in quantifying the calorie-burned outcomes after finishing energetic cardiovascular training activities was steadily reinforced.

To achieve the fit body shape and firm body parts, prolonged and continuous exercises were encouraged. The more the members performed their cardiovascular and

strength training practices energetically and enthusiastically, the more their body parts, their postures, their movements, and their performances were arranged, monitored, and adjusted automatically. Ultimately, refined processes of self-monitoring and self-disciplining practices in each member's body and workout performance were fully absorbed and reinforced, and each and every member was fully transformed into the object of sport sciences knowledge and its elaborate strategies.

However, the help of the trainers is a key factor in achieving this. To maintain privacy in the clubs, several trainers were inclined to stand far behind but ready for each client's request. Many newcomers felt that they were left alone and reluctant to seek guidances, had little confidence in their routine exercises which resulting in their inability to fulfill their routines. Thus, refined processes of self-surveillance and self-discipline in workout practice were not completely absorbed and accomplished.

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