

2020

Perceived Benefits and Barriers of Static Stretching in Exercisers

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Introduction

Stretching is an important exercise and therapeutic modality that has potential to promote physical and psychological well-being. Performing stretching maneuvers after activity has been shown to improve range of motion, stimulate circulation, and lengthen muscles.¹ However, recent evidence suggests that intention does not always adequately predict behavior in the exercise realm; referred to as the “intention-behavior gap”.^{2,3} The purpose of the current study was to use address how the perception of post-workout stretching affects engagement in stretch training.

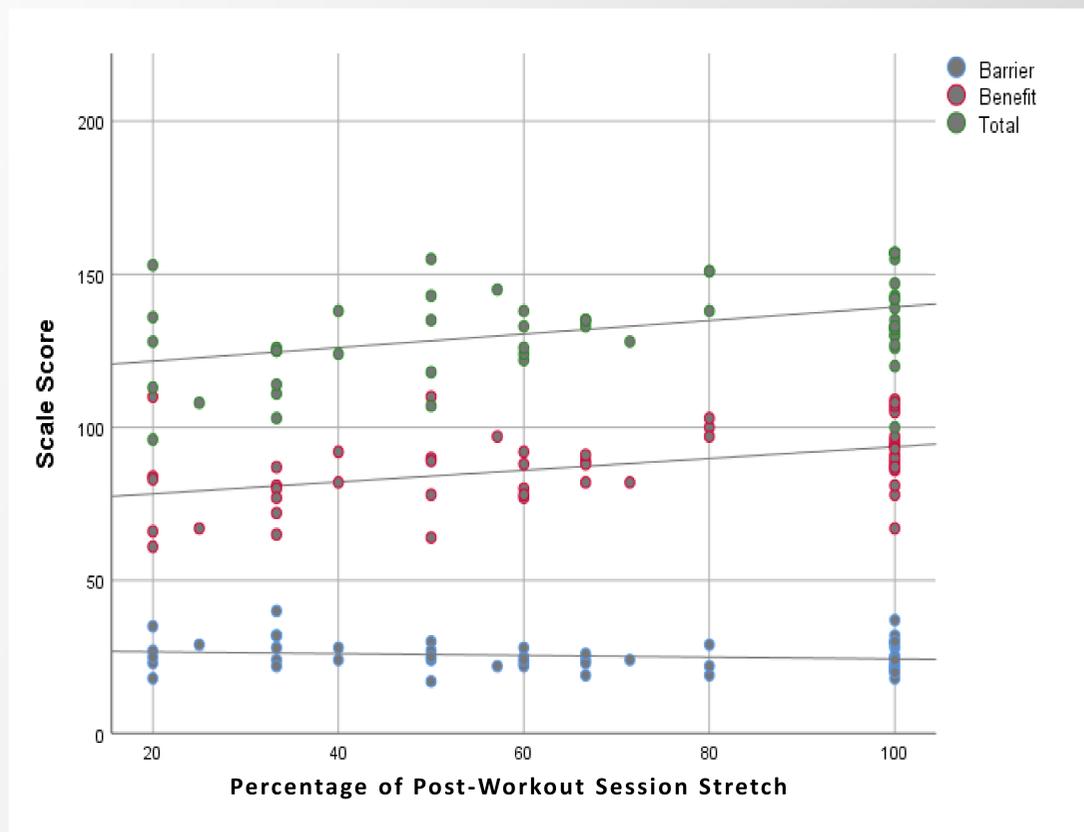


Figure 1. Simple scatter plot analysis between stretch percentage and Total scale score (green), Benefit scale score (red), and Barrier scale score (blue). Percentage of post-workout session stretching was calculated by dividing reported number of workout days by reported number of stretch days. Pearson correlation was significant for total scale score ($r=0.432$, $n=54$, $p=0.001$) and benefit sub-scale score ($r=0.460$, $n=54$, $p=0.000$) but not for the barrier sub-scale score ($r=-0.217$, $n=59$, $p=0.099$).

Results

- Greatest perceived benefit from stretching was improvement in flexibility
- Greatest perceived barrier to stretching was associated discomfort
- On average, members stretched 69% of their visits to the fitness facility
- The benefits/barrier ratio was 1.66, exemplifying that perceived benefits outweighed the perceived barriers to stretching
- The more beneficial an individual perceived static stretching to be, the more time and greater percentage of workouts they devoted to stretch training post-workout

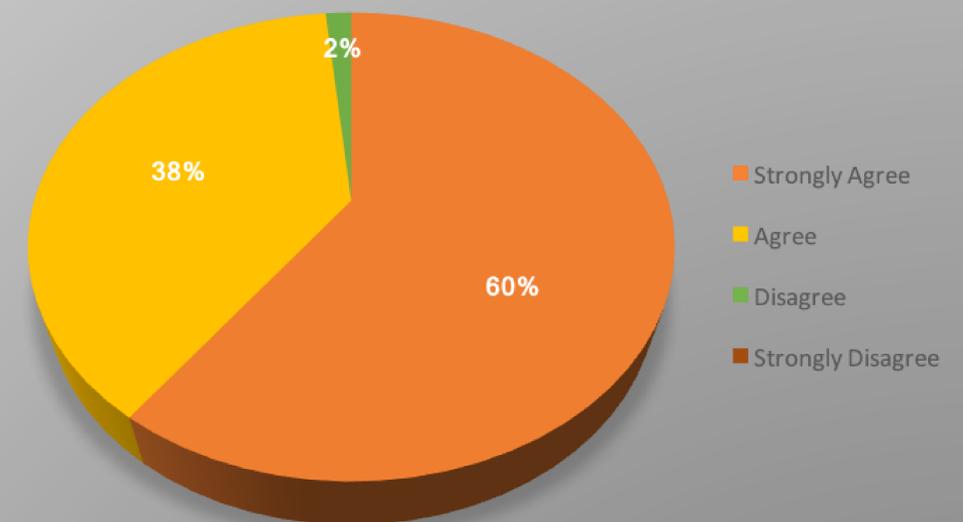


Figure 2. The greatest perceived benefit from stretching was improvement in flexibility. The majority (88.5%) of the members of the fitness facility strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that stretching improved their flexibility.

Conclusion

When individuals perceived the benefits of static stretching post-workout to outweigh the barriers, they engaged in more stretch training and at a higher frequency than those who did not. The implication of this recognition extends to health professionals who are looking to instigate change and includes adequately measuring benefits and barriers to help propel health-promoting behaviors to the forefront.

References

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