
Original Research Article

Adapting to Contemporary Virtual Coaching: Challenges and Opportunities of Online Fitness Training Among Gym Coaches

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Abstract: The increasing use of online fitness training has transformed how Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches deliver their services, creating both opportunities and challenges within digital coaching environments. Despite the growing adoption of virtual fitness instruction, limited research has explored how coaches experience and navigate this mode of service delivery. This study explored the challenges encountered and opportunities that emerged among Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches conducting online fitness training. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed, involving thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed six major challenges encountered by the participants: Inability to Physically Monitor and Correct Client Form, Difficulty in Sustaining Client Motivation and Engagement, Limited Access to Gym Equipment and Training Resources, Difficulty in Ensuring Client Safety and Injury Prevention, Technical Difficulties and Connectivity Issues, and Reduced Interpersonal Connection and Coach–Client Rapport. Despite these challenges, five opportunities emerged from the participants' experiences, namely: Expanded Client Reach and Geographic Accessibility, Flexible Scheduling and Work Arrangement, Diversification of Coaching Services and Revenue Streams, Opportunity to Build a Personal Brand and Online Presence, and Stronger Documentation and Progress Tracking Capabilities. The study concluded that online fitness coaching has evolved into a viable and transformative mode of fitness service delivery that requires coaches to continuously adapt their instructional, technological, and interpersonal competencies. While virtual coaching presents challenges related to supervision, engagement, safety, and

communication, it also offers significant opportunities for professional growth, business expansion, and enhanced service accessibility. The study recommends that fitness organizations and coaching professionals strengthen digital coaching competencies and technological preparedness to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of online fitness training.

Keywords: Online Fitness Training, Virtual Coaching, Gym And Health And Fitness Coaches, Digital Fitness, Coaching Challenges, Coaching Opportunities

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed numerous industries, including the fitness sector. Traditionally, fitness coaching was conducted through face-to-face interactions in gyms and fitness centers, where coaches could directly supervise clients, demonstrate exercises, and provide immediate feedback. However, technological innovations and the widespread use of digital communication platforms have enabled fitness professionals to extend their services beyond physical facilities. Online fitness training has emerged as an alternative mode of coaching that allows trainers to deliver exercise programs, monitor progress, and communicate with clients through virtual platforms. The increasing popularity of online fitness training reflects a broader shift toward technology-mediated health and wellness services that prioritize accessibility, convenience, and flexibility (De Lyon et al., 2017; Baena-Arroyo et al., 2020).

The growth of online fitness training accelerated significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when lockdowns and mobility restrictions disrupted conventional fitness operations worldwide. Fitness instructors and coaches were compelled to adapt their professional practices to virtual environments to continue serving their clients. Studies have shown that online fitness platforms became essential tools for maintaining physical activity and exercise participation during periods of restricted movement (Valeriani et al., 2023; Fatima et al., 2024). Likewise, Czarnecka (2022) found that fitness instructors had to rapidly adjust their coaching methods, communication styles, and instructional strategies to accommodate virtual training environments. While online fitness training created opportunities for continued service delivery, it also introduced challenges associated with technological competence, client engagement, and exercise supervision.

Despite the growing acceptance of online fitness training, the transition from traditional coaching to virtual instruction has not been without difficulties. Fitness coaches often encounter limitations in monitoring exercise execution, correcting movement patterns, and ensuring client safety during remote sessions. According to Andersson (2021), fitness instructors experienced uncertainty regarding their professional roles and struggled to maintain participant motivation in online settings. Similarly, Gui et al. (2022) reported that fostering meaningful social interaction and sustaining participant engagement remain significant concerns in online group exercise classes. These challenges suggest that online

fitness coaching requires a distinct set of competencies that differ from those employed in conventional gym-based training.

At the same time, online fitness training offers numerous opportunities that have transformed the professional landscape of fitness coaching. Research has demonstrated that virtual fitness services enable coaches to expand their client base, transcend geographical limitations, and provide more flexible scheduling options (Casterline, 2021; Pugh, 2023). Furthermore, Yangzi (2023) emphasized that digital platforms can enhance professional visibility and facilitate innovative approaches to fitness instruction through social media and online content creation. These opportunities indicate that online fitness training is not merely a temporary response to external circumstances but may represent a sustainable and evolving component of the fitness industry.

The relevance of examining online fitness training is also evident within the Philippine context. Filipino coaches, athletes, educators, and fitness enthusiasts experienced substantial changes in training practices during and after the pandemic. Pagaduan et al. (2022) documented how Filipino athletes adapted to home-based and remotely supervised training programs, while Mamburam (2025) revealed that local sports coaches encountered challenges related to athlete engagement, training continuity, and coaching adaptation. Furthermore, Baltasar et al. (2026) found that online strength and conditioning programs among Filipino student-athletes introduced both opportunities for continued athletic development and obstacles associated with motivation and compliance. These findings demonstrate that digital fitness practices have become increasingly relevant within the local fitness landscape.

Additional Philippine studies further highlight the growing importance of understanding fitness participation and exercise behavior. Research by Cagas, Torre, and Manalastas (2014) identified health, physical improvement, and well-being as primary motivations for exercise among Filipinos, while Cagas et al. (2022) emphasized the need to promote accessible physical activity opportunities across different populations. Studies conducted by Cana and Santos (2022), Palma et al. (2024), Habig et al. (2025), and Arroyo and Salubayba (2024) likewise underscore the changing nature of physical activity engagement, fitness participation, and virtual physical education experiences. Collectively, these studies suggest that digital approaches to exercise and training have become increasingly significant in supporting health and wellness outcomes.

Although existing literature has examined online fitness participation, virtual exercise programs, remote coaching practices, and digital physical education, a notable gap remains in understanding the experiences of gym coaches themselves. Much of the current research focuses on clients, students, athletes, or exercise outcomes, while relatively few studies explore how gym coaches navigate the challenges and opportunities associated with online fitness training. Moreover, there remains limited qualitative evidence that captures the lived experiences, perceptions, adaptations, and professional realities of gym coaches who actively conduct online fitness training. Given that coaches play a central role in facilitating exercise participation and ensuring training effectiveness, their perspectives

warrant closer scholarly attention (Perez-Camarero et al., 2021; Craig et al., 2023; Baez et al., 2017).

Therefore, this study sought to explore the challenges and opportunities of online fitness training among gym coaches. Specifically, it aimed to identify the challenges and opportunities they encounter that emerge from digital coaching environments. The study intended to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital fitness practices and provide practical recommendations for enhancing online fitness training programs, professional development initiatives, and the overall effectiveness of virtual coaching services.

This study was anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis (1989), the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985), and the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) developed by Albert Bandura (1986). The Technology Acceptance Model provided a lens for understanding how Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches perceived and adopted digital platforms in delivering virtual fitness services, particularly regarding the usefulness and ease of use of online coaching technologies (Davis, 1989). Self-Determination Theory explained how coaches sustained motivation and engagement while adapting to online fitness instruction by emphasizing the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Meanwhile, Social Cognitive Theory highlighted the role of self-efficacy, observational learning, and behavioral adaptation in enabling coaches to effectively navigate challenges and implement strategies within digital coaching environments (Bandura, 1986). Together, these theories provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the experiences, challenges, opportunities, and adaptive strategies of Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches in conducting online fitness training.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore and understand the challenges and opportunities experienced by gym and exercise coaches in conducting online fitness training. Descriptive qualitative research was appropriate because it enabled the researchers to obtain detailed accounts of participants' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives regarding a specific phenomenon without imposing predetermined theoretical assumptions. The design facilitated the collection of rich and meaningful descriptions of participants' lived experiences, allowing the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how gym and exercise coaches navigated online fitness training, addressed challenges, and maximized opportunities within virtual coaching environments (Kim et al., 2017; Doyle et al., 2020).

Population and Sampling

The participants of this study consisted of thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches who had experience conducting online fitness training through digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Facebook Live, Microsoft Teams, or other online fitness

applications. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that enabled the researchers to identify individuals who possessed substantial knowledge and firsthand experience regarding online fitness coaching. Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because it facilitated the selection of information-rich participants who could provide detailed and meaningful insights into the phenomenon being investigated (Palinkas et al., 2015).

To ensure the relevance of the participants' experiences, the following inclusion criteria were established: (1) participants were currently employed or actively working as Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches; (2) participants had conducted online fitness training sessions for at least six (6) months prior to the study; (3) participants had experience utilizing online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Facebook Live, Microsoft Teams, or similar applications for fitness coaching; (4) participants were at least eighteen (18) years old; and (5) participants were willing to voluntarily participate and provide informed consent. Individuals who had no experience in conducting online fitness training or were unable to participate in the interview process were excluded from the study.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide composed of open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' experiences, challenges, opportunities, and coping strategies related to online fitness training. Prior to data collection, the interview guide underwent content validation by three experts in research and physical education to ensure the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the questions. Recommendations from the validators were incorporated to improve the quality of the instrument. To establish reliability, a pilot interview was conducted with individuals who possessed characteristics similar to those of the target participants but were not included in the actual study. This procedure helped determine the comprehensibility, consistency, and effectiveness of the interview questions in generating relevant responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Table 1 presents the interview questions of the study.

Table 1: Instrumentation

Objectives of the Study	Interview Questions
To identify the challenges encountered by Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches in online fitness instruction.	What challenges did you encounter while conducting online fitness training sessions?
To explore the opportunities that emerged from digital coaching environments among Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches.	What opportunities emerged from your experience in conducting online fitness training?

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to the conduct of the study, approval was secured from the appropriate authorities. Potential participants who met the inclusion criteria were identified and invited to participate in the study. The purpose of the research, along with the procedures and ethical considerations, was explained to the participants before obtaining their informed consent. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted at a mutually convenient schedule, either through online platforms or face-to-face arrangements. With participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of data collection. After the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for accuracy and completeness. The transcribed data were subsequently organized and prepared for thematic analysis. Throughout the data gathering process, the researchers maintained professionalism, neutrality, and respect for the participants' perspectives and experiences.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative method for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed repeatedly to facilitate familiarization with the data. Significant statements and meaningful responses were coded and grouped according to common patterns and ideas. These codes were subsequently organized into categories and themes that represented the shared experiences of the participants. The identified themes were further refined and interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities encountered by gym and exercise coaches in online fitness training (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all respondents after they were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, benefits, and potential risks associated with the study. Participation remained voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the exclusion of personally identifiable information from research records and reports. Furthermore, the study complied with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) by ensuring that all personal information and research data were collected, processed, stored, and disposed of securely. All digital files, interview recordings, and transcripts were stored in password-protected devices accessible only to the researchers and were used solely for academic and research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the challenges faced by the gym and health and fitness coaches training through online. The analysis of the participants' responses revealed that Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches encountered various challenges while conducting online fitness

training sessions. Six major themes emerged from the data: Inability to Physically Monitor and Correct Client Form, Difficulty in Sustaining Client Motivation and Engagement, Limited Access to Gym Equipment and Training Resources, Difficulty in Ensuring Client Safety and Injury Prevention, Technical Difficulties and Connectivity Issues, and Reduced Interpersonal Connection and Coach–Client Rapport. These findings suggest that while online fitness coaching enabled the continuation of fitness services in digital environments, coaches faced significant instructional, technological, and relational barriers that affected the quality of coaching delivery and client interaction.

Research Objective 1. *To identify the challenges encountered by Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches in online fitness instruction.*

Question: *What challenges did you encounter while conducting online fitness training sessions?*

Theme 1: Inability to Physically Monitor and Correct Client Form

A prominent challenge identified by the participants was the inability to physically monitor and correct clients' exercise form during online fitness sessions. Ten (10) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches reported difficulties in accurately assessing movement quality, posture, and exercise execution due to limited visual access through digital platforms. Participants explained that unlike face-to-face coaching, virtual training restricted their ability to provide immediate corrective feedback, making it more difficult to ensure proper technique and prevent potential injuries.

“One of the biggest challenges with online coaching is not being able to see everything clearly. Even when clients position their cameras properly, there are still angles and movements that I miss. Sometimes I worry that they're doing the exercise incorrectly, but I can't step in and adjust them the way I normally would during an in-person session.”

This finding supports the studies of Czarnecka (2022), Pugh (2023), and Gui et al. (2022), who reported that virtual fitness environments limit coaches' ability to observe movement patterns and provide real-time corrective feedback. The finding is also consistent with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which emphasizes the role of observation and feedback in developing skills and improving performance. The emergence of this theme suggests that online fitness coaching requires enhanced communication techniques and technological adaptations to maintain exercise safety and instructional effectiveness despite the absence of direct physical supervision.

Theme 2: Difficulty in Sustaining Client Motivation and Engagement

Another significant challenge experienced by the participants was sustaining client motivation and engagement in online fitness training. Nine (9) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches shared that maintaining clients' enthusiasm, commitment, and accountability became more difficult in virtual settings. Participants observed that the absence of the social atmosphere, peer interaction, and energetic environment typically

found in gyms often resulted in reduced participation, distractions, and inconsistent attendance among clients.

“When clients are at home, there are so many things competing for their attention. In the gym, people are more focused because they're in that environment. Online, I really have to work harder to keep them engaged and motivated throughout the session.”

This finding aligns with the studies of Gui et al. (2022), Craig et al. (2023), and Andersson (2021), which emphasized that maintaining participant engagement and motivation is a persistent challenge in virtual fitness environments. The finding may also be understood through Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which highlights the importance of relatedness and social connection in sustaining motivation. The emergence of this theme suggests that online fitness coaches need to adopt creative engagement strategies and foster meaningful interaction to promote consistent participation and long-term commitment among clients.

Theme 3: Limited Access to Gym Equipment and Training Resources

Limited access to gym equipment and training resources emerged as a common challenge among the participants. Eight (8) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches reported that many clients lacked access to standard fitness equipment at home, requiring substantial modifications to exercise programs. Participants explained that workouts often had to be adjusted based on whatever resources were available, such as resistance bands, household items, or bodyweight exercises. While these adaptations allowed training to continue, coaches noted that they sometimes limited exercise variety and the achievement of specific fitness goals.

“Not everyone has dumbbells, barbells, or even enough space to work out at home. There were times when I had to completely redesign a program because the equipment I originally planned to use just wasn't available to the client.”

This finding is supported by Valeriani et al. (2023), Pagaduan et al. (2022), and Casterline (2021), who found that limited access to fitness equipment was a major constraint in home-based and online training environments. The finding may also be explained through the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), as coaches were required to adapt their training approaches and utilize available resources to sustain program delivery in digital settings. The emergence of this theme suggests the importance of flexibility and creativity in online fitness coaching, particularly in designing effective workouts that accommodate varying levels of resource availability among clients.

Theme 4: Difficulty in Ensuring Client Safety and Injury Prevention

Ensuring client safety and preventing injuries emerged as a critical challenge in online fitness coaching. Six (6) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches expressed concerns about their limited ability to monitor clients closely during exercise sessions. Participants noted that the absence of direct supervision made it difficult

to identify signs of improper execution, physical discomfort, or fatigue, particularly among beginners and clients with pre-existing health conditions. As a result, coaches felt a heightened sense of responsibility in designing safe and appropriate exercise programs while relying on clients to communicate their physical condition accurately.

“Safety is always my biggest concern during online sessions. When I'm not physically there, I can't immediately see if a client is pushing too hard or feeling pain. With beginners especially, I have to be extra careful because one wrong movement can lead to an injury.”

This finding is consistent with the studies of Pugh (2023), Czarnecka (2022), and Bennell et al. (2017), which highlighted the challenges of supervising exercise performance and maintaining safety in remote training environments. The finding may also be explained through Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which emphasizes the role of guided observation and feedback in promoting proper behavioral performance. The emergence of this theme suggests that online fitness coaching requires careful exercise planning, clear safety instructions, and proactive communication to minimize injury risks and promote safe participation in virtual fitness programs.

Theme 5: Technical Difficulties and Connectivity Issues

Technical difficulties and connectivity issues emerged as a recurring challenge among the participants. Six (6) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches reported experiencing disruptions caused by unstable internet connections, platform malfunctions, delayed audio, frozen video feeds, and other technological problems during online training sessions. Participants noted that these interruptions affected communication, reduced the quality of instruction, and occasionally disrupted the momentum and engagement of both coaches and clients.

“There were sessions where everything was going well, then suddenly the connection would drop or the video would freeze. It can be frustrating because you're trying to coach effectively, but technical issues keep interrupting the flow of the workout.”

This finding is consistent with the studies of Gui et al. (2022), Craig et al. (2023), and Yangzi (2023), which identified technological barriers as a significant challenge in online fitness and virtual coaching environments. The finding is further supported by the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which suggests that the effectiveness of technology-mediated services is influenced by the usability and reliability of the technology being utilized. The emergence of this theme highlights the importance of stable digital infrastructure and technological preparedness in ensuring the smooth and effective delivery of online fitness training.

This section presents the second objective of the study which is to identify the different opportunities encountered by the gym and health and fitness coach when training online. The analysis of the participants' responses revealed that online fitness training created several opportunities for Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches. Five major themes

emerged from the data: Expanded Client Reach and Geographic Accessibility, Flexible Scheduling and Work Arrangement, Diversification of Coaching Services and Revenue Streams, Opportunity to Build a Personal Brand and Online Presence, and Stronger Documentation and Progress Tracking Capabilities. These findings indicate that digital coaching environments not only enabled coaches to continue delivering fitness services but also expanded their professional opportunities through increased accessibility, flexibility, business growth, and enhanced client management.

Research Objective 2. *To explore the opportunities that emerged from digital coaching environments among Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches.*

Question: *What opportunities emerged from your experience in conducting online fitness training?*

Theme 1: Expanded Client Reach and Geographic Accessibility

A significant opportunity identified by the participants was the ability to expand their client reach beyond geographical limitations. Ten (10) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches reported that online fitness training enabled them to work with clients from different cities, provinces, and even countries without the need for physical presence. Participants noted that virtual platforms removed location-based barriers, allowing them to connect with a more diverse clientele and offer their services to individuals who would otherwise be unable to access their coaching.

“Before online coaching, most of my clients came from the same area where I worked. Now, I have clients from different parts of the country, and even a few who are based abroad. It opened opportunities that I never really expected when I was only coaching inside a gym.”

This finding is consistent with the studies of Casterline (2021), Pugh (2023), and Yangzi (2023), which found that online fitness platforms significantly broadened coaches' professional reach and reduced geographic constraints on service delivery. The finding may also be explained through the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which suggests that individuals are more likely to adopt technologies that enhance performance and create practical advantages. The emergence of this theme indicates that online fitness training has expanded professional opportunities for coaches by enabling them to reach wider populations and deliver services across geographic boundaries.

Theme 2: Flexible Scheduling and Work Arrangement

Flexible scheduling and work arrangement emerged as a valuable opportunity associated with online fitness coaching. Nine (9) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches reported that digital platforms allowed them to manage their schedules more independently and accommodate clients with varying availability. Participants explained that online coaching eliminated travel time and provided greater flexibility in arranging sessions, enabling them to balance professional responsibilities while serving a broader range of clients. One participant shared:

“One thing I really appreciate about online coaching is the flexibility. I can schedule sessions throughout the day without worrying about commuting between locations. It also makes it easier for clients because we can find a time that works for both of us.”

This finding supports the studies of Casterline (2021), Fatima et al. (2024), and Yangzi (2023), which identified flexibility and convenience as key advantages of online fitness training for both coaches and participants. The finding is also consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which posits that individuals are more likely to embrace technologies that improve efficiency and ease task performance. The emergence of this theme suggests that digital coaching environments can promote greater work autonomy and scheduling adaptability, enhancing the overall delivery of fitness services.

Theme 3: Diversification of Coaching Services and Revenue Streams

The diversification of coaching services and revenue streams emerged as a notable opportunity among the participants. Seven (7) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches reported that online fitness training enabled them to expand beyond traditional one-on-one coaching and offer a wider range of services. Participants shared that digital platforms allowed them to create pre-recorded workout programs, conduct group fitness classes, develop personalized online training plans, and offer subscription-based fitness content. These opportunities not only enhanced service accessibility but also provided additional sources of income that were not as feasible in conventional gym settings. One participant shared:

“Before transitioning online, most of my income came from personal training sessions at the gym. When I started coaching virtually, I realized I could offer more than just live sessions. I began creating workout programs that clients could access anytime, hosted group classes, and even launched a monthly subscription plan. It gave me more ways to help people stay active while also creating additional income streams beyond my regular coaching hours.”

This finding is supported by the studies of Yangzi (2023), Casterline (2021), and Pugh (2023), which highlighted how digital fitness platforms enabled coaches to diversify their services and reach broader markets. The finding is further explained by the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which suggests that individuals are more likely to adopt technological innovations when they perceive clear benefits and enhanced professional performance. The emergence of this theme indicates that online fitness coaching not only expanded service delivery options but also created new economic opportunities that contributed to the sustainability and growth of coaching careers.

Theme 4: Build a Personal Brand and Online Presence

The opportunity to build a personal brand and strengthen an online presence emerged as a significant advantage of digital fitness coaching. Five (5) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches shared that online platforms enabled them to

showcase their expertise, promote their services, and establish professional credibility beyond their local communities. Participants explained that social media, fitness applications, and content-sharing platforms allowed them to connect with wider audiences, attract potential clients, and position themselves as trusted fitness professionals within the digital space. One participant shared:

“...I started coaching online was my visibility. Before, people only knew me through the gym where I worked. Now, I regularly post workout tips, client progress stories, and fitness content on social media. Over time, people started recognizing my work, and some of my clients actually found me through my online content. It helped me build a reputation and create a stronger professional identity outside the gym.”

This finding aligns with the studies of Yangzi (2023), Baena-Arroyo et al. (2020), and De Lyon et al. (2017), which emphasized that digital platforms provide fitness professionals with opportunities to increase visibility, demonstrate expertise, and expand their professional influence. The finding may also be understood through the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which suggests that technology adoption is influenced by its perceived usefulness in achieving professional goals. The emergence of this theme indicates that online fitness coaching serves not only as a mode of service delivery but also as a strategic avenue for professional branding, career development, and long-term business growth.

Theme 5: Stronger Documentation and Progress Tracking Capabilities

Stronger documentation and progress tracking capabilities emerged as a valuable opportunity associated with online fitness coaching. Four (4) out of the thirteen (13) Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches reported that digital tools enabled them to systematically record client information, monitor workout performance, and track progress over time. Participants explained that fitness applications, spreadsheets, and online coaching platforms allowed them to maintain organized records, making it easier to evaluate client development, adjust training programs, and provide more personalized coaching support. One participant shared:

“...coaching online is that everything can be documented. I can easily keep track of clients' workout logs, progress photos, body measurements, and completed sessions in one place. It helps me see their improvements more clearly and makes it easier to adjust their programs based on actual data rather than just observation.”

This finding is supported by the studies of Pugh (2023), Casterline (2021), and Valeriani et al. (2023), which highlighted how digital fitness platforms enhance the monitoring and management of client progress through technology-assisted tracking systems. The finding is also consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which posits that individuals are more likely to adopt technologies that improve efficiency and task performance. The emergence of this theme suggests that online fitness

coaching can strengthen the continuity and quality of coaching services by enabling more accurate, organized, and data-informed approaches to client development.

CONCLUSION

The transition to online fitness training has fundamentally reshaped the professional practice of Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches. While digital coaching created opportunities for service continuity and professional growth, it also introduced challenges that altered how coaches deliver instruction, maintain client engagement, and ensure safety. The results suggest that effective coaching extends beyond fitness expertise alone; it increasingly requires technological competence, adaptability, and the ability to foster meaningful relationships in virtual environments. As fitness services continue to evolve, coaches must develop new skills and strategies that address the unique demands of digital coaching.

Moreover, the study highlights that online fitness training should not be viewed merely as a temporary alternative to face-to-face instruction but as a distinct mode of professional practice with its own advantages and limitations. The opportunities identified, including expanded client reach, flexible work arrangements, diversified services, stronger online visibility, and improved progress tracking, indicate that digital platforms can enhance both the accessibility and sustainability of fitness coaching. These benefits demonstrate how technology can create new pathways for professional development and business growth while enabling coaches to serve broader and more diverse populations.

Ultimately, the findings underscore the need for the fitness industry to embrace innovation while addressing the challenges associated with virtual coaching. Investments in digital coaching competencies, technological infrastructure, client engagement strategies, and online safety protocols may help maximize the benefits of online fitness training while minimizing its limitations. This study provided growing body of knowledge on digital fitness practices and provides valuable insights that may inform future coaching programs, professional training initiatives, and the continued advancement of online fitness services. Finally, Fitness organizations, gym management, and professional coaching associations should provide specialized training and technological support to Gym and Health and Fitness Coaches to enhance virtual instruction, strengthen client engagement, improve safety monitoring, and maximize the opportunities offered by online fitness coaching.

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