

Exploring the nutritional strategies of individuals prior to an early morning high intensity functional fitness class to better understand nutritional literacy and physical literacy within this specific group of athletes.

Introduction

High intensity functional fitness (HIFF) is a growing trend within the fitness industry, with global brands like CrossFit and Hyrox appealing to professional athletes and recreational gym members. The literature on this fitness trend has highlighted a diet culture whereby disordered eating has been identified, suggesting misinformation and potentially affecting both performance and health outcomes of its participants and followers (Brisebois et al., 2022; Cunha et al., 2022; Maxwell et al., 2017; Pearson and Jenkins, 2022).

Objective

The main objective of the research project was to better understand people who participate in HIFF and perception of fueling and exercise in relation to their nutritional and physical activity needs and goals.

Methods

Participants for the research were invited to answer a short questionnaire with a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions. This enabled a mixed-methods approach to the project to add depth to the data. Participants were recruited from an independent HIFF gym with no obligation to take part, and no identifiable information gathered. No anthropometric information was requested, and no triggering or leading questions included in the questionnaire as outlined and approved in the ethics form. There were 12 questions in total created on Microsoft Forms, with a mixture of tick-box answers and free text boxes. Once collated the data was divided and analysed using SPSS or NVIVO.

Reasons for eating before morning workout (n=10):

"For more energy to perform better. I get hungry about 10 minutes into the class as it's been about an hour since waking." (ID 75)

"I felt and was occasionally sick post workout when I didn't eat a snack before. I also felt really tired during the workout." (ID 36)

4. Do you eat something before working out between 05.00am-07.00am?

[More Details](#)

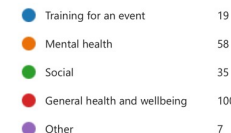


82% of participants do not fuel before a morning workout.

n=58 workout for mental health reasons.

8. Why do you workout?

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Reasons for not eating before morning workout (n=82):

"If I'm well fed from the day before I don't notice any issue with strength or energy. I'm not depleting my glycogen stores by being asleep." (ID 46)

"Mainly time - I like to eat a couple of hours before which isn't feasible for me attending a 6am class." (ID 18)

"If it's a long run, I feel like I need the energy. If it's a shorter session I'm torn between research I've heard that says it's good not to eat and that peri menopausal women should eat before exercising." (ID 83)

Results

A total of n=100 answered the questionnaire; female = 62%, male = 38%; aged 18-64, with an average age of 41. 52% of participants exercised between 3-4 times per week; 28% exercised 1-2 times per week, and the remaining 20% exercised 5+ times per week, all during the hours of 05.00am-07.00am at the HIFF facility. 82% answered 'no' to eating before their early morning workout, and a further 8% answered 'sometimes' to eating before the morning workout. Of the 10% that answered 'yes', the most popular answer for eating was to have energy for their workout (n=7), with 'banana' as the most mentioned source of nutrition in this group (60%). The most popular reason cited by the 82% for not eating prior to their morning workout was 'time' (n=43), followed by digestive concerns (n=33), either worried about being sick/reflux during the workout or not hungry. The remaining n=6 reported that eating prior to their workout would impact their performance outcome. All n=100 exercised for general health and wellbeing, with n=58 stating that they exercised for mental health reasons, and n=19 cited that they were training for an event.

Conclusion

The results show that a potential 90% of the n=100 questioned reported to not eating prior to an intense training session in the morning on a regular basis, citing time or digestive issues as barriers to them fueling. The present study shows that amongst this group there's uncertainty due to misinformation on nutrition in conjunction with exercise, with further investigations needed to assess the group's level of knowledge, and how this can feed back into practice.