

Role and group identity and adjustment to running group disbandment

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Introduction

Background:

- People who are active often struggle with long-term exercise adherence¹. Exercise-related role and group identities may facilitate better exercise maintenance^{2,3}.
- The benefits of group identity for exercise maintenance may depend on normal group function⁴.
- Previous research found that among group runners, strong role identity predicted adaptive reactions, whereas strong group identity predicted maladaptive reactions to a hypothetical scenario of group disbandment⁴.
- No research to date has studied the impact of role and group identity on reactions to a real-life situation of exercise group disbandment.

Objectives:

- Examine the relationship between runner role and running group identity and reactions to a real-life situation of running-group disbandment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hypotheses:

- Role identity will positively predict self-efficacy and running behaviour after group disbandment and negatively predict difficulty with running solo.
- Group identity will negatively predict self-efficacy and running behaviour after group disbandment and positively predict difficulty with running solo.

Methods

Design:

Cross-sectional, online survey

Participants:

105 Canadian runners who completed at least 4 weeks of solo running after group disbandment ($m_{\text{age}} = 42.6 \text{ y}$, $SD = 12.5 \text{ y}$; $m_{\text{group membership}} = 4.8 \text{ y}$, $SD = 5.7 \text{ y}$)

Measures:

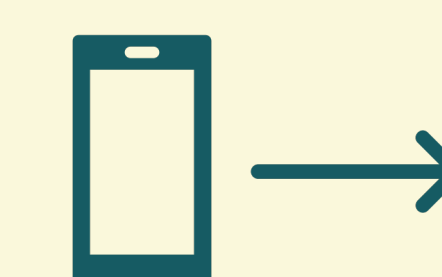
- Role Identity and group identity
- Self-efficacy for running when forced to run solo
- Running behaviour when forced to run solo
- Perceived difficulty with running solo

Measure	Items	Measurement	Alpha
Exercise Identity Questionnaire ⁵	9	7-point Likert	0.88
Four-Item Social Identification Measure ⁶	4	7-point Likert	0.87
Task Self-Efficacy Scale ^{4,7}	9	11-point Likert	0.92
Self-Regulatory Efficacy Scale ^{4,7}	7	11-point Likert	0.92
Godin Leisure-Time Exercise Questionnaire ⁸	6	Open response	n/a
Difficulty Scale ^{4,7}	4	10-point Likert	0.96

a Researcher-developed tools

Analysis: A series of linear regressions were used to examine the influence of identity (role and group) on self-efficacy and running behaviour after group disbandment as well as perceived difficulty with running solo.

Role identity
helps runners
adaptively
react to
running group
disbandment



Scan the code
for references



Results

Table 2:

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Role identity	3.9	7.0	6.0	0.9
Group identity	2.5	7.0	5.7	1.2
Task self-efficacy	2.5	10.0	8.2	1.9
Self-regulatory efficacy	0.7	10.0	7.8	2.2
Strenuous physical activity frequency*	0.0	10.0	3.9	2.1
Perceived difficulty	1.0	10.0	3.6	2.5

* Used to assess running behaviour

Table 3:

Separate Regression Analyses of Role and Group Identity Predicting Outcomes

Outcomes	B	beta	SE	95% CI		t	p
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit		
Runner Role Identity							
Task self-efficacy	0.97	0.45	0.22	0.53	1.40	4.42	<.001
Self-regulatory efficacy	0.62	0.24	0.27	0.08	1.15	2.26	.026
Running behaviour	0.90	0.36	0.26	0.39	1.41	3.49	.001
Perceived difficulty	-0.48	-0.17	0.32	-1.13	0.15	-1.52	ns
Running Group Identity							
Task self-efficacy	-0.43	-0.26	0.16	-0.75	-0.10	-2.61	.010
Self-regulatory efficacy	-0.28	-0.15	0.20	-0.68	0.13	-1.35	ns
Running behaviour	-0.30	-0.16	0.19	-0.68	0.09	-1.53	ns
Perceived difficulty	0.16	0.07	0.24	-0.32	0.64	0.67	ns

Discussion and Conclusions

This study is the first to examine role and group identity in relation to a real-life scenario of exercise group disbandment.

Runner role identity:

- Role identity predicted higher self-efficacy for running and more running behaviour.
- Role identity was negatively related to difficulty with running solo, however this relationship was nonsignificant.
- These findings align with previous work and confirm our hypothesis.

Running group identity:

- Group identity negatively related to self-efficacy and running behaviour. Only the relationship with task self-efficacy emerged as significant.
- Group identity was unrelated to difficulty with running solo.
- These findings demonstrate that endorsing an exercise group identity is of little use for exercisers experiencing group disbandment.

Difficulty with running solo:

- Neither role nor group identity predicted perceived difficulty with solo running. This finding differs from similar previous work.
- Runners reported little difficulty with solo running ($m = 3.6$, $SD = 2.5$). When considering the COVID-19 pandemic, this finding is logical. Runners likely understood that running solo would protect their health and had little desire to re-unite with the group during physical distancing precautions.

Conclusions:

For people who exercise in groups, identifying with an exerciser role may promote adaptive reactions and continued exercise in the face of disruptions such as group disbandment.

