

# Stages of Change in Physical Exercise: A Test of Stage Discrimination and Nonlinearity

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**Objectives:** To investigate the utility of the protection motivation theory (PMT), social-cognitive theory (SCT) and transtheoretical model's (TTM) processes of change (POC) by (1) discriminating between TTM's stages with planned comparisons and (2) examining higher-ordered trends across stages. **Methods:** 1582 individuals were included in the analyses that tested severity, vulnerability, response-efficacy, self-efficacy, POC, pros and cons,

social and environmental support. **Results:** The findings provide evidence for the utility of the PMT and TTM's POC for stage discrimination; stage discontinuity patterns are supported. **Conclusions:** Promotion of health behavior should target stage-specific variables, such as threat appraisals for early stage movements.

**Key words:** theories of health behavior, stage models, discontinuity pattern, severity, self-efficacy

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