Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Master of Science of

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BSc (Dalhousie University, 2018)

“Motivation and Behavioural Regulations of Children and Youth Related to Physical Activity Intensity during the COVID-19 Pandemic”

Social Dimensions of Health

Thursday, March 4, 2021
10:00 am
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Ryan Rhodes, Department of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Ziba Vaghri, Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)

External Examiner:
Dr. Sam Liu, Department of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Marc Lapprand, Department of French, UVic

Dr. Stephen V. Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Background. Physical activity (PA) in children and youth is a necessary behaviour for health across the lifespan. Play and leisure time PA has also been declared as a right for children under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canadian levels of inactivity are highly concerning, with only 25% of children and youth aged 10-17 meeting national guidelines for PA behaviours in Canada. In 2020, COVID-19 pandemic regulations have additionally reduced the engagement of children and youth with leisure time PA. Rationale. Understanding key theoretical models of motivations and behavioural regulations for PA is necessary to developing appropriate interventions and strategies for targeting inactivity and ultimately changing PA behaviour for a healthier life. There is a gap in the literature regarding motivation for leisure time PA of children and adolescents, based on self-determination theory (SDT), and potential age and gender moderation or mediation. Objective. The purpose of this study was to investigate motivations for PA of children and youth, and any interactions between age and gender, utilizing Organismic Integration theory (OIT), a sub-theory of SDT. Design. The study was a cross-sectional design. Participants. Participants were children and youth aged 11-14 years, living in Canada at the time of questionnaire completion. The questionnaire was distributed from April 2020 to August 2020, and COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were in place during this period. Methods. Motivations and regulations were assessed online using the Behavioural Regulations in Exercise Questionnaire version 3 (BREQ-3) and PA was assessed using the Godin Leisure Time Exercise Questionnaire (LTEQ). Results. Higher levels of PA intensity were correlated with more autonomous forms of regulations and motivation, whereas lower levels of PA intensity were not significantly correlated with more controlled forms of motivation. No BREQ-3 variables predicted PA intensity after controlling for age and gender, therefore mediation analysis was not completed. Gender moderated the relationship between integrated regulation and PA, explaining 7-8% of the variance. Males had significant prediction from integrated regulation (β= 5.80, p<.01), whereas females did not (β= 1.34, p=.210). Subanalyses revealed no BREQ-3 variables significantly predicted different levels of strenuous or moderate PA, yet greater scores of the relative autonomy index (RAI), a general measure of autonomous motivation, predicted higher levels of PA intensity. Conclusion. The study supported some facets of SDT theory. Autonomous forms of motivation correlated with higher levels of PA behaviour, and a generalized measure of autonomous motivation predicted PA intensity levels. However, controlled forms of motivation did not predict lower levels of PA intensity, which is not consistent with theory but somewhat consistent with empirical findings. Gender was the key predictor of PA outcomes, indicating other variables beyond motivation and regulations should be further explored regarding children and youth’s motivations for leisure time PA, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.