



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

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

of

AMANDA WEBBER

BA hons (University of Victoria, 2018)

“Mobile EMA Examines the Impact of an At-Home Physical Activity Program on Older Adults' Depression Symptoms during COVID-19”

Department of Psychology

Wednesday, January 12, 2021
8:30am (PST)
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Mauricio Garcia-Barrera, Department of Psychology, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Scott M. Hofer, Department of Psychology, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Jonathan Rush, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. John Walsh, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Sanghoon Nam, School of Business, UVic

Abstract

Physical activity is a well-known protective factor against poorer mental health outcomes. Feelings of depression, social isolation, and stress have increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public health measures implemented to mitigate the spread of the virus have had some unintended consequences on older adults' physical and mental health. Researchers and government officials recommend physical activity to minimize the negative psychological and physiological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, older adults have generally shown less moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and positive behavioural adaptations during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting a need for physical activity programs and strategies explicitly targeted for older adults. Filling this gap, the current study developed and implemented a remote exercise training program for older adults. Employing a measurement burst design with repeated ecological momentary assessments, the current longitudinal randomized control study examined the dynamic relationships of physical activity, depression, social isolation, and COVID-19 related stress in older adults. The results from multilevel analyses showed: (1) the exercise training program was effective in increasing physical activity; (2) sex, age, and group assignment were significant predictors of physical activity; (3) physical activity did not reduce feelings of depression over time; (4) social isolation is a positively associated with depression; and (5) COVID-19 stress is negatively associated with depression. More research into at-home physical activity programming for older adults is needed.