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## CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

### **Relationship among social support, physical activity and quality of life**

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#### ***Introduction***

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most physical activities were restricted, which may have adverse effects on quality of life (QoL). Moreover, social activities were reduced due to social distancing, and closure of schools and recreational facilities led to social isolation and reduced social support. Good social support is associated with a better quality of life. However, the empirical evidence on whether the effect of physical activities on quality of life can be mediated by social support is scarce. The direct and indirect effects of physical activities mediated by social support on quality of life are not well understood.

#### ***Methods***

A prospective self-administered online questionnaire using validated instruments is being conducted. Students studying at a tertiary institution are recruited by emails to participate in the study. The data for online baseline survey is being collected (Feb 2021), and the online follow-up survey will be conducted six months after. Both surveys will use the same questionnaire, including basic demographics, International Physical Activity Questionnaire-Short Form (IPAQ-SF), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), and 12-item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-12). Pearson's correlations and ANOVA are used to assess the relationship. If the relationships were significant, mediation analyses will be carried out to estimate the direct, indirect, and total effects of physical activity on quality of life mediated by social support.

#### ***Results and Discussion***

The baseline data collection is still in progress and 131 students studying at Tung Wah College were successfully recruited. Analysis of the data finds that QoL was only associated with social support, but not with physical activity. Performing physical activity with infection control measures, such as wearing face masks and restricted social distancing, may not be optimal for improving quality of life.

#### ***Implication***

The findings can provide useful information explaining how physical activity affects QoL. An effective health program on physical activity should not only aim to focus on exercise activities, but also on the social components of the exercise in order to maximize the potential benefits of physical activity. Also, this project identifies the direction for integrated care on physical activity and QoL, so as to achieve optimal population health.

### ***Lessons learned***

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the pilot study has demonstrated that the use of online self-administered questionnaire is a viable option to replace the traditional face-to-face questionnaire survey. Restricted social interaction during physical activity cannot exercise the full benefits of physical activity.

### ***Limitations***

As only students studying in one of the tertiary institutions are invited to participate in this questionnaire survey, they may not be representative of young people in Hong Kong. Secondly, they are invited by email and their participation is entirely voluntary; this survey may not be able to achieve a high response rate, and this may lead to selection bias. Lastly, the baseline data collection has not completed yet and is still in progress. So far the analysis was only based on a limited sample size, which might not have a sufficient statistical power.