

**Positive Effects of a Virtual Exercise Program for Older Adults**

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## **Introduction**

Exercise is a form of activity that is carried out by individuals of interest to sustain or improve physical health. As individuals age, mental and physical health becomes less of a priority to sustain satisfaction in activities of daily living and improve overall quality of life. Many older adults retire from their daily jobs and are left with a vast amount of time throughout the day. Older adults use this extra time to pick up on hobbies or leisure activities but oftentimes disregard their physical health with such reasons including lack of motivation to adhere to an exercise program, experience, accessibility, satisfaction, and confidence. A study by da Silva et al. (2022) indicates that reinforcement of the need for physical exercise for older adults contributes to an autonomous, independent lifestyle through maintaining and/or improving physical fitness and function. They found that staying physically active through online exercise is a beneficial strategy in mitigating the effects of a sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity. These findings highlight the need for increased education on the importance of accessible physical exercise modalities to further increase quality of life and overall well-being. The focus areas of this capstone include program development and education providing accessible resources to older adults to inform and educate them on the positive effects of implementing a virtual exercise program (VEP).

## **Processes/Methodology**

Throughout the 7 week implementation of the VEP, I have taken into consideration the age, gender, fitness/activity levels, and physical attributes of all my participants when producing components of my VEP. This has helped me gain a deeper understanding of the appropriate modifications required for each individual to successfully participate in the program. Participants

engage in a one-on-one 45 minute exercise session consisting of an introductory warm-up exercise, followed by 10 workouts targeting all major body parts, then closing with a cool down exercise to finish out the session. Participants follow this recorded workout session through applications including Zoom and Google Meet using any technological device such as a tablet, smartphone, or laptop at scheduled weekly online meetings. Overall, the important concepts within my comprehensive VEP is to make the exercises easily accessible, gain a fundamental understanding of how to carry out and implement exercises via technological devices, utilize social engagement and interaction, and provide opportunities to increase quality of life and satisfaction through successful completion of the program.

### **Outcomes**

This capstone program relates to the field of occupational therapy as it provides a holistic approach to each individual participating in the VEP. Additionally, this capstone addresses key occupational therapy outcomes including the promotion and maintenance of occupational performance, health and wellness, quality of life, and life satisfaction amongst older adults. Post surveys will be emailed out to participants consisting of a questionnaire about their experience after successful completion of the program. This will include questions such as: 1) any personal limitations/barriers preventing continued engagement in the VEP after completion? 2) Successful areas of the VEP that kept you engaged? 3) Any additional changes to the VEP to make it more personal? These are just a few of the many questions to be administered to gain an understanding of the overall experience of the participants within my VEP and link the goals and objectives of the program stated within my MOU. This capstone experience along with its measured outcomes demonstrate increasing knowledge to myself, the capstone agency, and its consumers, in how a

successful implementation of a VEP can physically and mentally improve the quality of life of older adults.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the focused areas of this capstone experience I chose to pursue relate a lot to my personal life as I serve as a personal trainer to many older adults with and without physical disabilities. It allows me to embed personal knowledge and experience into this capstone and aid in program development. Along with proper guidance from my faculty and capstone agency mentor, this capstone experience allows for greater opportunities to distribute an abundance of education and positive health benefits to all stakeholders and make an everlasting impact on older adults and any future participants who choose to participate in the VEP. This program embodies the overall purpose of how occupational therapy and a well constructed program can help change an individual's life with added benefits.

## References

da Silva, W. A., Martins, V. F., Haas, A. N., & Gonçalves, A. K. (2022). Online exercise training program for Brazilian older adults: Effects on physical fitness and health-related variables of a feasibility study in times of COVID-19. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(21), 14042. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192114042>