

## **Fitness Trackers and Friends: Using Technology to Facilitate Social Support and Physical Activity**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Consistent physical activity enhances physiological and psychological well-being, with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommending at least 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity weekly. However, decreased exercise or sedentary habits can elevate depressive symptoms, diminish life quality, and increase disease risks. **PURPOSE:** To examine the effectiveness of a socially mediated, partner-based intervention incorporating fitness trackers. A secondary aim was to assess how self-efficacy (SE) and social support (SS) differed between dyad and solo exercisers. **METHODS:** Fourteen undergraduate students (M:11, F:3; aged 19-27 years) were randomly assigned to a solo ( $n=6$ ) or dyad group ( $n=8$ ). Participants wore a MyZone Fitness Tracker which calculated MyZone effort points (MEPs) for each workout, based on minutes spent in heart rate training zones. Both groups had access to individual results via an app, but the dyad group also viewed their partner's workout data. The Multidimensional Exercise Self-Efficacy Scale (MSES) and Physical Activity and Social Support Scale (PASSS) measured self-efficacy and social support pre- and post-test, respectively. **RESULTS:** At the end of week 3, the dyad group showed more improvement in PA than the solo group ( $d = .56$ ); however, the dyad group began with higher activity levels which were maintained throughout the study. Conversely, the solo exercise group experienced an 83% decrease in PA. In addition, the dyad group experienced higher SE compared to the solo group. Dyads reported higher feelings of SS compared to solo group. **CONCLUSION:** This study supported the positive effect of exercise dyads on exercise behavior and self-efficacy compared to solo exercise, as the pairs were able to maintain a higher level of PA and reported meaningful differences in self-efficacy and social support.