Abstract:

In older adults, physical activity has been linked to improved physical function specific to independent living, improved balance, and a decrease in fall risks in older adults. Self-efficacy, or confidence, for physical activity can be enhanced by an exercise leader or a peer who is active (Bandura, 1977). One element that relates to self-efficacy is social support. Social support, such as feedback from peers or leaders can improve an individual's sense of self-efficacy for a given task.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the difference in balance efficacy (confidence that one can maintain balance in daily activities) and sense of social support across older adults who are physically active with a formal exercise leader, with a peer group, or without any type of formal group exercise. We hypothesize that the two groups either with a formal leader or a peer-group will experience greater social support and thus will be more active and show a higher level of balance efficacy.

The study will be carried out within the Forest Grove and Hillsboro Senior and Community Centers, Forest Grove gyms, and other regional facilities. The influence of an exercise leader in building self-efficacy in older adults will be assessed using questionnaires.