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Report on the member of Thesis Council on the Thesis of  
“Socio-psychological features of women with risk of addictive behavior in fitness”

Submitted for the completion of a scientific degree of a candidate of psychological science in  
Specialty  
19.00.05- Social Psychology by Felsendorff Olga Vladimirovna  
at Saint-Petersburg State University

### Summary Recommendation

I am honored to submit my positive review and recommendation letter for acceptance of the scientific degree of a candidate of psychological science submitted by Felsendorff Olga Vladimirovna.

### General Comments

This candidate has investigated the socio-psychological features of women highlighting their risk of addictive behavior associated with physical fitness activities. This dissertation focuses on an understudied topic and makes a novel contribution to the increasing scientific research on behavioral addictions. The outlined sections, format, structure, and content of this dissertation are consistent with generally accepted standards among doctoral candidates. I reviewed the English language version of the dissertation, which was remarkably well written, especially given English is a second language for the candidate. The manuscript offers establishes the importance and relevance of the topic, reporting on existing literature, and establish the need for the candidate’s research.

The candidate draws on existing literature to establish the plausibility of exercise addiction and selects and appropriate sample upon which to investigate her research question. Indeed, given the additional societal demands placed on women to maintain their body image, selecting a female sample was an appropriate choice for this research. The candidate establishes a theoretical and methodological basis for this investigation, citing leading research in the field and appropriate references form the scientific literature.

The research methods are appropriately linked to the research questions and the main conclusions are supported by the statistical analysis. This dissertation yields interesting results and makes a novel contribution to the scientific knowledge in the field.

### Specific Comments

The candidate establishes grounds for her research based on the existing literature. Indeed, she makes a compelling case that women are a vulnerable population worthy of consideration for this research. She also offers appropriate models of addiction to argue her cases that people can become addicted to

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behavior. For instance, she offers the Interactive Model of Exercise Paradox as a plausible model for exercise addiction. Collectively, the purpose of the research and hypothesis are clearly identified and explained.

In her research design, the candidate has selected relevant constructs to consider in her study participants, namely, risk for addiction, emotionally dysregulation, attitudes, facets of personality, and self-esteem. These characteristics allow for a comprehensive analysis of possible correlates of exercise/sports addiction, which by extension, also allow for predictive analysis of risk factors. The candidate has also wisely selected psychometrically validated instruments to measure her constructs of interest.

This study, with its associated statistical evidence, offers explanatory power in helping the reader understand why the participants at risk are not merely devoted to exercise but obsessed with fitness to compensate for body dissatisfaction, poor self-esteem, and personality features such as neuroticism.

The collection of the data from this sample is worthy of comment. Many doctoral students draw on small samples to conduct their analysis. Conversely, this candidate has obtained a large sample of 189 women with a broad range in age, from three different fitness centers in St. Petersburg. This is remarkable and reflects dedication on the part of this candidate to gather a larger than average sample size in a population of Russian women.

The statistical analysis is appropriately chosen to answer the candidate's research question and in fact, does so adequately. Analysis of variance of group differences on the variables of interest establishes the predominance of atypical scores on the study measures among her sample of women attending fitness classes which supports her conclusions. Indeed, the study confirmed the hypothesis of increased risks of sports addiction and eating disorders in women actively involved in sports. Further, dissatisfaction with the image of their own body, both in general and with its individual parameters in women committed to active fitness is observed. The personal portrait of women from the main sample is characterized by neuroticism, spontaneous aggressiveness, depression, irritability, reactive aggressiveness, shyness, emotional lability, masculinity, situational and personal anxiety, as well as reduced self-esteem, both in general and in a number of individual parameters, in particular concerning body image ("appearance" and "body").

Groups are appropriately divided in the study sample, allowing for pairwise comparisons. Subsequently, it was possible to identify non-specific traits (common for all study groups) and specific traits (typical for one or two pairs of the studied groups), as well as predictors of the risk of sports addiction. The obtained data provided support for the basis of a structural model of developing of sports addiction in women committed to active fitness training.

The results are presenting in a clear and concise manner. Of note, the candidate does not go beyond the results of her analysis in the discussion of her findings.

One concern I have, which is minor, but nevertheless important, is the candidate states that her data "proves" the assertions of her hypothesis. "This study proves that the risk of addictive behavior in fitness classes increase as well as the risk of eating disorders..." This may be a mistranslation of a Russian word, but in scientific research, it is not appropriate to use the word "proves" but suggest she use "strongly supports" or something less conclusive if in fact the English translation is correct in applying the word "prove." Elsewhere the word "prove" is used in discussing the research of others. This should likewise be change to "supports" or "provides evidence" or something similar.



### Conclusion

The results of the dissertation are well presented, consist of appropriate statistical analysis, and offer a sophisticated interpretation of scientific merit which demonstrates a solid understanding of research methods and mastering of this topic.

This thesis demonstrates a significant amount of work by the candidate to deliver novel findings supported by quality research. The assertion that the pursuit of sports for health can have addiction potential among women in fitness classes is relevant for the field of exercise fitness and behavioral addictions.

In summary, this dissertation by Felsendorff Olga Vladimirovna is complete, consistent with the expectations for doctoral level research, and the findings offer a novel contribution to existing literature. Subsequently, I offer my recommendation, without reservation, that the dissertation of Felsendorff Olga Vladimirovna presented for the candidate degree in the psychological science be considered as meeting the requirements for the candidate dissertation on specialty 19.00.05- Social Psychology.

Sincerely,



Dr. Rory C. Reid, Ph.D., LCSW  
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry  
Research Psychologist

DATED March 10, 2021

Digitally signed by Dr Rory Reid  
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