

ASSOCIATION OF LEISURE PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT OF OLDER PERSONS IN KEDAH

Wan Abdul Rahim WS¹, Azman NA², Mohd Poot EF², Dahlan A², and Zainudin AF³.

¹Unit of Occupational Therapy, Hospital Rehabilitasi Cheras, Jalan Yaacob Latif, Bandar Tun Razak, 56000 Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

²Centre for Occupational Therapy Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Puncak Alam Campus, 43200 Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

³Rehabilitation Department, Pantai Jerudong Specialist Centre, Jerudong BG3122, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam

Correspondence:

Nur Atiqah Azman,
Centre for Occupational Therapy Studies,
Faculty of Health Sciences,
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Puncak Alam Campus,
43200 Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: atiqahazman@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

Reaching towards ageing nation in 2030, Malaysia prepares its older persons to be in better conditions with provision of a better long-term care emphasizing health, well-being, and quality of life with one of its components to be engaged in leisure activities. Older persons known to occupy their free time with leisure activities as their daily occupation. However, those activities were restricted while pandemic affecting all population globally. This study identified if the leisure participation still engaged by older persons during the post-pandemic era. A cross-sectional study enrolled 137 older persons living in Kedah via purposive sampling. Leisure Participation Questionnaire was utilized to measure the leisure activities participated by the older persons. Majority of older persons engaged in leisure activity during the post pandemic era with reading (n = 107, 78.1%), watching television (n = 98, 71.5%), cooking or baking (n = 94, 68.6%), chat-chatting (n = 88, 64.2%), and less than half spending time with grandchildren (n = 66, 48.2%). Cognitive, productive and recreational leisure activity are dominant among female while male only dominant at social leisure activity. The productive leisure activity shown a significant association with social supports received from family members rather than friends (p < 0.05). Older persons were highly engaged in indoor-type specifically cognitive activities in comparison with outdoor-type recreational activities as their leisure during the post-pandemic era. This findings as an eye opener for the community to engage and expose in various types of leisure. Besides, professional and carers would be responsible to educate and develop significant intervention strategies for integrating leisure as a means of improving quality of life and well-being to promote healthy aging.

Keywords: Older Persons, Leisure Participation, Social Support, Leisure Participation Questionnaire, Kedah

Introduction

Malaysia is fast becoming an aging country as evidenced by the growing older persons population in the country with the expectation that the number would increase even more in the future (1). The older persons in Malaysia will double from 7% to 14% within 28 years only compared to Sweden which has taken time for about 112 years to get the same change (2). The increase of number in the older persons population outlined the need for better long-term care emphasizing health, well-being, and quality of life among older persons (3).

The theoretical foundation in Occupational Therapy (OT) emphasized that occupation has a strong influence on health and well-being (4). From an occupational therapy standpoint, occupations are viewed as everyday activities

that bring meaning and purpose to life, and leisure activity is one of them (5). The importance of leisure activities to the older persons has been well-documented by previous studies with findings showing that leisure participation among the older persons has positive impact on their well-being and quality of life (6-9).

In terms of the types of leisure activities, the older persons generally in Malaysia tend to spend more time socializing with family members and friends in their neighbourhood and frequently participate in gardening activities during their free time (10). Unfortunately, because of the recent Covid-19 pandemic, Malaysia has implemented a movement control order (MCO) that resulted in a travel ban on all interstate and interdistrict borders as well as the ban on social gatherings. The implementation of

MCO raises concerns about how it might affect leisure participation among the older persons population in this country. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the post-pandemic leisure participation and its associated factors among the specific older persons in Kedah, Malaysia. The findings from this study can potentially act as an advancement of knowledge and future practice in relation to leisure participation among older persons in Kedah, Malaysia.

Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study was executed with participation of a total of 137 (n = 137) older persons in Kedah. Prior to enrol and obtain data from respondents, the sheets of informed consent have been issued to all participants for their permission to be involved in the study. The respondents enrolled via a purposive sampling who fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the study, (i) Older population aged 60 years and above; (ii) able to understand instruction from the questionnaire; (iii) older persons Cognitive Assessment Questionnaire (ECAQ) total score 7 and above, while those older population who are having cognitive impairment and critical illness that hinder leisure participation have been excluded from this study.

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of two sections: the first section was used primarily to collect the demographic data of participants and the second section contained the Malay version (10) and English version of the Leisure Participation Questionnaire (LPQ). The questionnaire was distributed through face-to-face medium of invitation with 10 to 15 minutes consumed to complete the questionnaire. Data gathered was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 with using descriptive and inferential statistics for answering the research objectives.

The data has been analysed using SPSS version 26 which Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess the difference of leisure activities via LPQ towards demographic factors. While Kruskal Wallis test used to determine the association between social support and leisure participation. The socio-demographic data were analysed through descriptive analysis.

Results

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the sample in this study. The majority of the respondents were in the young-old group (82.5%), females (64.2%), Malays (78.1%), married and still having spouse (58.4%), received primary education level (48.9%), and staying in the rural area (68.6%). On the other hand, 84.7% of the older persons reported that they had received social support to participate in leisure activities with 65% of them were received social support from their family members.

Table 1: Characteristics of respondents

Factors	Frequency	%
Age (years):		
Young-old (60-74)	113	82.5
Old-old (≥75)	24	17.5
Gender:		
Male	49	35.8
Female	88	64.2
Ethnic:		
Malay	107	78.1
Chinese	11	8.0
Indian	2	1.5
Others (Siamese)	17	12.4
Marital Status:		
Single	3	2.2
Married	80	58.4
Widowed	49	35.8
Divorced	5	3.6
Highest Education Level:		
None	20	14.6
Primary education	67	48.9
Secondary education	42	30.7
Tertiary education	8	5.8
Locality:		
Urban	43	31.4
Rural	94	68.6
Receive social support to participate in leisure activities:		
Yes	116	84.7
No	21	15.3
Main social support received:		
Family member	89	65.0
Peers	27	19.7
None	21	15.3

The distribution of leisure activity carried out by the older persons is reported in Table 2. Overall, the most frequently reported leisure activities were reading (78.1%), watching television (71.5%), cooking or baking for pleasure (68.6%), having conversations while relaxing (64.2%), spending time with grandchildren (48.2%), listening to radio (44.5%), and cleaning or decorating housing area (44.5%). Meanwhile, for the less popular leisure activities were playing golf (100%), using computer (97.1%), performing musical instruments (94.9%), playing sports (93.4%), and attending exhibition (87.6%) which are mainly from recreational and cognitive activity category.

The Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference was found in cognitive activities of males older persons (Mean = 12.59, n = 49) and females older persons (Mean = 13.76, n = 88), U = 2733.5, z = 2.621, p = 0.009, r = 0.22, in social activities of males older persons (Mean = 15.9, n = 49) and females older persons (Mean = 13.16, n = 88), U = 1617, z = 2.433, p = 0.015, r = 0.21 and in productive activities of males older persons (Mean = 10.27, n = 49) and females older persons (Mean = 14.39, n = 88), U = 3133.5, z = 4.409, p = 0.000, r = 0.38 as displayed in Table 3.

Table 2: Leisure participation of the respondents

Leisure Activity	n (%)					
	Everyday (5)	Almost everyday (4)	At least once a week (3)	At least once a month (2)	Once in several months (1)	Never (0)
Recreational Activity (RA):						
1. Exercise (tai-chi, jogging, walking, cycling etc)	28(20.4)	29(21.2)	21(15.3)	3(2.2)	6(4.4)	50(36.5)
2. Going for walks in the park etc	-	1(0.7)	1(0.7)	10(7.3)	10(7.3)	115(83.9)
3. Playing sports (badminton, tennis etc)	3(2.2)	-	-	-	6(4.4)	128(93.4)
4. Playing golf	-	-	-	-	-	137(100)
Cognitive Activity (CA):						
1. Reading (books/Quran/ bible etc)	107(78.1)	6(4.4)	6(4.4)	13(9.5)	1(0.7)	4(2.9)
2. Playing cards, chess, mah-jong etc	1(0.7)	-	-	-	43(31.4)	93(67.9)
3. Using computer / Browsing internet	3(2.2)	-	-	1(0.7)	-	133(97.1)
4. Performing musical instruments	-	-	-	-	7(5.1)	130(94.9)
5. Writing or drawing for pleasure	-	-	-	14(10.2)	28(20.4)	95(69.3)
6. Teaching (tuition / Quran classes)	3(2.2)	3(2.2)	3(2.2)	4(2.9)	26(19)	98(71.5)
7. Watching TV	98(71.5)	14(10.2)	3(2.2)	12(8.8)	8(5.8)	2(1.5)
8. Listening to radio / music	61(44.5)	4(2.9)	4(2.9)	22(16.1)	25(18.2)	21(15.3)
9. Attending exhibition, cultural show, performances etc	-	3(2.2)	-	11(8.0)	3(2.2)	120(87.6)
Social Activity (SA):						
1. Meeting or visiting friends or other family members	14(10.2)	-	7(5.1)	42(30.7)	47(34.3)	27(19.7)
2. Involve in community activities	-	-	-	32(23.4)	28(20.4)	77(56.2)
3. Window shopping	33(24.1)	6(4.4)	16(11.7)	33(24.1)	10(7.3)	39(28.5)
4. Religious activity (going to mosque, Marhaban class etc.)	28(20.4)	27(19.7)	9(6.6)	15(10.9)	26(19)	31(23.4)
5. Having conversations while relaxing	88(64.2)	6(4.4)	5(3.6)	21(15.3)	14(10.2)	3(2.2)
6. Spending time with grandchildren	66(48.2)	2(1.5)	13(9.5)	22(16.1)	23(16.8)	11(8)
Productive Activity (PA):						
1. Cooking/baking for pleasure	94(68.6)	1(0.7)	2(1.5)	13(9.5)	13(9.5)	14(10.2)
2. Rearing or taking care of pets or domestic animals	49(35.8)	-	4(2.9)	25(18.5)	1(0.7)	58(42.3)
3. Gardening	38(27.7)	4(2.9)	25(18.2)	18(13.1)	3(2.2)	49(35.8)
4. Making handicrafts (sewing, knitting etc)	3(2.2)	-	-	13(9.5)	32(23.4)	89(65)
5. Cleaning/decorating housing area	61(44.5)	2(1.5)	24(17.5)	31(22.6)	9(6.6)	10(7.3)
6. Fishing	1(0.7)	-	-	41(29.9)	6(4.4)	89(65)

Table 3: Differences of leisure activities in gender

Variables		Mean Rank	n	U	Z-score	p-value	r-value
Recreational Activity Score	Male	64.19	49	2391.5	1.087	0.277	0.09
	Female	71.68	88				
Cognitive Activity Score	Male	57.21	49	2733.5	2.621	*0.009	0.22
	Female	75.56	88				
Social Activity Score	Male	80.00	49	1617	2.433	*0.015	0.21
	Female	62.88	88				
Productive Activity Score	Male	49.05	49	3133.5	4.409	*0.000	0.38
	Female	80.11	88				

Mann-Whitney U Test

*Significance level $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows the pattern of perceived social support received by respondents during participating in leisure activities. The Kruskal Wallis Test revealed a significant association was found in productive activity category across

three different social support received during performing leisure activities (Family member, $n = 89$, Friends, $n = 27$, None, $n = 21$), $X^2 = 7.137$, $p = 0.028$ with social support received from family members was found to be the main predictor for leisure participation.

Table 4: Association between perceived social support and leisure participation

Variables		n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	χ^2	p-value
Recreational Activity Score	Family member	89	2.84	2.276	59.76	0.903	0.637
	Friends	27			54.33		
	None	21					
Cognitive Activity Score	Family member	89	13.34	4.056	59.59	0.769	0.681
	Friends	27			54.91		
	None	21					
Social Activity Score	Family member	89	14.14	6.605	58.11	0.081	0.960
	Friends	27			59.78		
	None	21					
Productive Activity Score	Family member	89	12.91	5.444	61.71	7.137	*0.028
	Friends	27			47.93		
	None	21					

Kruskal-Wallis Test

*Significance level $p < 0.05$

Discussion

Current leisure participation

The result from this study suggested and agreed with previous study (11) during pre-pandemic, older persons in the post-pandemic era were more likely to involve in cognitive activities compared to other categories of leisure, with reading and watching television being the two most popular leisure activity. Reading is quite synonym among the older persons population as it is perceived as a form of activity that continues to sustain people as they grow older and does so more strongly in comparison to other leisure activities (11). The high involvement in watching television among the older persons is likely due to the

wide availability and access to television in most of today's households (12).

In addition to that, these findings could also be related to the post-impact of the pandemic era as the older persons were used to their indoor routines after the implementation of strict Movement Control Order (MCO) during the pandemic of Covid-19. Meanwhile, this study revealed that playing golf was the least popular leisure activity with zero participation recorded. The absence of golf-related facilities and cultural reasons could have played a significant role contributed to this. Golf is perceived by most people as a western sport and only for those who are rich and of high status (13).

Pattern of leisure participation according to gender

This study also revealed that there were significant gender differences found in leisure participation among post-pandemic older persons within the category of social activities and productive activities in which female older persons were found to be more actively involved in both social activities and productive activities compared to male older persons. This could be related to the personal qualities of women (14), stated that women possessed communal qualities that include selflessness, concern for others, and a desire to be one with others. The high involvement of female older persons in productive activities could probably be related to the traditional view of gender role preferences in which activities such as cooking and cleaning are viewed more as feminine tasks (15).

Association between leisure participation and social support among older persons

This study shows that there is a significant association between perceived social support and productive activities in which items such as rearing or taking care of pets, gardening, and making handcrafts were found to be associated with perceived social support. However, there is no significant association found between perceived social support and the other categories of leisure activities in this study.

In contrast, previous finding reported friends as the main source of social support among the older persons (10), which this study revealed that support received from family members was found to be the most common source of support reported among the post-pandemic older persons. The differences in findings could be related to the impact of the pandemic era which prohibited visits between people, especially non-family members, and subsequently led to closer bonding between older persons and family members. Post-pandemic older persons may be used to the new norms and thus, still rely on family as their main source of social support.

Conclusion

This study concluded that the post-pandemic era has an impact on leisure participation among the older persons as evidenced by the high involvement in leisure participation related to indoor-type cognitive activities such as reading and watching tv in comparison with outdoor-type recreational activities. The post-pandemic older persons might still have fear of contracting the virus and coupled with the instilled compliance with the new norms from during the pandemic era, may have led them to continue with their leisure routine even after the pandemic. The implementation of MCO during the pandemic era also developed closer bondage between the older persons and their family member as they spent more time with their family than with friends. Therefore, social support received from family members played an important role in leisure participation among the post-pandemic older persons.

As Malaysia is expected to become an aging country soon, it is important to outline the need for better long-term care emphasizing health, well-being, and quality of life among the older persons. Through leisure involvement, the older persons develop positive emotions, social relationships, learning skills, and knowledge. Therefore, emphasizing leisure involvement as a means of improving quality of life and well-being is important to promote healthy aging.

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Competing interests

The authors of this publication would like to declare that there is no conflict of interest for the publication of this research. This study also was completely borne by the researchers with no any financial resources granted.

Ethical clearance

This study has been granted an ethical approval prior to conduct this study from the university Ethical Committee, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) (FERC/FSK/MR/2022/0150).

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