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**Influence of Recreational Activities on Quality of Life in Retirees in
Canada**

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**Influence of Recreational Activities on Quality of
Life in Retirees in Canada**



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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to analyze the influence of recreational activities on quality of life in retirees in Canada.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Recreational activities significantly enhance retirees' quality of life in Canada by improving physical health, reducing loneliness, and increasing life satisfaction. Activities like walking, gardening, and community involvement boost well-being and mental health. Structured programs offered by community centers also contribute to retirees' sense of purpose and belonging. Access to varied recreational options and social networks is essential for maintaining high life quality. Tailoring activities to individual interests and abilities is key to long-term benefits.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Activity theory, self-determination theory (SDT), socioemotional selectivity theory (SST) may be used to anchor future studies on influence of recreational activities on quality of life in retirees in Canada. Practitioners should design and implement customized recreational programs tailored to the specific needs, preferences, and health conditions of retirees. Policymakers should allocate resources and funding to support recreational programs specifically designed for retirees.

Keywords: *Recreational Activities, Quality, Life, Retirees*

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of life in retirees from developed economies such as the USA and Japan is generally characterized by high standards of healthcare, financial stability, and social engagement. In the USA, retirees benefit from comprehensive Medicare coverage, with 92% of Americans aged 65 and older having health insurance as of 2019 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). This access to healthcare significantly enhances their quality of life. In Japan, a robust pension system and a cultural emphasis on respect for the elderly contribute to a high quality of life for retirees. Japan's elderly population is expected to comprise 28.7% of the total population by 2030, highlighting the country's focus on supporting its aging citizens (World Bank, 2021).

The quality of life for retirees in developed economies such as the United Kingdom and Germany is marked by robust social welfare systems, excellent healthcare services, and various community engagement opportunities. In the UK, retirees benefit from the National Health Service (NHS), which provides comprehensive healthcare services. According to a report by the UK Office for National Statistics, 87% of retirees in the UK are satisfied with their healthcare services (ONS, 2020). In Germany, the statutory pension insurance scheme ensures financial stability for retirees, with 75% of the elderly population reporting financial security (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2021). Additionally, Germany's extensive social services and community programs promote an active and fulfilling lifestyle for retirees.

The quality of life for retirees in countries like Canada and Australia is generally high due to strong healthcare systems, financial stability, and active aging policies. In Canada, retirees benefit from a comprehensive healthcare system and robust social security programs. According to Statistics Canada, 90% of Canadian retirees' report being satisfied with their retirement life, attributed to the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security benefits (Statistics Canada, 2019). In Australia, the combination of a universal healthcare system (Medicare) and the Superannuation pension scheme ensures that retirees enjoy a good quality of life. Research indicates that 88% of Australian retirees have adequate financial resources to support their retirement (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Sweden and South Korea, the quality of life for retirees is generally high due to well-developed social welfare systems, excellent healthcare, and supportive community services. In Sweden, the universal healthcare system and generous pension schemes contribute to a high quality of life for retirees. According to Statistics Sweden, 89% of Swedish retiree's report being satisfied with their overall quality of life, thanks to the comprehensive pension and healthcare systems (Statistics Sweden, 2019). In South Korea, the National Pension Scheme and the availability of quality healthcare services ensure financial stability and health security for retirees. About 83% of South Korean retirees report having sufficient financial resources to maintain their standard of living (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2020).

In developing economies, the quality of life for retirees often faces challenges due to limited access to healthcare, inadequate pension systems, and less robust social support networks. For example, in Brazil, while there have been improvements, many retirees still struggle with healthcare accessibility and financial insecurity. The Brazilian government has increased healthcare spending, yet 30% of the elderly population reports difficulties in accessing medical services

(Silva, 2019). In India, the quality of life for retirees is often compromised by insufficient pension coverage and reliance on family support, with only about 12% of the workforce covered by formal pension schemes (OECD, 2019). Mexico and South Africa, retirees often face challenges related to healthcare access, financial stability, and social support. In Mexico, despite improvements in the healthcare system, many retirees struggle with insufficient pension income and limited healthcare services. Approximately 40% of retirees in Mexico report financial difficulties and inadequate access to healthcare (INEGI, 2019). In South Africa, the situation is similarly challenging, with only 30% of the elderly population receiving formal pension benefits, leading to high levels of poverty among retirees (Statistics South Africa, 2020). However, community and family support play a crucial role in mitigating these challenges. India and China, retirees face varying degrees of challenges related to healthcare, financial stability, and social support. In India, many retirees rely on family support and savings due to inadequate pension coverage. The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) reports that only 12% of the elderly in India have formal pension coverage, resulting in financial insecurity for many retirees (NSSO, 2019). In China, the situation is improving with the expansion of the social security system, but disparities still exist between urban and rural retirees. Approximately 80% of urban retirees in China receive pensions, compared to only 30% in rural areas (China National Committee on Aging, 2020).

Indonesia and the Philippines, retirees face challenges related to healthcare access, financial security, and social support. In Indonesia, many retirees rely on family support due to inadequate pension coverage. The Indonesian National Social Security System reports that only 10% of the elderly have formal pension coverage, leading to financial insecurity (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, 2019). In the Philippines, the situation is similarly challenging, with many retirees depending on informal support networks and personal savings. Approximately 15% of the elderly in the Philippines have access to formal pension income (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020).

Retirees in sub-Saharan economies face significant challenges related to healthcare, financial security, and social support systems. In Kenya, for instance, the absence of a comprehensive national pension system means many retirees rely on personal savings and family support, leading to financial instability. Only 3% of the elderly in Kenya receive formal pension benefits (International Labour Organization, 2021). In Nigeria, the situation is similar, with limited access to healthcare and inadequate pension coverage affecting the quality of life for retirees. A mere 5% of the elderly population in Nigeria has access to any form of pension income (World Bank, 2020). In sub-Saharan economies like Ghana and Tanzania, retirees often experience significant challenges due to inadequate pension systems, limited healthcare services, and economic instability. In Ghana, a lack of comprehensive pension coverage means many retirees rely on informal support networks and personal savings, leading to financial insecurity. Only about 5% of the elderly in Ghana receive formal pension benefits (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020). In Tanzania, retirees face similar issues, with insufficient healthcare services and limited financial support, resulting in a high prevalence of poverty among the elderly. Approximately 8% of retirees in Tanzania have access to any form of pension income (World Bank, 2021).

Nigeria and Uganda, retirees often experience significant challenges due to inadequate pension systems, limited healthcare services, and economic instability. In Nigeria, many retirees face financial insecurity and poor healthcare access, with only 5% of the elderly receiving formal

pension benefits (National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, 2020). In Uganda, similar issues persist, with many retirees relying on informal support networks and personal savings, leading to financial hardships. Only 4% of the elderly in Uganda have access to formal pension income (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Kenya and Zimbabwe, retirees often experience significant challenges due to inadequate pension systems, limited healthcare services, and economic instability. In Kenya, many retirees face financial insecurity and poor healthcare access, with only 3% of the elderly receiving formal pension benefits (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). In Zimbabwe, the situation is similarly challenging, with retirees relying on informal support networks and personal savings, leading to financial hardships. Only about 5% of the elderly in Zimbabwe have access to formal pension income (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2020).

Recreational activities are defined as voluntary engagements in activities during leisure time that are intended to provide enjoyment, relaxation, and personal satisfaction. These activities play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for retirees by promoting physical health, mental well-being, social engagement, and overall life satisfaction. Four common recreational activities among retirees include walking, gardening, swimming, and participating in social clubs. Walking is a low-impact exercise that improves cardiovascular health and reduces stress (Cunningham & O'Sullivan, 2019). Gardening provides a sense of purpose and connection to nature, contributing to mental health and emotional well-being (Van den Berg & Custers, 2011).

Swimming offers a full-body workout that helps maintain physical fitness and reduce the risk of chronic diseases, while also providing a relaxing and therapeutic experience (Agnew & Phillips, 2017). Participation in social clubs fosters social interactions and community involvement, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness among retirees (Kelly, 2019). These recreational activities collectively contribute to a higher quality of life by addressing various aspects of health and well-being, demonstrating their importance in the lives of retirees. Therefore, encouraging retirees to engage in these activities can significantly enhance their overall life satisfaction and health outcomes (Bowling, 2014).

Problem Statement

The quality of life in retirees is a critical issue that affects their physical health, mental well-being, and overall life satisfaction. Despite the well-documented benefits of recreational activities, many retirees do not engage in regular physical or social activities, leading to potential declines in their quality of life (Cunningham & O'Sullivan, 2019; Kelly, 2019). With the increasing global aging population, understanding the influence of recreational activities on retirees' quality of life has become imperative. Recent studies suggest that activities such as walking, gardening, swimming, and participation in social clubs significantly enhance physical fitness, mental health, and social engagement among retirees (Agnew & Phillips, 2017; Van den Berg & Custers, 2011). However, there is a need for comprehensive research to explore the extent to which these activities impact various aspects of retirees' lives and to identify barriers that may prevent them from participating in such beneficial activities (Bowling, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Activity Theory

Posits that staying active and engaged is crucial for the well-being and life satisfaction of older adults. Originated by Robert J. Havighurst in 1961, this theory suggests that maintaining social roles and participating in meaningful activities contribute to higher levels of happiness and better health outcomes. The theory emphasizes the importance of continued social interaction and physical activity for retirees. In the context of recreational activities, such as walking, gardening, and participating in social clubs, the theory supports the notion that these activities can enhance the quality of life for retirees by keeping them physically active and socially engaged. Recent research corroborates the positive impact of continued activity on retirees' well-being, highlighting the relevance of Activity Theory in understanding how recreational activities influence the quality of life (Wang, 2020).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Emphasizes the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering motivation and psychological well-being. Developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in the mid-1980s, SDT suggests that individuals thrive when their basic psychological needs are met through self-chosen and meaningful activities. This theory is highly relevant to the study of recreational activities and quality of life in retirees, as it highlights how activities that retirees find personally fulfilling and self-directed can significantly improve their quality of life. Engaging in activities chosen for themselves can fulfill retirees' needs for autonomy and competence, leading to greater life satisfaction and well-being. The emphasis on self-directed, meaningful activities aligns well with the benefits observed in retirees who participate in recreational activities (Ryan & Deci, 2018).

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST)

Proposed by Laura L. Carstensen in the 1990s, posits that as people age, their time perspective changes, leading them to prioritize emotionally meaningful activities and relationships. According to SST, older adults become more selective in their social interactions, focusing on activities that enhance their emotional well-being. This theory is particularly relevant to understanding why retirees may prefer engaging in recreational activities that provide emotional satisfaction and foster close social bonds. Activities such as social clubs and community engagements are likely to be highly valued by retirees, contributing significantly to their quality of life. SST provides a framework for understanding the emotional and social dimensions of recreational activities, explaining their importance in enhancing life satisfaction among retirees (Carstensen, 2019).

Empirical Review

Cunningham and O'Sullivan (2019) investigated the impact of walking on physical and mental health among retirees. They conducted a longitudinal study involving 500 retirees, utilizing physical health assessments and mental health surveys to collect data over a period of two years. The findings indicated that regular walking significantly improved cardiovascular health and reduced symptoms of depression among the participants. Participants who walked regularly experienced lower blood pressure, improved heart health, and fewer depressive symptoms compared to those who did not engage in regular walking. Based on these results, the authors recommended the establishment of walking groups and the development of community walking paths to promote regular physical activity among retirees. This study underscores the importance

of walking as a simple yet effective recreational activity to enhance retirees' quality of life, emphasizing its role in promoting both physical and mental well-being.

Van den Berg and Custers (2018) examined the role of gardening in enhancing the well-being of elderly individuals. Their mixed-methods study involved 300 retirees, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to explore the impact of gardening on well-being. The results showed that gardening activities were linked to improved mood, increased life satisfaction, and reduced stress levels among retirees. Retirees who engaged in gardening reported feeling a sense of accomplishment and connection to nature, which contributed to their overall happiness and emotional health. Based on these findings, the authors recommended the development of community gardens and the provision of gardening workshops for retirees, suggesting that such initiatives could provide significant mental health benefits and enhance the quality of life for the elderly.

Agnew and Phillips (2017) analyzed the effects of swimming on physical fitness and quality of life in older adults. Conducting a controlled trial with 200 retirees, they measured physical fitness and quality of life indicators before and after a structured swimming program. The findings revealed that swimming significantly improved physical fitness, including enhanced muscle strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance, as well as overall quality of life. Participants reported feeling more physically capable and enjoying better general health, which in turn positively influenced their mood and social interactions. The authors recommended providing access to swimming facilities and organizing swim classes specifically tailored for retirees to maximize these health benefits.

Kelly (2019) explored the impact of participation in social clubs on the social well-being of retirees. Using a survey study with 250 retirees, Kelly employed social well-being scales to assess the effects of social club participation on loneliness and social support. The study found that participation in social clubs significantly reduced feelings of loneliness and increased social support among retirees. Those who participated in social clubs felt more connected to their communities and reported higher levels of satisfaction with their social lives. Kelly recommended promoting social clubs and group activities within retirement communities to help alleviate loneliness and enhance social networks among retirees, highlighting the social benefits of these recreational activities.

Gothe and McAuley (2018) investigated the influence of yoga on stress levels and mental health in elderly populations. Their quasi-experimental study involved 150 retirees, measuring stress and mental health indicators before and after a 12-week yoga program. The results showed that regular yoga practice significantly reduced stress levels and improved mental health outcomes, including reductions in anxiety and depression. Participants also reported improved sleep quality and a greater sense of relaxation and overall well-being. The authors recommended implementing regular yoga sessions in community centers and retirement homes to provide retirees with an accessible and effective means of improving their mental health and quality of life.

Wayne and Kaptchuk (2018) investigated the benefits of tai chi on physical and mental health among elderly individuals. The study involved 180 retirees, assessing physical health measures such as balance and flexibility, as well as mental well-being indicators. Their findings indicated

that tai chi significantly improved balance, flexibility, and mental health, with participants reporting reduced anxiety, better mobility, and increased confidence in their physical abilities. The study recommended offering tai chi classes in senior centers to promote physical and mental health, emphasizing the gentle, accessible nature of tai chi as an ideal exercise for older adults.

Morrow-Howell, Hong and Tang (2019) evaluated the impact of volunteering on the life satisfaction and mental health of retirees. Using a cross-sectional study design with 220 retirees, they employed life satisfaction and mental health surveys to explore the effects of volunteering. The findings indicated that retirees who engaged in volunteer activities reported higher life satisfaction and better mental health, including lower levels of depression and anxiety. Volunteering provided retirees with a sense of purpose and opportunities for social interaction, contributing to their overall well-being. The authors recommended encouraging volunteer opportunities tailored to retirees' skills and interests to maximize the benefits of volunteering on their quality of life.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Gaps: Cunningham and O'Sullivan (2019) focused on individual recreational activities such as walking, while other studies by Van den Berg, Agnew, and others examine activities like gardening, swimming, and social clubs. There is a conceptual gap in comparing the relative effectiveness of these different activities on various aspects of quality of life in retirees. Future research could explore which activities have the most significant impact on physical, mental, and social well-being when compared directly. Van den Berg (2018) and other researchers measure specific outcomes like cardiovascular health, depression, mood, physical fitness, and social support, but do not always provide a comprehensive view of overall well-being. Integrating broader measures of holistic well-being, which include cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental aspects, could offer a more complete understanding of how recreational activities influence retirees' quality of life. Agnew and Phillips (2017) assess the short-term benefits of recreational activities, but there is a need for longitudinal studies that investigate the long-term impacts of these activities on retirees' quality of life. Considering sustained engagement and potential long-term health benefits or risks is crucial for understanding the full impact of recreational activities.

Contextual Gaps: Kelly (2019) focused on a relatively homogeneous group of retirees without considering the diversity in terms of socioeconomic status, cultural background, and previous health conditions. Future research should address how different subgroups of retirees might experience and benefit from recreational activities differently. Gothe and McAuley (2018)

recommend various recreational activities but do not extensively explore the barriers that retirees face in accessing and engaging in these activities. Understanding these barriers, such as financial constraints, physical limitations, or lack of social support, could inform more effective intervention strategies. Wayne and Kaptchuk (2018) suggest general recommendations for promoting recreational activities, but there is a need for research on customized interventions that cater to individual preferences and abilities. Ensuring that activities are tailored to meet the unique needs of different retirees can enhance their effectiveness and accessibility.

Geographical Gaps: Cunningham and O’Sullivan (2019) and others primarily conduct studies in Western countries, such as the USA and European nations. There is a geographical gap in understanding how recreational activities impact retirees' quality of life in non-Western contexts, including Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Van den Berg (2018) conducts research primarily in urban settings, which might not represent the experiences of retirees living in rural areas. Future studies should explore how recreational activities affect retirees in rural communities, where access to facilities and social networks might differ significantly. Kelly (2019) focuses on the impact of recreational activities in a single cultural setting, but there is a lack of cross-cultural studies comparing the impact of recreational activities on retirees' quality of life across different cultural settings. Understanding cultural variations in recreational preferences and their outcomes can provide insights into more universally applicable and culturally sensitive interventions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The influence of recreational activities on the quality of life in retirees is profound and multifaceted, reflecting significant improvements in physical, mental, and social well-being. Evidence from recent studies highlights that engaging in activities such as walking, gardening, swimming, social club participation, yoga, tai chi, and volunteering can lead to enhanced cardiovascular health, reduced symptoms of depression, improved social connections, and overall life satisfaction among retirees. These activities offer a range of benefits, including physical fitness, stress reduction, emotional stability, and opportunities for social interaction, which collectively contribute to a higher quality of life. However, gaps remain in understanding the relative effectiveness of different activities, the long-term impact of sustained engagement, and the barriers faced by diverse retiree populations. Future research should focus on addressing these gaps by comparing various activities, exploring long-term effects, and identifying strategies to overcome participation barriers. By fostering a comprehensive approach to recreational engagement, policymakers and community planners can better support retirees in achieving optimal well-being and enhancing their quality of life.

Recommendations

Theory

Future research should develop and apply integrated theoretical models that encompass physical, mental, and social dimensions of well-being to better understand the impact of recreational activities. By synthesizing elements from existing theories, such as the Biopsychosocial Model and the Salutogenic Model, researchers can offer a more comprehensive framework for analyzing how various activities affect retirees' quality of life. This approach could reveal interactions

between different domains of well-being and provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which recreational activities influence overall health. Theoretical advancements can be achieved by conducting longitudinal studies that examine the long-term effects of recreational activities on retirees' quality of life. Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts can refine existing theories by identifying varying impacts of activities on diverse populations. These theoretical contributions would enhance the understanding of how recreational activities sustain their benefits over time and across different settings.

Practice

Practitioners should design and implement customized recreational programs tailored to the specific needs, preferences, and health conditions of retirees. By incorporating findings from research on the effectiveness of different activities, such as walking, gardening, and swimming, practitioners can develop personalized interventions that maximize health benefits and improve overall quality of life. Programs should also be adaptable to accommodate individual limitations and preferences, ensuring higher participation rates and greater impact. Community organizations should establish and support recreational facilities and programs that cater to retirees. Examples include creating accessible walking paths, community gardens, swimming pools, and social clubs. Collaborating with local health professionals and retirees themselves can ensure that these initiatives address the actual needs and interests of the elderly population, thereby enhancing their engagement and well-being.

Policy

Policymakers should allocate resources and funding to support recreational programs specifically designed for retirees. This includes investing in infrastructure such as community centers, parks, and pools, as well as funding for workshops and classes that promote physical, mental, and social activities. Policies should also incentivize partnerships between public and private sectors to expand the availability and variety of recreational opportunities. Policy development should incorporate metrics related to recreational activities and their impact on retirees' health and well-being. By including these metrics in health and social policy frameworks, policymakers can better evaluate the effectiveness of recreational programs and make data-driven decisions to enhance retirees' quality of life. This approach will support evidence-based policy-making and ensure that recreational activities are recognized as a key component of holistic elderly care.

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