

THE INFLUENCE OF LEISURE RESOURCEFULNESS AND RECREATION SPECIALIZATION ON LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG A SAMPLE OF SENIOR ADULTS

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Abstract.—The quest for quality of life and individual happiness is, in part, associated with the individual's ability to identify his/her own needs at a point in time along the life cycle continuum and having the ability to translate those needs into activity spheres or recreation activities. This research is an examination of recreational career participants among a sample of senior adults. Each respondent's scores for leisure resourcefulness and recreation specialization were used as predictor variables to examine their relationship with the respondent's average score on a life satisfaction continuum. Results of the analyses indicate that leisure attitude and leisure companions are significant predictors of life satisfaction among the sample respondents. Moreover, higher recreation specialization, one's commitment, and one's involvement in a career or specialized recreation activity are significant predictors of life satisfaction.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to provide researchers and practitioners additional knowledge concerning leisure services provision for senior adults by examining the influence of recreation specialization and leisure resourcefulness on life satisfaction. Over time senior adults who have developed a higher degree of involvement and commitment to a specific recreation activity and an ability to identify and engage in meeting his/her leisure needs will experience higher life satisfaction.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Leisure Resourcefulness

Rapoport and Rapoport (1975) published a book titled, *Leisure and the Family Life Cycle*. This work has become a standard reference in this area of leisure research. In an exploration of leisure influences on individual lifestyles by way of case studies, the authors advance the concept of leisure resourcefulness. Presumably a person

who has a higher degree of leisure resourcefulness will also experience a higher quality of life and greater life satisfaction. There are two basic tenets of this concept. First, one must know how to and be able to make a meaningful life for him/herself within the realities of his/her own existence, and, second, one must know how to and be able to change those realities to effect an appropriate leisure lifestyle or one's mode or manner of personal expression during nonwork time. The authors go on to state that leisure resourcefulness is not constant from one person to another nor is it constant over the life span. Personal or situational variables may intercede, such as the loss of one's spouse or birth of one's child, that may influence one's leisure resourcefulness. That is, leisure resourcefulness varies with one's adaptive abilities and one's personality across life cycle stages. If resourceful in their leisure, the elderly, having large blocks of free time, will recognize or at least be aware of their needs at a point in time and know how to and be able to translate their needs into spheres of action or meaningful recreation activities.

2.2 Recreation Specialization

The initial conceptualization of recreation specialization was Bryan's (1977) descriptive study of fishermen in the northwest United States. Bryan stated that characteristic patterns of participation occur as fishermen "move through stages in their 'fishing career'" from an occasional fisherman to a generalist, a technique specialist, and ultimately to a technique-setting specialist. Each stage is characterized by increasing degrees of sophistication in fishing equipment, specific resource types, and changing membership in the fisherman's social group—the fisherman moves from family participation to eventual membership in a group of fellow specialists. Bryan (1979) applied the concept of specialization to a wide variety of recreation activities. Bryan (2000) went on to state that concurrent with continued specialization in a recreation activity are clusters of attitudes and values as to the meaning of the activity and its centrality to one's identity. Scott and Shafer (2001) concluded from multiple studies of recreation specialization that

Table 1.—Life Satisfaction Scale Items¹ and Reliability Score

Scale Items
1. As I grow older, things seem better than I thought.
2. I have gotten more of the breaks in life than most.
3. I am just as happy as when I was younger.
4. These are the best years of my life.
5. *Most of the things I do are boring.
6. I expect some pleasant things to happen to me.
7. The things I do are as interesting to me as they ever were.
8. *I feel old and somewhat tired.
9. As I look back on life, I am fairly well satisfied.
10. I have made plans for things I'll be doing a month from now.
11. *When I think back over my life, I didn't get most of the important things I wanted.
12. *Compared to other people, I get down in the dumps too often.
Cronbach's Alpha=.803

¹Adapted from R. J. Havinghurst, B. L. Neugarten, and S. S. Tobin. (1961). The measurement of life satisfaction. *Journal of Gerontology*, 16, 134-143.

Scale items were measured on a five point scale: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree.

*Items were reverse coded for internal consistency.

“beyond the recognition that recreational specialization includes a set of behaviors and attitudes, there remains little agreement about how precisely to characterize and measure the construct” (p. 326).

A 15-item scale was developed based upon Bryan's (1977) conceptualization of recreation specialization: the social group, knowledge of the activity, place of participation, equipment, commitment, and stage of development. The respondent was asked to either agree or disagree with each item (Ricciardo 2004).

The scale used to measure life satisfaction was a standardized scale adapted from Havinghurst et al. (1961). The scale items are provided in Table 1.

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objectives of this research were to (1) examine the relationship between life satisfaction and leisure resourcefulness among the sample population, and (2) examine the relationship between life satisfaction and recreation specialization among the sample population.

4.0 DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE

The data collection instrument was a self-administered questionnaire. Data were collected by commuter students enrolled in recreation courses. Students enrolled in each

of three courses are residents of a large metropolitan area. Each student was given five questionnaires with instructions to provide one questionnaire per household to an adult 65 years of age or older who may be a family member, relative, friend, or acquaintance. The sample size was 172 respondents.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Description of the Sample Population

Eighty-six percent of the sample respondents were Caucasian and approximately six percent were African American. The average age was 68 with an approximately equal number of males and females. Sixty percent of the respondents were married and 57 percent lived at home with their spouse. One-third of the sample had earned a college or advanced degree. Fifty-five percent had graduated either from high school, or tech school, or experienced some college. Forty percent of the respondents had an income of less than \$40,000 and 36 percent had incomes between \$40,000 and \$70,000. Eighteen percent had incomes greater than \$70,000. Fifty percent of the sample population reported having one or two sources of income in their retirement, and 50 percent experience three or four sources of income. Fifty-eight percent of the sample had worked at their occupations for 30 or more years. Seventy-two percent of the respondents reported their present health as excellent or good, and

Table 2.—Results of Multiple Regression Analysis of the Life Satisfaction Scale¹ and Average Scores for Each of Five Leisure Resourcefulness Scales

Leisure Resourcefulness Scales	Average Score	Alphas	Beta	t	p
Leisure Time	3.33	.693	.090	1.05	.295
Leisure Knowledge	3.27	.819	.002	.018	.986
Leisure Attitude	2.14	.824	.261	2.27	.025
Leisure Companions	2.62	.896	.182	2.15	.033
Leisure Equipment	2.35	.887	.103	1.14	.254

Model Summary

$R = .493$ $R^2 = .243$ $R^2_{adj} = .216$ $F(5, 140) = 9.00, p < .000$

¹ The respondent's average for the 12-item Life Satisfaction Scale (from 1, Strongly Agree, to 5, Strongly Disagree) was used as the dependent variable.

86 percent of the respondents stated that they have their own transportation.

5.2 Life Satisfaction and Leisure Resourcefulness

Five subscales were designed to measure leisure resourcefulness: Leisure time, leisure knowledge, leisure attitude, leisure companions, and leisure equipment. Each scale consisted of 10 items and each response was a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Ricciardo 2004). The subscales and the average score for each scale and associated reliability scores (alphas) are provided in Table 2. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between life satisfaction and leisure resourcefulness (Table 2). The respondent's average score for the 12-item life satisfaction scale was used as the dependent variable. The respondent's average score for each of the five subscales of the leisure resourcefulness scale was used as an independent variable.

Both leisure attitude and leisure companions were significant predictors of the respondent's life satisfaction. The explained variance is 24 percent.

5.3 Life Satisfaction and Recreation Specialization

Results of factor analysis of the 15-item recreation specialization scale are in Table 3. Four factors account for 47 percent of the variance. Four factors were identified: knowledge, novice, commitment, and involvement. The scores for each of the four factors

were saved and used as independent variables. The respondent's average score for the 12-item life satisfaction scale was used as the dependent variable. Results of multiple regression analysis indicate significance for three of the four factors from the recreation specialization scale: novice, commitment, and involvement (Table 4). The beta weight for novice is negative, so as the level of novitiate goes down, the level of specialization increases. The explained variance is 11 percent.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Earlier research of this sample population in light of recreation participation over the life span indicated that respondents had developed career or specialized recreation activities (Ricciardo 2004). In the data collection instrument the respondent was asked: "What leisure activity/hobby have you been participating in the longest, for example, you may have been fishing or collecting since childhood, play a musical instrument, play cards?"

Life span recreation participation indicted a variety of recreational pursuits, for example, sporting activities, crafts, table games, fishing/hunting, collecting, baking/cooking, and so on. The average reported number of years participating in all hobbies or career activities was 42.8 years with a range of one year (computers) to 67 years (baking/cooking).

Among the sample respondents leisure attitudes were a significant predictor of life satisfaction. Attitudes

Table 3.—Factor Analysis Results of the 15-Item Recreation Specialization Scale

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.516	16.775	16.775
2	1.841	12.275	29.050
3	1.459	9.725	38.775
4	1.235	8.236	47.011

Rotated Component Matrix and Factor Scores

Component	1	2	3	4
Scale Item				
Taught ¹	.814			
Equipment ²	.703			
Beginner ³		.747		
Started ⁴		.543		
Books ⁵			.710	
Life ⁶			.616	
Goodas ⁷				.771
Vacations ⁸				.691

¹ I have taught this activity to others.² I require specialized equipment to participate in this activity.³ I am a beginner in this activity.⁴ I just started participating in this activity.⁵ I have read a lot of books about this activity.⁶ This activity is an important part of my life.⁷ I mostly participate with others as good as I am.⁸ I go on vacations just to participate in this activity.**Table 4.—Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Life Satisfaction¹ and Four Dimensions of Recreation Specialization²**

Specialization Dimension	Beta	t	p
Factor 1, Knowledge	-.124	-1.60	.111
Factor 2, Novice	-.161	-2.08	.039
Factor 3, Commitment	.217	2.81	.006
Factor 4, Involvement	.176	2.28	.024

Model Summary

$R = .333$ $R^2 = .111$ $R^2_{adj} = .087$ $F(4, 150) = 4.66$,
 $p < .001$

¹ The respondent's average for the 12-item Life Satisfaction Scale (from 1, Strongly Agree, to 5, Strongly Disagree) was used as the dependent variable.² Factor scores for the four factor solution of the 15-item Recreation Specialization Scale were used as independent variables.

influence one's predisposition to behave or not to behave in a certain way and therefore act as determinants of human behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). To develop career recreation activities, attitudes over time remained sufficiently strong, with stability of beliefs in the value and benefits sought from participation in the career activity. Evident also are the persistent effort in engaging

in the activity over time and the dedication of resources to identify a career recreation activity.

Leisure companions significantly influenced life satisfaction among the sample respondents. Cheek and Burch (1976) discuss the concept of leisure social worlds that are evident by a sense of social belonging (being

“at home”) and a shared scheme of order where one participates with others similar enough to themselves that normative constraints, although not absent, are present at a very low level of awareness. Membership is often restricted to others having similar knowledge, commitment, involvement, and skill levels. The shared scheme of order provides stability and continuity to the group and serves to maintain the intragroup bond even over prolonged periods of time (Cheek & Burch 1976). Commitment and involvement among career recreation activity participants significantly influenced one’s life satisfaction, according to the findings in this research. Research by Doty (1986) found that a positive self-concept and a sense of competence significantly contributed to life satisfaction among senior adults.

Rapoport and Rapoport (1975) identify these individuals as highly adaptive and resourceful in their leisure. The authors state that such individuals act as role models for other elderly. They are a resource in the community often untapped for their potential to provide knowledge, demonstrations, advice, instruction, and displays of individual ingenuity, creativity, and craftsmanship. As a means of pride and sharing with others in their leisure social worlds, the elderly will display their products and/or skills with others both as a point of pride and a display of their mastery and competency. Such expressions of competence and ability are important in providing a sense of selfhood and identity at any age (Freysinger & Kelly 2004).

7.0 CITATIONS

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