

Leisure Activity in the Third Age

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Abstract

Introduction: Leisure activity is a pleasant and social activity which tries to revitalize the individual through the experience acquired in his spare time.

Purpose: The purpose of this review study is to investigate the contribution of leisure activity to the health promotion of elderly people.

Material and review methods: An extensive review of the relevant literature was performed via electronic databases (Medline, Scopus) and international journals.

Results: The elderly are a respectable and important part of our society and the issues related to older people should be treated in a serious manner. This is why our society has created a variety of groups that organize a wide range of activities covering entertainment, education and recreation of the elderly.

Conclusions: The contribution of leisure activity helps to promote the health of the elderly and has a positive impact on their quality of life.

Keywords: Age; Recreation; Leisure activity; Health and quality of life

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Introduction

Super massive demographic increases in most of the world population, the rapid technological achievements, as well as the different ways of telecommunication have altered the way people use their leisure time [1]. The impact of technology on the way of work and leisure activities, as well as the growing aging of the population, add to the need for recreational programs that will contribute to the provision of pleasant moments beyond the various other benefits to the elderly [2]. Aging as a biological event, is associated with the "withdrawal" from active economic activity and the transition from a state of autonomy to a state of dependence, where the coverage of the increased and special needs of the elderly is treated as a social burden [3].

Entry into the old age marks a series of changes to which the elderly need to be adapted. These changes are the release of their professional identity. These individuals need to be reconciled with their bio-physical bending and finally they should not think like they are the center of the world. A strong feature of the elderly in changing their personality is the withdrawal from social activities and from the world. As people get older, they lose their interest about the world, and they are isolated to themselves [4]. The outside world becomes threatening and inhospitable for the elderly, resulting in being indifferent to what is happening in the outside world [2,5]. In recent years, efforts

have been made to seek better conditions for the elderly in order to be able to share many social and cultural activities [5]. October 1st has been established as the World Day of the Elderly, to raise public awareness about the problems and rights of this particular population [6].

Purpose

The purpose of this review is to examine the contribution of leisure activity to the advancement of the spiritual and psychosomatic health of elderly people.

Methodology

The study material consisted of articles on the subject that were found mainly in electronic databases such as Medline, Pub med, Google Scholar and the Hellenic Academic Libraries Association (HEAL-Link), with the following keywords: age, recreation, leisure activity, health and quality of life. The search included research articles mainly of the last decades, about leisure activity in the third age. The exclusion criteria of the articles were languages other than Greek and English.

Leisure Activity

Leisure activity is a major concern of today's society, where men and women often work normally under conditions of high competition and pressure, which makes them anxious and exhausted.

Recreation is categorized into 5 interrelated but distinct phases, including [7]:

- Expectation from activity
- Trip to activity
- The activity itself
- Return from activity
- Reminiscence of activity

Leisure activity includes the following features [8]:

- Commitment
- self-reward from participating
- the pleasure of the experience
- the personal characteristics of the experience
- conducting during leisure time
- freedom of choice

The value of leisure activity in people's lives is invaluable, as it offers the possibility of creative ways of using leisure time and offers people not only pleasure, relaxation, escape from routine, but also mental and spiritual cultivation. Leisure activity, therefore, is closely tied with the nature of man [5].

Leisure Activity and Quality of Life

Leisure satisfaction and leisure attitudes have been reported as the most significant and positive effects on quality of life. Several authors have documented positive relationships between participation in recreational activities and improvement of quality of life. The explanation for these findings focuses on the "positive consequences" of social interaction with other people arising from active participation in leisure activity [9]. In addition, social leisure activity has been shown to have a positive impact on the quality of life of a wide range of social groups such as middle-aged women and the elderly in general [10].

The value of activities is not only determined by the frequency of engagement, but also by the attitude and status of the participants. The attitude of a leisure person has a very significant and positive impact both on the degree of leisure participation and on the level of satisfaction from the leisure participation. The satisfaction of recreation contributes more than the satisfaction of participation to the general satisfaction of the elderly [2,5]. A study, in which 137 people aged over 60 participated, investigated the correlation between leisure and quality of life by using path analysis. The results showed that participation in leisure activity has an indirect relationship through satisfaction for quality of life. In this example, pleasure satisfaction has proved to be the only significant predictor of quality of life [11].

Being an elderly active is also associated with higher life satisfaction. There are many potential determinants of life satisfaction. These include personality, social expectations, socio-economic relative deprivation of factors, relationships with important others (neighbors, parents and children), physical and psychological

health, housing and employment [12]. Additionally, life satisfaction is associated with better physical and mental health, longevity, and other outcomes that are considered positive in nature [13].

Leisure Activity of the Elderly

Recreational programs are designed to help the elderly become physically and mentally active and at the same time can be a means of gaining social support and life. Visits to local markets, shopping in department stores, volunteer programs, clubbing and, taking part in centers for the open elderly protection, can increase the level of elderly activity and help them sustaining their physical and mental stimulation [14]. A well-designed leisure program for the elderly does not only help them to eliminate the monotony of life, but gives them also the opportunity to live new things and share their thoughts and experiences with peers. Sports and other recreational options should be chosen in such a way as to help them being in good mental and physical condition and strengthening their spiritual and physical capacity [15].

The elderly are a respected and important part of our society and that's why our society has created a variety of groups that organize a wide range of activities covering entertainment, education and recreation for the elderly. For example, in the Centers for the open protection of the elderly, the nurses direct them to many types of activities, such as dancing, visiting archaeological sites, walking in the parks, participating in tree planting, chess competitions and various excursions. Nurses should encourage the elderly to engage in such groups, as their participation can lead them having a big benefit [16].

Cognitive Activities for the Elderly

It is well documented by the health professionals that the elderly should remain mentally and physically active. Cognitive activities allow the brain to be exercised, help in stimulating memory skills and in gaining control of brain functions that reduce with age. A simple conversation, a walk or even a song can prove to be of great significance for the elderly. It is important to select activities that enable them to use their cognitive abilities [2,14]. At the **Table 1** below are some activities for the elderly that are beneficial to them [17]:

Thus, the elderly beyond their creative and recreational employment, they'll be able to retain as much abilities and social skills as possible (speech, memory, sense of direction, etc.) improving in that way their mood, cognitive function, enhancing their psychology and their quality of life in general [18].

Table 1 Activities for elderly.

1.	Board games, like chess	8.	Painting
2.	Cart game	9.	Reading literary books and printed press
3.	Gardening	10.	Embroidery, knitting and any other kind of handiwork
4.	Puzzle	11.	Low intensity exercise
5.	Memory games	12.	Dance
6.	Fishing	13.	Solving crossword
7.	Artwork		

Leisure Policy for the Elderly

Third age is a period equally creative, productive and dynamic in people's lives. Thus, the state should provide for older people, structures and support, care actions, empowerment and stimulation of confidence as well as strengthening the sense of independence, self-sufficiency, supply and social participation. Such structures, as regards to the Greek reality, through which the pre-mentioned objective can be achieved, are the Open Care Centers (KAPI) operating in the Municipalities of the Greek territory [19].

The aim of these centers is the provision of services for the prevention of biological, psychological and social problems of the elderly, in order they remain independent, equal and active members of society. Moreover, not only Open Care Centers (KAPI), but also all the structures of every organized society and state dealing with older people, should work more actively by giving older people the opportunity not to allow themselves to withdraw from life, and make them becoming more active and

stronger [20]. They have to be the places where the elderly can seek human warmth, social support, peer-to-peer contact, information and entertainment [21]. Under these circumstances and within the framework of the view supporting that the elderly should stay in their home environment, the program "Home help for the elderly" was created and developed to meet the needs of inactivity, isolation and health [22].

Conclusion

The participation of the elderly in all social activities strengthens the perception that elderly society composed of active citizens who still have much to offer to society [5,9]. The contribution of leisure activities to promoting health of the elderly is necessary and important [14]. Creative activities and events, in conclusion, not only play an educational role for the elderly, giving them the opportunity to socialize, but also highlight their personality elements and abilities, helping them to develop skills for the adoption of healthy attitudes and behaviors [23].

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