Bonsai growing as serious leisure: A source of emotional and social wellness for older adults

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Introduction
➢ This poster presents an overall picture of an ongoing study about the personal and social benefits of engagement in bonsai growing as a form of serious leisure.
➢ This study focuses on bonsai growing which combines horticultural techniques, artistic skills and philosophical principles to shape and preserve various types of trees to represent an ideal form of nature.
➢ The study aims to discover to what extent bonsai growers can benefit from this hobby to enhance their emotional and social wellness.

What is Serious Leisure?
➢ Serious leisure is a term coined by Dr Robert Stebbins in 1982. It includes a vast range of indoor and outdoor hobbies, amateurism and volunteer activities, which are adequately substantial and sufficiently challenging, also requiring long-term commitment and special knowledge or skills (e.g. birding, knitting, fishing, pottery, etc.).
➢ Serious leisure brings numerous personal and social benefits for people such as joy, feelings of accomplishment, a sense of belonging, self-expression and self-actualisation.
➢ Serious leisure activities typically need some skills that the participants develop during a long period. They are usually engaged in various types of collecting, making, performing, observing or learning activities.

Research Design
➢ Theoretical framework: Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP)
➢ Target group: Bonsai growers in Australia
➢ Research methodology: van Manen’s phenomenological approach
➢ Data collection tool: A semi-structured interview with open ended questions
➢ Platform for communication: Zoom & telephone

Early Findings
➢ Bonsai generates pleasure, passion, and purpose.
➢ Bonsai fosters intergenerational and intercultural ties.
➢ Bonsai works as a hub of hobbies such as amateur photography, travelling, pottery and painting.
➢ Bonsai nurtures a culture of collaboration, creativity, caring and sharing.
➢ Bonsai growers create communities of interest at local, national and global levels supporting each other.
➢ The findings will inform both policy and practice in the area of aged care and ageing studies.
➢ Policymakers can use the results to make evidence-based decisions to promote leisure activities for older adults.
➢ Scholars in the ageing studies can conduct quantitative follow-up studies to verify the findings in larger sample sizes or other contexts.

References & Further Readings