

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

- Stebbins, R. (1982). Serious leisure: A conceptual statement, *Pacific Sociological Review*, 25, 251-272.
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- Mansourian, Y. (2021). Information activities in serious leisure as a catalyst for self-actualisation and social engagement. *Journal of Documentation*, 77(4), 1-19.

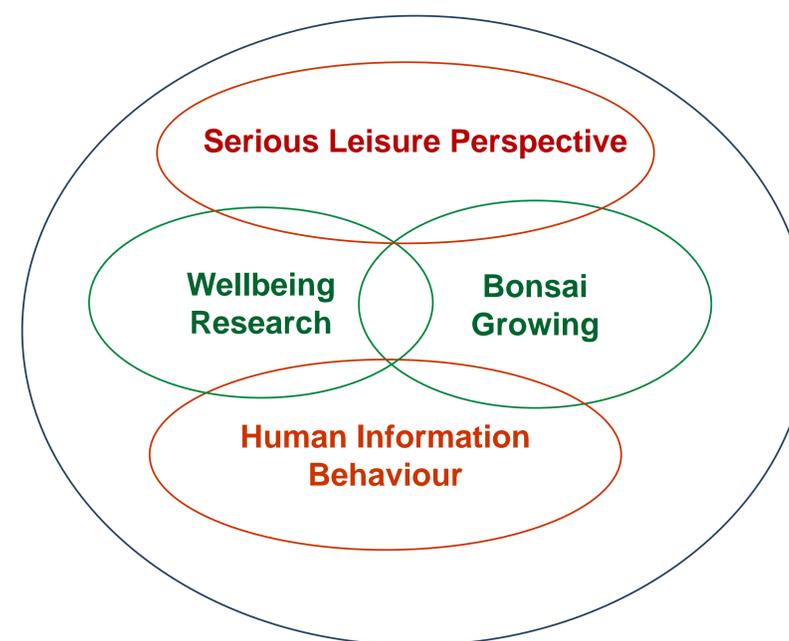


Figure 1. Mapping this research into a bigger picture