

How Serious Leisure Enhances Social Engagement in the Elderly

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Abstract

According to the Activity Theory, high level of involvement in activities is a key factor for the process of successful ageing. Leisure is a productive source of social involvement and among all kinds of leisure, Serious Leisure (SL) is one of most appropriate types that matches the requirement for this theory. Robert Stebbins coined this term in 1982 and has been developing it since then with a group of scholars in different disciplines across the world. SL includes various practices of hobbies, amateurism and volunteer activities that people choose to do during their free time and they are involved in it for a long period. Moreover, involvement in SL usually requires some skills and knowledge that they learn during their joyful journey. Bird watching, amateur photography, coin collecting, gardening, fishing, car restoration, knitting or genealogy are just a few examples of SL. Research shows SL can provide numerous personal and social benefits for people such as fostering confidence, developing self-esteem, creating self-actualisation, causing self-gratification and bringing sense of achievement. At the same time, SL can reduce the risk of depression, loneliness and boredom.

This presentation will outline a project I am undertaking about Human Information Behaviour (HIB) in the context of SL. In addition, the undertaken literature review will be shared with the audience to explicate the benefits of SL and articulate how it can be promoted amongst older people and how it helps them to achieve successful aging. Based on the literature, SL can help the elderly to experience meaningful life without adding new work related commitments to their daily routine. Moreover, it supports them to foster their physical, cognitive and emotional wellness at the same time. Overall, the link between SL and successful ageing is an emerging topic and more research has to be done to identify the mechanism.

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