

Original Paper

Leisure Time Use, Meaning of Life, and Psychological Distress: Comparing Canadian and Korean Older Adults

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Abstract

Older adults' day-to-day leisure time activities both reflect and stimulate physical, cognitive, and social capacities that contribute to their quality of life. To better understand how leisure activity choices and possible impacts vary across two cultures, this questionnaire-based study compared leisure time use, perceived meaning of life, and psychological distress for 617 older adults in Canada (n=298) and the Republic of Korea (Korea) (n=319). Compared to Koreans, Canadian respondents spent more time overall in leisure activities and devoted a higher percentage of their total leisure time to active, rather than passive, activities. They spent significantly more of their time on cognitively active activities, while Koreans preferred socially and physically active ones and scored significantly higher on both meaning of life and psychological distress. Both groups spent more of their time watching television than on any other single reported activity. Age group, retirement status, health, education, and income varied across the two countries and were significantly associated with aspects of leisure time use for each group. The results identify areas for improvement if Canadian and Korean older adults' leisure time use is to effectively support their aging well.

Keywords

older adults, active leisure, passive leisure, leisure time use, meaning of life, psychological distress, Canada, Korea

1. Introduction

Older adults' choices about how they use their leisure time can greatly affect their quality of life as they age. In westernized cultures, we expect older adults to "age well", maintaining their physical, mental,

and psychological health so that they can experience their later years as enjoyable and fulfilling. We use “aging well” to describe older adults’ maintenance of their physical and mental capacities, psychological health, and subjective sense of wellbeing, for as long as possible as they grow older. While there is no agreed definition for the term or for the related terms “quality of life”, “successful aging”, and “active aging”, all have been used in the literature to describe states of objective health, subjective wellbeing, or combinations of both. They are associated with an independent, health-conscious, active, and subjectively meaningful life (Elo, n.d.; Vaillant, 2002; World Health Organization, 2002).

We define “leisure” as “behaviour that differs from culture-specific behaviours closely related to immediate survival and other practical necessities” (Purrington & Hickerson, 2013, p. 130), i.e. behaviours other than paid work, acquiring necessities for living or family support, or personal or household maintenance. Leisure activities contribute to aging well by exercising physical and mental capacities, facilitating family support and social connectedness, and fostering psychological health and general enjoyment of time spent (Cairney, Faulkner, Veldhuizen, & Wade, 2009; Chang, Wray, & Lin, 2014; Cho, Post, & Kim, 2017; Nimrod, 2007; Toepoel, 2013). Some studies have categorized leisure activities as “active” (requiring physical or mental energy or social engagement) or “passive” (more sedentary and solitary) and have found stronger associations between active leisure activities and wellbeing, although the direction of causality is unclear (Adams, Liebbrandt, & Moon, 2011).

Research on older adults’ leisure time use is not new. Within national boundaries and cultures, studies have described variations in older adults’ leisure preferences depending on their background, culture, and life experience. However, cross-national research on leisure choices is rare compared to studies within specific countries. Focusing on retired seniors in one mid-sized urban area in Canada and one in the Republic of Korea (often called South Korea; hereafter referred to as Korea), this study contributes to our knowledge and understanding of experiences of aging across cultures by comparing leisure time use in the two settings and its associations with respondent background and two measures of subjective wellbeing. Our results also provide a foundation for further study and practice to support aging well in both countries.

2. Background

2.1 Life Expectancy and Urbanization

Older Canadians and Koreans can anticipate many leisure-filled post-retirement years. Life expectancy at age 60 is now 25 years in Canada and 24 years in Korea (Global AgeWatch Index, 2015). The median retirement age in Canada was 64.1 years in 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2018), while Korean employees with regular paid work have generally been required to retire in their mid-fifties (Howe, Jackson, Nakashima, Kwon, & Park, 2007). Korea also has one of the world’s lowest rates of female labour-force participation (Howe et al., 2007), leading to a high proportion of older women whose lives involve little or no paid work or family responsibilities.

The majority of older adults in both Canada and Korea live in urban environments. In 2006, about 78% of Canadians aged 55 and over lived in cities (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2012), with 36.2% living in the three largest (Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal) (Turcotte & Schellenberg, 2007, p. 18). Urban residence has been associated in Canada with a higher level of social vulnerability (Keefe, Andrew, Fancey, & Hall, 2006). Korea is one of the most rapidly urbanizing countries in the world, with its urban population rising from 27.7% in 1960 to 82.1% in 2017 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012, p. 34; Statista, 2018); 72.4% of Koreans aged 55+ live in urban centres (United Nations Demographic Statistics, 2010). The result is a growing group of urban Korean seniors living without close family support, exacerbated by a trend toward younger people preferring to live alone rather than with their parents (Bell, 2004).

2.2 Older Adults' Leisure Time Use and Quality of Life

In general, time use can be categorized into four types: paid work, housework, personal activities, and leisure time. For retired older adults, leisure time is the great majority of time in daily life. In 2005, Canadian men aged 65 to 74 spent almost eight hours per day in leisure, while women in this age group spent an average of 7.2 hours (Stobert, Dosman, & Keating, 2005). Statistics Korea (2010) reported comparable figures for 2009, with elderly males having 7.8 leisure hours per day and females 7.2 hours per day.

Older Canadians spend their leisure time in both active and passive leisure. They spend more time watching TV, reading, and participating in sports and events, hobbies and games than do younger adults (Chang, Kaufman, & Ireland, 2015; Dosman, Fast, Chapman, & Keating, 2006; Gauthier & Smeeding, 2003; Stobert et al., 2005). These studies have found that hobbies, social activities, volunteer work, and home activities such as watching TV and reading books increase with age; women spend more time in social activities, while men spend more time in sports-related activities. Stobert et al. (2005) reported that older Canadian adults with a university degree were almost five times more involved in education, hobbies, and cultural organizations, compared to those with less than a high school education.

Korean seniors spend much of their leisure time in passive activities such as TV watching and resting, as well as social activities (Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism, 2010, cited in Yang, Kim, & Lee, 2012). This may be related to their educational attainment, which lags well behind that of older Canadians; while 42.2% of older Canadians had a tertiary education in 2010, only 12.8% of older Koreans had attained that level (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). Choo (2002) noted an increase in all Koreans' total leisure time and particularly active leisure, based on five time-use surveys between 1981 and 2000, and reported that Koreans were increasingly viewing active leisure as important for personal fulfillment and self-improvement.

Participating in particular leisure activities can enhance older adults' health and quality of life (Adams et al., 2011). Physical activity has been shown repeatedly to affect seniors' physical and psychological quality of life (e.g., Cairney et al., 2009; Phillips, Wójcicki, & McAuley, 2013). Forsman, Nyqvist, Schierenbeck, Gustafson and Wahlbeck (2012) reported that older adults derive positive outcomes and

resources from personal relationships and interpersonal contact nurtured by social activities. Conversely, seniors' low social engagement has been associated with reduced subjective wellbeing (Simone & Haas, 2013). In Canada, active leisure activities, including physical, cognitive, and social pursuits, have been associated with greater health (measured objectively) and life satisfaction (measured subjectively) (Brooker & Hyman, 2010; Stobert et al., 2005). Wang et al. (2006) found that playing board games such as Mahjong could reduce risk factors for cognitive impairment in Chinese older adults, while television increased the risk.

Volunteering is potentially a way for seniors to remain socially engaged and productive. Joloza (2013) reported that volunteering in the UK was associated with greater overall life satisfaction for older adults. Statistics Canada (2011) reported that 36% of Canadians over age 64 years volunteered for charities or non-profit organizations. Although only 12.6% of Korean older adults volunteered in 2008, volunteer participation status in Korea is associated with self-reported successful old age (Shin, 2011). Volunteer work shares one's knowledge and skills with others, and caring for children and seniors uses leisure time to provide another form of assistance; these activities may result in positive feelings and should contribute to positive self-esteem (Chang, 2004).

2.3 Leisure Activities, Meaning in Life, and Psychological Distress

One aspect of older adults' psychological wellbeing is a sense of meaning in life. Meaning in life is associated with a sense of self-concept and self-esteem and is different for each individual. Individuals create their own "global" meaning (sense of life goals and purpose) through cognitive, affective, and motivational mental processes (Reker & Wong, 1988, 2012). Reker and Wong (2012) explained that a person high in global meaning "...has a clear life purpose, has a sense of direction, strives for goals consistent with life purpose, feels satisfied with past achievements, and is determined to make the future meaningful" (p. 435). Based on an extensive literature review, Iwasaki (2007) argued that leisure contributes to quality of life across cultures by providing a way for people to create life meaning and purpose. Kim, Kim, Cha, and Lim (2006), exploring happiness in Korean culture, found that purpose in life was the most frequently-identified source of happiness after family relationships for Korean adults aged 20-64 years. Hutchinson and Nimrod (2012) found that older adults experience a deep sense of meaning in life when they can achieve goals and experience themselves as successful in their leisure activities. Meaning in life has been found to be important for mitigating stress and enhancing wellbeing (Reker & Wong, 2012).

Poor mental health is often referred to by the umbrella term "psychological distress", which encompasses feelings of sadness, hopelessness, nervousness, depression, anxiety, cognitive difficulties, and other negative symptoms (Poulin, Lemoine, Poirier, & Lambert, 2005; Turcotte & Schellenberg, 2007). Psychological distress is measured using various scales (Poulin et al., 2005); overall prevalence in specific populations has not been established, but in Canadian older adults it diminishes with age and increases in those aged over 75 years (Turcotte & Schellenberg, 2007). Psychological distress has been found to be associated with reduced physical exercise, gender, living alone, lower educational

attainment, and disability (Cairney et al., 2009; Kikuchi et al., 2014; Kim, Bryant, & Parmalee, 2012; McHugh & Lawlor, 2012). Roh et al. (2015) found that participation in physical, social, and religious activity was associated with a decreased risk of depression among Korean older adults.

To summarize, leisure activity choices appear to be important for aging well. Active activities that exercise physical, mental, or social capacities have been found to enhance older adults' health and quality of life, and purposeful leisure activities might provide a sense meaning in life and mitigate psychological symptoms. But while research gives us glimpses into these associations in both and Korea, we have little systematic evidence of how leisure activities compare for these populations or of how these might be influenced by the distinct cultures and experiences. Most western studies (e.g., Dosman et al., 2006; Krueger et al., 2009; Statistics Canada, 2011; Stobert et al., 2005; Turcotte & Schellenberg, 2007) have focused on finding nationwide aggregate patterns of leisure time use and are not helpful in understanding specific older adult groups such as urban older adults, who are likely to differ from those in rural areas with regard to their activities and lifestyles. Some researchers have investigated Asian seniors' leisure time use (e.g., Lin, 2003; Wang, 2008), but we are not aware of any that have studied Korean older adults in detail. Cross-national comparisons (e.g., Gauthier & Smeeding, 2003) have rarely included Asian nations.

Our study addresses this gap by comparing categories of Canadian and Korean older adults' leisure time use and associations with personal background, perceived meaning of life, and level of psychological distress. Our intention is that the results from the study will help to increase our understanding of the activities and leisure choices of the two countries' older adults, building greater cultural sensitivity and identifying ways to better support both groups in aging well.

3. Method

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do older adults in Canada and Korea compare in terms of how they spend their leisure time?
2. How do older adults in Canada and Korea compare in terms of their ratings of meaning of life and level of psychological distress?
3. Are respondents' background characteristics, perceived meaning of life, and level of psychological distress associated with their leisure time use in each country?

To answer these questions, this research examined self-reported leisure time use among older adults in a western Canadian city (Vancouver) and a South Korean city (Busan). Prior to beginning the study, ethical approval was obtained from the participating universities' Research Ethics Offices.

The study used an anonymous, paper-based questionnaire. Envelopes containing an explanatory cover letter, consent form, and the survey instrument were distributed by researchers and students, through facility coordinators, to residents of 14 local seniors' centres in Canada and half this number in Korea, to students in the authors' undergraduate classes to give to their grandparents, and to other seniors known through personal contact. Stamped, self-addressed envelopes were included to facilitate return

of the questionnaire to the researchers' university offices. The surveys were carried out between July 20 and December 5, 2011. A total of 298 usable questionnaires out of 400 (74.5%) were returned in Canada and 319 out of 400 (79.8%) in Korea.

3.1 Sample

Participants in the study comprised 617 adults (298 in Canada and 319 in Korea) aged 55 years and over who were already retired or who only maintained part-time paid jobs in pre-retirement. Older adults in full-time paid work were not included.

Participants' ages ranged from 55 to 94 years, with a mean age of 67.3 years (*SD* 9.02). The age range for Canada was 55 to 93 years, with a mean of 68.6 years (*SD* 9.51); Korea participants had ages ranging from 55 to 94 years with a mean of 66.15 years (*SD* 8.39). Canadian respondents tended to be older; 41.3% (*n*=123) were aged 55 to 64, compared to 48.3% (*n*=154) for Korea, and 27.5% (*n*=82) were in the oldest (75+) age group compared to 17.6% (*n*=56) for Korea. 69.1% (*n*=206) of Canadian respondents were female and 30.9% (*n*=92) were male. The majority of Korean respondents (62.4%, *n*=199) were also female, with 37.6% (*n*=120) male.

Since Korean respondents came from a single ethnic group, ethnicity was reported only for Canada. 59.9% (*n*=178) of Canadian respondents were Caucasian; Asians formed the second-largest group at 31.7% (*n*=94). The survey did not distinguish among Asian ethnicities, but we note that the majority of the sample was likely to be Chinese, based on Statistics Canada (2016) reports that approximately 499,000 ethnic Chinese and approximately 55,000 ethnic Koreans lived in Vancouver in the latest Canadian census.

A higher percentage of Koreans (67.7%, *n*=216) was married or living common law, compared to 59.4% (*n*=177) of Canadians. A greater proportion of Canadians was divorced or separated (15.4%, *n*=46 vs. 6.3%, *n*=20). Proportionally more Koreans were widowed (24.1%, *n*=77 vs. 17.4%, *n*=52). Only 1.9% (*n*=6) of Koreans were single, compared to 7.7% (*n*=23) of Canadians. More seniors in Korea than in Canada lived with others (81.8%, *n*=261 vs. 67.1%, *n*=200).

The largest sample differences were in health and education. More Canadians than Koreans reported excellent or very good health (52.3%, *n*=156 vs. 31.3%, *n*=100), while more Koreans than Canadians reported fair or poor health (40.8%, *n*=130 vs. 15.1%, *n*=45). Nearly half of Koreans had not finished high school, (46.7%, *n*=149 vs. 13.1%, *n*=39 for Canadians); 35.7% (*n*=114) of Koreans had achieved a high school education, compared to 50.7% (*n*=151) of Canadians. 36.2% of Canadian respondents (*n*=118) had a university degree, compared to 17.5% (*n*=56) of Koreans.

A lower percentage of Koreans were fully retired (60.2%, *n*=192 vs. 76.4%, *n*=227), and a higher percentage worked part-time (39.8%, *n*=127 vs. 23.6%, *n*=70). Korean respondents had lower household incomes, with 47.3% (*n*=151) earning less than \$20,000 compared to 21.5% (*n*=64) in Canada.

Overall, then, the samples in the two countries were not strictly equivalent. These differences and their implications are considered in the Discussion section below.

3.2 Measurement

The questionnaire asked about respondents' personal backgrounds and their leisure time use in various activities, collected in self-report form. Respondents indicated accumulated hours they had spent during the past seven days; the list of possible activities (Table 1) was adapted from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2009) and Brooker and Hyman (2010), which provide two broad categories (active/ passive leisure and personal/ social contribution), along with four sub-categories of active leisure time use: cognitive, social, physically active, and volunteer work. Volunteer work and unpaid care work were included in the category of active leisure activity.

The 28-item Life Regard Index (Battista & Almond, 1973), rated on a five-point Likert scale, was used to measure perceived meaning of life according to two subscales: Framework (whether or not one has a clear set of life goals giving personal meaning), and Fulfillment (whether or not one has achieved one's life goals). Because subscale reliabilities in this study were too low for both countries, only the combined scale results (Cronbach's $\alpha = .55$ for Canada and $.66$ for Korea) were used in the analyses.

Psychological distress was self-reported using the 17-item Typology of Psychic Distress (PSYDIS) scale (Mellinger et al., 1983), which rated indicators of depression, anergia (lethargy), anxiety, and perceived cognitive difficulties on a five-point scale. For this instrument, Cronbach's α was $.92$ for Canada and $.93$ for Korea.

Table 1. Leisure Categories and Activities

Category	Activity
Active leisure	Cognitively active: Reading, using a computer or the Internet, hobbies, attending educational activities, playing cards and board games, writing letters, attending entertainment or sports events
	Socially active: Socializing with friends or relatives; talking on the phone; going to a social club, pub, restaurant; attending cinema, theatre, dance, parties
	Physically active: Exercising, walking, sports
	Volunteering/ unpaid work: Volunteer work, child care, adult care
Passive leisure	Watching TV or videos, relaxing, listening to the radio, listening to tapes or CDs, taking pleasure drives

3.3 Data Analysis

SPSS version 19 was used to analyze the data. Multiple data analysis methods were employed, including descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, *t*-tests, and ANOVAs.

4. Results

4.1 Research Question 1: How Do Older Adults in Canada and Korea Compare in Terms of How They Spend Their Leisure Time?

Table 2 summarizes data and *t*-tests for hours spent on categories of activities in Canada and Korea. Overall, Korean seniors spent only slightly more than half as many hours on leisure activities in total and therefore fewer hours in each category; as we would expect, *t*-tests on hours spent in all categories are highly significant ($p=.000$).

Table 2. Comparison of Canadian and Korean Older Adults: Number of Hours Spent on Categories of Leisure Activity

Category of leisure activity	Canada ^a	Korea ^b	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M (SD)*</i>	<i>M (SD)*</i>		
Active leisure hours				
Cognitively active	23.6 (15.9)	8.5 (10.0)	14.07	.000
Socially active	13.4 (9.9)	9.3 (7.6)	5.83	.000
Physically active	6.2 (5.6)	3.7 (4.2)	6.09	.000
Volunteer/ unpaid work	4.2 (7.2)	1.6 (4.0)	5.43	.000
Total active leisure hours	47.4 (24.4)	23.1 (18.4)	13.93	.000
Passive leisure hours	29.2 (21.8)	17.3 (13.6)	8.06	.000
Total leisure hours	76.6 (38.8)	40.4 (26.1)	13.49	.000

^an=298. ^bn=319. **M*=mean. *SD*=standard deviation.

Given the size of these differences, it makes more sense to compare percentages of total leisure time, rather than absolute hours, allocated to various activities (Table 3). *t*-tests for these showed significant differences between countries for all broad activity categories and for the majority of individual activities.

Koreans spent a significantly higher percentage of their leisure time in passive activities than did Canadians (44.5%, *SD* 19.5 vs. 36.8%, *SD* 15.7); respondents in both countries spent the highest percentages of their passive leisure time on watching TV and generally relaxing. Aside from passive leisure activities, Koreans emphasized socially active leisure activities (23.2%, *SD* 13.0 vs. 18.2%, *SD* 11.4), while Canadians preferred cognitively active ones (31.0%, *SD* 14.0 vs. 19.0%, *SD* 15.6). Canadians' "top three" active leisure activities were reading, using the Internet or a computer, and socializing, while Korean older adults spent the highest percentages of their active leisure time on socializing, exercising, and talking on the phone. Koreans spent a significantly higher proportion of their leisure time on physical activity (9.7%, *SD* 9.4 vs. 8.2%, *SD* 6.1), while Canadians volunteered for a significantly greater percentage of their leisure time (5.8%, *SD* 9.3 vs. 3.6%, *SD* 7.7). No significant

differences were found in the percentage of leisure time spent on hobbies, attending educational activities, socializing, child care, adult care, listening to tapes or CDs, or taking pleasure drives.

Table 3. Comparison of Canadian and Korean Older Adults: Percentage of Total Leisure Hours Spent on Categories of Leisure Activity and on Individual Activities

Category	Activity	Percentage of total leisure hours			
		Canada ^a	Korea ^b	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M (SD)*</i>	<i>M (SD)*</i>		
Active leisure	Cognitively active				
	Reading (books/ papers/ magazines)	11.0 (8.5)	4.9 (7.2)	9.59	.000
	Using a computer or the Internet	10.7 (11.5)	3.2 (5.9)	10.12	.000
	Hobbies	3.9 (5.7)	4.3 (6.4)	.805	.421
	Attending educational activities	2.2 (4.9)	1.9 (5.0)	.62	.536
	Playing cards and board games	1.4 (3.4)	2.5 (5.1)	3.25	.001
	Writing letters	1.2 (2.4)	.3 (1.3)	5.43	.000
	Attending entertainment or sports events	.7 (2.1)	1.8 (4.4)	4.15	.000
	Subtotal	31.0 (14.0)	19.0 (15.6)	10.10	.000
	Socially active				
	Socializing with friends, relatives	9.4 (8.0)	9.9 (9.3)	.80	.424
	Talking on the phone	4.5 (5.3)	7.7 (6.8)	6.72	.000
	Going to a social club, pub, restaurant	2.4 (3.2)	3.3 (5.0)	2.46	.014
	Attending cinema, theatre, dance, parties	1.9 (3.5)	2.3 (4.5)	1.19	.235
	Subtotal	18.2 (11.4)	23.2 (13.0)	5.13	.000
	Physically active				
	Exercising, walking, sports	8.2 (6.1)	9.7 (9.4)	2.25	.025
	Volunteer/ unpaid work				
	Volunteer work	3.0 (5.4)	1.4 (4.8)	3.76	.000
	Child care	2.1 (6.9)	1.5 (5.1)	1.15	.250
	Adult care	.7 (3.3)	.7 (3.1)	.023	.982
	Subtotal	5.8 (9.3)	3.6 (7.7)	3.09	.002
	Total active leisure	63.2 (15.7)	55.5 (19.5)	5.41	.000
Passive leisure	Watching TV, video	17.3 (12.2)	22.3 (15.0)	4.52	.000
	Relaxing	8.8 (8.1)	14.7 (13.0)	6.90	.000
	Listening to the radio	6.6 (8.3)	3.6 (7.7)	4.63	.000
	Listening to tapes, CDs	2.9 (4.6)	2.3 (4.3)	1.85	.064
	Taking pleasure drives	1.2 (2.6)	1.6 (3.2)	1.82	.069
	Total passive leisure	36.8 (15.7)	44.5 (19.5)	5.41	.000
	Total	100.0	100.0		

4.2 Research Question 2: How Do Older Adults in Canada and Korea Compare in Terms of Their Ratings of Meaning of Life and Level of Psychological Distress?

With regard to results on the Life Regard Index (perceived meaning of life), Korean older adults had significantly higher scores than those in Canada (3.04, *SD* .34 vs. 2.98, *SD* .28), indicating that they see themselves as having clearer life goals and meaningful goal achievement. However, Korean older adults also reported significantly higher psychological distress scores (higher levels of depression, anxiety, lethargy, and/ or cognitive difficulty) (2.50, *SD* .63 vs. 1.66, *SD* .62).

To compare leisure activities that might lead to a greater sense of meaning in life, activities were re-expressed as activities for oneself or for others, with activities for others including volunteer or care work and all other activities grouped as activities for oneself. Seniors in both countries spent almost all their time on activities for oneself, but Korean seniors spent a significantly higher percentage of their leisure time on these activities (96.4%, *SD* 7.66 vs. 94.2%, *SD* 9.27 for Canada; $t=3.09$, $p=.002$).

4.3 Research Question 3: Are Respondents' Background Characteristics, Perceived Meaning of Life, and Level of Psychological Distress Associated with Their Leisure Time Use in Each Country?

Table 4 presents significant associations between respondent background characteristics and their total leisure time in Canada and Korea. Few were found in either country. Age group was significantly associated with total leisure time in Canada, where more seniors aged 65 and over reported more leisure time. Work status produced significant associations in both countries, with fully retired seniors reporting more leisure time. Older adults with higher incomes had significantly more total leisure time in Korea than in Canada.

Table 4. Significant Associations between Respondent Background Characteristics and Total Leisure Time Hours

Background characteristic	Canada			Korea		
	<i>n</i>	Leisure time hours <i>M (SD)*</i>	<i>t/ F (p)</i>	<i>n</i>	Leisure time hours <i>M (SD)*</i>	<i>t/ F (p)</i>
Age group						
Pre-senior (aged 55-64)	123	67.4 (31.0)	-3.71	154	37.9 (26.9)	-1.65
Senior (aged 65+)	175	83.1 (42.4)	(.000)	165	42.7 (25.3)	(.100)
Work status						
Retired	227	82.4 (39.2)	4.75	192	44.7 (26.1)	3.74
Working part-time	70	58.0 (31.7)	(.000)	127	33.9 (24.9)	(.000)
Current household income						
Below \$20,000	64	81.3 (41.7)	2.23	151	37.1 (23.6)	3.47
\$20,000 - \$39,999	100	80.6 (40.4)	(.109)	116	41.3 (25.8)	(.032)
\$40,000 or more	134	71.4 (35.8)		52	47.9 (32.2)	

**M*=mean. *SD*=standard deviation.

Table 5 presents significant associations between background characteristics and time spent in active or passive leisure activities. These were found in Canada for age group (more time was spent in both active and passive leisure activities by seniors aged 65+ years), education (those with more education spent less time on passive leisure activities), work status (fully retired older adults spent more leisure time in both active and passive activities), and income level (lower income was related to more time spent in passive leisure activities). Those living alone rather than with others engaged in more passive leisure activity at a level just above the significance level of $p=.05$.

In Korea, similar significant differences were found for age group (respondents aged 65+ years spent more time in passive leisure activities), work status (those who were fully retired spent more time on both activity categories), and income (higher income was associated with more active leisure time). Korean older adults' education level was positively associated with time spent in active leisure (with more highly educated respondents reporting passive leisure time). In addition, Korean older adults' health status was significantly associated with time spent in both categories; those with better health reported more active leisure time, while those with poorer health reported more passive leisure time.

Table 5. Significant Associations between Respondent Backgrounds and Time Use on Active and Passive Leisure Activities

Background attribute	Active leisure time			Passive leisure time	
	<i>n</i>	Hours	<i>t/ F(p)</i>	Hours	<i>t/ F(p)</i>
		<i>M (SD)*</i>		<i>M (SD)*</i>	
Canada					
Age group					
Pre-senior (aged 55-64)	123	43.1 (22.0)	-2.61	24.3 (17.0)	-3.51
Senior (aged 65+)	175	50.5 (25.6)	(.010)	32.6 (24.1)	(.001)
Living situation					
Live with others	200	46.5 (23.5)	-.89	27.3 (19.4)	-1.92
Live alone	98	49.1 (26.1)	(.375)	33.0 (25.8)	(.056)
Education					
Did not complete high school	39	47.2 (29.2)	.65	35.6 (27.0)	3.34
High school graduation	151	48.7 (24.1)	(.586)	30.9 (23.6)	(.020)
Bachelor's degree	73	44.1 (22.6)		23.5 (14.9)	
Master's degree and beyond	35	49.2 (23.8)		26.5 (16.8)	
Work status					
Retired	227	50.6 (24.0)	-4.16	31.7 (22.7)	-4.37
Working part-time	70	37.1 (22.9)	(.000)	20.9 (16.5)	(.000)
Current household income					

Below \$20,000	64	48.0 (27.8)	.06	33.3 (23.0)	5.80
\$20,000 - \$39,999	100	47.8 (23.0)	(.940)	32.9 (23.7)	(.003)
\$40,000 or more	134	46.9 (23.8)		24.5 (18.8)	
Korea					
Age group					
Pre-senior (aged 55-64)	154	22.7 (18.5)	-.33	15.1 (11.76)	2.74
Senior (aged 65+)	165	23.4 (18.2)	(.740)	19.3 (14.9)	(.006)
Current health					
Excellent	25	35.7 (26.9)	5.05	14.1 (8.9)	2.43
Very good	75	24.1 (16.8)	(.001)	16.0 (10.8)	(.047)
Good	89	24.6 (20.7)		18.7 (14.6)	
Fair	89	19.4 (13.0)		15.7 (10.7)	
Poor	41	18.1 (15.7)		22.2 (21.0)	
Education					
Did not complete high school	149	20.8 (16.2)	5.26	18.1 (15.0)	1.03
High school graduation	114	22.7 (15.3)	(.001)	16.3 (12.1)	(.381)
Bachelor's degree	39	26.6 (4.04)		19.0 (14.0)	
Master's degree and beyond	17	38.1 (27.8)		13.4 (7.3.)	
Work status					
Retired	192	25.3 (18.6)	-2.75	19.4 (14.0)	-3.41
Working part-time	127	19.7 (17.6)	(.006)	14.2 (12.3)	(.001)
Current household income					
Below \$20,000	151	20.4 (16.1)	5.26	16.7 (13.0)	.32
\$20,000-\$39,999	116	23.5 (17.2)	(.006)	17.8 (14.3)	(.728)
\$40,000 or more	52	29.8 (24.6)		18.1 (13.8)	

**M*=mean. *SD*=standard deviation.

There was a small but significant positive association between Koreans' meaning of life rating and hours spent on active leisure activities ($r=.11$, $p=.053$). Also, there were small but significant negative associations for both countries between psychological distress rating and participation in active leisure activities, i.e., lower psychological distress was associated with greater participation in active leisure activities (for Canada, $r=-.12$ and $p=.046$; for Korea, $r=-.13$ and $p=.026$).

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to compare leisure time use, and its associations with background characteristics and measures of psychological wellbeing, for Canadian and Korean urban older adults. Our Canadian sample was older, healthier, better educated, and better off financially than the Korean

group in this study, and these background characteristics are consistent with differences in social and economic conditions and cultural practices during participants' lives. The relatively older ages of Canadian respondents probably reflect Korea's lower retirement age and may help to explain the greater proportion of females among the Canadian respondents. The greater percentage of Koreans who were married or living common law or were widowed) might be due to both the younger age of Korean respondents and differences in marriage practices (Denney, 2015; Wu & Balakrishnan, 1992). The lower proportion of Koreans reporting excellent or very good health is likely to arise from the impact of years of war and subsequent poor economic conditions experienced by many of that country's seniors. Perhaps the greatest difference between respondents in the two countries was in education, again reflecting the probable impact of war and economic distress. The lower percentage of Koreans who were fully retired is consistent with Korea's lack of comprehensive retirement benefits (Howe et al., 2007) and is consistent with Koreans' lower household incomes.

5.1 Leisure Time Use

Older adults in Canada reported nearly twice as much leisure time as those in Korea, which is consistent with the lower percentage of fully-retired Koreans in our sample. It could also be at least partly due to a cultural distaste for leisure in Korea; Lee (2005) points out that today's older Koreans were highly motivated during their working lives to work hard and avoid idleness, and these Confucian attitudes might influence how they value, participate in, and report leisure activities in retirement.

In terms of specific leisure activities, the prevalence of TV watching (a passive activity) in both countries seems to transcend the influences of education, income, and culture. This echoes findings by Choo (2002) and Lee (2005) for Korea, although in Canada browsing the Internet has become the top adult leisure-time activity, with TV watching now third (Booknet Canada, 2017).

Canadians' higher percentage of leisure time spent on active leisure activities, and their emphasis on cognitively active ones, are consistent with their education levels compared to Koreans in our sample. Koreans spent significantly higher percentages of their leisure time on physically active activities, while Canadians used more of their time to volunteer. This confirms research on the lack of volunteering in Korea, which relates it to lower education levels and economic hardship earlier in life (Shin, 2011). Also, Lee (2005) points out that leisure activity choices tend to be consistent pre- and post-retirement, so these difference may reflect cultural patterns in the two countries during these older adults' earlier lives.

Since cognitively, socially, and physically active activities have all been shown to enhance wellbeing and promote aging well, seniors in each country seem to be acting constructively to improve their quality of life. However, the prevalence of passive leisure activities is a concern in both countries, as they are associated with poorer health and reduced life satisfaction (Lee, 2005). Interventions to promote the less-popular active leisure activities in each country (e.g., cognitive activities and volunteering in Korea, social and physical activities in Canada) might improve their older adults' wellbeing and health outcomes.

5.2 Meaning of Life and Psychological Distress

Koreans' significantly higher score on perceived meaning of life could reflect its greater explicit importance in Korean culture, which is rooted in a long Confucian tradition of collectivist and spiritual values rather than materialistic and individualist ones (Kim et al., 2006). Interestingly, these values are not reflected the greater emphasis on activities for oneself rather than for others among Koreans in our sample. Their significantly higher reporting of psychological distress is consistent with other research showing stresses on older Koreans from lack of a pension system, diminished family support, and shifts away from traditional filial piety (Bell, 2004; Harlan, 2014; Yang, 2011).

Religious or spiritual activity, which was not included in this study, could also help to explain these results, since research suggests that these mitigate depression and support health among older adults (Roh et al., 2015; Zimmer et al., 2016). It is possible that excluding these from our survey obscured respondents' concerns with meaning and purpose by itemizing more self-focused activities.

We had hoped for more insight into older adults' reported sense of meaning in life, particularly in light of literature that identifies it as an important component of happiness in Korea (Kim et al., 2006). The association of greater active leisure activity with lower psychological distress, while not a causal one in this study, is consistent with extensive literature on the positive impact for older adults of exercise, social support, and cognitive activity (e.g., Cairney et al., 2009; Forsman et al., 2012; McHugh & Lawlor, 2012). This adds to evidence that active leisure activities among seniors in both countries seem important for reducing later-life mental and physical health challenges, consistent with established guidelines for aging well.

5.3 Associations between Background Variables and Leisure Activity Choices

Unsurprisingly, age, retirement status, and income were significantly associated with total leisure time hours, although age group was not significant in Korea, possibly due to Koreans' earlier retirement age of 55 years. Those who were fully retired or (in Korea) had higher incomes had significantly more leisure time. This may reflect Korean seniors' need for more part-time work to compensate for their overall lower incomes. Because Canadian incomes are generally higher than those in Korea, it is possible that a finer breakdown for household income (with more than one category above \$40,000) would have resulted in a significant association between income and leisure time for Canada.

Significant associations between background characteristics and use of leisure time for active or passive activities were largely the same across the two countries, probably reflecting the importance of time availability (when retired), education (for greater focus on active leisure), and income level, which is likely to be associated with education and also would support involvement in more costly active leisure activities. These commonalities suggest that cultural background might be less important than the above variables for choice of passive or active leisure activity.

The association between Koreans' health status and time spent on active versus passive leisure activities is consistent with extensive literature linking engaged lifestyles with health (e.g., Adams et al., 2011). We expected to find this association in Canada as well but did not, possibly due to a bias in our

volunteer sample toward healthier study participants.

Overall, our results build a picture of two groups of older urban adults rooted in differing cultures and life experiences but with the common factors of age, retirement status, health, education, and income associated with their leisure activity choices. In particular, the prevalence of passive leisure activities among both groups is a concern, providing more evidence that encouraging active leisure pursuits is important for organizations, agencies, and individuals who support aging adults.

6. Conclusions, Study Limitations, and Further Research

Our study has identified significant similarities and differences in patterns of leisure time use for urban-dwelling older adults in Canada and Korea. As we have noted, these findings are consistent with existing knowledge about similarities and differences between the two countries in economic conditions, social norms, and societal values, as well as in stresses and pressures on each country's older adults. This study confirms other research findings that health, education, and income levels are associated with older adults' leisure time choices and their associated physical and mental health. It also reminds us of how global influences, particularly the instant and low-cost availability of television and other passive entertainment vehicles, transcend individual cultures to shape leisure choices. These results challenge health officials, educators, community and care centres, families, and others who support or care for older adults to encourage and facilitate greater participation in the physical, social, cognitive, and volunteer-oriented activities that are so important for aging well.

This research was limited in several ways. First, it relied on voluntary participation by older adults who are likely to have been healthy, active participants in initiatives at their seniors' centres and residences. Therefore, it may not reflect the actual range of backgrounds and leisure practices for Canadian and Korean urban older adults. Also, it excluded some background variables, such as psychological factors (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy) and did not include some activities that might be important to older adults' meaning of life and psychological distress, in particular those related to spirituality, religion, or participation in religious communities. It used diary reporting to measure leisure time use and did not consider other measures that might be more directly relevant to older adults' quality of life (see, e.g., Iwasaki, 2007; and Lloyd & Auld, 2002). Also, it did not directly relate leisure time use to measures of positive aging outcomes for older adults.

Further research to address these limitations could yield deeper cross-country comparisons and insights about how leisure time use by older adults in different countries reflects a confluence of individual life experiences, national and cultural conditions, and global trends. Adding a qualitative component could provide more insight into older adults' motivations. Comparing attitudes toward retirement and toward the role of spirituality and religion in seniors' lives could provide insights into leisure activity choices. Also, it would be useful to compare rural- and urban-dwelling older adults and third- and fourth-age older adults in each country to gain additional insights into specific conditions affecting each group's leisure time use.

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