



## The Relationships between Recreation Specialization in Traditional Korean Dance and Happiness for Female Adults

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**Abstract. Background/Objectives:** Engagement in leisure activities is one of the critical variables in increasing well-being and happiness. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between recreation specialization in traditional Korean dance and happiness for female adults.

**Methods/Statistical analysis:** A total of 256 female adults who live in a metropolitan area in South Korea voluntarily participated in this study. This study used a convenience sampling technique.

**Findings:** Findings indicated that recreation specialization are positively related to happiness. More specifically, the centrality to lifestyle and behavioral consistency of recreation specialization predicted happiness.

**Improvements/Applications:** Further research is needed to examine a possible relationship between other psychological benefits and specialization.

**Keywords:** Recreation specialization in traditional Korean dance, Skill knowledge, Centrality to lifestyle, Behavioral consistency, happiness, female adults.

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### INTRODUCTION

Substantial studies have indicated that through engagement in leisure activities individuals have gained psychological benefits, including psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and happiness [1, 2]. For example, [3] examined how leisure activity engagement contributed to happiness among older adults and found that leisure activity played an essential role in increasing perceived happiness. In this line of research, substantial studies have also revealed that leisure participation has provided rich opportunities for individuals in enhancing their senses of optimism and positive emotions, contributing to psychological well-being [4, 5]. [2] found that cycling specialization is positively related to their perception of subjective well-being among elder adults.

Several researchers argued that certain types of leisure activities may contribute to increased psychological benefits among participants [1, 6]. For instance, [7] categorized leisure activities into social, cultural, and family-based home activities. They noted that all three types of activities significantly impact on the subjective well-being of the study participants. Especially, [8] stressed that active participation in leisure activities served as a critical vehicle in increasing happiness. In a similar line of research, [9] noted that leisure activities such as listening to music and attending sporting events are more closely associated with happiness, followed by attending cultural events, reading books, and getting together with relatives and friends. Furthermore, leisure-time physical activity (LTPA), such as exercise and outdoor leisure activities, is found to be positively related to perceptions of happiness or well-being [10, 6]. However, there is a dearth of information concerning the relationships between different types of leisure activities and the psychological benefits of these activities.

Growing evidence revealed that recreationists' behaviors and attitudes are associated with their levels of specialization which have potential for providing leisure experience with a way of meaningfully disaggregating recreationists into more homogeneous subgroups [11, 12]. [13] proposed that the recreationists at different continuum of specialization are differentiated by such attributes as setting preference, equipment preference, frequency of participation, management preference, and technique preference. Specifically, more specialized recreationists differ from less specialized ones in their perceptions of quality of managerial intervention [14], motives in adventure recreation [15],

environmental preferences [16], social world involvement [17], and behavioral intention [18]. That is, recreation specialization is a process that describes how recreationists tend to progress along a sequence of developmental stages from novice to expert.

Researchers have applied Bryan's recreation specialization theory to a number of recreation activities such as birdwatching [18], boating [19], hiking [20], hunting [12], ocean cruising [21], cycling [2], and playing baseball games [19]. Recreation specialization is a useful construct to examine different preferences and behaviors and identify emotional feelings they have toward a certain leisure activity [2]. Classifying specialization groups with level of engagement, [18] concluded that highly specialized birdwatchers show a higher resource dependency and a higher attachment than do low specialized counterparts. Thus, distinct and meaningful target markets can be identified and developed by utilizing the theory of recreation specialization.

Recreation specialization is a multidimensional construct that include affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects [14]. The methods of assessment which operationalize the concept of recreation specialization vary. A necessary condition for adequately measuring a construct is to first precisely delineate what is included in the domain of the construct [18, 22]. However, the specialization construct has been controversial because of the many different proposals in conceptualizing and measuring it. For instance, specialization has been operationalized and defined in terms of past experience, commitment, and centrality to lifestyle [18], enduring involvement and participation history [14], and participation, skill, lifestyle, and equipment [12]. A lack of accuracy and redundant conceptualizations in relation to the specialization construct has increased confusion in measurement and interpretation.

Although the concept of recreation specialization has emerged as an important construct for understanding recreationists' attitudes and behaviors, the psychological benefits of specialization has received scant attention. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between recreation specialization in traditional Korean dance and happiness for female adults. This study explores the multi-dimensionality of specialization construct used in the past research.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Data Collection**

The sample consisted of female adults, ages 18 and over, enrolled in Korean traditional dance programs offered by public and commercial recreation centers in Seoul and Kyounggi province. The research used convenience sampling method (n=256). Respondents were explained that the collected information would be solely used for research purposes and an individual's name would not be identified. Less than 10% of the sample refused to participate in this study. Ten respondents were not included in the analysis due to the lack of scores on a substantial number of questions and/or of demographic information.

### **2.2. Measurement**

Recreation specialization has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct and was treated as such in this study. This research utilized the recreation specialization scales originally developed by [23]. Recreation specialization was measured by using the revised Korean version of 21-item form of [24] recreation specialization scales. The three subcomponents of the recreation specialization construct provide measurement standards for determining individuals' recreation specialization profiles: skill knowledge, centrality to lifestyle, and behavioral consistency. Skill knowledge level was measured in two ways, both by self-report (novice, intermediate, and advanced) and by class of difficulty. Centrality to lifestyle was measured by participants' perceived importance of Korean traditional dance in their daily lives. Behavioral consistency was measured by the degree to which a participant demonstrates consistent participation, measured by days and hours engaged in an activity. [25] Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) was used to measure happiness. This scale uses four items designed to measure global subjective happiness with the four items averaged to calculate a single composite score for subjective happiness. Based on the results of previous studies, the demographic variables included 5 items: age, income, education, frequency of participation, and hours of engagement. Consistent with previous research, the recreation specialization scales were measured on 5-point Likert-type scales, with anchors of 1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree, whereas satisfaction and specialization were measured on 5-point semantic differential items. To increase content validity, all statements were reviewed and refined by a panel of professors and professionals in the field of leisure and recreation.

### **2.3. Data Analysis**

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to prove construct validity of the instrument using

SPSS 25.0 and AMOS 25.0. Confirmatory factor analysis is preferred over exploratory factor analysis in this present study because it is theory-based and accounts for measurement error [26]. [27] indicated that factor analysis is a powerful and indispensable method of construct validity (p. 427). The model was evaluated using fit indices and individual path coefficients. The resulting measurement model was  $\chi^2=294,480$ ,  $df=194$ ,  $p<.000$ ; goodness of fit index (GFI)=0.851; adjusted goodness-of-fit index (RMR)=0.124; comparative fit index (CFI)=0.913, which indicated a good fit. A completely standardized solution using maximum likelihood method revealed that all of the items loaded highly on their corresponding factors, which indicate strong empirical evidence of their construct validity [28]. The t-values for the loadings were high, showing adequate convergent validity. Descriptive statistics were utilized to examine underlying characteristics of the study sample. The internal consistency of indicators measuring the construct was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Reliability tests of these indexes provided alpha scores ranging from .884 for skill knowledge to .890 for behavioral consistency. [29] indicated that in the early stages of research on measures of a construct, reliabilities of .70 or higher will suffice.

### 3. Results

Table must be in Table format. Enter the data in the Table and present it as such and do not convert it as Descriptive statistics were used to better understand participant characteristics and provide the reader with a contextual understanding of the sample 'Insert table 1'. The age was from 20 to 84 years of age. Nearly half of the participants (48.9%) had over 5 years of participation experience in traditional Korean dance activities. The majority of the sample (75.0%) spent their leisure time for 2-4 hours. Approximately, 35 percent (n=89) of the respondents participated in traditional Korean dance activities for 1-5 years. Twenty two percent (n=57) of the respondents indicated that they had participated in traditional Korean dance activities more than 10 years.

**Table 1. Respondent profile (n= 256)**

Characteristics	Classification	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age (20-84)	20-29		
	30-39		
	40-49		7
	50-59		7
	60 or sixty	2	8
Duration of Engagement	Below three months		
	3-6 months - Below 1 year		
	7-12 months - Below 5 years		8
	13-24 months - Below 10 years		6
	Over 10 years	57	22.3
Frequency of Participation	Below 2 times a week	141	55.1
	3 times a week	60	23.4
	Over 4 times a week	55	21.5
	Total	256	100

The zero-order correlation

consistency ( $r = .718$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which illustrated that the participants who are knowledgeable about traditional Korean dance are more likely to demonstrate high levels of participation in terms of frequency and intensity. Happiness was positively associated with all three subdimensions of recreation specialization. Centrality to lifestyle had the highest correlation with happiness ( $r = .349$ ,  $p < .01$ ), followed by behavioral consistency ( $r = .202$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and skill knowledge ( $r = .144$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 2. Intercorrelations of Study Variables**

	Skill knowledge	Centrality to lifestyle	Behavioral consistency	Happiness
Skill knowledge	1			
Centrality to lifestyle	.565**	1		
Behavioral consistency	.718**	.611**	1	
Happiness	.144*	.349**	.202**	1

\*\* $p<.01$

The multiple regression model of this study indicated that only the centrality to lifestyle and behavioral consistency of recreation specialization predicted happiness. 'Insert table 3' revealed that centrality to lifestyle ( $\beta = .380, p < .05$ ) and behavioral consistency ( $\beta = .043, p < .05$ ) served as the significant predictors of happiness ( $R^2 = .041, p < .001$ ). This result shows that happiness increased as the centrality to lifestyle and behavioral consistency increased. Nearly 4% of the variance in predicting happiness was explained by these two subdimensions of recreation specialization.

**Table 3. Summary Table for Multiple Regression (Dependent Variable: Happiness)**

Variable					
	93	7		930	0
Skill knowledge	73	2	02	171	3
Centrality to lifestyle	5	5	0	78	0
Behavioral consistency	8	9	3	5	5
F=3.617*, R=.203, R <sup>2</sup> =.041					

\* $p < .05$

#### 4. Discussion

Findings revealed that only the centrality to lifestyle and behavioral consistency of recreation specialization predicted happiness, indicating that happiness increased as the centrality to lifestyle and behavioral consistency increased. According to [30], centrality to lifestyle refers to "the role assigned to a leisure activity relative to other life interests" (p.239). Bryan's specialization theory highlights that a highly specialized recreationist in traditional Korean dance will consider the activity as central to his/her life. It can be further argued that traditional Korean dance recreationists with high centrality to lifestyle perceive the activity to be related to the centrality of their values.

Results demonstrated that the behavioral consistency and attitudinal dimensions should be incorporated in assessing participants' recreation specialization. As individuals are more specialized in a particular leisure activity, they are more likely to stay with the activity not to lose associated benefits. [31] found that involvement and specialization are significantly related, suggesting that as participants in traditional Korean dance program invest more in the activity in light of time and effort, they become more specialized in the traditional Korean dance. It can be further assumed that a participant who has substantially invested in traditional Korean dance demonstrates higher training level and greater number of participation in dancing. Contrary to our expectations, this study found that the skill knowledge subdimension of specialization was not associated with happiness. It implies that participants' knowledge and skill levels in relation to traditional Korean dance are not significantly influential in their perception of happiness. Thus, emphasizing knowledge acquisition of traditional Korean dance may not be an effective way to increase level of specialization, not contributing to participants' happiness.

In particular, the findings of this study expand the value of engagement of traditional Korean dance activities as it is related to happiness. It can be argued that traditional Korean dance activities are beneficial in helping participants reduce negative psychological symptoms and improve positive feelings and emotions, which result in happiness. For example, [32] examined the benefits of traditional Korean dance activities and found that the participants had enhanced feelings of accomplishment and an increased sense of belonging and connectedness with others. In addition, the researchers suggested that cultural activities may contribute to physical, social, educational, and psychological benefits, which result in health and well-being. In a similar line of research, the value of cultural activities such as traditional Korean dance activities has been advocated by researchers who have examined the lives of immigrants from Western cultures [33]. They identified the positive outcomes of participation in cultural activities for immigrants.

Despite some potentially important implications of this study, there are some limitations that should be addressed. First, this study mainly focused on the relationship between the subdimensions of recreation specialization and happiness among female adults. It may be interesting for researchers to expand the scope and characteristics of the participants to adolescents and male adults. Second, this study obtained data from a convenience sample of traditional Korean dance program participants in Korea. The research results cannot be extended to other leisure activities or regions. In the future, respondents should be recruited from a wider geographic area and other types of leisure activities. Third, because of the correlational nature of this study, the presumed causal role of recreation specialization remains untested. Future research will benefit from the use of different statistical

methods such as path analysis and structural equation model. Finally, this study is cross-sectional in nature. Because the constructs such as specialization and happiness change over time, a longitudinal research design is needed to analyze the process of changing in relation to specialization and happiness.

## 5. Conclusion

This study is an initial exploration of how subdimensions of recreation specialization are associated with happiness for female adults. This study offers insight into the complex diversity of individuals involved in traditional Korean dance activities. Understanding theoretical and empirical linkages between specialization and happiness will provide a basis for incorporating information about recreationists and their decision making process to provide more meaningful management implications across different situations. Further research is needed to examine a possible relationship between specialization and other potentially important social variables such as loyalty, serious leisure, involvement, constraints, and motives.

Understanding the distinctions between specialists and generalists in the traditional Korean dance activities can aid dance professionals and managers in providing differentiated programs to maximize participants' satisfaction. Literature on leisure provides evidence that leisure-time physical activity has been advocated as a means to enhance psychological well-being and happiness. Furthermore, the results of this study support the notion that recreation specialization is positively and significantly associated with happiness. That is, as recreationists are getting more specialized in traditional Korean dance activity, they are more likely to demonstrate higher level of happiness. This study also suggests that physical activity engagement would be the most effective vehicle for increasing psychological benefits than other types of leisure activities in that dance activities provide participants opportunities with stress release, self-confidence, and sense of achievement. From a theoretical standpoint, our findings supported the positive impacts of recreation specialization on participants' happiness in traditional Korean dance programs, contributing to an exploration of the influential factors of specialization subdimensions. That is, the more the participants specialized they were in their traditional Korean dance activities, the more they perceived happiness.

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