

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL RECREATION IN ENHANCING HOLISTIC WELL-BEING AND HEALTH ACROSS LIFESPAN

Meneroka peranan rekreasi mental dan rohani dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan dan kesihatan holistik sepanjang hayat

*Adli Mohd Sidi¹, Abu Bakar Jaafar², Muhammad Syakir Sulaiman³, Fatin Aqilah Abdul Razak¹, Nurshahira Ibrahim²

¹Faculty of Sport Science & Recreation,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pahang Kampus Jengka,
26400 Bandar Tun Razak, Pahang, Malaysia.

²Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pahang Kampus Jengka,
26400 Bandar Tun Razak, Pahang, Malaysia.

³Sport Centre,
Selangor Islamic University,
43000 Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author's email: adlisidi@uitm.edu.my

Submitted:	Accepted:	Revised:	Published:
27-Apr-2026	27-Apr-2026	28-Jun-2026	30-Jun-2026

Abstract

This review explores the role of mental and spiritual recreation in promoting holistic well-being and health throughout the lifespan. It synthesizes existing literature on diverse recreational activities such as meditation, prayer, cognitive training, crafts, and physical engagement, emphasizing their contributions to stress management, emotional regulation, social connection, and transcendental well-being. Employing qualitative and quantitative research methods, including surveys, interviews, and thematic analysis, the study highlights the positive impacts of recreational activities across different age groups, from youth to the elderly, and addresses challenges in implementation and misinformation. The findings underscore the importance of integrated recreational approaches in enhancing physical, mental, and spiritual health, especially among aging populations experiencing loneliness and social isolation. The review concludes with recommendations for future research directions and practical interventions that leverage technological aids and culturally sensitive practices to foster holistic health across the lifespan.

Keywords: holistic well-being, mental recreation, spiritual recreation, lifespan health, social engagement, elderly well-being, integrative health

Abstrak

Kajian semula ini meneroka peranan rekreasi mental dan rohani dalam mempromosikan kesejahteraan dan kesihatan holistik sepanjang hayat. Ia mensintesis kesusasteraan sedia ada mengenai pelbagai aktiviti rekreasi seperti meditasi, doa, latihan kognitif, kraf, dan penglibatan fizikal, menekankan sumbangan mereka kepada pengurusan tekanan, peraturan emosi, hubungan sosial, dan kesejahteraan rohani. Menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan kualitatif dan kuantitatif, termasuk tinjauan, temu bual dan analisis tematik, kajian itu menyerlahkan kesan positif aktiviti rekreasi merentas kumpulan umur yang berbeza, daripada belia hingga warga tua, dan menangani cabaran dalam pelaksanaan dan maklumat yang salah. Penemuan ini menggariskan kepentingan pendekatan rekreasi bersepadu dalam meningkatkan kesihatan

fizikal, mental dan rohani, terutamanya dalam kalangan penduduk sedang meningkat umur yang mengalami kesunyian dan pengasingan sosial. Ulasan ini diakhiri dengan cadangan untuk hala tuju kajian masa depan dan intervensi praktikal yang memanfaatkan bantuan teknologi serta amalan sensitif budaya bagi memupuk kesihatan holistik sepanjang hayat.

Kata kunci: *kesejahteraan holistik, rekreasi mental, rekreasi rohani, kesihatan jangka hayat, penglibatan sosial, kesejahteraan, warga meningkat usia, kesihatan integratif*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Participating in outdoor recreation are popular in promoting ecotourism values and outdoor recreational experiences to those love the involvement in an outdoor natural setting or the wilderness. The richness of resources encourages people to experience the unique attractions, and which also includes the outdoor recreational experiences of ecotourism destination. Satisfaction is a main psychological goal of their participation in the outdoor recreational activities either the extreme outdoor recreation to leisure recreation activities. Visiting wilderness area and participation in the recreational activities not only to provide tourists with the outdoor recreational experience but it fulfills soul enriching desires as well. The outdoor experience with nature will develop experiential benefits for positive attitudes and recreational experiences (Kil, 2016).

2.0 CONCEPTUALIZING HOLISTIC WELL-BEING AND HEALTH

Holistic well-being is increasingly understood as a multifaceted integration of physical, mental, spiritual, and social health rather than the mere absence of disease. This comprehensive view recognizes that well-being transcends physical fitness to include mental resilience, emotional balance, spiritual growth, and social connectedness as inseparable components that mutually reinforce one another (Juhasz & Magyar, 2024). The mental and spiritual dimensions, in particular, contribute decisively to a person's overall health across the lifespan, supporting adaptive coping strategies, psychological well-being, and a meaningful sense of purpose (Kiss-Geosits, 2024; Kulcsár et al., 2023). The increasing complexities of modern life such as pervasive technological immersion, social fragmentation, and heightened psychological stress—underscore the necessity for integrative recreational approaches that cater not only to physical but also mental and spiritual renewal (Juhasz, 2022; Mayer, 2021).

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL RECREATION

Mental recreation encompasses activities that promote cognitive enhancement, emotional regulation, and effective stress management, facilitating resilience and psychological restoration. Empirical studies elucidate how engagement in mentally stimulating recreational activities, including creative arts and emotional self-regulation techniques, can reduce stress levels and cultivate flow experiences that enrich mental health (Magyar & Horváth, 2024; Nagy & Magyar, 2021). On the other hand, spiritual recreation involves practices that nurture transcendental well-being, such as meditation, prayer, and spiritually oriented physical activities, which foster inner peace, connectedness, and existential meaning (Kiss-Geosits, 2024; Pászok, 2023). Historically, spirituality and physical movement have been interconnected, reflecting

traditions wherein physical practices serve as vessels for spiritual expression and mental transcendence (Kiss-Geosits, 2024).

This integrated approach is increasingly relevant today, revealing that spiritual recreation can positively influence mental health by strengthening coping mechanisms and enhancing social bonding in community and group settings. Moreover, insufficient knowledge and misinformation about related practices, such as the use of medicinal plants in complementary therapies, highlight the need for evidence-based education and integrative programs (Pasz, 2023; Pasz & Kenderes, 2023).

4.0 LIFESPAN PERSPECTIVE

Mental and spiritual recreation play a vital role across all stages of life. In youth and adulthood, they contribute to competence development, emotional intelligence, and social inclusion, while in older adulthood it is crucial in addressing issues of loneliness, social isolation, and diminished life satisfaction (Kulcsar et al., 2023; Mayer, 2024; Szegvari et al., 2025). Movement, meditation, and breathing exercises are effective means for older adults to foster self-care, maintain physical health, and nurture social engagement, countering the isolation exacerbated by events like the COVID-19 pandemic (Kulcsar et al., 2023). Additionally, volunteering activities in old age expand social networks, promote cognitive fitness, and enhance emotional well-being by providing a sense of purpose and societal value (Szegvari et al., 2025).

Stress and mental health issue is significant in Malaysia, where 29.2% adults in Malaysia recorded in 2025 based on the statistic from National Centre of Excellent for Mental Health under Ministry of Health Malaysia (2025). This categories of health issues related to stress, anxiety and minor psychiatric issue. Therefore, understanding the mental-spiritual and recreational engagement across the lifespan facilitates the design of targeted interventions that support well-being at each stage, adapting to the evolving challenges and capacities of individuals throughout life. This comprehensive perspective is crucial for promoting active and fulfilling aging, as well as lifelong mental and spiritual health development.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

The investigation of mental and spiritual recreation employs both qualitative and quantitative research designs to comprehensively capture the multifaceted nature of these phenomena. Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews and content analysis, are extensively used to explore subjective experiences, motivations, and attitudes related to mental and spiritual recreational activities. For instance, Mayer (2023) utilized qualitative methodologies to probe the motivational background and flow experiences inherent in recreational activities (Mayer, 2023; Mayer, 2024). Similarly, Bene and Kulcsár (2022) adopted qualitative approaches, combining documentary content analysis and professional interviews, to assess the spread and experiential outcomes of Senior Joy Dance, a recreational movement promoting mental and social well-being among elderly participants.

In parallel, quantitative methods have been widely applied to validate measure health-related outcomes linked to mental and spiritual recreation. Surveys utilizing structured questionnaires serve as a common tool to quantify variables such as well-being, social contentedness, and cognitive function. For example, Juhasz (2023) implemented internet-based questionnaires to evaluate medicinal plant use

and knowledge, providing quantitative insights into behavioral patterns that intersect with spiritual and mental health practices. Moreover, Kulcsár et al. (2024) conducted quantitative surveys to collect data on employees' opportunities for regeneration, highlighting active recreational choices and employer support through descriptive statistics and comparative analyses.

Mixed-method designs are also employed to triangulate data and enrich understanding. Mayer (2023) similarly combined qualitative and quantitative data to assess motivational constructs in physical recreational activities, enabling a holistic perspective on psychological benefits. The inclusion of both data types facilitates capturing the complexity of mental-spiritual recreation, which often encompasses subjective states difficult to quantify as well as demographic and behavioral statistics. Primary empirical data often focus on subjective well-being, motivational factors, and flow states. Mayer (2023; 2022) and Magyar (2021) collected first-hand information via interviews and questionnaires to map mental and emotional states associated with recreational engagement. Magyar's work also underscored the role of flow experience and its measurement across varied settings, stressing the cognitive benefits intertwined with mental recreation.

Data sources for these investigations derive from diverse origins tailored to the research objectives. Authoritative literature reviews form a significant foundation within 5 years from 2020 to 2025, especially in topics related to spiritual recreational frameworks. Pászok's studies (2023; 2024) compiled extensive literature on phytotherapy and recreational uses, integrating historical knowledge with contemporary applications, thereby informing the research on natural adjuncts to mental and spiritual well-being.

Additional data is sourced from digital questionnaires focusing on populations such as the elderly, where social isolation and loneliness prevail. Kulcsár et al. (2023) surveyed senior participants to assess movement, meditation, and mindfulness programs that contribute towards improved self-care and emotional health. Furthermore, data from employee surveys in tourism sectors also contribute to understanding regeneration opportunities and the practical implementation of mental-spiritual recreational frameworks in workplace wellness (Beke & Mihuca, 2024).

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Forms of Mental Recreation and Their Effects

Mental recreation encompasses a breadth of activities aimed at enhancing cognitive function, emotional regulation, and stress relief. Textile crafts are exemplary forms of mental recreation; as demonstrated by Nagy and Magyar (2021), such activities foster flow experiences, which are crucial states of deep engagement that alleviate stress and improve mental health. The meditative and rhythmic nature of textile crafting further aids in emotional stabilization and cognitive focus.

Cognitive training and emotional self-regulation methods also form vital parts of mental recreation. Horváth (2024) emphasized the significance of developing cognitive abilities across life stages, highlighting prevention strategies against cognitive decline in older age through educational and recreational interventions. Complementing this, Almási and Kesserű (2022) described HeartMath Institute's techniques such as Heart-centered breathing and Quick Coherence that volunteers utilized for emotional self-regulation. Their findings confirmed that such techniques improve emotional management, leading to higher quality interpersonal connection and psychological well-being.

6.2 Spiritual Recreation and Holistic Health

Spiritual recreation merges mental and transcendental well-being practices often integrating meditation, prayer, and physical work. Kiss-Geosits (2024) traced Christianity's historical ties with movement and sport, illustrating how spiritual practices can encompass physical activity, meditation, and transcendental experiences. This holistic approach connects body, mind, and spirit, fostering comprehensive well-being.

Pilgrimages and thematic spiritual routes also provide meaningful recreational experiences promoting mental and social well-being. Rozgonyiné Drotár et al. (2023) articulated how the "Csodarabbik útja" pilgrimage route supports spiritual recreation, generating significant tourist traffic and fostering communal engagement. Their related research (2023) further identified overtourism's potential negative effects but highlighted the pilgrimage's capacity to contribute to residents' and visitors' mental health through spiritual and social experiences.

6.3 Recreation Addressing Loneliness, Isolation, and Aging

The elderly population is especially vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation, conditions mental and spiritual recreation can mitigate. Kulcsár et al. (2023) showcased interventions combining movement, breathing, meditation, and mindfulness to foster self-care, social engagement, and emotional health among older adults during the pandemic's isolating conditions. These practices support inward attention, self-love, and well-being.

Further emphasizing social connectivity among the elderly, Szegvári et al. (2025) established that volunteering enhances the social network and cognitive fitness of older adults, facilitating active lifestyles and improved quality of life. Equally, Fülöp and Magyar (2022) underscored that engaging in amateur family history research provides intellectual stimulation, community building, and identity preservation, enriching mental and spiritual health in aging.

Integration of Mental-Spiritual Recreation with Physical Activity

Physical activity remains a cornerstone of holistic well-being, which when combined with mindfulness and spiritual elements, yields synergistic benefits. Mayer (2023) analyzed older firefighters' motivations for sports, highlighting relaxation and stress coping as primary drivers, intersecting physical effort with psychological benefit. Bene and Kulcsár (2022) further supported that Senior Joy Dance induces positive physical and subjective experiences that enhance well-being, reinforced by social support and friendship formation.

Magyar (2021) emphasized how recreation programs influence emotional and cognitive health by facilitating flow and positive experiences, while Horváth (2024) reinforced the role of cognitive development interventions in education and recreation for lifelong well-being.

6.4 Challenges and Opportunities in Implementation

Despite benefits, gaps in knowledge and misinformation about medicinal plants and their use in spiritual and mental recreation remain a challenge, as Pászok (2023) reported. Incorrect or incomplete knowledge hinders effective use and trust, underscoring the need for educational programs.

Technical innovations such as smart mirrors and mobile applications present promising avenues to support mental and spiritual recreation. Juhász (2023) introduced an innovative smart mirror capable of performing rapid facial diagnostic analyses providing mental and physical health snapshots along with personalized recommendations. Similarly, Papp (2024) demonstrated tools improving sleep quality

in tourism settings, and Oravec et al. (2025) detailed WHOOP smart devices enhancing conscious lifestyles by monitoring sleep, strain, and recovery — vital for mental and physical performance optimization.

These technologies offer opportunities for personalized, accessible mental and spiritual health support, aligning with growing health awareness and the holistic well-being paradigm.

In sum, these findings reveal multifaceted forms of mental and spiritual recreation that contribute significantly to holistic well-being, while highlighting implementation challenges and innovative solutions.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The review demonstrates that mental and spiritual recreation play a vital role in fostering holistic well-being across the lifespan. Evidence shows that engaging in diverse recreational activities, such as meditation, cognitive exercises, crafts, and physical movement, significantly contributes to stress reduction, emotional regulation, social contentedness, and spiritual transcendence. Particularly for aging populations, these activities help combat loneliness, social isolation, and cognitive decline. The findings underscore the necessity of integrating mental and spiritual recreation into health promotion strategies, healthcare practices, and community programs. Broader implications include leveraging technology and culturally adapted practices to enhance accessibility and effectiveness. Future research should focus on addressing existing gaps, refining intervention models, and exploring innovative methods to sustain holistic health through lifelong recreational engagement.

8.0 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest related to the writing of this article.

9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Appreciation to all individuals and institutions indirectly involved in supporting the preparation of this article.

10.0 AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the writing of this article.

11.0 REFERENCES

- Almási, A., & Kesserű, P. (2022). Hogyan segítsük a segítőt? Ézelmi önszabályozó módszer a telefonos lelkielsősegély-szolgálatban. *Recreation*, 12(4), 28–32. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2022.12.4.5>
- Bene, Á., & Kulcsár, K. (2022). Örömmel táncolni – Szenior Örömtánc. *Recreation*, 12(1), 16–19. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2022.12.1.3>
- Beke, S., & Mihuca, D. (2024). Turizmusban dolgozók rekreációs lehetőségei [Recreational opportunities for tourism workers]. *Recreation*, 14(2), 35–38. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.2.6>

- Horváth, J. (2024). Kognitív funkciók megjelenése, fejlesztési területe és mérési lehetőségei a sportban és a rekreációban [Appearance of cognitive functions, area of development and measurement possibilities in sports and recreation]. *Recreation*, 14(1), 18–21. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.2>.
- Juhász, A. (2022). A modern kori egészségtudatosság, avagy mit is értünk ma holisztikán? *Recreation*, 12(3), 30–33. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2022.12.3.5>
- Juhász, A. (2023). Szembenézés önmagunkkal egy okos tükör segítségével. *Recreation*, 13(4), 32–35. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2023.13.4.6>
- Juhász, A., & Magyar, M. (2024). Jólét – Jólét – emberközpontú társadalom és gazdaság – egészséges életmód. *Recreation*, 14(4), 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.4.5>
- Kiss-Geosits, B. (2024). „Ahol ÉG és FÖLD összeér...” : Spiritual Workout. *Recreation*, 14(2), 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.2.5>
- Namyon Kil (2016) Effects of vicarious experiences of nature, environmental attitudes, and outdoor recreation benefits on support for increased funding allocations, *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 47:3, 222–236, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2015.1111188>
- Kulcsár, K., Jámber, K., & Breznai, A. (2023). Az idősebb korosztály aktivitásának növelése: Mozgás, légzés, meditáció. *Recreation*, 13(2), 28–32. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2023.13.2.6>
- Kulcsár, K., & Mihuca, D. (2024). Turizmusban dolgozók rekreációs lehetőségei. *Recreation*, 14(2), 35–38. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.2.6>
- Magyar, M. (2021). Film és rekreáció 1. A pandémia árnyékában. *Recreation*, 11(3), 30–33. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2021.11.3.5>
- Magyar, M. (2021). Jólét és az életminőség fejlesztése. *Recreation*, 11(3), 42–45. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2021.11.3.7>
- Magyar, M., & Horváth, J. (2024). Kognitív funkciók megjelenése, fejlesztési területe és mérésének alkalmazási lehetőségei. *Recreation*, 14(2), 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.2.4>
- Mayer, K. (2021). Nem csak a húszéveseké... az erdő, avagy hosszútávú teljesítménytúrázás ötvenéves kor felett. *Recreation*, 11(4), 13–17. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2021.11.4.2>
- Mayer, K. (2023). A hangverseny-élmény összetevői. *Recreation*, 13(3), 14–16. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2023.13.3.3>
- Mayer, K. (2023). A sport, mint az életmentés és a testi- és lelki egészségmegőrzés eszköze. *Recreation*, 13(4), 8–11. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2023.13.4.2>
- Mayer, K. (2024). 50 év feletti vasemberek tényleg vasból vannak? *Recreation*, 14(2), 10–14. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.2.2>
- Nagy, R., & Magyar, M. (2021). A textilművészet többdimenziós rekreációs hatásai. *Recreation*, 11(2), 18–21. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2021.11.2.3>
- Oravec, L., Szűcs, A. L., & Patakiné Bősze, J. (2025). Személyes adatokból személyes fejlődés. *Recreation*, 15(1–2), 19–26. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2025.15.1-2.3>
- Papp, A. (2024). Az alvás minőség fontossága a turizmusban – innovációk a szálláshelyeken. *Recreation*, 14(2), 39–44. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.2.7>
- Pászk, N. (2023). A gyógynövénygyűjtés és a rekreáció kapcsolata. *Recreation*, 13(3), 32–37. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2023.13.3.7>
- Pászk, N. (2024). Gyógynövények használata a sporttáplálkozásban. *Recreation*, 14(3), 4–10. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2024.14.3.1>

- Pászk, N., & Kenderes, R. (2023). Középkorban is ismert gyógynövények használata napjainkban. *Recreation*, 13(3), 23–27. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2023.13.3.5>
- Rozgonyiné Drotár, N., Petykó, C., Szalók, C., & Nagy, A. (2023). „Csodarabbik útja 2”: Szellemi rekreáció a helyi lakosok szemszögéből Bodrogkeresztúron. *Recreation*, 13(4), 25–30. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2023.13.4.5>
- Szegvári, G. E., Boros, S., & Magyar, M. (2025). Az időskori önkéntesség rekreációs szerepe. *Recreation*, 15(1–2), 27–33. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2025.15.1-2.4>
- Tessényi, J. (2023). Szerencsejátékosok attitűdjeinek időbeli összehasonlító vizsgálata. *Recreation*, 13(3), 18–22. <https://doi.org/10.21486/recreation.2023.13.3.4>