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# Impact of Voluntary Work and Leisure Activities on Mental Wellbeing: A Cross-Cultural Survey

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## Abstract

This survey paper explores the intricate relationship between voluntary work, leisure activities, and mental wellbeing, emphasizing the psychological, social, and health benefits these engagements offer. Voluntary work fosters a sense of purpose and community involvement, enhancing self-esteem and reducing loneliness. Leisure activities contribute to cognitive, physical, and emotional health, offering stress relief and promoting social connectedness. The paper highlights the importance of a cross-cultural perspective, as cultural norms and values significantly influence how these activities impact mental health outcomes. By understanding these cultural nuances, interventions can be designed to be culturally sensitive and effective, ensuring accessibility to diverse populations. The integration of technology and Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methodologies is also discussed as a means to enhance the reach and impact of these activities. Technology facilitates social participation, particularly among older adults, while CBPR ensures interventions align with community needs and cultural preferences. Despite the documented benefits, the paper acknowledges methodological limitations in current research, such as small sample sizes and a lack of longitudinal studies, which affect the generalizability of findings. Future research directions include exploring causal relationships, understanding technology's role in social participation, and developing community-based interventions. In conclusion, voluntary work and leisure activities hold significant potential for enhancing mental wellbeing globally. By considering cultural contexts and leveraging innovative approaches, these activities can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of populations worldwide, contributing to a healthier and more inclusive society.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Growing Interest in Voluntary Work and Leisure Activities

The rising focus on voluntary work and leisure activities as they relate to mental wellbeing underscores their potential benefits for diverse populations. Research highlights that these activities significantly enhance mental health outcomes, particularly among older adults, where engagement in leisure activities correlates with improved cognitive and physical functions, thereby facilitating successful aging [1]. This is increasingly vital in light of aging populations, where maintaining cognitive and physical health is essential.

Leisure activities also play a crucial role in mitigating social isolation and fostering social connectedness. Interventions such as social prescribing, including nature-based activities, have shown promise in enhancing mental wellbeing by strengthening social ties and alleviating loneliness, a growing concern with significant mental health implications [2].

Voluntary work further contributes to health benefits, as supported by medical literature and policy frameworks, especially in the context of active aging in OECD countries [3]. Active community in-

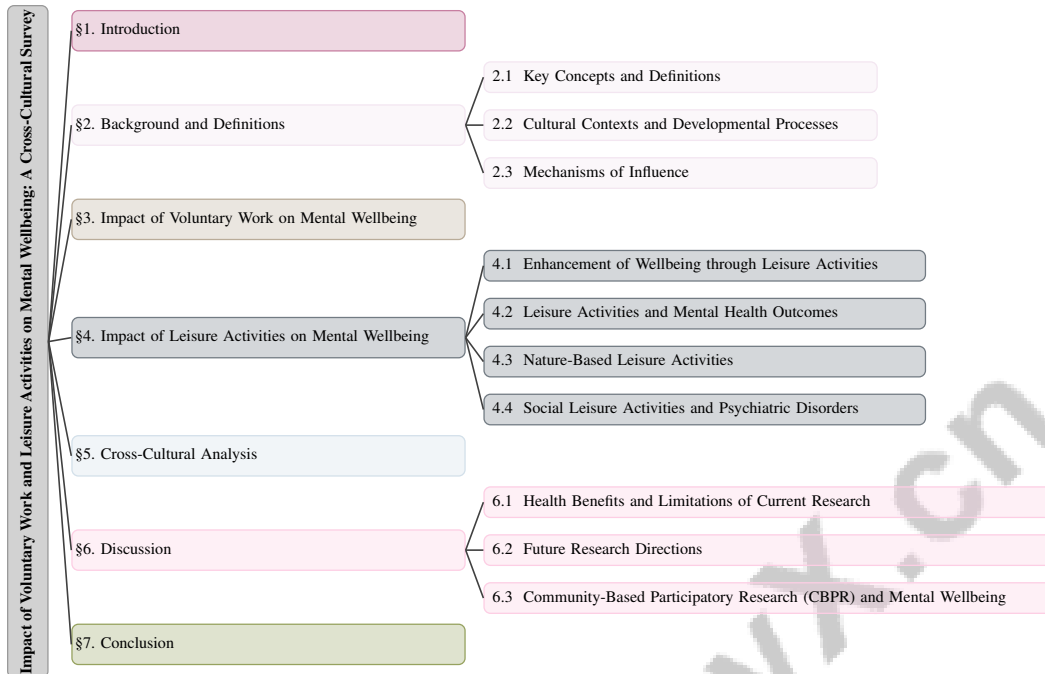


Figure 1: chapter structure

volvement through volunteering not only boosts social participation but also correlates with improved mental health outcomes, establishing its importance as a public health strategy.

Cultural context is pivotal in shaping the impact of leisure activities on mental wellbeing. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, there is a critical need for culturally sensitive leisure programs, as existing research largely reflects Western contexts [4]. Tailoring leisure activities to fit the cultural and social needs of various populations enhances their effectiveness.

The intersection of technology and social participation offers new opportunities for promoting mental wellbeing. Technology can facilitate social engagement among older adults, addressing challenges related to age-related declines and social isolation [5]. Integrating technology into leisure activities presents a novel avenue for enhancing social participation and improving mental health outcomes.

## 1.2 Importance of Cross-Cultural Perspective

Analyzing voluntary work and leisure activities from a cross-cultural perspective is essential due to the varying cultural contexts that influence individuals' engagement in these activities and their impacts on mental wellbeing. The benefits of voluntary work, particularly for older adults, have been explored in economic and social science literature, yet these effects remain under-explored within diverse cultural frameworks [3].

Cultural norms and values dictate perceptions of meaningful activities and their incorporation into daily life, influencing well-being, social integration, and personal development across communities. For instance, culturally aligned leisure activities in Saudi Arabia enhance retirees' wellbeing by fostering social connections, while in adolescence, social leisure activities can mitigate the risk of mental disorders [6, 7, 1, 4, 8]. In Western societies, voluntary work is often linked to civic engagement, whereas in other cultures, it may align more closely with familial or religious obligations. Similarly, leisure activities differ widely, with some cultures emphasizing communal activities and others favoring individual pursuits. These cultural distinctions impact how voluntary work and leisure activities contribute to mental wellbeing, necessitating culturally sensitive research and program development.

Cross-cultural analysis can also illuminate how societies tackle common challenges such as aging populations and social isolation. By examining cultural nuances in voluntary and leisure activities, researchers can identify best practices and innovative strategies adaptable to other contexts. This

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approach enhances the generalizability of findings and ensures that interventions are culturally relevant and effective, incorporating community perspectives and addressing specific cultural needs [9, 7, 4, 10, 11].

### 1.3 Structure of the Survey

This survey is structured into seven main sections, each aimed at exploring the intricate relationship between voluntary work, leisure activities, and mental wellbeing from a cross-cultural perspective. The introductory section establishes the context by emphasizing the growing interest in how these activities influence mental health outcomes and the necessity of considering cultural contexts in such analyses.

Following the introduction, the second section provides background and definitions, offering a comprehensive overview of key concepts such as voluntary work, leisure activities, mental health outcomes, and the importance of cross-cultural analysis.

The third section examines the impact of voluntary work on mental wellbeing, discussing its psychological benefits, the promotion of active aging, and the connection between community involvement and health outcomes. The fourth section focuses on leisure activities, analyzing their role in enhancing mental health outcomes, particularly through nature-based and social leisure activities.

The fifth section conducts a cross-cultural analysis, comparing the effects of voluntary work and leisure activities on mental wellbeing across different societies, highlighting cultural variations and similarities in psychological benefits and social participation. The sixth section synthesizes findings from prior sections, discussing the implications of the cross-cultural analysis and proposing future research directions, including the role of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in studying mental wellbeing.

In conclusion, the paper synthesizes key findings that emphasize the significant influence of cultural contexts on understanding how voluntary work and leisure activities affect mental health outcomes. Engagement in leisure activities—including hobbies, volunteering, and social interactions—can lead to improved health, emotional balance, and social integration, particularly among specific demographic groups. This underscores the necessity for culturally sensitive approaches in designing leisure programs that cater to diverse populations, ultimately enhancing wellbeing and quality of life [8, 1, 4]. This structured approach ensures a thorough exploration of the topic, providing valuable insights into how these activities can enhance mental wellbeing globally. The following sections are organized as shown in Figure 1.

## 2 Background and Definitions

### 2.1 Key Concepts and Definitions

Understanding voluntary work, leisure activities, and mental wellbeing is crucial for analyzing their interconnections across cultural contexts. Voluntary work promotes social participation and active aging, providing psychological benefits that extend beyond monetary compensation [3]. This engagement fosters a sense of purpose and community involvement, integral to mental wellbeing.

Leisure activities address mental and physical health through various mechanisms [8]. These activities range from nature-based interventions that mitigate social isolation [2] to social and technological engagements that overcome barriers for older adults [5]. Their positive impact on cognitive, physical, and mental health is particularly evident in successful aging [1].

In contexts like Saudi Arabia, the role of leisure activities in enhancing retirees' wellbeing is underexplored, necessitating culturally sensitive research [4]. Socialization, family dynamics, and cultural contexts significantly influence participation in these activities [7]. For frail older adults, limited engagement in meaningful leisure activities due to frailty, low income, and inadequate social networks highlights the need for targeted interventions [9].

Mental wellbeing closely correlates with the quality and frequency of social participation, reducing loneliness and social isolation, especially among vulnerable populations [2]. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methodologies offer insights into addressing health disparities and enhancing mental health outcomes [10].

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A critical gap exists in linking socially active leisure time during adolescence with mental disorders in young adulthood [6]. Addressing this gap is essential for developing comprehensive interventions that promote mental wellbeing across diverse populations and cultural settings.

## 2.2 Cultural Contexts and Developmental Processes

Cultural contexts shape developmental processes and the understanding of mental wellbeing, influencing socialization practices. These nuances are crucial for effective mental health interventions. Existing methods often overlook the specific needs of the Saudi retired population, limiting tailored interventions [4]. This oversight highlights the necessity for culturally sensitive approaches that consider unique social and cultural dynamics.

Current methods categorize studies into cognitive, physical, and mental health fields, employing objective measures and latent variables to enhance reliability and validity [1]. Recognizing diverse cultural factors influencing developmental processes and mental wellbeing is essential. For frail older adults, cultural contexts elucidate barriers to leisure participation, often exacerbated by mobility constraints, lack of companions, and insufficient opportunities.

The lack of motivation and IT skills complicates these challenges, necessitating culturally relevant, accessible, and inclusive interventions [5]. Profile matching techniques create matched samples representing specific populations, facilitating causal inference without weights [11]. This methodological advancement enhances understanding of cultural influences on developmental processes and mental wellbeing.

The underutilization of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in psychology limits addressing mental health disparities in marginalized communities [10]. Integrating CBPR methodologies captures cultural contexts influencing mental wellbeing and develops effective interventions. Categorizing research into levels of social leisure activity provides a framework for understanding associations between these activities and psychiatric disorders, emphasizing cultural contexts in shaping mental health outcomes [6].

## 2.3 Mechanisms of Influence

Voluntary work and leisure activities influence mental health outcomes through psychological, biological, social, and behavioral processes. These mechanisms operate at individual, group, and societal levels, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding their impact on mental wellbeing [8]. Psychological processes enhance self-esteem and purpose, arising from fulfillment associated with voluntary work and leisure participation [3]. These activities can trigger biological responses, such as endorphin release and reduced stress hormones, contributing to improved mental health.

Social mechanisms are vital, as both voluntary work and leisure foster social connectedness and community integration, reducing loneliness and isolation [2]. Nature-based interventions, a subset of social prescribing, activate essential intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental processes for health, highlighting the significance of environmental interactions in enhancing mental wellbeing [2]. Behavioral processes involve adopting healthy lifestyle choices and establishing routines that support mental health maintenance.

The Personalized Compensatory Strategies Intervention (PCSI) facilitates leisure engagement among frail seniors by educating them on compensatory strategies [9]. This intervention underscores the importance of addressing physical and motivational barriers to participation, enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of leisure activities in promoting mental wellbeing.

The complex relationship between voluntary work, leisure activities, and mental health outcomes is underscored by mechanisms operating at psychological, biological, social, and behavioral levels. Recent research reveals over 600 pathways through which leisure activities—such as hobbies, volunteering, and socializing—positively influence mental health, aiding in the prevention and management of mental disorders across life stages. High levels of social leisure activities during adolescence correlate with reduced psychiatric disorders, while active participation among older adults is associated with better cognitive function, physical health, and overall mental wellbeing. These findings emphasize the need for a comprehensive understanding of how leisure activities can enhance mental health, particularly through culturally sensitive and community-based programs tailored to diverse de-

mographic groups [8, 6, 1, 4]. Understanding these processes is essential for designing interventions that capitalize on the benefits associated with these activities, ultimately contributing to improved mental wellbeing across diverse populations.

In examining the multifaceted effects of voluntary work on mental wellbeing, it is essential to consider its hierarchical structure. As depicted in Figure 2, this figure illustrates the various dimensions of this relationship, categorizing the psychological benefits, the role of voluntary work in active aging, and the influence of community involvement on health outcomes. Each primary category is further subdivided into specific subcategories that detail the distinct benefits and contributions to both mental wellbeing and public health. This structured representation not only enhances our understanding of the interconnectedness of these factors but also underscores the importance of voluntary work in promoting overall health and wellbeing within communities.

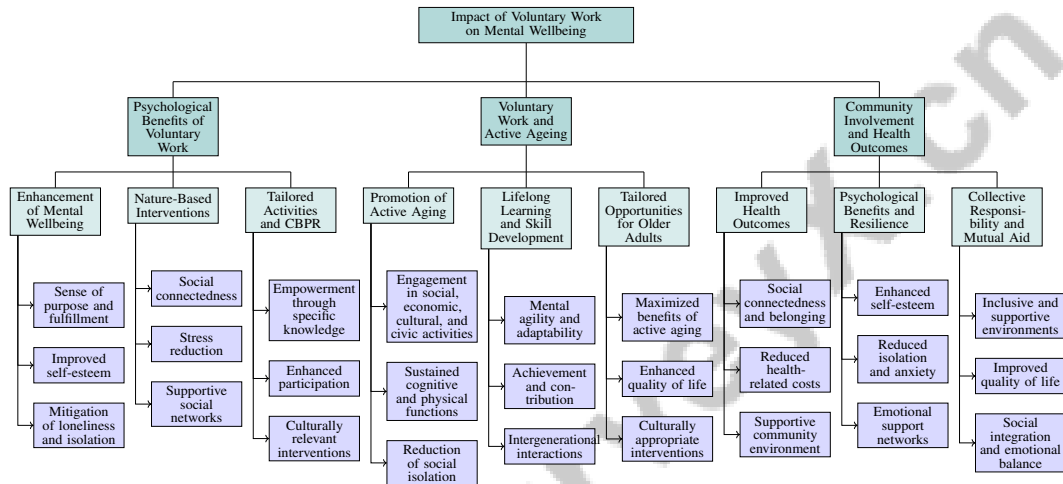


Figure 2: This figure illustrates the hierarchical structure of the impact of voluntary work on mental wellbeing, categorizing the psychological benefits, the role in active aging, and community involvement's influence on health outcomes. Each primary category is further divided into subcategories detailing specific benefits and contributions to mental wellbeing and public health.

### 3 Impact of Voluntary Work on Mental Wellbeing

#### 3.1 Psychological Benefits of Voluntary Work

Voluntary work provides substantial psychological benefits, enhancing mental wellbeing through a sense of purpose, fulfillment, and self-esteem, which are integral to personal growth and active aging [3]. It encourages social interaction and community engagement, mitigating loneliness and isolation, key factors affecting mental health. Nature-based interventions, a form of social prescribing, illustrate how voluntary work fosters social connectedness and reduces stress, improving health outcomes [2]. These interventions underscore the role of environmental engagement in mental wellbeing and the creation of supportive social networks through voluntary activities.

Tailored voluntary activities, especially for frail seniors, empower individuals by providing specific knowledge and strategies [9]. This personalization enhances participation and amplifies the psychological benefits of voluntary work, reinforcing its value as a public health strategy. Incorporating Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) principles into voluntary work studies emphasizes community engagement's role in enhancing research validity and health outcomes [10]. CBPR methodologies help capture the psychological benefits of voluntary work, ensuring interventions are culturally relevant and effective.

#### 3.2 Voluntary Work and Active Ageing

Voluntary work is pivotal in promoting active aging, encouraging older adults' engagement in social, economic, cultural, and civic activities, thereby enhancing mental wellbeing. Active aging involves

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maintaining physical health and cultivating purpose and community belonging inherent in voluntary activities [3]. Participation in voluntary work helps older adults sustain cognitive and physical functions, essential for successful aging [1]. It alleviates social isolation and loneliness, common among older individuals, while fostering social networks that provide emotional and psychological support [2].

Voluntary work also offers opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development, crucial for maintaining mental agility and adaptability in later life. The sense of achievement and contribution from these activities boosts self-esteem and reinforces a positive self-identity, vital for mental health [3]. These psychological benefits are key in reducing the risk of depression and anxiety, common mental health issues among the elderly. Additionally, voluntary work facilitates intergenerational interactions, promoting knowledge and experience exchange, enriching communities, and fostering inclusivity and respect for the elderly [10].

Implementing CBPR approaches in studying voluntary work among older adults provides insights into their specific needs and preferences, ensuring interventions are effective and culturally appropriate [10]. Tailoring voluntary opportunities to older adults' interests and capabilities maximizes the benefits of active aging, enhancing mental wellbeing and quality of life for seniors.

### **3.3 Community Involvement and Health Outcomes**

Community involvement through voluntary work is strongly connected to improved health outcomes, impacting individual wellbeing and broader societal health metrics. Participation in community-based activities fosters social connectedness and belonging, crucial for mental health. These findings have economic significance, potentially reducing health-related costs and enhancing subjective wellbeing [3]. Voluntary work contributes to a supportive community environment, reducing mental health disorder risks.

The protective role of socially active leisure time, identified in adolescence, extends into adulthood, buffering against psychiatric disorders [6]. This highlights the importance of community support systems in mental health prevention and the need for sustained social activity engagement throughout life. Voluntary work acts as a catalyst for building resilient communities prioritizing mental wellbeing.

Community involvement through voluntary work offers a sense of purpose and fulfillment, enhancing self-esteem and psychological resilience, contributing to positive health outcomes [3]. These psychological benefits are supported by social interactions through voluntary work, reducing isolation and promoting emotional support networks, crucial for maintaining mental health and significantly lowering anxiety and depression incidence.

Beyond individual benefits, community involvement through voluntary work fosters a culture of collective responsibility and mutual aid, essential for addressing public health challenges. Encouraging active community participation, voluntary work creates inclusive and supportive environments, significantly enhancing overall quality of life. Such engagement improves mental wellbeing and contributes to better health outcomes, particularly among older adults, by maintaining mental capacity and resilience against stressors. The benefits of voluntary work extend to social integration and emotional balance, highlighting its role in promoting psychological capital and life satisfaction across diverse demographic groups. This underscores the need for policymakers to develop accessible and culturally sensitive volunteer programs addressing community needs, enriching society's collective wellbeing [3, 4].

## **4 Impact of Leisure Activities on Mental Wellbeing**

### **4.1 Enhancement of Wellbeing through Leisure Activities**

Leisure activities substantially enhance wellbeing by offering cognitive, emotional, and social health benefits, often paralleling the impacts of education and wealth [1]. They play a vital role in comprehensive wellbeing strategies, improving cognitive and physical functions and mental health. Among Saudi retirees, leisure activities notably enhance health, emotional balance, and social integration [4]. This underscores the need for culturally relevant leisure programs that foster social interaction and community belonging, essential for mental health.

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Cognitive benefits, such as improved memory and attention, highlight leisure's role in maintaining mental agility and preventing cognitive decline. Physical activities, a subset of leisure pursuits, improve physical health and reduce chronic disease risks, contributing to life quality [1]. Emotionally, leisure activities foster cognitive function, support mental health, and promote successful aging by instilling purpose and enjoyment, particularly in older adults. Participation in diverse leisure activities—from hobbies to social interactions—enhances wellbeing through psychological, social, and behavioral mechanisms, aiding in mental and physical illness management [8, 1]. They serve as stress relief outlets, enhancing emotional balance and reducing anxiety and depression risks, while fostering achievement and personal growth to bolster self-esteem and life satisfaction.

#### **4.2 Leisure Activities and Mental Health Outcomes**

Leisure activities are pivotal in improving mental health outcomes by promoting relaxation, socialization, and personal development. Engagement in these activities correlates with psychological benefits that enhance mental wellbeing, such as stress and anxiety mitigation, providing respite from daily pressures [1]. This stress-relieving effect is crucial in preventing mental health disorders like depression and anxiety, often exacerbated by chronic stress.

Social leisure activities promote social connectedness and alleviate loneliness, vital for mental health [2]. By fostering social interactions and community involvement, these activities help establish supportive networks providing emotional and psychological support, especially for vulnerable groups like the elderly [9]. Leisure activities also stimulate cognitive health by enhancing mental processes, such as memory and attention [1], essential for maintaining mental agility and preventing cognitive decline. Engaging in mentally stimulating leisure activities serves as a protective factor against neurodegenerative diseases.

Physical leisure activities, such as sports or exercise, significantly promote mental health by improving physical fitness and reducing chronic disease risks [8]. The physiological benefits, including endorphin release and stress hormone reduction, contribute to improved mood and overall mental wellbeing.

#### **4.3 Nature-Based Leisure Activities**

Nature-based leisure activities are recognized for their potential to enhance mental wellbeing through psychological and physiological mechanisms. Activities like walking in natural settings, gardening, and outdoor group exercises offer mental health benefits, including stress reduction, mood enhancement, and increased vitality. Exposure to natural environments significantly lowers stress and anxiety levels, improves mood, and enhances cognitive function [2].

A key benefit of nature-based leisure activities is fostering social connectedness, crucial for mental wellbeing. Group activities like community gardening or guided nature walks build supportive social networks that alleviate loneliness and isolation [2]. These interactions benefit vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, who face increased social isolation risks [9]. Nature-based activities also provide physical exercise opportunities, positively affecting mental health. Engaging in physical activity within natural settings enhances mood and mitigates depression and anxiety symptoms through endorphin release and stress hormone reduction [8]. The synergy between physical activity and nature exposure amplifies mental health benefits.

Natural environments' restorative properties enhance cognitive function and mental clarity. Nature exposure is linked to improved attention, memory, and cognitive performance, making it valuable for maintaining mental agility and preventing cognitive decline, especially among older adults [1]. Nature-based leisure activities promote mental relaxation and cognitive fatigue recovery by providing a calming environment.

#### **4.4 Social Leisure Activities and Psychiatric Disorders**

Social leisure activities, emphasizing interpersonal interaction and community involvement, significantly influence mental health outcomes, particularly psychiatric disorders. High levels of social leisure activities during adolescence correlate with reduced incidences of mental disorders, including affective, anxiety, and substance use disorders. In contrast, low engagement is linked to higher psychiatric issues, highlighting the importance of community-based social leisure opportunities for

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children and adolescents as preventive mental health measures. Leisure activities benefit individuals across age groups, enhancing cognitive function, emotional wellbeing, and overall health, positioning them as strategic components in mental health promotion and intervention programs [6, 1, 4, 8, 2].

Engagement in social leisure activities fosters a sense of belonging and community integration, critical for mental health. Supportive networks formed through these activities provide emotional and psychological backing, reducing loneliness and isolation, prevalent risk factors for psychiatric disorders [2]. This support benefits individuals with existing mental health conditions, providing a buffer against symptom exacerbation and promoting resilience.

Moreover, social leisure activities enhance interpersonal skills and self-esteem, leading to improved mental health outcomes. Participation fosters self-confidence and accomplishment, vital for maintaining mental wellbeing. Positive reinforcement and peer validation in social settings mitigate negative self-perceptions associated with psychiatric disorders. High social leisure activity levels in adolescence are linked to lower psychiatric disorder incidences, suggesting community engagement fosters mental well-being and resilience. Promoting social connections and leisure activities, families and communities can significantly bolster mental health, particularly for those at risk of mental health issues [6, 10, 8, 2, 11].

The stress-reducing role of social leisure activities is noteworthy. By providing platforms for relaxation and enjoyment, these activities alleviate stress and anxiety, common precursors to psychiatric disorders. The physiological benefits of engaging in social leisure activities, such as stress hormone reduction and endorphin release, further enhance mood and mental health [8].

Participation in social leisure activities enhances community resilience by fostering inclusivity and mutual support, promoting social integration, emotional well-being, and reducing mental health disorder incidences. Research highlights their role in improving life quality and psychological health across diverse demographics [8, 6, 4]. This collective approach to mental health promotion is essential for addressing psychiatric disorders' broader societal impacts, emphasizing community-based interventions in mental health strategies.

## **5 Cross-Cultural Analysis**

### **5.1 Cultural Influences on Behavior and Health**

Cultural factors profoundly influence behaviors and health outcomes, shaping engagement in voluntary work and leisure activities, which are crucial for mental wellbeing [7]. Designing culturally relevant interventions requires understanding these nuances to enhance effectiveness. Tailored leisure activities that reflect cultural values significantly improve retirees' quality of life, promoting mental health and social integration [4].

The Multi-level Leisure Mechanisms Framework offers insights into how individual behaviors, social contexts, and cultural influences interact to affect health outcomes, guiding the optimization of leisure activities for mental wellbeing [8]. Nature-based interventions exemplify the positive impact of cultural influences, enhancing social connectedness and mental health more effectively than traditional clinical methods by leveraging cultural ties to nature [2].

Technology supports social participation by categorizing it into virtual and co-located forms, emphasizing cultural factors in technology adoption for leisure activities [5]. Considering cultural preferences in technology use can foster meaningful social interactions and improve mental wellbeing.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) strengthens community ties and fosters culturally appropriate interventions, ensuring research addresses the unique needs of diverse populations. This approach enhances research validity and promotes community empowerment and mental health [10].

### **5.2 Culturally Relevant Leisure Activities**

Culturally relevant leisure activities enhance mental wellbeing by aligning with cultural values, traditions, and social norms, fostering community cohesion and personal identity. Programs tailored to cultural practices, such as those for Saudi retirees, improve wellbeing, emphasizing the importance of culturally specific interventions [4].



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The Multi-level Leisure Mechanisms Framework underscores the need to incorporate cultural influences at various levels in leisure activity design [8]. Activities that include traditional music, dance, or communal gatherings enhance social integration and emotional balance, contributing to mental wellbeing.

Nature-based interventions, leveraging cultural connections to the environment, promote mental health by fostering social connectedness and reducing stress [2]. Integrating cultural elements into these activities enhances their effectiveness and supports sustainable mental health improvements.

Technology facilitates culturally relevant leisure activities, particularly for older adults, by addressing cultural preferences in virtual and co-located participation [5]. This approach ensures that leisure activities are accessible, meaningful, and technologically inclusive, enhancing social interactions and mental wellbeing.

Incorporating Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methodologies ensures culturally sensitive and effective leisure interventions by engaging communities in the research process. This participatory approach aligns activities with cultural values, fostering community empowerment and mental health [10].

### **5.3 Cross-Cultural Challenges and Opportunities**

Cross-cultural research on voluntary work and leisure activities presents challenges and opportunities for enhancing mental wellbeing across diverse populations. Cultural variability in definitions and perceptions can lead to inconsistencies in research findings, affecting intervention development [3]. The lack of culturally sensitive methodologies further complicates comparisons, as many studies reflect Western-centric perspectives that may not apply to non-Western contexts like Saudi Arabia [4].

Addressing these challenges requires adaptable research approaches to ensure findings are relevant across diverse populations. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) offers a promising solution by involving community members in the research process, ensuring culturally appropriate interventions aligned with the target population's needs [10, 7]. This approach fosters trust and collaboration, facilitating innovation and the development of comprehensive models for voluntary work and leisure activities.

Integrating technology in leisure activities presents opportunities to bridge cultural gaps and enhance social participation. By leveraging technology for virtual and co-located participation, researchers can design accessible and culturally relevant interventions that support mental wellbeing across diverse contexts [5].

## **6 Discussion**

This section delves into the health benefits of voluntary work and leisure activities, alongside the limitations in the current research landscape. Understanding these impacts is crucial for enhancing mental well-being, especially among older adults. It is equally important to acknowledge methodological constraints that may affect the generalizability of findings. The following discussion elaborates on these benefits and limitations, offering insights into the relationship between leisure activities and mental health outcomes.

### **6.1 Health Benefits and Limitations of Current Research**

Research consistently highlights the significant health benefits of voluntary work and leisure activities, particularly in enhancing mental and physical well-being. Participation in leisure activities is linked to improved cognitive and physical functions, positively affecting mental health [8]. Voluntary work is associated with better health outcomes, emphasizing the need for policies promoting volunteering among the elderly [3].

However, several limitations affect the generalizability of current research. Many studies are correlational, limiting causal inferences about the relationship between leisure activities and successful aging [1]. Small sample sizes further undermine external validity [9]. Additionally, the intersectionality of cultural factors and socioeconomic status is often inadequately addressed, resulting in incomplete narratives that do not fully capture mental well-being's complexity across diverse populations [7].

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Cultural specificity, as seen in studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, restricts the applicability of findings beyond their immediate contexts [4].

The diversity within the older adult population and varying technological solutions' effectiveness are often overlooked, highlighting the need for more inclusive studies [5]. Current methodologies frequently lack rigorous evaluation methods and may not address diverse populations' unique needs [2]. Challenges such as biases in diagnosis, insufficient assessment methods, and potential underreporting of mental health issues hinder the accurate capture of leisure activities' mental health benefits [6]. The absence of comprehensive frameworks for integrating community voices into research exacerbates these limitations, leading to ethical dilemmas and potential power imbalances [10].

## **6.2 Future Research Directions**

Future research on voluntary work and leisure activities should adopt interdisciplinary approaches, incorporating psychological, sociological, and anthropological perspectives to understand their impact on mental well-being comprehensively [7]. Investigating causal relationships between leisure activities and successful aging through longitudinal studies or interventions aimed at increasing leisure engagement is crucial [1]. Such investigations could clarify the interactions between various mechanisms and contextual factors, facilitating targeted interventions [8].

Further research should explore the long-term impacts of leisure activities among retirees from diverse cultural backgrounds to deepen understanding of leisure's role in well-being [4]. Comparative studies on cultural differences and similarities would provide valuable insights into leisure activities' universal and culture-specific benefits.

The role of technology in enhancing social participation among older adults also merits further exploration. Research should focus on refining technology designs for better usability and investigating cultural variations in social interaction patterns facilitated by technology [5]. Developing equitable, community-based approaches to social prescribing, utilizing technology for tracking participation and outcomes, and understanding cultural differences in nature engagement are crucial areas for future inquiry [2].

In voluntary work, future studies could investigate the mechanisms through which volunteering influences health and explore other dimensions of community involvement [3]. Identifying these mechanisms will enable researchers to design interventions maximizing volunteering's health benefits.

Moreover, future research should prioritize developing community-based interventions to enhance social leisure activities for adolescents and explore emerging trends in mental health prevention strategies [6]. Ensuring the long-term application of learned strategies, including larger sample sizes and additional support sessions, is essential for sustaining interventions promoting leisure activities [9].

## **6.3 Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Mental Wellbeing**

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a collaborative approach actively involving community members in the research process, ensuring culturally relevant and effective interventions. By fostering equitable partnerships between researchers and community stakeholders, CBPR enhances the validity and applicability of findings, particularly regarding mental well-being [10]. This approach is crucial for addressing health disparities and improving mental health outcomes by aligning research objectives with community needs and priorities.

CBPR empowers communities by involving them in decision-making processes related to research design, implementation, and evaluation. This empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among community members, essential for enhancing interventions' sustainability and effectiveness aimed at improving mental well-being. By actively engaging individuals in these processes, CBPR can better address diverse populations' unique needs, ultimately leading to more significant and lasting impacts on mental health outcomes [10, 2, 4]. Additionally, CBPR facilitates integrating local knowledge and cultural practices into research, ensuring tailored interventions to the community's specific contexts.

While CBPR offers substantial benefits, including fostering equitable community involvement and enhancing findings' relevance, it also faces challenges such as potential power imbalances among

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stakeholders, the need for extensive collaboration, and difficulties in integrating diverse perspectives into a cohesive research agenda [10, 8, 11, 9]. The collaborative nature of CBPR necessitates significant time and resources to build and maintain trust and relationships between researchers and community members. This process can be complex and may encounter resistance from stakeholders unfamiliar with participatory research methods. Furthermore, power dynamics within the community and between researchers and participants can influence the research process and outcomes, requiring careful management to ensure equitable participation.

To enhance CBPR's effectiveness in investigating mental well-being, researchers must adhere to ethical principles emphasizing transparency, mutual respect, and collaborative decision-making. This commitment fosters equitable community involvement and ensures research addresses diverse populations' unique needs and perspectives, promoting impactful and relevant outcomes in mental health studies [10, 8, 3, 2, 11]. By addressing these challenges and leveraging CBPR's strengths, researchers can develop interventions effectively promoting mental health while resonating with communities' cultural and social realities.

## 7 Conclusion

This survey explores the intricate dynamics between voluntary work, leisure activities, and mental wellbeing, highlighting the multifaceted benefits these engagements offer. Voluntary work fosters a sense of purpose and community, significantly enhancing self-esteem and mitigating loneliness. Simultaneously, leisure activities contribute to cognitive, physical, and emotional health, offering stress relief and nurturing social bonds, all crucial for mental wellbeing.

The cross-cultural perspective underscores the importance of cultural contexts in shaping the impact of these activities on mental health. Cultural norms and values shape participation in voluntary work and leisure activities, influencing their psychological and social benefits. Understanding these cultural distinctions enables the development of culturally sensitive interventions, ensuring the benefits of these activities are accessible to various populations.

Moreover, the integration of technology and Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) presents innovative opportunities to extend the benefits of these activities. Technology can enhance social participation, particularly among older adults, while CBPR ensures interventions are culturally relevant and community-focused, aligning with specific needs and preferences.

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