

Professor proposes new way to analyze impediments to leisure activities

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For decades, behavioral scientists have been interested in understanding why people don't participate in leisure activities, but there has been no consistent method for measuring these factors, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Research scientist whose paper recently earned a top award from the *Journal of Leisure Research*.

"Behavioral scientists have been looking at factors such as health, interest in environmentally responsible behaviors and physical or geographical access to understand why people don't take advantage of leisure opportunities," said Dr. Gerard Kyle, an AgriLife Research professor in the department of recreation, park and tourism sciences at Texas A&M University, College Station. "But over the past 30 years, efforts to measure these factors have varied considerably."

In an attempt to provide consistency, Kyle, in collaboration with Dr. Jinhee Jun, an assistant professor in the College of Business at Hallym University, Seoul, South Korea, presented and tested an alternate approach to analyzing the measures used to quantify impediments to engaging in [leisure activities](#).

Their resulting paper, titled "An alternate conceptualization of the leisure constraints measurement model: Formative structure?," was recently recognized as Paper of the Year – 2015 at the 2016 National Recreation and Park Association Congress held Oct. 6 in St. Louis, Missouri.

"Current understanding suggests people negotiate barriers to leisure engagement beginning with factors such as physical ability, to those within the physical environment, such as having a place to fish," Kyle said. "In this paper, we developed measures that are both consistent with the measurement theory from which they are derived, plus we helped identify factors that inhibit engagement in an array of desired behaviors."

For their research, Kyle and Jun looked at a number of intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural factors.

Their next step was to determine how these factors might be interpreted and analyzed using traditional "reflective" and "formative" modeling and to identify the limitations of these models, as well as the traditional metrics being used.

Among the intrapersonal factors identified in the study were fear of crime, poor health, lack of ease in social situations, desire to pursue recreation in areas other than parks and dislike of participating in nature or outdoor recreation activities.

Interpersonal factors included friends and family preferring to recreate elsewhere, no one to go with to parks and conflicting schedules with a spouse or companion.

Structural factors included lack of time, lack of information about existing parks and park programs, work commitments, distance to parks, transportation to parks, cost of park facilities and programs, crowding of parks and facilities, overdevelopment of parks and facilities, too busy with other activities and too busy with family responsibilities.

Kyle explained reflective measures are expected to have a degree of connection or correlation that can be said to reflect the "latent" or

unobserved variable, while formative measures are not expected to correlate and can be thought of as having formed the latent variable. Latent variables are those not directly observed but are inferred, using a mathematical model, from other variables that can be observed and measured.

"A large number of the issues with using previous modeling to determine impediments to leisure activity could be resolved by viewing constraint measures as formative and using analyses that are consistent with this type of measurement," he said.

Kyle said devising the correct constraints measurement model could resolve a number of measurement issues, advance understanding and enhance delivery of leisure services.

He said the purpose of the paper was to critique leisure researchers' misapplication of the leisure constraint measurement model and to present an alternative analytic approach more consistent with those indicators of constraint.

"A great deal of attention has been devoted to developing measures of various leisure phenomena such as motivation, specialization, enduring involvement, place attachment, commitment and the like," Kyle said.

"And many factors affecting participation in leisure activities are assumed to be unobserved or latent, particularly those related to individuals' thoughts and feelings about leisure and the context in which it is experienced."

Kyle said in his paper, "we have argued that because contemporary measures of leisure constraints follow a formative structure, factor analytic approaches are inappropriate due to incorrect assumptions about the measurement model."

Additionally, he noted conventional metrics for assessing validity and reliability, designed for more traditional reflective measurement models, are also inappropriate.

He said the paper provides an example illustrating one latent variable modeling technique to analyze formative factors, along with discussion of the theoretical and practical issues to be addressed when using this method.

Kyle said while not quite solving the problem, this technique addresses the assumptions made about factors that keep people from participating in leisure activities.

"This procedure has the potential to lay to rest many of the lingering concerns underlying the measurement of constraints," he said. "By embracing the potential for using formative measures, researchers also are better positioned to utilize indicators that are specific to the population or context of concern."

He said while there are diverse opinions on the validity of formative modeling, the growing acceptance of formative measurement has the potential to greatly change the way factors affecting behavior related to leisure activity are viewed and analyzed.

"This will undoubtedly produce stronger findings that are both of theoretical and applied value," he said.

More information: KYLE, Gererd; JUN, Jinhee. An Alternate Conceptualization of the Leisure Constraints Measurement Model: Formative Structure? *Journal of Leisure Research*, [S.l.], v. 47, n. 3, apr. 2015. ISSN 2159-6417. js.sagamorepub.com/jlr/article/view/6419

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