LIFE SATISFACTION OF OLDER PERSONS: DOES DAILY ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION MATTER?
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The daily activity participation refers to the varieties and categories of productive activities participated by older persons in a typical day. Productive activities include paid and non-paid activities. The activity theory developed by Robert Havighurst in 1960s postulates that regardless of types of activities, older persons who are active will be more satisfied with life than less active older persons. The purpose of this paper is to determine the effect of the varieties and categories of daily activity participation on life satisfaction of older Malaysians living in the community. Data from the 1999 Survey on Perceptions of Needs and Problems of the Elderly on older persons aged 60+ were used. The varieties of daily activity participation is computed by counting the number of productive activities participated in a day, while the categories of daily activity participation refers to the combination of productive activities participated in a day. The life satisfaction score is constructed based on the respondents' responses to 10 questions adopted from L-SIA. Multiple regression analysis is used to estimate the expected life satisfaction of respondents according to the varieties and categories of daily activity participation, controlled for socio-demographic factors and self-esteem. The multiple regression analysis showed that the varieties of daily activity participation had a statistically significant positive coefficient, indicating the more the varieties of daily activity participation, the higher the life satisfaction. Thus, the results supported the activity theory. The participation in different categories of activities yielded different level of life satisfaction. On average, daily participation in paid work only achieved the lowest life satisfaction, while higher life satisfaction was achieved by participating daily in leisure activities only or together with other activities. It is concluded that the varieties of daily activity participation, and daily participation in leisure activities had positive effect.