Introduction: A regional community space in Japan, Chiiki-Katsudokan, was founded to facilitate the social interactions of older adults through activities. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic occasionally forced this space to close or limited the volume of its participants. In this research, the operation of the space was reviewed by monitoring the changes in the social interactions of the attendees, and by investigating the anticipated function from the attendees’ needs. Method: A semi-structured interview targeting the attendees of Chiiki-Katsudokan was conducted in December 2021 (N=19, main age: 80s). The level of social interaction before and during the pandemic and the newly anticipated function of the space were examined.

Results: First, deep and light interactions were observed. Those with deep interactions initially had wide social connections and used Chiiki-Katsudokan to interact with friends. Meanwhile, those with light interactions only talked to other attendees while attending the space. During the quarantine, those with deep interactions stayed connected with others and met privately, while those with light interactions faced a higher risk of social isolation. Second, the most popular newly anticipated functions of the space were “Place to gather with friends (n=14)” and “Interaction with younger generation (n=14).” “Opportunity to learn about the new pandemic-lifestyle (n=11)” was also rated high, while need for “online events” was rated the lowest (n=7).

Conclusion: The pandemic re-emphasized older adults’ need for direct interaction. Low interest in technology-based countermeasures suggested that community spaces should expand their operation method while considering offline methods (e.g., pen-pal system) that could enhance social interaction.

TYPES OF ATTENDEES IN COMMUNITY SPACE IN JAPAN: TOWARD DESIGNING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

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Introduction: Designing community space for social participation of older adults is essential for healthy aging. The behavioral characteristics of the attendees have much to offer as they relate to social settings designed in the space. This study aims to elucidate the basic typology of the attendees considering their motivation for attendance and state of social connection.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews targeting attendees of Chiiki-Katsudokan, a space designed for social participation in a larger aging estate in Japan, were conducted in December 2021 (N=16, 16% male). Attendees were asked about their reasons for attending events at Chiiki-Katsudokan, interaction levels with other attendees, and levels of social participation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results: Based on the interviews, attendees were classified into three types: Seeker, Hobbyist, and Socializer. First, Seekers (n=3) used Chiiki-Katsudokan as the primary means of preventing social isolation. Amongst the three types, the social interaction level of Seekers was the lightest, and the opportunity decreased when Chiiki-Katsudokan closed during the quarantine. Second, the main motivation for Hobbyists (n=5) was the event contents which matched their interests. Hobbyists were also likely to engage in hobby networks, which continued privately during the pandemic. Finally, Socializers (n=8) attended Chiiki-Katsudokan to communicate with friends. Many were initially socially active and engaged in social interaction outside Chiiki-Katsudokan, e.g., tea time with friends, during the quarantine.

Conclusion: This study suggested that designing community space for social participation requires defining the varying levels of engagement and expecting relationships outside the space based on the behavioral characteristics of the attendees.

MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING AMONG DISABLED OLDER ADULTS: THE MODERATED ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT

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Engaging in meaningful activities has been seen as an important way to sustain the well-being of older adults with disabilities and to achieve person-centered care. Yet, it is still unclear whether and to what extent meaningful activity engagement promotes well-being for community-dwelling older adults with disabilities, and how the environmental factors could affect these relationships. This study aims to investigate the relationship between meaningful activity engagement and psychological well-being, and to explore the moderated role of environmental factors (physical, attitudinal, service/support, policy). Survey data conducted in Taiwan between April and July of 2018 were analyzed by using multiple regression (N=1,244). Three types of meaningful activities (instrumental, social, and leisure) were identified based on a self-rated activity meaningfulness measure. Findings showed that higher levels of engagement in three types of meaningful activities were associated with better quality of life (QOL), but only engaging in meaningful leisure was associated with less depressive symptoms while adjusting functional status. Perceived better policy-related environment (e.g., long-term care services) could reinforce the positive effects of three types of meaningful activity engagement on QOL and depressive symptoms. Findings also indicated perceived attitudinal environment moderated the association between meaningful leisure activity engagement and QOL. These results established the influences of meaningful activity engagement on the well-being of community-dwelling older adults with disabilities and highlight the importance of age-friendly environment in supporting meaningful activity engagement and older adults’ well-being.

SESSION 6250 (POSTER)

ATTITUDES ABOUT AGING (POSTERS)

OLDER ADULTS’ INDIVIDUAL TRAJECTORIES IN SOCIAL STATUS AND AGING ANXIETY

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A high social standing in comparison to others is associated with positive psychological and health outcomes. Highest social standing is assigned to the group of middle-aged adults, hence, on average, older adults face a loss in status relative
to younger age groups and relative to their former selves. Experienced and expected age-related changes in subjective social status and their association with aging anxiety have not yet received much attention in aging research. Using a new methodological approach, respondents indicated their perceived and expected social status for five points in time: 10 years ago, 5 years ago, now, in 5 years, in 10 years, which allowed for inter- and intrapersonal comparisons. They did the same for the average status of members of their age group. Early and later in old age (N = 191; range 65–88; MW = 73.5 years), participants expected higher losses in status than they have experienced in the past. However, low personal status in relation to others showed higher associations with aging anxiety (R2 = .16) than disadvantageous age-related intrapersonal changes (R2 = .14). Perception of a stable subjective status trajectory as well as distancing oneself from the group older adults, as in perceiving one’s personal status above the groups’ status, was related to reduced anxiety of aging. Taken together, analysis of individual status trajectories can help to gain new insights on attitudes toward aging. Implications for creating a more positive perception of aging are discussed.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND ATTITUDES TOWARD AGING IN OLDER ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Research has shown that positive or negative views of aging are associated with quality of life. Prior research has found that community dwelling older adults aged 65 and older with more negative views of aging have lower scores on quality of life scales, whereas those with higher views of aging have higher scores on quality of life scales. A group of 264 community dwelling older adults (Mean age = 72.4 years, 62-92 years old) living in Prince Edward Island, Canada, completed a survey measuring attitudes towards aging and quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sample consisted of a majority of retired (n=206) older adults, living in an urban area (n=151), and approximately 53% receiving a household income of $26,000 to $75,000 per year. Regression analysis found that attitudes towards aging significantly predicted quality of life (F(1,127)=24.9, p<0.01), with positive attitudes predicting higher quality of life scores and negative attitudes predicting lower quality of life scores. The model showed that the predictor, attitudes towards aging, explained 16.5% of the variance in quality of life (R2=2.7, t=-4.9, p<0.01). This suggests that attitudes towards aging play a role in predicting quality of life in older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA, LEARNING EXPERIENCES, AND PUBLIC STIGMA AGAINST DEMENTIA

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Overcoming stigma around dementia is a global challenge. This cross-sectional study examined the association of experiences of interacting with people with dementia (PwD) and learning about dementia, with the public-stigma against dementia. We recruited—via an internet survey—710 Japanese adults (mean age = 46.3 years; 49.3% females) without any medical or welfare license, or dementia-related work experience. Public-stigma against dementia was assessed using the Japanese version of Phillipson et al.’s scale (2012) exploring dementia-related attitudes in the context of “personal avoidance,” “person centeredness,” “fear of labeling,” and “fear of discrimination.” Multivariable linear regression analysis was employed to examine the association of interacting with PwD and learning regarding dementia as explanatory variables with dementia stigma score, adjusting for sociodemographic variables. Regarding interactions with PwD, talking or activities with PwD were associated with low “personal avoidance” (β = -1.47, p = 0.002), “fear of labeling” (β = -0.96, p = 0.020), and “fear of discrimination” (β = -0.396, p = 0.043). Experiences of living with PwD were associated with low “personal avoidance” (β = -2.35, p = 0.002) and “fear of discrimination” (β = -0.789, p = 0.013). Learning experiences at school regarding dementia were associated with low “personal avoidance” (β = -4.01, p < 0.001), and self-learning experiences were associated with low “personal avoidance” (β = -1.73, p = 0.049) and high “person centeredness” (β = 1.27, p = 0.037). However, workplace learning was not associated with any area. Interacting with PwD and learning about dementia might reduce associated public-stigma.

AWARENESS OF AGE-RELATED GAINS AND LOSSES AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS WITH PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE FUNCTION

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Awareness of age-related change (AARC) refers to people’s recognition of how aging has affected their performance, behavior, and ways of experiencing life. Sometimes these age-related changes are perceived as losses (AARC-Losses), such as when people notice declines in their health. However, other times these age-related changes are perceived as gains (AARC-Gains), such as when people notice they have developed a better sense of what is important to them. Past research has shown that higher AARC-Losses (and to a lesser extent lower AARC-Gains) are associated with poorer self-rated health. However, no research has yet examined whether AARC also relates to an objective performance-based measure of health. To address this, we examined the cross-sectional relationships between AARC-Losses and AARC-Gains with gait speed (i.e., a measure of physical function) in 164 community-dwelling older adults. Participants in this study also completed health-related questionnaires and the NIH Toolbox Cognition Battery. Results showed that AARC-Losses were most strongly predicted by depression and the NIH Toolbox Cognition Battery. Results showed that AARC-Losses were most strongly predicted by depression and slower gait speed. A different pattern emerged for AARC-Gains. After controlling for demographic factors, depression, and other self-reported measures of health, we found that higher AARC-Gains were predicted by poorer cognition and slower gait speed. The counterintuitive relationship between AARC-Gains and objective cognition has previously been reported in the literature. However, this study is the first to