

Developing Leisure Themes that Impact Happiness: Evidence from Emirati Women in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

This research work aims to develop leisure themes that impact happiness. The research was conducted in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) among Emirati women, employing an exploratory sequential design approach that included focus groups (FGDs) followed by questionnaires. The research presents unique findings, as this area has not been thoroughly researched, highlighting the value and originality of this study. The leisure themes that were developed post data collection and analysis indicate a different approach to leisure among Emirati women, in comparison to other women across the globe. Further, this research fills the gap in the limited literature review available on leisure themes from the UAE. The implications of this study are that the findings enable decision makers and HR (Human Resources) departments to frame an enhanced level of well-being for their employees. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine the leisure behavior of Emirati women in the UAE, particularly their involvement in different leisure activities to achieve happiness, through systematic data collection and analysis. **Design/methodology/approach:** The study identified and developed eleven leisure themes based on the findings from focus group discussions with 42 women residing in seven different emirates of the United Arab Emirates. A semi-structured questionnaire was designed to elicit responses from 195 Emirati women on their involvement in leisure activities with relation to how these help women to achieve happiness. The data collected via a questionnaire were analysed using construct analysis modeling, which revealed that six themes had a high impact on the happiness of Emirati women. **Findings:** This study revealed that Emirati women focus more on personal/self-centric leisure themes to achieve maximum happiness. Passion and personal space were found to elicit high levels of happiness, whereas personal well-being, self-introspection,

techno-entertainment, relationship building, and informal work relationships were found to elicit low levels of happiness. **Research limitations/implications:** The outcomes of this research will provide directions for further in-depth research in the UAE and other countries/cultures by academicians. **Practical implications:** The outcomes of the research would provide a direction to the policy makers of the Ministry of Happiness, UAE, to devise appropriate strategies to enhance the happiness of women in the country. **Originality/value:** This paper aims to be novel by developing leisure themes specific to Emirati women residing in the UAE and testing the impact of leisure themes on achieving happiness.

Keywords: Leisure Themes, Happiness, Emirati Women, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Introduction

Leisure is a widely studied concept associated with human livelihood. de Grazia (1962) provided both classical and modern perspectives of the concept. The classical view of leisure has been described by Greek aristocrats, Plato and Aristotle, as a cultural ideal, whereas work is perceived as slavish and degrading (Sylvester, 1999). Modern leisure is explained as the time beyond work and other needs for an individual, including domestic chores and self-care. de Grazia (1962) and Trainor et al. (2010) elaborate that leisure is a state of being, in which an activity is performed for its own sake, for its end. Further, Newman et al. (2014, 559) propose that "leisure is the amount of activities/time spent outside obligated work time and/or engagement". Individuals can experience happiness through leisure activities because these are engaged in during free time, and individuals have the freedom to choose activities they like and focus on those that provide intrinsic satisfaction and genuine happiness in life (Lobo, 2006).

Understanding the concept of leisure may necessitate enhanced knowledge of leisure and its relationship with happiness and well-being. One of the earliest studies conducted in the USA showed that most people were pleased with their own chosen leisure activities (Andrew & Withey, 1976). Lu and Argyle (1994) found that constructive and positive leisure enhances satisfaction and happiness. Gregory (1982) explored the gender dimension to propose that women are more associated with leisure. On the contrary, Deem (1982) suggested that women participate equally in comparison to men in leisure activities, although most women face difficulty in identifying and adopting outdoor leisure activities. Bialeschki and Henderson (1986) argued that several constraints affect the choice and time of women in leisure activities as family expectations, demands of spouse/children, and completion of domestic chores top the list of competing factors. Mowl and Towner (1995) highlighted a wide variety of aspects on how leisure has been framed for women over the decades and revealed the unique opportunities and constraints of leisure in terms of physical structure and social environment. They examined how social customs constrict perception and usage of leisure in daily life. Numerous studies have revealed that shopping is one of the leading leisure activities among women, which is used to seek happiness and intrinsic joy (Jansen-Verbeke, 1987; Sakkthivel & Sriram, 2015). Given that extant studies have established the involvement of women in leisure activities in their bid to achieve happiness, the present study intends to explore the leisure life of Emirati women.

Valek and Fotiadis (2018) agree that the literature on the choice of leisure activities of national residents of the UAE is scarce. Emirati women embrace Islamic religious and cultural norms (Lewis, 2010), which impact their choice of leisure activities (Martin & Mason, 2003),

which are strikingly different from their counterparts across the world. Berger and Peerson (2009) support the way religious and cultural norms impact Emirati girls and revealed that, for example, even though swimming was possible at ladies-only indoor pools, even then, the ladies could not use them effectively as cultural and religious norms put restrictions. Martin and Mason (2003) discovered that religious and cultural norms have a significant impact on leisure activities among Muslims, especially among women in the Middle East. Religious and cultural requirements also influence certain modes of entertainment like music, singing, and dancing (Martin & Mason, 2004). Hanafy (1995) differentiates between *haraam* (drinking alcohol and gambling) and *halaal* (sports and activities that help maintain healthy minds and bodies) forms of leisure, as the former are unacceptable forms of leisure in Islam. In addition, Sfeir (1985) states that many sporting activities are prohibited for women, for the reason that they do not follow the norms of modesty and dress codes. Therefore, not all leisure activities followed by Emirati women may be seen as similar in Western countries.

This study is unique as it will focus on the leisure life of Emirati women in their intentions to achieve happiness. The available literature does not provide direction in the selection and testing of leisure activities pertinent to a study of this kind; therefore, the researchers selected leisure activities that are available and accessible to Emirati women in line with their religious and cultural norms. Emirati women do not participate in certain leisure activities, such as visiting bars that serve alcoholic drinks, casinos for gambling, and entertainments involving dance and music, as such activities are forbidden (*haraam*) in the Islamic religion and Emirati culture (Shirazi, n.d.; Rizvi, n.d.). To gather data, a focus-group discussion was conducted among selected women representing different emirates of the UAE to determine the accessibility and availability of leisure activities and the women's intentions in participating in such leisure activities. Based on outcomes of focus-group discussions, pertinent leisure themes were developed and tested among Emirati women to discover the leisure themes that yield maximum happiness. The tests utilized semi-structured questionnaires to probe into themes of leisure for Emirati women.

Literature Review

Leisure, Women, and Happiness

Humans typically pursue happiness and leisure, which are indispensable parts of human life (Argyle, 1999; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004; Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Leisure leads to happiness, as elucidated by various studies (Hills & Argyle, 1998; Stebbins & Liu, 2012; Liu & Yu, 2015). Modi (2017) posited that leisure is the key to the door of happiness.

Numerous studies have attempted to link leisure and women (Gregory 1982; Deem, 1982; Bialeschki & Henderson, 1986; Jansen-Verbeke, 1987; Mowl & Towner, 1995). Some studies revealed a positive relationship between leisure and happiness (Crandall, 1980; Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Spiers & Walker, 2009; Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Heo et al., 2012); how leisure activities enhance productivity and reduce health-related expenses (Snir & Harpaz, 2002), and that a few leisure activities assist in decreasing work stress (Blasche, Arlinghaus & Dorner, 2014). Existing literature has verified these claims in the context of the Western world (Iwasaki, 2006; Spiers & Walker, 2009), however, similar studies in the context of the Middle East are limited. Sakkthivel (2011) conducted a study in the Turkish part of Cyprus, through developing and testing new leisure constructs, of monetary and non-monetary leisure activities, and revealed that most respondents focused on non-monetary-based leisure

activities to seek happiness. In the Asian context, a study conducted in China revealed a positive relationship between leisure and happiness, due to factors like transition from socialism to capitalism, enhanced allocation of resources, and increased incentives leading to the growth of personal income of people in China (Easterlin et al., 2012). Duerden, Courtright, and Widmer (2018) proposed that work and leisure may be interrelated due to their blurred boundaries; they concluded that there is no clear demarcation between work and leisure as two distinct activities, but rather, as mutually overlapping activities. Some organizations are of the view that both leisure and work are interrelated; hence, there is provision for various impressive leisure-related activities in the workplace. According to Aristotle's philosophy, music, art, physical ability, and politics are all leisure activities (Banks, 2003), while Jackson (2009) explains that leisure is a unit that measures time. Pieper (2009) reiterates that leisure is an attitude related to a mental or spiritual state of mind and is an abstract situation, showcasing the condition of one's soul. This statement drives us to think of the prominence of leisure in our day-to-day lives.

There is a strong tendency for people to overvalue work, posing a risk as it impacts negatively on work-life balance and overall well-being (Pieper, 2009), which are critical in the contemporary world and need to be practiced well to utilize the benefits of leisure (Agha, Azmi, & Khan, 2017). Well-being is about mindset, and its relationship with leisure activities has been extensively researched in contemporary times (Brajsa-Zganec et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2018). Overall, research reports support the notion that leisure activities enhance the level of happiness, enable consolidation of social relationships, offer support in acquiring knowledge and skillsets, make people feel better about themselves, and enhance the quality of life (Brajsa-Zganec et al., 2011). A multitude of progressive studies support the route of achieving happiness through leisure activities in China (Lee & Zhang, 2010), Egypt (Saad, 2007), Japan (Iwasaki et al., 2006), Turkey (Koca, Henderson, Asci, & Bulgu, 2009), and Taiwan (Tsai, 2006, 2010).

According to Liu, Li, Iwasaki, Onda, and Lee (2016), happiness as a field of study has substantial research evidence from ancient China and India. Taoism, founded by Lao Tzu, believes that happiness lies in a simple life and can be achieved through peace of mind owing to his surroundings, appreciates the creation of the Almighty, and is in a state of tranquillity (Liu et al., 2016). Several studies posit that experiences and insights gained from leisure activities make people happy and satisfied in life (Jackson, 2009; Newman et al., 2014; Wei et al., 2015). These studies provide a much-needed direction in developing the premise for this current study; however, none of the studies described the relationship between leisure and happiness comprehensively. The current study, therefore, focuses on developing comprehensive leisure themes and measuring the impact of the themes on achieving happiness, thus working towards bridging the gap in existing literature.

Research Objectives for this Study

- Find leisure activities that would create happiness among Emirati Women,
- develop specific leisure themes that suit the cultural values of participating respondents, and
- Find the impact of developed themes on creating happiness among Emirati women.

Following the research objectives, the main **Research Question** can be framed as:

- Which leisure activities create happiness among Emirati Women?

Research Methods

The study is particularly centred on Emirati Women who practice the Islamic religion. Conducting a study on these women should unearth the leisure activities that they engage in and detail how such activities result in happiness, within the realm of religion and cultural norms. The outcome of the study would provide a new vista on leisure activities that women across the world could engage in for achieving happiness. The participants represent different demographic groups in terms of age, occupation, marital status, and employment, among others.

Table 1

Demographic Details of Participants

Criteria	Participant Details
Number	42
Age	20-50 years 20-30 years: 18 30-40 years: 14 40-50 years:10
Gender	Females
Nationality	Emirati (UAE nationals)
Marital Status	Married: 33 Unmarried: 09
Employment	All participants

While deciding on the research approach, we agreed on the mix-methods approach with an exploratory sequential design. Exploratory Sequential Design is a mix-methods approach where researchers begin with qualitative data collection and analysis to explore a phenomenon, followed by quantitative methods to test or generalize findings. This design is particularly useful when little is known about a topic, as the qualitative phase helps generate hypotheses, concepts, or instruments for the subsequent quantitative phase. It provides depth and context before moving to measurement and generalization, making it valuable in culturally sensitive research. Researchers must ensure proper integration between phases to enhance validity and rigor (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fetters et al., 2013). Focus group discussions (FGD) followed by a survey were conducted for data collection and analysis during step one. The semi-structured questionnaire enabled researchers to gather empirical data and opinions of participants in step two. The detailed methodology is in the following sections.

Step 1: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Themes Development

The central focus is on Emirati women who have embraced the Islamic religion, which, along with the local Arab culture, has certain norms towards women's involvement in different leisure activities. A set of questions to probe different leisure activities of Emirati women and the level of happiness achieved through these activities was deployed. To ascertain such leisure activities, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted among selected Emirati women to unravel the nature and type of leisure activities that they engage in to achieve happiness.

The FGD was conducted at the university premises in Sharjah with Emirati women who are students of different age groups, ranging from 20 to 50 years. *(It is relevant to state that Emirati women enrol for a university degree at different ages, as most of them start working*

in government organizations after completion of their school-level studies.) The participants belonged to seven different Emirates of the UAE (*Sharjah, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Umm-Al-Quain, Ras Al Khaimah, and Fujairah*), which reveals the spread and validity of the sample population selected for the study. The session was moderated by researchers after an appropriate briefing on the nature of the study. Forty-two Emirati women of different age groups participated in the study. Each focus group interview was with six Emirati women belonging to different age groups, and seven focus group interviews were conducted on the University premises, in different time periods, in December 2019. The participants were appropriately briefed about the nature of the study and were asked to reveal different leisure activities that are accessible and available to them. Numerous leisure activities were identified during the FGDs. The exercise revealed several new areas of leisure activities that participants engage in to achieve happiness. The researchers selected the leisure activities that were most commonly engaged in by all participants. These leisure activities were elaborated further to develop leisure themes to be asked among the selected respondents of Emirati women.

Development of Leisure Themes

Eleven themes emerged from the FGD data analysis. In no order, they are (1)reading (2)personal entertainment (3)personal well-being (4)self-introspection (5)continuous learning/personal inquisitiveness (6)passion (7)adventure (8)techno-entertainment (9)relationship building (10)personal space, and (11)camaraderie-informal work relations.

- (1) *Reading* refers to reading books. The reader chooses to read books on leisure, religion, fiction, storybooks, or novels of any type, and in any preferred language (Liu & Da, 2020).
- (2) *Personal entertainment* is any form of entertainment liked or preferred by the participant. In contemporary times, personal entertainment is linked to smart and artificial intelligence-related gadgets. The participants freely mentioned leisure activities engaged in for personal entertainment, like playing board games (Wang & Wong, 2014; Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2017; Schulz et al., 2017; Liu & Da, 2020).
- (3) *Personal well-being* refers to taking care of oneself. Personal well-being is related to a state of being comfortable, healthy, and happy and includes activities, tasks, and choices related to enhancing mental alacrity and physical vitality, that provide a sense of achievement and personal fulfilment (Liu & Da, 2020).
- (4) *Self-introspection* is closely aligned to self-reflection, connecting with the soul and understanding mental and spiritual context. Self-introspection is a significant tool when spending time alone, doing activities like closing eyes, meditating, or connecting with the soul through visualization, like a video about one's daily chores (Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2017; Schulz et al., 2017)
- (5) *Continuous learning/personal inquisitiveness*, synonymous with "lifelong learning," is a process of continuously updating oneself through knowledge, skills, competence, and expertise enhancement. This is an interesting theme as several people engage in enhancing and updating themselves, in order to gain further fulfilment (Liu & Da, 2020).
- (6) *Passion* connects all interesting tasks adapted by individuals to channel their energy into things they long to do. Passion is an extremely strong feeling that supports people in developing themselves and taking tasks that may seem otherwise find extremely difficult or challenging like spending time in activities like cooking and baking was considered relevant for this study (Liu & Da, 2020).

- (7) *Adventure-related activities* are extremely interesting tasks, activities, or sports-related events that may otherwise seem difficult to achieve but people with an adrenaline rush could undertake, due to a preference for such activities (Wang & Wong, 2014; Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2017; Schulz et al., 2017).
- (8) *Techno-entertainment* has emerged as one of the trendy types of activities preferred by teenagers and adults. People use dedicated devices such as video game consoles, smartphones, tablets, and laptops or in tools and applications in hand-held devices and smartphones, thereby making them more available and easier to use for techno-entertainment (Wang & Wong, 2014; Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2017; Schulz et al., 2017).
- (9) *Relationship building* means meeting neighbors, friends, and others to share thoughts, problems, and issues, or even talk about reasons for happiness and joy. People use relationship building in multiple ways, through multiple modes (Schulz et al., 2017; Liu & Da, 2020).
- (10) *Personal space* is a fictitious space around a person to be used in a manner that they prefer. Generally, people want to spend time by themselves so that they can do whatever they like to do (Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2017).
- (11) *Camaraderie* is mutual trust and friendship among people who spend time together, and are primarily work-related relationships (Liu & Da, 2020). People use camaraderie to spend time productively with people they like and trust.

A simple conceptual model would be:

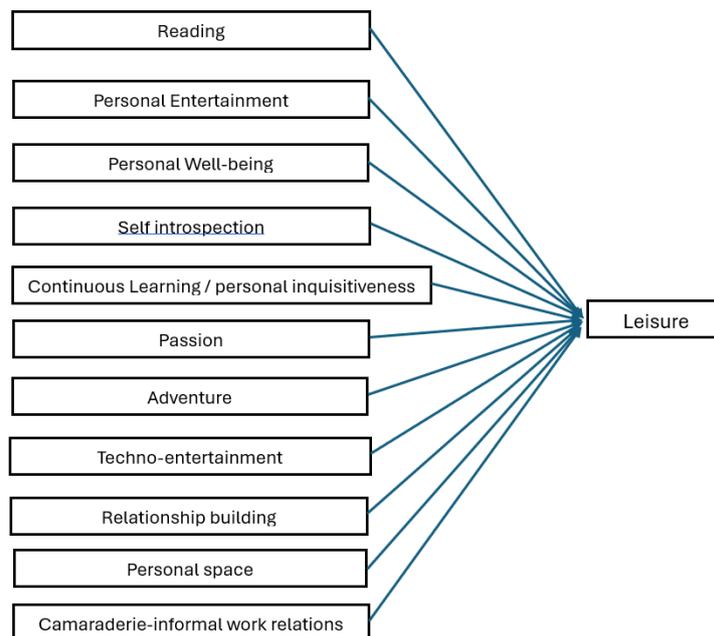


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Step 2: Design of Data Collection Tool and Collection Method

Further to the FGD, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed as a data collection tool consisting of 11 broad themes of leisure activities. The selected themes included reading, personal entertainment, personal wellbeing, self-introspection, continuous learning/personal inquisitiveness, passion, adventure, techno-entertainment, relationship building, personal space, and camaraderie. The data-collection tool, the questionnaire, was designed using a 7-

point Likert scale (from “extremely happy” to “not at all”) and consists of 36 statements representing 11 broad leisure themes. The questionnaire further consisted of open-ended questions to find the respondents’ intentions and involvement in leisure activities to achieve happiness. Some of the questions were phrased as follows: “What motivates you to follow your passion, and how do you achieve happiness out of it?” “How and why does reading different books make you happy?” “How do you spend your leisure time by involving yourself in several personal entertainment options to achieve happiness?” “Do you enjoy playing online games during leisure time?” “Are you adventurous?” “What do you like doing during your me-time?” “What do you love doing when you are alone?” “Do you hang around with your work colleagues beyond work time?” and so on.

Participants were selected through the self-selection method by asking the main question, "Do you engage in different leisure activities?" The rationale behind the self-selection method is to gather Emirati women who are involved in different leisure activities. Several participants were not aware of leisure activities; hence, the researchers explained the nature and different aspects of leisure activities and ascertained their involvement in leisure activities in order for them to secure participation in the study. In order to ensure a relaxed and open environment, professional female researchers were deployed to collect data.

Administration of the instrument and interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour per participant. This amount of time spent on each participant and the restricted availability of the selected participants posed a challenge in gathering data from a large number of participants. Around 267 respondents were approached with a self-selection question, and only 195 individuals responded. 68 participants answered the questions related to intentions and involvement towards different leisure activities to achieve happiness (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Scott & McCarville, 2008). The participants belonged to different emirates of the country, thus, ensuring the study covered the whole country and were approached in locations, such as universities, workplaces, malls, and houses. The outcomes of open-ended questions relating to intentions and involvement of the respondents are displayed below, along with the results of each theme.

Table 1

Themes with construct values, rank, and impact using Construct Analysis Modelling

Construct	Construct value	Rank	Impact
Passion	5.334135	1	High
Personal space	5.045072	2	High
Personal entertainment	5.026042	3	High
Adventure	4.82482	4	High
Reading	4.804688	5	High
Continuous learning/personal inquisitiveness	4.785457	6	High
Personal wellbeing	4.592067	7	Low
Techno-entertainment	4.57492	8	Low
Self-Introspection	4.454327	9	Low
Informal work relationship	4.394231	10	Low
Relationship building	4.125	11	Low
Grand Total	51.96076		
Midpoint	4.723705		

Findings and Discussion

The collected data were analysed through construct analysis modelling in order to identify high and low-impact leisure themes and activities that can lead to happiness. The cumulative scores of constructs are presented to identify the impact of leisure activities on happiness. The construct analysis revealed the rank order and impact of leisure themes that can lead to happiness (refer to Table 1). It is interpreted that the higher-order leisure themes are assumed to create more happiness. The high and low-impact leisure themes were categorized based on the construct value arrived at, which is higher than a mid-point value. The midpoint value is arrived at through the cumulative score of all construct values divided by the number of constructs taken. The following discussions explained the individual impact of leisure themes in creating happiness and experiences of the respondents:

$$f(\text{ILTi}) = \left[\sum C_j / C_n \right] \left[\sum_{i=1}^n S_i / n \right]$$

Figure 2: Calculation of Impact of Leisure Themes on Happiness

$f(\text{ILTi})$ = Impact of Leisure themes on happiness of Emirati women

S_i = Agreement level score of the respondents towards the impact of leisure themes

C_j = Sum of construct scores

C_n = No. of constructs taken

Passion ranks first among the activities with a construct value of 5.33, which is higher than the midpoint value of the data, indicating that spending time with passionate tasks is one of the highly prioritized leisure activities for Emirati women. To corroborate this result, some of the responses from in-depth interviews are captured below:

I love cooking, and I am passionate about it. I watch many YouTube videos to learn new recipes each week. Then I come back and do special cooking at home, which my family loves, and it gives me more happiness! I just enjoy it to the core – R10

I follow my passion for baking. I am so much in love with baking that I have an online startup for baking cakes – R6

Eating out and trying out new fine dining restaurants of different cuisines, I love to do. Most of my weekends I spend on this – R3

I love food... It's my weakness. I go out to eat at least three times a week. I enjoy different cuisines also – R46

I work in a company, but for the last seven years, I have been focusing on canvas painting. My family is very supportive. Recently, I sold 2 paintings online – R14

Ranking second among leisure activities is personal space, with a construct value of 5.04, showing high impact on happiness. Emirati women like to be involved in this type of leisure activity as they love to do things, and that is what makes personal space so important for them. Different respondents use personal space in a variety of ways.

My personal space is utilized when I visit the parlour and spend time on my beautification – R33

I spend a lot of time in my garden. I believe I can talk to my plants and love taking care of them. This is another world for me – R30

In my personal space, I want to sit with my mom and spend time with her. Sometimes I just lie down with her, and many times I apply oil to her hair or massage her hands and legs. It's a great feeling when my mother gets relaxed in this manner – R52

I spend more time with my sisters and love to talk about different things, mostly fashion – R19

Personal entertainment, ranking third, is another important leisure activity that Emirati women engage in to achieve happiness. It showed a high impact on happiness, with a construct value of 5.02. Personal entertainment is one of the favorite leisure activities of UAE women as they have access to several sources of personal entertainment, like outdoor activities and some activities at home, like watching television. Below are some of the responses from interviewees:

I love spending time at home in my room watching television. This is good as I don't have to go out of the house, I can rest comfortably, and entertain myself most of the time. Some of the Arabic and English TV series are wonderful. Nowadays, I watch a lot of AD Drama, Zee Aflam Channel, and Netflix series. I love them!!!- R1

I like visiting theme parks with my kids, and I become very happy when I see my kids enjoying – R28

I entertain myself by visiting the movie theatre weekly. I love Hollywood and Bollywood films. I don't watch Arabic films – R61

Even when I'm cooking, I love solving Sudoku. Since a long time I have been playing the game, and I am completely addicted to it – R63

Adventurous activities rank fourth among the leisure activities with a construct value score of 4.82. Emirati women go out for dune bashing, ziplining, long drives, and beaches for adventurous activities. The UAE has a scenic landscape, stunning deserts, mountains, and beaches for adventurous activities. Excellent facilities and infrastructure support are available in the country. A substantial number of Emirati women possess a driving license and a car, so access to adventure is easy. The data collected from the Emirati women who drive as well indicates that adventure is one of the popular leisure activities adopted by these women and is a significant source of their happiness. The interview responses below support this finding.

We are blessed in the UAE, Alhamdulillah! Since childhood, I have been going out to the desert with my father and brothers. We love our deserts. We do camping or ride a desert scooter. Sometimes I just go out and sit on the sand. In my village, the desert is all around us. A large part of the day goes by in the sand – R59

I go out for a long drive to Jebel Hafeet and Jebel Jais, especially during the weekends. My friends even go rock-climbing. Recently I did zip-line in Jebel Jais...a memorable adventure of my life- R15

I like camping with my family and spending time in nature. Of course, we do this during the winter season – R18

It is fun to experience adventure. I am not scared of mountaineering and love to go out to high mountains-R42

It would be great to have bungee jumping in the UAE; I do these things when I go abroad to Europe. I even did parasailing in one country –R43

Scuba diving and jet skiing are fun. I love doing this at least once a month with my family- R39

Reading ranked fifth (construct value = 4.80) on the list of constructs that elicit high impact on the happiness of Emirati women. As indicated in the interview responses, reading is a relaxed way of passing the time, with comfort around them.

For me, reading and learning new things is very critical to my happiness. I love reading books on religious and non-religious topics, and biographies of people to get inspired. There is a lot to learn from these great people – R21

I find happiness in reading, and I feel that I utilized my time well – R60

Reading is something I have loved since my childhood. I have read many books by famous English and Arabic authors – R50

I read the holy Quran daily. I believe if I get happiness in reading, I should use it for the best thing that I can do. This helps me to feel good – R37

Going to the library is what I like to do. The variety of books is amazing, and that attracts me repeatedly to visit the library near my house. I go weekly, find new books, and try to read them. Wish I knew more languages to read more books – R54

I own a Kindle, and I am a regular reader of online books – R37

Continuous learning/personal inquisitiveness ranks sixth (construct value = 4.78) on the list of constructs. These women seek to continue their studies even after long breaks from after-school studies. Some even return to university after a decade or more for continuous learning/personal inquisitiveness.

I attend several training programs hosted by my organization. I find happiness in all this, and I feel I utilized my time well – R38

I love to visit different heritage sites and museums. From childhood, I developed this interest, and I get happy when I spend time there – R12

I feel none of the art galleries in the UAE are left that I haven't visited. Keep going on and off to these places. Love doing that! – R51

Doing BBA and MBA is something that I planned in my age in spite of being in my 30s. I want to study and learn more as knowledge is power nowadays – R66

My kids teach me a lot of things as they are tech-savvy and know new things that happen across the world. I sit with them every day and hear them. I find that it is helping me to learn new trends of the world – R43

Contrary to those leisure themes that enhance the happiness of participants of this study, some themes do not add to any level of happiness, namely, personal wellbeing, techno-entertainment, self-introspection, informal work relationships, and relationship building; these rank low in supporting levels of happiness.

Personal well-being ranks seventh with a construct value of 4.59. It indicates a low impact on the happiness of Emirati women. Few Emirati women adopt ways of personal wellbeing, like going to the gym, running, walking or cycling. Some of the interview responses further validate this finding.

I go cycling, but I find it difficult to cycle in an abaya. So, most of the time I prefer to go outside the city to do cycling. However, I do walk regularly. I walk for 30-40 mins daily, which is highly satisfying. I can spend time with myself and become healthy, too. Walking helps me build concentration power. I feel happy after that – R5

I don't really love going to the Gym for workouts and Aerobics. Keeping fit is important, but there are other favourite things that make me happy—R36

I am so busy that even if I want to go to the Gym I feel that there are other things that I can prioritize to get happiness – R64

I have a swimming pool in the house, so it's accessible and easy to swim anytime. No one disturbs me, and it's a way I can take care of my wellbeing – R24

I would love to swim, but I use a treadmill in my house. Swimming means going out somewhere, but 45 minutes on the treadmill is easy at home, and I feel good about myself – R52

Techno-entertainment is another low-rated (construct value = 4.57) leisure activity among Emirati women, as they do not play online games. Emirati women do not use mobile phone games as time-passers. This finding is evident in the interview responses below.

Playing games online on a computer or mobile is not what I like to do when I am free. I want to utilize my leisure time in a way I enjoy, as I want to be happy – R55

Randomly, sometimes I play some games that my little son downloads on my phone, but I am not addicted – R65

I am not sure of getting happiness through spending time with the phone – R7

Playing games on my mobile is very boring – R25

My brothers play online games and football on PS4. I only watch them playing – R16

Self-introspection ranks quite low, having a construct value of 4.45, which is lower than the midpoint value, 4.72, indicating that it is not one of the most desired leisure activities among Emirati women. Some of the responses from the interviews below corroborate this finding.

I tried doing self-introspection, but I am not sure... I got confused...I felt it didn't give me any happiness – R27

What can I think about myself? Everything happens as per the will of Almighty... – R23

I cannot sit idle, thinking of something about the past or future, I love to live in the present – R32

Only sometimes, if I make a mistake, then I feel the need to think more about how I behave and act, otherwise I go with the flow – R29

Emirati women do not show interest in making informal work relationships. It ranked low, 4.39 on the scale. This may be attributed to the fact that, in Emirati society, long-term relationships are created through family relations and not in workplaces. Responses below support this claim.

All our relationships come with family, friends, and distant family relationships. It is difficult to maintain work-related relations as people find new jobs and move on. We also have a lot of expatriate colleagues who come and go from the workplace, so it's difficult to be friends with them as they sometimes leave the job and go back. So why should I waste my time with them? -R34

I don't like mingling with male colleagues – R40

My family doesn't like me to maintain personal relationships with my colleagues – R47

My friends are there, and only a few people I like mixing up with at my work. I never invite them to my house – R36

Why should I meet these people whom I am sitting with for the whole day? I have a family, kids, and my own friends to hang around with – R45

Lastly, relationship building was not found to be a leisure activity for Emirati women, as it ranks very low (construct value = 4.12). In fact, in the Emirati society, relationship building is an important element of the fabric of the society. Some of the interview responses are in tandem with this finding.

Relationship building is not a leisure activity. It is to be done very seriously and not in my free time. I am very particular about my real relationships, and I spent enough time on them - R41
I love spending more time with my family and not much with friends – R20

I do not go out with friends- R9

We form relationships with friends and family members. I think that's enough for a lifetime – R68

Conclusion

Leisure and happiness were found to have a relationship, and this has been established through previous studies (Hills & Argyle, 1998; Sakkthivel, 2011; Stebbins & Liu, 2012; Liu & Yu, 2015; Modi, 2017; Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2017; Schulz et al., 2017; Liu & Da, 2020). The element which can be achieved through different means, leisure, is one of the prominent ways to achieve happiness (Wang & Wong, 2014; Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2017; Liu & Da, 2020). This study developed specific leisure-based themes for Emirati women through FGDs. This study examined the intentions of Emirati women as well as their involvement in leisure activities to achieve happiness within religious and cultural norms. The main results lead to developing the eleven leisure themes that enabled in developing insights into the phenomenon of leisure among Emirati women. This study, thus, unearthed leisure themes that Emirati women are involved in to achieve happiness.

Passion was found to have the highest impact on Emirati women in achieving happiness. Most Emirati women derive happiness particularly from cooking for the family, learning new cuisines, and sharing food with family and friends. Emirati women also found to derive high levels of happiness by indulging in activities related to personal space, like personal grooming, silent walk, trekking, cycling, fishing, and deep sailing, spending time with family, visiting souq/malls, and family farmhouses/resorts during weekends. Emirati women love to have personal space and achieve high levels of happiness through getting involved in activities related to it. It is interesting to note that personal entertainment activities increased the levels of happiness of Emirati women who indulge in watching programs on television, listening to music, visiting movie halls to watch movies, etc. Personal entertainment, therefore, is a key leisure activity that Emirati women indulge in to achieve their happiness. Emirati women love to involve in adventurous activities during their leisure time to achieve high levels of happiness as the UAE houses numerous options of adventure activities, such as adrenaline-rush sports, jet skiing, parasailing, sky diving, desert skiing, artificial ice skiing, and bungee jumping, to name a few. Emirati women love to venture outdoors, equally, as personal entertainment to gain high levels of happiness. Emirati women spend their leisure time reading and continuously learning about different aspects of life, culture, and heritage, which is triggered by personal curiosity. Another dimension revealed that Emirati women are involved in continuous learning, so as to achieve high levels of happiness. It clearly shows that Emirati women gain happiness through activities to gain knowledge and achieve inner satisfaction. The women like going for long drives, visiting picnic spots, and camping in the desert with family. They involve in such activities to free themselves mentally from their daily routine, highlighting the multi-faceted personalities of Emirati women who love to engage in

leisure activities to gain high level of happiness. These results vividly show that Emirati women intend to break the stereotypical image of women not being involved in certain activities; rather, they portray themselves to the outside world as progressive women who love to be involved in a variety of leisure activities to gain happiness.

The study revealed that Emirati women obtain a low level of happiness by engaging in leisure activities related to techno-entertainment, such as browsing the internet, playing offline/online video games. They do not derive happiness from self-introspection-oriented leisure activities such as staying idle, sleeping or doing nothing. Emirati women derive happiness by involving more in physically oriented leisure activities, including venturing into different places with family.

It is evident from the study that Emirati women do not seek happiness through relationship-building activities and engaging in work-related informal relationships with colleagues. It is interesting to discover that Emirati women refuse to be idle and are highly interested in physical activities and externally oriented leisure activities to achieve maximum happiness. Despite actively following religious and cultural norms, Emirati women still portray themselves as activity-oriented women who engage in personal/self-centric, physical external leisure themes, to maximize happiness.

Theoretical Implications

The outcomes unveiled a novel dimension of Emirati women in their quest towards achieving happiness through indulging in different leisure activities. Researchers can take this current study to explore the in-depth phenomena with similar, the same, and contrasting populations. Additionally, new theories can be devised, and wider research can be carried out on this topic.

Practical and Social Implications

It is evident from the study that Emirati women have immensely progressed, show intentions of becoming contemporary to their counterparts around the world, and are adamant to achieve happiness by engaging in leisure activities within the ambit of religious and cultural norms. The study revealed leisure themes that Emirati women intend to get involved in to achieve happiness; hence, the study also provided a picture of new leisure themes that would make the Emirati women happy. This supports decision makers and governments in providing an ecosystem for women in the country, with the help of which the latter can seek leisure and happiness.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One major limitation of this study is the type of population that was considered for data collection and analysis. The research team feels it was limited, and further research can support in reducing this limitation by building a more robust concept and application for such a study. A suggestion for future research would be to replicate this study with other populations across the globe and place more thrust on underexplored populations.

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