

Chapter 9

Activities, Social Isolation, and Information Technology

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Activities, Social Isolation, and Information Technology

Nimfa B. Ogena

As people age, their physiological, social, and economic conditions change. Associated adjustments are often manifested through the activities of older persons (OPs) within the context of their perceived sociocultural expectations and the evolving digital technologies of the period.

Activities of Older Persons

How OPs spend their time provides a glimpse of their quality of life, which in turn is associated with their social roles and health status, amongst others. Family roles and adult engagement in the workforce shape Filipinos' perception of ageing as a responsibility (Valdez et al., 2013). Retirement often signals a person's role shift from being an active economic provider for the family, as younger members of the family are tasked to take on the economic lead, to a role with less economic burden. Therefore, OPs have greater liberty to choose activities that they are interested in pursuing given their physiological condition.

Activities

In the Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in the Philippines (LSAHP), respondents were asked how often they are engaged in a list of activities. Daily activities are classified as sedentary, physical, and social. Sedentary activities include listening to the radio, reading, and watching TV, while physical activities include physical exercises and gardening. Separated are social activities such as hanging out with friends and neighbours, the main intent of which is to socialise.

Table 9.1. Activities by Sex and Age

Activities	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% of older person who do the following activities daily:								
Listens to radio	22.4	23.7	n.s.	23.4	23.6	20.9	n.s.	23.2
Reads newspapers, magazines or books	4.7	1.7	**	3.3	2.3	2.2	n.s.	2.9
Watches TV	64.9	66.0	n.s.	70.5	60.5	49.7	***	65.6
Physical exercises	55.3	50.3	n.s.	52.9	53.2	47.1	n.s.	52.3
Gardening	26.1	27.3	n.s.	28.8	27.6	13.8	***	26.8
Hangout with friends and neighbors	22.0	26.6	n.s.	26.1	23.2	20.6	n.s.	24.8
% of older person who do the following activities at least once a month:								
Watches movies outside the house	3.8	3.5	n.s.	3.5	4.8	1.8	n.s.	3.6
Attend social activities	34.7	35.4	n.s.	40.4	29.6	18.4	***	35.1
Gambling for leisure	10.5	4.5	***	7.4	6.9	4.0	n.s.	6.9
N	2,411	3,573		3,760	1,551	673		5,984

p < 0.01. , *p < 0.001. n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

The LSAHP data reveal that watching TV (66%), physical exercises (52%), and gardening (27%) are the top three daily activities of older Filipinos (Table 9.1). Physical exercises include walking, jogging, dancing, aerobics, and Zumba. Other daily activities of OPs are listening to the radio (23%) and hanging out with friends and neighbours (25%). Not surprising is the low proportion of OPs who read newspapers, magazines, or books (3%) as OPs may have switched from print media to TV and electronic gadgets as their main source of information.

The activities of male and female OPs appear to vary. While more females than males hang out daily with friends and neighbours, more males than females perform the other activities daily such as physical exercises and reading information materials.

Age differentials for the daily activities of OPs were also found. The proportion of OPs who watch TV and engage in gardening significantly declines with age. While sedentary and physical activities of OPs are more prevalent on a daily basis, social activities are less frequent. Only one in three (35%) OPs attend social activities at least once a month. Activities less frequently done by OPs are watching movies outside the house (4%) and gambling for leisure (7%). More male OPs gamble for leisure compared to female OPs (11% and 5%, respectively).

Gambling in the Philippines are varied and may be classified as either sedentary or social. Examples of common gambling activities in the country include, but are not limited to, sweepstakes, card games, cockfighting, and horse-race betting. The OP's age is inversely related to attendance in social activities and gambling for leisure.

Religiosity and Ageing

With lower economic expectations from the family, focusing on spirituality and/or religion may provide OPs with an alternative mechanism for occupying their time and efforts as they age. When asked about their religious activities, the majority (76%) of OPs reported attending religious services outside the home, but less than one in four OPs said they attend prayer meetings, Bible studies, or related religious activities outside the home (Table 9.2). More than half of the OPs (57%) pray alone or in a private place, while 24% perform religious activities at home with other family members. Moreover, 38% of OPs watch or listen to religious activities through TV or radio, and more than one in four (27%) OPs read the Bible or religious materials. More female than male OPs perform these religious activities. Those aged 60–69 are more involved in these religious activities than their older counterparts and the proportion declines as age increases.

Table 9.2. Religious Activities by Sex and Age

Religious Activities	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who performs the following activities:								
Attends religious services outside the home	65.5	83.2	***	80.9	72.4	57.7	***	76.1
Attends religious activities outside the home (prayer meeting, bible studies, etc.)	17.8	28.3	***	25.0	24.5	17.8	n.s.	24.1
Prays alone or privately in places other than a public place of worship	47.0	63.0	***	57.8	56.0	51.1	n.s.	56.6
Performs religious activities at home with other family members	16.0	29.6	***	25.8	23.7	16.0	n.s.	24.1
Watches or listens to religious activities through TV or radio	33.5	40.4	n.s.	41.2	33.2	27.8	***	37.6
Reads the Bible or any religious materials	19.2	31.9	***	29.7	24.9	14.7	**	26.8
N	2,411	3,574		3,760	1,552	673		5,985

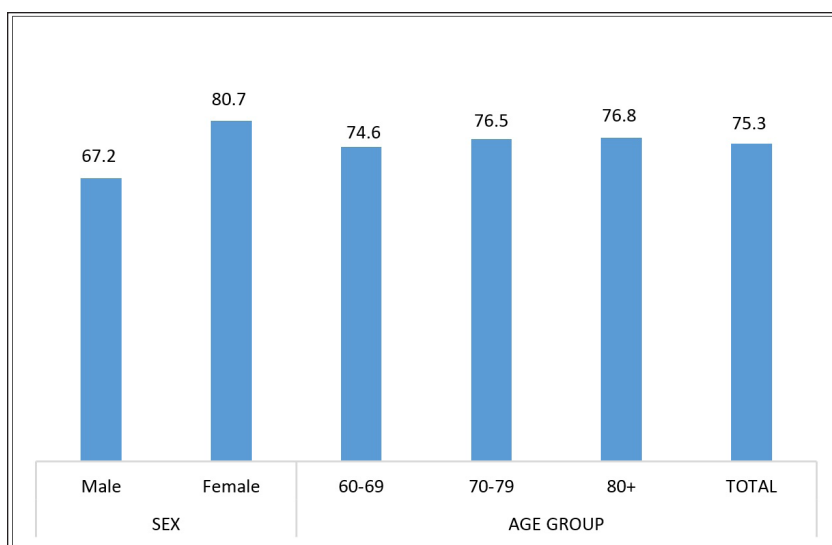
Religious Activities	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who are currently members of any religious group or organization	5.8	16.3	***	12.7	12.1	8.6	n.s.	12.1
<i>N</i>	2,411	3,574		3,760	1,552	673		5,985
% who said religion is very important in their life	67.2	80.7	***	74.6	76.6	76.7	n.s.	75.3
<i>N</i>	2,195	3,259		3,615	1,401	439		5,455

p < 0.01. , *p < 0.001, n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

Although three in four (75%) OPs consider religion very important in their lives, membership in organisations within their respective religion is low at 12%. Some examples of religious organisations in the Philippines are the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Women's League, Couples for Christ, amongst others. Females and those aged 60–69 have a higher membership in religious organisations than their counterparts. More females than males indicated the importance of religion in their lives (Figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1. Percent of Older Persons Who Said Religion is Very Important in Their Lives by Sex and Age



Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

Membership in Organisations and Volunteerism

Other social activities of OPs are with nonreligious organisations. About 3 in 10 (31%) OPs are members of any type of nonreligious organisation (Table 9.3). More OPs aged 80 and above (33%) indicated their membership in nonreligious organisations while those aged 70–79 have the lowest proportion (28%) of membership in nonreligious organisations.

Table 9.3. Membership in Organisations by Sex and Age

Membership in Organisations	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who are members of any type of non-religious organizations	31.1	31.3	n.s.	31.9	28.5	33.1	n.s.	31.2
<i>N</i>	2,411	3,573		3,760	1,552	673		5,985
Types of organizations								
Business professional or farm associations	10.4	7.4	n.s.	11.8	2.7	3.4	***	8.6
Political groups	0.5	1.1	n.s.	1.2	0.2	0.0	***	0.8
Community centers or social or recreational clubs	3.0	4.9	n.s.	5.5	1.3	2.1	**	4.1
Clan associations	0.8	0.8	n.s.	0.9	0.9	0.3	n.s.	0.8
Organisations of retired older persons	14.0	14.7	n.s.	12.3	21.6	11.4	*	14.4
% who are engaged in any volunteer work in church or community	6.4	18.8	***	17.0	9.8	4.7	*	13.8
<i>N</i>	764	1,136		1,219	453	227		1,900

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

As to the types of nonreligious organisations that OPs are members of, the most common are organisations of retired OPs (14%), followed by business professional or farm associations (9%), and community centres or social or recreational clubs (4%). There are a few age differentials as to the types of nonreligious organisations in which the OPs are members. Significantly more OPs aged 60–69 are members of business professional or farm associations, community centres or social or recreational clubs, and political groups while more OPs aged 70–79 are members of organisations of retired OPs compared to their counterparts.

Only 14% of OPs are engaged in volunteer work in church or the community. Compared to their respective counterparts, more females and OPs aged 60–69 reported being engaged in such volunteer work.

Social Isolation

With decreasing economic resources, mobility impairment, and deaths of contemporaries, OPs are at risk of social isolation and loneliness. Social isolation is an 'objective and quantifiable reflection of reduced social network size and paucity of social contacts' (Step toe et al., 2013, p. 5797). Two forms of social isolation were noted by Cornwell and Waite (2009): social disconnectedness and perceived isolation. The former is the lack of contact with their social network, disinterest in social activities, and lack of participation in their social groups, while the latter is the subjective or more personal experience from which the sense of loneliness comes due to the feeling of an absence of support and companionship. Such feeling of loneliness may occur when there is a difference between the perceived and expected amount of support that the OPs receive from their families, especially their children. In addition, other studies have shown the gendered experience of loneliness in the context of social networks. A study by Takagi et al. (forthcoming) of older Singaporeans noted the different patterns of social relationships for loneliness in terms of gender. Older women are experiencing higher levels of loneliness despite having a stronger social network which may be due to unmet psychological needs, whereas older men are using their social relationships to alleviate loneliness.

Loneliness

The LS AHP used the three-item loneliness scale of the University of California, Los Angeles (Chan et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2004). The items include how often one feels a lack of companionship, how often one feels left out, and how often one feels isolated from others. These were not asked of proxy respondents but directly of the OPs themselves.

The LS AHP data reveal that, overall, loneliness amongst older Filipinos is relatively low. The majority of OPs (75%) rarely or never feel a lack of companionship (Table 9.4). However, about 1 in 10 (10%) OPs expressed that they fairly often or always feel the need for more companionship. This need was expressed more by female than male OPs. Only 7% of OPs said they always or fairly often feel left out in various situations while about 6% of OPs feel they are always or fairly often isolated from others.

Table 9.4. Loneliness of Older Persons by Sex and Age

Loneliness	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
Feels lack of companionship								
Always	2.0	3.4		2.9	2.3	3.7		2.8
Fairly often	6.6	8.3		7.1	8.5	8.8		7.6
Occasionally	11.7	16.1	n.s.	13.5	15.2	18.3	n.s.	14.3
Rarely	43.1	40.3		43.4	37.3	38.1		41.4
Never	36.7	31.9		33.0	36.8	31.1		33.8
Feels left out								
Always	2.3	1.9		1.5	3.4	2.5		2.1
Fairly often	3.1	5.5		4.3	4.6	6.1		4.5
Occasionally	11.8	12.7	n.s.	11.4	13.2	17.5	n.s.	12.3
Rarely	38.6	40.0		40.5	37.4	37.4		39.5
Never	44.2	39.9		42.3	41.3	36.4		41.6
Feels isolated from others								
Always	1.3	2.0		1.6	2.1	1.1		1.7
Fairly often	2.9	5.0		3.5	5.1	6.8		4.2
Occasionally	10.3	10.8	n.s.	9.4	12.7	13.6	n.s.	10.6
Rarely	40.8	38.5		40.4	37.4	38.3		39.4
Never	44.7	43.8		45.2	42.7	40.3		44.1
N	2,195	3,259		3,615	1,400	440		5,454

n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

Social Isolation from Relatives Not Co-residing with the OP

To assess social isolation of OPs in the Philippines, the LSAHP used the abbreviated version of the Lubben Social Network Scale also known as LSNS-6 (Lubben and Girona, 2004; Lubben et al., 2006) based on six questions. Similar to questions on loneliness, these questions were not asked of proxy respondents but directly of the OPs themselves.

Three measures are constructed from the LSNS-6: a Family subscale, a Friends subscale, and a total score. The Family subscale is constructed from three LSNS-6 questions that ask about relatives (e.g. children, grandchildren, in-laws, siblings, nieces, nephews, cousins, uncles, and aunts) who are not living with the respondent. Questions regarding non-co-resident relatives include the following: 'How many relatives do you see or hear from at least once a month?', 'How many relatives do you feel at ease with that you can talk about private matters?', and 'How many relatives do you feel close to such that you could call on them for help?' The Friends subscale is constructed from three similar questions that are asked about non-family members.

A total score for LSNS-6 ranging from 0 to 30 is computed as the sum of scores from six questions that are equally weighted. A higher score indicates more social engagement (Lubben and Gironde, 2004).

After evaluating the LSNS-6 amongst a sample of older adults in Hamburg (Germany), Solothurn (Switzerland), and London (United Kingdom), Lubben et al. (2006) recommended the inclusion of LSNS-6 in practice protocols of gerontological practitioners using clinical cut points to facilitate the identification of at-risk population that could then be further assessed and for whom interventions might be developed. Socially isolated individuals with a total score of less than 12, on average, have fewer than two individuals for the six aspects of social networks assessed by the LSNS-6. Similarly, those with scores of less than 6 on the three-item LSNS-6 Family subscale are considered to have marginal family ties; those with scores of less than 6 on the three-item LSNS-6 Friends subscale are considered to have marginal friendships (Lubben et al., 2006).

When asked about the OPs' relationships with relatives not living with them, a small proportion expressed feelings that may be related to social isolation. Only 5% reported not having any relatives to see or hear from at least once a month, 14% said they do not have any relatives whom they feel at ease with to talk about private matters, and 12% said they do not have relatives whom they feel close enough to call on for help (Table 9.5).

The proportion who reported they do not have any relatives to contact with at least once a month is highest amongst the oldest age cohort (80 and above). Moreover, more males than females do not have any relatives whom they feel at ease with talking about private matters, and do not have any relatives whom they feel close to such that they could call on them for help. Such proportions for the latter two questions are also lowest in the youngest age cohort (60–69).

OPs were also asked about the frequency of contact for various reasons with relatives not living with them. Only 3% never saw or heard from relatives with whom they have the most contact, suggesting that nearly all OPs have relatively active contact with their relatives. Again, the proportion who never see or hear from relatives with whom they have the most contact is lowest amongst those aged 60–69 compared to their older counterparts.

Table 9.5. Social Isolation from Relatives Not Coresiding with Older Person by Sex and Age

Social Isolation	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who do not have any relatives to see or hear from at least once a month	4.2	6.1	n.s.	4.6	6.4	7.7	n.s.	5.3
% who do not have any relatives whom they feel at ease with that the older person can talk about private matters	16.1	13.2	*	12.7	17.3	19.1	n.s.	14.4
% who do not have any relatives whom they feel close to such that the older person could call on them for help	13.2	11.2	*	11.1	13.5	14.9	n.s.	12.0
<i>N</i>	2,196	3,258		3,615	1,400	439		5,454
% who never see or hear from relatives with whom older person has the most contact	3.7	3.1	n.s.	2.8	4.1	5.6	n.s.	3.4
% who never get consulted when one of the relatives has an important decision to make	12.4	9.7	n.s.	9.0	14.3	14.2	n.s.	10.8
% who never get to talk with any of the relatives when older person has an important decision to make	10.7	11.1	n.s.	9.5	13.7	14.0	n.s.	10.9
<i>N</i>	2,196	3,259		3,615	1,401	440		5,456
% who have marginal family ties ^a	23.7	28.7	n.s.	24.5	31.0	31.2	*	26.7
<i>N</i>	2,196	3,258		3,615	1,400	439		5,454
Satisfaction with the level of contact with relatives								
Very satisfied	9.6	11.1		10.2	11.1	11.4		10.5
Satisfied	80.4	77.8		79.2	77.8	78.9		78.8
Unsatisfied	7.5	8.8	n.s.	8.0	9.3	7.3	n.s.	8.3
Very unsatisfied	0.5	1.1		0.9	0.6	1.3		0.8
Not sure	2.1	1.2		1.7	1.2	1.2		1.6
<i>N</i>	2,196	3,258		3,615	1,399	439		5,453

^a6-item scale with 6 as the cut-off score

*p < 0.05. n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSHP data.

About 11% of OPs feel they never get consulted when one of their relatives has an important decision to make. Similarly, 11% of OPs said they never get to talk with any of their relatives when the OPs have an important decision to make. More males than females said they never get consulted when a relative has an important decision to make while more females than males said that they never get a chance to talk with relatives when they have an important decision to make. Differentials were also found by age. Compared with their counterparts, those aged 70 and above feel left out when their relatives make major decisions.

Using the LSNS-6 Family subscale, 27% of the OPs were found to have marginal family ties. This suggests that, on average, nearly 3 of 10 respondents would each have fewer than two relatives to perform social integration functions assessed by LSNS-6 (Table 9.5). The proportion of OPs that have weak social ties with non-co-resident family members increases as age increases.

Nevertheless, a majority of OPs (89%) were either very satisfied or satisfied when OPs were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their contact with relatives. More female than male OPs were not satisfied with their level of contact with relatives.

Social Isolation from Friends

The same questions on social isolation were asked in relation to the OPs' friends, including those who live in their neighbourhood. About 5% of OPs reported having any friends to see or hear from at least once a month (Table 9.6). The proportion who reported this was higher for males and those aged 80 and over.

Table 9.6. Social Isolation from Friends by Sex and Age

Social Isolation	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who do not have any friends to see or hear from at least once a month	6.5	4.7	*	5.5	4.1	8.8	n.s.	5.4
% who do not have any friends whom they feel at ease with that the older person can talk about private matters	21.9	20.1	*	19.8	21.1	27.9	n.s.	20.8
% who do not have any friends whom they feel close to such that the older person could call on them for help	17.3	19.2	n.s.	17.6	17.7	26.9	n.s.	18.4
N	2,196	3,259		3,614	1,400	439		5,454
% who never see or hear from friends with whom older person has the most contact	7.1	5.2	n.s.	5.6	5.5	9.8	n.s.	5.9
% who never get consulted when one of the friends has an important decision to make	14.8	12.7	n.s.	13.2	13.3	17.0	n.s.	13.5
% who never get to talk with any of the friends when older person has an important decision to make	14.2	15.2	n.s.	14.5	14.1	19.6	n.s.	14.8
N	2,196	3,260		3,615	1,401	440		5,454
% who have marginal friendship ties ^a	23.4	29.7	n.s.	25.0	29.6	37.2	*	27.2
N	2,196	3,258		3,615	1,400	439		5,454
% who are socially isolated ^b	21.9	28.7	**	22.9	31.3	33.8	**	25.9
N	2,196	3,258		3,615	1,400	439		5,454

Social Isolation	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
Satisfaction with the level of contact with friends								
Very satisfied	5.0	6.6		6.1	5.7	5.2		5.9
Satisfied	86.9	82.9		85.5	82.9	82.0		84.5
Unsatisfied	4.1	8.6	*	5.5	9.3	9.2	n.s.	6.8
Very unsatisfied	0.4	0.5		0.3	0.5	1.5		0.4
Not sure	3.6	1.4		2.7	1.5	2.2		2.3
<i>N</i>	2,195	3,260		3,615	1,401	439		5,455

^a6-item scale with 6 as the cut-off score.

^b12-item scale with 12 as the cut-off score.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

About one in five (21%) OPs do not have any friends whom they feel at ease with to talk about private matters. The proportion who feel this way is higher amongst males than females and amongst those aged 70 and higher compared to the youngest age cohort (60–69).

About 18% of OPs do not have any friends whom they feel close enough to call for help. This feeling was expressed more by females than males, and the proportion of OPs who feel this way increases with age.

About 6% of OPs reported never seeing or hearing from friends with whom they have the most contact, and about 14% of OPs feel they never get consulted when one of their friends has an important decision to make. Males and those aged 80 and over registered the largest proportions in both instances. Fifteen percent of OPs said they never get to talk with any of their friends when they have an important decision to make. The proportion who feel this way is higher amongst females and those aged 80 or over.

Using the LSNS-6 Friends subscale, 27% of the OPs were found to have marginal friendship ties. This suggests that, on average, nearly 3 of 10 OPs respondents would each have fewer than two friends to perform social integration functions assessed by LSNS-6 (Table 9.6). The proportion of OPs that have weak social ties with non-family members increases with age.

On the other hand, the LSNS-6 total score reveals that 26% of the OPs are socially isolated (Table 9.6). These individuals, on average, have fewer than two family members or friends identified in the six aspects of social networks assessed by the LSNS-6. More females than males (29% vs 22%) are socially isolated. The proportion of OPs that have weak social ties increases as age increases.

The majority (90%) of OPs are satisfied or very satisfied with their overall level of contact with friends. Only 7% are either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied, with a higher proportion amongst females than males. The proportion who are unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the level of contact with friends is highest for those in age 80 or higher. About 2% are not sure of how they feel regarding their level of contact with friends.

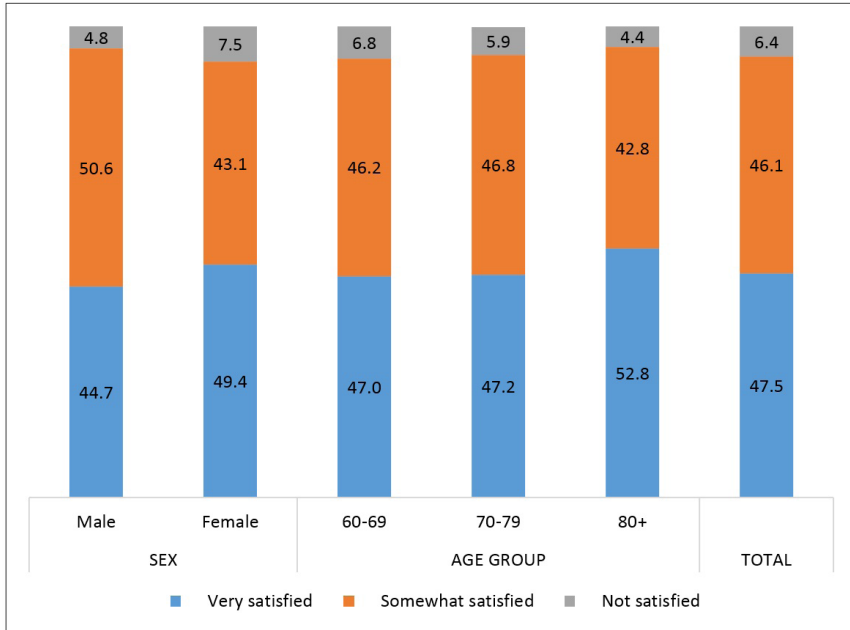
Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is a subjective measure of the person's overall evaluation of his or her life. In the LSAHP, life satisfaction is directly assessed from the answer to the question 'Are you satisfied with your life at present?' The possible responses are 'Yes, very satisfied,' 'Yes, satisfied,' and 'No, not satisfied.' Research has shown that life satisfaction is based on both subjective and objective conditions. Across studies, there is no consistent association with age, although life satisfaction tends to dip in the oldest ages (Baird et al., 2010; Chen, 2001).

The LSAHP results indicate that a great majority of older Filipinos are satisfied with their lives: 48% are very satisfied and 46% are somewhat satisfied. Only 6% report being unsatisfied (Figure 9.2). The proportion who are not satisfied decreases with age while correspondingly the proportion of very satisfied increases with age. More women than men are unsatisfied with their lives; the proportion of OPs who said they are very satisfied is also higher amongst women.

Another dimension of well-being explored in the LSAHP is self-assessed connectedness with family, relatives, and friends – a possible indicator of the closeness of social ties. The question asked was 'How much do you feel that family, relatives, or friends are willing to listen when you need to talk about your worries and problems?'

Figure 9.2: Current Life Satisfaction, by Sex and Age



Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

Table 9.7. Life Satisfaction by Sex and Age

Life Satisfaction	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
Current life satisfaction								
Very satisfied	44.7	49.4		47.0	47.2	52.8		47.5
Somewhat satisfied	50.6	43.1	n.s.	46.2	46.8	42.8	n.s.	46.1
Not satisfied	4.8	7.5		6.8	5.9	4.4		6.4
<i>N</i>	2,196	3,260		3,615	1,400	439		5,454
% who feel that their family, relatives, or friends are willing to listen when they need to talk about their worries or problems								
A great deal	13.7	14.2	n.s.	13.9	14.1	15.0	n.s.	14.0
Quite a bit	50.5	54.9		53.2	52.8	53.4		53.1
Some	20.5	16.9		17.8	19.7	18.7		18.3
Very little	7.6	5.8		7.0	6.2	3.5		6.5
Not at all	1.2	0.3		0.5	1.0	0.9		0.7
Keep to myself	6.4	8.0		7.7	6.2	8.4		7.4
<i>N</i>	2,164	3,231		3,584	1,380	428		5,392

n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

Results show that the great majority of OPs feel they can share problems and worries with family and friends because the latter have a great deal of, quite a bit, or some willingness to listen to them. A small minority (7%) report that their family/friends have very little or no willingness at all to listen to them, while another 7% say they keep to themselves and do not share their problems/worries. More women than men keep to themselves, while more men than women say their family and friends have little or no willingness to listen to them. More of the youngest age cohort feel that others have little or no willingness to listen to them, and more of the oldest age group keep to themselves.

Use of Information Technology

Over the past 2 decades, the rapid improvements in information technology (IT) have introduced new digital gadgets that have continuously challenged the adjustment of OPs. However, Pullum and Akyil (2017) noted that senior digital migrants have lower levels of social isolation because they communicate with their relatives and friends through the Internet.

The LSAHP data reveal that about 6% of the OPs have access to internet (Table 9.8) and spend an average of 2 hours daily on the Internet. Females have higher access to the Internet than males (8% vs 3%) but males spend more time on the Internet than females (3.2 hours vs 1.8 hours). There are also age differentials. Access to the Internet varies by age. Those aged 70–79 spend more time, on average, on the Internet than their counterparts (3.4 hours). The majority (90%) have a social networking account; amongst them, the most common type is Facebook (99%), followed by YouTube (19%).

About 3 in 10 OPs own cell phones. The proportion is higher amongst females than males (33% vs 27%), but daily use of cell phones is higher for males than females (1.4 hours vs 0.8 hours). Expectedly, the mean number of hours of cell phone use per day decreases with advancing age.

Tablet ownership is rare amongst the OPs (3%). More females than males own tablets (5% vs 0.8%), and the proportion of those who own a tablet is highest in the youngest age cohort (60–69) compared with those 70 and older. Those aged 60–69 also spend the most time, on average, on tablet use per day (3.2 hours) compared to their counterparts.

Only 1% of OPs own a laptop, with an average of 0.1 hours of usage per day. More females than males own laptops, and the proportion of laptop ownership is highest amongst those aged 60–69.

The top five mentioned uses of IT gadgets are for calling friends and family (94%), chatting/messaging (22%), voice or video calls (18%), sending or receiving emails (18%), and watching movies and TV shows and listening to music (16%). Some OPs also use IT gadgets for playing videos or computer games (10%) and for reading e-books, magazines, and online news (7%). Internet banking was the least mentioned use of IT gadgets by OPs (0.3%). More females than males reported using IT gadgets for these purposes. The proportion who use IT gadgets to call friends and family or to play video/computer games decreases with age. The use of IT gadgets to watch movies and TV shows, listen to music, and read e-books, magazines, and online news was highest amongst those aged 70–79.

Respondents were also asked who assists them in using IT gadgets. The top three persons who help OPs are their daughter (32%), son (22%), and grandchild (16%). The assistance provided by a son or daughter declines with the OP's age, whereas the assistance of a grandchild or daughter-in-law increases with the OP's age. A third of OPs (30%) are not assisted with the use of their IT gadgets.

Table 9.8. Use of Information Technology by Sex and Age

Information Technology	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who have access to internet	3.3	8.0	***	7.8	3.9	1.3	**	6.1
<i>N</i>	2,411	3,574		3,760	1,552	673		5,985
Mean number of hours of internet access per day	3.23	1.78	n.s.	1.83	3.42	1.86	n.s.	2.10
<i>N</i>	77	279		288	59	8		356
% with social networking account	73.1	95.3	***	92.4	82.7	75.2	n.s.	90.4
<i>N</i>	80	284		295	60	8		363
Type of social networking account								
Facebook	96.6	100.0	**	99.6	98.2	100.0	n.s.	99.4
Instagram	5.6	0.7	*	1.9	0.0	0.0	n.s.	1.5
Youtube	40.9	14.6	*	13.5	48.7	33.2	n.s.	19.3
Twitter	2.0	0.2	*	0.4	0.8	0.0	n.s.	0.5
Whatsapp	0.0	0.5	n.s.	0.5	0.3	0.0	n.s.	0.4
Others (messenger, skype, vibes, etc.)	5.7	17.3	n.s.	14.9	19.2	0.0	n.s.	15.3
<i>N</i>	58	271		273	50	6		329

Information Technology	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who owns a cellphone	27.0	32.9	n.s.	39.3	19.6	6.3	***	30.5
N	2,412	3,573		3,760	1,552	673		5,985
Mean number of hours of cellphone use per day	1.44	0.76	n.s.	1.07	0.77	0.34	n.s.	1.00
N	648	1,153		1,462	297	41		1,801
% who owns a tablet	0.8	4.8	***	3.8	2.8	0.6	n.s.	3.2
N	2,411	3,574		3,760	1,552	673		5,985
Mean number of hours of tablet use per day	1.95	3.00	n.s.	3.20	1.94	2.27	n.s.	2.89
N	19	172		143	44	4		191
% who owns a laptop	0.3	1.7	*	1.8	0.1	0.1	***	1.2
N	2,411	3,574		3,761	1,552	673		5,985
Mean number of hours of laptop use per day	0.15	0.14	n.s.	0.10	1.64	-	n.s.	0.14
N	8	61		68	2	0		69
Use of gadgets								
Calling friends and family	95.4	93.8	n.s.	96.1	87.8	84.1	***	94.4
Sending or receiving emails	11.4	20.8	*	18.8	9.9	22.5	n.s.	17.5
Chat site messaging	14.5	26.9	**	22.9	20.8	18.8	n.s.	22.5
Voice or video call using the internet	8.4	22.9	***	18.0	17.5	12.4	n.s.	17.8
Playing video or computer games	7.9	11.9	n.s.	11.9	4.4	4.9	**	10.5
Watching movies and TV shows, and listening to music	9.8	19.2	n.s.	15.1	21.1	3.7	n.s.	15.8
Read ebooks, magazines and online news	2.1	9.4	**	6.3	10.1	0.9	n.s.	6.8
Internet banking	0.6	0.2	*	0.4	0.2	0.0	n.s.	0.3
Others	7.5	6.0	n.s.	6.7	5.5	6.5	n.s.	6.5
N	659	1,185		1,487	311	46		1,844
Persons who help OP with the use of these gadgets								
None	35.0	26.4	n.s.	29.1	31.9	24.5	n.s.	29.5
Spouse	9.0	3.1	*	5.8	2.5	3.6	n.s.	5.2
Son	24.1	21.1	n.s.	23.9	16.0	8.0	***	22.2
Daughter	29.4	33.3	n.s.	35.0	20.4	10.7	**	31.9
Son-in-law	0.1	0.2	n.s.	0.2	0.2	0.2	n.s.	0.2
Daughter-in-law	0.7	1.6	n.s.	0.7	3.7	4.1	***	1.3
Grandchild	9.7	18.8	*	11.7	29.2	49.7	***	15.6
Brother	0.0	0.1	n.s.	0.0	0.0	0.0	n.s.	0.0
Sister	0.1	0.7	n.s.	0.5	0.5	0.0	n.s.	0.5
Other relatives	5.8	4.5	n.s.	5.6	2.0	2.6	**	4.9
Friends	1.7	4.9	n.s.	2.9	8.0	3.5	n.s.	3.8
Others (neighbor, house help, etc.)	0.4	0.2	n.s.	0.2	0.5	0.9	n.s.	0.3
N	658	1,185		1,487	311	46		1,844

*p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001. n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by DRDF using original LSAHP data.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The daily activities of older Filipinos reveal a combination of a sedentary, physical, and nurturing lifestyle. As more than 70% of Philippine households have TVs (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018), it is reasonable to find that 66% of OPs watch TV every day. This is a welcome finding as it is 5 percentage points lower than that observed by Cruz et al. (2016) in the 2007 Philippine Study on Aging (PSOA). However, there are no additional data on how many hours OPs actually spend on this activity, with whom they watch TV, and what programmes they regularly view; such data could help shed light on the contribution of TV viewing to the overall quality of life of the OPs.

More than half of the OPs in the LSAHP reported performing daily physical exercises; this is about a 10-percentage-point drop compared with the 2007 PSOA findings. This large decline is a cause for concern because physical exercises stimulate the metabolic system to ensure good health in view of the general decline in their physiological make-up as OPs age. Information on the types of exercise that the OPs are engaged in is also important in identifying supplementary physical exercise programmes for them.

The proportion of OPs engaged in gardening daily increased slightly from 26% in the 2007 PSOA to 27% in the LSAHP. Gardening may be viewed as a manifestation of the OPs' nurturing character. Another nurturing activity that may be included in future studies on OPs is taking care of grandchildren. This has been documented as important in many migration studies that focus on children left behind by overseas Filipino workers.

Humans are social beings but, at older ages, many OPs engage less frequently in socialisation as a daily activity. Nevertheless, the LSAHP data reveal that 35% of OPs attend social activities at least once a month. This is 15 percentage points higher than the figure reported in the 2007 PSOA and is thus a welcome finding. However, as expected, attendance in social activities declines with age. Local government units (LGUs) and/or the office of senior citizens affairs are encouraged to diversify their activities to ensure the participation of all OPs in their respective areas. Recommended activities for OPs at the LGU level include social dancing, Zumba, tree planting, walking and/or jogging as a group, games/competitions, visiting sick members, tours, and movie showings.

The LSAHP validated the importance of religion in the lives of older Filipinos, as three in four OPs claimed that religion is very important in their lives. Compared with the 2007 PSOA results, however, the LSAHP results indicate lower proportions of OPs who participate in various religious activities, whether directly or indirectly, inside or outside the home, and in public or private places. Only a little more than 1 in 10 OPs are currently members of any religious group or organisation, with females and those aged 60–69 reporting higher membership than their respective counterparts. Further research could clarify the linkage between individuals' religious values/beliefs and the actions they take to support such values.

Loneliness is often linked to social isolation, but the literature reveals no direct link between them. This is perhaps due to the many factors associated with both isolation and loneliness, such as retirement, migration, and poor health and/or loss of mobility, which in turn lead to social network disruption (Wenger et al., 1996).

LSAHP data reveal that the reduced level of socialisation does not necessarily translate into a high prevalence of loneliness amongst older Filipinos; this is consistent with the findings of Cornwell and Waite (2009). Only a small proportion of OPs feel a lack of companionship, feel left out, or feel isolated from others. This may be partly explained by familial expectations that influence living arrangements for OPs. While care establishments for OPs have started to increase in the Philippines, tradition dictates that the family should take care of the OP and the OP should live with one or more children. This has been institutionalised with the inclusion of parents of taxpayers as bona fide dependents living with them for additional tax exemptions. Therefore, OPs generally have access to family members for companionship and potential assistance when needed and do not feel left out to fend for themselves. However, the recent tax reform in the Philippines based on gross income has eroded such tax incentive for care and support for older people. How this change in the tax regime would affect the tradition of family support for OPs would remain to be seen in the coming years.

Consistent with the low level of loneliness amongst OPs, perceived social isolation from friends and relatives not residing with the OPs is also low. Nevertheless, social isolation from friends and relatives not residing with the OPs as measured by the LSNS-6 is not as low. Such disconnect needs further attention, especially as to how social isolation is linked to health risks such as depression and other mental health problems, in particular, and quality of life of OPs, in general. Early detection of

social isolation tendencies of OPs may be addressed by including the LSNS-6 in the practice protocol of gerontological practitioners in the Philippines in concert with the suggestion of Lubben et al. (2006) so they can receive in-depth assessment and targeted interventions. Although a third of older Filipinos are found to have weak social ties, the quality of these relationships does not appear to be alarming, with 9 in 10 OPs who positively assessed the level of contact with their non-co-resident relatives and friends. Moreover, 94% said they are currently very or somewhat satisfied with their lives. The different ways in which older Filipinos assess various aspects of their lives is something to be investigated in further analyses of the LSAHP data.

In the current digital era, social networks have expanded to include virtual connections to supplement face-to-face interactions. A notably small proportion (6%) of OPs have access to the Internet, and nearly all of those with Internet access have Facebook accounts. Those with Internet access spend an average of 2 hours daily on the Internet. The cell phone is the most commonly used IT gadget by OPs while tablets and laptops are rarely used. OPs mainly use IT gadgets to connect with family and friends through the assistance of their sons, daughters, or grandchildren, amongst others. We recommend that LGUs include training programmes that would introduce OPs to the benefits of Internet connectivity, as well as workshops to assist OPs in the use of IT gadgets to expand their social networks beyond their residential communities. Further research could explore how social networking using the Internet as a daily activity is related to OPs' loneliness, social isolation, and quality of life.

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