UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

THE URBAN FARMING PRACTICES TOWARDS HORTICULTURAL THERAPY (HT) IN SHAH ALAM

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ABSTRACT

A state of emotional suffering that manifests as physical symptoms, known as psychological distress, which includes stress, anxiety, and depression. A survey done by the government of Malaysia highlighted a rise in mental health disorders across various community layers, signalling the urgent need for improved healthcare services and public health strategies. Various research indicates that engaging with nature can enhance mental well-being, and urban farming trends have gained traction as a community-based intervention. This research aims to develop the Horticultural Therapy (HT) model within urban farming communities by examining the characteristics, activities and motivations influencing stress reduction. The research objectives were: (1) To evaluate the correlation between HT characteristics and urban farming characteristics which can be integrated; (2) To analyze the relationship between urban farming activities and the stress levels of the urban farming communities, and, (3) To explore the role of motivation in moderating the relationship between urban farming activities and stress reduction within the community. A mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach were employed combining in-depth interviews with experts and questionnaire surveys to urban farming communities in Shah Alam area. The findings revealed that plant selection significantly impacts stress levels, whether alleviating or exacerbating them. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data facilitated the development of the HT model, provided a framework for future urban farming programs. In conclusion, this study demonstrates the potential of HT within urban farming communities as an effective intervention for reducing stress and improving psychological well-being. The development of the HT model, grounded in its core characteristics, provides a practical framework for maximizing the mental health benefits of urban farming initiatives. As urbanization continues to rise, integrating nature-based interventions like HT will become increasingly vital for promoting both individual and community well-being. Future research should further investigate the broader applications of HT in urban settings, with an emphasis on enhancing its accessibility and effectiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Horticultural Therapy is a plant-based activity with a healing purpose. According to the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA), Horticultural Therapy is gardening-related in which a person engages with a trained therapist to achieve specific treatment goals. Horticultural Therapy can be used as a useful tool for emotional and physical treatment (S. Lu et al., 2021). AHTA also stated that Horticultural Therapy is a process in which participants are involved in active or passive plant and garden-based activities to improve overall wellness. The exposure and natural environment engagement provide psychological benefits which include stress and anxiety reduction, mood improvement, increased perceived well-being, increase in concentration and attention, and cognitive restoration (Meore et al., 2021).

In this chapter, the researcher reviews the literature related to the research topic in general, starting with a simple explanation of the research's key components which are the background and the problem statement of the study, followed by the research questions extracted into the research aim and objectives. This chapter also includes the scope and limitations of the study, as well as the significance gathered from the research study. In conjunction with this chapter, it also consists of an outline of the methodology, process, and overall structure of the research.

1.2   Background Of Study

The development, sustainable production, marketing, and usage of high-value, intensively grown food and ornamental plants that are grown with intensive care by an individual, and often executed in a small space compared to an expansive wide field (Michaels et al., 2022). A substantial role is played by horticulture, a sub-sector of agriculture, in the economy, human nutrition, gender mainstreaming, and employment, and horticultural commodities include fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices, and condiments which grown and turn into a major segment in agriculture (Jaskani & Khan, 2021). Horticulture also has been used as a therapeutic activity for people with various