

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**ACCESSIBILITIES IN PUBLIC
RECREATIONAL PARK FOR PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES**

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ABSTRACT

Accessibility of public recreation parks is important to people with disabilities, as it may influence their physical activity participation, health benefit and quality of life. The purpose of this study was to identify the physical factors that are pertinent to the accessibility of public recreational park to people with disabilities in Malaysia. An assessment instrument named Accessibility at Recreational Park Instrument (ARPI) was developed with reference to subscales in Accessibility Instruments Measuring Fitness and Recreation Environments (AIMFREE) by Rimmer, Riley, Wang and Rauworth (2004). The accessibility questions were developed with reference to Code of Practice for Access of Disabled person to Public and Outside Building; Malaysian Standard MS 1184:2002 and Malaysian Standard MS 1331:2003 as to suits with Person with Disabilities Act 2008 in Malaysia. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to confirm the reliability ($r=0.85$) and validity of the instrument. The Five dimensions identified were Access Routes, Ease of Access, Signage, Toilet, and Lighting. This study was conducted at Titiwangsa Lake Park, Kuala Lumpur, involving people with different disabilities, which include wheelchair users ($n = 107$), amputees ($n = 53$) and assistive aids user ($n = 11$). The volunteer respondents were visitors to the public recreation park, aged above 18 years old. The results showed that, 'Toilet' was found to be the most important factor for two groups (wheelchair users and amputees). In the Titiwangsa Lake Park, respondents perceived 'Access Routes' as the most accessible compared to other accessibility factors. There were no significant differences in the five accessibility factors for all types of disabilities. However, there were significance differences of importance in terms of "Signage" between difference age groups; that is between 18- 24 years old and 45-55 years old group. Hence, public recreational park providers need to consider more seriously the above accessibility factors as to promote active participation of people with disabilities. Subsequently, this active involvement in recreation activities could improve their quality of life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

There are many potential benefits gained when one is involved in physical activities. Participation in physical activity makes our bodies become healthier, more energetic and enhances the level of mental and physical condition. Kannel and Sorlie (1979) noted that lack of exercise can shorten the life span and can increase the chances of heart attack. Physical activity participation for people with disabilities may play an important role in improving and preserving their quality of life (Nosek, Hughes, Whelen, Taylor, & Howland, 2006). In addition, Hiss and Lawson (2006) noted that participation in physical activity can also help to reduce cardiac risk factors among people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the benefits cannot be realized if the involvement of people with disabilities in any recreation and leisure activities participation are low. From the Healthy People 2010 report, 56% of adults with disabilities did not engage in any leisure-time physical activity as compared to 36% among adults without disabilities. In comparison, people without any disabilities are more physically active than the people with disabilities when it comes to the involvement in physical activity (US Department of Health and Social Services, 2002).

In this new era of globalization, there is still an unsatisfactory level of participation in physical activities among the people with disabilities. The people with disabilities are more likely to have sedentary lifestyle, live with greater health problems and have more physical activity barriers than the people without disabilities (Rimmer, Riley, Wang, & Rauworth, 2005). US Department of Health and Human Services (2000) reported that the people with disabilities and chronic illness are less likely to involve in regular moderate activity or regular vigorous activity as compared to the result for the ones without disabilities.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia also had revealed that 80% adults in Malaysia did not exercise (Hoe, 2011). According to the Medical Journal from The Lancet (2012), Malaysia is nominated at the tenth place for having laziness in physical activities involvement (Jaafar, 2012). The report showed that there is an