

## The Significance of Leisure and Recreation Activities in Parks

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### Abstract

Today man is confronted with different challenges of health and social problems ranging from obesity, diabetes, depression and suicide. With increase awareness of these issues, professionals in leisure and recreation providers, social workers need to better understand the benefit of leisure activities participation. The purpose of this paper however, is to acquaint people on the use of park for recreation activities and the benefits from it.. It is on this note that this study focuses on the origin of leisure and its significance on human body, the method employed to carry out the study is mainly derived from both primary and secondary methods of data collections. Interviews were made with some practicing doctors and information was collected from relevant health journals and text books. The study gathered showed that: Leisure and Recreation are as old as the existence of human beings It was practiced during the Stone Age. Anthropologists and archaeology confirmed it from researches made and that the early people had the same instincts as we do to enjoy ourselves Before the Stone Age, the story of creation showed that leisure and recreation started when the World started right from Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It was also commanded to the Israelites to rest after working activities in the week. The implications must have been known by God. Recent studies show that resting and recreation activities have social and physiological impacts on human system.

**Keywords:** *Work, Leisure, Recreation, Rest, Garden and Park*

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### **Background to the Study**

Human beings generally desire to have adventure; excitement and romance. The pursuit of happiness and the love of adventure are the motivating forces being realized mostly in leisure and recreation. Leisure is a measure of time left over after work, rest sleep and household chores. It is the time individual can do what he likes to refresh his or her physical body and spirit, while recreation means a variety of activities which a person could choose to refresh his/her spirit. It may include activities as diverse as a game of golf, foot-balling, watching television and traveling. [Pran, 2006]. In this paper however the objectives shall be to examine the origin of leisure and recreational activities. It will also find out the implications on human health.

### **Origin of Leisure and Recreation**

Leisure and recreation are as old as human existence and were present in the lives of our ancestors. Studies of the early sites where Homo sapiens first emerged in Africa showed that pigment powders such as red ochre were collected and used for body painting in preparation for ritual dances [Robert, 2001] Anthropologists are sure of the fact that early humankind had the same intelligence and instincts as we do. But according to the creation story as recorded in the Bible, leisure and recreation started earlier before the Stone Age. God, after the creation rested. This shows that the act of rest is embedded in man and is necessary after work. "And when God had created all the host of heaven and the earth, He rested" [The Holy Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible 2003; Gen.chap.1-3...]. So, according to the Holy Bible, [HCSB 2003] leisure, free time after work was first observed by God, even recreation too, because Holy Bible remarks that at the cool of the day God used to come down to enjoy the evening breeze [cool of the day] with Adam and Eve. He enjoyed seeing them at the garden. [Holy Bible, HCSB 2003, Gen. Chapter 3 : 8]. The creation of Garden of Eden started the park environment. Adam and Eve became the first set of human hood to relax and had experience of a park even though there were no man-made facilities in the garden. They were there for recreation activities like nature- watching and viewing.

The terms: *Garden, Rested, Work and Use to come* explain the recreational terms in tourism industry today. However, the command that Israelites should rest after work must have gotten many implications as thought by God on resting after work [The Holy Bible, HCSB, 2003 Exodus chapter 31 : 12-16] Looking through the verses, it might sound religious, but considering the social and psychological aspect of it, we would quickly realize the fact that over stress kills. Like the adage says "All work without play makes Jack a dull boy". The effects following restlessness use to be boredom, stress, psychological trauma, sleepless night etc. Therefore the importance of resting to humanity cannot be overemphasized. Among these significances are:

- It refreshes the body
- It is a therapy to boredom
- It increases productivity
- It increases life span

### **Implications on Human Health**

“ A Joyful heart is a good medicine to the body but a broken spirit dries up the bone,” The Holy Bible, HCSB 2003, Proverbs 17:22. So the feelings we derive in recreation are: joy, satisfaction, self realization and it makes people to be socialised.

According to Ewert (1989), he opines on benefits of recreation or any out door pursuit as having the following benefits. The benefits are:

**Psychological Benefit:** This is a way of realizing one self, being confident, self actualization, self efficacy sensation benefit, state of well being and personal testing.

**Sociological Benefit:** This involves being compassionate, having group cooperation, respect for others, friendship, behavioral feedback and belongingness.

**Educational Benefits:** This includes nature awareness, conservation education, value clarification and improving knowledge.

**Physical Benefits:** This also includes fitness, skill attainment, strength exercise, balance coordination.

According to the research carried out in California on Social and Health benefits of recreation in 2004 cum their sedentary living by the Department of Parks and Research, it was gathered that recreational activities especially the one involving going out for physical exercise have the following significance:

**Obesity Reduction:-**Engaging in recreation that involves physical exercise reduces the risk of diseases like heart disease, diabetes with a balanced diet appear to be the best combination for decreasing weight and improving glucose tolerance and insulin security [Kriska,1997].

**Immunity Boosting:-**It was also found that park and recreation users report fewer visits to physician for purposes other than checkups than did non-park users [Ho et al, 2003,]. Ruth Coleman, the director of California State Park once said that Parks are sanctuaries for us in a chaotic World and that is why visitation to Parks soared after September 11th. The experience of nature confers a sense of sanity. It bestows spiritual calmness that helps people to cope.

**It Strengthens Community:-**It was gathered that 99% of California mayors believe that parks and recreation strengthen the community image and create a sense of place [Department of Park and Research, 2002].

**Promote Stewardship:-** 99% of all Californians believe that maintaining the quality of the natural setting is an important factor in their enjoyment of outdoor recreation areas [Department of Park and Research, 2004].

### Promotes Social Bonds

- i. Unites families:-Families that recreate together tend to be closer and more cohesive, and have a greater chance of staying together [Zabriskie and McComick, 2003].
- ii. Builds Cultural Diversity and Harmony:-Over 80% of Californians participated in visiting historic or cultural sites and attended outdoor cultural events such as festival and fairs [Department of Park Research, 2003b].

### Results and Discussion

The results of the findings on the mode of recreation participation and the types of recreational activities being engaged in and the effects on the respondents are tabulated below. It was revealed that 64.10% of the total respondents rest at home, 12.82% visits club houses while 12.82% goes to sport centers, 10.26% go to picnic with their families.

**Table 1:** Mode of participation of respondents

Level Participation	Frequency	Percentage
Active participation	38	48.72
Passive participation	40	51.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table reveals that 48.72% of the respondents involved in activities that require energy (active participants) while the remaining 51.28% respondents are passive participants (not require energy).

**Table 2:** The time the respondents observe leisure

S/N	Observe	Frequency	Percentage
1	Once in a while	25	32.05
2	Once in a week	23	29.05
3	every day	13	16.67
4	once in a month	1	1.28
5	twice in a month	3	3.85
6	twice in a week	8	10.26
7	twice in a year	5	6.14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table shows that 32.05% observe their leisure time once in a while, 29.05% observe it once in a week, while 16.67% observe their leisure time every day, 1.28% observe it once in a month, 3.85% observe it twice in a month, 10.26% observe twice in a week while remaining 6.14% of the respondents have theirs twice in a year.

**Table 3:** Types of exercise of the respondents

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Juggling	34	34
Sports	24	24
Drinking	22	22
Others	12	12
No option	8	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above results indicate that juggling is the most preferable exercise among the respondents. It constitutes the largest percentage (34%), this is followed by sports, representing 24% and 22% for drinking respectively. While 12% representing others says gardening and chatting activities remains their choices, only 8% of the total percentage says nothing (No option).

**Table 4:** Types of outdoor activities

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Sports	28	28
Reading	8	8
Socializing	18	18
Others	20	20
No option	26	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown above 28 respondents representing 28% says sports ranging from volley ball, table tennis, basketball among others remained their choices as related to outdoor activities. While 8% and 18% claimed that reading and socializing; meeting friends and families (relatives) remained their choice. Another 20% of the respondents said that activities like gardening and snapping pictures etc are their outdoor activities. Only 26% remains silent as they do not give answer to the questions.

**Table 5:** Effects noticed after the activities

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Refreshed	30	30
Good health	26	26
Fitness	4	4
Others	30	30
No option	10	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Majority of the respondents as represented by 30% agreed that after the pleasurable hours they feel refreshed. This is followed by another 26% of the total percentage which confirmed that they do have sign of good health after the pleasurable hours. The remaining 4%, 30% and 10% says they feel fit; very happy, light weight etc and no option respectively.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, as the society is becoming complex with urban city problems of stress after work, environmental pollution and other economic and social problems that can cause boredom and depressions could be easily tackled by recreation and leisure participation. The habit of resting and recreating should be encouraged by different levels of government and business organizations in Nigeria to improve the health status of every Nigeria and to increase our productivities. This could be done by giving the civil servants enough time to rest by reducing the working hours and giving enough leave bonuses to Nigeria workers.

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