



Utilization of Leisure Hours among Students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to find out the utilization of leisure hours among students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria. The researchers attempted to find out whether the students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma creates time for their leisure activities, the factors that affect the participation in leisure activities, the reason for active participation in leisure activities and what could be done to promote participation in leisure activities. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for study and questionnaire was used to collect the data. Amongst the conclusion reached was that sports should be taken seriously and should be regard as sports for all.

Key Words: Leisure, Planning, Satisfaction and Utilization

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary institutions are considered to be centres for learning, maturity and a place for seriousness, encompassing genders (Beings) equality. Leisure is an activity and not idleness (Omoruan 1996). It is no longer devoted exclusively to the education of the young but also to their lifelong learning structures and experiences (Patterson & Pegg 1999). Colleges and universities have not only allowed the entry of various racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups but have also welcomed adults of various ages. University administrators had to determine how to provide an environment that met students' needs and contributed to their life satisfaction. The environment inside and outside the university campus provides activities for students to participate in during their leisure and spare time. Leisure is an element that can be found in any activity, and it plays a significant role in the modern world.

Utilization of Leisure Hours among University Students

In past leisure research, little attention has been given to the relationship between leisure and the academic performance in Nigeria. Leisure is an activity that takes place during one's free hours. It is voluntary and the benefits derived are immediate. Leisure is enjoyed by all irrespective of age, sex, religion and even social class. Unlike work, there is no loss if one fails to participate in leisure activities. When we take part in leisure activities, we create a change of activity which brings to us new life. Some leisure activities are passive while others active. People often complain that they are too busy to have time for leisure. This is not totally correct. In the course of generating issues to be considered in this work we have had the need to ask students a number of times, how they spend their leisure hours? They always answer they have no time for set aside for leisure. Hence they always spend their time on studies. The usual complain by students and many others that they have no time for leisure is not altogether correct.

Leisure has been seen as a number of occupations in which the individual may indulge in his or her freewill either to rest, to amuse himself, to add to his or her knowledge or increase his voluntary participation in the life of the community, after discharging his professional family and social duties. To fully understand the meaning of leisure one has to take into accounts both its time and activity dimensions. The amount of time we have for leisure determines what we can do in that period. On the other hand, it would be unwise to think that leisure is simply free time.

In simpler societies like Nigeria, the time between labour and leisure is not sharply drawn. In such societies most time is used if not in work, then in other 'structured activities'. Anthropologist who have studied the daily lives of people in such simpler societies report a pattern of work and leisure that is much more integrated than most of our modern industrial society. There is a report that African men and women enjoyed leisure not according to 'clock time' but whenever they were free from routine duties in daily life (Okoye, 1995).

The Greek view of leisure was based on its association with schooling or cultivation of the self rather than with free time. Aristotle cited only two activities that qualify for leisure - music and contemplation. It should also be remembered that Greek society was based on slave labour. The leisure ideal was for a minority then and probably to argue that leisure never existed for the mass of people as a separated part of life until it was won from their excessively long working hours. In other words leisure could be regarded as product of the industrial society. This is evidence in the condition as well as the content of the leisure.

Butcher (1999) stated that, "The school job does not end when the two O' clock bell rings." His influence extends into the child's life through the school the school days and activities we engage in after school life. Therefore, there is need for a pleasant change and satisfying type of relaxation by students during their lifetime. Students also need this satisfaction from other avenues for it may not be possible to find all their needs in the walls of their schools. Therefore there is need for a pleasant change and satisfying type of

relaxation by students during lifetime. Above all, Guinn (1995) concluded that from his studies that different age, sex and social class groups could derive similar satisfaction from their leisure even though its content is different. Therefore there is need for a pleasant change and satisfying type of relaxation by students during their lifetime.

This study was an attempt to investigate the utilization of leisure hours amongst students in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The researchers also examined the college rank and gender of the participants in relation to their leisure participation. The purpose of the study was therefore to identify the effects and factors that influence the student's choice of activities during leisure periods. In answering this, emphasis was placed on whether students have free time. Even when it exist, do they utilize this hours wisely. Also, the factors that affect students' choice of activities and the subsequent effect on students' life was also reviewed.

Literature Review

Leisure has various definitions, when people speak and write. Merriam (1980) sees leisure as the discretionary time un-obligate time, a time that is free work or time out used for meeting the exigencies of life. One definition attempts to take the twenty four hours of the day subtract from the periods which are not leisure. A second type of definition insists that it is essentially not a period of time but a quality of activity or of the person engaged in the activity. Aristotle used the term "leisure in two sentences, one meaning he ascribed to the work was available time. This idea of available time was given a negative connotation by Veblen (1990), who used the word leisure in the sense of unproductive consumption on time.

Dumazedier (1997) related leisure to time by saying that leisure was the time free from production work, thanks to technical progress and social action for man's pursuit of a non-productive activity before during or after period of his productive occupation. According to Edward (1997) leisure can be defined as ones spare time. That is, the time that is left after the compulsory days' work has been performed. The time when one is free to do what he chooses. Leisure in some situations has been defined as a state of having (free or unoccupied) time at one's own disposal to spend as he pleases. In this direction, Omoruan (1996) identified five different kinds of free time. Permanent voluntary leisure of the rich, temporary involuntary leisure of the unemployed on neither holidays nor vocations, temporary incapacity of employed, permanent incapacity of the disable and the voluntary retirement of the aged and the fifth type of free time identified was the free time of unemployed old people and of the disable.

Nwagwu (2004) sees leisure as an opportunity and there can be no choice, no judgment, and no attitude and hence no freedom without opportunity or can there be opportunity without time. This assertion was earlier presented by Fitzgerald (1998). He related leisure to a state of opportunity, stating that leisure represents time, (time is opportunity).

Utilization of Leisure Hours among University Students

Therefore leisure represents freedom, freedom allows for choice and choice is opportunity.

The meaning of leisure to the layman was defined by Nakhood (1998) as “that part of the individual daily life in which he finds himself free from the demands of his regular calling and able to enter upon any line of activity he may choose within his own interests whether it be work or play. Leisure consist of a number of occupation in which the individual may indulge on his own free will either to rest, to improve his skills disinterest or to increase his own free voluntary participation in the life of the community after discharging his professional and social duties. Also, Eboh (2009) asserted that leisure must be understood as a mental and spiritual attitude. It is not the inevitable result of spare time, a holiday, a weekend or a vocation. It is in the first place an attitude of the mind and a condition of the soul.

Anyanwu (1998) revealed that “today” leisure is defined as the state of behaviour, the state of having things done, one own disposal time which he can spend as he pleases, free or unoccupied. Furthermore He added that leisure activities must be conducive and un-stressful activities. He added again that leisure is better utilized to improve upon recreational skills and endowment of man and to activate man’s social interaction impact. This therefore infers that, leisure activities are utilized to improve man’s physical and mental capabilities. Short leisure is and unsatisfactory term because it means different things to different people, sees it as a time free from work while others regard it as a means of resting after normal day’s work.

In as much as leisure time is that period of time at the complete disposal of an individual after he has completed his work and fulfilled his other obligations, it is necessary to note at this point that it requires some level of planning. Planning is essential in almost every human endeavour, if so, what then are the guiding principles for leisure activities planning? The activities programme should attempt to meet the individual needs and desires of the students. If needs are not met, desires not fulfilled, the participants feel no inclination to return to the activities. The activities should be diversified. In most cases, leisure connotes only sport and games.

The activities should be in careful balance to include opportunities for active and passive activities, indoor and outdoor activities or interest. Activities should also be for long-range interests and short term participation. The leisure activities should provide equal opportunity for all, regardless of race, creed, social, status economic need, sex, age, interest and physical capacity. Activities should be offered at a wide variety of time to meet the diverse living schedules of the students. Leisure activities for the student should be planned and coordinated to make best use of available facilities and human resources, factors such as topography, riverine and forest and others can affect the activities. Moreover, the safety and health of the participants must be paramount to all.

The activities should be constantly re- evaluated in the light of objectives and students acceptance. The areas range from simple to the complex, from the organized to the laissez-faire, from the students enjoyment

to group and from the mental and aesthetic to the physical. All these connote some form of relationship between leisure and recreation. However, recreations may be classified into several groups. Some of the most common ones include:

Musical and Dance Activities: This is believed to harmonise the soul while it provides means of the student's expression or emotional outlet. It is sometimes used as a background or setting for other events. It has aesthetic values. Inherent in most dancing as done or seen for recreation are the following values; there is improved understanding of and control over the body, a belief of tension, a sense of accomplishment and personal enrichment and opportunities to appreciate other students from different ethnic groups on their cultural development.

Dramatics: The radio and television Houses and the educational institutions have set the pace.

Arts and Crafts: Some of the values are that, they serve as outlet for creative expression. There is opportunity to work with hands. Students develop appreciation and recognition of beauty. There is personal satisfaction and pride in accomplishment Arts and craft include leather- craft, graphic arts, ceramic, sewing and the rest.

Sports and Game: The four main values are fun, competition, catharsis i.e. outlet for strong emotions and physical fitness. Types of activities are: organized game contest for individual and team sports.

Out Door Activities: Campfire, canoeing, conservation and fishing. **Horticulture:** Students in Botany department mostly fall into these categories. They plant flowers and study flowers.

Therapeutic Activities: Therapeutic activities describe the activities given to people who are ill, disabled or handicapped and consequently unable to participate in the leisure activities for able bodies provided by the school. Such activities have been found to be corrective and curative. For example, wheel chair contests. Their needs vary from a desire to belong, to create, to feel secure, to love and be loved, to feel significant, and to experience new adventure. Radio and television shows and parties help relate the mentally ill to reality. Camping is beneficial and pleasurable for most of this group. Several studies have pointed out that leisure satisfaction is an important component of a healthy life (Wu, 2001).

Therefore, leisure activities serve not as rest, relaxation and diversion as they formerly did but also as self-expression which is some time central to ones understanding of the world and one's place in it.

Roles of the school in leisure activities

The type of leisure activities dictate the type of facilities needed and this varies from school to school. As libraries are provided so that students, who have been taught to read and love to read, may pursue their reading interest as extensively as possible, the school must provide similar opportunities for enjoyment of other leisure interests. The school should enlarge its concept of

Utilization of Leisure Hours among University Students

curriculum to include activities of an informal nature, which takes place outside the classroom after school and during the vacation periods. The school buildings should be designed so as to provide the facilities essential for the achievement of desirable goals.

In many countries, schools serve the recreation needs of the students, much as it is desirable for the students to make use of facilities, the students should also provide additional facilities as supplement. One other method is to provide alternate entrances to some of these places so as to give minimum inconveniences to the normal school work. Movable partitions will provide big halls and soft wood floor are preferred to hard cement for dancing and other agility exercise. The extensive use of school facilities for students' recreation pays high dividends to the students who use them in the school. The ideal situation can only be achieved if there is effective and efficient administration. An advisory and administrative committee should be formed representing all groups and individuals concerned with the wellbeing of all persons in the school.

Factors that affect the utilization of leisure hours activities

The factors that affect the utilization of leisure hours among the students include the following.

Age: The students who are between the age of 17 and 21 years spend their leisure hours to engage themselves in taking photographs, going to parties, visiting friend etc. While a student in the faculty said, she used her leisure hour either to rest, to amuse herself, to add to her knowledge or improve her skills. Also some 300 level students who are between 22 to 24, years of age say that they utilize their hour in watching films, reading and sometimes visit friends (Eboh and Boye, 2009).

Time: In a pre-testing for 50 students, the time they spend on leisure are dependent on purpose. For example; Income and Family related activities, Religious activities, Relation and relaxation activities. On the average, about three hours is spent each day.

Environment: This depends on the faculty of the student. For example, in the faculty of Natural Science AAU, Ekpoma most of the students utilize this hours on the activities which can take place within their environment e.g. going to library for research, going to laboratory for practical work, rest and going religious services. Similarly too, students in the faculty of Agriculture spend it in their school gardens weeding on their practical crops and watering of their crops.

Social and Economic Factors: This is a major source of stratification of student in pursuit of leisure. Religion beliefs have not made it possible for some students to participate in some re-creative activities. Social stratification makes for the automatic seeking of one's own level for leisure pursuits. It is obvious that some students who have enough money utilize their leisure hours in film houses or clubs and also taking their friend out for launch.

Facilities and Equipment: Most students in ICT related department use this periods in learning how to operate the computer, playing computer games and cooking in their various hostel. Common facilities included tennis courts, athletic field, basket ball court, and recreation centers where students go for their recreational activities.

State of health: Leisure activities are good for both the well and the sick persons. Special re-creative activities have been found to help improve the health of the sick. Leisure activities have also been used to rehabilitate people. While we admit that by and large recreation provides fun, joy and happiness, it also improves health.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive analysis was used to analyse the responses of students based on the Questionnaire administered. Forty (40) questionnaires were sent to each of the fifteen (15) faculties and institutes under study in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The questions contained in the questionnaire were grouped to address issues like Students' awareness of leisure activities, planning for leisure activities. On the whole, a total 564 questionnaires were completed and used for the study. The tables are presented in frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Group One:- Students' awareness of leisure activities.

In table 1, most of the respondents indicated that leisure activity is as old as man. This was represented by 76.4 per cent of total respondents. Also about half of the respondents who take part in leisure activities have been doing it in the last five years. Furthermore, 126 students representing 22.3 per cent claimed that they take part in leisure activity, while 378 of the respondents representing 67 per cent do not take part in leisure activities.

Table 1: Students' awareness of leisure activities.

Question	Options	Freq	%tage
Do you agree that leisure activity is as old as man	Yes	431	76.4
	No	103	18.3
	Nil	30	5.3
How long have you been taking part in it?	Below 5 yrs	280	50.0
	Btw 5-10 yrs	209	37.3
	Above 10 yrs	71	12.7
Do you take part in leisure activity?	Yes	126	22.3
	No	378	67.0
	Nil	60	10.7

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork 2011.

Utilization of Leisure Hours among University Students

Research Group Two: Planning for leisure activities.

As shown in table 2, 497 respondents claimed that planning for leisure is very necessary. 9 per cent of respondents did not see any need for planning. The respondents were asked if they plan for their leisure activities. Out of the 556 respondents, 420 of the respondents do not plan their leisure time, while only 120 have a leisure plan and 16 were indifferent. This shows that most students do not have a plan for leisure. Anytime it comes they just fit in like that. However, 540 students representing 97 per cent with the claim that leisure programme include active and passive activities. While 16 students representing 3 percent disagreed. Therefore the claim that planning of leisure programme include active and passive is valid since higher percentage agreed. The question if planning create equal opportunity for both male and female students to participate in leisure activities was asked.

Table 2: Planning for leisure activities.

Question	Options	Freq	%tage
Is planning for leisure activities necessary	Yes	497	89.4
	No	50	9.0
	Nil	9	1.6
Do you make plans for leisure activities	Yes	120	21.6
	No	420	75.5
	Nil	16	2.9
Does planning of leisure programme include active and passive.	Yes	540	97.1
	No	16	2.9
	Nil	0	0
Does planning create equal opportunity for both male and female students?	Yes	540	97.5
	No	10	1.8
	Nil	4	0.7

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork 2011.

As shown in the same table, 540 students representing 97 per cent agreed with the claim, while 10 students disagreed. Therefore the claim that planning does not create equal opportunity for both male and female is valid.

Research Group Three: Time utilization for leisure.

Most of the respondents while responding to the question, "Do students create time for their leisure" indicated that most of them do not create time for leisure. This was represented by 498 respondents representing 80 percent. Also, a negative claim was shown in the response to the question of if students utilize their leisure time wisely. 480 ticked 'No' while only 76 ticked 'Yes'. Furthermore, those students that even take part in leisure activities do it mostly in the afternoon (Table 3). Only about 165 of the respondents claim that students engage in leisure in the evening.

Table 3: Utilization of leisure time.

Question	Options	Freq	%tage
Does students create time for their leisure	Yes	108	19.4
	No	498	80.6
	Nil	-	0
Do students utilize their leisure time wisely?	Yes	41	7.3
	No	350	63.0
	Nil	165	29.7
When do students have their leisure?	Morning	43	7.7
	Afternoon	168	31.0
	Evening	340	61.2
	Nil	5	0.01

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork 2011.

Research Group Four: Students participation in leisure activities.

As shown in table 4, 300 students representing 54.7 per cent agreed with the claim that students participate in leisure activities while 220 respondents representing 39.7 per cent disagreed with the claim. This therefore brings in the question of how often they do engage in leisure activities. In their responses, 135 believe that students often take part while 390 claim sometimes. 25 of the respondents were indifferent. Also, their response to the time the activities take place shows that it is mostly done in the evenings. The researcher also tried to establish if the physically challenged take part in leisure and the response was not in the affirmative. Despite, the fact that 201 respondents did not respond.

Table 4: Students participation in leisure activities.

Question	Options	Freq	%tage
Do students participate in leisure activities?	Yes	300	54.2
	No	220	39.7
	Nil	34	6.1
How often do students participate in leisure activities?	Often	135	24.6
	Sometimes	390	70.9
	Nil	25	4.5
When do students engage in leisure activities?	Morning	5	1.1
	Afternoon	248	44.6
	Evening	302	54.3
Do students who are physically challenged participate in leisure activities	Yes	63	11.3
	No	212	38.1
	Nil	201	50.6

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork 2011.

Research Group Five: Factors that affect participation in leisure activities.

From Table 5, the availability of facilities and equipment greatly motivate the participation of students in leisure activities. Hence it shows that lack of equipment and facilities hinder effective participation in leisure activities.

Utilization of Leisure Hours among University Students

Age and sex does not significantly affect activities students participate in. 503 respondents representing 90.5 per cent supported the position. However, the environment determines the choice of leisure activities to engage in as illustrated by 92.3 per cent of the respondents.

Table 5: Factors that affect participation in leisure activities.

Question	Options	Freq	%tage
Does lack of facilities and equipment hinder effective participation in leisure activities?	Yes	531	95.5
	No	20	3.6
	Nil	4	0.9
Does age and sex determined the activities to participate during leisure hours?	Yes	43	7.7
	No	503	90.5
	Nil	10	1.8
Does environment determine the choice of leisure activities?	Yes	513	92.3
	No	43	7.7
	Nil	0	0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork 2011.

Research Group Six: Effects of leisure activities in students' life.

Amongst the questions asked under this research group was if leisure activities was stressful. As shown in table 6 below, 232 respondents were in the affirmative while 304 respondents were in the normative.

Table 6: Effects of leisure activities in students' life.

Question	Options	Freq	%tage
Leisure activities are full of stress and boredom.	Yes	232	43.3
	No	304	56.7
Do leisure activities create good health and wellbeing of the students?	Yes	503	92.1
	No	43	7.9
Does leisure activities serve as a medium of making friends?	Yes	540	97.8
	No	13	2.2

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork 2011.

Also, leisure activities create good health and wellbeing of the students as adjudged by 92.1 percent of respondents. Finally, 97.8 percent of respondents believe that leisure activities serve as a medium of making friends.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After a careful consideration of the results from the research instrument administered, the findings revealed the following:

- i. Despite the fact that students of Ambrose Alli University have little knowledge of leisure activities and its importance to their health, they hardly create time for leisure.

- ii. Students have no plan of work and this is responsible for inactive participation in leisure activities.
- iii. Also, equipment and facilities are necessary for active participation of students in leisure activities.

From the result obtained, it is emphasized that students have no knowledge of leisure activities and do not utilize their leisure hours wisely. Therefore, the following are recommended:

- i. Students curriculum to include how to use leisure hours in order to yield positive dividends, share ideas and adventure.
- ii. Provide and improve on recreational facilities and equipment to maintain healthful living (healthy physical and emotional state).
- iii. Make use of leisure hours through adaptation to nature and creative arts, which will show the need for self-satisfaction, actualize teamwork, social interaction and healthful living.
- iv. Create skills that will comfort students in their state of being and desist from hazardous activities and bad habits during leisure hours.

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