Recreation – A Non-Medicinal Therapy against Mortality

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Abstract:
The basic premise of this study is that regular participation in organized recreational activities provides a non-medicinal therapy against mortality. The study considers participation in recreation as contributing to the enhancement of high level wellness concept of health of the citizens. Recreation is defined as those activities in which individuals take part during leisure times and are motivated by the satisfactions derived from the experience. Its roots are deeply embedded in the social and conservation movements of the late nineteenth century. Its history parallels that of public education and public welfare. In an age of advanced technology, man's physical work has been reduced to the barest minimum. He is daily suffering from tension, anxiety, high blood pressure and nervous break-down. These debilitating and degenerative diseases result in high mortality rate among our population. Participation in recreation is seen to offer a non-medicinal therapy against mortality. It achieves this through providing activities that are used as techniques to achieve desirable goals. Participation in recreational activities improves and maintains physical and emotional health, satisfactory adjustments to the social order in adult life, instills ethical concepts and promotes informal educational and cultural growth. Participation builds character, instills values and provides information and teaching. It is a means of breaking down the monotony of poverty, providing amusement and diversionary experiences, reducing tension and providing therapeutic and socializing force for growth and all ages of our population.

Keywords: *Recreation, Non-Medicinal Therapy, Wellness, Physical Activity, Mental Health, Mortality, Quality of Life*

1.0 Introduction

Sociologists, health educators, and cultural anthropologists have identified key social institutions such as family, education, religion, government, economy, and organized recreation as fundamental to human development and well-being. These institutions play vital roles in shaping the quality of life and promoting high-level wellness among individuals (Adeyemi, 2024). Among these, organized recreation has increasingly gained recognition as a significant contributor to both physical and mental health in contemporary society.

In recent times, rapid technological advancement and urbanization have drastically reduced the level of physical activity required in daily life. As a result, many individuals are exposed to increased levels of stress, anxiety, hypertension, and other lifestyle-related diseases. Globally and within Nigeria, these conditions have contributed significantly to rising mortality rates and declining overall well-being (World Health Organization, 2023).

Recreation, particularly when structured and regularly practiced, has emerged as an effective non-pharmacological approach to addressing these challenges. It provides opportunities for relaxation, social interaction, emotional release, and physical activity, all of which contribute to improved health outcomes. This aligns with the view that engaging in recreational activities can serve as a preventive and therapeutic measure against many modern health conditions. As noted by Ojo and Ojo (2026), recreational therapy is increasingly recognized as a viable intervention for enhancing mental and emotional well-being in urban populations.

Historically, the value of recreation as a health-promoting activity has long been acknowledged. It has been described as a natural and accessible means of maintaining wellness, reducing dependence on medical interventions, and improving quality of life. In this regard, recreation can be viewed as a non-medicinal therapy that contributes to longevity and overall human development. This paper therefore examines recreation as a non-medicinal therapy against mortality, with particular emphasis on its role in promoting high-level wellness, improving physical and mental health, and enhancing the quality of life among individuals.

2.0 Concept of Recreation

Recreation is a multifaceted concept that is often interpreted differently depending on individual perspectives, cultural background, and social context. Because of its subjective nature, it is difficult to provide a single, universally accepted definition that fully captures its meaning. However, scholars generally agree that recreation is best understood in terms of the experience it provides rather than the activity itself. What makes an activity recreational is the sense of satisfaction, enjoyment, and renewal derived from participation.

In contemporary literature, recreation is commonly defined as activities that individuals voluntarily engage in during their leisure time for the purpose of enjoyment, relaxation, and personal development. These activities are intrinsically motivated, meaning that individuals participate out of personal interest and internal satisfaction rather than external obligation or reward (Cordes and Ibrahim, 2020)**.**

Furthermore, recreation is characterized by freedom of choice, enjoyment, and its constructive contribution to the overall well-being of the individual. It plays a significant role in enhancing physical fitness, emotional stability, social interaction, and mental health. According to World Health Organization (2023), active engagement in leisure and recreational activities contributes significantly to improved health outcomes and quality of life.

In addition, modern perspectives on recreation have expanded to include emerging forms such as digital and virtual recreation. While these forms provide psychological relaxation and cognitive engagement, their contributions to physical wellness remain a subject of ongoing academic debate. Nevertheless, both traditional and modern forms of recreation are essential in promoting holistic well-being and high-level wellness among individuals (Tinsley and Eldredge, 2021)

3.0 History of Recreation

Recreation has been a part of the lives of all people of every race, nation and creed. In many cases Bucher (1964) stated, man has spent his leisure hours in a constructive and worthwhile manner by participating in music, dances, games, sports, painting and arts.

Organized recreation as a non-medicinal therapy against mortality is a twenty century product. The earlier recreation organizations were supported by philanthropists. They utilized voluntary leadership and provided programmes for the underprivileged. Today, there is a blending of governmental, private and commercial interventions. Abiodun (2025) states that this development has led to the commercialization of leisure, where private fitness and recreation hubs now play a secondary role to public parks in urban development.

Organized recreation has experienced three distinct periods of developments. Each has contributed to the nature of respective recreation services and has resulted in some dichotomies and philosophical conflicts. Youth work, sports and other diversionary activities, and natural resources management and conservation best describe the essential elements of each of these eras. In the early history, the Chinese, Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Babylonian and Greek left evidences of these pursuits.

The movement toward comprehensive organized recreation, Hawkins (1967) stated, was accelerated during the World War II when the need to get away from the tragedy of war increased the demand for activities of amusement and diversion of all age groups. Independent state recreation agencies were created, and therapeutic and industrial recreation emerged as special fields of endeavour. Later these were also outdoor recreation, camping and water sports such as canoeing, fishing and boat regatta.

4.0 Contemporary Organized Recreation

The distinct eras in the history of organized recreation are reflected in the organizational structure and programmes of the many contemporary groups providing recreation services. They are either diversionary, resource management oriented or instruments of personality development and social change. The first is most observed in municipal and industrial settings, while the last is characteristic of hospital and youth agencies (Edginton, Hudson, Dieser and Edginton, 2022). The resource management orientation is most frequently found at the state and Federal levels. The contemporary organized recreation programmes according to World Leisure Organization (2021) fall under:

- Music Activities: Instrumental, Orchestral Community sings and choral groups.

- Dance: Folk, square, social and modern dance.
- Arts and Crafts: Plastics, leather, crafts, graphics, ceramics, metal crafts, photography, stenciling and block printing.
- Sports and Games: Archery, Badminton, bowling, golf.
- Dramatics: Plays, festivals and clubs.
- Out Door Activities: Camping, Canoeing, Fishing, Campfires.
- Miscellaneous: Flower, forums, cards and hobby clubs.

5.0 Agencies that Sponsor Recreation Programmes

There are three major types of recreation agencies in the country. They include public recreation, private or voluntary and commercial agencies.

1. *Public Recreation Agencies*: include youth commission, state parks, state conservation, National parks, fish and wild life services and Zoos.
2. *Private/Voluntary Agencies*: include youth serving organisations such as Boys' Brigade, Boys' scouts, young Men's Christian Association, young Women's Christian Association, Museum, Libraries, Athletic Clubs and outdoor clubs.
3. *Commercial Agencies*: include theatres, bowling, night clubs, art galleries and concert halls.

The programmes of the Federal, State and Local Governmental agencies are designed to serve the needs of the general public. Administratively, they range from the provision of facilities to be used by citizens at their discretion, to the structuring of highly supervised events such as dramatic and athletic performances. The needs of the more specialized publics are met through the efforts of industries, institutions, schools, the military and agencies especially serving youths (Cordes & Ibrahim, 2020)

Their programmes are broadly based and molded to conform to the unique features of their setting. The military must consider the health need for both creative and diversionary experiences for highly mobile and youthful groups. The school recreation programmes must complement the more formal educational curriculum of the school system. The industrial recreation services must recognise that they are often the only organized recreation opportunities. Recreation is most viewed by the administrators and participants of these programmes as a diversionary experience (National Recreation and Park Association, 2022)

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Administrators of institutional and to a less degree, youth-serving recreation programmes are mainly concerned with the effects or end results of recreational participation. Participation in recreational activities is seen as offering opportunities for increasing a high level of wellness of the general public including the young, adults, men and women and the aged. It is seen as a therapeutic socializing force. It provides programmes which maximize the opportunity for social adjustment. Recreation is an end in itself. Recreation programmes amuse, entertain and allow the participants to enjoy some diversion and therefore have a recreative experience.

It is employed as a technique for achieving desirable social goals such as the improvement and maintenance of physical and emotional health, the instilling of ethical values, and the promotion of informal educational and cultural growth. Participation contributes to the healthy personality development among youths, fosters desirable traits of citizenship and promotes discipline and moral development (Edginton, et al., 2022).

Participation in recreation contributes to the satisfaction of basic human needs for creative self-expression and promotes total health - physical, emotional, mental and social. It also serves as an antidote to the strains and tensions of modern life, thereby enhancing overall well-being and quality of life (World Leisure Organization, 2021). Scholars maintain that participation in recreation contributes significantly to human happiness and to both mental and physical health in ways that cannot be substituted by medication alone

Participation in recreation results in character development, community integration, moral growth, and even economic benefits. These advantages are derived from programmes designed to cater to all categories of people children and adults, boys and girls, men and women. High-level wellness remains a central objective in recreation, as health is closely related to how individuals utilize their leisure time. The manner in which people spend their free

time greatly determines their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Recreational activities provide relaxation, emotional release, and escape from daily stress, thereby enhancing overall health (World Health Organization, 2023).

Recreation helps to overcome the deficiencies that arise after work, school, or daily routines, contributing to the integration and holistic development of the individual. It is essential throughout the year, as the human body requires it regularly, just like proper nutrition, to maintain optimal functioning and wellness.

Recreation is needed all year round. For proper functioning, the human organism needs this essential ingredient on a regular basis, just as it demands nutritious food every day in order to maintain a high level wellness. An individual needs recreation to get the most out of life. We need recreation to keep in the best of health. Individuals are advised to recreate "rationally" and "enthusiastically". Give about five percent of your time to recreation and you will not have to give 100 percent getting over being sick.

Participation in recreation maintains the muscle tone, relieves nervous tensions and provides relaxation, aids digestion, controls obesity and improves functioning of the lungs by deepening of respiration. In so doing, the individual feels better. The individual performs his daily physical, mental and social functions without stress. He possesses a high level of physical fitness capable of performing without fatigue and still has reserve power to go further. This is because participation enriches him with a high level wellness. Those who participate in regular recreation never fail to mention that recreation makes them feel better. If a person feels better, his attitude toward others will probably be friendlier. He is happier, makes wiser decisions and his world in general looks better.

Participation in recreation provides an outlet for instinctive aggressive drives by enabling an individual to "blow off steam" and provides a supplement for daily work. Physiological studies indicate that participation in certain aspects of recreational activities improves the general health of the heart muscles, lowers pulse rate and reduces lactic acid accumulation in the muscles. It results in the reduction in the osmotic resistance of red blood corpuscles. It is thought that this is due to the rise in body temperature during recreation activities. Regular participation is associated with reduced risk of hypertension and improved blood circulation, thereby promoting long-term health and wellness (American Heart Association, 2023).

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigerians are finding it very difficult to adjust their nervous tensions and their emotions to the seemingly fast pace they are living in modern day. The political and economic uncertainties are placing a lot of strains and stresses on the wellness of the citizens. The Nigeria's former leading killers were pneumonia, influenza, tuberculosis and diarrhea. Today, the order has changed to heart attack, high blood pressure, intracranial lesions, nervous break-down and arthritis. The therapy to all these maladies lies in participating in regular recreation which is a non-medicinal therapy against mortality. Medical experts and AAHPER experts have shown that participation in recreational activities provides ample opportunities for enhancing high level wellness among the citizenry. Such citizens will now live longer, productive and meaningful lives.

The Nigerian governments – Federal, State and Local must provide opportunities for recreation education of the citizenry. Such education process must create awareness of the values of recreation in developing high level wellness among the citizenry. Teachers must emphasize the habit of regular participation in recreation activities. The mass media, television, newspapers and other information media must be utilized to disseminate information on the values of recreation in developing high level wellness.

The Nigerian governments must provide funds for establishing recreation facilities and centres all over the country. They must encourage participation in music activities, dance, arts and crafts, sports and games, dramatics and out-door activities. Institutions of learning – Nursery/kindergarten, secondary and Tertiary must encourage active participation in recreation activities among the students and youths. Everybody in Nigeria must cultivate the habit of participating in recreation activities as one of the ways of enhancing high level wellness among the entire citizenry.

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