EMPLOYING RECREATION FOR AGED HEALTHFUL LIVING

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ABSTRACT
Recreation plays a key role in the well-being of older adults and in enhancing their quality of life. As for the aged, involvement in recreation activities can satisfy a variety of needs. It the important benefits of recreation for the aged population is increased health and fitness, as well as, opportunities for socializing, for using skills and talents developed throughout lifetime, and for learning new skills. This paper therefore focused on various recreational activities for the aged as a tool for enhancing healthful living. These activities are very useful to the aged as they can spend their leisure time and enjoy by doing interesting tasks. Some aged ones have enjoyed positive use of leisure throughout their life, and are able to find appropriate activities to suit their changing physical abilities and interests. The paper thus exposed the potential positive values of recreation. It also recommended that government should embark on public campaign through the various mass media to educate the general public on the benefits of meaningful engagement in recreational activities and involvement by aged ones.

KEYWORDS: Recreation, Age, Healthful living

INTRODUCTION
Recreation consists of activities or experiences carried on with leisure usually chosen voluntarily by the participant because he/she perceives certain personal or social values could be gained from them. It may also be perceived as the process of participation or as the emotional state derived from involvement. Recreation is any activity that takes place during leisure hours or free time. It is voluntary and the benefit one derives is immediate (Mohammed, 2008). He further explained that the primary purpose of recreation is to provide man with experiences that will assist them in achieving a better state of health, particularly for the aged.
According to Odumu (2000), recreation is any activity pursued during leisure either individual or collective, which is free and pleasurable, having its own immediate appeal, not impelled by a delayed reward beyond itself or by any immediate necessity. It is also looked upon as a worthwhile, socially accepted leisure experience that provides immediate and inherent satisfaction to the individual who voluntarily participates in an activity. The main reason for recreation is to provide man with experiences that will help the individual in achieving a better state of health. Recreational experiences are directed towards the individual’s total development, which is physical, social, mental, emotional, intellectual, psychological and spiritual. Recreation is not new to any country including Nigeria. Every country has its mode of recreation and various time or occasions of participation. Recreation serves many purposes, but perhaps none is more important than the contribution it makes to human health and well-being.

Everybody including the aged needs to satisfy his/her aspiration in life through recreational activities be it physical, mental, emotional, and social. The role of recreation as a field of human endeavour to provide avenue of making individuals to look healthier, happier, feel better and relax well as they are aging. Kennedy (1999) postulated that, a man is healthy when he has developed in body and mind up to average standard, and is capable of adapting himself to any physical or moral stress, which the chances of this mental life are likely to impose upon him. The World Health Organization has redefined Health as state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmities (WHO, 2001).

Indoor and outdoor recreational activities have important role to play in the lives of the old and the young people. Sedentary living kills more than any diseases and hence whenever someone is free he/she should not hesitate to participate in various recreational activities.

**SCOPE OF RECREATION ACTIVITIES**

Recreation may mean different thing to different individuals because what may be recreation to one person can be a job for another. With the changing concept of recreation, it is inevitable that the scope of recreation would expand. For the purpose of this paper, the definition of Udoh (1988) is considered where he explained that the original philosophy of recreation has now extended to include physical activities, social activities, nature and outdoor activities, creative and aesthetic activities, intellectual activities, service activities, musical activities, collecting and dramatic activities. From these areas of existing recreational activities, everyone should be able to find one particular activity he/she is interested to participate in.
RECREATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF HEALTH OF THE AGED

People in developed nations, like USA, England, Australia and Canada, are living longer than ever before due to their knowledge of the benefits of recreation. Moronkola (2002), documented that in the last decade, many large and small corporations and businesses have begun to offer their employees recreational activities that will improve their health and physical fitness. These companies have found that improved fitness among their workers leads to improved health and reduce employees’ medical problems and absenteeism, as well as, lead to higher productivity and job satisfaction.

Most people are unaware of the importance of recreation to their health. To recreate is to revitalize one’s body and be reborn with health, vigour and vitality. The aged needs it because as a person is aging, everything about the person is also aging. Well and meaningful recreation have that capacity to revitalize those organs of the body that are getting weak as one gets older or when one is aging. Afolagbe (1998), asserted that the use of physical activities and sports/recreation as a therapeutic agent is not recent: he concluded that the use is gradually developing to the present generation.

Hence, Nigeria should be involved in such development in order to promote good health for both young and the aging. Engaging in recreational activities on a daily basis reduces the risk of developing or dying from leading causes of illness and death. Regular participation in recreational/physical activities, according to Creed (2004), improves health in the following specific ways:

- Reduces the risk of dying prematurely.
- Reduces the risk of dying from heart disease.
- Reduces the risk of developing diabetes. Helps in reducing blood pressures in who already have high blood pressure.
- Reduce the risk of developing cancer.
- Reduces the feeling of depression and anxiety.
- Helps in controlling weight.
- Helps in maintaining healthy bones, muscles and joints.
- Helps aged, adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling.
- Promotes psychological well-being.

Odumu (2000), in his view stated the following as benefits of recreation to man.

i. **Social benefits:** The degree of an individual’s social interaction is often the yardstick in determining his mental health status. Recreation offers a tremendous opportunity for solitary activity which is important sometimes. There are times when one needs solitude.
such as reading, listening to music or painting and others. These are worthwhile recreational activities. In addition to seeking a solitary confinement “do their own thing” normal individuals also want friendship and companionship or association with other persons. This is because the interaction with fellow human beings promotes a feeling of worth, a feeling of security from group acceptance, approval and recognition. Recreation such as in games, picnic, dancing, and others, provides opportunities for participation in group situations, which can contribute to the social health of persons of all ages. Recreation has also been acknowledged as a factor in the prevention and correction of anti-social tendencies.

ii. **Mental benefits:** Many Nigerians today are subjected to some form of stress or the other generated both internally and externally that they need an avenue that mental release offers. Self-gratification and self-esteem are important mental health needs. The satisfaction and the pleasant emotions which accompany them can be provided by worthwhile recreational activities.

Aggression, which is one of the coping devices for stress can be an outlet in recreational sports. Udoh (1988) opines that the mind must be freed through engaging in recreational activities during one’s leisure time when stress affects behavior most. The current economic hardship and uncertainty of the future can cause the mind to be burdened more than ever before. It is, therefore, necessary to find satisfactory means of diffusing the pent up stress which may lead to mental disorganization. This reaction provides an antidote for it. Creative urges can also be satisfied through such programmes as craft, painting, dramatics, music, writing and other arts.

1. **Physical benefits:** All the attributes of physical exercise apply to recreation of physical nature. This is because the physical exertion which is inherent in many physical activities, creates organic and or physiological efficiency. These include improved metabolism, more efficiency, functioning of circulation and respiration, improved muscle tone and coordination, achievement of greater flexibility and improved general body efficiency.

   Our present day living, especially in the urban areas no longer provides enough vigorous exercise to develop and maintain good muscle tone of cardiovascular and respiratory fitness. Machines have taken over most of the works that need locomotor or manipulative activities. In view of this, it has become important that individuals should deliberately seek reaction of physical nature so as to compensate for sedentary and passive forms of recreation which lead to a number of health disorders such as obesity and cardiovascular disorders.
Physical exercise is vital as men and women approach the middle years of life and beyond because it helps to slow down the aging processes which affect some vital organs of the body. Association for Applied Sport Psychology (2005) explained that recreational activities and exercises can promote psychological well-being as well as improve quality of life of the aged. They further listed the following as the psychological benefits gained from recreational activities.

- Improved mood
- Reduced stress as well as an improved ability to cope with stress
- Improved self-esteem
- Pride in physical accomplishments
- Increased satisfaction with oneself
- Improved body image
- Increased feelings of energy
- Improved confidence in your physical abilities
- Decreased symptoms associated with depression

As people experience these psychological benefits, it is likely that they also will be motivated to continue exercises so that they continue to receive these benefits.

**TYPES OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE AGED**

1. **Strolling:** Walking around leisurely can be very helpful. In addition to being a type of exercise, walking around the neighborhood or in the park may enable the aged to make new friends, take note of changes in the neighborhood, and enjoy some sunlight and fresh air. Having great company while strolling is recommended as it prevents the short daily walks from becoming monotonous.

2. **Golfing:** Golf may be a professional sport, but it is also a favourite pastime for many. The concentration, skill and patience needed to play this game is immense, and the aged will appreciate the challenge. Other light sports for the aged include lawn bowling and swimming.

3. **Yard games:** There are many games that can be played in the yard including:
   a. Frisbee target toss
   b. Darts
   c. Volleyball
   d. Badminton
   e. Horseshoes
4. **Metal detecting:** A great way for the aged to spend some time outdoors is through metal detecting. Hunting for metallic objects can be both fun and rewarding at the same time. The best place to do metal detecting is at the beach, but it can also be done at the park or the back yard. A metal detector can be used to hunt for coins, scrap metal and any other type of metallic object.

5. **Nature photography:** It is wonderful to see and hear birds singing, and it can be fun to capture these events on camera. Nature photography is great not just for nature lovers, but also for the aged. It’s not just birds and wildlife that can be captured on film; roaring ocean tides, the stars, sunrise and sunsets are beautiful spectacles that lend themselves to photography. All that is needed is a decent camera.

6. **Picnics:** Having meals in the outdoors can be an enjoyable experience. Of course, this outdoor activity can be combined with any of the other activities in this list. The key to success with this outdoor activity lies in choosing a suitable spot and enjoying different locations. Going to the same bench at the park can become boring after a while, so hiking up a hill to have a picnic with a view of the city below (for example) can be worth the effort.

7. **Gardening:** Gardening is a popular hobby for people of all ages. Planting vegetables and flowers in the yard and looking after them can be a lot of fun. At the same time, getting all the vegetables and fresh cut flowers from your own garden can be fulfilling. The size of the garden, however, should be reasonable. After all, gardening for the aged should be more of a hobby than a duty. If the garden is large, some assistance should be provided.

8. **Fishing:** Fishing is one of the best activities for the aged. Not only does it allow them to spend some time outdoors, it also gives them an opportunity to potentially walk away with something for dinner. Fishing also allows the aged ones to spend time with family and friends. With great fishing spots around the country, it is easy to find that perfect fishing spot. Having great company during these fishing trips is important.

9. **Garden parties:** Hosting an outdoor party can give the aged ones a great excuse to go outdoors. This can be a daytime event that includes grandchildren and kids, or evening parties.

10. **Boat rides:** The fresh air is really appreciated while on the water. Boat rides on a lake or an ocean can provide a senior with a chance to have some fun outdoors, or just a relaxing experience.
RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations were made.

1. Government should embark on public campaign through the various mass media to educate the general public on the benefits of meaningful engagement in recreational activities and involvement by the aged ones.

2. Government and private firm should put in place various facilities for recreational activities in both rural and urban areas.

3. The general public should strive to engage in meaningful recreational activities that promote good health.

4. Recreational activities should be varied to accommodate local and peculiar needs of participants.

5. Recreational activities should be made interesting to stimulate healthy living.

CONCLUSION

Engaging in daily recreational activities can help improve the fitness and general well-being of any individual and the aged. Total fitness implies freedom from diseases that weigh down people especially when one is aging. There is a growing awareness of the need for aged to take a greater responsibility for their health without the use of medication.

REFERENCES


