

Exploring the Concept of Leisure and Its Impact on Quality of Life

Adesoye A. A.¹, Ajibua M. A.^{2,*}

¹Department of Human Kinetics, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

²Sport Centre, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to express the concept and components of leisure so that people can have clear idea of its meaning. A well adaptation to leisure-centred life could help individuals experience good life. It has been espoused that what is done in free hours has great effects on the growth and development of individuals and by extension, the nation. Leisure has been viewed in various ways by different authors. It is viewed in relation to time, activity, play, state of mind and work. Having a clear idea of what leisure stands for is very germane. This is because the meaning one gives to leisure may affects the individual's choice of discretionary activities.

Keywords

Busy-Ness, Destination, Discretionary Time, Falconry, Tour

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1. Introduction

Leisure has not yielded itself to a globally accepted definition. It appears no single description of leisure has entirely captured the social, psychological, physical, mental, physiological and cultural contents that leisure carries. An international expression of the importance of leisure can be found in the "Declaration of human right" of the United Nations (Ajibua, 2012). The Declaration recognizes the right of everyman to rest, to leisure, to freely participate in cultural life of his community and emphasizes the importance of ensuring that children should also have full opportunity for play and recreation. Leisure is very important in helping people meet basic needs especially those that are not attained in work related routine (Driver, Brown and Peterson, 1991). According to Brajsa-zganec, Merkas and Sverko (2011), leisure provides opportunities to meet life values and needs. Socially accepted leisure activities have been espoused as deterrents to antisocial activities since they fill free time, alleviate boredom and help people feel good about

themselves (Iso-Ahola and Crowley, 1991)). In similar study by Willits and Willits (1986), it was established that through leisure adolescents acquire knowledge of social and corporate skills, experience, intellectual or physical attainment, and explore a variety of peer, family and community roles. However, the lack of leisure repertoires or perceived boredom in man's leisure time may lead to deviant behaviours such as violence and crimes of various magnitudes.

Leisure is important in maintaining and sustaining man's destiny. Iso-Ahola and Crowley (1991) remarked that leisure activities are important because, in addition to providing opportunities to socialize, they provide human beings with good opportunities to explore and form their individuality and identity.

Ajibua (2012) in his literature review cited that man is turning more and more to leisure time as a source of interest and satisfaction. According to him, this is because it is in leisure hours that man finds opportunities for individual and creative expression; seek for social interaction and

* Corresponding author

E-mail address: alayodeajibua@gmail.com (Ajibua M. A.)

opportunities for self-development, which contribute, to the raising of the general level of their society. The United Nations Organization (1998) and (2006) asserted that leisure time is a legitimate right of everyman, because it satisfies man's essential needs for relaxation, recreation, individual development and creative expression. This world organization further stated that the harmonious development of the individual, as well his or her finding happiness of life, is largely dependent on sensible leisure-time activity.

Leisure has different meanings to different people and different cultures. In ancient times, leisure was a symbol of wealth and social status. In Egypt, for example, leisure was restricted to nobility, the military and religious leaders. Their leisure activities included wrestling, boxing, archery, art and music. Leisure activities such as hunting and falconry developed from the need for survival. Leisure gardens became ideal location where the upper classes could relax and enjoy themselves.

Leisure in ancient Greece is a cultural demonstration based on meditation, reflection and wisdom. In fact, they were the one to first distinguished between work and leisure. They promoted balance between work and play as a route to a healthy lifestyle and a healthy society. In ancient Rome, leisure meant entertainment. The Roman calendar had 200 days in a year set aside for celebrations out which 175 days were days for games (Haywood, 2004). In Latin America context leisure was associated with an empty time, time of doing nothing, thus linked to laziness and idleness. By this, leisure is confused and identified with idleness, therefore making it look harmful to the development of the society. In France, leisure is commonly referred to as enjoyment of the time free to rest, have fun or develop human being. The Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy defined leisure as a moment of "cessation of work, inaction or total omission of activity".

In Nigeria, leisure is conceived as the end result of work. In local parlance, it is common to hear people say, 'Omo to ba sise ye ko ni asiko igbadun', which means, 'a hardworking person should have a time for relaxation and enjoyment'.

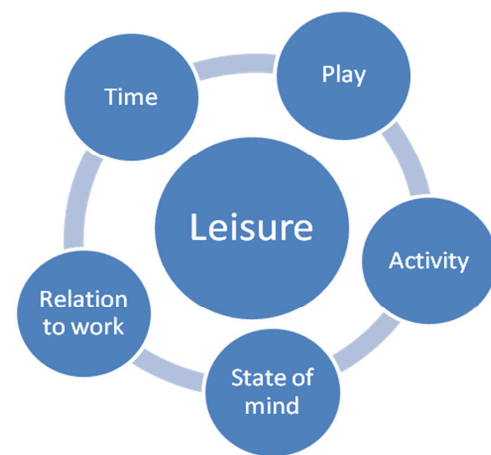
There is a misconception which portrays leisure as time spent on unproductive endeavours. This misconception is incorrect and needs to be corrected. In a way, ones understanding of the meaning of leisure may affect his perception of it and consequently influence activities such individuals should participate in. Ruskin (1988) observed that making choice of activities in leisure time is dependent on individual knowledge, skills, attitudes and acquired concepts. Marchildon (2013) opined that the way one perceives an activity will determining whether such activity will be enjoyable or not. Understanding the concept of leisure brings

one to its full power and potential. Also, the choice of leisure time activities may also be influenced by gender, education, culture, social-class, religion and the environment.

The purpose of this study is to express the concept and component of leisure so that people will understand what constitute leisure activity and benefits that may accrue from it. This may serve as motivating factor people to actively participation in rewarding and joyful activities.

2. Concept of Leisure

Leisure has been described at various times in relationship with time, activity, play, state of mind and work.



Leisure Concept Model

2.1. Leisure as Time

Akintunde, (2001) described leisure as the period of time often referred to as the "free time" after or before compulsory activities such as employment, running business, household chores, education, day-to-day stress, eating and sleep are undertaken. In the same vein, Jackson (2005) defined leisure as a block of free time; a time when man is free from the obligations and necessities of life. Alla and Ajibua (2012) in their literature maintained that leisure signifies individual's choice to spend his/her discretionary time fulfilling certain interest or needs or performing a gratifying experiences for the sake of wellness or personal growth. It is a time man uses according to his/her own judgements. Leisure is a time spent on activities chosen by individual and are rewarding for their own sake. Edington, Compton and Hanson (1980), Murphy (1981), Torkildsen (2005) and Alli (2008) divided time into three segments which Jackson (2005) study referred to as life three parts;

- Existence: the things one must do biologically to stay alive;
- Subsistence: the things one must do to make a living

(through work) or to prepare to make a living (through school); and

- Discretionary time: the time that may be used according to one's own judgement.

Of all these three life parts, leisure is the discretionary time or the time activity-oriented towards self-fulfilment and self-expression is carried out. Weiskopf (1975) remarked that discretionary time may not necessarily be an asset and may easily become a negative one. He explained that its value is determined by the content that man imparts to it. He asserted further that whether a certain use of leisure time will be considered sensible will depend on factors such as quality of man's education, the opportunities available to him, and the nature of free choice which he can make in providing content for that leisure time. Thus, the effects of unlimited, unorganised and undirected leisure hours are likely to be disastrous to the society (Jackson, 2005). However, leisure will be a sure and desirable asset when man is educated towards appropriate activities, and provided with necessary means to that end- the required organizational frameworks, facilities and equipment (D'Armour, 1988).

2.2. Leisure as Play

The term play comes from the Anglo-Saxon *Plega* referring to a game, sport or even fight. The Latin word *Plaga* means a blow, thrust or stroke as in a ball game or in combat. Play in historically European conceptions, according to Bekkum (1998) is an action, motion and activity especially when it is free, rapid or light against the heaviness of work. All these activities mentioned are within the province of leisure. This might have prompted Alli (2008) to describe leisure as any form of play or amusement. Aho (2007) viewed leisure as a form of play, that free man from busy-ness and gives him an opening to face the abyssal nature of his own being and the misery that 'beings are'. The aforementioned clearly indicated that play is an important characteristic in many aspects of leisure practices.

Standenaven and De Knop (1999) argued that leisure as play is an ingredient of human development. To get clear picture of what play entails Torkildsen (2005) came up with the features of play as;

1. A form of behaviour, which is generally regarded as not being instrumental in purpose.
2. Often carried out in the spirit of pleasure and creative expression.
3. Often aimless, disorganised and casual, or highly structured or complex.
4. Commonly thought of as activity engaged in by children, but adult also play.

5. Regarded as voluntary, pleasurable and non-serious, although it may involve risk and intense commitment.

6. Apparently found in all cultures.

7. Linked to important social functions such as law, warfare, religion, art and music.

8. Regulated and rule-governed.

9. Free.

10. Limited in time and space.

11. Self-contained-an end in itself.

From the above explanations it may not be wrong to conclude that leisure is play.

2.3. Leisure as Activity

Torkildsen (2005) cited that people utilize their time to perform various activities. He revealed four (4) different types of activities,

- Remunerative obligation;
- Family obligation;
- Social-spiritual obligation; and
- Activity-oriented toward self-fulfilment or self-expression.

The fourth category which is activity-oriented toward self-fulfilment or self-expression is referred to as leisure. Leisure is any activity that is freely chosen and pursued for its own sake- the intrinsic motivation dimension (Agahi, 2008). It is an activity apart from the obligation of work, family, and society to which the individual turns at will, for relaxation, diversion, or to broadening his knowledge and his spontaneous social participation, and the free exercise for his creative capacity.

Kelly (1996) explained that leisure activity can also be divided based on what the activity provide individual participant and therefore divided leisure activity into;

1. *Experiential leisure* - activities that give intrinsic satisfaction, diversion, relaxation etc;
2. *Developmental leisure* - activities that offer challenges and involve personal competence and creativity and;
3. *Social leisure* - activities that provide social interaction and social status.

Klumb and Maier (2007) in their study divided activity into generative and discretionary; with leisure activities falling under the category of discretionary activities. According to them, discretionary activities are divided into productive and consumptive activities. Productive activities are those activities that can be performed by someone without losing it benefits (e.g. gardening and shopping) while consumptive

activities are performed for their own sake (e.g meeting friends and reading a book). However, the line between productive and consumptive activities may not always be a very clear one as productive activities as mentioned above may very well be performed for their own sake too.

2.4. Leisure as State of Mind

Contrary to the concept of leisure as activity, Murphy (1981) explained that leisure is not so much an activity, but a state of mind achieved through outward expression. It is an attitude of the mind and the condition of the soul (Torkildsen, 2005). Marchildon (2013) posited that leisure is being at peace with oneself and what one is doing. In effect, it is only the experience that is the leisure and not the outward expression. It was also perceived as a way of keeping the mind busy, and consequently, distracting people from distressing thoughts that may be triggered by stressful life circumstances. Studies have shown that temporary escape from stress through leisure may allow an individual to psychologically "regroup" and to more effectively deal with existing problems upon "returning".

2.5. Leisure in Relation to Work

Leisure is not the opposite of work as some people may think, but the end result of work. It is not the antithesis of work, but a key driver to it (Marchildon, 2013). Leisure is the right balance between work and rest. It can therefore be achieved both in work as well as in rest (Steindi, 2009). Ruskin (1988) asserted that life is a harmonious network of activities, in which the distinction between 'work' and 'leisure' is as arbitrary as that between 'body' and 'mind'. Leisure and work are so closely related that the two cannot be separated (Edginton, Jordan, DeGraaf and Edginton, 2012), because elements of leisure are also found in work. The difficulty with seeing leisure as time outside work is that many leisure activities are very hard work and some work situations are enjoyable, almost leisure-like. Furthermore, leisure, traditionally, is conceived as freedom from commitment, yet many leisure activities require considerable commitment. Strong (2006) contented that the choice of work and careers we undertake most of the time have their root in the aspirations and skills developed during leisure activities.

From the above views of leisure, one can rightly conclude that leisure is a free time activity engaged in through personal volition for self-expression and self-actualization.

For those who choose to use leisure in wholesome and constructive manner, several approaches may be considered for spending free-time wisely. These approaches are listed below.

a) Involvement in self-directed activities; or involvement in activities programmed by someone else.

b) Participating in activities directly; or participating as spectators.

c) Participating in activities alone; or participating with others.

d) Involvement in activities as service to others; or involvement for personal pleasure.

e) Doing things for which there is cost, or doing things which are totally free.

f) Taking part in new activities or taking part in activities which have been done before.

g) Involvement in activities which are active; or involvement in activities which are passive.

Obviously, an individual might choose an activity which includes more than one of the approaches stated above. For example, deciding to play tennis with a friend after work would include the following: the activity is self-directed; the activity involves direct participation; the activity involves participating with someone else; the activity will be done for personal pleasure; there is no ticket to buy in order to do the activity that both participants have done previously, and involvement is by all means- active participation.

Jackson (2005) itemized the basic elements that must be noted when discussing leisure.

- A civilization that creates leisure which it cannot rationally use may well be in great danger or destruction than one that has no leisure at all.
- How people use their leisure will be the determining factor in its effect upon the individual and upon the society.
- Whether leisure will be an asset or liability depends in large degree, upon the quality of leadership in the leisure service fields.

3. Components of Leisure

Leisure activities are those activities that people choose to carry out in their spare time (Omoruan, 1996; Torkildsen, 2005). These activities according to World Leisure Board of Commission (2001) and Leitner and Leitner (2004) are wide-ranging and can be categorized into serious or substantial leisure and casual or diversionary leisure.

3.1. Serious or Substantial Leisure

This is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting, that, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience.

3.2. Casual or Diversionary Leisure

This is the immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy. Its main types are play, relaxation, passive entertainment, active entertainment, sociable conversation and sensory stimulation. It is considerably less substantial and offer no career of the sort found in serious leisure (World Leisure International, 2000).

Triggs (1996) classification splits leisure pursuits into two major parts, namely:

- i Recreation
- ii Tourism.

The differences that exist between them relate to the purpose of the activity chosen and geographical range or distance travelled. This agreed with Edington, Compton and Hanson, (1980) who in their study claimed that participants in recreation are involved in activities within their immediate vicinity, while tourists are involved in variety of activities in the course of their travels, but both are participating in these activities in their leisure time. Thus, the difference between recreation and tourism is a matter of location of the activity. In other words, recreation and tourism are both part of a continuum, travelling being the differential factor (Standenaven and De Knop, 1999).

The relationship between recreation and tourism according to Olarewaju (2000) are as follows:

- i Both are carried out at free time.
- ii Both are carried out by choice.
- iii Both do not allow for remuneration of participants.
- iv Tourism is a bigger concept than recreation.
- v Both make use same elements or resources.

3.3. Recreation

The word recreation stems from the Latin *recreatio*, which refers to restoration or recovery. The term implies the recreation of energy, or the restoration of human's ability to function (Alli, 2007; Famayo and Adunbi, 2009). It comes from the concept of creating again, recollecting, or reforming the mind. Recreation refers to a voluntary activity a person chooses to participate in during his/her leisure time, which generates an experience that results in satisfaction, enjoyment, pleasure, achievement and/ or a sense of well-being (Torkildsen, 2005). It is an activity engaged in for relaxation and recuperation; as well as an activity that rejuvenates and replenishes the individual to continue to perform on the job without undue stress.

Recreation is a guided process of voluntary participation in

any activity which contributes to the improvement of general health well-being and the skills of both the individual and the society (South Africa Department of Sport and Recreation, 2008)

The United Nations Organization presented recreation as an activity pursued during leisure, either individually or collectively that is free and pleasurable, having its own immediate appeal, not impelled by a delay reward beyond itself or by any immediate necessity. It is a civil right and by implication a necessity of life (UNO, 1998). Recreation are those activities done for relaxation after hours of work which provide self-confidence that enable the participants to develop their full potentials.

In conclusion Olanrewaju (2000) itemized the objectives of people for going out for recreation. They are:

- a) For purpose of utilizing spare time.
- b) For the intrinsic value of recreation.
- c) To escape from boredom of locality or job.
- d) For fun and relaxation.
- e) To contribute to the physical, mental and moral well being of the participants.

3.4. Tourism

Mahdi (2008) reported that the word "tourism" is derived from "tour" an old French word. In French language this word means: circle movement, act of going, going around and circulating. Until the 20th century, there was no attention to perfect definition of tourism, but because of the economic crisis of 1929, the governors of western societies found that tourism can play a role in economic recovery. In 1973, the Committee of United Nations Statistical experts took the first step to define the international tourism. In the opinion of the committee all the people who leave their countries for the period of at least 24 hours and lived in another country will bear the title "international tourists". According to the definition which is generally acceptable, the people describe below are not tourists;

- i People who travelled in order to attend meetings and conferences or when political, economic and sports representatives travel to another country.
- ii People who travelled by ship within the period less than 24 hours.
- iii The people mentioned below should not be regarded as tourists.
- iv People who enter a country to get job, according to job contract.
- v People who enter a country to reside in that country

forever.

- vi Students and youth who study in an institution of learning of a country and reside in a dormitory.

Tourism in the words of Adejuwon (1993) means the movement of person(s) from his/her abode to a place far or near for the purpose of leisure. They are visits to places outside one's home place, location and country for various purposes such as vacation, interest in the history of destination of the tour and/or its architecture. It is in a sense the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not connect with any earning activity. Tourism encompasses the activities of person travelling to and staying at places, outside their usual environment, for not more than one consecutive year, for leisure, business or other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from the place visited (Torkildsen 2005).

From the various definitions of tourism given above, one can safely described tourism as a set of activities of a person travelling to a place outside his or her usual environment for less than a year and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of any activity remunerated from within the place visited. The phrase, 'usual environment', excludes trips within the person's community. The phrase 'exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited', exclude migration from temporary work paid for by an economic agent resident in the place visited. This exclusion does not apply to business-related travel such as sale's call, the installation of equipment, or conventions where the traveler's employer is located elsewhere than the place visited.

Tourism can be categorized based on the motive of involvement or activity place. Murphy (1985) classified tourism in relation to motives of involvement as stated below.

1. *Health tourism*: This is a journey with the intention to spend time getting well after an illness thereby combining medical exercise or convalescing with holiday and rest. This is different from complete hospitalization.
2. *Sport tourism*: It is an activity associated with the participation in sport such as Football, Tennis, Boxing, Polo, wrestling etc (Standenaven and De Knopp, 1999). It has become almost impossible today for sportsmen and women to pursue their careers without engaging in travel. Team tours are also popular with amateur and professional clubs who engage agents to find matches and arrange accommodation and transportation.
3. *Scientific tourism*: This is associated with educative excursions, scientific journey or conferences and meetings.
4. *Cult and Religion tourism*: They are associated with

journeys like pilgrimage to the Vatican and Jerusalem by Christian and Mecca by Muslims.

5. *Social tourism*: This is an organized form of tourism for the less privileged such as pensioners, students or every low-income workers. Special and subsidized facilities are provided for this group of tourists in form of accommodation, restaurant or holidays packages.
6. *Reality tourism*: This tourism relates to learning about the "history of repression and political violence". It involves among other things visiting people who are under these conditions and who have probably broken off such holds. It involves seeing the real life situation of people who have undergone some unfortunate circumstances like those in Burundi, Liberia, Sudan etc.
7. *Space tourism*: This is a recent approach to tourism. This involves the visit of people of the space. Dennis Tito is the first space tourist to travel to Russian Mir Space station.

In a separate study of Triggs (1996) and Lickorish and Jenkins, (1997) tourism was categorized based on activity place.

- a. *Domestic tourism*: Residents of a country visiting destinations in their own country.
- b. *Inbound tourism*: Visits to a country by non-residents.
- c. *Outbound tourism*: Resident of a country visiting destinations in other country.
- d. *Internal tourism*: The combination of domestic tourism and inbound tourism.
- e. *National tourism*: The combination of domestic and outbound tourism.
- f. *International tourism*: The combination of inbound tourism and outbound tourism.

4. Conclusion

This study has shown that leisure is of great benefits to mankind and therefore needs deeper understanding. It is the positive interaction of people with their environment that results into learning. Leisure has emerged as a separate social institution, which is the vehicle for self-improvement and expression no less than work. Leisure brings sense of creativity, control and achievement. It helps us to enjoy new experience, challenges and adventure. Whatever we do in our leisure time helps us as human beings to shape our lives. It affects quality of life and life satisfaction. It is during leisure that man finds opportunities for self development which contribute, to the raising of the general level of their society. In fact, culture of groups and societies finds its origin in leisure. Leisure is very important to mankind. Efforts should

be taken by policy makers to ensure that constructive leisure activity programs are consciously put in place so that people can gain the enormous benefits that accrue from active participation in it. An accurate knowledge of the meaning of leisure will have positive implication for its organization, growth and development in any society.

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