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Extent of Participation in Traditional Recreational Activities of Ugwueke Community in Bende Local Government Area, Abia State

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Abstract

Recreation is an activity one voluntarily engages in during his/her leisure time due to the satisfaction derived from it. This study investigated the extent of participation in traditional recreational activities of Ugwueke community in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State. Researchers adopted descriptive survey research design. A sample of 396 members of the community was used for the study. Researchers-designed questionnaire with a reliable index of 0.71 was used to elicit information from the respondents. Frequency and percentage were used to answer the research questions while Chi-square was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The findings from the study revealed that only 38.02 per cent of the participants in Ugwueke community participated in Ibo Uzo to a high extent, while 51.97 per cent participated to a very low extent. Also, 36.5 per cent of the respondents participated in Ikwota iyi to a high extent, while 41.86 per cent participated to a very low extent, while 34.84 per cent of the respondents participated in Mgba to a high extent, 32.24 to a moderate extent and 21.32 to a very low extent. Participation in traditional recreation were statistically dependent on age ($\chi^2 = 10.41$, $p = 7.815$). It was concluded that the community should be educated on the need to involve everyone in recreational activities and therefore recommend that there should be forum for workshop and seminar to enlighten them on the need to involve everyone in recreational activities.

Keywords: Recreation, Traditional Recreation, Recreational Activities, Participation

Introduction

Recreation is a major and general human need. Man has found outlets for self-expression and personal development in the form of recreation. It is an essential part of human life and finds many different forms which are shaped naturally by individual interests and also by the surrounding social environment (Atika School, 2020). Human beings spend their time in activities of daily living, work, sleep, social duties and leisure, the later being time free from prior commitments to physiologic and social needs, a prerequisite of recreation (Kusuma, 2018). Recreation carries different meanings for different people with a wide range of activities that may be indoor or outdoor and may have different outcome. Awucha (2024), defined recreation as an activity people engage in during their free time to relax, have fun, and rejuvenate their minds and bodies. The activities can be physical, social, creative or adventurous and are often undertaken for enjoyment, leisure and personal fulfilment. American Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPER) states that recreation is a special field that contributes to the satisfaction of basic human needs for creative self-expression; helps to promote total health- physical, mental, emotional and social; provides an antidote to the strains and tensions of life; provides an avenue for abundant personal and family living; and develop effective citizenship and vitalizes democracy. Recreation according to IGI Global (2023) is the whole of activities that are based on entertainment and leisure which are done voluntarily without being subjected to rule or gain. Today, recreation is understood to

be a much more complex phenomenon, with meanings that extend far beyond simply taking part in activity.

Recreation is necessary for everybody including the people of Ugwueke community in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State. Anyadiegwu (2019) stated that recreation is of great importance. It results in the enhancement of one's interpersonal and intrapersonal skill. Apart from being a way of spending free time, recreation is also a way to socialize, it is a way of being with loved ones and enjoying with them. Recreation gives one an opportunity to meet new people and develop new friendship. Anyadiegwu also noted that socialization implies being a team player, making one feel as being a part of the community. Participating in recreational activities also help strengthen family relationship. A certain kind of freedom that you experience during recreation helps one feel distressed. One's enthusiastic participation in recreational activities boosts positive energies, encourage a positive temperament, thus unlacing one. Recreation brings one close to nature. Visits to tourist centres and parks can brighten up one's life. Recreation is an engagement that one voluntarily undertakes on his/her own during leisure time because it is refreshing, interesting and motivating and brings immediate satisfaction. Unfortunately many do not seem to know the importance of participating in recreational activities of their community.

Recreation can come in many forms such as modern or traditional (Princetorns, 2021). Modern recreation is leisure activities characterized by using the most up-to-date techniques and equipment (Kusuma, 2018). Traditional recreation are past time activities in which people engage in based on cultures and religious belief involving music, dance, dramatic play, healing rites or as celebrations of historic events which serve to reinforce the ties that binds members of the tribe or other social group together and transmit traditional beliefs and values from one generation to another (Rogers, 2005). According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2023), traditional recreation or indigenous games, dances and sports also in their modern and emerging forms express the world's rich cultural heritage and must be protected and promoted. Setting aside some periods after the day's works for relaxation, play and other forms of amusement are generally part of people's way of life and culture in the Nigerian society. As recreation contributes to human happiness and happiness itself is recognized by our forefathers as a fundamental and worthy objective for every individual to develop sense of joy (Princetorns, 2021). In Nigeria, especially among Igbos, wrestling and dancing form the major type of their recreational activities. These activities were engaged in, mostly at the end of the farming season.

Recreational activities are a broad concept covering a wide range of activities and interest. A list of recreational activities could be almost endless including most human activities, few example being reading, playing or listening to music, watching movies or television, gardening, hunting, hobbies, sports, studies and travel (Abbah, 2018), but this work centres on traditional recreation. Recreational activities in the context of this study are concerned with the traditional activities engagements of Ugwueke community during their free time that is expected to bring enjoyment and satisfaction to them. Due to the broadness of recreational activities, recreational activities of Ugwueke such as Mgba, Ibu Uzo, and Ikwota Iyi were considered in this study and the extent they participate in them. Three of them were considered in this study.

Ibo Uzo (Road Clearing)

This activity is done once every two years precisely in April. It is a popular traditional recreational activity in Ugwueke community which attracts people from within and outside the

community. The participants will organize themselves and inform the elders of the village so that they will meet and decide on the date of the event. Also those that will participate or are matured for Ibo uzo will equally meet and make plans on how to make the event successful. The announcement of the date itself brings joy to the heart of the community members and so they look forward to it. On the D-day, the celebrants will assemble at the ancient land separated for the occasion in their full regal (traditional warrior attire). Each will be assigned a portion of the land to cut within a specified period of time at the sound of Ikoro popularly known as Ikoro Bende. Their friends, family members and others who came to observe will cheer them up in many ways such as: clapping, singing, showering them with praises and so on. Any one of them that finishes cutting will be celebrated in a special way. At the end of the cutting, they will proceed to the palace of the Eze who will confirm them by pronouncing blessings on them. Lastly, entertainment will follow suit.

Ikwota Iyi Tradition (River Clearing)

This is the activity enjoyed by the youth and the aim is to clear the river of every dangerous object so that the people swimming in Eze river (river) will be safe. In this tradition, the young men and women (youths) in the village who can swim and like swimming very well will voluntarily come out in the village square and set themselves into two groups because the village is surrounded by river. They will clear the rivers of every harmful object once a year to make it safe for the users. The first group starts from one side of the river while the second group starts from the other side of the river and both group meet at the centre of the river; their movement and sound made by it attracts onlookers. At the meeting point the youth leader blows a whistle which attracts the attention of the whole villagers and then, all of them will be welcomed into the village square by their siblings and love ones with clothes for changing. When they finish changing their clothes, the Eze (traditional ruler) and his cabinet members will then entertain them with delicious meal in appreciation for a job well done and they will display some aquatic animals and objects they brought from the river.

Mgba (Traditional Wrestling)

The game is played on a sand-filled circled surface measuring six meters in diameter, excluding the official and spectators stands. The total play area should measure 25meters radius. Only players competing and referee are allowed into the circled area during the time of the game. The circle shall be demarcated with visible artificial barriers considered not injurious to players and officials. There shall be three categories with distinct weight classification. A player is not allowed to participate only in one category, this is to prove their mettle . Only shorts and sashes duly certified as not injurious to players may be worn. The contestants are spaced apart facing each other; each player uses his tactics to attack and/ or defeat his opponent. The duration involves three rounds of three minutes each and one minute interval shall constitute a bout. A bout could be terminated in less than the stipulated time by a knock-out or submission.

A player can use any of the following to win his opponent:

- By lifting the opponent off the ground while standing firm on his feet.
 - By dodging the opponent thereby leading to complete fall.
 - By diving and grasping/collecting an opponent's leg thigh and raising him up.
 - By flinging his leg to clear and opponent off the ground.
 - By hooking/ gripping an opponent from standing position.
- Points are awarded when either contestant:
- Fall on his back or buttocks- 1 point

- Fall on his knees or hands- $\frac{1}{2}$ points each.
- Fall flat on the ground- 1 point
- Lift up an opponent and stand firm on his feet- 2 points
- The maximum points obtainable in any bout shall be 30 points.
- Knock-out or submission by either player erases opponent's points

A knock-out is recorded when an opponent can no longer continue or where he stays beyond the one minute interval, except in case of injury duly certified by the referee. A player shall be deemed to have won a bout when: He obtains a simple majority score; and opponent surrender by rising up his hands, and by knocking-out the opponent. One thing is to have these activities; another thing is to participate in the activities.

Participation is the nature and the extent of a person's involvement in life situations. It includes: activities of self-care, socialization, education, recreation and community life (Thaddeus and Dennis, 2018). The extent to which people engage in meaningful activities and pursue goals in their community is relevant to their quality of life and their sense of meaning in everyday life especially Ugwueke community. Participation in the context of this study is the extent to which the individuals in Ugwueke community take part in their traditional recreational activities. It can be high, moderate, low or very low. The idea of participating in traditional recreation has not been given the proper attention in many communities and as a result of this some people may not know what one may gain through participation in recreational activities. Some demographic variables have been reported by researchers to influence ones participation in recreational activities as regards to tradition. Nwachukwu (2017), identified age as one of the variables capable of influencing engagement in recreational activities. The researcher wants to find out what is obtainable in Ugwueke community of Bende local government in terms of their extent of participation in the traditional recreational activities. This study investigated the extent of participation in traditional recreational activities of Ugwueke community in Bende Local Government area of Abia State. Specifically the study sought to determine the:

1. extent of participation in Ibu uzo;
2. extent of participation in Ikwota iyi;
3. extent of participation in Mgba

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study;

1. What is the extent of participation in Ibu uzo?
2. What is the extent of participation in Ikwota iyi?
3. What is the extent of participation in mgba?

Hypothesis

One hypothesis was postulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

Extent of participation in the traditional recreational activities of Ugwueke community is significantly independent of age ($p \leq .05$).

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this present study. The area of the study is Ugwueke in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State. 45,000 members of the community constituted the population of the study. A sample of three hundred and ninety six (396) members of Ugwueke community was used for the study. This was arrived at using “Taro Yamane’s formula for a finite population. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher’s designed questionnaire titled “Extent of Participation in Traditional Recreational Activities Questionnaire” (EPTRAQ). It was validated by 3 experts in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument has a reliability index of 0.71. The structuring of the questionnaires was guided by the research questions. The questionnaires consisted of five sections lettered sections A, B, C and D. Section A obtained relevant information on the personal data of the respondent while the other sections determined the extent of participation in traditional recreational activities. They were administered to the respondents according to their villages. The completed copies of the questionnaires were collected immediately on the spot. 396 copies of the questionnaires were administered and 384 copies were used for data analysis after screening. This gave a return rate of 88 per cent. The data were computed and analyzed using frequency and percentage, while Chi-square was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Extent of participation in Ibu uzo (n= 384)

Activity	High		Moderate		Low		Very Low	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Cutting of grasses	147	38.28%	10	2.60%	13	3.38%	214	55.72%
Packing of grasses	92	23.95%	130	33.85%	35	9.11%	127	33.07%
Clapping of Hands	200	52.08%	—	—	—	—	184	47.91%
Blowing of Whistle	2	0.52%	—	—	—	—	382	99.47%
Observing	289	75.26%	2	0.52%	2	0.52%	91	23.69%
Average %		38.02		7.39		2.60		51.97

Results as shown in Table 1, indicates that only 38.02 per cent of the participants in Ugwueke community, participated in Ibo Uzo to a high extent, while 51.97 per cent participated to a very low extent. Specifically, 55.72 per cent participated in cutting grasses to a very low extent, 33.85 per cent participated in packing of grasses to a moderate extent, while 52.08 per cent participated in clapping of hands to a high extent. Also, 99.47 per cent participated in blowing of whistle to a very low extent while 75.26 per cent participated in observing to a high extent.

Table 2: Extent of participation in Ikwota iyi (n= 384)

Activity	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
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	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Clearing	54	14.06%	30	7.81%	40	10.40%	260	67.70
Blowing of whistle	1	0.3	-	--	--	--	383	99.7
Receiving Swimmers	289	75.26%	2	0.52%	2	0.52%	91	23.69%
Observing	154	40.10%	150	39.06	30	7.81%	50	13.02%
Singing	200	52.08	100	26.04%	64	16.66%	20	5.21%
Average%		36.5		14.69		7.08		41.86

Results as shown in Table 2, indicates 36.5 per cent of the respondents participated in Ikwota iyi to a high extent, while 41.86 per cent participated to a very low extent. There is very low participation by the respondents in active activities like clearing (67.70 %) and whistle blowing (99.7 %). There is high extent of participation of the respondents in receiving swimmers 289 (75.26%), and observing 154 (40.10 %).

Table 3: Extent of participation in Mgba (wrestling) (n= 384)

Activity	High		Moderate		Low		Very Low	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Wrestling Part	92	23.95%	130	33.85%	35	9.11%	127	33.07%
Beating of Drum	88	22.91%	121	31.51%	44	11.45%	131	34.11%
Singing	200	52.08%	100	26.04%	60	15.62%	24	6.25%
Observing	160	41.67%	140	36.46%	45	11.71%	49	12.76%
Clapping of hands	129	33.59%	128	33.33%	39	10.16%	88	22.91%
Average %		34.84		32.24		11.61		21.32

Results as shown in Table 3, indicates that 34.84 per cent of the respondents participated in Mgba to a high extent, 32.24 to a moderate extent and 21.32 to a very low extent. 52.08 per cent participated in singing, 41.6 per cent in observing, and 33.59 were clapping hands during Mgba in Ugwueke community.

Table 4: Chi Square Summary of Analysis regarding age difference in extent of participation in traditional recreational activities in Ugwueke community

Variables	N	HE	ME	LE	VLE	x ² cal	df	x ² tab	Decision
Age		O(E)	O(E)	O(E)	O(E)				
0-39	182	76(72.0)	40(28.4)	28(31.2)	38(54.9)	7.815	3	10.41	Rejected
40-above	202	76(79.9)	20(31.5)	38(34.7)	56(61.0)				

Data in table 4 show that calculated value of 10.41 is greater than table value of 7.815 at the degree of freedom of 3 at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. In other words extent of participation in traditional recreational activities of Ugwueke community is dependent of age.

Discussion

The findings in table one indicated that the mostly engaged activity by Ugwueke community during Ibuzo is observing. This was followed by clapping of hands, cutting of grasses and packing of grasses. While the least engaged activity was blowing of whistle with 2(0.52%). The reason for this is not far-fetched. This is a recreational activity that all males who have attained age of forty are expected to go through. Those who go through it are seen as responsible and matured men. This is in line with the findings of Golder, (2021), who indicated that engagement in traditional practices has a lot to do with age; which is important in village community where various unions (associations) are formed based on age grade

The findings in table two indicated that the mostly engaged activity by Ugwueke community during Ikwota iyi is receiving swimmers with respondents. This was followed by singing with, observing and blowing of whistle, while the least engaged activity was swimming. This is due to the fact that igu iyi can be engaged in by people who are skilful in swimming; it is also restricted to certain age limit. That is to say that skill has significant role in igu iyi recreational activity This is contrary with the findings of Omolawon and Ibraheem (2011), that indicated that health status and skill level were not significant determinants of academic staff members' engagement in leisure sports.

The findings in table 3 indicated that the mostly engaged activity by Ugwueke community during Mgba is singing. This was followed by observing, clapping of hands and wrestling, while the least engaged activity was beating of drums. The extent at which wrestling is participated was not surprising because it is not always done by everyone yet attracts too many audience/spectators. As such it is a heroic activity. This is in line with findings of Ngoka (2007) who stated that recreationists (tourists) are attracted to tourism potentials which may include the natural sceneries of river, culture and custom of Nigerians. Agreeing with this view, Nwanne (2017) claimed that the richness and diversity of Nigerian culture has always been touted as significant reason why tourism should be a major foreign exchange earner for the country.

The findings in table 4 tested the hypothesis that extent of participation in traditional recreational activities of Ugwueke community is independent of age. Data in table 5 shows that calculated value of 10.41 is greater than table value of 7.815 at the degree of freedom of 3 at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. In other words extent of participation in traditional recreational activities of Ugwueke community is dependent of age. This is in line with the findings of Anyadiegwu (2019), who indicated that based on age ; there were statistically significant variations in secondary school students' understanding of participant safety precautions, facilities and equipment, and activities

Conclusion

Based on the findings and the discussion of the study it was concluded that there were high level of participation in almost all the recreational activities of Ugwueke community in Bende local government area of Abia State Ikwota iyi and Mgba, except in Ibuzo which is participated at very low extent. It was obvious that extent of participation in traditional activities of the community is dependent of age.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the discussion and conclusion thereof, the following recommendations are hereby presented

1. The community recreation planners should encourage the members to continue to participate fully in all the recreational activities so that they will not go into extinction
2. There should be forum such as workshop and seminar to enlighten the community on the need to involve everybody in the recreational activities irrespective of age so that everybody will participate

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