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Towards Improving Participation of Students with Hearing Impairment in Leisure and Recreational Activities for their Social Adjustment in Nigeria

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Abstract

Participation of students with hearing impairment in leisure and recreational activities in Nigeria is very low, due to some social and attitudinal factors. This has contributed to their low level of social adjustment. This paper examined improving participation of students with hearing impairment in leisure and recreational activities in Nigeria. The concepts of hearing impairment, leisure and recreational activities, as well as, benefits of leisure and recreational activities to students with hearing impairment, guidelines for improving participation of students with hearing impairment in leisure and recreational activities and barriers to their participation were also examined. Recommendations were given based on the issues raised in the paper.

Keywords: Leisure activities, recreational activities, social adjustment, Students with hearing impairment

Introduction

Students with hearing impairment are often seen by some sectors of the society as not being able to derive the same pleasure from leisure and recreational activities as their peers with normal hearing, due to hearing and communication barriers, hence they are discriminated against when it comes to participation in activities such as, games, drama, dance and sporting activities. In most cases, they are often isolated and considered inferior. Also, some sectors of the society consider them as accursed group; others subject them to various abuses that cumulatively make them bitter against the society. It is essential that the students with hearing impairment be given the opportunities to interact favourably with their environment, as well as, accept and live positively with their hearing impairment. Thus, the smooth interaction refers to the extent to which the individual's needs are satisfied, usually with the implication that maximal or optimal need satisfaction depends on a satisfactory relationship with the environment. This entails interaction with our physical or social surroundings (Richard, 2003) in (Isaiah, 2011).

Obviously, the students with hearing impairment are capable of competing with their normal hearing counterparts because they are in no way different from them, in terms of, their intellectual abilities, strength and physical abilities. This means that they can participate in leisure and recreational activities like basketball, skating, chess, football, dance and swimming like their counterparts who are with normal hearing.

Recreational activities are essential parts of human life that exists in different forms which are not only shaped naturally by individual interests, but also by the surrounding social environment. Recreational activities can be communal or solitary, active or passive, outdoors or indoors, (Rechner, 2010). Some recreational activities are meant to serve as hobbies. These are activities which are done for pleasure on regular basis. A list of typical activities could be almost endless including most human activities, a few examples being reading, playing or listening to music, watching movies or television, gardening, hunting, sports and travelling. However, some recreational activities such as gambling, or delinquent activities may violate societal norms and laws (Bruce, 1995). Public space such as parks, beaches and other tour centres are essential venues for recreational activities. There is the need to educate the public about the need to integrate the students with hearing impairment into the society through full participation in societal activities. This will enable them to have high sense of belonging and reduce or totally eradicate all forms of discriminations from the members of the public. Leisure and recreational activities are capable of helping the students with hearing impairment to socialize with their peers who are with or without disabilities as well as other members of their communities. Their involvement in recreational activities will equally afford them the opportunity to live healthy lives and adjust favourably to their environment.

Adjustment refers to the holistic adaptations of an individual to the environment (Richard, 2003) in Isaiah (2011). It involves several spheres of activities such as within family, school, work-place and self. Hence, psychologists have come up with different types of adjustment like social, psychological, educational and marital. In other word, adjustment cuts across every area of human endeavours. Psychologists often make use of the term adjustment to describe various types of social and interpersonal relations in the society. Therefore, adjustment can be referred to as the reaction to the demands and pressures of a social setting and imposed upon the individual. Social adjustment is an attempt made by an individual to address the standards, values and desires of a society, so as to be accepted. From the foregoing, it is imperative that students with hearing impairment adjust to their environment through leisure and recreational activities. This will in no small way improve their sense of belonging to their environment.

Students with Hearing Impairment and Leisure and Recreational Activities

Students with hearing impairment are those who have hearing loss ranging from mild to profound. They fall within hard-of-hearing to those who are totally deaf. It is obvious, that most people believe that they are not capable of participating in leisure and recreational activities, as a result of their hearing impairment and communication barriers. This may due to the fact that most games involve the communication of rules and regulations. Although, Lauren (2015) submits that people with hearing impairment enjoy recreational activities just as the rest of the members of the community. They need them even more than we do in order to combat their isolation and lack of independence that often result from their disabilities. Being physically

active can help to improve one's health and well-being. This can also prevent secondary medical conditions. It is particularly important that people with hearing impairment devote some time to leisure and recreational activities because they can improve their quality of life (Kurkova, 2016).

Leisure and recreational activities are those activities which are done to rest or relief mind and brain from being too stressed. In essence, leisure and recreational activities refer to all those activities that people choose to do to refresh their bodies, mind and to make their spare time more interesting and enjoyable (Queensland Department of Education, 2010). They also refer to free time activities in which people can engage apart from their everyday responsibilities (work and domestic tasks) to rest, relax and enjoy themselves. It is during leisure time that people participate in recreation and sporting activities. Recreation is about activities, pastimes, and experiences which are freely chosen. They are usually undertaken in free time and produce feelings of well-being, fulfillment, enjoyment, relaxation and satisfaction.

Leisure can also be viewed as activities that people engage in during their free time. They are not work oriented or that do not involve life maintenance tasks such as housecleaning or sleeping. Parent, Rousseau & Siemiatycki (2010) see leisure as the activity that we engage in for various reasons such as relaxation, competition, or growth and may include reading for pleasure, meditating, painting, and participating in sports. Leisure time is residual time. Some people argue that it is the constructive use of free time, while many view free time as all non-working hours. Only a small amount of time spent away from work is actually free from other obligations that are necessary for existence, such as sleeping and eating.

One perception is that leisure is just “spare time”, time not consumed by the necessities of living, another holds that leisure is a force that allows individuals to consider and reflect on the values and realities that are missed in the activities of daily life, thus being an essential element of personal development and civilization (Bruce, 1995).

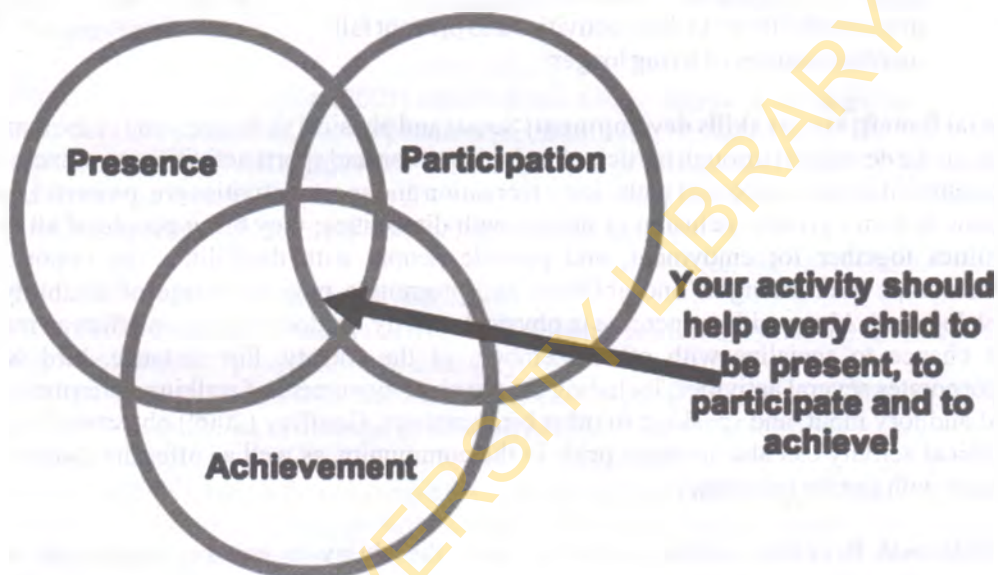
Strategies for Improving Participation of Students with Hearing Impairment in Leisure and Recreational Activities

Leisure and Recreational activities for children with hearing impairment should be properly coordinated, monitored and guided so that the children will enjoy the activity and to avoid or minimize injury. The followings are some useful guidelines for improvement:

- good communication
- the specific needs of each child should be provided.
- there should materials adaptation to meet the need of every child
- the children should to taken round the playground, showing them lines and marks on the playground
- Give them instructions and rules of the activities.
- The students may need to be trained to acquire some skills before they can participate in some activity, if the students cannot acquire the skills, then it is better not to allow such students to participate in the activity
- Interpret the meaning of signs and symbols on the playground for them since they can only understand visual instruction made with symbols.

Children with disabilities are often excluded from activities that other children take part in. These include, making friends, playing with friends, having fun, sports and other recreational activities. They are often excluded from many of the things that help children develop and give them opportunities to reach their full potential. Yet they have the same right to be included in these activities as all children. Each child we work with is unique. By recognising the individual needs of every child, we will be able to offer the same quality of education and instruction that all children need and have a right to.

Fig. 1.: Increasing Participation of Students with Disabilities in Leisure and Recreational



Source : UNICEF (2013)

From fig. 1, it is clearly shown that Activities are not inclusive if children with disabilities are just physically attending the school or activity. Inclusion is about providing the opportunities for all children to be present, to participate and to achieve. This means that individuals with hearing impairment should be give opportunity to fully participate in all leisure and recreational activities in their schools.

Benefits of Leisure and Recreational Activities

These benefits are particularly important results of participation in out-of-school time (OST) programmes. Participation in leisure and recreational activities can have many benefits for both the individual and community. These benefits include:

Physical/Health Benefits: Leisure and recreational activities have enjoyable and effective way of improving health and well-being; they can relieve stress, increase fitness, improve physical and mental health, and prevent the development of chronic diseases, such as, heart disease. Regular outdoor activity provides a number of physical health benefits, including reduced arthritis pain, weight loss and lowered risk of diabetes, certain cancers, osteoporosis and

cardiovascular disease. Getting 150 minutes of moderate exercise such as, biking or brisk walking, or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week such as, hiking or cross-country skiing-help maintain a healthy weight and reduce risk of chronic disease. Unites States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2010) found a correlation between access to outdoor recreational activities and overweight and obesity. Also, regular physical activities can help to:

- reduce risk of cardiovascular disease
- reduce risk for type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome
- reduce risk of some cancers
- strengthen bones and muscles
- improve mental health and mood
- improve ability to do daily activities and prevent fall'
- increase chances of living longer.

Social Benefit and/or skills development: Social and physical skills are some of the many skills that can be developed through participation in recreation and sports activities; awareness raising, reduction of stigma and social inclusion – recreation and sports activities are powerful, low-cost means to foster greater inclusion of people with disabilities; they bring people of all ages and abilities together for enjoyment, and provide people with disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths and abilities, and promote a positive image of disability; skills development. Along with an increase in physical activity, outdoor recreation offers an individual the chance to socialize with other members of the society. For instance, bird watching incorporates several activities, including the physical movement of walking, interpreting visual and auditory input, and speaking to other birdwatchers. Geoffrey (2009) observes that outdoor physical activity can also increase pride in the community, as well as offer the chance to meet people with similar interests,

Intellectual Benefits: Outdoor activities have the ability to enhance high level thinking, improved creativity and better self-esteem. Lepp & Jefferies (2012) opine that natural settings rejuvenate and calm the mind, improve outlook and increase positive affect. In contrast, artificial environments may cause feelings of exhaustion, irritability, inattentiveness and impulsivity, according to resources for the Future. Taylor and Kuo (2009) reported that 20-minute walks through natural settings lead to improved concentration.

Empowerment: Recreation and sports activities can empower people with disabilities by positively influencing their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Emotional Benefits: Both physical and outdoor activities reduce stress, anxiety and depression. Spending time exercising in a park leads to an increase in positive moods, positive self-concept, confidence and a reduction in cortisol levels, a hormone released when the body feels stress. Similarly, increased access to green space for activities such as walking decreases stress, especially for children,

Barriers to Participation in Leisure and Recreational Activities by Students with Hearing Impairment

Access to participation in leisure and recreational activities by students with hearing impairment is very low when compared with that of their peers who are without disabilities. Many reasons

have been advanced for this ugly development. For instance, Kurkova (2016) submits that for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, the level of physical fitness might be lower than that of people without any disability. The reasons for this difference might be due to a lack of auditive information or communication problems during physical activities. In addition, Rimmer, Ming-De, McCubbin, Drum and Peterson (2010) point out that the degree of participation in physical activity among people with disabilities is affected by a multi-factorial set of barriers (architectural, social, policy and attitudinal).

The rate of participation in leisure and recreational activities among students with hearing impairment is low, despite the general awareness of the benefits of physical activity to people with disability.

World Health Organization (2001) reported that nearly everyone faces hardships and difficulties at one time or another, but for people with disabilities, barriers can be more frequent and have greater impact. WHO (2001) describes barriers as being more than just physical obstacles. Barriers are factors in a person's environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability. These include aspects such as:

- A physical environment that is not accessible.
- Lack of relevant assistive technology (assistive, adaptive and rehabilitative devices).
- Negative attitude of people towards disability.
- Services, systems and policies that are either non-existent or that hinder the involvement of all people with one disability or the other in all areas of life.

Often there are multiple barriers that can make it extremely difficult or even possible for people with disabilities to function. These include: attitudinal, communication, policy and social. Students with hearing impairment most times experience one or more of these barriers.

Attitudinal Barriers

These have to do with the negative attitude of members of the society to persons with disabilities. Negative attitude of the members of the society can hinder students with hearing impairment to participate in recreational activities. Attitudinal barriers include:

- **Stereotyping:** People sometimes stereotype those with disabilities, assuming their quality of life is poor or that they are unhealthy because of their impairments.
- **Stigma, Prejudice and Discrimination:** These attitudes may come from people's ideas related to disability as a personal tragedy that needs to be cured or prevented as a punishment for wrong doing or as an indication of the lack of ability to behave as expected in society.

Communication Barriers

One of the major barriers hindering the students with hearing impairment from participating in recreational activities is communication. WHO (2001) reported that communication barriers are experienced by people who have disabilities that affect hearing, speaking, reading, writing and or understanding and who use different ways to communicate than people who do not have these disabilities. For instance, auditory health messages may be

inaccessible to people with hearing impairments, including videos that do not include captioning and oral communications without accompanying manual interpretation, such as American Sign Language.

Policy Barriers

There are several government policies that are not favourable to persons with hearing impairment. Policy barriers are frequently related to a lack of awareness or enforcement of existing laws and regulations that require programmes and activities be accessible to people with disabilities. Examples of policy barriers include:

- Denying qualified individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate in or benefit from government funded programmes.
- Denying reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities for participating in recreational activities or other areas of human endeavours.

Social Barriers

Social barriers are related to the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, learn or work – or social determinants of health that can contribute to decrease functioning among people with disabilities. When social barriers are present, individuals with hearing impairment are likely to have problem adjusting to their environment.

Conclusion

Leisure and recreational activities have the potentials to do more than keep children off the streets. They play important roles in creating an overall youth development that are capable of integrating the students with hearing impairment into the society. Therefore, leisure and recreational activities should be planned by the school to help young people with hearing impairment to develop the knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and behaviours necessary for successfully adjust to their environment.

Recommendations

Having known that leisure and recreational activities are very useful to health, social and physical development of persons with hearing impairment, the followings are hereby recommended:

- Recreation and leisure activities should be included in the curriculum for the students with hearing impairment so that it will be mandatory for school and the students to engage in one activity or the other.
- The government should fund and support leisure and recreational activities for students with hearing impairment.
- Students with hearing impairment should be encouraged to participate in one activity not only during school time but also when out of school.
- Leisure and recreational facilities should be provided for schools especially for children with hearing impairment in the schools. .

- Competitions should be organized on regular basis among students with hearing impairment; this will encourage them and arouse their interest in recreational activities that are beneficial to them.
- Experts in inclusive leisure and recreational activities should be made available in schools. This will increase the participation of students with hearing impairment in leisure and recreational activities.

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