

Socio-economic Characteristics of Outdoor Recreation Participants in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined the socio-economic characteristics of outdoor recreation participants in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers, Nigeria. A total of 2026 copies of questionnaire was distributed purposively to elicit information regarding outdoor recreation from the visitors found in the twenty seven recreation centers existing in the study area. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyzed data in this study using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 20.0 version. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the significant relationship between the frequency of visiting the recreation centers and income, age and gender at $p < 0.05$ significant level. Findings revealed that 48.6% of the respondents were married and more than 60% were within 21 and 40 years of age. Significant relationship existed between frequency of visiting recreation centers and resident's income, age, education and gender in the study area ($R^2 = 0.742$, $p < 0.05$). The study recommended among others that government should encourage females, widows and widowers to be participating actively in the recreation activities in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

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Keywords: Socio-economic characteristics, Outdoor, Recreation centers, Port Harcourt Metropolis

1. Introduction

Recreation generally is considered to be activities voluntarily undertaken, primarily for pleasure and satisfaction, during leisure time either because of the immediate satisfaction to be derived from it or because he perceives some personal or social values to be achieved by it (Torkildsen, 1986). Romild et al. (2011) noted that outdoor recreation can both be a public good or service available to residents and a private commodity prized by a market, often in the context of tourism. In the former case, provision of outdoor recreation opportunities is often perceived as a cost to society, and as such subject to political deliberations besides many other public commitments. In the latter case, outdoor recreation activities implies economic activities that may contribute to local development and job creation. Studies of Moore et al. (2003) and Manning (2004) affirmed that several overviews and comparative analyses of recreation frameworks exist in few places globally. Moore and Spires (2004) suitably employed evaluation framework for urban regeneration in which the broad programme embraces the trio dimensions of economic, physical and social objectives. Also, studies have identified the benefits of engaging in outdoor recreational activities to include promotion of healthy living; encouragement of social interaction; increased productivity; prevention of crimes and anti-social behaviours and enhancement of

the economic base of the society among others (Obi-Ademola, 2008; Simon, 2015). However, outdoor recreational facility availability has been shown to associate positively with youth physical activity levels (Ries *et al.*, 2011).

Socio-economic characteristics play key roles in determining the level of participation of individuals in recreating activities. Similarly, public participation is a core component of policymaking and implementation in democratic societies (Silverman, 2006). Thus, socio-economic characteristics have impacted the physical activity determinants across a number of the socio-ecological domains (Eime et al, 2013). It has been proven that people with higher socio-economic status are more likely than those with lower socio-economic status to participate in recreation activity especially in sport (Steenhuis et al., 2009). It is also evident that higher socio-economic status neighbourhoods have significantly more recreation facilities than lower socio-economic status neighbourhoods, thus providing more opportunities to be physically active (Estabrooks et al., 2003). There is an abundance of knowledge of the wide range of influences on participation in recreation activity (Eime et al., 2015). It was also observed that the determinants of participation can relate to intrapersonal, interpersonal, organisational, environmental, and policy factors (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis and Owen; 1999; Eime et al, 2015).

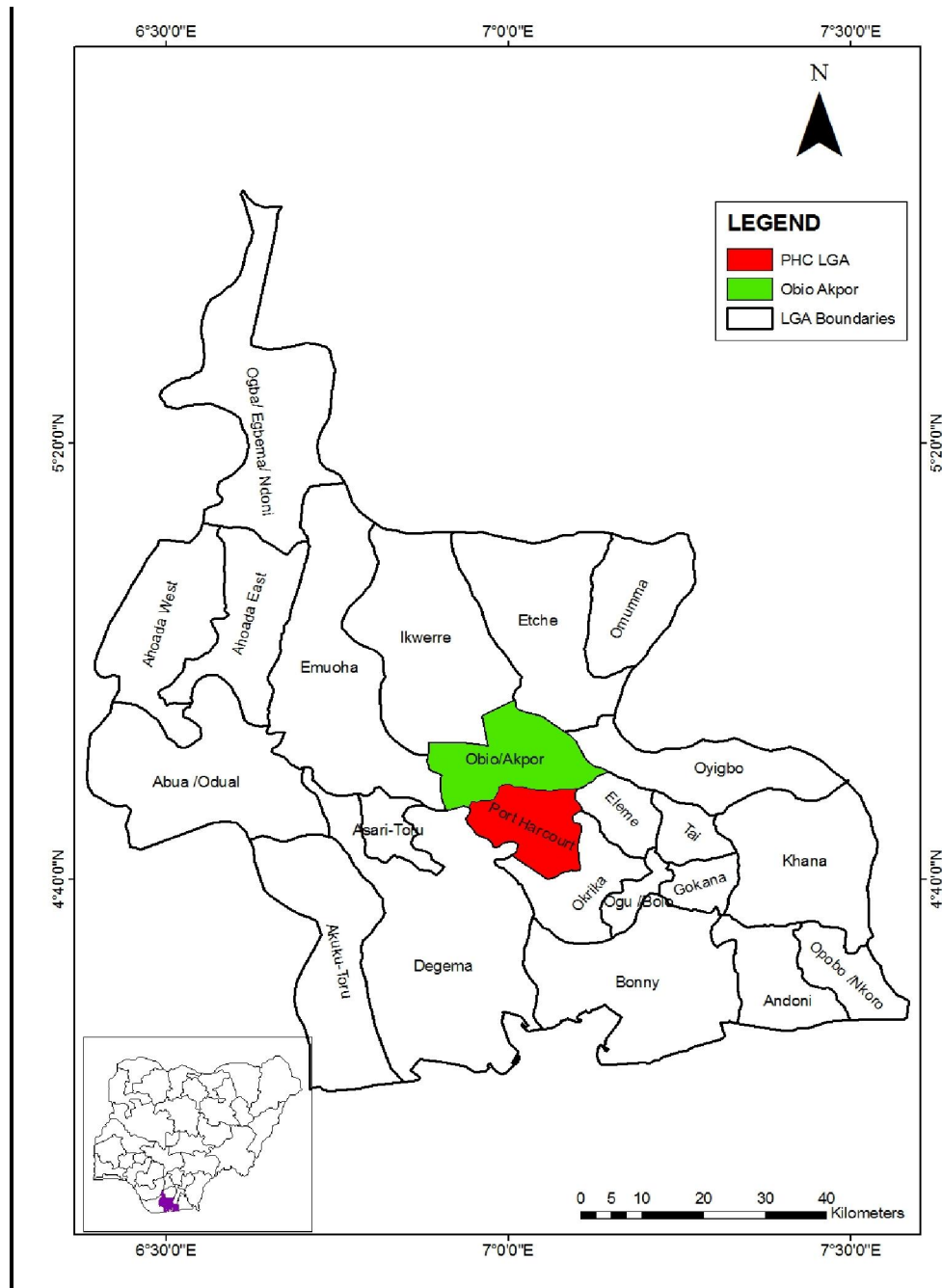


Figure 1: Rivers State Showing Study Area
Source: Rivers State Ministry of Planning (2016)

Motivations to participate in recreation activities are diverse but relatively stable over time (Manning, 2011), and so are the benefits from participation to individuals and society (Driver and Burnes, 1999). Therefore, increasing the visibility and accessibility of recreation centers such as parks can help maximize their value to the surrounding community (Active Living Research, 2010). Indirect paths from nearby homes into a park detract from the

proximity value boost and decrease the level of benefit that could be experienced. Similarly, parks bordered by roads are substantially more valuable to the surrounding neighborhood than green space only bordered by private lots. Access to open space can also play an important role in the magnitude of the effect (Active Living Research, 2010). Outdoor recreation opportunities are produced by supply, and when combined with demand factors from the

individual, they will result in an experience. The degree that such experiences meet certain expectations will result in a level of satisfaction and certain benefits to individuals and society. Over one hundred such leisure related benefits are identified by Moore and Driver (2005) within the categories of personal, social/cultural, environmental and economic benefits. Not all of these apply to participation in outdoor recreation activities, but put differently, few leisure benefits are uniquely dependent on a particular location, outdoor or elsewhere. Social correlates of outdoor recreation participation were in focus already in the 1950s and 60s when research on outdoor recreation started to build up as leisure became more generally available, and several studies have shown

that socio-economic characteristics only provide a moderate basis for predicting outdoor recreation participation (Kelly, 1980; Manning, 2011; Romild et al., 2011). Several studies have been done on recreation activities but little is still known on the description of socio-economic characteristics of the participants and the relationship of socio-economic characteristics on the frequency of attending recreation centers especially in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Thus, the present study examined the description of socio-economic characteristics of the recreation centers participants with a view to showing the influence of socio-economic characteristics on frequency of attending the recreation centers.

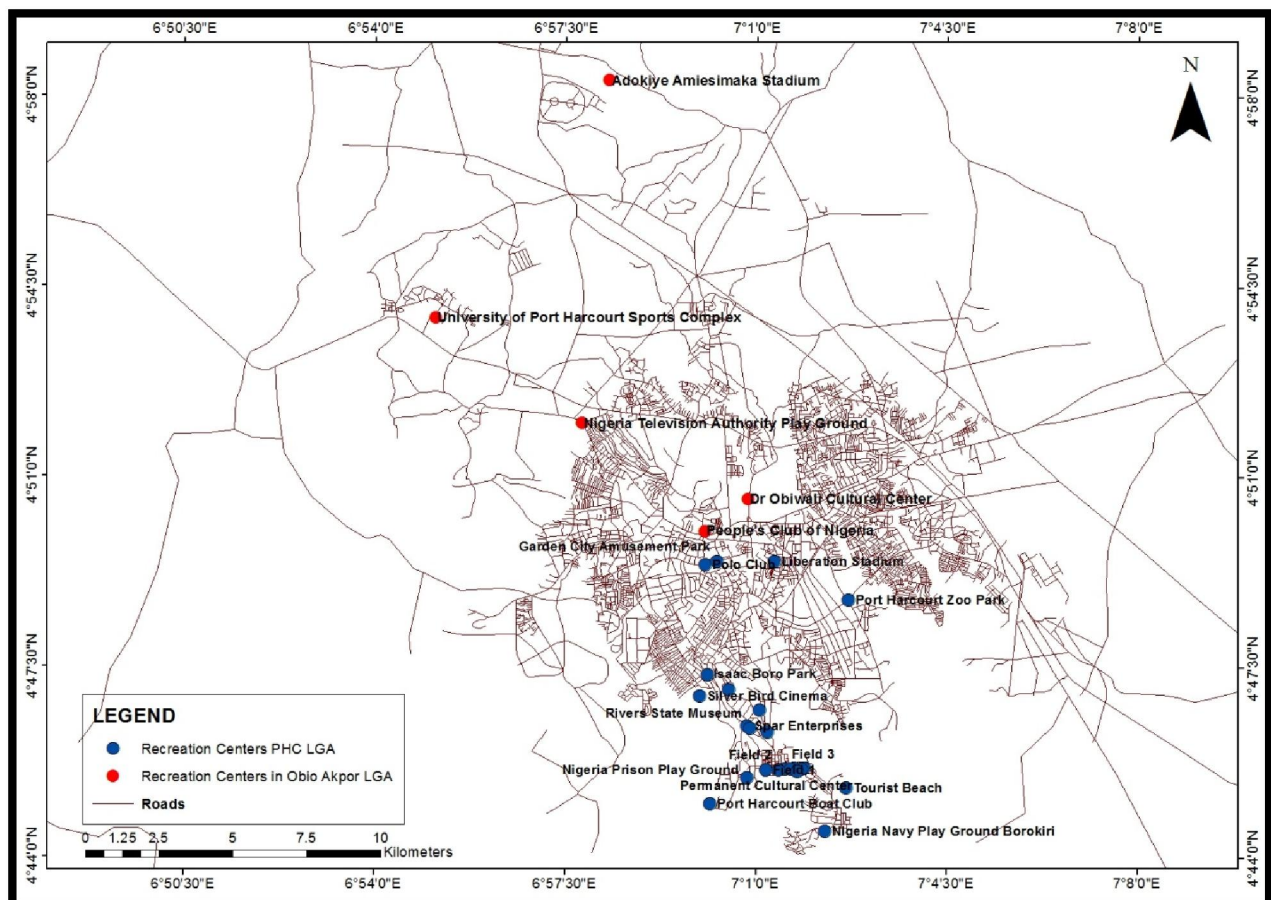


Figure 2: Study Area the Locations of Recreation Centers
Source: Rivers State Ministry of Planning (2016); Authors' Fieldwork (2016)

Methodology

The study was conducted in Port Harcourt Metropolis comprising of both Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas. Port Harcourt is located between latitudes 4° 45'E and 4°60'E and longitudes 6° 50'E and 8°00'E (Figure 1 and 2). The study area is influenced by urbanization or urban

sprawl whereby smaller communities have merged together and form megacity. The reason is due to high influx of people resulting to rapid growth of the population in the study area. This in turn is largely due to the expansion of the oil and allied industries, which have also attracted many, varied manufacturing industries. The population of the city therefore

increases on a daily basis. The study area enjoys tropical climate due to its latitudinal position. The tropical climate is characterized by heavy rainfall from April to October ranging from 2000 to 2500 mm with high temperature all the year round and a relatively constant high humidity (Eludoyin *et al.*, 2011). The relief is generally lowland which has an average of elevation between 20 and 30m above sea level. The geology of the area comprises basically of alluvial sedimentary basin and basement complex. The vegetation found in this area includes raffia palms, thick mangrove forest and light rainforest (Eludoyin *et al.*, 2011). The soil is usually sandy or sandy loam underlain by a layer of impervious pan and is always leached due to the heavy rainfall experienced in this area. The study area is well drained with both fresh and salt water. The salt water is caused by the intrusion of seawater inland, thereby making the water slightly salty.

A total of 2026 copies of questionnaire was distributed purposively to elicit information regarding outdoor recreation from the visitors found in the twenty seven recreation centers existing in the study area. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyzed data in this study using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 20.0 version. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the significant relationship between the frequency of visiting the recreation centers and income, age and gender at $p < 0.05$ significant level.

Results

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Participants of the Recreation Centers

The socio-economic characteristics of participants are shown in Table 1. The analysis shows that 61.0% were males while 39.0% were females. The finding showed that more males participated in the recreation centres than females. It is presented in Table 1 that 3% (60) had first school leaving certificate (FSLC) while 16.3% (330), 18.7% (380), 22.7% (460) and 39.3% (796) respondents had WAEC, NCE, HND and Bachelor's Degree (Graduate) qualifications respectively. The level of education of the attendants increased with higher educational status. The educated participants not only being aware of the benefits and the outdoor recreational centres, they also possess the income for effective demand. This is supporting the claim that outdoor recreation is a function of affordability and enlightenment which education can perform. In terms of marital status, 28.6% of total respondents were singles, while 48.6 were married and 8.6% were divorced. However, 9.0% were separated, 2.1% were widow and 3.1% were widower. The married families topped the table while the widow is seen at the bottom

with just 2.1%. Couples are happier and would want to keep their family together and in good health. Outdoor recreation is the panacea to these family bond issues.

It is observed that 2.9% of total respondents were of age less than 20 years while 36.6%, 31.1%, 19.7%, 8.9% and 0.8% respectively of the total respondents were of aged 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60; and above 61 years respectively. It is worthy to note here that age >20 accompany their parents mostly which affect their attendance. The active ages start from <21 where the graph has its peak and gradually drop down to those of <6lyrs who are now less active. Inactiveness reduction in outdoor recreation is seen as the year advances upward. Stress is particularly problematic for older adults, since aging is accompanied by physical, psychological, and social changes. Age-related changes from chronic disease and disability to care-giving responsibilities and of a loved one are potential stressors hence age is a constraint to active participation in outdoor recreation.

Participant's earning from N0.000 - N30, 000 monthly were just 2% of the total respondents, 59% earned between #31,000 and #60,000, 9% earned between #61,000 and #90,000. However, 13% of respondents earned between #91,000 and #120,000, 6% earned between #121,000 and #150,000 while 2% each earned between #151,000 and #180, 000; and # 181,000 and #210,000. Finally, 2% of the respondents earned between #211,000 and #240,000 monthly while 5% earned above #240,000 monthly. Findings thus revealed that those earning from #30,000 - #60,000 monthly have the highest percentage of the respondents recreating in the recreation centers. This may be attributed to their interest in recreating.

The analysis on household number of individual participant shows that 55.0% of the total respondents had the household range between 0 and 3, while 29.0% had household number ranging between 4 and 6. However, 11.1% had household ranging between 7 and 9; 4.1% had household between 10 and 12 while 0.8% had household above 12. It shows that the larger the family size the lesser their recreating capability. The moderate family sizes whose vehicles can easily accommodate also recreate indicating also less expense at the centers on the household head.

Influence of Socio-economic Characteristics on Frequency of Visits to Recreation Centers

The relationship of socio-economic characteristics (income, age and gender of respondents) frequency of visits to outdoor recreational centers can be observed in Tables 2 and 3. The combination of income, age and gender of respondents contributed 74.2% of variance in the frequency of visit to the recreation center and it was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ significant level (Table 4.1). An inspection of individuals predictors

revealed that income (Beta = 0.010, $p > 0.05$), age (Beta = 0.116, $p < 0.05$), gender (Beta = 0.272, $p < 0.05$) and education (Beta = 0.241, $p < 0.05$) are significant positive predictors of the frequency to visit the recreation center. The analysis thus showed that income was not significant; indicating that the variable does not contribute much to the regression model,

even though age, gender and education actually contributed to the model, but gender actually contributed more to the model because it has a larger absolute standardized coefficient.

The model for the socio-economic characteristics is written thus:

$$Y_{\text{Frequency of visit}} = 0.381 + 0.01_{\text{Income}} + 0.116_{\text{Age}} + 0.272_{\text{Gender}} + 0.241_{\text{Education}} + 0.022 \quad (R^2 = 0.742; p = 0.017)$$

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Participants

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	1236	61.0
Female	790	39.0
Total	2026	100.0
Educational Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC)	60	3.0
Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE)/National Diploma (ND)	330	16.3
Higher National Diploma (HND)	380	18.7
Bachelor's Degree (BSc)	460	22.7
MSc/Ph.D.	796	39.3
Total	2026	100.0
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	580	28.6
Married	985	48.6
Divorced	174	8.6
Separated	183	9.0
Widow	42	2.1
Widower	62	3.1
Total	2026	100.0
Age (Years)	Respondents	Percentage (%)
>20	59	2.9
21-30	741	36.6
31-40	630	31.1
41-50	400	19.7
51-60	180	8.9
Above 60	16	0.8
Total	2026	100
Income (Naira (#))	Respondents	Percentage (%)
0.000- 30,000	40	2.0
31,000-60,000	1195	59.0
61,000-90,000	182	9.0
91,000-120,000	263	13.0
121,000-150,000	122	6.0
151,000-180,000	40	2.0
181,000-210,000	40	2.0
211,000-240,000	40	2.0
Above 240,000	102	5.0
Total	2026	100
Household Number	Frequency	Percentage (%)

0-3	1114	55.0
4-6	588	29.0
7-9	224	11.1
10-12	84	4.1
Above 12	16	0.8
Total	2026	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2016

Table 2: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df	d12	Sig. Change	
1	.861 ^a	0.742	.742	.26082	.742	1941.049	3	2023	.000	.017

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Age, Income, Education

b. Dependent Variable: Frequency of Visit to Recreation Centers

Table 3: Individual Contribution of Predictor to Regression Model

Model	Understandardized Coefficient		standardized coefficient Beta	T	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.381	0.022		17.375	0.000		
Income	0.010	0.011	0.034	0.889	0.374	0.087	11.460
Age	0.116	0.017	0.239	6.913	0.000	0.106	9.400
Gender	0.272	0.015	0.605	18.631	0.000	0.121	8.267
Education	0.241	0.034	0.505	14.232	0.001	0.114	6.234

Discussions

Married were the dominating respondents in terms of marital status. This is contrary to the study of Simon (2015) which reported that singles to be the dominating type of marital status in Ibadan Metropolis. It can be inferred from the present study that the bulk of the surveyed population was teenagers and pre-adult population who are expected to be more active in recreation activities. The males were higher than females while the educational level attained by majority of the respondents was Bachelor's degree. These findings are in agreement with previous studies like Simon (2015). Majority are Bachelor's degrees because of the existing academic communities present in Port Harcourt Metropolis. These included University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, University of Education, College of Arts and Sciences and Polytechnics.

The multiple regression analysis shows that education, income, age and gender jointly showed significant relationship with the frequency of visits to the recreation centers. However, education, age and gender only showed significant relationships with frequency of visits to the recreation centers individually. It was reported in Romild et al (2011)

that education had a positive effect on participation rates in the recreation activities where it was shown that people with education above the compulsory school are more likely to go walking, hiking and jogging generally. Also, people with a university degree are characterized to be more likely into sailing, wind-surfing, surfing, ice-skating, kayaking, canoeing, cross- or back-country skiing, jogging, running in nature, mountain biking, downhill skiing, walking for pleasure or physical activity, hiking on trail outside the mountain region, picnic, barbeque, outdoor bathing in lake/sea and golf. It is revealed in Pan et al. (2009), Federico et al. (2012), Kamphuis et al. (2008) and Walters et al (2009) that a broad association existed between socio-economic status and levels of physical activities and sport while Eime et al (2015) also corroborated that there is positive overall association, both for any recreational physical activity participation in a 12- month period and for regular participation in some form of physical activity over that period. More et al (1990) also reported that education exerted a significant influence on mean participation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has examined the socio-economic status of the participants at the recreation centers in Port Harcourt Metropolis whereby more males were found and singles and married people dominated the recreation centers. The study also concludes that education, age and gender significantly influenced the level of participation in the recreation activities in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study therefore recommends that females, widow and widowers should be encouraged to participate in the recreation activities. Moreso, individuals with educational level lower than Bachelor's degree should be advised to intensify efforts to further their studies for them to have wider horizons with respect to education.

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