



FUNDAMENTALS OF RECREATION

Theories and Practice

Edited by
P. B. Ikulayo

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Personal and Physiological Contributions of Recreation

Grace O. Olinwa, Ph.D.

Introduction

In homes and factories and even on farms, machines now supply the power for most work. Machines have virtually eliminated the necessity of extensive walking, running, lifting or climbing in some countries. For example Television holds people in captive idleness for an average of 22 hours a week. Further electrical devices, gasoline engines and computers are able to perform work, so extensively and rapidly that the uses of the physiological systems of the human body have been greatly diminished.

Recreation represents a fusion between play and leisure. Historically, recreation was often regarded as a period of light and restful activity, voluntarily chosen, that permits one to regain energy after heavy work and to returned to work renewed to have the potential for being pleasant, rewarding, (and) creative and that both may represent serious forms of personal involvement and deep commitment. (Kraus, 2001)

Recreation is intended to restore us to wholeness, to health, for whatever purposes we may have. We do not recreate only to work. We recreate to live. Recreation is itself a part of living and has its own value to us. That element of restoration for whatever we consider important, including ourselves is one part of recreation. Recreation has purposes and is organized for social ends. It is not just "for its own sake" (Kelly, 2000).

The tasks of daily living does not provide enough vigorous exercise for many people to develop and maintain a satisfactory level of cardiovascular fitness, good muscle tone or the recommended body weight. Inactivity combined with poor personal health practices on the part of many could cause a massive nationwide physical fitness problem.

An important aspect of leisure is the maintenance of a sense of physical well being through sporting activities. Another component is the recreative process through which man seeks to refresh himself and relax his or her body. Physical activities will bring about changes in the various system of the body which leads to adaptations of the various organs in the human body. This consequently enhance:

- i. Cardiovascular endurance
- ii. Muscle condition
- iii. Body weight
- iv. Physical appearance

Benefits of Active Recreation

Research supports the fact that regular participation in vigorous exercise can slow down the rate of physical deterioration and bring about the following benefits.

- (a) The greatest benefits of maintaining physical fitness is the degree of independence it affords. There is a great psychological and financial advantage in having the ability to plan and exercise without depending on relatives, friends or hired help. This is a form of personal freedom worth exercising for.
- (b) Physical activity is as important as diet in maintaining proper weight. Overweight has a serious detrimental effect on overall well-being. It is related to several chronic diseases, shortened life expectancy and emotional problems. Medical authorities now recommend that weight reduction be accomplished by a reasonable dietary controls.
- (c) Physically active individuals are less likely to experience heart attacks or other forms of cardiovascular diseases than sedentary people.
- (d) Exercise helps a person look, feel and work better. Various organs and systems of the body are stimulated through activity and as a result they function more effectively. Posture can be improved through proper exercises that increase the tone of supporting muscles. This not only improves appearance but can decrease the frequency of problems in the lower back.

Fitness Appraisal

The most important aspect of physiological contributions of active living are:

- i. Cardiovascular endurance
- ii. Proper body weight
- iii. Muscle conditioning

Cardiovascular Endurance

One of the best indicators of cardiovascular endurance is the amount of oxygen the body can use, because this shows the oxygen utilization capacity of the cells. This characteristic can be measured accurately in a laboratory using treadmill or bicycle ergometer with the proper measuring devices. It is obvious that such cumbersome laboratory procedures are time consuming and inaccessible to the masses. Therefore simpler but less exact testing method have been devised, the best of which is Copper's 1.5 mile is applied to cooper interpretation table and the fitness level is read from the table. Despite the simplicity and ease of administration, this field test is highly accurate when compared to laboratory measurements. By this method an individual can quickly assess the cardiovascular fitness category for himself or anyone else, and by repeating the test periodically he can determine the direction and rate of change of his fitness.

Preserving Cardiovascular Health

Of all fitness-related aspects of active recreation, maintaining cardiovascular health takes the highest priority. Even though Americans were known to have more coronary attacks than the people of any other nation, with heart and circulatory system diseases claiming nearly a million lives each year, some Nigerians have been known to die of cardiovascular diseases. The continuing rise in the number of such deaths is believed to have been partly caused by the fact that more people are living in the age when degenerative vascular disease becomes more of a threat. Physicians have also noted, however, an alarming increase of mortality from cardiovascular illness among comparatively young adults, especially males.

Muscle condition

Muscle condition include status of strength, endurance and tone, with strength being the primary component, the other two are natural by products of strength. Strength is the ability to exert force against resistance. Strength is not necessary only for sportmen and women and others who are required to do heavy muscle

work. A reasonable strength level can add to everyone's ability to deal more effectively with the rigours of everyday life and to be more effective in active pursuits. Adequate muscle conditioning result from living a generally active life or by doing specific exercises against sufficient resistance to stimulate the muscles to maintain the desired strength level.

The exercises to be performed can be in form of calisthenics, weight training or vigorous sport participation. The relatively few who want or need an unusually high level of strength must participate regularly in a structured strength training program based on the concepts of heavy load and progressive resistance.

The condition of the muscular system can be quite easily evaluated by the individual himself by making two kinds of observations.

- i. the tone of the muscles as indicated by proper shape and firmness
- ii. The relative amount of strength that is apparent compared to the amount that was available previously last year, five years ago or ten years ago. For example how many press-ups can you do now compared to how many you used to do?

Development of Fitness Characteristics

In order to develop and maintain an acceptable level of fitness it is necessary to use the physiological systems of the body regularly and to exercise them at a high enough level to stimulate the desired system.

Developing Cardiorespiratory Fitness

Cardiovascular endurance refers to the ability of the heart to continuously pump blood round the body and provide oxygen to the working cells, while they perform work for extended periods of time. This depends majorly upon the effectiveness and efficiency of the circulatory and respiratory systems. Activities that stimulate increased use to oxygen transportation and utilization are referred to as aerobic exercises. Examples of aerobic activities are: basketball, handball, jogging, swimming, running, vigorous walking and bicycling. As muscles utilize more oxygen with active participation there are changes which occur in the oxygen supply system and the result is increased cardiovascular endurance. This condition contributes to overall health and fitness.

Developing Muscular System

A reasonable level of muscular strength is important in many occupations as well as in child bearing, housework, school work and recreational activities. In daily schedules that require vigorous pursuits the overall effectiveness of the body depends largely upon the condition of the large muscles of the legs, trunk and arms.

The most effective method of achieving strength gains is to follow a well-designed programme of progressive resistance exercises. However, such programme is not necessary for most people because they do not want optimum strength gains, but only a reasonable well-developed muscular system with a medium level of strength. This can be achieved through regular active participation in vigorous and semi vigorous activities, or by regular involvement in a variety of calisthenic exercise.

Women Teenagers and Muscle Development

Women and teenagers in particular are often fearful that muscle training will produce unsightly bulging muscles. Research indicates that this is not so. Inherent differences of males and females, such as the secretion of hormones, testosterone and estrogen, along with morphological characteristics determine femininity and masculinity - not physical activity. Girls and women are advised to put away fears that regular active participation or even structured to put away fears that regular active participation or even structured muscle conditioning programmes will influence their appearance in any way except beneficially.

The end results will be better muscle tone, a replacement of fatty tissue with firm muscles and improved overall fitness.

Achieving Desirable Body Weight

"You are what you eat" even though genetic information dictates the organization of the material that constitutes each of our bodies. The material derived from food, water, and air taken into the body constitutes the human body. This concept has vast implications for health and well-being. Through better nutrition we can improve the quality of life. Since we control the kinds and amount of foods that we eat, each individual is ultimately responsible for his body's nutritional state.

Nutrition has a significant effect on health because nutrients from foods are necessary for every heart beat, nerve sensation and muscle contraction. Not only does good nutrition contribute to prevention of deficiency diseases such

as scurvy and anemia but it also improves resistance to infectious diseases and plays a part in the prevention of chronic diseases. Good nutrition is a certain form of preventive medicine.

Obesity may increase the risk of developing some diseases or may aggravate diseases caused by other factors. For example, diseases of the heart and circulatory system are frequently associated with obesity; as high blood pressure and hardening of the arteries. In addition to contributing to health problems, obesity leads to general discomfort and inefficiency.

Side Effects of Obesity

Reduced life expectancy, coronary heart disease, obese people are prone to accidents, varicose veins, high blood pressure and general discomfort and obesity.

Control of Obesity

Scientists agree that physical activity plays a major role in weight control. Obesity among Nigerian teens and adults is gaining recognition in the area of research by World Health Organization. Numerous medical studies have documented the serious impact of obesity on people of all ages. Obesity is the condition that exist when the body is overloaded with excessive fat with inactivity or lack of exercise.

According to research reported in 1992 by the U. S. Department of Agriculture Nutrition Research Center, overweight teenagers are more like to suffer from such illness as heart disease, colon cancer & arthritis, and many die at a higher-than-usual rate, and when they reach their 70s their risk of death is twice that of those who were normal size as teenagers.

Apart from the psychological, sociological, and other factors that tend to promote obesity, one critical cause has to do with the sedentary lifestyle of many people. Regular, vigorous exercise is a key element in maintaining healthy body weight. For example, experts have calculated the exact number of calories burned per hour by various types of activities, such as walking, running, jogging, handball, swimming, tennis, or cycling. Jogging at the rate of 12 minutes per mile will burn up between 480 and 600 calories per hour. In contrast, watching television uses only 80 calories per hour just 15 more than sleeping.

Personal Values of Recreational Involvement

There are positive personal values in recreational involvement, as demonstrated by systematic research studies. In describing the major areas of human development, behavioural scientists use such terms as cognitive (referring to mental or intellectual development), affective (relating to emotional or feeling states), and psychomotor (meaning the broad area of motor learning and performance). Because these terms are somewhat narrow in their application, this chapter will instead use the more familiar terms physical, emotional, social, and mental development, together with a fifth category, spiritual experience.

Physical Values and Outcomes

Active recreational pursuits by few Nigerians III sports and games, dance, and even moderate forms of exercise as walking or farming has significant positive effects on physical development and health. The value of such activities obviously will vary according to the age and developmental needs of the participants. For children and youth, the major need is to promote healthy structural growth, fitness, endurance, and the acquisition of physical qualities and skills. It is essential that children learn the importance of fitness and develop habits of participation in physical recreation that will serve them in later life. This is particularly important in an era of electronic gadgets such as computer & television, labour-saving devices, and readily available transportation, all of which save time and physical effort but encourage a sedentary way of life.

Need for Recreation Motivation

Exercise alone, in the form of solitary aerobic activity or body conditioning, is not likely to become a long-term health measure if it lacks sociability or recreational atmosphere. In a study of adult fitness programmes in a Canadian industrial setting that the key factors associated with people continuing to engage regularly in group exercise had to do with the need for sociability, competition, and developing recreational skills. Thus, the most effective fitness activities are likely to be those with enjoyable recreational elements.

As a consequence, many colleges and universities, YMCAs and YWCAs, and company recreation programmes designed to serve employees have initiated fitness centers and programmes in order to promote active play and conditioning activities within a recreational framework example is Shell and Chevron Oil companies in Nigeria. In both the United States and

Canada, federal authorities have joined together with professional societies and educational agencies to stimulate public interest and involvement in physical fitness and sports. Federal government of Nigeria must put up infrastructures that will enhance jogging and exercise programme of its citizens.

Emotional Values and Outcomes

What are the specific ways in which recreation contributes to emotional well-being? Millions of people who function within a presumable normal range of behaviour tend to suffer from tension, boredom, stress, frustration, and an inability to use their leisure in satisfying ways. Mental depression afflicts many people. The feeling of engagement and control over one's life that may be achieved in leisure is critical to sound mental health.

Relaxation and Escape

Going beyond these broad categories of leisure benefits, it has been suggested that one of the most important psychological benefits of recreation is relaxation. Some people obtain this through physical activity, other from reading or other mental pastimes, and still others by dozing, daydreaming, or taking it easy. Relaxation, provides a respite from life's worries and pressures, relieves feeling of tension and fatigue, and restores mental efficiency. Most people need to relax after a day's work, following an emotional disturbing experience, or part way through a long period of involvement in one task.

Overcoming Loneliness

Another important contribution of recreation to mental health consists of its role in providing social contact, friendship, or intimacy with others. Loneliness is a widespread phenomenon: typically, as many as three-quarters of all college students reports being lonely during their first term away from home. Loneliness can have unpleasant and even life-threatening consequences and often is directed linked to alcoholism, physical illness, or suicide.

Stress Management

A closely related value of recreation is its usefulness in stress reduction. Stress is defined as the overall response of the body to any extreme demand made upon it, which might include threats, physical illness, job pressures, and environmental

extremes - or even such life changes as marriage, divorce, vacations, or taking a new job. Increasing amounts of stress in modern life have resulted in many individuals suffering from migraine or tension headaches, allergies, ulcers and ulcerative colitis, hypertension, and a number of psychosomatic illnesses, as well as accident proneness.

Prior to this time it was thought that the best approach to stress was rest and avoidance of all pressures, but today there is awareness that some degree of stress is desirable and healthful. Today, researchers point out that physical activity can play a significant role in stress reduction. Typically, people work off anger, frustration, and indignation by taking long walks or engaging in some kind of physical activity such as chopping wood. All of the body's systems - the working muscles, heart, hormones, metabolic reactions, and the responsiveness of the central nervous system - are strengthened through stimulation. Following periods of extended exertion, the body systems slow, bringing on a feeling of deep relaxation. Attaining this relaxed state is essential to lessening the stress reaction.

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