

## **Recreational Facilities in Schools: A Panacea for Youths' Restiveness**

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**ABSTRACT** This paper focused on the palliative effect of available and well applied recreational facilities in schools. The conceptual definition of 'recreation' was given as a guide to the analytical review of when, how and why some recreational materials possess restorative constituents capable of mitigating work-induced stress in the school environment. The searchlight of the analysis highlighted such salient constructs as; youth restiveness being a manifestation of anxiety, the dysfunctional effects of anxiety on the human body, the description of the physiological activities of the body that give vent to anxiety, the facilities and the recreational goals for which they are adapted to achieve. Recommendations as to how to optimize the use of recreational facilities to create useful pastimes for students was given.

### **INTRODUCTION**

'Recreation' can be defined as the refreshment of the mind and body after work, especially by engaging in enjoyable activities, or can be understood as the activity a person takes part in for pleasure or relaxation rather than as work. By this token any material or object designed to achieve this relaxation end can be tagged a recreational facility. The human organism expands in knowledge and experience by constantly interacting with his environment. Such interactions are conceptualized and made meaning of through unceasing sensory stimulations, which play a pivotal role in perceptual growth. However in an attempt to justify the palliative potentials inherent in recreational facilities, the following points will be highlighted.

- Youth Restiveness as a Manifestation of Anxiety.
- Dysfunctional effects of anxiety on the human body.
- Description of the physiological activities of the body that give vent to Anxiety
- Facilities And the Recreational Goals for which they are adapted to Achieve
- Conclusions and Recommendations

#### **Youth Restiveness as a Manifestation of Anxiety**

A sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce a desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths, fits the label of 'youth restiveness'. This is an

aberrative excess behaviour attribute that is always marked by violence and disruption of lawful activities. The Nigerian experience has come in considerable dosage and is largely describable as unpleasant. Death tolls have often been recorded each time youths go on rampage protesting some perceived injustice against their vested interest by the authority. The anomalous crisis intervention technique unique to the Nigerian police whose responsibility it is to quell riots is to shoot with live bullets aimed at protesters. The bullet hitting its target and the stampede that comes in its wake has always been responsible for the avoidable loss of life for which concerned parents and colleagues of the deceased have had to shed sorrowful tears at several instances of such macabre incident in our political history as a Nation.

The University of Ibadan 'Adepeju' saga of 1970 presaged the spate of student/police clashes, which for more than two decades thereafter continued to wreak harvests of death. Other landmark occurrences include the 'Ali must go' episode of 1978, which claimed the lives of so many young secondary school and University students that only the famous lack of proper record keeping tradition of our polity helped shield the wanton recklessness from international outrage, the 1981 Arogundade ritual murder - induced riot at the then University of Ife in which about twelve students lost their lives, the 1986 University of Lagos massacre in which six students lost their lives. It was the turn of Ahmadu Bello University, University of Lagos, University of Benin and the University of Ibadan

to lose students to police brutality in 1988 when protesting against the unlawful termination of the appointment of some lecturers including the then Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) president and the expulsion of some students from the University of Benin under the vice chancellorship of Professor Alele Williams.

Apart from the above-enumerated major encounters, there were minor skirmishes recorded in-between in which some lives were also lost. These brief accounts of landmark restiveness of Nigerian youths were unique in that they were campus based and were spurred by perceived injustice arising from impaired educational policy. Though not recorded officially but happened all the same, with far less destructive colouration, were spates of politically induced restiveness recorded during the pre 1960 Nigeria's struggle for political independence. Indeed, what can be regarded as the first officially floated political party in Nigeria was registered as National Youth Movement (NYM) in 1934 by Herbert Macaulay. This movement recorded an achievement in the direction of sensitizing other nationalists to the necessity of forming an organized political party to fight for the political independence of Nigeria. It must be emphasized that youths, particularly the young elites, most of whom have had contact with other advanced cultures of the world through education, constituted the mainstream of the party.

The outcome of the political restiveness that was brought to bear on the colonial government of the period went a long way in paving the way for the independence of Nigeria in 1960. And, in a way, was the precursor of rights awareness in Nigeria, because the general labour union strike of 1945 can be safely said to be borne out of the political sensitization flagged off by the NYM in 1934. It is significant to note that the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) formed in 1944, the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) formed in 1949, the Action Group (AG) formed in 1951, all had a youth wing. The purpose for a youth wing for all these parties and other political parties after them could not be unrelated to the need for these youths to deploy their restive nature to muzzle the parties into the consciousness of the electorates.

Other spontaneous restiveness on the part of Nigerian youths was witnessed again in 1963 when the Ahmadu Bello led government of

Nigeria signed a secret pact with the French government to have a nuclear weapon tested in the Sahara Desert. University students in the then three existing universities boycotted classes and were planning to embark on a more impactful restiveness to prove their point when the government backed down and revoked the pact. Another instance that bore a similar insignia was the June 12 1993 nationwide restiveness led principally by youths. This episode rudely impressed it upon the psyche of those in authority that Nigerians have matured politically and cannot be taken for granted where it concerns how they want to be governed. Indeed, the democratic dispensation ushered in, in 1998 was fostered by the 1993 youths' restiveness. It is also important to mention the economic induced restiveness of youths in the Delta region of Nigeria that has constituted for the government and the people around the region a serious headache for over a decade.

The above brief historical account of landmark cases of youths' restiveness in Nigeria has identified three major factors as possible causes of youths' restiveness. These are peer motivated jamboree-like excitement of being a student, jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideals and perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation. While these reasons are classifiable as belonging to the dichotomies of selfish/selfless motivating forces, the emotional experience attendant on them no doubt produces a great deal of anxiety in the rampaging youths.

### **Dysfunctional Effects of Anxiety on the Human Body**

The way the human body is constituted allows it to devise self-sustaining mechanisms that it depends upon to restore order when disharmony occurs between social expectations and reality. This reality may manifest when innate and experiential potentials, both combined, cannot be mustered to achieve desired set goals. The dissonance that is produced would automatically pave way for the onset of anxiety. Anxiety is the fearful anticipation of impending danger, the source of which is unknown or unrecognized.

The central feature of anxiety is intense mental discomfort, a feeling that one will not be able to master future events. The person tends to focus only on the present and on pursuing one task at a time. Physical symptoms of anxiety

include muscle tension, sweaty palms, upset stomach, shortness of breath, feelings of faintness, and a pounding heart. It happened that until the late 19th century extreme anxiety was routinely mistaken for cardiac or respiratory disorders. At that time Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) identified anxiety neurosis as a distinct diagnosis. Freud believed that anxiety arose when a person's aggressive or sexual drives—which he believed were instinctual—made them behave unacceptably, and that the anxiety acted as a trigger for defensive action to repress or redirect these drives. When the unconscious defensive maneuvers were unsuccessful, a neurotic anxiety reaction occurred.

Learning theorists see anxiety differently. Some believe that anxiety is learned when innate fears occur together with previously neutral objects or events; for example, an infant often startled by a loud noise while playing with a toy may become anxious just at the sight of the toy. Others stress the importance of imitative behaviour and the development of particular thought patterns. Psychiatrists, on the other hand, recognize several mental disorders in which anxiety is the main disturbance, including panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. They claim that panic attacks occur intermittently, whereas generalized anxiety is more chronic. In phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorders, fear is experienced when an individual tries to master other symptoms.

Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental disorders in the Western world and the most common in the United States, affecting at least 4 per cent of the population. Evidence suggests that such disorders occur in families. Drugs, psychotherapy, behaviour modification, and complementary medicine therapies such as relaxation training, alone or in combination, are often used in treating anxiety.

### **Description of the Physiological Activities that Give Vent to Anxiety**

If we define recreation as the refreshment of the mind and body after work, especially by engaging in enjoyable activities, or as the activity a person takes part in for pleasure or relaxation rather than as work, then subtle reference is being made to the need to reduce from the workload of the brain and the heart. Recreation provides for the brain the opportunity to relax.

While relaxing, less blood will be required to be pumped to activate the functioning of the nervous system. It should be mentioned that the autonomic nervous system directs all activities of the body that occur without a person's conscious control, such as breathing and food digestion. It has two parts: the sympathetic division, which is most active in times of stress, and the parasympathetic division, which controls maintenance activities and helps conserve the body's energy.

When the heart is challenged to deal with emergencies, the rate of heartbeat increases. This is to enable it pump more blood to the motor areas of the body that translate impulses to physical action. These are essentially the limbs controlled by the autonomic nervous system, being accelerated by the sympathetic system and depressed by the parasympathetic system. Nervous impulses originate rhythmically in a special nervous node, the sinus, or sinoatrial node, located in the right atrium near the superior vena cava. The impulses travel along a slender bundle of neuromuscular fibres, called the bundle of His, or the atrioventricular bundle, which, after a relay at the atrioventricular node, branches into two bundles, one for each of the ventricles. Through these specialized fibres the nervous impulse stimulates, at rapid speed and in a known orderly sequence, contraction of the heart-muscle fibres in keeping with the required needs of the limbs, that is; judging by the seriousness of the challenge.

A hormone known, as adrenaline is another route by which the physiological activities of the body can be described during anxiety spell. This hormone is secreted by the medulla of the adrenal gland. The pure compound, first isolated by the Japanese chemist Jokichi Takamine, is also known as epinephrine. It was formerly produced in the adrenal glands, but as a result of breakthroughs in medical science technology, can now be made synthetically.

Adrenaline is not necessary to the maintenance of life and is normally present in the bloodstream in minute quantities. In times of excitement or emotional stress, however, large additional quantities are secreted, exerting a marked effect on body structures in preparation for physical exertion. It stimulates the heart, constricts the small blood vessels, raises the blood pressure, liberates sugar stored in the liver, and relaxes certain involuntary muscles while contracting others.

The adrenal medulla cells also secrete a substance chemically related to adrenaline known as noradrenaline or levoarterenol. In general, the function of noradrenaline seems to be the maintenance of normal blood circulation. It is also the chemical agent responsible for the transmission of nerve impulses in one part of the nervous system. Large amounts of adrenaline and noradrenaline are produced by some tumours of the adrenal glands, resulting in a great increase in blood pressure experienced during anxiety attack.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF RESTIVENESS

In order to reduce from the pressure, which a considerable pumping of blood had put on the brain as a result of the individual's encounter with an unpleasant experience, some outlet must be found to dissipate the pressure. Often the favoured outlet is to engage in action, which in psychological parlance is referred to as the 'flight' or 'fight' impulse. Restiveness being a choice of reaction appointed to retaliate a behaviour considered deficient in quality, is classifiable as a form of defense mechanism, a terminology adopted by Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) to describe the personality measure embarked upon to explain the anti social impulse emanating from the human's subconscious which is controlled by the id.

Freud believed that there is a way that an equilibrium develops between drives, conflicts, and reality. Conflicts repressed into the unconscious are retained, but remain dynamic. From time to time they may overcome repression and re-emerge into conscious appreciation, precipitating anxiety or panic. To counteract this, the individual has to make various compromises by using defence mechanisms that become part of that person's character. Many examples of defence mechanisms include regression, displacement, repression, sublimation, etc. But the types pertinent to this discourse are known as projection and reaction formation, both of which have similar modes of manifestation.

**Projection:** This occurs when the individual ascribes his or her own unconscious desires to another person. Youths are generally governed by group dynamics while in school. They cultivate new habits that are in consonance with

the existing fad within the school, and conform to what they consider the group's collective position. Issues are given ideal interpretations, which, most often do not find any parallel in existing realities in their local domains. Hence, they tend to see less patriotism, crass opportunism, and selfishness as dominant attributes of the people in authority. In order to prove a point and attempt to effect a change consonant with their perceived ideals, they become restive, and through the use of force, put action to their feelings.

This was the case in 1984 when students of higher institutions in the country went on rampage to protest an alleged #2.8 billion oil money that was supposed to be missing from the accounts of the petroleum industry during the time General Buhari, the then Head of State, was heading the Ministry. This protestation brooked no explanation from the affected individuals and no official explanation tendered was reflected upon. Another more valid way of identifying the projection content of youths' collective impulse is to direct attention to how Student Union Governments (SUG) in Nigerian higher institutions are run. More often than not, allegations of embezzlement, misappropriation of fund, lack of a sense of accountability etc. has always dogged such governments. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the same students who condemn similar inadequacies in government functionaries perpetrate these atrocities.

**Reaction Formation:** This describes a situation where the individual adopts a pattern of behaviour directly opposed to a strong unconscious drive. Youths of all hues suffer from a carry over of the attention-seeking syndrome known as egocentrism, which characterizes most of the adolescents' social impulses. They like to be heard and be seen, they must lend their opinion forcefully to all national issues, including the ones whose rubrics are not too clear to them.

This manifested in reality in 1978, in the wake of the 'Ali Must Go' episode when Segun Okeowo, the then president of the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS), as a gesture of recognition for the entire Nigerian students by the then ruling oligarchy, was made a member of the Constitution Drafting Committee. A gesture considered rather ego massaging than necessity induced.

### Facilities and the Recreational Goals for which they are Adapted to Achieve

Brimming with energy that desires an outlet puts the youth among the most potentially positioned to excel in whatever pastime that catches their fancy. So long as these energies are managed by experts who can help provide a cost effective direction and an enviable outlet. Facilities required to make this job easier to tackle include the following; Clubs and Societies such as Youth Clubs, Play Schemes, the Scouting Association and Girl Guides, Theatre Clubs, Sports Clubs, Hobby Groups, and Religious Groups, are all part of the required facilities. Other leisure facilities and activities that can be provided are Sports Centres, Swimming Pools, Libraries, Arts Centres, Museums, Sports Grounds, Playgrounds, Community Centres,

Presented hereunder in the table are facilities and the end they can be directed to achieve.

<i>Facilities</i>	<i>Target Recreational Goals</i>
Youth Clubs	Relaxation by socializing, also enhances interpersonal relationship
Play Schemes and Theatre Clubs	Simulating life realities in a make believe manner that will make them acceptable
The Scouting Activities and Girl Guides	An international youth association that prepares youth for selfless service, both to fatherland and humanity
Sports Clubs	Coordinating the essential muscular organs of the human body for optimal psycho-motoric functioning
Hobby Group	Provision of alternative avenues to engage in extra curricular activities
Religious Group	Provision of Spiritual support, a therapy for humility and perseverance.
Sport Centre	Creation of a sports arena where many facilities will be concentrated for maintenance and proper monitoring.
Art Centre	Stimulation of the aesthetic sensibilities of youths
Libraries	Provision of reading materials that would activate the pursuit of hobby requirements, such as novel and magazine perusals.
Museums	Bridging the past with the present so as to be able to create a vivid imagination for the future through the appreciation of heirlooms and antiquities
Sporting Competitions	Evolve a healthy spirit of competition and create an avenue to let off steam, through such meets as interhouse sport, football tournaments, swimming, etc.
Controlled Leisure Centres	Provide a comprehensive recipe for mental - development focused relaxation for students.

Education-Related leisure activities such as evening classes. Other provisions that can be considered include; Controlled Leisure Centres, such as; health clubs, golf courses, cinemas, pubs and wine bars, theme parks, leisure goods, horse racing, casinos, discos, and many other such activities that are capable of providing a comprehensive recipe for mental development focused relaxation for youths.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubting the fact that only some and not all of the above-prescribed recreational facilities can be provided for use in our institutions of learning. Constraints of finance and other logistics would handicap a comprehensive provision of all the facilities. It should also be noted that most of the facilities require trained specialists to achieve their optimal essence. The type of educational curriculum that Nigeria inherited from the British colonial set-up made Physical and Health Education an integral part of school activities, to the extent that spanning the whole of the Nigerian Educational cadres, physical exercises and training was built into the school syllabus.

With the increased awareness of the importance of an active lifestyle, physical education is seen as laying the foundations in young people for long-term health and improved quality of life. Many educationists, administrators, policy-makers, and activity providers view physical education and sport as occurring at various levels. Introduction to the traditional major sports for most people usually takes place at school. As the range of sports opportunities widens, children increasingly encounter sports for the first time. Having been introduced to a sport, some become irregular participants, what is called the "recreation route", while others may join a club and strive to improve personal performance, the "performance development route".

The recreation route is what we are interested in here, but it should be mentioned that the performance development route has been the precursor of what decided a life occupation for most of Nigeria's international footballers and sports men and women, who today, are making waves in international meets. Part of the repertoire of the recreation route is using the advantage of the knowledge acquired from the

school-based physical and health education to develop the same recreational fancies later in life. These include the crave to excel as a cheerleader, a member of a supporters' club, leisure watching of tournaments as a pastime to overcome boredom and, fitness exercises to fight off obesity.

Recreational facilities provide several leeway for students to let off steam and become less stressed up. Being stressed up, either as a result of improper goal setting technique, or a perceived injustice in the public place, has always precipitated a feeling of frustration in this category of youths, a development that more likely than not is capable of predisposing them to take recourse to violence.

It should also be noted that academic activities can atimes become strenuous, hence the tendency for weak students to foment trouble that would force a break in the school calendar. To forestall this, students should be sensitized to the functional use and stress mitigating property inherent in recreational facilities. Educational planners should also relax academic schedules in a way that would allow students ample time for recreation. It will also be highly desirable if more sporting activities, such as inter house sport, inter collegiate or inter University sports, are organized from time to time so that pent up energies and emotions can be dissipated through

competitions. A conspicuous portion of the school library must be stocked with the latest novels collected both locally and internationally, and novel exchange clubs be encouraged to thrive. Television, Radio, Magazines and games must be provided in sufficient quantity for the use of resident students in schools that have boarding facilities. Similarly, it is of a paramount necessity for clubs, societies, departments and faculties within the school to arrange both educational and recreational excursion trips for their student members.

If the above efforts are made with commitment and sincerity by Educational planners and policy makers, the level of restiveness witnessed among students will be drastically reduced.

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