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# **PROBLEMS AND ISSUES RELATING TO PHYSICAL FITNESS IN AN URBAN SETTING**

**ADEFUYE, MICHAEL AYODELE**

Department Of Physical And Health Education

Michael Otedola College Of Primary Education,

Noforija - Epe

&

**DANSU, TONY**

Department Of Physical And Health Education

Faculty Of Education, Lagos State University, Ojo.

## **ABSTRACT**

In the olden days, being physically active was as natural as eating and sleeping, today most people are not physically active as most works are now being done by machines. Physical fitness is a must for everybody irrespective of age, sex, status and religion. However the same degree of fitness is not required by everybody. Despite high level of awareness about physical fitness, people still find it difficult to participate in physical fitness programme. This paper looked into the problems and issues relating to physical fitness in an urban setting: which include attitude of urban settlers towards physical fitness, lack of equipment and facility, inadequate fitness club / center and high cost of fitness centre, government attitude towards recreational centre, modernization, fear of injury and time. In order to develop good physical fitness habit, these problems must be addressed by both government and individuals in urban setting.

## INTRODUCTION

The Human body is designed to work when it is active. It adapt to nearly any level of activity and exertion. The more we ask o. our body (muscles, bones, heart, lungs) the stronger and more fit they become. However, the less we ask of them (muscles, bones, heart, anc lungs), the less they can do. When our bodies are not kept active, they begin to deteriorate. Bones lose their density, joints stiffen, muscles become weak and the ability of the cell to produce energy begins to degenerate. People go about their daily routine (eat, work, sleep) with little or no time, for physical activity. "Anyone who lives a sedentary life and does not exercise even if he eats good food and takes care of himself according to proper medical principles all his days will be painful ones and his strength shall wane" (Ryan, 1984).

The U.S. Surgeon General's report (1996) recommended that individual's should include a moderate amount of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week. The report suggested a goal of expending 150 calories a day, or about 1000 calories a week, in physical activity. It should however be noted that the same degree of physical fitness is not required for everybody, but there are general standards. It is erroneously assumed that physical fitness is therequirements for sportsmen and women and not needed as such by people who are not into sports. This assumption is wrong.

Orunaboka and Uduk (1994) opine that the demands of modern complex society make it increasingly necessary for individuals, regardless of gender to have the capacity for physical endurance. This goes to shows that physical fitness is a must for all, irrespective of age, sex, religion and socio economic status.

## CONCEPTS OF PHYSICAL FITNESS

Different professional see physical fitness from different angles based on their own understanding of physical fitness. Whichever way physical fitness is defined, it must encompass the following according to Stevenson, (1998).

- Psychological fitness - emotional stability
- Health - Physiology functions
- Body mechanics - performances in skills
- Physical anthropometry - a good muscular forms as well as proper body weight

Stevenson (1998) stated that fitness as a goal of physical education refers to the efficient development and functions of the various system of the human body such as the nervous, circulatory, muscular, skeletal and digestive systems.

Arogbonlo, Onekata and Danladi (2001) defined physical fitness as the ability of an individual to carry out daily tasks vigorously and alertly without undue fatigue and with ample energy to enjoy leisure time pursuits and to meet

unforeseen emergencies. Heyward (1994) sees physical fitness as the ability to perform occupational, recreational and daily activities without becoming unduly fatigued.

Surgeon General (1996) defined physical fitness as a set of physical attributes that allows the body, to respond or adapts to the demands and stress of physical efforts to perform moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity without becoming overly tired.

Physical fitness could only be developed through regular exercise. Exercise refers to a subset of physical activity, which is planned, structured, repetitive movement of the body designed specifically to improve or maintain physical fitness. Physical activity on the other and refers to any body movement carried out by the skeletal muscles and requiring energy (Stevenson 1998).

## **COMPONENTS OF PHYSICAL FITNESS**

Hockey (1993) and O'Neill (2000) assert that physical fitness is made up of health and performance related components. According to them, the health related components refer to those factors that ensure the development and maintenance of health and with the increase of the functional capacity of the body. These include. aspects of physiological and psychology functioning, which offers protection against degenerative disease. O'Neill (2000) further stated that the performance related fitness has to do with those qualities or functions that enable an athlete to compete effectively with greater power, speed, agility, coordination, balance and good reaction time etc. These according to hockey (1993) are more peculiar to athletes with high performance and even then it is specific to each event.

## **HEALTH RELATED COMPONENTS**

### **Cardio-Respiratory Endurance**

Getchell, Pippin and Varnes (1987) and Fahey, Inset and Roth (2001) defined cardio-respiratory endurance as the ability of the heart, lungs and blood vessels to deliver oxygen from the environment to the blood stream, the heart's capacity to pump blood, the ability of the nervous system and blood vessels to regulate blood flow, and the capability of the body's chemical. system to use oxygen and process fuels for exercise.

Cardio - respiratory endurance is a central component of health - related fitness because the functioning of the heart and lung., is so essential to overall good health (Getchell, Pippin and Varnes 1987; Fahey, Inset and Roth 2001).

## **Muscular Endurance**

Fahey, Inset and Roth (2001) defined muscular endurance as the ability to sustain a given level of muscle tension, that is, to hold a muscle contraction for long period of time or to contract over and over again. Muscular endurance is important for good posture and for injury prevention. Muscular endurance helps people cope with the physical demands of everyday life and enhances performances in sports and work. It is also important for most leisure and fitness activities.

## **Flexibility**

According to Graham, Hale and Parker (2001) flexibility is ability to move the joints through their full range of motion. Adequate flexibility allows for a full range of motion in the joint and is often limited by the amount of extensibility of the muscles, tendons and ligaments. Joints and muscles that are not flexible limit movement and add to the risk of injury (Getchell, Pippin and Varnes, 1987). Stretching exercise can help ensure a healthy range of motion for all joints.

## **Muscular strength**

Muscular strength is the amount of force a muscle or a group of muscles can produce with a single maximum effort (Graham, Hale and Parker, 2001 and Fahey, Inset and Roth, 2001). Strong muscles are important for the smooth and easy performance of everyday activities such as carrying buckets of water, lifting boxes, climbing stairs, as well as for emergency situations.

## **Body Composition**

Body composition refers to the proportion of fat and fat - free mass in the body. Healthy body composition involves high proportion of free fat mass and acceptable low level of body fat, adjusted for age and gender. (Fahey, Inset and Roth 2001). Fahey, Insel and Roth (2001) and Okuneye (2002) have shown that excess fat in the body predispose one to dangerous disease and chronic health conditions. The best way to add muscles is through resistance training, also known as strength training (Fahey, Inset and Roth 2001).

## **PERFORMANCE RELATED COMPONENTS OF PHYSICAL FITNESS**

### **Agility**

Hockey (1993) defined agility as one's ability to change direction with minimum loss of speed. It is the maneuverability of the body and its part with

accuracy. Adeloeye (2003) described agility as the combination of several athletic traits including strength, reaction time and speed of movement, power and coordination.

## **Speed**

Speed is one of those physical qualities for excellent performance in sports and it's needed to make athlete react fast or move their bodies or implements fast on the ground, in the water or in the air as the case may be (Hockey, 1993). Speed according to Hockey (1993) is the ability of an individual to be able to cover a given distance within the shortest time possible.

## **Power**

Lakomy (1994) defined power as the product of the applied force and the velocity at which that point of application is moving. Calstatela (2000) defined muscular power as a skill related component, which has to do with the maximal resistance that a muscle or muscles group can overcome in one attempt in the least amount of time.

## **Coordination**

Lakomy (1994) defined coordination, as the ability of an individual to control all the various senses during sport. performance. This component is essential to sports performance

## **Balance**

Balance according to Calstatela (2000), is the ability of body to maintain equilibrium. It is the ability of an individual to maintain a stable position even when under tension.

## **PROBLEMS AND ISSUES RELATING TO PHYSICAL FITNESS**

A number of problems are associated with physical fitness in urban setting these problems are:

1. Attitudes of urban settlers towards physical fitness
2. Lack of equipment and facility

3. Inadequate fitness club / center and high cost of fitness centre.
4. Government attitude towards recreational centre
5. Modernization
6. Fear of injury
7. Time

### **Attitude of Urban Settlers towards Physical Fitness**

It is a global concern that participation in physical activity is declining daily not only among adults but also among youths (Strydom, 2003). Passive entertainment, like video and computer games has to a large extent deprived the youths of regular physical activity.

In contrary, Otiono (1994) stated that in the technologically advanced countries, fitness has become a culture. The people understand the values of fitness and can determine that it is good for them; they do not require government intervention or television push before they engage in physical activities.

However, Okuneye (1996, 1997 and 2006) reported high level of awareness of physical fitness. Okuneye (1997) reported that only few people engage in regular physical fitness activities despite their high level of awareness and knowledge of health benefit. Okuneye (2006) reported that there were constraints that they think more of their job and they have poor habit of engaging in physical activities. Okuneye (2006) concluded that the problems of poor habit is the major impediments to regular participation in physical activities and that it is difficult to persuade many adults to regularly participate in physical fitness activities even when there is necessity for it because it has not been part of them.

### **MODERNIZATION**

Technological advancement has taken its toll on people's participation in regular physical activities. Being physically active should be as natural and necessary as eating and sleeping. This was true many years ago, when most people had to use physical labour in their daily lives, today much of these works are done by machines. Okuneye (2002) asserted that physical activity behaviour of people have been tremendously altered due to modernization or development in the society. This can be traced to contributions of advances in technology to sloth resulting from industrial revolution in the 19th century. Since this time, the need for man to be physically active in order to earn a living has continued to decrease. This is because powered vehicles and various machines are used to reduce the labour

required for cleaning, lifting, construction and maintenance work. Lately, the advance in computer and communication technology has added to reduction in daily expenditure of occupation tasks for many people.

### **Lack of Equipment and Facilities**

The role of equipment and facilities in physical fitness development of individuals cannot be over emphasized. In order to make possible the conduct of a complete physical activities and sporting programme for the people within a particular community, effective planning and provision of adequate facilities and equipment are very necessary. Awosika (1996) and Omolawon and Sanusi (2006) explained that the availability of facilities, equipment and opportunity to practice make possible recreational opportunities for individual during leisure time. Different type of activities require different facilities and equipment consequently any limitation of facilities create difficulties in presenting the desired variety of physical activities in the ideal environment for conducting sporting programmes.

Omolawon and Sanusi (2006) reported that facilities and equipment were significant determinants for non-participation of University of Ibadan Staff in sports and physical activities. When facilities and equipment are not available to people who want to develop fitness through such sports like basketball, volleyball, handball etc. such people tend to be discouraged.

### **Inadequate and High Cost of Fitness Club / Center**

According to Graham, Hale and Parker (2001), fitness club / centre and physical activity clubs provide additional physical activity for individual. Family physical activity night, fitness fairs and fitness / health checks bring family together to participate in physical activity as well as to learn the current information on fitness, physical activity and good health. Physical fitness club / center in Lagos for instance are grossly inadequate for the inhabitant of the State. The 2006 population census put the State population to over nine million and how many fitness clubs / centers are available for this large population? The situation is the same in almost all the urban center / setting in Nigeria.

The few fitness centers that are available are expensive and as such only few people could afford the cost of obtaining physical fitness programme.

Adogbeji and Ogbenetega (2006) reported a significant relationship between economic status of student and their participation in recreational activities.

### **FEAR OF INJURY**

Since injury could be sustained during physical activity, people may want to stay away from physical activity so as to avoid injury. In a study carried out by Onohwakpor and Eboh (2006) it was reported that fear of injury was one of the barriers to participation in physical activity. Okuneye (2006) stated that consideration should be given to the safety of performance area of adults.



Specific area that is free from hazards within the neighborhood or the community should be identified and most often they must ensure they get to the venue before they start any activity.

Okuneye (2006) further stated that injury should be avoided as much as possible in adults physical fitness programme as minor injury would easily discourage them and. drastically reduce adherence to the programme.

## **Government Attitudes towards Recreational Centers**

Government policies all over the world have the capacity to enhance or endanger the status of sports in that country. Due to the impact of sports on the generally of the people, government all over the world do endeavour to formulate policies that would promote sports development (Morakinyo 2002). Although sports policy exists in Nigeria but with little or no consideration to physical fitness programme or recreation. Federal, states and local government in Nigeria have physically lay out maps and on the map specific places have been set aside for recreational purpose. Almost all such parcels of land have either been sold to individual to build house or either the local, state or federal government have built "shopping complex" on this land and or converted to some other uses as refuse site, car parks or market. The estates in the urban setting are not left out, the sports facilities at Amuwo Odofin housing estate has been converted to night market and even in the afternoon, trading activity takes place. This situation could discourage people living in such areas in the urban setting from participating in physical fitness programme.

## **TIME**

Time is crucial in whatever one does or plans to do. People might be interested in physical activity but have limited time because of the demands of their job. Adeogun and Dansu (2006) reported, that marketers in Badagry area of Lagos State were willing to participate in exercise regularly, but the time consuming nature of their business and lack of sport and fitness facilities around the market were hindrance to their non - involvement in exercise. Mayo clinic staff (2004) had similar observation that people whose job's nature give little or no time find it extremely challenging to engage themselves in exercise. Mayo clinic staff (2004) suggested that such busy people need to make exercise convenient as much as possible and that professionals in the area of fitness should highly motivate such people to take up positive exercise behaviour. Buckley (1987) stated that employers could spend up to 60% of their working hours at work combined with family and other commitments; it is therefore not surprising that many people find little or no time to exercise.

## **CONCLUSION**

The role of physical fitness in the achievement of good health cannot be over emphasized. Physical fitness is a must for everybody irrespective of age, sex,

religion and socio - economic status. The health related component of physical fitness is very essential in view of its relationship to the overall health of an individual.

However, the same degree of physical fitness is not required for everybody and that's why Surgeon General Report stipulates 150 calories a day or 1000 calories a week to be expended on physical activity. Despite the importance of physical fitness many people still find it difficult to participate in regular physical activities and this could be as a result of their attitudes toward physical fitness, lack of equipment and facilities, inadequate fitness club / centre, government attitude, modernization, fear of injury and time.

Therefore if meaningful / appreciable physical fitness level must be attained by the urban settlers all these problems must be addressed by individuals and government

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