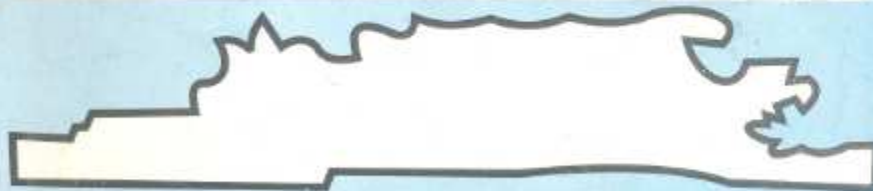


**DYNAMICS OF EDUCATION
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PATTERNS OF RECESS AS EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

Recess remains an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary age children. It provides children with discretionary time and opportunities to engage in physical activities that help to develop a healthy body and mind. This study investigated how primary school pupils in Lagos State spend their recess times. 3000 pupils selected from both public and private primary schools, using a stratified sampling technique participated in the study. A self-developed checklist that was validated and tested for reliability ($r=0.81$) was used for data collection, while data were analyzed using percentage, mean, t-test and one-way ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that pupils love to engage in vigorous activities such as playing games and running than sedentary ones such as discussion during recess. However, pupils of public schools are more active during recess than their counterparts in private schools; and males are more active than female. The study showed no variation in the pupil's pattern of recess by age.

INTRODUCTION

Recess is an essential component of the total educational experience that provides pupils with discretionary time and opportunities to engage in physical activity, which helps to develop healthy bodies and enjoyment of movement. According to the Council on Physical Education for Children (CPEC, 2001), recess allows elementary school children to practice life skills such as conflict resolution, cooperation, respect for rules, taking turns, sharing, using language to communicate, and problem solving in real situations.

Jarret (2004) states that the most obvious characteristics of recess is that it constitutes a break from the day's routine; and for people of all ages, and in all fields, recess is considered essential

for satisfaction and alertness. Citing Toppino, Kasserman and Mracek, Jarrett (2004) mentions specifically that recall is improved when recess is introduced rather than teaching pupils for a long time without break. Jarrett (2004) found that this assertion is comparable with what is known about brain functioning; that attention requires periodic novelty, that the brain needs downtime to recycle chemicals crucial for long-term memory formation.

More importantly, recess provides pupils with the opportunity for movement experiences that helps develop a healthy mind and body that is capable of learning. Inactivity is considered a major risk factor for heart disease and pattern of inactivity may begin at early ages (CPEC, 2001). Based on this, MacPherson (2002) is of the opinion that children must be given as much as possible time to play, especially during recess, as playing outside promotes running around, which helps sustain sound health.

Considering recess from other perspectives, CPEC (2001) mentions that during the period, pupils learn to resolve conflict, solve problems, negotiate and work with others without adult intervention. This is an opportunity for kids to develop and improve social skills. Reek: according to Jarrett (2004) may be the only opportunity to engage in social interactions with other children. Many classrooms allow very little interaction; recess therefore is a valuable time in which adults can observe children's social behavior; their tendency to bully and fight, as well as their leadership and pro-social behaviours. Seeing how pupils interact freely during recess can help teachers in managing their behaviour.

However, reports indicate that recess in many American School Districts has been in jeopardy for several years now (Deirdre, 2006; & Villarire, 2006). An estimated 40 percent of schools either have eliminated recess or are considering eliminating it. Some of these schools cited safety and improving pupils academic achievement (Deirdre, 2006) as reasons for elimination. This is an action that should not be envied or copied; and due to this situation, Villare (2006) position that disposing of recess is a deeply misguided approach to education, given the lack of physical activity in the lives of many American kids, and enormous benefits that children could gain from a physical activity during recess. The situation is different in Nigeria since there are

no evidences of elimination of recess from the school programme. Specifically, observation of many public and private primary schools time-tables in Lagos State shows that recess is observed, as there are periods for short break and long break.

On the other hand, studies report variation in levels of involvement in recess and types of activities engaged in during recess by pupils (Deirdre 2006; Jarette, 2004; & McPherson, 2002). While some pupils engage themselves in vigorous physical activities, some are into moderate ones and others participate in less physical activities. Jarrett (2004) states, however, that recess time spent in physical activities has been found to be of greater benefits than the less active ones. This study was designed to investigate patterns of recess as educational experience among primary school pupils in Lagos State.

The following hypotheses were in this study:

1. Pattern of recess among public school pupils do not vary significantly from those of private school pupils.
2. There is no significant sex variation in the pupils' patterns of recess.
3. Pupils do not vary significantly in their patterns of recess by age.

METHODS

Participants

3000 pupils who were equally selected from both public and private primary schools in Lagos State participated in this study. An average of 100 pupils per school, were selected from thirty school in six local government areas of Lagos State using a stratified sampling technique. Based on age, sex and school type (i.e. private and public).

Instrument

The main instrument used for data collection in this study was a self-developed checklist, which has two sections. The first section was on the demographic data of the participants, which include age, sex and school type; while the second section sought information on the types of activities - pupils engage in during recess and their extent of engagement. The activities include playing games, running, minor plays, reading, writing, discussing, resting in the class and watching others play. The instrument was served to four professional colleagues for validity, and was thereafter subjected to test-retest method of reliability test that gave r value 0.81. In addition to this, pupils were also observed during recess in the selected schools to support data collected via the checklist.

Data Collection

The researchers and six trained research assistants visited the selected schools for the purpose of data collection. The consent of the school authorities and participants were sought before the administration of instrument. Selected participants were taken to empty classes during the break time where copies of the checklist were distributed. Though the researchers and their assistants assisted participants in interpretation of items on the instrument where necessary, no external interference was allowed in the process of data collected. All filled copies were retrieved immediately to avoid loss.

Data analysis

Data collected in this study were coded and analyzed using simple percentage, mean, t -test and one-way ANOVA. Hypotheses of the study were tested at 0.05 level of significant.

RESULTS

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of pupils' activities during recess

ACTIVITIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Playing Games	2214	33.9
Running	1002	15.4
Minor Plays	1561	23.9
Reading & Writing	654	10.1
Discussion	711	10.9
Resting in the Class	126	01.9
Watching Others	257	03.9
TOTAL	6525	100.0

Result presented in table 1 shows that during recess, majority of the pupils engage themselves in playing games [33.9%], minor plays [23.9%] and running [15.4%]. 10.1% engage in reading and writing and 10.9% discuss with friends, and few of the pupils rest in the class [1.9%] or watch others play. [3.9%] during recess. Figure 1 further describes this result.

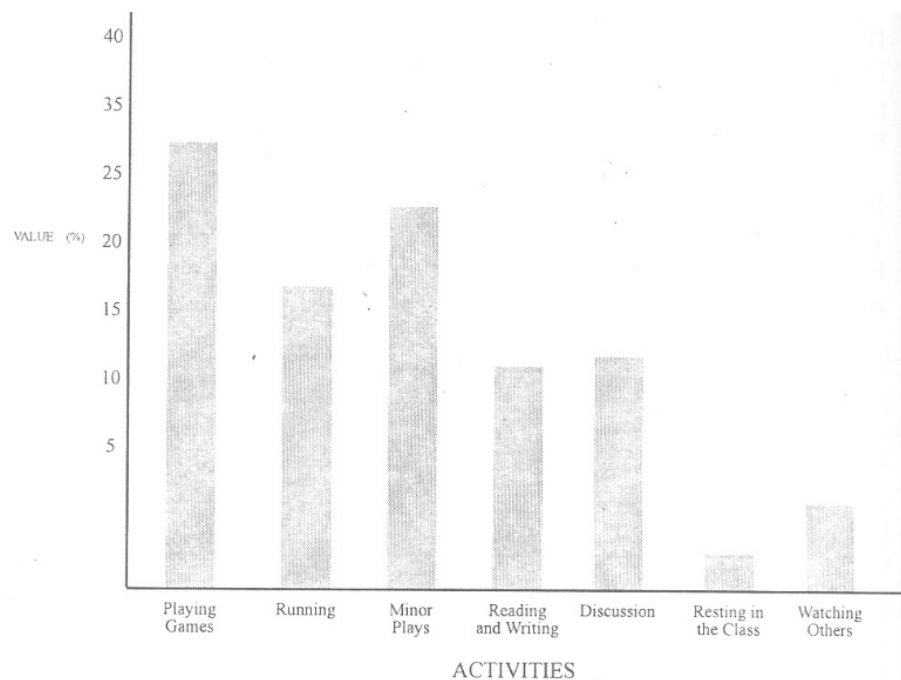


Figure 1: Component bar chart on pupils' activities during recess

Table 2: Mean and t-test analysis of data on physical activities during recess among pupils by school and by sex

Variable	Response	X	SD	df	t-cri	t-cal
School	Public	268.42	16.31	2998	1.96	*16.42
	Private	257.91	18.77			
Sex	Male	274.33	26.43	2998	1.96	*31.70
	Female	248.976	22.11			

The result presented on table 2 show that pupils of public schools have a greater mean value (268.42 ± 16.31) on their level of physical activity during recess than their counterparts in private schools (257.91 ± 18.77). t-test analysis of the data shows that the calculated value (16.42) was greater than 1.96 critical value at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the hypothesis

that patterns of recess among public school pupils do not vary significantly from those of private schools must be rejected. It means that there is a significant variation in the recess patterns of public and private schools.

The table further shows that male pupils recorded higher mean value (274.33) than female counterparts (248.97) on level of physical activity during recess. T-test analysis of this data shows that the calculated value (31.70) was greater than critical value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significant. This result indicates that the hypothesis, that there is no significant sex variation in the pupils' patterns of recess must be rejected. This connotes that male pupils vary significantly from their female counterparts in pattern of recess.

Table 3: Mean and one-way ANOVA on physical activities of pupils during recess by age

Age Range	X	SD	df	F-cri	F-cal
7-8	261.31	24.98	2999	2.99	1.75
9-10	259.48	20.01			
11-12	263.12	21.66			

*Not significant at 0.05

The result in table 3 shows that the mean physical activity level of pupils within the age range of 7 and 8 years was 261+24.98, while that of pupils within the age range of 9 and 10 years was 259.48+20.01. Those within the age range of 11 and 12 years recorded a mean value of 263.12+21.66. One-way ANOVA on the data shows that the calculated value (1.75) was less than the critical value (2.99). The hypothesis that pupils do not vary significantly in their patterns of recess by age was accepted based on this result. It means that recess patterns among various age groups in primary schools do not differ significantly. Figure 2 below further describes the results presented in tables two and three.

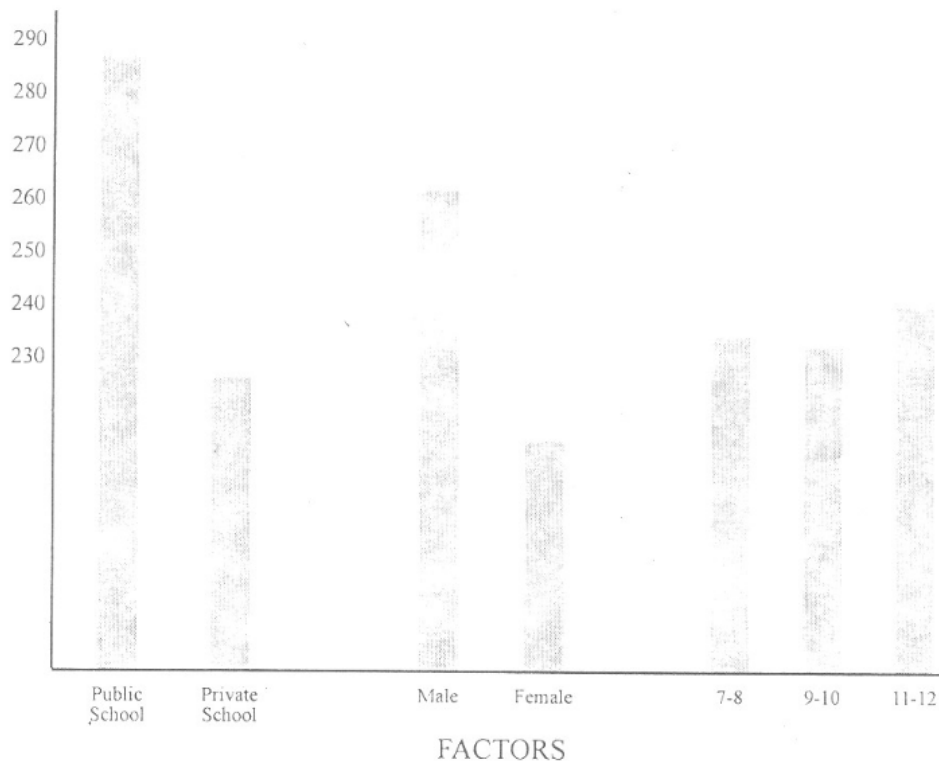


Figure 2: Component bar chart on mean value of value of pupils on recess activities.

The component bar chart shows greater variations in the mean values of pupils' levels of physical activity during recess by school type and by sex, but slight variations in the mean values by age.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that greater percentage of pupils prefer and engage themselves in vigorous activities such as playing games, minor plays and running during recess; while relatively fair preference was given to reading and writing, and discussion with friends. The findings show that those who rest in the class or watch others play during recess are very insignificant [see table 1 & figure 1]. This finding is in agreement with the opinion of Ogunsina [1999] that running, chasing, climbing, ball handling, activities with beanbags, sticks, creative dance and explorative plays are common physical activities of primary school pupils. Ogunsina [1999] states categorically that in the last two grade of elementary education that is primary five

and six, pupils must be allowed to take part in more vigorous activities. This is because pupils at this stage want to identify themselves with groups and they need the exposure as group leaders.

This study further shows great difference in the patterns of recess of public primary school pupils and the private ones in Lagos State.. This finding indicates that pupils in public school engage themselves in physical activities during recess than their counterparts in private schools (see table 2). Jarret (2004) given similar report that not all pupils are active during recess; however, if given a variety of opportunities for physical activities, it could be expected that those who are less active may be motivated to be more active. Jarret (2004) states further that children's tendency to choose physical activity as recess activity is expressed in higher level after a longtime denial of such an opportunity.

The study further reveals major differences in recess pattern of male and female pupils, with the male pupils more active during recess. This finding is not a surprise, several studies report similar finding. According to Padden (2002), the Surgeon-General's report on physical activity and health shows that greater percentages of females than their male counterparts are not physically activities. Similar reports are also given by Healthy Memphis (2006) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHs, 2002).

However, this study reveals no major differences in the recess patterns of pupils by age (see table 3 and figure two). Available studies point out that recess for pupils as educational experiences can play important roles in their learning, psychological development and health (Deirdre, 2006; Villaire, 2006; Jarrett, 2004; McPherson, 2002; & CEPE 2001,). But more importantly, recess spent actively is of greater value than those spent in less physical activity (Jarrett, 2004).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded in this study that majority of pupils prefer and engage themselves in vigorous activities such as playing games, minor plays and running during recess than sedentary

activities such as resting in the class or watching others play. it is also concluded that patterns of recess vary among pupils of primary schools in Lagos State. While pupils in public primary schools are more active during recess than their counterparts in private schools, female pupils are less active in comparison with the male pupils. However, age is not a factor in the pupils' patterns of recess.

It is therefore recommended that recess should be given serious attention in primary schools in Lagos State. Wide range of physical activities should have been made known to pupils during physical education class for which they can engage in during recess. Sufficient sports facilities and equipment will serve as motivation for a large number of pupils to engage in physical activities during recess. Pupils must be allowed to freely choose what activity they feel like engaging in during this period. However, there should be a monitoring of what they do to ensure their safety.

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