The role of leisure recreation in advancing social cohesion within local communities in North-west States, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study is on the role of leisure and recreation in advancing social cohesion within local communities in North West States -Nigeria. One research question and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study and the study was delimited to social cohesion. The respondents of the study were local residence of the selected states of North West States. Descriptive research design of survey type was used for this study and multistage sampling technique was used to select the sample size of the respondents availability sampling was used were all the respondents present at the time of questionnaire distribution were used as population and sample of the study totalling four hundred and twenty (420), A researcher's developed questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection and a reliability index of 0.76 was obtained from a pilot study. Four hundred and twenty (420) questionnaires were distributed and four hundred and nineteen (419) were duly completed and returned for analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to organize and describe the bio-data of the respondents while one way sample t-test statistics was used to test the sub-hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study indicates that leisure recreation play a significant role on the development and advancement of social cohesion of local communities in the North West States-Nigeria and therefore the paper recommended that leisure recreational activities should not be overlooked for they can influence the development and advancement of social cohesion in communities of North West States and can also offer opportunities for interaction in open spaces and natural environments that can play a valuable role in an individual's sense of attachment to the area in which they live and the local community more generally.

Keywords: Social, leisure, cohesion & recreation

1.   Introduction

Social cohesion refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society. It identifies two main dimensions: the sense of belonging of a community and the relationships among members within the community itself. It stems from a democratic effort to establish social balance, economic dynamism, and national identity, with the goals of founding a system of equity, sustaining the impulses of uncontrolled economic growth, and avoiding social fractures (Ekholm 2016). North West States of

Nigeria is suffering deadly conflict involving many armed organizations, including herder-allied groups, vigilantes, criminal gangs and jihadists. Violence is rooted in competition over resources between predominantly Fulani herders and mostly Hausa farmers (World Health Organization, 2005) It has escalated amid a boom in organized crime, including cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, village raids and Jihadist groups are now stepping in to take advantage of the security crisis and in the trade of small

arms and light weapons in the region, organized gangs operating from ungoverned forests have proliferated, engaging in cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery, including of miners and traders in the largely unregulated gold mining sector, as well as pillage of communities (Stanley, 2003).

Having originated in Zamfara State, gang violence has since spread to five other nearby states, namely Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi and Niger, the last of which is in North Central Nigeria. Although the conflict between the nomadic herders and farmers are ancient spanning decades, the two groups have a history of cooperation and understanding underpinned by the strength, effectiveness and credibility of community structures, authority and with pastoralists once known to adhere to integrated structures, norms and rules co-created as social contracts. Access to and use of land and natural resource management issues, compounded by climate change risks have further complicated this relationship and are key to understanding the changing dynamics of peace and stability in the North-West. Some of the key challenges that pose a threat to social cohesion of North West States often stem from divisions and conflicts, economic disparities, political divides, and social inequalities within the States, this resulted into straining the social fabric, leading to polarization and fragmentation. The question is; what are the strategies that can be employed to address them? Is through development and advancement of social cohesion. Social cohesion is viewed as the glue that binds societies and is considered an essential ingredient to address common societal challenges. Coole, (2009) identifies cohesive communities as having a common vision, a sense of belonging, positive appreciation of diversity and strong relationships being built and

maintained between people from different backgrounds and different neighbourhoods However, in today's complex and rapidly changing world, maintaining social cohesion is no easy task. According to Mccue, & Kourouch, (2010 leisure, recreation are two terms that are often used interchangeably to refer to free time activities, while both involve activities that people engage in during their free time, there are some fundamental differences between the two and are universal components of human culture which takes different forms and meanings based on the characteristics of a given society; while leisure and recreation both involve free time activities, but leisure time activities tend to be more passive and relaxed, while recreation is typically more active and energizing (Russell, 2013).

Leisure time is the time that a person has to spend on activities outside of work or other obligations and is the time that people can use to pursue their interests, hobbies, or passions and are activities that can include reading, watching movies, playing video games, cooking, or simply relaxing, these activities can be physical, such as hiking, biking, or swimming, or they can be non-physical, such as playing board games, doing puzzles, or attending a concert (Russell, 2013). According to the United Nations Organization (2006) leisure time is a legitimate right of everyman, because it satisfies man's essential needs for relaxation, recreation, individual development and creative expression and further stated that the harmonious development of the individual, as well his or her finding happiness of life, is largely dependent on sensible leisure-time activity. Leisure recreation is expressions of excess energy, channelling it into socially acceptable activities that fulfils individual as well as societal needs; leisure recreation also provides satisfaction and pleasure for the

participant without compulsion (Russell, 2013).

Social cohesion focus on strong coordinating institutions which places the emphasis on society as a whole rather than existing in social relationships and approaches issues from the group or societal level and on shared understandings such as solidarity, generalized trust, widely help norms, values, attitudes and is the glue that holds communities together, fostering a sense of belonging, trust, and cooperation among individuals (Stanley, 2003). The purpose of this paper therefore is to find out the role of leisure, recreation on the development of social cohesion in the North West States-Nigeria.

Research Question
Will leisure recreational activities play any role on the development of local communities' social cohesion in North West States-Nigeria?

Hypothesis
Leisure recreational activities will not play any significant role on the development of social cohesion of local communities in North West States Nigeria

Theoretical Frame Work of Social Cohesion
The first ideas around social cohesion can be traced back to the writings of Ibn-Haldun in the 14th century (Dragolov, Ignácz, Lorenz, Delhey, Boehnke& Unzicker. 2016). In particular, Ibn-Haldun put forth the idea of asabiyyah, which has often been translated as group feeling or social cohesion (Alatas, &Khaldunian 2006). He presented asabiyyah as a mix of unity and group consciousness. Central to his theory was that ruling dynasties or civilizations will eventually be replaced as the ruling classes became less concerned with maintaining asabiyyah and more concerned with preserving their status. In

turn, this allows groups with stronger asabiyyah to emerge (Alatas, &Khaldunian ; 2006; Ibn, K. The Muqaddimah 2015). In more modern times, numerous political scientists and economists, including Hobbes, Smith and Tönnies, have engaged with social cohesion and related concepts (Dragolov, Ignácz, Lorenz, Delhey, Boehnke& Unzicker. 2016). Arguably, the most prominent and influential contemporary work comes from Emile Durkheim's conceptualizations of solidarity and most notably, Durkheim, (1893) argued that maintaining social order rests on one of two forms of solidarity: Through the mechanical solidarity inherent to traditional and small-scale societies, whereby social cohesion stems from homogeneity as individuals share similar work, personal, educational, and religious backgrounds. A cohesive society is characterized by resilient social relations, a positive emotional connectedness between its members and the community, and a pronounced focus on the common good" (Dragolov, Ignácz, Lorenz, Delhey, Boehnke& Unzicker. 2016). Social cohesion is an ongoing process of developing well-being, sense of belonging, and voluntary social participation of the members of society while developing communities that tolerate and promote a multiplicity of values and cultures, and granting at the same time equal rights and opportunities in society" (Fonseca, Lukosch, &Brazier, 2019). Many prominent policy documents take similar stances, integrating many dimensions into their definitions, including inequality, well-being and social mobility (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2011; Council of Europe (2010). The North-West States of Nigeria has experienced a significant increase in conflicts, primarily driven by inter-communal clashes between the nomadic herders and farmers, resource

disputes, ethnic tensions, armed and organized criminal activities such as banditry. These conflicts have resulted in loss of lives, displacement of communities, and socio-economic instability. The widespread and deep-rooted banditry phenomenon has affected large parts of the population, with thousands of victims of violence every year, hundreds of thousands internally displaced persons, and considerable pressures on inter and intra-communal relations. Therefore, this study adapted the theory of Dragolov et al. (2013), as this framework, will help in understand how the North West States lost its once trust, reciprocity, peace, love brotherhood that exists between members of the communities and other communities restore back the cohesiveness that lacking. The theory of social cohesion contains three core dimensions or constructs, each broken into three related sub-dimensions. The first is social relations, which includes social networks, trust in people and acceptance of diversity. The second is connectedness, which includes notions of identification, trust in institutions and perception of fairness. Finally, there is a focus on the common good, which comprises ideas of solidarity, helpfulness, respect for social rules and civic participation. This study used Dragolov et al. (2013) theory to `bridge this knowledge gap by offering the first conceptual framework that focused on leisure recreation and the development of social cohesion among local communities in North West States Nigeria. According to Stanley, (2001) social cohesion is a concept that refers to the bonds that link members of a social group to one another and to the group as a whole. Stanley, (2003) identifies two main dimensions: the sense of belonging of a community and the relationships among members within the community itself and it stems from a democratic effort to establish social

balance, economic dynamism, and national identity, with the goals of founding a system of equity, sustaining the impulses of uncontrolled economic growth, and avoiding social fractures. In this paper the role of leisure recreation is seen from the perspective of social cohesion theory on the benefits of participating in leisure recreation.

2. Review of Literature

Leisure recreation programs are clearly community driven and are for community development purposes and for attaining specific community development objectives as it is the reality globally, but in Nigeria of today, government and stakeholders are yet to come to terms to understand and appreciate the fact (World Health Organization, 2005; Yazid 2017). Social cohesion is defined as "the tendency of a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Sebirova & Zineviev, 2016). Social cohesion involves building shared values, reducing disparities in wealth and income and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community (Coole, 2009). The cohesiveness of leisure recreation group mostly refers to the strength of bonds between local community members, the unity of a local community, the feeling of attraction between local community members and the degree to which members concentrate their efforts to achieve group goals. Furthermore, social cohesion reflects the degree to which members of the community like each other and interact accordingly (Cutter, 2009). For example, a community that is made up of members of the community who have participated in leisure and recreational

activities for a long period of time have very strong social bonds than a community member of relative strangers.

For leisure recreation to developed social cohesion of communities, it must work to realize the right of all members of the society to participate in leisure recreational activities, so also an effective community leisure recreation must intentionally give priority to development objectives that are carefully designed to be inclusive (Putnam, 2000). These programs should embody the best values of leisure while upholding the quality and integrity of recreational experience and should combine recreational activities of both traditional play and modern sport to enhance their effectiveness (World Health Organization, 2005). The role of leisure recreation activities is to seek to empower participants and communities by engaging them in the design and delivery of activities, building local capacity, economy and security, social cohesion adhering to generally accepted principles of leisure and recreational activities tenets and pursuing sustainability through collaboration, partnerships and coordinated action. It was observed by the researcher that takes consideration and recognition is not given to and of community needs in an attempt to implement such policies to the communities (Botcheva & Huffman 2004).

Leisure recreation has thus been promoted as a way to engage communities and groups within them, such as socially vulnerable young people who may be hard to reach through other social institutions such as mainstream education, leisure time or community work (Crabbe, 2007; 2009). Coalter, (2007, 2015) opined that leisure recreation' has the potential to contribute to wider social issues including but not limited to public health, mental health, community cohesion, education and criminal justice. The focus of this study is to find out if the role of social cohesion systematically helps local communities to advanced, achieve and build social cohesion.

3. Methodology

Descriptive research design of survey type was adapted and used for this study and the population for this study comprised of the entire community leaders, youth, and sport philanthropists' sport stakeholders available during the distributions of the questionnaire totaling four hundred and twenty (420). The researcher's developed questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection and was validated by three (3) lecturers in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Bayero University Kano were a reliability index of 0.76 was obtained. An introductory letter was obtained from board of research committee of the department of Human Kinetics, Bayero University Kano which was taken to the Heads of each unit selected for the study for their permission to conduct the study. Four hundred and twenty questionnaires (420) were distributed and four hundred and nineteen (419) were duly completed and returned for analysis. Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentages was used to organize and describe the bio-data of the respondents while one sample t-test statistics was used to test the sub-hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

A multi stage sampling technique was used for this study and stratified sampling technique was used to stratify the seven (7) states that made up the North-West was each stratified as follows: All the seven States that made up the North West States have three (3) senatorial zones: North, South and Central for example, Kano state has three senatorial zones, as viz; Kano Central, Kano North, and Kano South, this applies to all the other States.

Stage 1; Simple random sampling was used to select two (2) senatorial zones out of three from each state. The researchers wrote and folded the names of each state on a piece of papers according to each stratum and placed into three different bowls then mixed thoroughly. The researcher assigned (7) trained research assistants to draw a piece at random from each bowl without looking. Hence, the selected states become the studied areas.

Stage 2 Simple random sampling was equally used to select two local governments in the states through the above method

Stage 3 Availability sampling techniques was used were all the respondents available were taken and used as the sample from each of the local government area under study.

4. Results and Discussion

Will leisure and recreational activities play any role in the development of local communities' social cohesion in North-West States Nigeria?

To answer this question, all the obtained respondents' mean on the variable were presented in the table below:

S/N	STATEMENT ON SOCIAL COHERSION	MEAN	SD
1	Social Cohesion is among the social ties that we develop oughout our lives to maintain peace.	3.3508	0.65617
2	Social Cohesion creates mutually respectful ationships, co connectedness and trustworthiness ong people.	3.1742	0.76759
3	Social Cohesion refers to the links and bonds formed ugh friendships and acquaintances	3.4105	0.70777
4	Social Cohesion facilitates decision-making because mbers of communities do not need to renegotiate each e they enter into a joint activity.	3.1885	0.88725
5	Social Cohesion facilitates trust coordination because enhanced communication between group members or nmunities, thus reducing inefficiencies	3.3508	0.71790
	Aggregate Mean	**3.2949**	

Table 1. Above revealed the obtained mean of respondent's opinion on leisure and recreation role in the development of social cohesion of local communities in North-West States Nigeria. The results showed that all the obtained mean and aggregate mean were higher than the fixed mean of 2.5. This clearly showed that leisure and recreational activities play a vital role on the development of social cohesion of local communities in the study area, a one simple t-test was conducted and the results is as follows:

Hypothesis Testing

Ho1 Leisure and recreation will not significantly play any role in the development of social cohesion of local communities in North-West States Nigeria. To test this hypothesis a one-sample t-test was used and the results are as follows:

Table 3. Summary of One sample t-test on the role of social cohesion in the development of community sports in North- States West Nigeria.

VARIABLE	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	P
SOCIAL HESION	419	3.29	0.378	0.18	42,97	418	0.001
FIXED MEAN	419	2.50					

Table 3 revealed respondents mean of 3.29 and SD= 0.378, statistical computation indicated that t=42.97, df 418 (P<0.05). This means that the null hypothesis stated is hereby rejected, which implies that leisure and recreational activities play a significant role in the development of social cohesion of local communities in North-West States Nigeria.

Discussion
Finding from this study revealed that leisure recreation has a role to play on the development of social cohesion of local communities of North West State-Nigeria, this study is in line with the studies of Atherley, 2006; Kremet, Sadlik & Kim 2007) who reported their research finding that leisure recreation can be a mechanism for the promotion of socially cohesive society, this because social cohesion involves building shared values, reducing disparities in wealth and income and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community. The study is also in line with Sport England, (2017) in their study report, shows that social cohesion has been used to explain the improved performance of diverse groups and that social cohesion is a collective term for various types of activities used to enhance social relations and define roles within members of the community, often involving collaborative tasks. Many social capital exercises aim to expose and address interpersonal problems within members of the community and over time, these social capital activities are intended to improve trust, security, health and wellness (Drukker, Buka, Kaplan, McKenzie & Van Os, (2005).

This study is also in agreement with Richard, 2015; Tonts, 2005) that social cohesion value leisure and recreation and has been widely recognized now and considered a major instrument in social policies. Researchers such as Akwezullo, 1999; Ozbaydar, 2013; Mccue & Kourouch, 2010) point to the potential for leisure recreation in building relationships and social cohesion across religious, ethnic and economic lines (Harell and Stolle, 2008). This theory has help in the understanding that evidence abound of the positive role of leisure recreation on the individual members of the community and at the community level. At the individual level there are physical, mental and social health (Coalter, Allison, Taylor 2000; Kremer-Sadlik, & Kim, 2007) and at the community level, leisure and recreation has been advocated as a mechanism that will promote a socially cohesive society (Atherley, 2006; Kremer-Sadlik &Kim, 2007).

5. Conclusion and Recommendation
From the results of the study it was concluded that:
i.   It is now recognized and understood from the finding of this study that leisure recreation can be used as a tool for building social cohesion in communities
ii.   Leisure recreation can positively contribute to building social cohesion,

such as better physical and mental health, reducing crime and antisocial behavior.

iii. Leisure recreation is seen as potentially contributing to a wide array of social issues that include social integration, participation and in reducing antisocial behavior of youths, restraining violence and enhancing security and community safety.

iv. Leisure recreation can create meaningful social interactions between different people from different backgrounds together thereby increasing confidence, providing a new level of understanding and cooperation in society.

Recommendations

i. Government must ensure that leisure recreation options are made available to all as will aid the full development of individuals within the communities, which in turn will contribute to a better, more developed and cohesive society**.**

ii. The leisure recreation can be developed through the following ways such as first, community interest is priority and should be involve in the planning and implementation of leisure and recreation activities.

iii. leisure recreational activities should not be overlooked for they can influence the development of social cohesion in communities

iv. Leisure recreation can also offer opportunities for interaction in open spaces and natural environments that can play a valuable role in an individual's sense of attachment to the area in which

they live and the local community more generally

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