

Recreation and Tourism Experiences of Farm Children in Southwest Nigeria: Implications for Child Development

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Abstract: Recreation and exposure of children to their environment contributes greatly to their overall development in life. The study examined recreational and tourism experiences of farm children in southwest Nigeria. A well structured interview schedule was used to gather data from 540 children from age 5 to 14 years involved in familial agricultural activities. Findings were presented using descriptive statistics while the Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis of the study. Findings revealed 85.2% of the children had time to play games while those who watched television were 77.9%. Those who visited or spent holiday periods outside their own place of residence within six months were 52.6 and 63.9%, respectively. These indicators of recreation and tourism had negative and significant correlations with the children's level of involvement in agriculture at the 0.05 level. It was recommended that schools organize excursions for children while community television viewing centers should be provided.

Key words: Agriculture, games, television, visitations, holidays

INTRODUCTION

Concept of recreation and tourism: All work and no play make Jack a dull boy goes the old adage which reveals the importance attached to leisure time for children by those interested in child development. Leisure is generally considered to be the time when an individual has the freedom to choose what to do beyond any formal employment and the domestic requirements of life.

Recreation according to RTPI^[1] connotes a group of activities that individuals carry out in their leisure including sport and commercial leisure. It also includes passive activities such as reading, watching television and the traditional tourism activities of taking a holiday away from home and day visits to attractions. Recreation is thus used to embrace every idea of leisure activities including tourism. Though tourism is treated synonymously with recreation and also as a sub set of it, it has its own distinct features.

Tourism basically deals with movement or travel outside the individuals immediate environment Quinion^[2]. The advanced oxford dictionary also defines it as the practice of traveling for pleasure or as going for holidays. In essence, leisure is classified into recreation or tourism based on the location of such activities in relation to the individuals immediate environment.

Relevance of recreation and tourism to children: Leisure for children is important for various reasons especially due to the fact that they are in the process of growing. They need to exercise their muscles and bones for healthy development and through that makes for proper development. Recreation provides opportunity to express pent up emotional feelings and tension which develop in classroom through interaction with tutors and colleagues. This helps children to grow up emotionally balanced and avoid some unwanted emotional traits like resentments, bitterness etc. Recreation also helps children develop creativity as they play with toys which may be educationally oriented or just for fun. It enables children to engage their minds in constructive activities as the restless and intuitive tendencies in children make them prone to activities to fill their spare time. Recreation also helps in the development of good interpersonal relationships and attitude to life. They learn to manage success and accept defeat. Recreation could be in the form of sports/games which may be on the open field e.g. football, hide and seek or indoors like ludo, computer games etc. According to RTPI^[1], it also includes watching television and reading for pleasure. Recreation therefore has socio-emotional and educational benefits for children.

Tourism on the other hand though having a base line of pleasure seeking is also educative by nature as the

children are exposed to things they have not seen or heard before or those they have heard but not seen. It boosts classroom efforts by creating real live audio-visual effects. Tourism helps to create awareness and interest in the children which may go a long way in determining future decisions such as career, place to live etc. Excursions organized by schools for students, spending holidays outside their immediate home environment fall into this category. Tourism therefore opens the children to a wider horizon of life beyond their classrooms and home environment.

Study justification: According to the operations of the universal basic education programme in Nigeria, most children (from age 5 to 14 years) are expected to spend over half of their working day in educational institutions. It is therefore necessary to ensure that part of their spare time is used for relaxation and refreshing after the days work. However, the present economic condition of the country has created a scenario whereby every available opportunity is used for income generating activities by households. Some children finish from school to assists their parents in the markets or on the farms getting home later in the evening to do domestic work, eat and sleep, sometimes not having opportunity to do their home work. This study was therefore carried out to examine the recreation and tourism experiences of children involved in agricultural activities in households of south west Nigeria

Objectives of the study: The general objective of the study was to examine the recreation and tourism experiences of children involved in agricultural activities in south west Nigeria. The study specifically

- examined the personal characteristics of the children,
- determined the children's level of involvement in agriculture,
- examined the recreation experiences of the children and
- examined the tourism experiences of the children.

Hypothesis: A hypothesis set in the null form was tested in the study at the 0.05 level of significance.

H₀: there is no significant relationship between the children's level of involvement in agriculture and their leisure experiences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Multistage sampling technique was used to sample 540 children aged 5-14 years. Fifty percent of the six south west states (Ogun, Osun and Ondo) were selected. In each state, based on the fact that about 63.72% of the Nigerian population lives in the rural area NPC^[3], three

local government areas in the ratio 1:2 for urban and rural were chosen giving three urban LGA's and six rural LGA's. Fifty percent of the political wards in each LGA were selected making 45 wards and a community was selected from each ward. A structured interview schedule was used to obtain primary data from 12 children in each community.

Children's level of involvement in agriculture was measured in hours at the interval level. Frequency tables and percentages are used to present the results of the study. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis of the study at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics children: Table 1 shows the personal characteristics of the children interviewed. Majority are males (76.2%) within the ages of 10 and 14 years (86.9%). This reveals that male children are likely to be more involved in agricultural activities than females. Furthermore older children also likely to be more involved in agricultural activities than the younger ones. Data on the educational level of the children reveal that majority (98.7%) were enrolled in formal education. The higher percentages (40.6%) were in the junior secondary school followed by those in senior secondary schools (23.5%).

Period of agricultural involvement: About 41.5% of the children i.e. 224 of 540 as shown on Table 2 involve in agricultural activities on weekdays. The larger percentage of this category (47.8%) does so between 6am and 8am in the mornings and later in the day between 4 and 6 pm in the evening (38.4%). Table 2 also reveals that 95.2% of those who participate on weekends begin involvement between 6 and 10 am in the mornings. Majority (78.7%) however return before 4 pm in the evening making ample time available for most children to have time for recreation.

Children's level of involvement in agriculture: Most children (81.7%) involved in agricultural activities on weekdays spend less than 2 h with a mean of an hour daily. This is due to the fact that most of the children are enrolled in educational institutions, which takes most of their weekdays from around 7:30 am to 2 pm in the afternoon and for most children who engage in extra mural lessons after school they return home after 4 pm. Thus less time is available for agricultural activities and even leisure activities. Those who participate on weekends spend an average of 6 hours which will likely make room for leisure activities. About 32.3% who spend more than 8 h on weekends contravenes the Nigerian labour Act of 1974 which prohibits a young person under the age of 16 years from working for more than 8 working h in

Table 1: Personal characteristics of the children

		n = 540	
Variable		f	%
A	Sex		
	Male	412	76.2
	Female	128	23.7
B	Age (Years)		
	5-9	71	13.1
	10-14	469	86.9
C	Educational level of child		
	Non formal	7	1.3
	Primary 1-3	82	15.2
	Primary 4-6	105	19.4
	JSS 1-3	219	40.6
	SSS 1-3	127	23.5

Table 2: Period children involve in agricultural activities

A		Time children involves in agriculture during Weekdays	
		f	%
	6-8 am	107	47.8
	8-10 am	8	3.6
	12 noon-2 pm	3	1.3
	2-4 pm	20	8.9
	4-6 pm	86	38.4
	Total	224	100
B	Time children returns during weekdays		
	6-8 am	94	42.0
	8-10 am	14	6.3
	2-4 pm	7	3.1
	4-6 pm	102	45.5
	After 6 pm	7	3.1
	Total	224	100
C	Time children involves in agriculture during weekends		
	6-8 am	262	50.7
	8-10 am	230	44.5
	10-12 noon	7	1.4
	2-4 pm	13	2.5
	4-6 pm	5	0.9
		Total	517
D	Time children returns during Weekends		
	6-8 am	22	4.3
	8-10 am	16	3.1
	10-12 noon	129	24.9
	12 noon-2 pm	138	26.7
	2-4 pm	102	19.7
	4-6 pm	110	21.3
		Total	517

any one day. It should however be noted that most farming households spend most of the weekends on their farms working, eating and resting. Nevertheless, based on a seven day working week, hours of child work was categorised into low, moderate and high involvement. Majority (98.1%) of the children fell into the low category i.e. less than or equal to 14 h and the rest in the moderate level of involvement i.e. between 14.1 and 28 h. None fell into the high level involvement i.e. greater than 28 h. The study revealed an average of 7 h was spent on agricultural activities weekly by children in the south west of Nigeria.

Recreation experiences

Games: Most of the children (85.2%) have opportunity to play games during the week though at various level. Few of the children (14.8%) as seen on Table 3 are opportune to play games daily while 34.4% do so only on weekends.

Table 3: Recreation and tourism experiences of farming children

		n = 540	
Variable		f	%
A	Playing games		
	Never	80	14.8
	Weekends only	186	34.4
	1-3 times weekly	100	18.5
	4-6 times weekly	94	17.5
	Everyday	80	14.8
B	Watching television		
	Never	119	22.1
	Weekends only	65	12.1
	1-3 times weekly	71	13.1
	4-6 times weekly	52	9.6
	Everyday	233	43.1
C	External visits		
	Never	256	47.4
	Once in 6 months	114	21.1
	Once in 3 months	74	13.7
	Once monthly	29	5.4
	Twice monthly	32	3.9
	Weekly	35	6.5
		External holidays	
	Never	195	36.1
	Spent less than a week	122	22.6
	Spent a week	84	15.6
	Spent two weeks	48	8.9
	Spent a month	46	8.5
	Spent the whole holiday	45	8.3

This reveals that despite a low involvement in agriculture on weekdays, children still have little opportunity to play games with their friends or by themselves after school hours. This may be as a result of further involvement in household chores. This means children are bugged down by educational and household chores and thus have little time for leisure which could refresh them. Correlation analysis revealed a negative and significant correlation between playing of games and level of involvement in agriculture ($r = -0.21, p < 0.05$). This implies that increase in level of involvement in agriculture will reduce opportunity of children to play games.

Television viewing: Majority of the children (77.9%) view television weekly. A larger percentage of these (43.1%) do so everyday. This is encouraging as children will be exposed to the outside world and current events even if they do not leave their immediate environment.

Correlation analysis revealed a negative and significant correlation between television viewing and children's level of involvement in agriculture ($r = -0.23, p < 0.05$). This indicates that television viewing is negatively influenced by involvement in agricultural activities.

Tourism experiences

External visits: This has to do with travels outside the children's immediate home environment for any reason apart from holidaying. Close to half of the children (47.4%)

never had the opportunity to go beyond their home environment within the 6 month period investigated by the study. Among those who did, one visit/trip in six months was the highest (21.1%), followed by those who went once in 3 months (13.7%). It is good to note that a few did so weekly (6.5%). This reveals a low exposure and interaction with the world beyond their immediate environment.

Level of involvement in agriculture also had a negative and significant effect on external visit of the children ($r = -0.12, p < 0.05$). This means the more involved the children are in agriculture, the less time they have to go outside their immediate home environment. This is evidenced by the period of their involvement. They barely have free time after school hours and on weekends.

External holidays: A larger percentage of the children (63.9%) spend their holidays outside their immediate home environment. This study is better than in the external visits which may imply that school and farm work may be limiting factors for external visits during the school sessions. However, those who spend less than a week (22.6%) were the highest among those who go for holidays. This reveals that for one reason or the other parents or guardians do not release their children for external holidays and if they do, it is not for so long a time. Those who spend the whole holiday outside are the minority (8.3%).

Correlation analysis reveals level of involvement in agriculture has a negative and significant correlation with external holidays ($r = -0.14, p < 0.05$). This means the children's level of involvement does hinder holidaying outside the children's home.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study reveal that the higher the level of involvement of children in agriculture the less their recreation and tourism opportunities. However, children's level of involvement in agriculture in the study area is not beyond the legally accepted level but this level is nevertheless, seen to significantly affect children's leisure and tourism experiences with negative correlations for watching television the highest.

It is therefore recommended that schools should be encouraged to organize excursions for their pupils so as to make up for this deficiency in their education and development. Communities should be enlightened on advantages of children exposure especially through television. They should be further encouraged to establish Television viewing centers provided with electricity generating machines.

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