

Correlation between Recreation Activities and Enhanced Social Interaction Among Christian Communities in Lagos State

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ABSTRACT

The study was conceived to explore the correlation between recreation activities and social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State. The descriptive research design was adopted in carrying out the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to draw sample for the study. A self-structured research instrument titled, Recreation and Christianity Social Interaction Survey (RCSIS) was subjected to test-retest method of reliability and a value of 0.80 was obtained. RCSIS was administered to (N=300) participants for data collection. Three research hypotheses formulated for the study, were tested at a 0.05 significance level. The findings from results of the study revealed: a significant relationship between Church-related recreation events and social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State ($F=27.496$, $p<0.05$) and; significant relationship between religious group activities and social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State ($F=5.309$, $p<0.05$); and a significant relationship between religious volunteering and social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State ($F=15.954$, $p<0.05$). The outcome of the study is an indication that participation in recreational activities among Christian communities not only contributes to spiritual growth but also plays a crucial role in enhancing individuals' social lives. It was recommended that leaders of Christian communities and denominations take proactive steps to extend the concept of recreation beyond its conventional boundaries within Christian circles. While religious activities play a pivotal role in fostering social interaction, there is also a need to explore innovative ways of integrating array of recreational elements into their activities.

Keywords: recreation activities, social interaction, church-related events, religious group activities, religious volunteering, christian communities

INTRODUCTION

During the 20th century, the connection between religion and recreation was investigated in both theory and application. In the early 1900s, the Lord's Day Alliance organisation in Canada was linked to the Presbyterian Church with the mission to counter the growing secularisation of the Sabbath. Their main focus was on blending religion and recreation, promoting Sunday as a day of rest. This initiative from the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada had a significant impact on influencing Canadian decision makers, particularly Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier's government, leading to the introduction of the Lord's Days Act among Christian communities in 1906 (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2009).

Nowadays, Christian communities have recognised the potential for collaboration between religion and sports as a means to engage with members of their external environment on a more frequent basis. Churches now expand their presence beyond their physical buildings and engage with the community through religious volunteering activities including sports. According to Eitzen and Sage (2012), the values of religion are ingrained in the ideology of sports. Numerous religious groups are increasingly participating in offering meaningful recreational experiences that convey lessons in building character, diligence, and treating others with respect.

Recreation refers to activities that individuals participate in during leisure to refresh and revitalise themselves, including the motives and emotions they encounter while engaging in worship (Sonnenberg & Barnard, 2015). Recreation usually is regarded as a pause from the obligations of daily existence, providing a chance to rest, de-stress, and partake in pleasurable pursuits. Meanwhile, religion greatly

influences people's beliefs, values, and behaviours that steer their lives. The interconnection between recreation and religion can differ based on cultural, historical, and personal aspects. Occasionally, religious observances can even serve as recreational activities. Instances like festivals, pilgrimages, and group assemblies linked with different faiths offer chances for both recreational and spiritual significance (Goldman, 2008; Thomas & Whittington, 2018). Leisure psychology underscores that recreation is a core element, serving as a significant source of delight, joy, or entertainment, thus making it a form of amusement (Ullah, 2016).

According to Lee (2004) there are different views on the relationship and involvement that religion and recreational activities have on each other. It should be apparent that religion and sports do have various common bonds. The impacts of these common bonds have been demonstrated through the various ways that Christian communities utilise different sports and recreational programmes to preach the gospel; recreational activities present this opportunity and diversity. Sundays have witnessed an increase in the popularity of commercial recreation, including activities such as sports events, bowling, golf, and picnics. Alongside these, church-related recreation activities also involve social gatherings, religious volunteering, workshops, religious discussions, lunches, and picnics organised by the Church. In the early 19th century, American Protestants criticised sports as a tool of the devil that could divert athletes from matters of faith and prioritise worldly success. However, nowadays, this perspective is less common, and numerous modern Christians see sports as an opportunity for spreading their faith (Blazer, 2012). During the 20th century and continuing till the present day, Sunday remains a significant time for families, religious volunteering activities, and leisure in Canada. The growth of Canada's commercial recreation sector has, to some degree, been influenced by the possibilities presented by Sunday as a day of rest (Karlis, 2004). Setonji and Adande (2022) in a study, recommends that the leadership of the Redeemed Christian Church of God's pastoral structure should focus on enhancing the Redemption Camp with high-quality facilities for inspiring recreation and religious tourism, as this would ensure that attendees of the camp and conventions not only receive spiritual benefits, but also enjoy exceptional faith-centered recreational and tourism opportunities.

Most religious group activities such as summer camps center around delivering religious teachings and discussions, fostering personal development as well as social interaction, and possibly encouraging people to adopt the faith. Similarly, specialised camps for indigenous youth may also be created for particular audiences. These camps have resemblances to other summer programmes, providing various activities such as canoeing, arts and crafts, sports, archery, rock climbing, swimming, mountain biking, and games. They include both day and overnight camps, taking place in indigenous communities, established camp locations, and wilderness expedition settings (Blazer, 2012). Many of these camps include structured Church-related events, with scheduled times for group Christian teachings. These teachings are presented through storytelling, dramatic performances, puppetry, music, videos, and similar methods. Additionally, the camps organize small-group discussions for reflection and dialogue. On the other hand, some camps take a more subtle approach, avoiding direct teaching. Instead, they aim to convey Christian values and lessons through demonstrations and social interactions (Woodley, 2015). Furthermore, sports were utilised as a method of spreading religious teachings, exemplified by the missionary efforts of C. T. Studd, a cricket player, in the mid-1880s (Stewart, 2021).

Religious groups that didn't conform typically had varying feelings about sports, with a significant portion viewing it as a worldly pastime that distracts from spiritual concerns. They had concerns about the morally ambiguous culture of spectators that frequently came with sports events (McLeod, 2013). As noted by McLeod (2013), in the 1890s, these religious organisations began adopting what he refers to as 'Chapel Sport' along with its principles of Muscular Christianity. Additionally, the appeal of Chapel Sport continued to grow and spread beyond the end of World War I. According to McKay (2012), the rise of the sports and Christianity movement was a reaction to the perceived shift towards spirituality in neo-Catholic and non-traditional evangelical circles. These religious groups were criticised for not tackling the societal poverty and class divides of the mid-1800s. On the other hand, supporters of the Sports and Christianity movement championed a theology that embraced the material

and physical realms, highlighting social interaction and advocating for a progressive outlook. It was suggested that recreation and Christianity embraced its optimistic view of the world from the Christian Socialist movement. This movement arose as a reaction to the turbulent events of the Chartist movement during the 1830s and highlighted the importance of tackling social inequality and class divisions in Britain in order to promote the country's overall welfare (Stewart, 2021).

Erdozain (2010) proposes that in the 1800s, religious groups frequently determined a person's salvation by observing their leisure activities. Engaging in calm and carefully selected recreational activities, family-oriented hobbies signified being saved, whereas involvement in disorderly and extravagant behaviours was linked to being unsaved. Externally, this phenomenon led to the rise of Anglican Muscular Christianity. Within this movement, the evangelical emphasis on wholesome recreational pursuits became widely embraced as a strategy for evangelism, social interactions and individual ethical development, (Mangan, 2010). Subsequent reaction to these attempts, which ultimately failed, emphasized by Archibald Brown in his book "The Devils Mission of Amusement, " argues that while striving to create a holy kind of entertainment, religion was moving its emphasis from personal faith-based validation to the importance of moral actions (McKay, 2012). McLeod offers an explanation of Muscular Christians as individuals who believed that sports and other physical pursuits held not only recreational value but also moral, religious, and social significance. They advocated for the church's endorsement of these activities. This definition also includes other sporting activities like drills, gymnastics, and weightlifting, recognising the diverse objectives pursued by Muscular Christians, which ranged in degrees of moral significance (McLeod, 2013).

In Nigeria, scholarly investigation has largely overlooked the relationship between Christian worship and recreation. Available information on this connection mostly comes from non-academic sources online, discussing how recreational activities may be integrated into Christian communities to accomplish their goals. In the past, the examination of recreational activities associated with the Church has been within the scope of the field of leisure studies (Mobley, 1975). However, little attention has been given to the recreational pursuits linked to Christian worship. This paper therefore intends to contribute to the limited amount of existing research on the topic of recreation and Christianity by investigating the relationship between recreation activities and social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following research hypotheses guided this study:

1. Church-related events will have no significant influence on social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State.
2. Religious group activities will have no significant influence on social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State.
3. Religious volunteering will have no significant influence on social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The descriptive research design was adopted for this investigation. Hence, the instrument used for data collection was Recreation and Christianity Social Interaction Survey (RCSIS). Data was collated, analysed, interpreted and used for drawing conclusions about the correlation between recreation activities and social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State.

Population/sample

The population for this study comprises of all Christian worshippers in Lagos State. A total of 300 respondents (males=139; females=161) were selected using the simple random sampling technique and

used in the study. To this end, 60 Christian worshippers were selected from each of the five administrative divisions of Lagos State, involving 115 Catholics, 165 Pentecostal worshippers, 14 Orthodox members, and 6 Evangelists.

Data collection

Data were collected through the Recreation and Christianity Social Interaction Survey (RCSIS), designed by the researchers and evaluated by a panel of two experts in sports administration and management for content and criterion related validities. The reliability before administration was determined using a pilot study, involving the test-retest method. This involved administering the instrument to 10 Christian worshippers who were not part of the main study twice with two weeks interval between the first and second administrations. The data obtained from this exercise was collated and correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) with an r-value of 0.80. A total of 300 copies of CTCPDQ were administered on all respondents using a hybrid technique (online / offline), i.e., physical questionnaires and e-questionnaire.

RESULTS

Data collected were analysed and presented using percentage and the Linear Regression statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Demographic distribution of respondents

Variables	Modules				
Sex	Male 139 (46.3%)	Female 161 (53.7%)			Total 300 (100%)
Age	18-25 years 123 (41%)	26-40 years 91 (30.3%)	41-60 years 78 (26%)	61 years and above 8 (2.7%)	
Denomination	Catholic 115(38.3%)	Pentecostal 165 (55%)	Orthodox 14 (4.7%)	Evangelical 6 (2%)	
Ethnicity	Hausa 28 (9.3%)	Igbo 118(39.3%)	Yoruba 153 (51.3%)		
Attendance frequency	Daily 66 (22%)	Weekly 216 (72%)	Bi-monthly 18 (6%)		

The sex distribution on table 1 above shows that 139 (46.3%) of the total respondents were males, while the remaining 161 (53.7%) were females. With regards to age distribution, 123 (41%) of the total respondents were between 18-25 years, 91 (30.3%) were between 26-40 years, 78 (26%) were between 41-60 years, while the remaining 8 (2.7%) were 61 years and above. The distribution based on denomination shows that 115 (38.3%) of the total respondents were Catholics, 165 (55%) were Pentecostal members, 14 (4.7%) were Orthodox Church members, while the remaining 6 (2%) attended Evangelical ministries. From the Ethnicity distribution, it could be observed that 28 (9.3%) were Hausas, 118 (39.3%) of the respondents were Igbo, while the remaining 153 (51.3%) were Yorubas. Furthermore, the frequency of attendance distribution shows that 66 (22%) of the total respondents attend Church services daily, 216 (72%) of the respondents attend Church on a weekly basis, while the remaining 18 (6%) attend Church bi-monthly.

Table 2: Linear regression analysis result of church-related events and social interaction

Model Summary – R = 0.291 R ² = 0.084 F=27.496* Sig.=0.000					
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-value	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
Constant	22.865	2.445		9.351	0.000
Church-related recreation events	0.714	0.136	0.291	5.244	0.000

Dependent variable: social interaction

The result on table 2 above showed that a significant regression F-value (27.496; $P < 0.05$) was obtained at 0.05 confidence level, hence, hypothesis one stated above is hereby rejected. This goes to show that church-related recreation events significantly enhanced social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State. Furthermore, the result revealed that the relationship could be predicted at 8.4% (R^2 -square=0.084). The significant positive t-value recorded for church-related recreation events influence suggests that the higher the church-related recreation events, the higher the social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State would be.

Table 3: Linear regression analysis result of religious group activities and social interaction

Model Summary – R = 0.132 R ² = 0.018 F=5.309* Sig.=0.022					
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-value	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
Constant	30.072	2.247		13.382	0.000
Religious group activities	0.287	0.125	0.132	2.304	0.022

Dependent variable: social interaction

The result on table 3 showed that a significant regression F-value (5.309; $P < 0.05$) was obtained at 0.05 confidence level, hence, hypothesis two as stated is hereby rejected. This goes to show that religious group activities significantly enhanced social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State. Furthermore, the result revealed that the relationship could be predicted at 1.8% (R^2 -square=0.018). The significant positive t-value recorded for religious group activities influence suggests that the higher the religious group activities, the higher the social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State would be.

Table 4: Linear regression analysis result of religious volunteering and social interaction

Model Summary – R = 0.225 R ² = 0.051 F=15.954* Sig.=0.000					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
Constant	27.623	1.912		14.450	0.000
Religious volunteering	0.426	0.107	0.225	3.994	0.000

Dependent variable: social interaction

The result on table 4 above shows that a significant regression F-value (15.954; $P < 0.05$) was obtained at 0.05 confidence level, hence, hypothesis three as stated is hereby rejected. This goes to show that religious volunteering significantly enhanced social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State. Furthermore, the result revealed that the relationship could be predicted at 5.1% ($R^2\text{-square}=0.051$). The significant positive t-value recorded for religious volunteering influence suggests that the higher the religious volunteering activities, the higher the social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State would be.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The outcome of this study is an indication that participation in recreational activities among Christian communities not only contributes to spiritual growth but also plays a crucial role in enhancing individuals' social lives. The first finding from table 2 above showed that Church-related recreation events significantly enhanced social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State. This finding agrees with Ammerman (2013) who highlights how religious gatherings play a role in creating social connections that offer emotional assistance and foster a feeling of inclusion. Also, Putnam (2000) who emphasised in his book on "the collapse and revival of American community" that engaging in religious activities, like participating in church gatherings, is linked to higher levels of trust within society and greater engagement in the community. Chaves (2004) supports the above finding as he opined that various church-affiliated occasions offer diverse chances for members of the church to connect, cooperate, and foster relationships that go beyond formal religious ceremonies. These events help establish a feeling of inclusion and common principles within the community, all while encouraging individual development and participation in social activities.

The second finding from table 3 showed that religious group activities significantly enhanced social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State. This finding is in consonance with Levin (2016) who found that engaging in religious communal events like worship services, prayer gatherings, study circles, community service initiatives, festivals, and similar activities can foster feelings of membership, emotional assistance, and enhanced social connections within the religious community. The interactions during religious rituals and group activities provide opportunities for individuals to connect with others who share similar beliefs and values, contributing to the development of a strong social network (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Several studies have also advanced the relationship between recreation activities and enhanced social interaction among Christian communities. Sherkat and Ellison (2007) in their study found that involvement in religious group events has the potential to foster significant friendships and social connections that go beyond the scope of religious activities. The influence of religious group engagements on social interaction can differ depending on elements like members' dedication, the group's openness, and the particular rituals. Some people may discover strong bonds and meaning in these activities, while others could experience alienation or unease due to varying beliefs or practices (Cadge, 2002).

The third finding from table 4 showed that religious volunteering significantly enhanced social interaction among Christian communities in Lagos State. This finding aligns with Post & Neimyer (2008) who through their study found that engaging in religious volunteer work frequently entails offering support to marginalized or underprivileged individuals. This interaction with diverse life situations fosters greater empathy and compassion within volunteers, resulting in a more encompassing and understanding attitude in their interactions with others. The common goal of participating in religious volunteering promotes significant engagement and teamwork, which has the potential to go beyond just volunteering and influence personal relationships. These connections frequently go beyond factors like age or background, creating bonds between individuals who might not have engaged with each other otherwise (Bekkers, 2005). Participating in religious volunteering greatly influences social interaction by uniting people who hold similar beliefs and values, all while contributing to the community. This nurtures a feeling of membership and friendship among volunteers, resulting in enhanced social connections (Hill & Pargament, 2003).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study established that church-related events, religious group activities, and religious volunteering are instrumental in fostering positive social interactions among Christian communities. The data collected strongly supports the existence of a positive relationship between these religious engagements, which are mostly recreational in nature and increased social interaction among Christian communities, not only contributing to spiritual growth but also plays a crucial role in enhancing individuals' social lives. Furthermore, it is recommended that leaders of Christian communities and denominations take proactive steps to extend the concept of recreation beyond its conventional boundaries within Christian circles. While religious activities play a pivotal role in fostering social interaction, there is also a need to explore innovative ways of integrating array of recreational elements into their activities. By incorporating recreational and leisurely pursuits that align with the values and principles of the Christian faith, leaders can create more relaxed and casual settings that encourage organic interactions among members. This could involve organising outings, sports events, creative workshops, or cultural activities that provide opportunities for individuals to connect on a more personal and casual level. Incorporating diverse forms of recreation not only enhances social interaction but also enriches the overall community experience. It allows members to bond over shared interests and passions beyond their religious affiliations, contributing to a well-rounded sense of belonging and camaraderie. Leaders should also consider reaching out to their congregation for input on the types of recreational activities they would be interested in participating in. This collaborative approach ensures that the offerings are tailored to the preferences and needs of the community, increasing the likelihood of active engagement and positive outcomes. Finally, expanding the scope of recreation within Christian communities can lead to a more holistic and fulfilling social experience for members. By embracing a broader range of activities, leaders can create an environment that nurtures meaningful relationships and fosters a sense of unity among individuals with shared values.

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