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Leisure Perception and Participation among Professional Women in Ile- Ife of Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined women's leisure activities; how much time they have for leisure and their perception of leisure. The study was carried out in Ile- Ife, Nigeria. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used to elicit information from respondents. Ten respondents were interviewed in-depth. Moreover, one hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered on women in different professions and one hundred and twenty-six completed the questionnaires successfully. The findings were that women do not have much time for leisure. Some use their leisure time to rest and sleep while some use it to do home chores and some do not have leisure time at all. They see leisure as unimportant and as activities of men. In conclusion, women's perception and attitudes to leisure and inability to have leisure are products of socialization that stems from patriarchy, which dictates masculinities and femininities; Women do not have much time for leisure as their jobs, children, husbands and family chores mainly take their time. The following

suggestions were offered: that awareness should be created on the importance of leisure to health. Women should be made to know that leisure activities are for their good health and general well being and that leisure is not only for men. Finally, men should be made to understand how important it is for them to participate in home chores to lighten the burden on their wives.

Key words: Leisure, Professional women, sports, Perception Nigeria

Introduction

Good health is a basic human right as well as a critical determinant of economic productivity (Zoel and Cook 1998). Leisure is paramount for the maintenance of good health. Apart from the health aspect, involvement in leisure activities gives women confidence to challenge society's gendered role restrictions and stereotypes. In this context, leisure and sports are means by which women can become empowered (Shaw 1994). Organized sports empower women through better health, muscular bodies and fun (Real 1999). Some scholars have indicated that increased physicality from exercise enhances women's ability to challenge traditional notions of femininity (Hall 1996, McDermott 2000). Despite the obvious benefits of leisure and sports, Gilroy (1989) suggests that a woman's body is rarely seen as an agent or source of power. Instead, the female body is treated as an object controlled by someone else.

According to Bittman and Wajcman (2000), leisure is another area of consumption where gender gaps exist. The gender gap in free time or pure leisure, during the week in the United States and several other Organizations for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) countries is close to three hours in favour of men. Women in these countries experience a higher proportion of their leisure time that is contaminated with other unpaid activities, such as housework and taking care of the children. Men's leisure is less likely to be interrupted. Men can experience larger blocks of pure leisure without having to worry about other obligations. Bittman and Wajcman (2000) also found that among married couple with children under two, men have approximately three times as much adult leisure time during the week (without the presence of children). In addition, men see time with children as play, while women see such time as the occasion for unpaid work. This concept of pure leisure or uncontaminated leisure coincides with Deem's (1988) idea of leisure quality, whereby the quality of leisure of women is less than it is for men.

Entitlements in leisure have been widely discussed in terms of whether it is a right or a privilege. According to Henderson (1996), research often suggest that men see it as a right where as women do not and are actively discouraged not to. Even though women may often say that they need leisure, they may not place a higher priority on it or feel they deserve it, despite the positive outcomes associated with leisure and physical fitness (Goodwin & Hill, 1998). Leisure then ends up being the lowest priority for women. Henderson (1991), citing a research work suggests that women may not feel entitled to leisure until the children have grown up and left home or until the women turn 65. However, women who work outside the home or who were employed had more leisure interest than non- employed women. Employed women more easily compartmentalize their lives to make time for leisure. In addition, employed women generally have more money and more household help which provide more leisure options (Henderson and Bialeschki 1991).

Patriarchy as a social system ascribes different values to issues as it concerns men and women. In patriarchy, what is associated with women and femininity is devalued compared to what is associated with men and masculinity and the different notion of femininity and masculinity constrain leisure experiences (Firat 1994). Firat (1994) also contends that activities that were historically conducted at home such as gardening, cooking, and sewing were associated with women because women stayed at home and performed these skills. Men were connected with activities in the workplace and less connected with the ones in the home and we see a similar separation in leisure nowadays.

According to Henderson (1996), the desire for leisure among working men is more of a motivator than it is for working women because working women must contend with housework first. Henderson (1996) therefore, suggests that women tend to have leisure that consists of activities near or at the home because it can be infused with household chores where few opportunities for leisure exist. Firestone and Shelton's (1994) work on a "double day" shows that paid work affects women's non-domestic leisure more than it does for men's. Researchers (Allison and Duncan 1987, Chambers 1986 and Shank 1986) have found that the leisure of the dual career women is largely associated with family environments, particularly children. In the integrative review of the meanings of women's leisure, Henderson (1996) notes that women tend to use the home as the primary place and means for leisure. Even in cases where nontraditional female leisure opportunities do exist outside the home, they have often been offered in such a way as to not to

interfere with household responsibilities. In this case leisure itself can be seen as problematic or constraining as it re-enforces gender appropriateness (Shaw 1994).

While it appears that leisure opportunities certainly exist for women outside the home, the literature suggests that leisure for women is still largely perceived as a secondary concern. Opportunities for leisure do exist, but it is only when other duties and other concerns have been addressed first. Expectations of a woman and her role in society appear to transcend the opportunities outside the home. Even in cases when the opportunities for women are equal to those of men, women still performs “emphasized femininity” (those roles society expects from a woman) (Connell 1987). Connell (1987) uses the notion of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity to explain gendered social patterns of sports participation. This corroborates with West and Zimmerman’s (1987) findings that mothers on golf courses are more likely to be labeled deviant and asked to account for the care of their families than fathers on golf courses. The major issue is that from an early age, girls work longer and have less leisure than boys (Bates, Denmark, Held, Helly, Hune, Lees, Pomeroy, Somerville, Zalk 1995).

Owing to this, men have dominated leisure and participatory sport activities in North America (Wiley, Shaw and Havitz 2000). The historic lopsidedness of male participation in sports is often explained by gendered socialization. Participation in sports is considered an important way to construct a masculine self identity. Boys who have difficulty with sports are vulnerable to attacks as “not real men”. Boys’ participation in sports is considered the norm and girls’ participation exceptional (Wiley et al 2000). One thing that continues to prevent self expression in participatory activities, especially organized activities is the separation between men and women and girls and boys into different spheres. This physical separation allows differences to be maintained, whether real or artificial which exaggerates differences and allows men to maintain control (Reskin 1998). According to Reskin (1998), physical separation fosters unequal treatment because it locates people in different spheres where disparity in treatment from the dominant group can be hidden or kept away from the subordinate group.

Even in the context of sports spectatorship, Wenner and Gnatz (1998) report findings that suggest that women over all will comply with the needs of their husbands when a discrepancy exists. They report that women are almost two times more likely than their husbands to watch what sports their husbands

wants to watch, and men are also more likely than women to believe that their spouses would give up watching their sports viewing in order to accommodate the other's plans. When a conflict in viewing does arise, and one partner wants to watch sports and the other partner wants to watch his or her favourite show, women are more likely than men to acquiesce to the second television set. Men usually have dominant power on TV channel choices and influence women's view by limiting their choice. This situation makes it more difficult for women to concentrate on their viewing for a long time (Lull 1990).

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to examine professional women's perception of leisure and explore how much time they have to participate in leisure activities. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the social economic characteristics of respondents;
2. Examine how professional women spend their leisure time;
3. Explore what they do at leisure;

Clarification of Concept

Leisure: In this study, leisure refers to a person's free time, and, what she/he does with such free time. It is a pleasant activity such as sport, hobby, and so on which, one enjoys doing in one's spare time. This is what Bittman and Wajcman (2000) refer to as one's free time (pure leisure) for recreational activities.

Professional women: These are career women who earn their living through specialized training acquired from school. In this paper, professional women refer to women bankers, medical doctors, teachers, administrators and legal professionals.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical frameworks for this paper are marginality and gender and Development theories. The marginality theory posits that those who feel marginalized in society feel a lack of control over their own lives because their lives are at the disposal of others (Henderson 1990).

This theoretical framework is deemed fit for the study because women have been relegated to the background in most societies. Women's lives in most

societies are being controlled by their husbands and most women live their lives to satisfy their husbands. The woman's role as wife and mother is seen as the first responsibilities a woman should handle before even thinking of herself. As such, most women are saddled with the family responsibilities to the level that they forget everything about themselves including leisure.

The Gender and Development approach is part of the feminist theoretical and development frameworks. It emanated from Women in Development as a result of the need to include men in gender issues and analysis (Connelly et al 2000). The Gender and Development approach stresses the importance of including men's issues in development and population discourses.

Despite increasing recognition of the importance of more equal gender relations, many programmes continue to work solely with women in an attempt to help empower them in their relationships with men. However, rarely do women have direct control over the contexts, occasions and forms within which these relationships take place. The Gender and Development approach stresses the importance of including men in programmes aimed at empowering women. Berer (1996) argues that the key lies in involving men in ways, which are more supportive of both men and women. If empowering women is to remain the end point, policies for change that involve women will also be grounded in a men centered and gender sensitive perspective.

Gender and Development theory is deemed appropriate for this paper in the sense that men's help in household chores is needed so as to enable women to have some time for leisure because most women complain that they use their leisure period for house work.

Methodology

This study was carried out in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The data collection techniques were in-depth interview and questionnaires. In-depth interview was carried out on ten respondents. The in-depth interview was used to learn what is pertinent to the individual about her leisure behaviour. It also enabled the researchers to get the varied responses from interviewees, which help, in finding out their real leisure experiences. However, in order to reach a wider sample, questionnaires were administered on one hundred and fifty (150) respondents and one hundred and twenty six (126) respondents completed the questionnaires successfully. The data were analyzed in themes. The data from the in-depth interview were used to compliment the data from the questionnaires. The population consisted of women doctors, nurses,

pharmacists, bankers, administrators, accountants, academics, lawyers and women police officers. The sample design was purposive.

Results

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Age

Table 1 indicates that 86(68.8%) of the respondents are between the ages of 20-40 years while 4(31.2%) are between the ages of 41 – 60 years indicating that all the respondents within the working.

Marital Status

The results show that out of the 126 professional women that were interviewed, the majority 102(81.0%) are married, 21(16.7%) are singled, 2(1.6%) are widowed while 1(0.7%) are divorcees.

Educational Qualifications

Occupation of the respondents as displayed in the above Table indicates that an appreciable number of the respondents are graduates. The majority 79(62.7%) have first degree. This is followed by those with WASC, 23(18.2%), Masters 22(17.5%) and PhD (1.6%) indicating that 81.8% of the respondents are graduates.

Occupation

A significant percentage of the respondents covered have good jobs. The majority 44(35.0%) are teachers, 37(29.3%) are medical doctors, 22 (17.5%) are bankers, 11.1% were administrators while 9 (7.1%) are legal professionals.

Husband's Educational Qualification

Results of husband's educational qualifications reveal that the majority of them are graduates. More than one-quarter of the respondents' husbands (28.6%) are first degree holders, 27.8% are Masters degree holders; 18.4% have PhDs; 7.9%; 7.1%; 6.3%; have HND, NCE, OND and West African School Certificate (WASC) respectively. The study reveals that the majority of the respondents and their husbands are highly educated.

Table 2 shows that majority of the women (66.6%) spend between 1– 4 hours on leisure per week. This is followed by those who reported spending between 5–8 hours (20.7%), those who spend between 9-13 hours per week constitute 16(12.7%). The above result indicates that the majority of respondents spend less time on leisure.

As indicated in table 3, more than half of the respondents spend their leisure time on performance of home chores. About 23.8% of them reported spending their leisure time for resting and sleeping, 3.9% stated that they spend it on traveling while 0.8% spends their leisure period for singing and praying.

When asked how she perceives and partake in leisure activities one of the interviewees, a medical doctor had this to say:

Leisure is good but it is usually men that have the time for that kind of luxury. By the time I finish from my clinic, I come back home to face housework and the children. I do not even have time to rest let alone having time for leisure. I do all these because if a woman does not do these house jobs, she is considered a bad woman and her husband would be told by his family to marry another wife.

Yet another interviewee (a pharmacist) affirmed:

I don't have any time for any leisure. Even if I am given 30 hours in a day, it will not be enough for me to finish my home chores so there is no way I can have anytime for leisure. Moreover, I see leisure as something for men. A good woman should always have something to do around her home.

Similarly, another interviewee (a nurse) stated:

It is mainly men that enjoy leisure because they do not do home chores. If they come back from work, they can go to the club or engage in other leisure activities. I do not have anytime for leisure and I do not see it as important.

In addition, a medical doctor with the Obafemi Awolowo University said:

Leisure can be interesting but the problem is having the time to engage in it. I see it as healthy and refreshing but it is mainly for men. I find it difficult to balance my time between house work and paid work and I cannot squeeze in leisure in my schedule. Even when one employs a house-help, there are so many

things which a house-help cannot do for one. My husband does not help matter too, he does not help in home-chores in any form at all and he expects his food to be ready at the appropriate time and I make sure that I do that despite the fact that my own job in the hospital is more demanding than his own.

Correspondingly, a teaching in one of the secondary schools affirmed:

I see leisure as pass time for men. In spite of the fact that I come home early from work, I still do not have time for leisure because a lot of work waits for me at home every day and by the time I am through with those home-chores, night would have fallen. It is men that have such time.

It is obvious from the above that the majority of the interviewees perceive leisure as the preserve of men and that they do not have time for leisure.

Discussion

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents showed that the women and their husbands were highly educated. This means that both the women and their husbands were modern and enlightened people who were expected to live lives that are different from the traditional society.

Majority of the women had 1- 8 hours of leisure in a week. This implies that majority of the respondents do not have much time for leisure. During the in-depth interview, an interviewee stated that 30 hours a day was not enough for her to finish all she had to do in a day. This corroborates with Bittman and Wajzman's (2000) findings that women do not have much time for leisure. This is because women particularly the career women do contend with the problem of combining paid work with home chores and as such would not have time for leisure. This debunks Henderson and Bialeschki's (1991) findings that women who work outside the home or who were employed had more leisure interest than non- employed women. They also contend that employed women more easily compartmentalize their lives to make time for leisure and that employed women generally have more money and more household help, which provide more leisure options. This situation is different in Nigeria because the study reveal that although majority of our respondents belong to the highest cadre of professional women in Nigeria, they still do not have much time for leisure. This finding is attributable to

traditional sex roles of women. For instance it was found that majority of the respondents' husbands in the study area do not subscribe to their wives employing the services of house-helpers thereby creating less time for their wives to participate in leisure activities. Femininities as a set of ideology see a woman that have much time for leisure as an unserious woman. She may also be seen as someone who does not build her home. The socialization which women undergo from early childhood to adulthood is that a good woman should not have time for any other business except the business of arranging and building her home to the comfort of her husband and children. A woman that prefers leisure to the work of good mothering and good wife is considered a lazy wife. In some societies, this may be enough reason for the man to marry another wife. During an in-depth interview, an interview stated that a good woman should always have something to do in her home.

The study shows that the majority of the professional women in the study area use their leisure time to do home chores and to rest. For the fact that 59.2 percent of them spend their leisure on home chores and others (23.8%) spent theirs to rest and sleep implies that they do not have much time to themselves. The fact that they even see rest as leisure is an indication of how busy they are as individuals. This finding corroborates Bittman and Wajcman's (2000) findings that women experience a higher proportion of their leisure time that is contaminated with other unpaid activities, such as house work and taking care of the children. It also corroborates Henderson's (1996) findings, which suggested that women tend to have leisure that consists of activities near or at the home because it can be infused with household chores. Furthermore, Henderson (1996) notes that women tend to use the home as the primary place and means for leisure. For professional women, they combine these unpaid activities with paid work there by having a double burden. It is important to note that despite professional women's husbands' high level of education, the women still do most of the house work making it impossible for them to have time for leisure. Many respondents affirmed that their husbands do not participate in housework. Instead, they would go out to meet their friends who might even discourage them from assisting their wives in their housework. This means that patriarchal values has been so deeply entrenched in the social system to the level that western education has not changed anything.

Interestingly, many of the respondents see leisure as the preserve of men. This means that even if the professional women have time for leisure, they may not involve themselves in any leisure activity because they do not see it

as important. They also do not see it as what women should bother themselves with. It is equally interesting that in spite of the high level of education of the professional women, they see leisure as unserious business.

According to Henderson (1996), research often suggests that men see leisure as a right while women do not and are actively discouraged not to. Even though, women may often say that they need leisure, they may not place a higher priority on it or feel they deserve it. All these combine to deny women the pleasure of enjoying leisure.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

The study indicated that most of the respondents do not participate in leisure activities. In the first place, majority of the respondents see leisure as a male preserve. Some of them do not see it as a serious affair implying that the women themselves do not see leisure as important. Furthermore, it was indicated that most of the respondents do not have much time for leisure as some of them complained that they use their free time to do home chores and other family unpaid activities. It was therefore concluded that professional women not having time for leisure is a product of their unfavourable attitudes toward leisure and this is as a result of their early socialization. The patriarchal system, which determines masculinities and femininities, is the major culprit in denying women the pleasure of leisure.

The paper suggests the need for awareness/sensitization programmes to be targeted on men and women on the importance of leisure as a good ingredient for good health. Men should also be sensitized on the need to help their wives at home so that the women can have some time to themselves and leisure. The question remains as to whether patriarchal social system (that determines masculinities and femininities) will allow for this change. if it does, is it also likely to apply to leisure. The answer to this question lays in future research.

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Table 1: Showing Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

PARTICULARS	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-40	86	68.8
41-60	40	31.2
Total	126	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	21	16.7
Married	102	81.0
Divorced	1	0.7
Widowed	2	1.6
Total	126	100.0
Educational qualifications		
West African school Certificate (WASC)	23	18.2
First Degree	79	62.7
Masters	22	17.5
Ph D	2	1.6
Total	126	100.0
Occupation		
Banker	22	17.5
Medical Doctors	37	29.3
Teaching	44	35.0
Admin	14	11.1
Legal	9	7.1
Total	126	100.0
Husband 's highest level of educational		
West African School Certificate	5	3.9
First Degree	36	28.6
Masters	35	27.8
Ph D	23	18.4
NCE	9	7.1
OND	8	6.3
HND	10	7.9
TOTAL	126	100.0

Table 2: Showing how much time professional women have for leisure

Particulars	F	%
Number of leisure hours in a week		
1 – 4	84	66.6
5- 8	26	20.7
9 - 13	16	12.7
Total	126	100

Table 3: Showing How Women Spend their Leisure Time

What do you do at leisure	Frequency	Percentage.
Home chores	74	59.2
Music, sports/TV, play	16	12.7
Resting/sleeping	30	23.8
Traveling	1	0.8
Singing/praying	5	3.9
Total	126	100