

ASSESSING THE USE AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES IN OLD PORT HARCOURT TOWNSHIP

Ibama Brown, Wocha Chikagbum, Kpunpamo Owanate Boyle

ABSTRACT: Public open spaces place high value on the quality of life and social interaction of residents in an urban center, and contribute to a healthy urban environment. Public open spaces are publicly or privately owned land that is publicly accessible and has been designated for leisure, play or sports. It is land set aside for the protection and /or enhancement of the natural environment. However, there have been factors militating against the utilization of these open space facilities. This raises the question of the various problems facing the use of public open spaces and what are the present uses of public open spaces around the Port Harcourt Township Area. This gave credence to the need for this paper which has its goal as assessing the use of public open spaces in Port Harcourt old Township Area. To this respect, data were collected, collated and analyzed using the SPSS model and results presented in tables, graphs and charts to interpret the findings. It was discovered that some users were not satisfied with some recreational facilities because of the inadequacy and deteriorating condition. To resuscitate open spaces in the study area, recommendations were made which suggested that the Rivers State Government should fund and partner with the private sector for effective management facilities in the Port Harcourt old Township Area and should see recreation in the light of its usefulness to health and general well-being of the people.

Keywords: Adequacy, Open space, Public open spaces, Recreation, Social interaction, Use,



INTRODUCTION

Open spaces is said to be all open spaces of public value, including not just Land but also Islands, bodies of Water such as Rivers, Canals, Lakes, and reservoirs which offer important opportunity for Sports and outdoor recreation and can also act as a visual amenity, David (2001). An open space analysis focuses on officially designated existing or planned public open spaces that are available to the public at no cost or through a nominal fee, Travlou (2007).

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The term "Urban open space can describe many types of open areas. As the counterpart of development, Marilyn (1975)

described urban open spaces as natural and cultural resource, synonymous" with neither "unused Land" nor park or recreational areas; or Land or water area with its surface open to the sky, consciously acquired or publicly regulated to serve conservation and urban shaping function as well as provide recreational opportunities. As noted by many authors such as Marilyn (1975), the Landscapes of urban open spaces can range from playing field to highly maintained environment to relatively natural landscapes. They are commonly open to public access.

The authors further noted that urban open spaces may be privately owned. These include areas outside of city boundaries such as state and national parks as well as open spaces in the Countryside. However, Kayden (2000) shows that Public open space is defined as public or privately owned land that is publicly accessible and has been designated for leisure, play or sports or land set aside for the protection and/or enhancement of the natural environment.

It is well established that the utilization of public open spaces have long been regarded as an important part of residential development in land use planning. This is not far from the prescriptions in the Port Harcourt Master Plan which is unfortunately not being properly managed, implemented and maintained

Falade (1998) in his article on public acquisition of land for landscaping and open space management shows that since the mid- 1950s there has been a growing interest in recreation,

conservation of public open spaces, pollution abatement and myriad of other ways to improve the quality of the environment. He further showed that there has been an increasing demand for recreational public open spaces for leisure and its related activities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The utilization of public open spaces in the old Port Harcourt Township is a major problem which can be shown in different ways from observation of some public open spaces in Port Harcourt Township. One example is the Alfred Diete Spiff sports complex (Civic Centre) where most of the facilities are located in one unit is in bad condition, some of the indoor facilities designated for recreation are now being hired for religious programmes. Some parts of these facilities are occupied by mentally challenged persons. It is unfortunate that this multi-million naira edifice constructed in 1976 by the then Military Administrator of Rivers state, Alfred Diete Spiff, has more or not properly managed. The Port Harcourt Master Plan (1973 - 2003) clearly designated seven public open spaces, namely fields 1-7 along Niger Street. These open spaces were said to have been well organized and utilized by both the youths and the elderly. Today the story is different. For instance, the number three (3) field is in a very bad state though people manage to play football since there are no alternatives. The number six (6) field which was designated as the football field is unusable. Number two (2) field meant for basketball is overgrown by bush as the renovation work started by the state government has been abandoned. Generally speaking the Government of Rivers State has not really maintained and/or managed public open spaces in the old Port Harcourt Township area. As Oruwari (1998) and Abdulkarim (1994) observed some of the public open spaces are being given out for residential development and other land uses far from open space concern, those not given out are neglected and turned to dump sites.

However, in the present day land-use system in Nigeria especially in Port Harcourt, Public open spaces though available are hardly accessed and utilized in the old Port Harcourt Township area. Abdulkarim (1994) and Oruwari (1998) showing that some of the public open spaces available have either being reallocated to non-public open spaces uses nor managed or neglected and have become homes for the mentally disturbed, and hoodlums. The importance of public open spaces cannot be over emphasized. Port Harcourt has a range of public open spaces which ought to be maintained to enhance utilization and improve the quality of life of the people.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Are the available open spaces adequate?
2. Are the Public open spaces used for what they are meant for?
3. Are they meeting the needs of the users?
4. Are there any difficulties/problems faced using the open spaces?

5. Are there maintenance problems in the management of the open spaces

THE GOAL OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study is assessing the use of public open spaces in Port Harcourt Township Area.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

1. To identify Public open spaces and ascertain the degree of adequacy.
2. To ascertain if they are used for purpose they are meant for and the degree of utilization
3. To ascertain if the users' need are met
4. To identify problems entered when using the open spaces
- 5 To Identify reasons for lack of maintenance and the way forward.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

The body system needs not be overworked and constantly under stress. There is usually a time for one to get off the usual routine daily activities that are geared towards the pursuit of wealth.

The importance of recreation to the individual well-being cannot be over emphasized. Parks are intended to provide a means of escape from the cramped, confined and controlling circumstances of the streets of the town, in order words, a sense of enlarged freedom, Alexander (2000). A well planned public open space has the propensity to attract and/or induce people to utilize it. The abandonment or neglect of public parks denies the people the opportunity to recreate.

Thus, by studying the uses and management of public open spaces in the old Port Harcourt Township Area, these challenges which would address this trend would provide a good framework on how to have better, healthier and functional public open spaces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public open space is a public or privately owned Land that is accessible to the public and has been designated for leisure, play or sports, or Land set aside for the protection or enhancement of the natural environment, Kayden (2000).

However, Ebenezer (1898), considered the usefulness of public open spaces so much that he propounded the theory of the three magnets where he talked about the City and the Country side which can be brought together in other words incorporating the public open spaces into the urban environment.

This shows that the City which is one magnet can be "married" to form the third one-city Countryside. This theory was necessitated by the deteriorating human housing congestion, sub-urban environment, the ever increasing pressure on the Socio-economic facilities in London. To this end, Ebenezer Howard proposed the

Garden City Movement. As a result, Countryside were no longer waste lands but served significant purposes such as camping sites, games reserves, holiday resorts etc.

CLASSIFICATION OF OPEN SPACES AND TYPES

CLASSIFICATION OF OPEN SPACES

Having a classification system for public open space enhances the opportunity for adequacy assessment in terms of distribution, diversity, and quality of public open space.

A four tiered classification system is proposed:

- A contextual classification, considering catchments.
- A functional classification, considering the primary use of the open space.
- A landscape setting classification considering the physical condition and characteristics of the area.
- A relationship classification, considering the relationship with other open space.

The Contextual Classification shows that the hierarchy has four tiers:

Local Open Space, Municipal Open Space, Regional Open Space, Civic and Community Spaces
Local or Neighbourhood Open Space.

• **Local Open Space**

This describes the small local parks that are predominantly provided in every precinct. Local open space will have immediate local catchments, be relatively small in size, service daily and weekly neighborhood use and will generally be easily accessed by bicycle or foot. It will include spaces for play, informal recreation and sport, at a relatively low level of complexity.

• **Municipal Open Space**

This term is used to describe areas that generally serve either the whole municipality, or several suburbs. The expectation is that residents would be prepared to drive to these places. They may be significant for the municipality as a whole or a substantial part of it due to size, function or diversity. Municipal level public open spaces are significant for their conservation or cultural values. They can also often serve as a medium to longer term "stay" park, drawing their visitors from catchments of several suburbs. Municipal level packs will generally be larger and of a greater complexity than local or neighborhood public open spaces.

• **Regional Open Space**

Regional open space generally serves regional catchments broader than one municipality. They may host significant sites or species of flora and fauna. By virtue of their size, diversity of opportunities or level of development, they may attract high numbers of people, including tourists in some cases. Residents

will not necessarily expect these types of spaces to be available in every municipality.

• **Civic and Community Spaces**

This category describes "non-park" community spaces, such as town squares, plazas, malls, etc which can serve important roles as informal meeting spaces in busy civic and commercial precincts, as well as venues for planned community events. Deficiencies in such community spaces can sometimes be addressed through street closures and/or widening of footpaths.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF OPEN SPACES

The following eleven primary functions of open space have been developed to reflect the primary type of development and use:

A brief description of each primary function follows:

✚ **Playground**

Areas that are primarily set aside for play equipped with skate facilities and that have no other recreation facilities.

✚ **Social Family Recreation Area**

Areas that provide opportunities for a range of age groups typically catering for play picnics, casual ball games, traits and possibly environmental activities.

✚ **Community Farm /Garden**

Areas dedicated to horticultural or agricultural recreation activities.

✚ **Cemeteries! Memorial / Remembrance! Garden**

Areas dedicated to the memory of people or events.

Ornamental Garden

✚ **Areas dedicated specifically to horticultural features.**

✚ **Corridor/ Trail**

Primarily a green space trail Link or walkway between streets! Neighbourhoods and areas of public open space

✚ **Sport**

Areas reserved for sporting pursuits, for example baseball, soccer, cricket and football.

✚ **Rough Natural Area**

- Paved Areas
- Vegetable Garden / Pasture | Agriculture

Relationship Classification

This classification has been developed to help interpret the relationship each piece of public open space has with other open spaces. The following three relationship types included:

- Part of a larger parcel of open space
- Linked to other open space
- Stand-alone open space

✚ **Part of a larger parcel of open space**

A piece of public open space which is one of a number of differently named or developed parcels of public open space that are connected or adjacent to each other.

Linked to other opens space. This refers to separate parcels of public open spaces that are connected to others by an off-road link, walkway, bridge, neighborhood court etc.

✚ **Standalone Open Space**

Land not adjacent to or connected to any other open space. Maller (2002).

TYPES OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

There are different types of public open spaces, Brosseau (2008), has listed a range of public open spaces including different levels of parks including district parks, community and neighborhood parks. It showed that while community are smaller scale parks that serves the needs of the community, the neighborhood parks give more coverage as it serves the neighborhood.

DISTRICT PARK

District Park is a large park with a variety of Recreational facilities. It serves the combination needs of several surrounding local communities or suburbs where People within the community may travel some distance to access. Liters for range of age groups Parks and all developed generally multi-functional can include active and passive parks, Recreational facilities such as kick-about areas, multipurpose hard surfaces and playground equipment can include a special interest component such as a River, water body etc.

Neighborhood Parks: (Including pocket parks and public squares) are smaller park spaces serving the immediate local community/neighborhood (within from Social walking distance) focused on informal Recreation including play equipment and kick about areas, Brosseau (2008).

Others include the

- ❖ Sports Facilities: include sports fields, stadia and indoor halls.
- ❖ Undeveloped: No land zoned but that has not been developed for whatever reason.
- ❖ Coastal: Subject to usually linear public open spaces and amenities along coastal regions.
- ❖ Amenities: Local context which are managed by municipal parks Department and may include high profile tourist facilities.
- ❖ Gardens: Indicate areas where municipal parks Department are responsible in some mane for maintenance or management of community vegetable gardens.
- ❖ Neighborhood Parks: (Including pocket parks and public squares) are smaller park spaces serving the immediate local community/neighborhood (within from Social walking distance) focused on informal Recreation including play equipment and kick about areas, Brosseau (2008).

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Extract from the Port Harcourt Master Plan (1973-2003) showed that public open spaces, particularly in urban areas, have

extremely important positive influence on Community health and well-being. Reachable good quality public open spaces are important as they provide city inhabitants with direct contact with nature, which is essential to human health.

They also provide opportunities for people to experience regular human contact in a non-threatening environment, which is a key health influence. Public open spaces have an important role in providing places where native and indigenous vegetation can still thrive and provide habitat for native birds and animals.

Public open spaces are very important elements in the urban areas as regards to the well-being of the population. Public open spaces give among other things, which make it very important to humanity:

- i. Fresh Air: high vegetation absorbs dust and gases. The air is measurably better in towns with more vendors and offers us natural oxygen, which is necessary for health purposes.
- ii. Beauty: A town with parks and tree lined streets is more beautiful and comfortable to live in. Thus is a good scenery for both residents and passersby.
- iii. Recreation: Open space within and around parts of the City gives residents the opportunity of recreation and sports. It is especially important that children and adolescent are given sufficient space for games and sports to work off surplus energy. This particular aspect is more important to our study and cannot be ignored in seeing to the quality of life of people.

The importance of public open spaces and open spaces management/maintenance go a long way to prevent ad-hoc development in our towns and cities. Thus the presentation made in the master plan of Port Harcourt for the Government to consider the issue of public open spaces very seriously.

Research has shown that an important factor in determining the health and wellbeing of a given community, and of the individuals within it, is the level of contact and interaction that occurs between the people of that community, Castillo (1994).

The provision of public spaces, which people enjoy gathering in and using can play an important role in promoting and fostering human contact and interaction, it is important to also recognize the critical role that appropriate, accessible, safe and appealing non-park spaces such as town squares, courts, malls and plazas and footpaths can play.

ENHANCING SOCIAL INTERACTION AND HEALTH

In the provision of public open space, Castillo (1994) further advised Councils to consider the underlying reasons for providing them. He opines that fundamentally public open spaces are provided to enhance community health and wellbeing; hence it is important for Councils to embrace a broader definition of public open space challenges to that of just the provisions of traditional parks, gardens and reserves.

The provision of public spaces, which people enjoy gathering in and using can play an important role in promoting and fostering human contact and interaction. Whilst parks, gardens and reserves play a very significant role in this process, it is important

to also recognize the critical role that appropriate, accessible, safe and appealing non-park spaces such as town squares, courts, malls and plazas, footpaths and play, Carr (1992). In support of this notion the World Health Organization states in its publication "The Solid Facts" that "Designing facilities to encourage meeting and social interaction in communities can improve mental health." It also indicates that "Social support and good social relations make an important contribution to health (and) supportive relationships also encourage healthier behavior patterns social isolation and exclusion (on the other hand) are associated with increased rates of premature death and poorer chances of survival after heart attack", and poorer health generally, Castillo (2003).

HISTORY OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE

London has a long history of urban open space, which has significantly influenced development of modern parks, and is still among the greenest capital cities in the world Roberts (2001).

The basis for many urban open spaces seen today across Europe and the West began its process of development in London in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was during this period that the areas became pockets of green in the urban environment, commonly modeled after the natural wild of the countryside Roberts (2001).

The first parks to reverse the trend of privatization and again be opened to the public were England's royal parks in the nineteenth century. This was done in response to the extensive and unexpected population movement from the country into cities. As a result, "the need for open space was socially and politically pressing. The glitches, to which the establishment of parks was expected to offer some respite, were easy to designate such as: overcapacity, poverty, uncleanliness, and ill health, lack of morals and morale and so on. Such opinions again received significant popular support during the "City Beautiful" movement in America during the 1890s and 1900s. The provision of public open spaces gives the public an opportunity to get all of the apparent health and lifestyle benefits of having such access to open spaces within urban environs.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Urban open space is under strong pressure. Due to increasing urbanization, combined with a spatial planning policy of densification, more people face the prospect of living in less green residential environments, especially people from low economic strata. This may lead to environmental injustice with regard to the distribution of (access) to public green space.

FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Public open spaces and recreational areas serve many functions. They provide areas such as those used for organized sports, or passive areas use for gardens, planted areas, Walkways, children's' play areas, picnic grounds, and other less organized activities. Areas of public open space also fulfill to an amenity

function in that they add to the pleasantness of urban setting by creating visual relief from the respective appearance of city buildings and roads. Roads also serve an important public open space function, providing a contribution to Local amenities, as well as offering areas where people can meet and interact.

Including enhance and protect the resource base i.e. air, water, soil plants and in turn the animals as well as affect economics development like tourism, development patterns, employment, real estate values etc., Goodman and Freund (1986). Furthermore, an ingredient that foster positive needs physical and psychologically in recreation and amenity. It could also prevent the city from growing uncontrollably as well as prevent the coalescence of Port Harcourt neighboring towns and settlements, Port Harcourt Master Plan (1973-2003).

MANAGEMENT PROBLEM OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES IN PORT HARCOURT

Open public spaces can further provide a more economically productive city, town or region, Goodman (1986).

The challenges in the management of public open spaces in Port Harcourt are as follows: First it should be noted that there are already planned open and public open spaces in Port Harcourt though few.

However, the lack of proper understanding in the importance of open spaces has retarded the implementation of the open public spaces policy, especially on the part of Government. In spite of the fewness in the number of public open spaces, they are still not properly managed; rather some are even re-allocated out for other developmental purposes.

METHODOLOGY

Key informants, questionnaires administration, field survey were the primary sources of data collected and used. Also some secondary sources of data such as: textbooks references from maps, journals and other archival materials.

DETERMINATION OF TARGET POPULATION

Stanley (1990) describes target population as persons, households, organizations, communities or other identifiable units to which intervention programmes are directed. In determining the adequacy and management of recreational facilities in which this paper is interested in, the target populations are the resident users, government functionaries and managers of Public recreation facilities.

Table 1 Questionnaires Distribution in the study area

Study Area	N	%
Civil Centre	80	40
Other public open spaces		
No. 1 field	20	10

No. 2 Field	20	10
No. 3 Field	20	10
No. 4 field	20	10
No. 5 field	20	10
No. 6 field	20	10
Total	200	100

Source: Authors' field work, 2013

Above				
Total	80	100	120	100

Source: Authors' field work, 2013

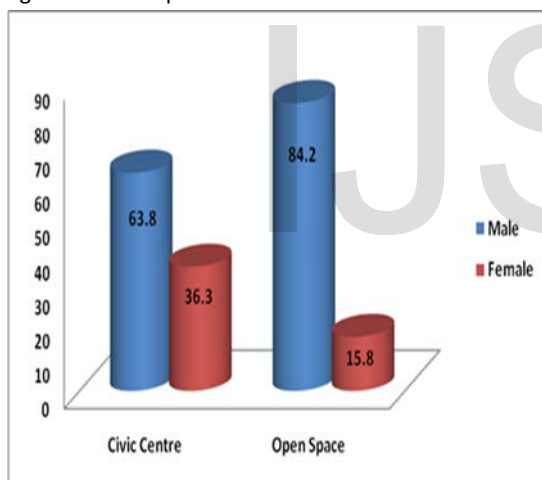
Table 2 above showed that the sample drawn from the Civic Centre was made up of mainly people within the age cohort 33-39 years, representing 50% and those between age cohorts 26-34 accounted for 32.5%. For respondents drawn for other public open spaces (fields 1-6), those in age cohorts 26-32 years accounted for 37.5%, while those in age cohorts 19-25 years and 40-46, were at par with 20.8% each.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

SEX OF RESPONDENT

Figure 1 revealed that 63.8% respondents at the Civic Centre and 84.2% of respondents in the other public open spaces (fields 1-6), were males while females accounted for 36.3% at the Civic Centre area and 15.8% in the other public open spaces (fields 1 – 6) respectively.

Fig. 1: Sex of Respondents



Source: Authors' field work, 2013

INCOME OF RESPONDENTS

Table 3 revealed that respondents within the income bracket of ₦18,000 - ₦28,999 were dominant in both target study areas representing 50% and 54.2% at the Civic Centre and other public open spaces (fields 1-6) areas respectively. The medium income stood at ₦29, 825 and ₦38, 854 for the Civic Centre respondents and other public open spaces (fields 1-6) respectively.

Table 3: Income Level of Respondents

Income Category	Civic Centre		Field No. 1-6	
	N	%	N	%
18,000 – 28,999	40	50.0	65	54.2
29,000 – 37,999	26	32.5	0	0
38,000 – 45,999	14	17.5	31	25.8
46,000 – 53,999	0	0	10	8.3
76,000 – 100,999	0	0	14	11.7
Total	80	100	120	100

Source: Authors' field work, 2013

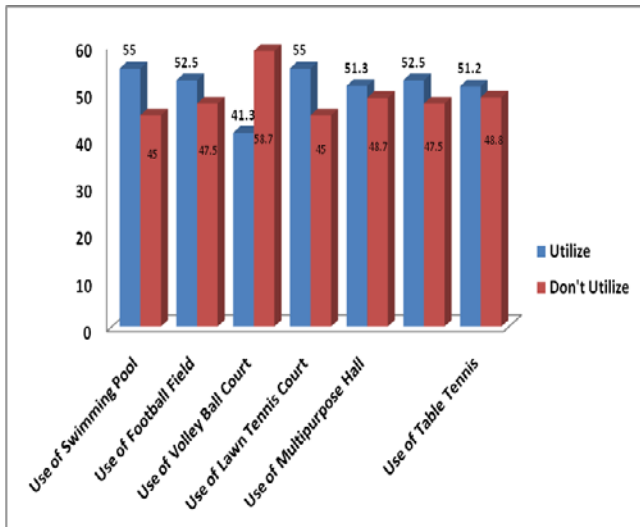
TYPES OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES MOSTLY USED IN THE STUDY AREA.

At the sports complex (Civic Center) various recreational facilities are utilized, they include the Swimming pool with 55% and football field with 52.5%, while the volleyball court constitutes 41.3% the Lawn Tennis Court constitutes 55%, 51.3% of respondents said they utilize the multipurpose Hall while the use of Bar/Restaurant and the Table Tennis constitutes 52.5% and 51.2% respectively. The modal response as regards the mostly used recreational facilities is the Swimming Pool and Lawn Tennis Court, both having 55% each.

Fig. 2 Types of Recreational Facilities Mostly Used at the Civic Centre

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age Cohort	Civic Centre		Field No. 1-6	
	N	%	N	%
19-25	14	17.5	25	20.8
26-32	26	32.5	45	37.5
33-39	40	50.0	14	11.7
40-46	0	0	25	20.8
47-50	0	0	6	5.0
50 and	0	0	5	4.2

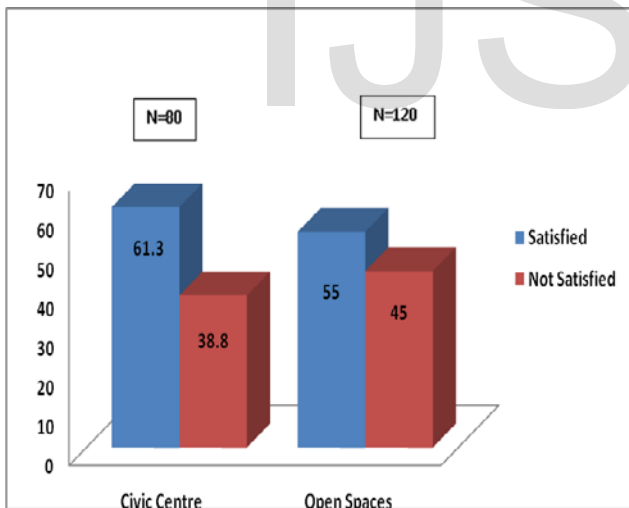


Source: Authors' field work, 2013

AVAILABILITY OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN THE STUDY AREA

The basic recreational facilities found in each of the other public open spaces (fields 1-6) were football field, Basket Ball court, Volley Ball court, Lawn Tennis Court, garden. While the Civic center had the following facilities, Swimming Pool, football field, Lawn tennis court, Volley ball court, Table Tennis Court, and Multi-purpose Hall.

Fig. 3 User Satisfaction with recreational facilities



Source: Authors' field work, 2013

SATISFACTION WITH AVAILABLE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN THE STUDY AREA

Figure 3 showed user satisfaction or otherwise of respondents with the recreational facilities in their neighbourhoods. The chart reveals that in civic centre, 61.3% of respondents said they were satisfied while 38.7% said otherwise. Similarly respondents from the other public open spaces with 55% responded as being satisfied and 45% expressing their dissatisfaction with the facilities.

REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES

Table 4 showed reasons for user dissatisfaction with recreational facilities in the study area. For those around the civic centre, the main reason was that of poor maintenance which accounted for 52.5% of reasons for dissatisfaction followed by the fact that facilities were not enough to serve the area, accounting for 27.5% of that distribution. However, at the open spaces, the modal response being that the facilities were not enough to serve the area, representing 72.5% of the distribution.

Table 4: Reasons for user dissatisfaction

Response	Civic Centre		Other public open spaces (Fields No. 1-6)	
	N	%	N	%
Poorly Maintained	42	52.5	-	-
Not well built	-	-	14	11.7
Facility not enough to serve the area	22	27.5	87	72.5
Substandard Design	16	20.0	19	15.8
Total	31	100	54	100

Source: Authors' field work, 2013

USER RATING OF FACILITIES

Table 5 below shows respondents' rating of recreational facilities. The table further reveals that most respondents in both civic centre and public open spaces rated the facilities to be 'Good' accounting for 50% and 57.5% of the distributions respectively.

Table 5: User rating of Recreational Facilities in the study area

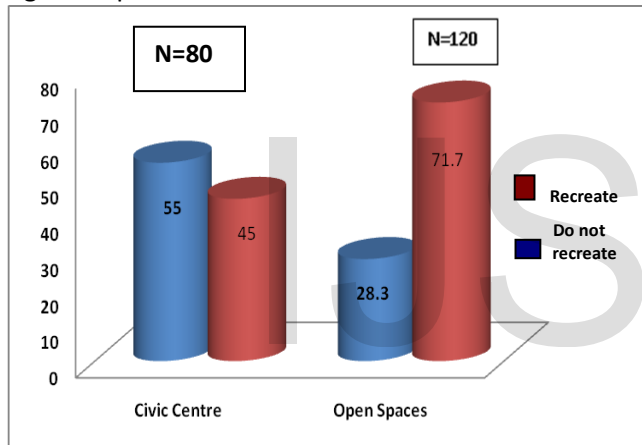
Rating	Civic Centre		Other public open spaces (Field No. 1-6)	
	N	%	N	%
Very Good	14	17.5	10	8.3
Good	40	50.0	69	57.5
Bad	14	17.5	31	25.8
Very Bad	12	15.0	10	8.3
Total	80	100	120	100

Source: Authors' Field Work, 2013

Respondents’ Recreational Status

Figure 4 showed respondents’ recreational status. Respondents were asked if they had reasons not to recreate and 55% of respondents around the civic centre answered in the affirmative, while those who answered otherwise accounted for 45%. However, the reverse was the case around the open spaces, with 28.3% saying they have reason not to recreate and 71.7% saying they have no reason for not recreating.

Fig.4: Respondent’s recreational status



Source: Authors’ Field Work, 2013

RESPONDENTS REASONS FOR NOT RECREATING

Table 6 below showed the reasons given by respondents for not recreating. The major reason across the study locations was that of lack of time for recreation accounting for 56.8% and 44.1% of the distributions at Civic centre and other public open spaces respectively. Other reasons given around the civic centre included “insecurity”, dislike of facilities available and distance to facilities, accounting for 22.7%, 12.5% and 9.1% respectively. Nevertheless, around the open spaces, other reasons given included dislike of facilities, insecurity and distance to facilities accounting for 17.6%, 9.1% and 11.8% respectively.

Table 6: Respondents’ Reason for Not Recreating

Response	Civic Centre		Other public open spaces (Fields No. 1-6)	
	N	%	N	%
No time for that	25	56.8	15	44.1
Don’t like the facilities available (Substandard)	5	11.3	9	26.5
Insecurity	10	22.7	6	17.6
Long Distance to recreational facility	4	9.1	4	11.8
Total	44	100	34	100

No time for that	25	56.8	15	44.1
Don’t like the facilities available (Substandard)	5	11.3	9	26.5
Insecurity	10	22.7	6	17.6
Long Distance to recreational facility	4	9.1	4	11.8
Total	44	100	34	100

Source: Authors’ field work, 2013

RESPONDENTS’ SUGGESTIONS AS TO WAYS OF IMPROVING PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Table 7 showed respondents suggested ways to improve public open spaces. The Table below reveals that the most popular suggestion as to the improvement of public open spaces in the fields was “maintenance of facilities”, accounted for 55% and the provision of adequate security accounted for 32.5%. at the Civic Centre, the modal response was the provision of adequate security which accounted for 50% of the distribution and closely followed by maintenance of facilities which accounted for 26.7% of the distribution.

Table 7: How to Improve Public Open Spaces

Response	Civic Centre		Field No. 1-6	
	N	%	N	%
Adequate security	26	32.5	60	50.0
Maintenance of facilities	44	55.0	32	26.7
Provide recreational facilities	4	5.0	8	16.7
Arrest all lunatics in recreational facilities	6	7.5	20	6.7
Total	80	100	120	100

Source: Authors’ Field Work, 2013

CONCLUSION

Based on the research, it has been discovered that users are not satisfied with some recreational facilities in the Civic center, and other public open spaces (Fields No. 3, No. 4 and No. 6). This is because of the inadequacy of the facilities in the public open spaces in the Port Harcourt township area. However, users of facilities in the area were found to be somewhat grateful to have the facilities even though more modern facilities are needed. Recreational development must be treated as an essential part of the city development process, also recreational facilities may provide a variety of accessible opportunities to people and secure a means of enhancing the quality of living on the Port Harcourt township area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is suggested that the Rivers State Government should fund and partner with private sector to manage the facilities in public open spaces in the Port Harcourt Township area.
2. The Rivers State government should appoint a committee to resuscitate the Port Harcourt civic centre and the other public open spaces in the Port Harcourt township area, and then privatized it for better management where necessary.
3. The Rivers State Government should not see recreation as a waste of time but should view recreation in the light of its usefulness to spiritual, psychological, physical and general well-being of the people.
4. The government should upgrade and improve the recreational facilities in the public open spaces in the township area of Port Harcourt.

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