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Recess Practices and Pupils Engagement with Physical Play Activities in Primary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study investigated recess practices and pupils engagement with physical play activities in primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consists of 5,904 primary school teachers. While the sample size comprised 590 teachers, proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. The instrument used for data collection was a structured 25-item questionnaire titled "Recess Practices Questionnaire" (RPQ). Three experts in the Faculty of Education of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Kuder-Richardson 20 to establish the internal consistency of the items with Coefficient value of 0.86. The data collected were analyzed using percentages in answering the two research questions posed for the study, while the null hypotheses were tested using chi-square statistics. The findings revealed that primary schools in Cross River State lack recess practices, play facilities were not available in primary schools, inadequate time for play during recess and poor recess supervision of play during recess were identified. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made among which were that teachers should not deny children recess, the management of schools should provide enough space for play during recess, State Ministry of Education should ensure that adequate play facilities are provided, before granting approval to schools.

Keyword: *Recess practices, pupils engagement, physical play activities, primary schools*.

1. Introduction

It is natural that children should play, because play as well as learning is natural components of children's daily lives. Play is truly a universal phenomenon, because it exists in different forms in every society. When you ask children of what they like to do best, the response would be that they like to play. Play is considered to be a practice initiated by children, while learning is seen as a result of a practice initiated by adults. In the context of primary school, play and learning are often separated in terms of time and space.

Children are highly motivated to play, though adults may not understand why they play. Bodrova and Leong (2013) and Uduchukwu (2011) observed that play is both fun and developmentally valuable. Modupe, Okonkwo and Osuji (2006) defined play as any activity that children are engaged in, for the enjoyment it provides without necessarily thinking of the end product. Egaga and Arikpo (2015) noted that a child who does not play is a sick child. A child who is prevented by his teacher or guardian from playing will be sick physically and mentally. Children all over the world have play at the very heart of their learning and development, because it keeps them happy.

Play is the only common means that children can use to explore their real environment and learn. Children may understand the world better when they are involved in doing something and by interacting with their peers. It is when they are involved in their learning that they take ownership of new information. According to Isenberg and Quisenberry (2012), when children are on the playground through social interaction with their peers they may be acquiring skills that are transferred to the classroom. Learning requires children to interact with their peers to gain facts and skills and making information one's own. Hurwitz (2012) asserts that the purpose of play is to motivate, stimulate, develop positive attitude, concentration, concepts, skills, language/communication skills and demonstrate awareness of recent learning and skills to consolidate learning.

Play allows children to relax and release the pressure from their normal environment. Through imaginative play, children act out roles and experiences that are important to them. They become motivated when taking on a role such as becoming an important member of the family, community or state. Children often use different objects to represent something else. For example, empty cartons could be used as vehicles or empty boxes of matches could be used as handsets. Dancy (2010) observed that when children are using their imagination to play, their brains are working in a much healthier way than when they are being made to sit and complete pages from work books. When children organize their own games, they learn respect for rules, self-discipline, control of aggression, practice leadership, resolve conflict, develop understanding, playing by rules and associate with children of different groups (Blatchford, Baines & Pellegrini., 2013). Some teachers consider play time as a waste of time and children are being bombarded with different lessons, instructional materials, homework and extension classes after school lessons and home lessons. Rushton (2011) noted that with stimulating environment, children's brain are able to connect millions of nerves pathways, that help in stress reduction and allowing greater flexibility and creativity in children. When children organize their own games, they learn respect for rules, self-discipline, control of aggression, practice leadership, resolve conflict, develop understanding, playing by rules and associate with children of different ethnic groups (Blatchford, Baines & Pellegrini, 2013).

In the primary school system, play is observed during recess. Holmes, Pellegrini and Schmidt (2006) and Arborgast, Kane, Kirwan and Hertel (2009) see recess as a time during the school day that provides children with the opportunity to engage in physical activity, conversation, participate in activities with their peers without adult intervention. Today, the issue of recess is controversial. Many schools are either eliminating or reducing recess and free play time. Recess time is being cut down, in order to increase time spent on academic instruction. Recess time is seen as a period that interferes and takes away children's time from learning which is the real thing. Pellegrini (2005) asserted that some schools claim to offer recess, but it is adult directed, while some have it once a week or less than 15 minutes. Some studies on recess have revealed that in United States, about 40 % of school districts have eliminated recess or are considering to do so, and a similar trend of eliminating recess was also occurring in United Kingdom and Australia (Silver, 2015). Jacobson (2008) noted that this lack of free and undirected play during recess may contribute to the rise in childhood obesity, anxiety and depression among children. Therefore, recess policies and practices should be put in place and made mandatory on primary schools to ensure that recess is scheduled daily in the school activities. Recess policies are plans of actions guiding on how recess should be

operated in primary schools. This is because laws require schools to have children participate in physical activity outside the classroom for various amount of time every day. Having policies on primary school recess encourages schools to ensure that recess is scheduled daily in the school activities. Without policies, some schools may not make provision for recess and physical activity for children in daily activities. Policies could serve as a catalyst for promoting activity daily in the school schedules.

According to Anyikwa (2013), in recent time, many adults including practitioners in education fail to understand the importance of play in a child's development. Consequently, recess time in primary schools is either eliminated or reduced in order to increase instructional time. However, recess practices allow children, a realistic setting in which to cultivate skills for leaning. For play to have a positive result on children, it is imperative that recess practices should be put in place. Recess practices are habits or customs that are carried out regularly, to facilitate recess. These practices are that: enough recess time should be included in the school time table as part of the regular schedule for the day. As observed by Ginsburg (2007), the periods have to be spread in between the lessons for the day to facilitate learning. It is when children are provided with enough recess time and minimal recess supervision to engage in unstructured free play that they become self-directed and acquire important skills. It should be noted that some countries that are top ranking in international test have that in place to provide their children with extensive recess in the morning and in the afternoon, as well as break. The secret behind Finland's super smart kids (2013) gave an instance of Finland students that rank among the top, in terms of academic testing and knowledge, yet their students receive over an hour of recess every day. They consider recess to be an essential part of the school's day.

Research has revealed that there is a positive correlation between exercise and academic performance (The secret behind Finland's super Smart kids, 2013). National Association of Early Childhood Specialists (2012) opined that since recess is an essential component of education, it should be part of the curriculum for pre-school through elementary school. In the same vein American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) recommended that primary schools should have their pupils participate in physical activity outside the classroom for various amount of time of at least 60 minutes every day.

According to Blatchford, Baines and Pellegrini (2013), when primary school children are provided with enough free playtime, the factor that determines their choice of activity might be the environment of the playgrounds and availability of play facilities. A playground is a place with specific design that allows children to play. Riders, Fairelough and Straoton (2010) opined that school playgrounds and other facilities provide important settings and important opportunities for children to engage in physical activity. It can be observed that some schools may have adequate playgrounds and play facilities, while some may have very little. Lasseter (2007) added that some schools that observe recess may make provision for adequate playgrounds and play facilities, while those that do not observe recess may lack play facilities or not have them at all. Brown (2013) added that schools that embed recess practices in their daily activities, would provide modern play facilities like; climbing structure, trike path, water stations, building blocks, swings, sand box, slides, monkey bars, merry go- round, chin up bars, overhead ladder, climbing structure that can help children to develop upper body strength and a large space that can allow for more extended play etc. However, many public and private primary schools may not have adequate playgrounds

and equipment. General observation shows that some schools may have very little spaces particularly in private primary schools. In fact, some private primary schools operate on rented structures or built structures without playgrounds.

There are two types of playgrounds in the school setting and they are: the large area playground and the small area playground. In a large area playground according to Riders, Faire and (2010), children achieve more recess physical activity than children in the small area playgrounds. The playground during recess is a place where children can actively confront, interpret and learn from meaningful social experience (Bishop & Curtis, 2011).

Some times when children are engaged in physical activity during recess, they may encounter some problems that could hinder their recess. These problems are that: recess environment sometimes encourage aggression and anti-social behaviour, intimidation and violence among others. Farmer, Petrin, Robertson, Fraser, Hall, Day and Dalisman (2010) noted that in the playground, there are child bullies who use physical power or intimidation to harm weaker peers. Another problem that children may encounter during play in recess is fear of injuries due to unsafe playground equipment (Barrios, Jones & Gallagher, 2007). Children are occasionally hurt or injured on challenging playground equipment.

With enormous problems militating against recess, it is imperative that some measures should be sought to enhance recess. Since bullying and aggressive behaviours are exhibited during recess, Pellegrini (2005) suggested that more adult recess supervisors can help to reduce aggression. Lewis, Colvin and Sugai (2010) suggested that there should be proper recess supervision and that school officials can consider implementing an intervention plan design to promote a more positive school recess climate. Another measure to eliminate the possibility of recess accident, according to American with Disabilities Act (2005), is to meet up with playground standard in terms of Disability Act 2005 (American Disabilities Act, 2005). This means that newly constructed facilities should be readily accessible to individuals with disabilities and children. The recess practice to enhance play during recess is to pass mandatory policies on primary schools. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2014) in a guideline statement released for children age 5-12 years noted that children need at least 60minutes' physical free play activity daily. The surplus energy theory explains that children who fall below this standard accumulate surplus energy that needs to be blown off steam during recess period. The researcher therefore, was motivated to investigate recess practices and pupils engagement with physical play activities in primary schools in Cross River State.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Some studies on recess reveal that recess became a source of controversy in the late 1980's when people began to question its role in the school curriculum. In United States, about 40 % of school districts have eliminated recess or are considering doing so, and a similar trend of eliminating recess was occurring in United Kingdom and Australia (Silver, 2015). Schools have begun to limit or eliminate recess. Young school children currently may no more have recess. Evidence has shown that this lack of free and undirected play during recess may be part of what contributes to the rise in childhood obesity, anxiety and depression among children.

Despite the importance of recess and its clear benefits in a child's development, recess seems to be losing its value in the society. The problem may be that some schools are built without playgrounds, while some may have no recess time, because they may only be concerned with academic content at the expense of recess. Even those schools that observe recess seem to have reduced the time from what it use to be. This worrisome scenario prompted the researcher to conduct the study that seeks to ascertain ''Recess practices and pupils engagement with physical play activities in primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria''.

The purpose of the study is to investigate recess practices and pupils engagement with physical play activities in primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The recess practices and pupils engagement with physical play activities in public and private primary schools in Cross River State
2. The time allocated for recess in public and private primary schools in Cross River State.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What recess practices engage pupils with physical play activities in public and private primary schools/?
2. What amount of time do primary schools (public and private) allocate to recess in Cross River State/?

1.4 Hypotheses

The following two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between public and private primary school teachers in the percentage ratings on the recess practices that engage pupils with physical play activities.
2. There is no significant difference between public and private primary school teachers in the percentage ratings on the time allocated for recess.

3. Method

This study adopted descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey is a type of research design, which shows accurately the characteristics of a particular individual, situation or a group. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey design is a design that aims at collecting data and describing them in a systematic way the features of a given population. In a survey design, a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered being representative of the entire group. This design is considered appropriate, because it enables the researcher to identify the characteristics of the population objectively. The design also provides the researcher with the opinions of respondents considered significant representative of the population with regards to recess practices in primary schools in Cross River State. The study was carried out in Cross River State.

The population of the study comprised 5,904 respondents and the sample size was 590 respondents. One third, of the eighteen Local Government Areas was calculated and used for the

study. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents. This technique ensures that a greater representativeness of the sample is relative to the population. This means that in respect of their weight in the population, each Local Government Area was assigned different weights. The population was stratified in terms of six (6) Local Government Areas and 10% of 5904 teachers resulting 590 teachers. This means that the sample size was made up of 60 teachers from Bekwarra Local Government Area, 104 teachers from Boki,90 teachers from Obanliku, 111 teachers from Obudu,109 teachers from Ogoja and 116 teachers from Yala. The reason for selecting 590 respondents was based on Nwana as cited by Agim (2012) that if the population to be studied is in a few hundreds, 40% or more sample should be withdrawn and studied. On the other hand, if the population for study is in many hundreds, 20% sample should be withdrawn and studied. When the population is in a few thousands, 10% sample should be taken and if the population is in many thousands, 5% sample can be taken and studied.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured and developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was titled "Recess Practices Questionnaire (RPQ)" consisting 25 items after extensive review of the literature and consultation with the experts in the field. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A was designed to collect background information from the respondents. Section B was subdivided into B1 and B2. B1 was made up of 24 items soliciting information on recess practices and pupils engagement with physical play activities and B2 was on information on time allowed for recess in primary schools. The items in B1 were structured on yes or no and B2 was structured on the range of 10, 20, 30 and 30 minutes and above respectively. The instrument was validation by three experts, two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The experts were given the instrument alongside with the purpose of the study and the research questions for the exercise. The un useful items were dropped and their corrections were effected, before the final copy of the instrument was drafted and approved by the researcher's supervisor.The instrument was administered to 20 teachers in primary schools in Ikom L.G.A, outside the study area. The instrument was tested outside the study area, because the respondents have the same characteristics with the respondents under study. The instrument was duly administered and data were collected and analyzed, using Kuder-Richardson (K-R) 20 Coefficient to establish the internal consistency of the items. According to Nworgu (2015), Kuder-Richardson 20 method was used, because when an instrument is applicable to dichotomously scored items, Kuder-Richardson 20 is considered appropriate. The analysis gave Kuder-Richardson 20 coefficient value of 0.86. Hence, the coefficient value of 0.86 revealed a high reliability of RPQ, which justify that the instrument is fit for the study.

The researcher administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents through the help of three research assistants. 590 copies of the questionnaire were given out and the researcher adopted on-the-spot delivery and recovery method during the administration of the instrument. The reason was to ensure a high return of the instrument. The researcher trained the research assistants for the exercise. This training was in line with the opinions of Nwana (2005) who suggests that there was need to train research assistants thoroughly, to successfully achieve the objectives of the exercise. The researcher ensured that the research assistants understood the purpose of the study, the structure of the data collection instrument, including the response pattern and the population/sample. The exercise took three weeks in all and a hundred percent of the instrument

was returned The data collected were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of percentages to answer the two research questions posed for the study, while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using chi-square statistics. In taking decision on clusters 1 and 2, items with 50% and above were regarded as agreed, while those below 50% were regarded as disagreed. Chi-square statistics was used to test the hypotheses and the decision rule is that if p- value is less than or equal to (0.05) alpha level, it is regarded as significant and therefore be rejected, but if p-value is greater than (0.05) alpha level, the null hypothesis would be accepted.

4. Results

Research Question 1: What recess practices engage pupils with physical play activities in public and private primary schools?

Table 1 Percentage Ratings of Recess Practices and pupils engagement with physical play activities in Public and Private Primary Schools.

N = 590

		Public schools					Private schools				
		Yes		No			Yes		No		
S/N	**Recess practices and pupils engagement with physical play activities include:**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**REMARKS**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**REMARKS**
1	Recess is scheduled in the school time table	287	57.4	213	42.6	A	65	72.5	25	27.8	A
2	Children go on recess in my school daily	128	25.6	372	74.4	DA	51	56.7	39	43.3	A
3	Children go on recess in my school once a week	382	76.4	118	23.6	A	53	58.9	37	41.1	A
4	Children go on recess in my school twice in a week	46	9.2	454	90.8	DA	43	47.8	47	52.2	DA
5	Children go on recess in my school thrice a week	36	7.2	464	92.8	DA	47	52.2	43	47.8	A
6	Children go on recess in my school four times a week	42	8.4	458	91.6	DA	48	53.3	42	46.7	A
7	Children do not go on recess at all	48	9.6	452	90.4	DA	23	25.6	67	74.4	DA
8	Recess is a free play time for pupils to choose their own play activity	363	72.6	137	27.4	A	65	72.2	25	27.8	A
9	There is playground for recess in my school	359	71.8	141	28.2	A	35	38.9	55	61.1	DA
10	Teachers do not keep pupils from participating in recess for academic issues	49	9.8	451	90.2	DA	69	76.7	21	23.3	A
11	Teachers are assigned to supervise pupils during recess	356	71.2	144	28.8	A	45	50.0	45	50.0	A
12	Play facilities for recess are routinely maintained and replaced	53	10.6	447	89.4	DA	3	3.3	87	96.7	DA
13	There is government policy guiding recess in my state	54	10.8	446	89.2	DA	25	27.8	65	72.2	DA
14	Adequate facilities are there to meet the needs of pupils' population during recess	52	10.4	448	89.6	DA	6	6.7	84	93.3	DA
15	My school has recess supervisor that	5	1.0	495	99.0	DA	14	15.6	76	84.4	DA

	guides pupils during recess										
16	Recess supervisor engages pupils in active supervision during recess to ensure pupils safety	3	0.6	497	99.4	DA	11	12.2	79	87.8	DA
17	Recess supervisor moves about scanning with eyes and ears to stay aware of recess happenings	5	1.0	495	99.0	DA	9	10.0	81	90.0	DA
18	Recess supervisor redirect pupils to appropriate behaviours	10	2,0	490	98.0	DA	8	8.9	82	91.1	DA
19	Recess supervisor facilitates group games during recess	15	3.0	485	97.0	DA	8	8.9	82	91.1	DA
20	Recess supervisor makes game equipment available at the start of recess	12	2.4	488	97.6	DA	6	6.7	84	93.3	DA
21	Teachers withhold recess as a behaviour management tool	420	84.0	80	16.0	A	69	76.7	21	23.3	A
22	Teachers ensure pupils arrive to recess on time	364	72.8	136	27.2	A	75	83.3	15	16.7	A
23	Teachers only withhold recess when playground safety is a concern	450	90.0	50	10.0	A	60	66.7	30	33.3	A
24	My school has large area playground to accommodate all pupils during recess	356	71.2	144	28.8	DA	42	46.7	48	53.3	DA
	Total		**797.05 33%**		**1600.95 67%**			**992.9 41%**		**1422.29 59%**	

Table 1 shows that items 1, 3, 8, 9, 11, 21, 22and 24 indicate recess practices that permit children to engage in physical activity in public primary schools. While items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 21, 22 and 23 indicate recess practices that permit children to engage in physical activity in private primary schools.

However, the respondents did not agree on items 4, 7, 19, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 24 in public and private schools respectively, as recess practices that permit children to engage in physical activity. The reason is that their percentage scores are below 50 %, which is the criterion score.

Research Question 2: What amount of time do primary schools (public and private) allocate for recess?

Table 2 Percentage Ratings of Time allocated for Recess in Public and Private Primary Schools

N= 590

		Public schools		Private schools	
S/N 25	The time allocated for recess in my school is	F	%	F	%
	10 minutes	390	78.0	63	70.0

20 minutes	38	7.6	18	20.0
30 minutes	40	8.0	5	5.6
30 minutes and above	32	6.4	4	4.4
Total	**500**	**100**	**90**	**100.0**

Table 2 shows that 390 respondents (78.0%) and 63 respondents (70.0 %) in public and private primary schools respectively, said that 10 minutes is the time allowed for recess in their schools; 40 respondents (8.0%) in public schools said that 30 minutes is the time allowed for recess in their schools, While 18 respondents (20%) in private primary schools said that 20 minutes is the time allowed for recess in their schools; 38 respondents (7.6%) in public schools said that 20 minutes is the time allowed for recess in their schools, while 5 respondents (5.6%) in private schools said that 30 minutes is the time allowed for recess ; 32 respondents (6.4) in public schools said that 30 minutes and above is the time allowed for recess in their schools, while 4 respondents (4 .4 %) in private schools said that 30 minutes and above is the time allowed for recess in their schools

Hypothesis one: The recess practices that engage pupils with physical play activities is independent on school type (public school or private school).

Table 3: Chi-square contingency summary table for Recess Practices which engage pupils with physical play Activities in Primary Schools (*N=590*)

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	440.000[a]	380	0.018
Likelihood Ratio	137.637	380	1.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.787	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	24		

Table 3 shows the chi-square contingency summary for the recess practices which engage pupils with physical play activities. On the whole, the Pearson chi- square value (0.018) is lesser than the p- value (0.05), hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the recess practices which engage pupils with physical play activities is dependent on school type (public school or private school)

Hypothesis Two : The amount of time allocated for recess in primary schools is independent on school type (public school and private school).

Table 4: Chi-square contingency summary table for the amount of time allocated for Recess in Primary Schools. (*N=590*)

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	48.000[a]	42	0.243
Likelihood Ratio	30.498	42	0.906
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.642	1	0.200

N of Valid Cases	8

Table 4 shows the chi-square contingency summary for the amount of time allocated for recess in primary schools. On the whole, the Pearson chi- square value (0.243) is greater than the p- value (0.05), hence the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that the time allocated for recess primary school is independent on school type (public school or private school)

5. **Discussions**

The findings of this study revealed that primary school children in Cross River State do not go on recess regularly throughout the week and that teachers keep pupils away from participating in recess either on academic grounds or as a disciplinary measure. This is contrary with the view of Kohn (2013) who stated that recess is a right of every child. Taking away recess from a child either as a disciplinary measure or abolishing it in the name of learning, infringes on that right. This study also, revealed that there is no government policy guiding recess. Currently, in Cross River State school system there is no recess policy guiding how recess should be operated. Law policies play a crucial role in ensuring that children are provided recess time for physical activity daily in their school schedule. The reason why some schools toy with recess periods anyhow could be that there is no government policy currently, guiding how recess should be operated. That is why some schools have seized undue advantage to continue to allow recess periods to be irregular in the school system. Policies could act as catalysts for promoting adequate levels of physical activity among primary school children. This is in agreement with the finding of Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Linver and Hofferh (2012) who asserted that in US, those states with explicit recess policy provide 150 minutes a week for physical education and at least 20 minutes' recess daily for children. Can same be applicable here? Without policies, some schools may not make provision for recess and physical activity for children in daily activities.

Another finding of this study showed that play facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of pupils' population. Primary schools in Cross River State, seriously lack play facilities, most especially the private schools that don't even have playgrounds. A playground is supposed to be one of the few places where children could actively confront and learn from meaningful social experience. It is sad that this is lacking here. On this aspect, Riders, Fairelough and Straoton (2010) noted that children who play in large area playgrounds with facilities during recess achieve more physical activity than children who play in small area playgrounds. Furthermore, Perry (2010) added that space should be provided for children to play with safety in mind. However, the finding of this study is contrary, because it revealed that primary schools in Cross River State, seriously lack play facilities.

As revealed in the study, there are inadequate facilities to meet the needs of the pupils' population, no regular maintenance of facilities and replacement of the old ones. Hudson (2005) observed that there would be poor recess practices, if play facilities were not adequate for children to use during recess. This problem of inadequate facilities in primary schools in Cross River State could be attributed to negligence and lack of commitment on the part of those in authorities concerned ((Franze, 2010). Play facilities provide children with balancing and climbing

opportunities, motor planning, spatial awareness and strength development, which help children to increase coordination and gross motor skills, which help children to read, write and solve mathematics problems.

Another finding of this study revealed that most schools do not have supervisors to guide the pupils during recess to ensure their safety and redirect them to appropriate behaviours. Sometimes recess environment encourages aggression and anti-social-behaviours, bullying on the playgrounds, intimidation and violence. Apart from that, there are child bullies who use strength in words, physical power or intimidation to harm weaker peers. This is in line with the finding of Lewis, Colvin and Sugai (2010) who stated that for obvious reasons, adult recess supervisors should be posted to playgrounds to do proper recess supervision during recess. Schools are also to consider implementing plan design to promote a more positive school climate. Recess Supervisors as well are expected to instruct children on social skills and review school rules, before the commencement of recess. This will eliminate or reduce the rate of problem behaviour in playgrounds during recess.

This study further revealed that primary schools in Cross River State lack recess supervisors to engage pupils in active recess supervision to avoid injuries, due to unsafe playground equipment. During recess, children abound to encounter hazards in the playgrounds. The playgrounds surfaces may be bare earth, the equipment may not be padded, maintenance of the equipment may not be regular, playgrounds equipment may have entanglement hazards, slides and climbers may have inadequate fall zones, schools may have playgrounds, but may not give consideration for safety measures in terms of playground size, surfaces, equipment type and height. This is in consonance with the view of Barios- Chohen, Jones and Gallagher (2007) who noted that children are occasionally hurt on and injure on challenging playgrounds, due to very little or no adult supervision. When children are engaged in recess without active supervisors, the situation may be deplorable. Active supervisors are to be readily available in their numbers in playgrounds, to make game equipment available at the start of recess and to do proper checking of the playgrounds and facilities, before the commencement of recess to avoid hurting the children, while the old ones are replaced. Newly constructed facilities could be constructed in such a way that they are accessible to children and individuals with disabilities. The result of the null hypothesis further revealed that recess practices which permit children to engage in physical activity depend on the school type. (Public or private type). This is not surprising, because schools could be paying more attention on academic tasks than recess. This finding is in line with the finding of Pellegrini (2005) who noted that recess time is seen as a period that interferes and takes away children's time from learning in classroom.

In view of this, various organizations have come up with recess policies for primary schools. Policies could serve as catalysts for promoting adequate level of physical activity among primary school children. These recommendations are ; children should have 60 minutes of physical activity a day, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013), recess is an essential component of education and should be part of the curriculum for preschool through elementary school (National Association of Early Childhood Specialist in State Departments of Education, 2012), all elementary school children should be provided with at least one daily period

of recess of at least 20 minutes (National Association for Sports and Physical Education,2006), recess should not be taken away as a punishment (American Academy of Pediatrics 2006), Principals should provide the development and maintenance of appropriately supervised free play for children during the school day (National Association of Elementary School Principal, 2010).

The findings of this study revealed that the time allowed for recess is 10 minutes. As it can be observed, this time provided for recess is grossly inadequate. It is not surprising, because more attention is being paid to academic content at the expense of recess. This is in line with the finding of Pellegrini (2005) who stated that recess time is seen as a period that interferes and takes away children's time from their learning, which is the main thing.

The finding revealed that the time allowed for recess in primary schools in Cross River State is not enough. For play and recess to have positive results on children, enough time should be provided in the school timetable as part of the regular schedule for the day. If children are not provided with enough time for recess, it will affect their learning in the classroom and this could not be what people may be projecting. This is because, academic learning tends to be more sedentary and it has little social change. In view of this, children most especially younger children require more physical and social change, such as the ability to engage in free play and their own activities. Recess is the only true break for children, because it is "drastic." It helps children to maximize the effects of distributive practice, most especially for younger children. This is in consonance with the finding of Alhassan et al. (2010) who noted that when children sit down for too long in the classroom without break, they tend to exhibit behaviour problem. When recess is delayed, children exhibit behaviours like; rudeness, truancy, spit on the floor, damages of class furniture, quarrelsomeness, mimic other children, shout at teacher, disobedience, interfering with the work of other children, fidgeting, verbal abuses, distractive conversation with others etc. These are indications that the children are tired and that they should be released to go outside the classroom and refresh themselves, before coming back to continue with their learning.

Whereas, American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) has recommended that children should have 60 minutes of physical activity daily, yet primary school pupils go on recess sparingly in Cross River State. Children may be provided with recess sparingly, because of the current controversy on the issue of recess. Many adults, including practitioners in education fail to understand the importance of play in a child's development. Recess is seen as a period that interferes and takes away children's time from learning. This may have been the reason why recess time in primary schools is either eliminated or reduced in other to increase instructional time. Some schools may have recess once a week or less than 15 minutes. This is in disagreement with the finding of Jacobson (2008) who stated that this lack of free and undirected play during recess may contribute to the rise in childhood obesity, anxiety and depression among children.

Recess is a sort of novelty practice where children refresh themselves, before going back to learn. This makes allowance for them to learn better. Many countries of the world that are top ranking in international test, carry out recess practices of providing enough time for their children to engage in unstructured free play that they become self-directed and acquire important skills. Some countries provide their children with extensive recess in the morning and in the afternoon as well as

break (The Secret behind Finland's Super Smart Kids, 2013). Recess is regarded as an essential component of education that is why the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists (2012) recommended that recess should be part of the school curriculum for pre-school through primary school. While Academy of Pediatrics (2013) recommended that primary schools should have their pupils to participate in physical activity outside the classroom of at least 60 minutes every day. This is in line with the finding of Slater et al. (2012) who stated that Uganda students have an eight hours' school day, but they have a half an hour of play in the morning, one hour for lunch and play and 1.5 hours of activity time for; sports, music, art, free choice play time in the afternoon. Japan spends one quarter of the day on non-academic activities. Besides, a long lunch break is given to children to go home and eat with their families. Students, who do not go home, read for their pleasure or interact with other children. Lasseter (2007) noted that China allows children to spend an hour to socialize per day. Some schools that do not have a dedicated recess period allow ten minutes break per class session. In addition, there is lunch time and quiet time. During this period, children either read at their desks or play by themselves. Ridgers (2012) added that in United Kingdom and Ireland, students have break after their second lesson of the day which last for about 20 minutes. Lunch time commences after one or two lessons and usually last for about 45 -60 minutes, while infant schools will have additional time towards the end of the day. Children will learn more effectively if they are provided with non –intellectual, none focused activities (Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005). Recess provides novelty they need, because when they get fade up with the recess activities, classroom activities such as academic instruction becomes novelty for them. Then, children will pay more attention to novel instructions and spend more time on task.

The null hypothesis shows the significance difference between public and private primary schools in percentage ratings on the time allowed for recess. The result of the test indicated no significant difference based on school type (public and private primary school). The null hypothesis was accepted. It was therefore, concluded that the time allowed for recess is independent on school type (public and private school). As it can be observed from this study, the time allowed for recess in primary schools, is generally inadequate. Children are provided with recess sparingly, either once a week or less than 15 minutes. The reason for this could be to provide more instructional time for children to learn. This finding is in disagreement with the finding of Kohn (2013) who stated that recess is a right of every child. Taking away recess from a child in the name of learning infringes on that rights.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that primary schools in Cross River State lack recess practices. This is, because the recess practices that permit children to engage in physical activity and interact freely with their peers are not there. Children in primary schools are not provided with regular recess and teachers keep them away from participating in recess for academic issue. Currently, there is no government policy guiding on how recess should be operated. Play facilities are inadequate to meet up with the needs of pupils' population. Primary schools also, lack recess supervisors that engage pupils in active supervision during recess, to ensure pupils safety, and the time allowed for recess is 10 minutes

7. Implications of the Findings

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The outcome of this study has revealed that most recess practices are not observed in primary schools in Cross River State. The findings have serious implications for time, supervision and practices in primary schools in Cross River State.

In the first place, the time allowed for recess in public and private primary schools is grossly inadequate. Therefore, there is need for the provision of enough time for recess in primary schools. If children are not provided with enough play time, they could likely exhibit behaviour problem in the classroom and this would hinder learning. The brain cannot maintain attention for a long period of time most especially for the younger children. The brain requires something different to regain focus. Secondly, for information to be processed, the brain needs time to relax in other to be able to recycle chemicals necessary for long memory formation. Lastly, attention is (cyclical) repeated many times and always happening in the same order, involving 90 -110 minutes'strong regular movement throughout the day. Recess, functions as a space between learning activity. So, enough recess time is a sort of novelty where children refresh themselves, before going back to learning. This makes allowance for them to learn better. Recess could help to reduce or eliminate childhood obesity, overweight, anxiety, depression and other health related problems among others. Recess would improve children's attention to academic achievement and learning. The implication here is to create awareness of the stakeholders, who take decisions on behalf of children to get involved with them in their experiences and eagerness to explore their physical environment.

Finding from this study revealed that, there is poor supervision of play by teachers during recess. This finding needs to be taken seriously by teachers, because recess environment encourages aggression and anti- social behaviour, intimidation and violence, child bullies who use physical or intimidation to harm weaker peers and injuries due to unsafe playgrounds. Studies have revealed that most injuries and bullying on playgrounds occur where there are no adult recess supervisors. It is suggested that schools could consider having intervention on plan design to promote more positive school climate. More so, more adult recess supervisors could be posted to do proper recess supervision during recess. Recess supervision expectations and school rules could be reviewed to children, before the commencement of recess. Recess supervisors could as well, do proper checking of playgrounds and facilities before the commencement of recess to avoid hurting the children, while the old ones could be replaced.

Furthermore, the findings from this study have revealed that most of the recess practices are not observed in primary schools in Cross River State. Recess practices are habits or customs that are carried out in primary schools regularly to facilitate recess. Children are eager to play as is natural to them, but policies and practices at home and in school have hindered play in their lives. Recess is gradually being eliminated and new schools spring up without playgrounds. The inability of children to engage in free play is made worse in the reduction of the amount of time for recess. In some cases, children do not go on recess nor have physical education in the time table for lack of space. Inactivity on the part of the children could lead them to childhood obesity, overweight, anxiety, depression and other health related problems. This has implications for training and continuing professional development of children's educators. There is need to improve the design and set up play environment where children can play. This requires collaborative effort of parents, teachers, administrators, Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education Board and stake holders

in education industry. They could allot enough time for recess on daily time table to encourage children to engage in vigorous physical activity.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Children should be allowed to go on recess regularly throughout the week and no teacher, whatsoever may be the reason, should deny them their recess.
2. School administrators should make deliberate efforts to provide adequate play facilities that will meet up with the needs of the pupils' population during recess. In addition, play facilities should be regularly checked and maintained.
3. Management of schools should provide enough space for play during recess, because children would achieve much recess physical activities in large area playgrounds than in small spaces.
4. Ministry of Education as a regulatory agency should ensure that approval to own schools is given to only schools that have standard space and facilities.
5. Government should as a matter of urgency, pass mandatory policies on primary school recess to ensure that recess is schedule daily in the school activities.
6. School administrators should post more adult supervisors to do proper recess supervision on the playgrounds to avoid bullying and injuries.
7. Management of schools should make adequate provision for at least 60 minutes recess every day for the pupils to enjoy.

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