

Assessment Of Recreational Land Use in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract- *This study assessed sustainable recreational land use in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The aim was to assess the sustainability of recreational land use in the study area. The specific objectives were to examine the existing recreational land-use pattern, identify the challenges affecting sustainable recreational land use, and evaluate the socio-economic implications of recreational land use in Uyo. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires administered to 382 respondents, while secondary data were sourced from textbooks, journals, government publications, and relevant literature. A systematic random sampling technique was used to select respondents, and the data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that 50% of respondents used open spaces for recreation, 32.5% used school playgrounds, and 17.5% recreated at home. The major challenges affecting sustainable recreational land use were security concerns (37%), inconvenient location (29%), substandard recreational facilities (18%), and limited recreational space (16%). The study further showed that 39.3% of respondents reported that recreational facilities were maintained monthly, while 57.6% identified littering as the most common maintenance problem. In addition, 65.8% of respondents agreed that poor safety and security significantly reduce the patronage and effective use of recreational facilities. The study concluded that although Uyo possesses several recreational facilities, inadequate maintenance, poor security, insufficient infrastructure, and weak land-use management hinder the sustainable use of these spaces. It therefore recommended the provision of additional recreational facilities in underserved areas, regular maintenance of existing facilities, improved security measures, preservation of green and open spaces through integrated land-use planning, and the establishment of effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure sustainable management of recreational land use in Uyo.*

Keywords: *recreational land use; sustainability; urban planning; green spaces; recreation facilities; Uyo; land-use management.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Recreation is an important component of urban land use because it provides opportunities for leisure, physical activity, social interaction, psychological restoration and community development. The source study frames recreational planning within sustainable urban development and emphasizes the need to balance physical development with ecological preservation. Recreational land therefore performs both social and environmental functions within an urban system.

The study also relates recreational provision to sustainable development, particularly the need for sustainable cities and communities and the protection of land and environmental resources. Rapid urbanization in many African cities has increased pressure on available recreational spaces. Inadequate funding, weak planning, competing land uses and poor management can reduce the quantity and quality of recreation facilities.

In Nigeria, pressure from urban expansion and development can affect parks, gardens, playgrounds, sports facilities and other open spaces. Where planning regulations are weakly enforced, recreational land may be exposed to encroachment and competing development demands. In Uyo, population growth and urban development have increased the need for functional recreational facilities, making assessment of their distribution, use, maintenance and sustainability important.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rapid urbanization of Uyo has increased pressure on recreational land resources and contributed to unsustainable land-use practices. Existing parks, gardens, sports facilities and open

spaces may be insufficient, poorly maintained or affected by encroachment and competing development pressures. These conditions can reduce accessibility and the quality of recreational environments and limit the social, environmental and economic benefits of recreation.

The study identifies weak enforcement of planning regulations, inadequate maintenance funding, competing land-use demands, limited public awareness and insufficient stakeholder involvement as important challenges requiring investigation. The central concern is therefore not simply the existence of recreational facilities, but whether available recreational land is appropriately located, adequately maintained, safe, accessible and sustainably managed.

1.3 Research Questions

What are the existing patterns of recreational land use in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State? What are the socio-economic impacts of the existing recreational land-use practices?

What are the key challenges affecting the sustainability of recreational land use in Uyo?

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to assess the state of recreational land use in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, with a view to providing suitable recommendations for sustainable recreational land use.

To examine the current existing pattern and utilization of recreational lands in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. To evaluate the socio-economic impacts of existing recreational land-use practices.

To identify the factors challenging the sustainable management of recreational spaces in Uyo.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on publicly accessible recreational spaces in Uyo, including parks, gardens, sports facilities and undeveloped green areas within urban and peri-urban areas. Key locations identified in the source include Ibom Plaza, Uyo Metropolitan Park and community leisure spaces. Private recreational

facilities were excluded. The study considers environmental, social and economic dimensions of recreational land use, including planning policy, community engagement, ecological preservation and socio-economic benefits.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is relevant to urban planners, policymakers, environmental managers, local government authorities and communities. It provides evidence on recreational land-use conditions and management challenges in Uyo and highlights the contribution of recreation to community well-being, public health, social interaction, tourism and urban environmental quality.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Recreation

The source literature presents recreation as an activity undertaken during leisure that refreshes the body and mind and contributes to individual and community well-being. Recreation may be understood as an experience, activity, institution, process or structure. Examples include walking, swimming, reading, games and dancing. Recreational activities may be active or passive.

2.2 Recreation and Children's Participation

Children's recreation is closely associated with play, learning and development. Participation can support communication, friendship, physical fitness, social skills, emotional well-being and healthy lifestyles. Recreational facilities can also support local economies by attracting investment, tourism and associated spending.

2.3 Recreation Centres and Parks

Recreation centres are open-space areas devoted to leisure activities and may include parks and other facilities. Recreational parks combine scenic, ecological and social values and provide opportunities for active and passive recreation. Their planning requires consideration of location, accessibility, land capacity, environmental quality and user needs.

2.4 Classification of Recreational Activities

By location: indoor, outdoor and indoor/outdoor recreation. By physical effort: active recreation and passive recreation. By organization: formal and informal recreation.

2.5 Factors Influencing Recreation

The reviewed literature identifies age, sex, income, education and physical or environmental factors as influences on recreational participation. Age affects independence and preferred forms of recreation; economic conditions influence affordability and the type of recreation; education can broaden interests; while climate, topography, soil and land availability affect recreational planning.

2.6 Importance of Recreation

Recreation is associated with physical fitness, psychological well-being, social interaction, community development, economic activity, tourism and environmental quality. Well-planned recreational spaces can improve urban aesthetics and provide opportunities for social and cultural activities while contributing to quality of life.

2.7 Planning Standards and Principles

The thesis reviews recreational planning standards and emphasizes that standards should serve as guides adapted to local needs. Principles discussed include enjoyment, cultural identity, environmental aesthetics, ecological conservation, accessibility, availability, adaptability, awareness, attractiveness and affordability.

2.8 Children's Recreational Park Concepts

Two design concepts are discussed: the orthodox playground concept and the adventure playground concept. The orthodox concept emphasizes organized divisions for different age groups and activities, supervision, circulation, play equipment, field games, picnic areas, landscaping and services. The adventure playground concept emphasizes exploration, creativity and active interaction with the environment.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The design enabled the study to obtain information from respondents concerning the use, condition, maintenance and challenges associated with recreational land use.

3.2 Sources of Data

Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires administered to 382 respondents. The source also identifies interviews and focus group discussions within its data-collection framework. Secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, government publications and relevant literature.

3.3 Sampling and Respondents

A systematic random sampling technique was used to select respondents. The questionnaire-based survey provided the principal basis for the descriptive analysis presented in the study.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

The principal instrument was a structured questionnaire. The data collection focused on the distribution and characteristics of recreational facilities, nature and use of recreation areas, maintenance, financial constraints, safety concerns and socio-economic characteristics of respondents.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly frequencies and percentages. The results were presented and interpreted to identify patterns of recreational land use and the major challenges affecting sustainable recreational provision.

3.6 Study Area

The study area is Uyo Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The research considers recreational land use within urban and peri-urban areas, including publicly accessible parks, gardens, sports facilities and open or green spaces.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicate that recreational land use in Uyo is characterized by the use of open spaces, school playgrounds and home-based recreation. The distribution and condition of facilities reveal gaps in provision, maintenance and accessibility. Safety, location, facility standards and the amount of recreational land are central factors affecting sustainable use.

4.1 Existing Recreational Land-Use Pattern

Half of the respondents (50%) reported using open spaces for recreation. School playgrounds accounted for 32.5%, while 17.5% reported recreating at home. The result demonstrates the importance of accessible open spaces and school-based facilities in meeting recreational needs.

4.2 Major Challenges Affecting Sustainable Recreational Land Use

Security concerns were the most frequently identified challenge, followed by inconvenient location, substandard facilities and limited recreational space. The result indicates that provision alone is insufficient: recreational spaces must be safe, accessible, adequately equipped and appropriately located.

4.3 Maintenance and Waste Management

The study found that 39.3% of respondents reported monthly maintenance of recreational facilities. Littering was identified by 57.6% of respondents as the most common maintenance problem. This points to the importance of routine maintenance and waste management as part of sustainable recreational land-use management.

4.4 Safety and Patronage

A total of 65.8% of respondents agreed that poor safety and security significantly reduce the patronage and effective use of recreational facilities. Safety is therefore a major factor influencing the practical value of recreational spaces and should be addressed alongside physical provision.

4.5 Socio-economic Considerations

The study examined age and sex, marital status, occupation, income, educational level, children's school attendance, after-school activities and types of recreational activities. These variables are relevant to understanding how demographic and socio-economic conditions shape participation and use of recreational spaces.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings collectively show that recreational land use in Uyo faces both quantity and quality challenges. Open spaces account for the largest reported recreational setting, indicating continued dependence on flexible public spaces. At the same time, security concerns and poor maintenance can reduce actual use even where facilities exist. The findings therefore support an integrated planning approach that considers land availability, location, accessibility, facility standards, security, maintenance, waste management and community participation.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Uyo possesses several recreational facilities, but inadequate maintenance, poor security, insufficient infrastructure and weak land-use management hinder their sustainable use. Recreational land is an important component of urban development and requires coordinated planning, management and protection. Sustainable recreational provision should therefore move beyond the mere creation of facilities to include their accessibility, safety, maintenance, environmental quality and long-term management.

5.1 Recommendations

Provide additional recreational facilities in underserved areas.

Institute regular maintenance of existing recreational facilities and improve waste management. Strengthen security measures around recreational spaces to improve public confidence and patronage. Preserve green and open spaces through integrated land-use planning and stronger development control. Improve the quality and adequacy of recreational infrastructure and equipment.

Establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems for recreational land-use management.
Promote stakeholder and community involvement in the planning, maintenance and management of recreational spaces.

VI. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The study contributes a Uyo-specific assessment of recreational land-use patterns, user challenges, maintenance conditions and safety concerns. It provides planning-oriented recommendations for improving the sustainability, accessibility and functionality of public recreational spaces and highlights the need to integrate recreational land into broader urban land-use management.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The journal is based on the scope and methodology reported in the source study. The source focuses on publicly accessible recreational spaces and excludes private recreational facilities. The analysis is primarily descriptive and relies on the reported questionnaire results, frequencies and percentages. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted within the geographical and methodological scope of the study.

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