

**EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIO-CULTURAL
LEISURE AMONG THE AFRICAN WOMEN IN THE
NETHERLANDS**

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Abstract

There is a growing body of literature on women's leisure, as well as information about socio-cultural leisure among women, but little is known about researching women's understanding of socio-cultural leisure in the Netherlands. The goal of this exploratory study is to describe African women's leisure in the Netherlands. The socio-cultural understanding of leisure among African women in the Netherlands was investigated using a qualitative study approach comprising semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The information was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The study enlisted the participation of 14 African women living in the Netherlands. The survey discovered that though the majority of African women in Leeuwarden, Netherlands, understand leisure, yet, do not have time for it due to their busy lives.

Keywords: Leisure understanding, African women, socio-cultural leisure, mental health, socialisation

Introduction

The studies of women's leisure have been the subject of discussion for almost three decades [1]. Consequently, a lot have been learnt about leisure meanings and how it has benefited as well as constrained on women [2]. During which [3], describes how feminism can function as a critique and a corrective mechanism in a way for changing the view of research especially, on constraints on women's leisure. Also, according to [4] integrative reviews conducted over the past two decades shown a growing evolution of information about women's leisure. However, researchers in primarily English speaking countries around the world were further expanding the meaning of leisure for women from different perspectives. Upon the above data women immigrants in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands were explored to identify their leisure constraints [5]. As part of the conclusions to [6], whose research findings have been replicated in this work, Chinese women in Leeuwarden experienced certain leisure constraints. Also, according to the dictionary meaning, to replicate someone's research work, you do it yourself in exactly the same way as with Chinese and African immigrant women leisure issues in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. In addition, [7] revealed that there were fundamental differences in the leisure and tourism behaviour of immigrants in Europe. Again, their research results shown, there were certain ethnic and cultural determinants to travel preferences, choice and behaviour as constraints, and other

determinants to leisure and tourism behaviour of African Somali immigrants in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. The same can be tested of the African women's leisure constraint issues.

According to [8] leisure is one life domain in which the creation of identity may be negated or distorted by the pressures and the repressions of a mass society. The understanding of leisure by African women will bring a great change in the well-being of their dependence because it means much restriction on leisure activity participation may be stopped rather they may tend to encourage others in their families about leisure. Kelly's concept of social and personal identities provides a transition from individual to social perspective on leisure. As women become more aware of their children's free time use, interests and experiences developed in their understanding of their role as facilitators of their children's leisure, which may include discussing and guiding of that leisure [9]. Again, to the African women, they may find joy experiencing leisure activities better with benefits and draw from the leisure constraints damages. According to [10], benefits obtain from leisure may differ in many ways such as physical and mental health; fitness, coping with everyday life stresses, relational; family bonding, personal identity and societal aspect of environmental awareness.

[11], as cited in [12], given a fundamental contribution that shown leisure studies were of the belief that is part of individual and social life. This is been subjected to theoretical and empirical analysis to venerate it as an ultimate goal of human activity. It may be argued that, literature review in leisure studies issues are of important for its necessary empirical analysis that sought to improve quality of life of the individual and society as well.

Exploring leisure understanding of immigrant in other countries is necessary for many reasons. It is of the view that, better cross cultural understanding of leisure can be enhanced to improve the wellbeing of the people, as well as findings of their leisure constraint can be defined, analyzed for appropriate recommendation. As confirmed by [13], that in exploring the leisure understanding of different people, it can lead into describing their cultural backgrounds. Also, several other cultures in leisure attitudes and behaviour patterns from other people can be used to study and compare in finding the understanding of leisure, how and why leisure is experienced in their ways. In addition to their confirmation, similarities and differences in the leisure of foreign nations may influence people negatively or positively. And that can lead into predicting future changes in leisure activities and attitudes in other countries. Research result of [13] on understanding of leisure around the world indicate globalization and technological improvement in the world through leisure and tourism and that leisure in America is better understood because of knowing more about leisure in other countries. Finally the result from their research shows that it promotes higher appreciation for other cultures including undeveloped nations and their information facilitated leisure enhancement in the United States. In the end, the understanding of leisure of women has been explored to show how their personal understanding of leisure relates to their leisure experience and constraint towards leisure.

The understanding of leisure, as present in the Oxford dictionary online gives the definition of leisure as "time when one is not working or occupied; free time, use of free time for enjoyment". While some other researchers hold their views that leisure has been conceptualized and defined from a number of perspectives. These different perspectives reflect historical difference in the organization of societies, as well as differences in concepts and impingement upon both freedom and pleasure [14]. Whereas, according to [13], leisure can be divided into three distinctive parts like: time, activity and experience. This research is focused on the personal leisure understanding, leisure experiences and constraints of leisure of African women in the Netherlands.

Research methodology of the study

The research is based on the qualitative dimension of life and leisure. According to [15] qualitative research refers to interviews, by comparison, semi-structured and in-depth (unstructured) interviews as „non-standardized“. Also, this instrument was chosen to study the experiential or qualitative dimension of human behaviour within the immediate context of daily life. Qualitative research design of semi-structured, in-depth and individual interviews were used to explore the leisure constraints of the African women in the Netherlands. This is because of the complex and dynamic nature of leisure experiences. These methods enabled the researcher to understand „respondents“ level of emotion, the way in which they have organised their world, their thought about what is happening, experiences and their basic perception” [16]. Some merits which justify the conducting of qualitative interviewing in this study include its most suitable means of exploring the views and experiences of the African women“s leisure constraints in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. It can be referred to its information retrieval in the form of images and sounds as well as words rather than numbers as in the quantitative research method nature. Moreover, pragmatic reasons which involved in particular with this case study situation can be best described and explained in the African women leisure experiences, feelings and world-view in their own words [17].

Sampling Methods

As earlier noted, the sampling of this research is originated with the detailed consideration of qualitative research method. This sample selection has been conducted according to convenience design sampling frame which ensures non-numerical data sampling procedure techniques. According to [18] Saunders et al., (2012), the convenience sampling is defined as" non-probability haphazard sampling procedure in which cases are selected only on the basis that they are easiest to obtain. These procedure techniques were chosen in order to answer the research questions and objectives more accurately to represent the larger case population of African women living in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. First, it might be impossible to interview the large population. Second, time constraints hindered the researcher to reach out all the members of the population since it was in-depth focused so that fewer respondents took more time to be interviewed. Thirdly, but not the last, budget constraints prevented the researcher to explore the entire far away population for example Amsterdam and other cities. Again the population sampled represented two International African women groups in selected International churches in Leeuwarden. Those were Ark of Covenant Church and Redeem Church of God. Based on semi structure in-depth interviews nature of the study, the chosen group of women were again selected using appropriate minimum sample size of 14 participants were selected for the study [18]. This technique is in-depth focus, useful with reasonable relative cost considering a homogeneous population of the women groups in the two churches. Also, to get the minimum sample size, convenience technique for specific individual participation was initiated for ease of access to meet the opened available members who participated. After a deliberated decision on the sampling procedures and techniques selected, seven (7) women each from the two churches making fourteen (14) were interviewed. The required in-depth focus sample selection data collected according to [18] represented the full set of the case population of the African women living in Leeuwarden. It has become possible because African women from different nationalities do come together in such churches making it easier getting them in the community areas of the city.

Sources of Data used

According to [19], Sources of data for descriptive qualitative analysis research work, like other research have two sources of data which is made up Primary Sources of Data and Secondary Source of Data. This research work conducted in Leeuwarden, Netherlands was made up of two sources of data. The Primary Sources of data where the original data gathered solely for the purpose of this research work, that is; data gathered from respondents using questionnaires and interviews to retrieve information from respondents concerning the Women’s Leisure in Leeuwarden. The secondary source of data was gathered using already existing literature, which is related to the research work under study.

Data Instrument Used

After gathering of sample respondents from Leeuwarden, Netherlands, the sample respondents were issued data gathering instruments to guide them. The basic data instrument used for the research work was interviews and questionnaires.

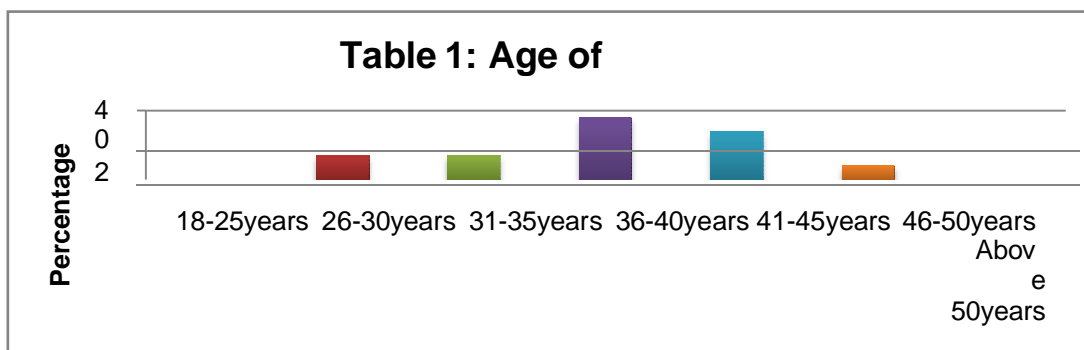
Data Analysis

As a means to find out how African women living in Leeuwarden understand and experience leisure into describing their leisure constraints, qualitative research method was applied to collect the data. Mason [20] quote, “qualitative research is characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context-sensitive”. To get insight into the life of African women in Leeuwarden entails an understanding of depth of the real picture in retrieving data.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Age of Sample Respondents

Throughout the research work, the data gathered from the respondents indicated that, none of the sample respondents where between the age group of 18 – 25years, whiles, the majority of the respondents representing 36% where in the age group of 36 – 40years, 14% of the sample respondents were in the age group of 26 – 36years, whiles, those in the age group of 46 – 50years represented 7% of the sample, another, 27% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 41 – 46years, lastly, 14% of the sample respondents were in the age group of 31 – 35years.



Source: field Survey, 2014

Marital Status of Respondents

From the data gathered concerning the marital status of respondents. 14% of the sample respondents indicated that they were single, while, 64% of the sample indicated that they were married, while, those who were divorced were 22% of the sample women respondents.

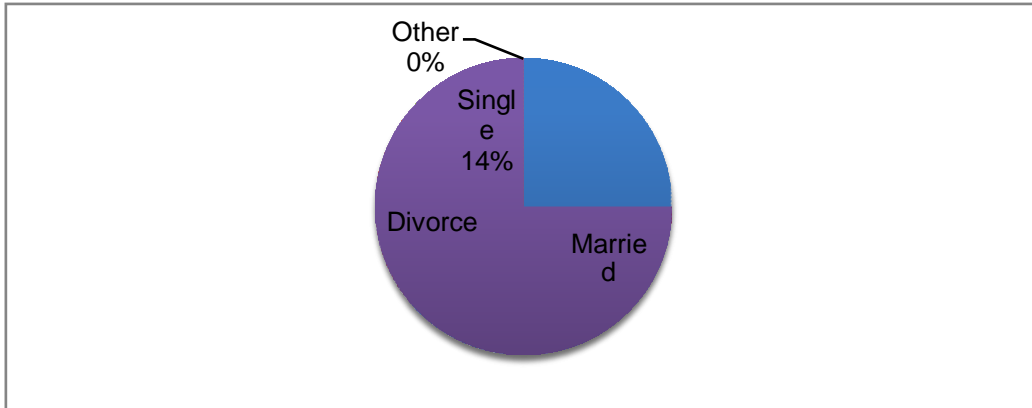


Fig. 1: Marital status of respondents

Source: field Survey, 2014

Educational Qualification of Respondents

The data gathered from the responses on educational qualification of respondents indicated that, 44% of the sample had diploma certificates, while, those who had first degree qualification were 21% of the sample, another, 14% of the sample were senior high school leavers, 7% of the sample respondents had professional certificates, those with masters certificates represents 14% of the sample respondents.

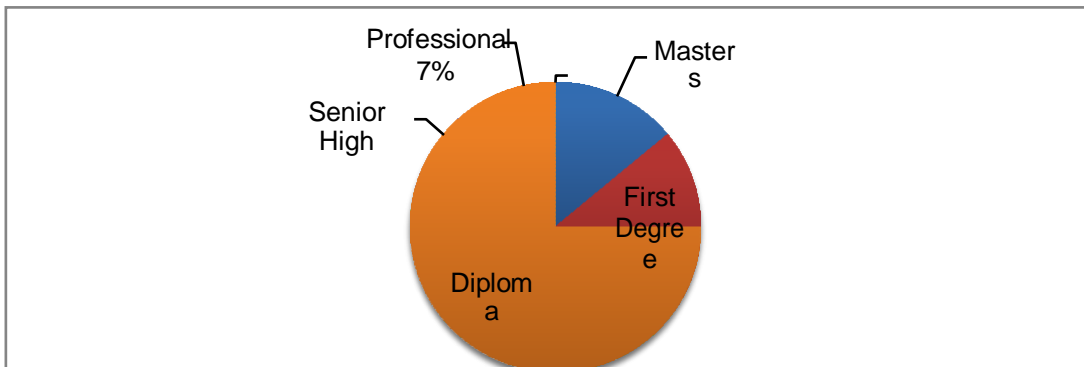


Fig.2: Educational level of respondents

Source: field Survey, 2014

Occupational Status of Respondents

From the data gathered, on the occupation status of respondents, 21% of the sample respondents indicated that they were students, while, those who were employed were 58% of the sample, another, 21% of the sample respondents indicated that they were unemployed and were not working.

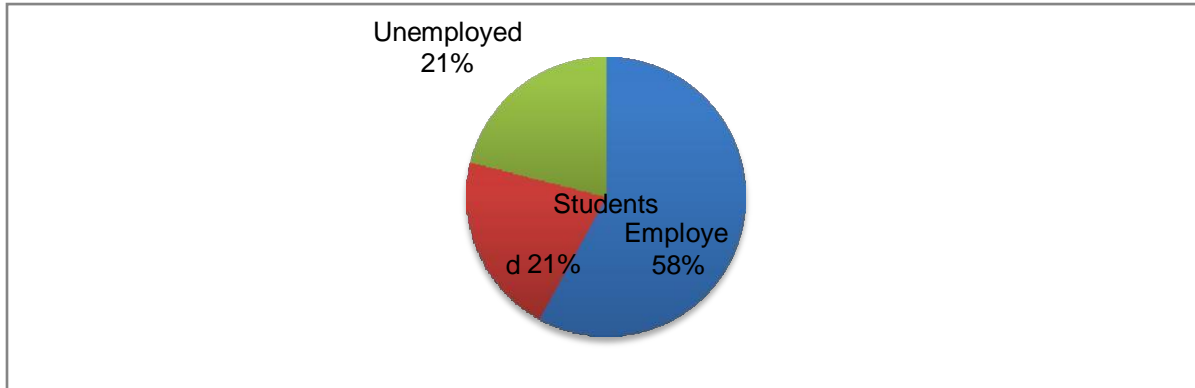


Fig. 3: Occupational Status of Respondents

Source: field Survey, 2014

The Period of Stay of Respondents in Netherlands

From the data gathered, none of the respondents have stayed less than 5years, while, 14% of the sample have been living in Netherlands for 6 – 10years, while, those who had lived for 11 – 15years were 28% of the sample, another, 36% of the sample indicated that they have been living in Netherlands for 16 – 20years, 21% of the sample had stayed in Netherlands for more than 20years.

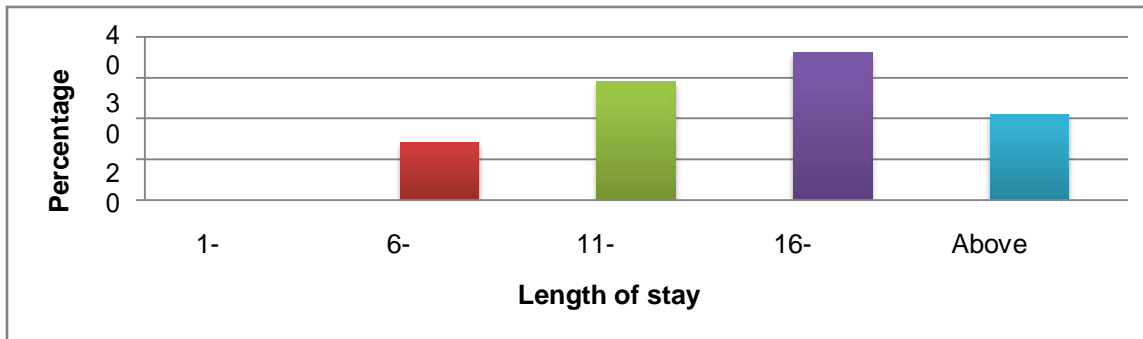


Fig.4: The Period of Stay of Respondents in Netherlands

Source: field Survey, 2014

Discussion

According to the data gathered from African Women in Leeuwarden, majority of the respondents responded that Leisure time is a time where by one do not have to do their obligatory activities such as going to work, cooking for kids and driving them to school but rather engaging in any activity that brings personal joy, relaxation or pleasure. Other respondents also indicated that leisure is the moment of having rest and time to do some personal activities such as shopping, cooking and eating. Other respondents were of the view that leisure meant time to play with family members, playing music or having fun. In a nutshell, the respondents made it clear that leisure means free time whereby respondents can choose to do anything or relax. This response agreed with that of [10] in addition to the concise dictionary from McMillan which indicated that Leisure, or free time, is time spent away from business, work, domestic chores, and education. It

also excludes time spent on necessary activities such as eating and sleeping. This made the research more evidential in the sense that, respondents had a clear idea what leisure period meant.

The research work indicated that majority of the respondents about 75% of African women in Leeuwarden, Netherlands were employed or gainfully earning salaries or wages, this was in total agreement with [2] who made it clear that, most women who traveled to relatively more developed countries than their home do so in such for employment or greener pastures, purposefully to work and make a living to take care of their family back home or look after their families and this research work also indicated that most of the women respondents are employed which gives them the opportunity to take care of themselves.

Throughout the data gathered, other respondents indicated that they have learnt how to take a cup of coffee at their Dutch „neighbours“ homes. Although most of the women addressed their language barrier issue but yet many of them enjoy the benefits of the Dutch language which make them feel comfortable. They do speak Dutch language at parties with fellow Africans and Dutch friends. They have adopted the culture of having outdoor leisure activities together without kids and eating Dutch foods at the restaurants. This to them was a benefit they gained as additional knowledge on how to enjoy leisure in Leeuwarden. From one woman’s response, “often going out for leisure is not mostly African women but their men are allowed”. That indicated how African women feel about themselves in terms of leisure experiences and perception over the benefits gain.

These responses gathered from the respondents concerning the benefits they gain from leisure agreed with [21] they indicated that a lot have been learnt about leisure meanings and how it has benefited them [2]. During which [3] describes how feminism can function as a critique and a corrective mechanism in a way for changing the view of research. Again, [22] have reported that, when people participate in leisure activities, they experience involvement, enjoyment, fun, freedom, timelessness, relaxation and spontaneity. Moreover, sense of separation, adventure, positive mood, state positive feedback, and different other positive experience [23]. Adding to that, studies indicated that, [24], have three perspectives on leisure experience, which shows definitional perspective, immediate conscious experience, and post-hoc satisfaction approach. The level of women’s leisure emotion as in African women in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, have been explored to give the definitional perspective of leisure, their immediate conscious experience and post-hoc satisfaction to find their leisure constraints.

Conclusions

The researcher concludes that most of the respondents understand leisure to be having a free time going out or staying indoors and enjoying oneself. Data gathered from the respondents indicated huge leisure diversities among African women in Leeuwarden. In relation to how Dutch Citizenry enjoys their leisure there are similarities and diversities. African society has some level of negative ideologies towards some forms of women’s leisure activities. With a woman from Africa having leisure smoking, drinking and dancing at the strip club is not socially accepted and seen as immoral activities. These forms of leisure activities are associated with some kind of negative image. But White women on the other hand, to be specific Dutch women in Netherlands are not socially labeled or perceived as bad or indecent when even smoking or drinking high volumes of alcohol.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that African women should to be encouraged to enjoy leisure activities which are very important and desist from bad habits and dangers during the leisure activities, which are found to be smoking of cigarette and drinking alcoholic contents due to the parties and the happiness it comes along with that; these activities can lead to some health complications. Again, African Women should be made aware of the relevance of going through normal leisure activities.

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