IMPACT OF RECESS PRACTICES ON THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AUTHORITY

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Abstract

Recess has long been recognized as an important period within the school day that provides pupils with opportunities to engage in physical activities that support their physical development This study investigated the impact of recess practices on the physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The study was guided by four research questions and four hypotheses tested at 0.05 level significance. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 4223 teachers in the 264 schools from both public and private schools (665 teachers in the 45 public schools and 3560 teachers in the 219 private schools) in the study area. The sample size for this study was 422. The study adopted a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The sample size for public school teachers was 67 and 355 teachers for private schools. The research instrument for the study was a 32-item questionnaire developed by the researchers and titled Impact of Recess Practices on the Physical Development of Pupils Questionnaire (IRPPDPQ). A four-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point) were used. Two experts from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one expert from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka validated the instrument. The Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The alpha coefficients gotten were 0.85, 0.79, 0.80 and 0.81 with an overall reliability of 0.81. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that both public and private school teachers agreed that running and chasing games and ball games among others are commonly implemented for physical development of pupils among others. Findings also showed that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the impact of pupils'

participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development among others. It was recommended among others that Teachers should encourage and actively supervise pupils' participation in physical activities during recess.

Keywords: *Recess practices, physical development, pupils, psychomotor skills, primary schools*

Introduction

Education is important to national development and society at large as it empowers individuals with knowledge, skills and values needed to contribute meaningfully to economic growth, social stability and innovation. It produces skilled manpower for various sectors, fosters informed citizenship and reduces poverty by creating opportunities for better livelihoods. As education equips individuals with the knowledge and skills to drive national progress, it is equally essential to recognize the role of structured breaks, such as recess, in fostering the holistic development and well-being necessary for effective learning.

Recess is a short, scheduled break during the school day that allows pupils to rest, play and socialize outside the classroom. According to Enemuo and Anselem (2025) states that recess is a scheduled break period during the school day that allows pupils to engage in play, recreation, physical activities, and social interaction outside formal classroom instruction. Enemuo and Anselem emphasized that recess provides opportunities for relaxation, refreshment, and activities that support pupils' academic and developmental outcomes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2024), recess is a regularly scheduled period during the school day in which pupils engage in physical activity, play, and social interaction under the supervision of trained staff. During this period, children are free to participate in activities of their choice with their peers. Operationally, recess refers to a scheduled break period during the school day in which primary school pupils participate in play, physical activities, and social interactions that contribute to their physical development. Recess is an important source of physical activity for children.

Recess dates back to the early 1800s, when schools introduced it to help children relax and get some exercise (McMullan, 2021). Over time, recess has become recognized not only for its physical benefits but also for supporting children's thinking, social skills, and emotional health. Recess offers pupils a vital opportunity for rest and rejuvenation, it is through well-structured recess practices that its full benefits such as improved social interaction, physical development and cognitive functioning can be effectively realized and sustained. Özkal (2020) averred that recess offers pupils the chance to engage in social interactions with their peers. Since learning is inherently social and collaborative, individuals build understanding by interacting with others and

their physical environment. Through play during recess, children actively connect and communicate with one another engaging in different recess practices which helps to build their physical development.

Recess practices refer to the strategies, routines, rules and activities implemented by schools to manage and organize recess time effectively. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) (2024) states that recess practices can be understood as the ways schools plan, supervise, schedule, and manage this recess period and the activities that occur during it. Ozenbaugh, Pentimonti, Justice and Skibbe (2022) described recess practices as the planned and unplanned activities, routines, and environmental arrangements that guide children's experiences during recess periods. These include organized games, free play opportunities, supervision methods, and the provision of play equipment designed to support children's development and well-being. For the purpose of this study, recess practices refer to the activities, routines, strategies and arrangements implemented during recess periods to promote pupils' participation in physical activities and enhance their physical development. Good recess practices promote physical activity, positive social interactions, conflict resolution, and emotional well-being, while minimizing bullying or unsafe behaviour. They are essential in maximizing the developmental benefits of recess and creating a supportive environment for learning and growth. According to Zhu, et al. (2025) states that sufficient recess time was positively associated with higher physical activity levels, better cardiovascular fitness, and improved health outcomes among school-aged children. Zhu et al, concluded that longer and well-utilized recess periods contribute significantly to children's physical fitness and overall well-being. Ojedoyin, Olagbegi, Nadasan and Govender (2022), states that pupils who had adequate opportunities for movement during school hours accumulated higher levels of physical activity than those with limited opportunities. Ojedoyin et al. emphasized that sufficient time allocation for active play is necessary for achieving recommended physical activity levels among school children.

There are several ways to organise recess in schools. Ozenbaugh et al (2022) revealed that structured recess practices such as organized games and supervised activities focus on specific skills and fitness goals, while unstructured recess practices allow children to freely choose their activities, encouraging creativity and spontaneous play. Some schools run these programmes led by teachers or trained staff, including team sports and group games designed to build teamwork, cooperation and fitness. Adekunle (2025), observed that primary school playgrounds in Nigeria are designed to accommodate various games and play activities that encourage movement, exploration, and physical engagement among children. Massey et al. (2017) reported that pupils

who participated in structured recess demonstrated improved cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution skills, suggesting that structured play fosters not only physical activity but also the development of key social-emotional competencies. Furthermore, pupils involved in structured recess activities engaged in significantly higher levels of Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA) than their peers, underscoring the effectiveness of structured recess in boosting physical development and ensuring equitable participation among pupils. A situation where the weather is bad, schools often switch to indoor recess. This involves board games, crafts, or gentle exercises like yoga or dance, ensuring children still get a break and some physical activity even when they can't go outside (Massey, Thalken, Szarabajko, Neilson and Geldhof, 2021).

Outdoor recess is another common approach. Taking place outside the classroom, it often involves using natural spaces for learning activities. This not only gives pupils a break from the usual classroom setting but also enriches their experience by connecting them with nature. Activities might include nature walks, gardening projects, or outdoor science experiments which build their physical development (Edwards-Jones, Waite and Passy, 2022). Physical development refers to the growth and refinement of motor skills, or in other words, children's abilities to use and control their own bodies. These advancements are evident in gross-and fine-motor skills and they are essential to children's overall health and wellness. According to Sulyman, Olaosebikan, Olosunde and Oladoye (2022), playground activities involving running, jumping, climbing, throwing, and other movement-based exercises significantly improved pupils' physical skill acquisition. Olaosebikan et al, noted that active participation in school playground activities promotes the development of locomotor and gross motor skills required for effective physical functioning among primary school children. In early childhood, children develop the ability to gradually control movement, achieve balance and coordination and fine and gross motor skills. According to Liu, Huang, Liu and Zhou (2024), states that fundamental movement skills, including jumping, hopping, balancing and locomotor movements, play a critical role in enhancing children's physical activity engagement during recess and other school-based activities. This leads to the psychomotor skills of children which involve the coordination of cognitive and physical abilities.

Psychomotor skills are defined as the abilities related to coordinating physical movements and motor functions. They include tasks that require both mental and physical effort, such as agility, balance, hand-eye coordination, and fine and gross motor skills. According to Khaseyi (2022) psychomotor skills cover a wide range of areas: gross motor skills (like running, jumping, and throwing), fine motor skills (such as writing, drawing, and cutting), and perceptual-motor

skills (including hand-eye coordination and balance). Developing these skills is vital for a child's overall growth because they support physical competence, cognitive development and social-emotional well-being. For example, gross motor skills help children stay physically fit, coordinate their movements, and take part in sports and play. Fine motor skills are important for academic tasks, creative activities, and self-care (Ghezelseflo, Gharravy, Ghaffari-Touran and Ghezelseflo, 2023). Perceptual-motor skills, which combine sensory input with motor responses, are key for hand-eye coordination, balance, and spatial awareness. Children with well-developed psychomotor skills often show better academic performance, higher self-esteem and stronger social skills (Botha, 2019). Psychomotor skills are closely linked to cognitive, physical and social-emotional development. Since psychomotor skills play such a vital role in a child's growth, it is important to provide opportunities and environments that support their physical development. Wong, Reilly, McCrorie and Harrington (2024) observed that children who had access to well-equipped play environments accumulated higher levels of physical activity and demonstrated better physical fitness outcomes than children with limited access to recreational facilities. The type of school a child attends can significantly influence their physical development, as schools with well-equipped playgrounds, physical education programmes, and supportive environments provide greater opportunities for active play, motor skill development, and overall physical well-being.

School type refers to the classification or category of a school based on its ownership, funding, curriculum, or educational approach. Common types include public (government) schools**,** private schools**,** mission and community schools**.** In terms of physical development, private school pupils generally exhibit stronger motor skills due to access to better facilities, structured physical education, and extracurricular activities (Castañer et al., 2021). El-Awady et al. (2022) revealed that while public school pupils reported a greater sense of well-being, they also faced more mental health challenges than pupils in private institutions. These differences suggest that both public and private schools offer unique advantages and challenges and the type of school a child attends can significantly influence their overall educational experience and development.

In spite of the importance of recess in promoting children's physical development, observations in many primary schools suggest that recess periods are not always effectively utilized to provide meaningful physical activity opportunities for pupils. In some schools, limited playground facilities, inadequate supervision, overcrowding, and the increasing emphasis on academic activities may restrict pupils' participation in active play during recess. Consequently, concerns have been raised about whether current recess practices adequately support the physical

development of pupils. It is against this backdrop that the researchers were motivated to investigate the impact of recess practices on the physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Statement of the Problem

Physical development is a fundamental aspect of children's growth and is essential for the acquisition of psychomotor skills, physical fitness, coordination, balance, agility, and overall well-being. During the primary school years, children require regular opportunities for active play and movement to develop these physical competencies. Recess has long been recognized as an important period within the school day that provides pupils with opportunities to engage in physical activities that support their physical development. Through activities such as running, jumping, climbing, ball games, and other forms of active play, pupils are expected to develop the motor skills and physical fitness necessary for healthy growth.

Recess is importance as it concerns have emerged regarding the effectiveness of recess practices in promoting the physical development of pupils. In many schools, recess periods are characterized by inadequate supervision, insufficient playground facilities, overcrowded play spaces, limited structured physical activities, and increasing academic demands that reduce the time allocated for active play. As a result, some pupils may spend recess periods engaging in sedentary activities rather than participating in physical activities that foster physical development.

Furthermore, differences in the implementation of recess practices across schools may affect the extent to which pupils benefit physically from recess periods. While some schools provide organized games, adequate playground equipment, and opportunities for active participation, others may lack the resources and structures necessary to maximize the developmental benefits of recess. These variations may have implications for pupils' psychomotor development, physical fitness, coordination, balance, and overall physical health. Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine the impact of recess practices on the physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of recess practices on the physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

1. Recess practices commonly implemented in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.
2. Impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.
3. What is the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.
4. What is the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What recess practices are commonly implemented for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?
2. What impact has the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?
3. What is the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?
4. What is the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority
2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

3. There is no significance difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.
4. There is no significance difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority

Methods

This study investigated the impact of recess practices on the physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The study was guided by four research questions and four hypotheses tested at 0.05 level significance. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 4223 teachers in the 264 schools from both public and private schools (665 teachers in the 45 public schools and 3560 teachers in the 219 private schools) in the study area. The sample size for this study was 422. The study adopted a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The population was stratified into public and private primary school teachers. Thereafter, proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the number of respondents selected from each stratum based on their relative sizes in the population, 67 teachers for public schools and 355 teachers for private schools. The research instrument for the study was a 32-item questionnaire developed by the researchers and titled Impact of Recess Practices on the Physical Development of Pupils Questionnaire (IRPPDPQ) This questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A provided instructions and gathered personal information from respondents, ensuring relevant demographic data was collected. Section B focused on the research objectives and the responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). To ascertain the validity, two experts from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one expert from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka validated the instrument. The Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The alpha coefficients gotten were 0.85, 0.79, 0.80 and 0.81 with an overall reliability of 0.81. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Questions One: What recess practices are commonly implemented for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of respondent on the common recess practices for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

S/N	Common recess practices for physical development of pupils include:	Private Schools		Decision	Public Schools		Decision
		X	SD		X	SD	
1.	Running and chasing games such as catch-and-run and relay races	3.76	.61	Agreed	3.81	.77	Agreed
2.	Ball games such as football, basketball, volleyball, handball and other ball-related activities	3.41	.80	Agreed	3.69	.54	Agreed
3.	Skipping activities	3.16	.90	Agreed	3.99	.96	Agreed
4.	Jumping and hopping games	3.02	.77	Agreed	3.28	.78	Agreed
5.	Teacher-organized games with specific rules	3.08	.51	Agreed	2.00	.45	Disagreed
6.	Climbing activities such as climbing frames, ladders, and monkey bars	3.41	.55	Agreed	1.56	.50	Disagreed
7.	Traditional games such as “ten-ten”, “suwe” (hopscotch), “hide-and-seek”, and other culturally relevant physical activities that encourage movement	2.78	.94	Agreed	3.85	.69	Agreed
8.	Engagement with swings, slides, seesaws, merry-go-rounds and other playground structures that promote physical development	4.00	.76	Agreed	1.36	.55	Disagreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.32**	**.73**	**Agreed**	**2.94**	**.65**	**Agreed**

Table 1 shows the responses from private and public school teachers on recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The private school teachers agreed to all the items listed as recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils. The public school teachers agreed to items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 as recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils while items 5, 6 and 8 were disagreed. The cluster mean of 3.32 for respondents in private schools and 2.94 for teachers in public schools are above 2.50 mean value set for decision rule. The standard deviation ranged from 0.45-0.96 for both respondents in private and public schools indicates that the respondents are not far apart.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

***Table 2*: T-test summary on the recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority**

Sources of Variance	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Private School	355	26.62	5.84				
				420	4.33	1.98	Rejected
Public School	67	23.54	5.24	.			

Results in Table 2 shows t-cal 4.33 P>1.98. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils is rejected since the t-cal (4.33) is greater than p-value. The researchers, therefore conclude that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Research Questions Two: What impact has the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

S/N	Impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils include:	Private School		Decision	Public School		Decision
		X	SD		X	SD	
9.	The duration of recess provides pupils with sufficient time for physical activities	2.66	.79	Agreed	3.67	.50	Agreed
10.	Adequate recess duration helps improve pupils' physical fitness	3.21	.55	Agreed	3.69	.53	Agreed
11.	Pupils develop better motor skills when they have enough time during recess	3.59	.55	Agreed	3.31	.43	Agreed
12.	Sufficient recess time promotes pupils' muscle development through active play	3.67	.50	Agreed	3.25	.32	Agreed
13.	Short recess periods limit pupils' opportunities for physical exercise	3.51	.77	Agreed	3.20	.44	Agreed
14.	Extending recess time can improve pupils' physical health and well-being	3.52	.75	Agreed	2.78	.42	Agreed
15.	Adequate recess time enables pupils to participate in a variety of physical activities	3.15	.52	Agreed	3.00	.43	Agreed
16.	Longer recess periods help pupils maintain a healthy body weight	2.50	.65	Agreed	2.61	.76	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.22**	**.63**	**Agreed**	**3.18**	**.47**	**Agreed**

The result on Table 3 shows that the respondents agreed to all the items so listed as the impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The cluster mean for both private and public schools show 3.22 and 3.18 respectively which are above 2.50 mean value set for decision rule. The standard deviation of respondents in private schools ranged from 0.50-0.79 and that of public school ranged from 0.32-0.76 this indicate that the respondents are not far apart. This finding highlights the importance of incorporating well-structured play activities into school recess, as they contribute meaningfully to pupils' physical growth and development.

Hypothesis Two 2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Table 4: T-test summary on the impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority

Sources of Variance	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Private School	355	25.81	5.08				
				420	0.55	1.98	Accepted
Public School	67	25.51	3.83				

Results in Table 4 shows t-cal 0.55 P< 1.98. thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools is accepted since the t-cal (0.55) is less than p-value. The researchers, therefore conclude that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Research Question Three: What is the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation on the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

S/N	Impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development include:	Private School		Decision	Public School		Decision
		X	SD		X	SD	
17.	Participation in running games during recess improves pupils' physical fitness	3.41	.79	Agreed	3.69	.53	Agreed
18.	Active participation in recess activities enhances pupils' gross motor skills	3.59	.55	Agreed	3.31	.43	Agreed
19.	Physical activities during recess improve pupils' body coordination and balance	3.67	.50	Agreed	3.25	.32	Agreed
20.	Participation in outdoor games promotes healthy physical growth among pupils	3.54	.57	Agreed	3.51	.77	Agreed
21.	Regular participation in physical activities during recess contributes to pupils' overall health	3.13	.75	Agreed	2.78	.42	Agreed
22.	Physical activities during recess help pupils maintain appropriate body weight	3.96	.85	Agreed	3.67	.50	Agreed
23.	Participation in active play during recess improves pupils' flexibility and movement skills	3.83	.88	Agreed	3.38	.83	Agreed
24.	Regular participation in physical activities during recess positively influences pupils' physical development	3.52	.94	Agreed	3.60	.59	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.58**	**.72**	**Agreed**	**3.39**	**.54**	**Agreed**

The result on Table 5 revealed the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The cluster mean for both private and public schools show 3.12 and 3.39 respectively which are above 2.50 mean value set for decision rule. The standard deviation of respondents in private schools ranged from 0.44-0.94 and that of public school ranged from 0.32-0.83 this indicate that the respondents are not far apart. Pupils' participation in physical activities during recess have a generally positive impact on their physical development.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significance difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Table 6: T-test summary on the impacts of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority

Sources of Variance	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Private School	335	28.65	5.83				
				420	2.35	1.98	**Rejected**
Public School	67	27.19	4.39				

Results in Table 6 shows t-cal 2.35 P>1.98. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development is rejected since the t-cal (2.35) is greater than p-value. The researchers, therefore conclude that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Research Question Four: What is the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority?

Table 7: Mean and standard deviation on the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority

S/N	Impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils include:	Private School		Decision	Public School		Decision
		X	SD		X	SD	
25.	The availability of playground facilities encourages pupils to participate in physical activities during recess	3.85	.50	Agreed	3.50	.69	Agreed
26.	Adequate playground facilities promote the physical fitness of pupils	3.69	.79	Agreed	3.16	.53	Agreed
27.	Playground facilities provide opportunities for pupils to develop their gross motor skills	3.31	.55	Agreed	3.12	.43	Agreed
28.	Pupils develop stronger muscles through the use of playground facilities during recess	3.41	.32	Agreed	3.25	.55	Agreed
29.	Adequate playground facilities improve pupils' agility and flexibility	3.51	.77	Agreed	3.20	.44	Agreed
30.	Adequate playground facilities promote the development of locomotor skills such as running, jumping, and climbing	3.33	.55	Agreed	3.21	.76	Agreed

31.	Playground facilities help pupils maintain a healthy body weight through regular physical activity	2.52	.75	Agreed	2.78	.42	Agreed
32.	The availability of playground facilities supports pupils' overall physical well-being	3.55	.80	Agreed	3.13	.71	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.39**	**.62**	**Agreed**	**3.39**	**.56**	**Agreed**

The result on Table 7 revealed the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The cluster mean for both private and public schools show 3.17 and 3.39 respectively which are above 2.50 mean value set for decision rule. The standard deviation of respondents in private schools ranged from 0.32-0.80 and that of public school ranged from 0.42-0.76 this indicate that the respondents are not far apart.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significance difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Table 8: T-test summary on the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Sources of Variance	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Private School	335	27.17	5.03				
				420	2.96	1.98	**Rejected**
Public School	67	25.35	4.53				

Results in Table 8 shows t-cal 2.96 P>1.98. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools is rejected since the t-cal (2.96) is greater than p-value. The researchers, therefore conclude that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that both public and private school teachers agreed that running and chasing games such as catch-and-run and relay races, ball games such as football, basketball, volleyball and handball, skipping activities, jumping and hopping games, and

traditional games such as ten-ten, suwe (hopscotch), and hide-and-seek are commonly implemented recess practices for the physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The finding of this study is in consonant with that of Adekunle (2025), who observed that primary school playgrounds in Nigeria are designed to accommodate various games and play activities that encourage movement, exploration, and physical engagement among children. The study emphasized that playground spaces and recreational facilities improve activities such as running, jumping, chasing, and group games, which are essential for physical development. The finding of this study is in agreement with that of Liu, Huang, Liu and Zhou (2024), who found that fundamental movement skills, including jumping, hopping, balancing and locomotor movements, play a critical role in enhancing children's physical activity engagement during recess and other school-based activities. The study emphasized that these movement patterns are essential for physical development and motor competence.

The null hypothesis one of no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils is rejected since the t-cal (4.33) is greater than p-value. The researchers, therefore conclude that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the recess practices commonly implemented for physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The finding is in line with that of Sulyman, Olaosebikan, Olosunde and Oladoye (2022), who found that the quality and availability of playground facilities significantly influence the implementation of physical activities and skill acquisition among primary school pupils. Schools with adequate facilities were more likely to provide diverse recess activities that promote physical development than schools with inadequate facilities.

However, the finding contradicts the position of Wong, Reilly, McCrorie and Harrington (2024), who found that regardless of school type, recess remains a major contributor to children's physical activity levels when adequate time and opportunities for play are provided. Their findings suggest that pupils can benefit from recess across different school settings provided that supportive recess practices are implemented effectively.

The findings of the study revealed that both public and private school teachers agreed that adequate recess duration provides pupils with sufficient time for physical activities, improves physical fitness, enhances motor skill development, promotes muscle development through active play, and that short recess periods limit opportunities for physical exercise among others are the impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka

South Local Government Education Authority. This suggests that the amount of time allocated to recess is a critical factor in promoting the physical development of primary school pupils. Findings are in agreement with that of Zhu, Yin, Liu, Qin, Jia, Xie and Liu (2025) who found that sufficient recess time was positively associated with higher physical activity levels, better cardiovascular fitness, and improved health outcomes among school-aged children. The authors concluded that longer and well-utilized recess periods contribute significantly to children's physical fitness and overall well-being. Again, findings are in line with that of Ojedoyin, Olagbegi, Nadasan and Govender (2022), who revealed that pupils who had adequate opportunities for movement during school hours accumulated higher levels of physical activity than those with limited opportunities. The authors emphasized that sufficient time allocation for active play is necessary for achieving recommended physical activity levels among school children.

Hypothesis two shows t-cal 0.55 P< 1.98. thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools is accepted since the t-cal (0.55) is less than p-value. The researchers, therefore conclude that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the impact of the duration of recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The finding is consistent with the study of Wong, Reilly, McCrorie and Harrington (2024), who found that sufficient recess time contributes significantly to children's physical activity levels and physical fitness irrespective of school characteristics. The authors reported that when pupils are provided with adequate recess periods, they engage more frequently in active play, thereby enhancing their physical development.

The findings of the study revealed that both public and private school teachers agreed that participation in running games during recess improves pupils' physical fitness, active participation in recess activities enhances pupils' gross motor skills, physical activities during recess improve pupils' body coordination and balance, and participation in outdoor games promotes healthy physical growth among pupils among others are the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority These findings suggest that pupils' active involvement in recess activities contributes significantly to various aspects of physical development. Findings are in tandem with that of Sulyman, Olaosebikan, Olosunde and Oladoye (2022), who found that playground activities involving running, jumping, climbing, throwing, and other movement-based exercises significantly improved pupils' physical skill acquisition. The researchers noted that

active participation in school playground activities promotes the development of locomotor and gross motor skills required for effective physical functioning among primary school children.

Results in hypothesis three shows t-cal 2.35 P>1.98. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development is rejected since the t-cal (2.35) is greater than p-value. The researchers, therefore conclude that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the impact of pupils' participation in physical activities during recess on their physical development in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The finding agrees with Sulyman, Olaosebikan, Olosunde and Oladoye (2022), who reported that playground facilities and opportunities for active participation significantly influence pupils' physical skill acquisition and motor development. The authors found that pupils in schools with adequate playground facilities engaged more frequently in activities that promoted coordination, agility, balance, and motor competence. Such differences in school facilities may account for the variation in teachers' responses observed in the present study.

The finding, however, contrasts with studies that reported differences in physical activity experiences between public and private schools due to variations in facilities and recreational resources. For instance, Castañer et al. (2021) found that school resources may influence children's opportunities for physical activity. Nevertheless, the present study indicates that despite possible differences in facilities, teachers in both public and private schools hold similar perceptions regarding the positive impact of recess duration on pupils' physical development.

The findings of the study revealed that both public and private school teachers agreed that the availability of playground facilities encourages pupils to participate in physical activities during recess, promotes pupils' physical fitness, and provides opportunities for the development of gross motor skills. This implies that playground facilities play a significant role in enhancing pupils' physical development by creating an environment that supports active play and movement. This finding is in consonant with that of Wong, Reilly, McCrorie and Harrington (2024) observed that children who had access to well-equipped play environments accumulated higher levels of physical activity and demonstrated better physical fitness outcomes than children with limited access to recreational facilities.

Hypothesis four shows t-cal 2.96 P>1.98. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean response of private and public school teachers on the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary

schools is rejected since the t-cal (2.96) is greater than p-value. The researchers, therefore conclude that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of teachers in private and public schools on the impact of the availability of playground facilities during recess on the physical development of pupils in primary schools in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. The finding also agrees with Ojedoyin, Olagbegi, Nadasan and Govender (2022), who reported that school environmental factors, including the availability of recreational facilities and spaces for active play, significantly affect children's participation in physical activities. The researchers observed that pupils attending schools with supportive physical environments demonstrated higher levels of physical activity and healthier physical development outcomes than those in less supportive environments.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that structured play recess practices play a vital role in promoting the physical development of pupils in Awka South Local Government Education Authority. Pupils across both private and public schools moderately to strongly agreed that activities such as sports clinics, dance classes, and gymnastics are part of their recess experiences, contributing to improved motor coordination, physical fitness, and social interaction. The study also concluded that there is no significant difference between private and public school pupils in their perception of the benefits of structured play. However, a significant difference was found in teachers' perceptions of the impact of these practices, with private school teachers reporting a greater influence on pupils' physical development. This suggests that while structured play is generally valued, its implementation and emphasis may vary by school type. The study affirms that structured recess is a powerful tool for enhancing children's physical growth and overall well-being, but calls attention to the need for equitable and consistent application across all schools.

Recommendations

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

1. School administrators should ensure adequate time is allocated for recess activities in the daily school timetable to enable pupils to participate sufficiently in physical activities that promote physical fitness, motor skill development, and healthy physical growth.
2. Teachers should encourage and actively supervise pupils' participation in physical activities during recess, including running games, ball games, skipping, jumping, hopping,

and traditional games, to maximize the physical developmental benefits associated with active play.

3. Government, educational authorities, and school proprietors should provide adequate playground facilities and recreational equipment such as swings, slides, climbing frames, balls, and open play spaces to facilitate pupils' participation in meaningful physical activities during recess.
4. Efforts should be made by the government to reduce disparities in recess practices and playground facilities between public and private schools through regular monitoring, provision of resources, and implementation of standard guidelines for recess management to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities for physical development regardless of school type.

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