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THE IMPACT OF AGODI URBAN PARK ON THE SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OF ITS VISITORS

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Abstract

Urban parks, within city centres are green spaces that incorporate natural elements such as grass, flowers, and trees, often featuring wildlife, small zoos, and abiotic components like hills and lakes, whether natural or artificial. These parks form a crucial interface between individuals and nature, contributing to public health, social cohesion, climate improvement, and tourism development. This study investigates the impact of the Agodi Park experience on the subjective well-being of visitors in Ibadan, the second-largest city in Africa. A survey method and a 6-point Likert-type scale were used to gather data on park experiences. Questionnaires were administered to 378 participants, with 350 responses analysed. Descriptive statistics and Spearman correlation analysis was employed. Results showed that 34.6% of respondents strongly agreed that they felt a sense of oneness with nature in the park, 44.3% agreed, 7.1% disagreed, and 11.1% were neutral. The findings indicate a high level of well-being among visitors, with various factors influencing their experience. The study recommends improving park facilities to alleviate pressure on limited resources and suggests further preservation and development of the park's vegetation as a key visitor attraction.

Keywords: Urban Parks, wellbeing, subjective wellbeing, experience, and Park use

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of "contact with nature" encompasses areas that contain elements of living systems, such as plants and animals, across various scales and levels of human involvement, ranging from small urban parks to untouched wilderness. It also includes non-living features, such as sunsets or mountain views. The definition of nature varies depending on the type of contact and how individuals relate to it (Russell et al., 2013).

According to Aziz et al. (2018), an urban park is a public green space designed for recreation and aesthetic purposes in the city. These parks are typically managed by local authorities and often feature lawns for picnicking and informal sports, playgrounds for children, sports facilities, walking and biking paths, landscaped gardens, water features, seating areas, and cultural or recreational facilities such as museums and amphitheaters.

Bhandari et al. (2018) and Mohd & Sahrir (2024) suggest that urban green spaces contribute to the sustainability of cities by providing ecosystem services such as carbon capture, air pollution reduction, biodiversity support, water recharge, and climate regulation. However, the connection between urban nature and human well-being is frequently overlooked, particularly in cities focused on economic growth. A lack of contact with natural spaces has been associated with higher rates of cognitive and physical health issues (Van den Berg, 2017). Additionally, exposure to green spaces facilitates sun exposure, which promotes calcium absorption through the synthesis of vitamin D (Chen et al., 2015).

Urban parks are essential recreational resources, serving millions of people each year. While some parks are highly valued, the quality of parks managed by city authorities can vary. Parks offer numerous benefits, including visual amenities, wildlife conservation, and cultural landmarks. Perceptions of safety and well-being significantly influence how people use these spaces (Cronin-de-Chavez et al., 2019). Hence, Perceptions of safety in urban parks differ based on factors such as gender and crowding. Mak and Jim (2019) found that women tend to be more concerned about safety than men and are more likely to support visible law enforcement. Safety is also influenced by physical features such as vegetation. While open, visible areas may improve security, they can reduce the park's overall attractiveness (Hartabela et al.,2022). Environmental stressors negatively affect human life, leading to aggression, cognitive decline, and reduced well-being. This study investigates the positive impact of urban parks on mental health and overall well-being. Biswas et al. (2022) define well-being as a positive state that goes beyond the absence of pain or discomfort, encompassing the fulfilment of essential needs, a sense of purpose, and the ability to achieve personal goals. Well-being is further enhanced by supportive relationships, inclusive communities, good health, economic security, rewarding work, and a healthy environment (Minh et al., 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Well-being refers to a state of comfort, health, and happiness, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects (Pinto et al., 2017). It is a holistic concept shaped by various factors such as physical and mental health, emotional and social well-being, financial stability, environmental conditions, and a sense of purpose. Rohde et al. (2020) classify well-being into two forms: Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) and Objective Wellbeing (OBW).

Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) refers to how individuals perceive and evaluate their lives, including their happiness and life satisfaction, based on personal self-reports.

Objective Wellbeing (OBW) involves assessing well-being through measurable, external factors that reflect quality of life across various domains, enabling comparisons between individuals and populations.

This study focuses on Subjective Wellbeing (SWB), a significant human concern dating back to the Classic Greeks, who explored concepts like *eudemonia* (human flourishing) and *ataraxia* (inner peace). Interest in SWB has persisted through the ages and is now studied in relation to personality, with numerous meta-analyses conducted on the topic (Abubakar, 2022; Murphy, 2011; Waldron, 2010).

Wapner (2013) underscores the growing scientific interest in the benefits of contact with nature for human well-being. Studies have examined various factors related to park use, including user characteristics, park features, and visitor experiences. For example, Kothencz and Blaschke (2017) explored the correlation between perceived and objective park characteristics in Szeged, Hungary, recommending the integration of both human perceptions and objective indicators. Ayala-Azcárraga et al. (2019) linked perceived green space characteristics to visitor well-being, while Hong et al. (2019) found that the frequency of visits and time spent in urban green spaces positively influenced well-being, though constraints and access issues could negatively impact visit frequency.

Van Dinter et al. (2022) investigated the relationships between personal and park characteristics, park use behaviours, sense of place, and visitors' long-term subjective well-being. Ling Lee et al. (2023) examined the impact of perceived soundscapes in Malaysian parks on visitors' subjective well-being and stress reduction. Similarly, Helen and Praise (2020) assessed tourist satisfaction with park facilities and services, concluding that high-quality tourism services significantly enhance tourist satisfaction.

The reviewed literature provides valuable insights into the relationships between user characteristics, park features, park use, visitor experiences, and well-being, but lacks full integration of these aspects. This study aims to comprehensively test these relationships, employing a conceptual framework (Fig 1) to illustrate these connections.

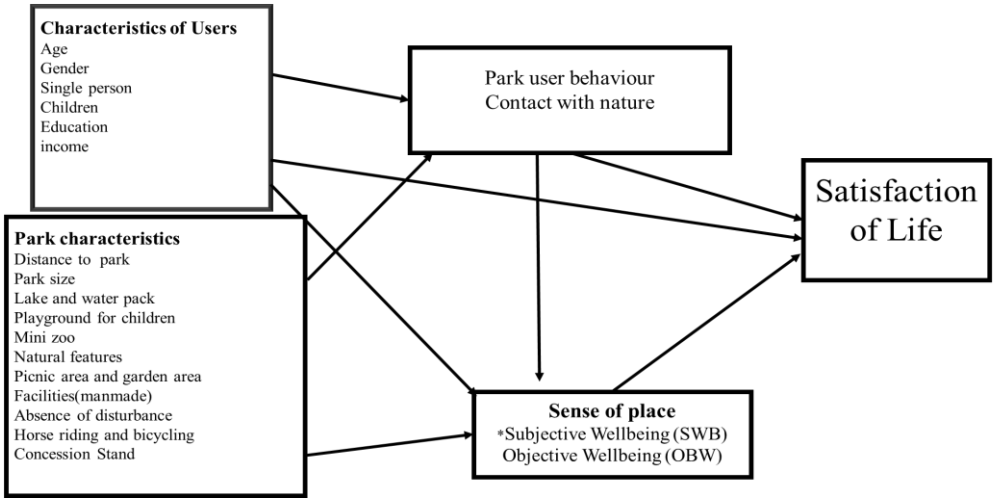

Figure 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the variables and their hypothesised relationships for analysis.

The conceptual framework illustrates that positive park characteristics promote frequent use and foster a strong sense of place, which, in turn, enhances both subjective and objective well-being. Frequent Park use reinforces the sense of place, clarifying the link between park perceptions and well-being.

Thus, this study will assess how urban parks, specifically Agodi Park, influence visitors' subjective well-being, with a focus on the role of the sense of place in explaining this effect. Additionally, it will examine how personal characteristics shape well-being and other key variables. Data were collected from visitors to Agodi Park to analyse these relationships, addressing the following research objectives:

1. Examining visitor's experience in Agodi Urban Park.
2. Identifying the factors influencing visitors' experience in Agodi Urban Park.
3. Analysing the relationship between visitors' experience and their subjective well-being in Agodi Park.

The Study Area

The study focuses on Agodi Urban Park in Ibadan, a popular recreational destination located at 7°24′25″N 3°53′57″E. Initially established as the Agodi Zoological and Botanical Gardens in 1967, the park was destroyed by flooding in 1980. It was later renovated by the Oyo State Government and reopened in 2014. Spanning 150 acres, the park features a water park, lake, mini zoo, play areas, picnic spots, gardens, and activities such as horse riding and cycling. A

tranquil retreat, Agodi Park is particularly popular with families during weekends and holidays, offering relaxation and recreation for both children and adults.

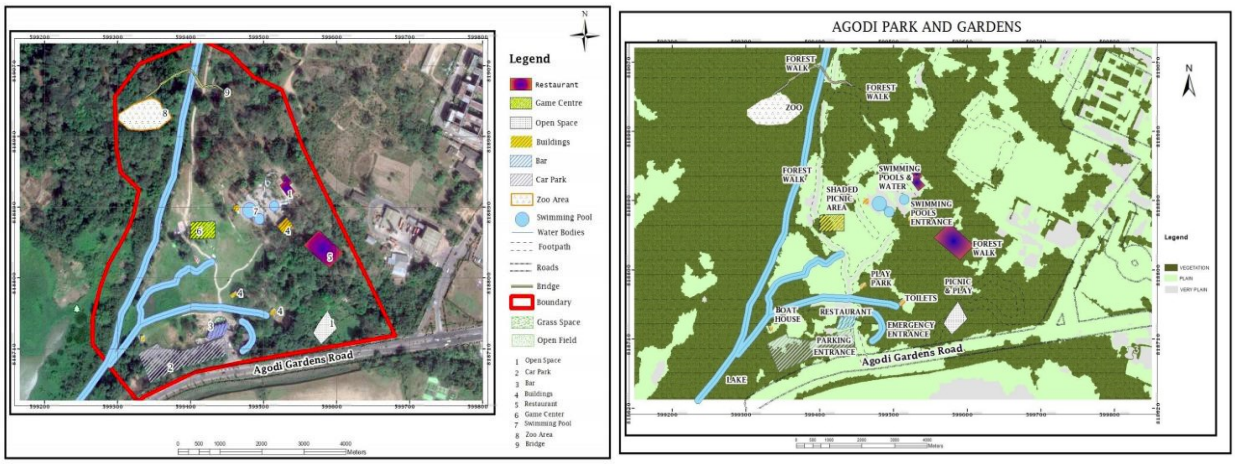

Figure 2: Geographical Location of the Study Area
Source: Authors ,2023

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in August 2023 during a festive season at Agodi Gardens. Of the 375 questionnaires administered, 350 were completed and returned. Efforts were made to ensure gender balance in the sample, and respondents were informed of the study's purpose. The survey employed a 6-point Likert-type scale to gather data on park usage and visitor experiences. Data analysis was performed using SPSS v.20, with a significance threshold set at $p = 0.05$. Descriptive statistics were applied to the first two objectives, while Spearman correlation analysis was used for the third. All survey questions were administered in English. Responses to the survey statements were rated from Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A) to Strongly Agree (SA). The first section evaluated visitors' experiences, including their sense of connection with nature and the effects on their physical and psychological well-being during and after the visit. Sample questions included "I feel a sense of oneness with the nature around me" and "How much do you feel physically/psychologically better than usual?" (Pasanen et al., 2018; Corral-Verdugo et al., 2008).

The next section focused on factors influencing visitors' experiences, such as noise, waste management, crowding, facilities, vegetation, and park administration (Frash Jr et al., 2016). The final section assessed visitors' well-being, with questions like, "Spending time at the park makes me feel relaxed and relieved."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the impact of visits to Agodi Urban Park on the subjective well-being of visitors, emphasising the role of positive leisure experiences in enhancing well-being. It seeks to uncover the outcomes of park visits and the factors influencing these effects. The research reveals several key findings that contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between park visits and well-being.

EXAMINING VISITORS EXPERIENCE IN AGODI URBAN PARK.

I Feel a Sense of Oneness with the Nature Around Me.

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that 2.85% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement "I feel a sense of oneness with the nature around me at the park", while 7.1% disagreed and 11.1% remained neutral. In contrast, 34.6% strongly agreed, and 44.3% agreed with the statement. These results suggest that the majority of park visitors do feel a strong connection with nature during their visit, as illustrated in Plate 1.

Plate 1: Vegetation scene depicting oneness with Nature

Table 1: Visitors Experience in Agodi Urban Park

S/N	Variable	No of individuals who took part in the survey	Percentage
1	I feel Sense of oneness with the nature around me.		
	Strongly deny	8	2.85%
	Deny	25	7.1%
	Neutral	39	11.1%
	Strongly agree	121	34.6%
	Agree	155	44.3%

2	I Feel Strong and Inspired in the park		
	Strongly deny	6	1.7%
	Deny	15	4.3%
	Neutral	33	9.4%
	Strongly agree	122	34.9%
	Agree	174	49.7%
3	I feel physically better than usual when here.		
	Strongly deny	5	1.4%
	Deny	40	11.4%
	Neutral	101	28.9%
	Strongly agree	86	24.6%
	Agree	118	33.7%
4	I feel psychologically better than usual		
	Strongly deny	9	2.6%
	Deny	42	12%
	Neutral	50	14.3%
	Strongly agree	94	26.9%
	Agree	154	44%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

I Feel Strong and Inspired in the park

The data in Table 1 reveals that 1.7% of respondents strongly denied feeling strong, attentive, and inspired during their visit, while 4.3% disagreed, and 9.4% remained neutral. In contrast, 34.9% strongly agreed, and 49.7% agreed. This suggests that the majority of park visitors experience a sense of strength, focus, and inspiration while at the park.

Plate 2: A zoo located in the park depicting feeling inspired in contact with Nature

I Feel Physically Better Than Usual.

Based on the data presented in Table 1, 1.4% of respondents strongly denied feeling physically better than usual while at the park, 11.4% disagreed, and 28.9%

remained neutral. In contrast, 24.6% strongly agreed, and 33.7% agreed. This suggests that the majority of park visitors feel physically better than usual during their visit, as illustrated in Plate 3.

Plate 3: Footpath walkway in the park

I Feel Psychologically Better Than Usual.

The data from Table 1 show that 2.6% of respondents strongly disagreed with feeling psychologically better than usual while at the park, 12% disagreed, and 14.3% were neutral. However, 26.9% strongly agreed, and 44% agreed. This indicates that the majority of park visitors experience improved psychological well-being when visiting the park, as illustrated in Plate 4, which highlights the calming presence of the lake within the park.

Plate 4: A lake and swimming pool in the park

EXAMINING THE FACTORS AFFECTING VISITORS EXPERIENCE

The data in Table 2 reveal that noise levels in the park have an insignificant impact on visitors, with 51.4% of respondents completely denying any disturbance from noise. In contrast, the condition of the park's facilities was deemed highly significant, with 50.9% of respondents agreeing that the presence and status of facilities play a crucial role in their experience. Regarding waste management, 36% of park users remained neutral, indicating a relatively

insignificant impact. However, the effect of vegetation was considered highly significant, with 49.1% of visitors agreeing that its presence greatly enhances their park experience. Additionally, 35.1% of respondents acknowledged crowding, often leading to the overuse and deterioration of facilities, as depicted in Plate 5. Furthermore, 49.1% of participants agreed that the park is well-managed by staff. Lastly, data from Table 2 indicate that 46.3% of respondents strongly agreed, and 40% agreed, that improvements to the park's facilities are necessary.

Plate 5: Children playing ground

Table 2: Factors Affecting Visitors Experience

S/N	Variable	No of individuals who took part in the survey	Percentage
1	Level of noise on the park users		
	Strongly deny	36	10.3%
	Deny	180	51.4%
	Neutral	89	25.4%
	Strongly agree	16	4.6%
	Agree	29	8.3%
2	Effect of facilities in the park		
	Strongly deny	10	2.9%
	Deny	30	8.6%
	Neutral	92	26.3%
	Strongly agree	40	11.4%
	Agree	178	50.9%
3	Waste Management in the park		
	Strongly deny	34	9.7%
	Deny	108	30.9%
	Neutral	126	36%
	Strongly agree	17	4.9%
	Agree	65	18.6%
4	Good vegetation in the park		
	Strongly deny	4	1.1%
	Deny	14	4%
	Neutral	10	2.9%
	Strongly agree	150	42.9%
	Agree	172	49.1%

S/N	Variable	No of individuals who took part in the survey	Percentage
5	Crowdy environment		
	Strongly deny	11	3.1%
	Deny	47	13.4%
	Neutral	93	26.6%
	Strongly agree	76	21.7%
	Agree	123	35.1%
6	Staff management and Ethics		
	Strongly deny	11	3.1%
	Deny	47	13.4%
	Neutral	93	26.6%
	Strongly agree	76	21.7%
	Agree	123	49.1%
7	Facilities improvement		
	Strongly deny	9	2.1%
	Deny	40	3.7%
	Neutral	72	7.9%
	Strongly agree	106	46.3%
	Agree	123	40%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VISITORS EXPERIENCE AND THEIR SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING IN AGODI PARK.

The analysis presented in Table 3 highlights the relationships between visitors' experiences and their subjective well-being at Agodi Urban Park. The correlation between "spending time at the park, which makes visitors feel relaxed and relieved," and subjective well-being yielded a correlation coefficient of 1.000 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a perfect and highly significant relationship. Similarly, the correlation between "feeling connected to nature" and subjective well-being resulted in a correlation coefficient of 0.621** and a p-value of 0.000, demonstrating high significance. The correlation between "feeling physically better than usual while at the park" and subjective well-being produced a correlation coefficient of 0.255** and a p-value of 0.000, indicating strong significance. Furthermore, the correlation between "feeling energised during their time at the park" and subjective well-being showed a correlation coefficient of 0.138** and a p-value of 0.010, signifying a significant relationship. Lastly, the correlation between "spending time at the park keeping visitors conscious and awakened" and subjective well-being yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.359** and a p-value of 0.000, confirming a highly significant relationship.

Table 3: Correlation analysis between Visitors experience and their Subjective Wellbeing in Agodi Park.

S/N	User's experience.	Spearman correlation Co-efficient	Subjective wellbeing(P-value)
1	Spending time at the park makes me feel relaxed and relieved.	1.000	0.000
2	Being here makes me feel connected to the nature around me.	0.621	0.000
3	I feel physically better than usual when I am here	0.255	0.000
4	My time here keeps me energized	0.138	0.010
5	Spending time here keeps me conscious and awakened	0.359	0.000

Note, that P<0.05 is moderately significant and P<0.01 is significant while P<0.001 is highly significant. *Source: Field Survey, 2023*

KEY CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH TO THE FIELD OF URBAN PLANNING.

The study will enhance understanding of the impact of public spaces on well-being, highlighting both social and psychological benefits. The study will inform evidence-based planning and policy formulation to promote the integration of green space in urban development. Similarly, Long-term urban sustainability improves quality of life, making cities more liveable and attractive for residents. Community participation and engagement in urban park planning and management foster a sense of ownership and responsibility. Economic benefits include attracting tourists to urban parks, generating revenue, and boosting local economies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study demonstrates that visiting urban parks significantly enhances human well-being, especially during periods when daily activities, environmental stressors, work-related pressures, noise, and overcrowding negatively impact quality of life at both individual and regional levels.

Although park facilities are available, high visitor numbers strain these amenities, diminishing the park's overall quality. To address this, the study recommends expanding facility offerings rather than limiting visitor access. Participants expressed mixed feelings about waste management and sanitation; therefore, enhancing waste management practices – such as increasing bin availability, promptly removing litter, and improving maintenance culture – is essential.

The park's vegetation, including its flora, fauna, and natural features like lakes and hills, serves as a key attraction. Preservation and enhancement of

this vegetation are vital for fostering connections with nature. The study finds the vegetation to be in good condition, with respondents underscoring its importance in nurturing this connection.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The Authors declare that they have no known competing financial interest or personal relationship that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data for this research was drive from questionnaire administered to visitors who visit the park during festive period in August 2023.

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