



Assessment of Wildlife Conservation and Educational Visits at University of Ilorin Zoological Garden, Nigeria

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Abstract. University of Ilorin Zoological garden, serves as a tourism destination to both pupils/students and general public; especially during the festive period. However, little study has been done on the assessment of the perception of visitors to wildlife conservation of the zoological garden. The study assessed wildlife conservation and educational visitation to University of Ilorin Zoological Garden. Data obtained through a pre-tested questionnaire and was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that 58.0% of the respondents were females and 42.0% were males. The highest age group lies between 25-34 years old. 69% of the visitors are from Kwara State, 28% from others state and 3% are foreigners. Students were the highest category (66%) of visitors while 29% represent civil servants. Majority of the respondents had visited other zoological gardens; and the major reason for the visit was for excursion and recreation purposes. 38% got information about the place from their various school, follows by family with 31% and the least are through media(4%). Result further shows that 75% of the respondents were satisfied with the development of Zoological garden while only 7% are indifferent; and 92% of the respondents are ready to visit the Zoological garden again. 57% of the respondents were aware of wildlife conservation through their school, 33% from friends and 10% from family members. University of Ilorin Zoological garden is a good recreation centre that needs to be publicized in the mass media, since the level of awareness from other sources other than from school and friends ranked the lowest.

Keyword: Wildlife, Conservation, Zoological garden, Ilorin

1. Introduction

Generally, zoological gardens are places where wild animals are kept for genetic resources conservation,

domestication and captive breeding, research, educational training, recreation and for economic reasons (Sijuade, 1977; Owolabi, 1986; Ayodele et al., 1999). At times, strange domestics and companion animals are also on display. There is a long tradition of maintaining some wild animal species in captivity. However, few species were kept on a large scale. This has changed over the last half century, with breeding groups of a wide range of wild animals having been established. The reasons for this include commercial, scientific, conservation and welfare factors.

Wildlife conservation education is a process of spreading information and knowledge about the sustainable use of wildlife products/resources and the aims is to provide learners with the opportunity to gain an awareness of wildlife and their environment. This knowledge and experience surrounding the sustainable use of wildlife, to acquire a set of values and positive attitudes is to obtain the required skills to identify and solve wildlife related problems. Both formal and non-formal education is indispensable to changing people's attitudes in this regard (Jacobson et al., 2006; UNESCO, 1992). This highlights the importance of education as a critical tool for achieving sustainable development both at formal and non-formal level, thus its inclusion as part of the curriculum. In Nigeria today, wildlife conservation implementations are being taught in school, especially from the area of biology, ecology, geography, history, and nature conservation (Ayodele et al., 1999).

Zoos are not only for a collection of animals but can also be reflection of the past, present and future of the animals, thus providing recreation serving as an entertainment and educational centre, where people of all ages can visit and enjoyed the sighting of different species of animals (Kuuderet al., 2013; Uloko, 2004; Borokini, 2013; Corazon, 2008). The

major focus of zoological garden therefore is to provide educational information on conservation in order to influence attitudinal changes towards wildlife conservation. And to achieve this effectively, care and maintenance of the pseudo habitat of the animals in captivity must be maintained (Rabb, 1994; Knowles, 2003). Good measures of this indicator are visitors who can make a good evaluation of the animal welfare. Visitors to zoological gardens make judgment about animal welfare on the basis of what observe during their visit (Hassan, 2015). This study assessed wildlife conservation and educational visits at university of Ilorin Zoological Garden with the aim of providing information on the levels of awareness amongst the visitors. As well as provide insights for the management and conservation of wildlife in Nigeria.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Description of Study Area

University of Ilorin Zoo was established in 1985 to complement the University’s biological sciences departments in teaching and research. It is located at the main gate of the University within latitude 8°30’N and longitude 4°35’E, with a children playground and picnic grounds. A major attraction to

the zoo is the 150meters long and 45meters high suspended canopy walkway which has continued to draw visitors to the zoo. The fact that most of the forest vegetation has been left undisturbed and the presence of a stream which flows through the zoo creates a serene and near natural environment which makes the zoo unique. The zoo drew over 55,000 visitors annually comprising schools, religious bodies, clubs and societies on excursion and picnics as well as families and individuals.

2.2 Data Collection and Sampling Method

One hundred and twenty (120) copies of structured questionnaire were administered to visitors using a random sampling technique for the period of the study. 100 questionnaires were recovered at the end of the period. Accidental approach were adopted in the administration of the questionnaire followed by a secondary gathering of information from records and files while interviews with experienced zoo staff was used to augment data generated from questionnaire.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics where results were expressed in tables, frequency and percentage.

3. Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

Demographic	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	42	42.0
	Female	58	58.0
	Total	100	100.0
Age Group	≤14	7	7.0
	15-24	23	23.0
	25-34	41	41.0
	35-44	19	19.0
	45 and Above	10	10.0
	Total	100	100.0
Residency	Kwara State	69	69.0
	Others State	28	28.0
	Foreign	3	3.0
	Total	100	100.0
Major Occupation	Students	66	66.0
	Civil Servant	29	29.0
	Others	5	5.0
	Total	100	100.0
Level Of Education	Primary	4	4.0
	Secondary	45	45.0
	NCE/ND/HND/Bsc	51	51.0
	Total	100	100.0
Religion	Christianity	36	36.0
	Islam	64	74.0
Total		100	100.0

Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in table 1, shows that majority (58.0%) were females, while 42.0% represented the male. The age range of the respondents reveals that most (41%) of them falls between the ages of 25-34, follows by 15-24 with 23% while the least (7.0%) fall between the ages of ≤14years old. The

residency status of the respondents indicates that 69% are from Kwara State, 28% are from others state and only 3% are foreigners. The major occupation of the respondents indicated that 66% are students while 29% are civil servants. Educational level of the respondents shows that 51.0% are tertiary holder certificate, 45% secondary school certificate holder and only 4.0% are primary school certificate holders. The table also revealed that 64.0% are Muslim while 36% are Christian.

Table 2: Checklist of Some Animals at the University of Ilorin Zoological Garden

Species	Scientific Name
Baboon	Papioanubis
Civet Cat	Nondiniaspp
Common Eland	Tragelapusroryx
Common Jackal	Canisavrius
Crocodile	Crocodile spp
Crowned crane	Balericapavonina
Domestic Pigeon	Columba domestica
Donkey	Equusasinus
Dove	Strepopeliadeciplers
Giraffe	Giraffe comelopardalis
Hooded Vulture	Neophonnonachus
Lion	Pantheraleo
Marabou Stark	Leptoptiloscrumeniferus
Monitor Lizard	Niloticusspp
Nile Monitor	Veranuspp
Ostrich	Struthiocamelus
Owl	Tyto alba
Patas monkey	Erythrocebuspatas
Python	Python sebae
Spotted Hyena	Crocutacrocuta
Stripped Hyena	Hyaenahyaena
Tortoise	Testudosuicata
White Stork	Ciconiacionia

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 3: Visitation and conservation education variables

Variables	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Purpose of visitation	Recreation	39	39.0
	Research	12	12.0
	Excursion	49	49.0
	Total	100	100.0
How did you know about the Zoo?	Friends	27	27.0
	Family	31	31.0
	Media	4	4.0
	School	38	38.0
Level of satisfaction?	Total	100	100.0
	Yes	72	72.0
	No	21	21.0
	I don't know	7	7.0
How was the reception from the zoo staff?	Total	100	100.0
	Hostile	5	5.0
	Warm	79	79.0
	Indifferent	16	16.0
Who sponsored your trip?	Total	100	100.0
	Individual	81	81.0
	Contribution		
	School	19	19.0
Will you visit again?	Management		
	Teacher/Lecturer	0	0.0
	Total	100	100.0
	Yes	92	92.0
No	8	8.0	
Total	100	100.0	

Table 3 shows that the reason for visiting the zoological garden was for excursion (49%), recreation (39%) while research purpose 12%. The source of information about the Zoological garden shows that 38% get to know through their various schools, 31% from family and friends and only 4% are through the media. The table further reveals level of satisfaction derived from the development of Zoological garden in which 72% are satisfied and 7% are

indifferent. 79% of the respondents had a warm reception from the staff while 5% indicated a hostile reception and 16% are indifferent. The table further reveals that 81% of the respondents were self-sponsored while 19% accounted for school management sponsored; with 92% of the respondents willing to visit the Zoological garden again. Figure 1 shows that 66% of the respondents indicated that they had visited other zoological garden apart from Unilorin Zoological Garden indicated while 44% had visited no other zoological garden before.

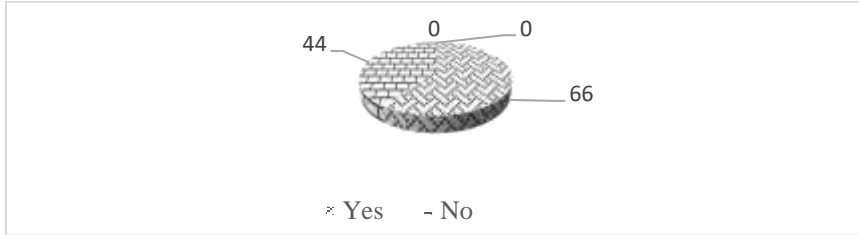


Figure 1: Visitation to other zoological garden

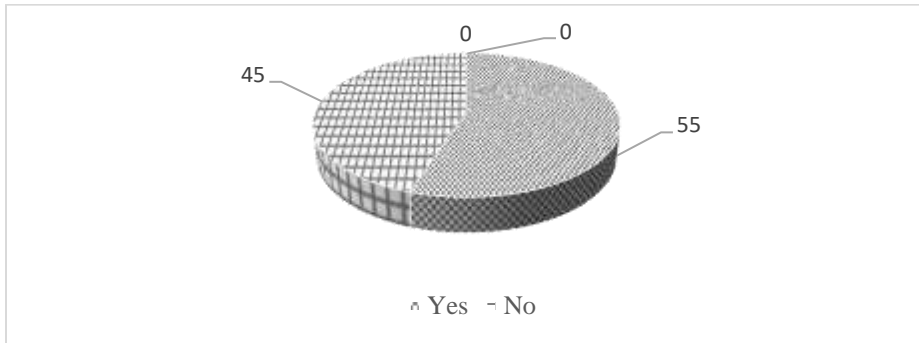


Figure 2: Awareness of Wildlife Conservation

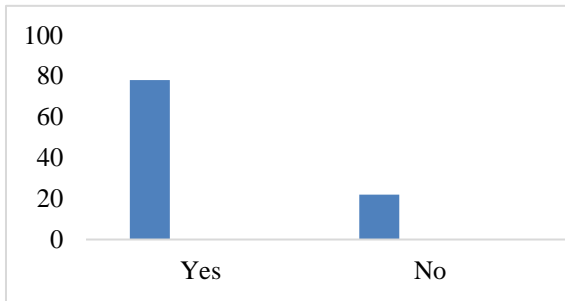


Figure 3: Willingness to Support Wildlife Conservation

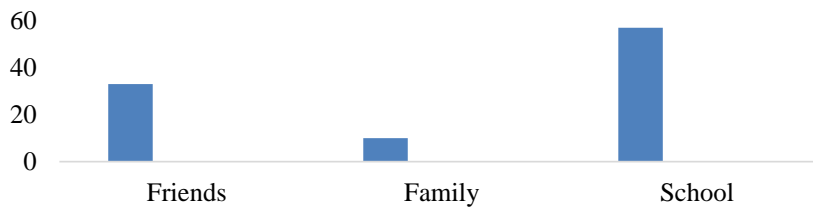


Figure 4: Source of Information about Wildlife Conservation

Figure 2: shows that 55% of the respondents are aware of wildlife conservation while 45% are not aware. Figure 3 shows that 78% of the respondents are willing to support wildlife conservation while 22% are not willing. Figure 4 shows that majority of the respondents got their knowledge of wildlife conservation through their school (57%), follows by friends (33%) and the least is through family with 10%.

4. Discussion

The study shows that more females than males visited the zoo within the study period. This is not in accordance with Alarape et al., (2015) which opine more males seek for recreation than their female counterparts. Many of the visitors fall within age group 25-34 years and 15-24 years. This clearly indicates that youths are more interested in conservation activities, and can be carriers of wildlife conservation message if adequate awareness is created among them. The result is in agreement with Edet et al., (2017) which reports that more youths visit zoological garden than the old age counterparts. More of students (66%) visited the zoological garden than other forms of vocations this is in agreement with the work of Ojo (2019) whose result indicated that 65% of the respondents were students which happened to be the highest.

Most (69.0%) of the respondents were residents of Kwara State. This calls for more awareness in the mass and social media as this will go a long way in promoting the activities of University of Ilorin Zoological garden outside the State.

The educational levels of visitors are more within tertiary and secondary educational level. This is further reflected in the higher percentage of students (66%) visiting the zoo for recreational, excursion and research purposes. The result agrees with Mohan et al., (2015) which reported high number of students visiting Zoo in Nairobi. Excursion and recreation rank the highest reason for their visit to the zoo with majority of the respondents (66.0%) indicating that they have visited others zoo. This gave them a broad knowledge about zoological garden and the opportunity to compare University of Ilorin Zoological Garden to others Zoological garden in Nigeria and Other countries that they have visited. According to Jacobson et al., (2006) the aims of conservation education is to provide learners with the opportunity to gain an awareness and become sensitivity to wildlife and their environment, so as to gain knowledge and experience of the problems

surrounding the sustainable use of wildlife, as well as to acquire a set of values and positive attitudes.

According to Falk et al.,(2007) visitors are good evaluators of conservation areas like zoological gardens; larger percentage of the respondents were satisfied with the level of development in the zoo while reception in form of hospitality from zoo staff was ranked very warmly (79.0%). This level of satisfaction and perception show that the University of Ilorin Zoological Garden is a good tourist destination and have the capability to actualize basic concepts and objectives of the establishment of zoological gardens. The larger percentage of individuals (81%) willingness to sponsor themselves to the study area as well as desire to visit again (92%) is an indication level of satisfaction, because happy visitor will tends to visit the same destination again. This is in line with Ijeomah et al., (2005) who stated that people visit the zoo to satisfy their natural curiosities. It is hoped that visitors leave the zoo with a positive change of mind towards the support of conservation because of the impact of the zoo and its officials on their psyche as they become environmentally informed.

Visitors heard about the zoo through friends (27.0%), family (31.0%), school (38.0%) and media (4.0%). This implies that the experiences from family and friends have positive impact in generating more interests for intending visitors and tourists to the zoo. The level of awareness on wildlife conservation amongst the respondents, as well as willingness to support wildlife conservation may be due to the level of education among the respondents; and with majority being students, many of the respondents got their awareness from schools.

University of Ilorin Zoological Garden attracts more people within the age bracket 15-34 years and the major purpose was for recreation and excursion. The willingness amongst the respondent to revisit the zoo suggest that the facilities provided at the zoological garden was satisfactory as well as a warm reception. This makes the zoo a good location to propagate wildlife conservation knowledge through the guide.

It is therefore recommended that awareness of University of Ilorin Zoological Garden should be made known to the neighboring states through mass media. Additional animal should be procured especially Elephant to increase attraction to the place especially for the foreigners.

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