

Comparative Assessment of the Safety Measures in The Environment of Public and Private Primary Schools in Ekiti State

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Abstract:

This study examined comparative assessment of the safety measures in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study was designed to determine the presence of health hazards in the environment of public and private primary schools; and to determine the presence of safety measures in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti state. The study uses cross sectional descriptive research design that employed the use of a standardized well-structured adapted checklist to assess the safety measures in the environment of (both public and registered private) primary schools. The population of this study comprises 158 private primary schools; 457 public primary schools in all the 3 Senatorial Districts, Ekiti State. Multi-Stage sampling procedure was used in this study to select appropriate sample. A standardized observational checklist was adapted from the school health programme evaluation scale to assess health hazards and safety measures. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data collected. Findings from the study showed that more than 20% of public schools were located close to major roads, market and industrial area while private schools were more exposed to health hazards as more than 20% were close to an industrial area, market place, major roads, dangerous/grazing animals and floods/open drainage. The study also revealed that majority of the public and private schools have inadequate safety measures. It was recommended among others that community health Nurses should enforce the presence of safety measures in the

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Introduction

The environment encompasses natural and man-made endowments, human environment is significant to his living conditions and this showcases how he plans his activities which are affected by things around him. Charette (2016) gave a wider definition of environment to include not only air, ground and water but also, indoor air quality, food, the living as well as the working environment.

People in a certain community whether schools, social gathering, religious gathering, or workplace pose a physical impact on the environment which climaxes in nature also having inverse consequences on their health. Pupils are frequently exposed to environment hazards (chemical, physical and biological) as a result of the inter-personal relationship man builds with his environment. It is therefore important to make available adequate safety measures in school environment to see that schools are safe. School Proprietors and teachers are expected to have enough knowledge on healthful school program so as to make effective implementations. World Health Organization (2019) estimated that between 25% and 33% of the global burden of disease can be credited to environmental risk factors. According to Hoy and Miskel (2019), school setting can either be healthy or unhealthy.

According to Cohen, Pickeral, and McCloskey (2017), school environment can also be assessed by the following: physical safety, social and emotional security, safety rules, norms), teaching and learning (support for learning, social and civic learning), interpersonal relationship (respect for diversity, social support-adults, social support – pupils) and institutional environment (school connectedness/engagement and physical surroundings). Cohen et al., (2017) also reported that virtually all Scholars as well as the National School Environment Council (2016) agreed that the four main factors that shape school environment are safety, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, and institutional environment.

A safe school is a place where pupils can access a high quality education in absence of violence threat (Idoko, 2013). School safety could be described as a situation in which the teachers and learners feel at home, groom confidence, sustain a positive state of mind, and do not show any signs of pulling out from the school, but work towards the attainment of their personal goals. Schools have to cultivate an active safety policies that targets overall school climate including emergency preparedness, and school system management. School safety includes prevention/mitigation, early intervention, immediate response/intervention and long-term recovery. Safety management involves active participation of headmasters, proprietors, school mental health professionals, school security personnel, appropriate community stakeholders (such as representatives from local law enforcement and emergency personnel), and other school staff to help maintain efforts over time for service delivery.

School safety is best defined as what a safe school is. As explained earlier, a safe school is a school that is materially and psycho-socially safe. Regarding the school's physical environment, the most evident aspects of such attributes are the quality of the security and school buildings and grounds' maintenance. This shows a neat and safe environment that is conducive to education and has security of property, well-cared for amenities, furniture and equipment, clean toilets, water and green environment void of harassment (Squelch, 2011). Safety can also be described as liberty from danger, dangers and unnecessary risks. Aluko (2012) views safety as deliberate plans and organization of environment, man and materials



to decrease or eliminate danger, injury/trauma and risks. Inadequate safety is established by unsafe situations, behaviour, disasters or emergencies, which a school requires to be prepared for so as to maintain safety in schools (Kipngeno & Kyalo, 2009).

Madison (2015) is of the opinion that in a harmful school environment, the teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil, staff to staff relationships are continually conflicting and empty of commitment for excellence. Such toxic learning milieu has inadequate sense of purpose, have norms that reinforce inertia, blame pupils for inadequate progress and frequently have actively hostile relations. According to Abdullahi and Terhemba (2017), insecurity cases have been widely submitted in many primary schools within and outside Nigeria. When the school environment is unsafe, all forms of behavior including deviance are learnt from the environment and the precise behaviors learnt at the initial years are relevant to one's personality development. Also it has been shown that behavior to do good or bad can be driven by situation and group interaction with peers, naughty orientations, underprivileged backgrounds, inept desire to commit crime, dullness, unhappiness, worry, strong feeling of inferiority complex and unsatisfied emotional needs. A school environment with insecurity is likely to have the following: its classroom, hostels, laboratories and cafeterias in ramshackle conditions, the teachers having negative attitude to tolerate and accept the emotional needs of pupils and there would be undue influences and clashes, of a local community meddling with school business.

Ofovwé and Ofili (2016) in their study sampled 133 (one hundred and thirty-three) private and public schools in Edo State reported that most of the schools sampled observed consistent cleaning exercise which added to improving cleanliness of the schools' environment. They reported that 47.1% of the 104 private schools make pupils responsible for clean-up of the school compound while 52.9% used cleaners, but in 96.6% of the 29 public schools, pupils were observed to be responsible for the cleaning and plastic bins were provided to gather the dirt. Their study also revealed that 77.9% of the private schools sampled and none of the public schools had adequate water supply and that most of the schools do not have toilet and hand washing facilities. Their study also showed that 90% of private and 86.4% of public schools involved their pupils in physical education and recreational activities.

Unhealthy school physical environment has negative impact on children's health, attendance, attentiveness and performance as well as lead to expensive, time-consuming clean up and remediation activities (Aina, 2014). Zippin (2014) similarly affirms the view by stating that schools should not expose the life of the pupil to objects and school amenities like broken chairs, desks and caving in walls that can cause bodily harm. The factors that are important to health include harmful substances such as air pollution and poisonous chemicals. The school environment should not be a health hazard so as to avoid attack by diseases and parasitic worms.

Ekiti state primary health care has been burdened with health issues from pupils in public and private nursery and primary schools, daily inflow of sick children to primary health care facilities as a result of environmental driven diseases such as acute respiratory infections, malaria, diarrheal and injuries which is the primary cause of increase child death in the state. Many childhood illnesses and death are greatly influenced by the environment



(Omotere, 2014). With the increase in private schools there is the need to compare the safety measures in the environment of private and public primary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This study examined comparative assessment of the safety measures in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study was designed;

1. to determine the presence of health hazards in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti state; and
2. to determine the presence of safety measures in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for this study;

1. Are there health hazards in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti state?
2. What are the available safety measures in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti state?

Methodology

The study uses cross sectional descriptive research design that employed the use of a standardized well-structured adapted checklist to assess the safety measures in the environment of (both public and registered private) primary schools in Ekiti. The population of this study comprises 158 private primary schools; 457 public primary schools in all the 3 Senatorial Districts, Ekiti State. Multi-Stage sampling procedure was used in this study to select appropriate sample. A standardized observational checklist was adapted from the school health programme evaluation scale by Nwadolu et al, (2016) to assess health hazards and safety measures in private and public primary schools.

Data was collected by the researcher and five (5) well-trained research assistants. The purpose of the study was explained to the research assistants. Research assistants were also taken through the checklist and how they will be used to collect data. The researcher and research assistants visited each school and assessed the environment of the selected primary schools with the use of the checklist. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data collected.

Results

Research Question 1: Are there health hazards in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti state?

Table 1: Presence of Health Hazards in the School Environment

Variables	Public Schools				Private Schools			
	Freq. n=166	%	Freq. n=166	%	Freq. n=166	%	Freq. n=166	%
	Yes present		No absent		Yes present		No absent	
Close to a major road	39	23.5	127	76.5	35	35.0	65	65.0
Close to market	33	19.9	133	80.1	28	28.0	72	72.0



Dangerous /grazing animals (snakes, dogs, Cow etc)	25	15.1	141	84.9	18	18.0	82	82.0
Animal dropping in environment	33	19.9	133	80.1	22	22.0	78	78.0
Floods/open drainage	27	16.3	139	83.7	25	25.0	75	75.0
Near a river	29	17.5	137	82.5	21	21.0	79	79.0
In an industrial area	40	24.1	126	75.9	27	27.0	73	73.0
Vectors/pest (mosquito, flea etc)	28	16.9	138	83.1	20	20.0	80	80.0

Table 1 presented the distribution of health hazards in the school. Majority of private schools (65%) and public schools (76.5%) were not located close to a major road. However, only relatively below average of private (28.0%) and public (19.9%) schools were located close to a market area. Below average from private schools (22%) and public schools (19.9%) saw animals droppings in classrooms. Also, below average from private (16.3%) and public (25%) schools had flood / open drainage in their schools. Less than an average of private (21%) and public (17.5%) schools had river near their schools.

Research Question 2: What are the available safety measures in the environment of public and private primary schools in Ekiti state?

Table 2: Presence of Safety Measure in the School Environment

Variable	Public Schools				Private Schools			
	Available		Not Available		Available		Not Available	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Safety patrol team	35	21.1	131	78.9	34	34.0	66	66.0
School fence	62	37.3	104	62.7	84	84.0	16	16.0
Fire extinguisher	18	10.8	148	89.2	11	11.0	89	89.0
Fire alarm	22	13.3	144	86.7	13	13.0	87	87.0
CCTV Cameras	2	1.2	164	98.8	10	10.0	90	90.0
Gate/Gate man	62	37.3	104	62.7	26	26.0	74	74.0
First aid box	32	19.3	134	80.7	33	33.0	67	67.0

Table 2 presented the presence of safety measures in the schools. Majority (88.9% and 66.0%) of public and private schools respectively do not possess the safety measures in their school environment. These include safety patrol team, school fence, fire extinguisher, Fire Alarm, CCTV Cameras and first Aid box. Also, majority (84.0%) of the private schools had perimeter fence while majority (62.7%) of public schools did not have. Also, below average (10.8% and 11.0%) of public and private schools respectively had fire extinguishers. Relatively low percentage of public (1.2%) and private schools (10.0%) said they have a CCTV camera. Also, below average (37.3%) of public schools had gate man while majority (74.0%) did not have in private schools. Less than average (19.3% and 33.0%) of public and private schools respectively had first aid boxes.

Discussion



Findings from the study showed that majority of all the schools studied were located away from physical health hazards environment and were cited within safe vicinity. However, more than 20% of public schools were located close to major roads, market and industrial area. The private schools were more exposed to health hazards as more than 20% were close to an industrial area, market place, major roads, dangerous/grazing animals and floods/open drainage. The findings were inconsistent with the results of a study of Fabal (2015) where majority of the schools were located within the area where pupils were exposed to physical health hazards. Safe school environment is important for pupil's health and well-being, this was supported by the study of Ofovwe and Ofili (2018). Positive school environment promotes pupil health and enhances the motivation of the pupils to attend school. Community health nurses have the responsibility to advocate for healthful environment among school owners and the government.

Findings from this study showed that in both schools, majority do not possess the safety measures in their environment. These included safety patrol team, perimeter fence, fire extinguisher, first aid boxes, gate man, and fire alarm whereas. This finding was consistent with a previous study Aina (2014) who reported that only 10% of public schools were completely fenced. School fence with gate and gateman prevent unauthorized departure of pupils from the school premises and also prevents strangers from getting access to the students. All schools in the state must be properly fenced to provide some degree of security for staff and pupils in this era where kidnapping and banditry is rampant in Nigeria. Also, majority of the schools did not have first aid boxes. This study was similar to the work of A Non availability of this can endanger pupils' health when emergencies cases arises within the school premises. Community health nurses are saddled with the responsibility to educate school owners and teacher s and the government on the importance of providing safety measures such as first aid box, gateman, fire extinguisher and school fence to prevent occurrences that may have negative impact on pupils' health and wellbeing.

Conclusion

The study concludes that more than 20% of public schools were located close to major roads, market and industrial area while private schools were more exposed to health hazards as more than 20% were close to an industrial area, market place, major roads, dangerous/grazing animals and floods/open drainage. The study also concludes that majority of the public and private schools have inadequate safety measures.

Recommendations

1. Community health Nurses should enforce the presence of safety measures in the school environment. This involves the provision of patrol teams, fence building, fire-extinguisher, gateman or security men and accessories such as CCTV and first aid box should be made available.
2. The use of speed signs, barricading access to rivers, roads and industries close to the schools to prevent health hazards such as drowning, accidents and industrial hazards should be made available.
3. The classroom should be well conducive to prevent several infections through congestion or poor ventilation.



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