

Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of School Safety among Primary Schools' Teachers in Edo South Senatorial District

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Abstract. A safe school is one that ensures the health, safety and security of the learners in the physical, social, emotional and psychological makeup of the school. The study investigated Knowledge, attitude and practice of school safety among primary schools' teachers in Edo south senatorial district. The study employed the cross-sectional form of survey research design. The target population comprised all primary school teachers in Egor and Ovia South west local government areas which are part of the senatorial district which are predominantly urban and rural areas respectively with a total of 992 public primary school teachers. The sample was 394 selected using purposive sampling technique. A researcher designed questionnaire was used for data collection which was validated by three experts in the field of health education; test re-test method was used to measure the reliability of the instrument whereby a coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by the researchers with the aid of three research assistants. Frequency counts and percentage was used to analyse the research questions and T-test was used to test the formulated research hypotheses. It was concluded that primary school teachers have limited knowledge and positive attitude, however the limited knowledge and positive attitude of school safety exhibited by the teachers was not determined by the location of the schools where they work. It was recommended that state government and local government should collaborate effectively to raise school safety programme and enlighten teachers about the components of school safety

to ensure schools are safe physically, socially, mentally, emotionally and psychologically.

Keywords: knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Safety measures, Primary schools and Teachers

1. Introduction

The responsibility of schools to provide a safe environment for their students has been affirmed in the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) four on Education. A school should be a safe place for all students. It should be a place free of violence and discrimination. Safe schools are a vehicle for disseminating knowledge about possible risks and conflicts in surrounding areas and how students can protect themselves from such exploitation. Students are taught how to prepare for, respond to and rebuild in the face of emergencies. A school should always be a place where students and staff are safe and protected. It is a teacher's responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of students who are in their charge. They can take pride in the fact that they are well versed in safety knowledge and skills. Community members will also be proud of the school and are more apt to support it when resources are scarce or when opposition to schooling emerges.

School safety refers to the process of establishing and maintaining a school that is a physically, cognitively and emotionally safe space for students and staff to carry out learning activities (Friskin, 2006). A safe school is one that ensures the health, safety and security of the

learners in the physical, social, emotional and psychological makeup of the school.

A safe school has a certain feeling, that when you enter, surrounds you with a sense of both calm and excitement. Calm, because you know you are in a physical, emotional and cognitive safe space that makes you forget about outside troubles and excitement, because you can allow yourself to be immersed in the wonders and challenges of learning and future possibilities (Odeyemi & Chukwu, 2015). They further stated that the overall knowledge of school health and safety among teachers was poor and limited. Odeyemi & Chukwu (2015) further revealed that teachers demonstrate poor knowledge of school health programme and school safety irrespective of the location of the schools. A learner feels safe when they know their physical, nutritional and emotional well-being is being looked after through a system of structural and procedural supports that promote their development in the school. A safe school has a system put in place that ensure and promote safety and continuity through emergency situations, ensure nutritional soundness in their students and staff, foster a positive school climate and allow for the anonymous reporting of abuses. In creating a safe school environment that promote effective teaching and learning, one of the most important aspects is planning which reflect on the physical structure, site collection in relation to social, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of the students and staff of the school. Without proper plans in place, major and minor emergency situations can quickly lead to injury, or even become life-threatening (Abodunmi, Adeoye, Adeomi, Osundina & Illori, 2014).

School safety begins with the school site selection, disaster control strategies on the social and psychological environment for effective teaching and learning process. The following should be consider for effective school safety: accessibility of school building, safe playground, adequate class space, Provision of adequate sanitation facilities, stairways with secured railings, recruitment of emotionally stable school staff and students, availability of safety gadgets like fire extinguishers, fire alarms system, proper reporting systems, secure, leak

proof roofing and access to adequate quantities of safe drinking water.

In planning for school safety, discussion should center around; vulnerability of the schools to threats, potential hazard and harms; gender sensitivity; makeup of the school population; contingency plans for infrastructure damage due to emergency; climatic hazards; supplies needed to continue education such as safety kits, who are the local partners who can assist in case of emergency. Poor school safety affects learners' performance, social and psychological wellbeing. Some of the symptoms that arise from poor school safety, behaviourally include; temper tantrums, regression in speech development, poor concentration, restlessness, stuttering, hyperactivity, self-destruction like drug taking, withdrawal syndrome, anxiety, nervousness (Nicolai, 2003; Nwachukwu, 2004).

Students or learners behaviour is an aspect of school safety. Reduction in self-control is displayed through activities including: increased sexual behavior, aggression, prejudice, thoughts of death, passivity and increased perception of task difficulty (Ibeziako, Bella, Omigbodun & Belfer, 2009; Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). It can be assumed that this could contribute to risk-taking behaviors outside the classroom that could inadvertently compromise classroom safety. School climate can be defined as the patterns of norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures that work together to create a general "mood" on a school campus (Cohen, Guffey, Higgins & Thapa, 2013). They further explained that school safety is desirable and necessary for the general wellbeing of the learners and staff of schools. This mood can be positive or negative depending on how staff, students and families work together to promote a shared vision of educational outcomes. Positive school climates contribute to the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of the student. Additionally, positive school climates contribute to the health and well-being of teachers and staff. The climate of your school can also contribute or pose a threat to safety. A positive school climate can lead to decreased

absenteeism, serve as a method of risk-prevention and lessen the effects of socioeconomic disparities. Schools with a positive climate experience less violence, less harassment and achieve greater academic outcomes. Overall, feelings of safety promote greater learning and development amongst students and are associated with less school violence and greater teacher satisfaction. Positive school climate starts with positive relationships. This refers to student-teacher, student-student and staff-staff interpersonal relationships. How connected individuals feel to the school and how well they take care of each other are important factors in building and sustaining positive relationships. Positive interpersonal relationships between students and teachers help to reduce bad behavior. Support from teachers and peers increase self-esteem and school achievement. Additionally, positive teacher perceptions of work environment, their own peer relationships, inclusion and support from leadership/peers minimizes burnout and leads to more committed teaching force. School can sponsor student groups related to teamwork that foster healthy competition, hold team-building staff development that also increase pedagogical knowledge and skills (Kann, Telljohann & Wooley, 2007).

Classroom organisation as a school safety element, the classroom should be kept clean, with easy access to trash cans, students should be able to get in and out of their seats and there should balance in setting arrangement in relation to ethnic and gender. There are several environmental risk factors than can contribute to ill health, threaten student safety and lead to psychological or developmental damage. Students may be at risk, if the community has experienced natural disasters such as flood, drought, and severe storms. Noriko, Masamine, Krishna, Chitsavang, Azusa, Bounlay & Khamhoung, (2009) expressed that local and regional conflicts between groups can lead to a loss of community or family support and further stated that out of school children are at an increased risk of abuse and human rights violations. Abodunmi, Adeoye, Adeomi, Osundina & Ilori, (2014) revealed in a study that teachers in public schools showed low practice to school safety which was as a result of poor

knowledge about school safety and lack of facilities to promote school safety like sick bay, sanitation kits, safe playground and well trained teachers.

The classroom is the best place for students to learn to share and respect other students (UNESCO, 2011). One of the best ways to build a relationship with a student is to get to know them. Students will feel more comfortable in class when they realize they have more similarities than differences with their classmates (Nigudgi, Patil, Pattankar & Shrinivasredy, 2012). Idehen & Oshodin (2008) stated that safety at the classroom level begins with effective classroom management. Many potential threats to students' emotional, cognitive and physical safety can be lessened through proper classroom management and consistent procedures. A teacher must understand that he work with a wide variety of learners who have differing abilities, personalities, learning styles and dispositions. Basic elements of classroom organization must also be employed. Classroom organization to promote school safety includes; keeping the class neat and tidy, proper arrangement of desks and chairs in such a way that students can move easily from one side of the classroom to the other.

Teachers play a significant role in promoting school safety. The knowledge, attitude about school safety will enhance the practice of school safety through advocacy, implementation and evaluation of the school safety to promote learners social, emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing. The knowledge of school safety ensure teachers' commitment and support to harness school safety elements and measures in order to have an effective learning environment for maximum learners performance and wellbeing of the students and staff to determine the extent of school safety practices in such schools. Ofovwe and Ofili (2007) explained that teachers and school administrators with adequate knowledge of school, safety tend to advocate for it and ensure its full implementation. They further revealed that teachers' attitude to school safety programme was not determine by the location of

the schools. In another vein, positive attitude about school safety reduces school related injuries, hazards, child abuse, absenteeism and other unruly behaviour in school. Knowledge, attitude and practice of school safety exemplify the general dimensions of effective teaching and learning environment, hence the need for this study to investigate the knowledge, attitude and practice of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial district.

2. Statement of the Problem

Children spend a considerable part of their life in school exposed to a variety of environmental, physical, emotional and social influences. With an increasing number of students with health conditions requiring health services during the school day, the school health service programme with emphasis to school safety and health should be directed to ensure safety among students and staff in the schools. Poor health and safety conditions may result from many causes including but not limited to physical, electrical and structural hazards, poor indoor air quality and/or temperature control, building materials, furnishings and equipment. Human error, facility operation, and maintenance practices, as well as the various activities of students, parents and other school user groups can also contribute to health and safety problems. Although there is no single solution for all of these problems, thorough and routine inspections of school facilities will help in reducing illness and injuries to students, staff and visitors. There have been reports of injuries, accidents, spread of communicable diseases like measles, whooping cough, conjunctivitis, cholera, tuberculosis among pupils in primary schools in Edo state, which ordinarily would have been prevented and controlled with proper school safety programmes and services. The role of teachers in the school safety programme is very central. They are the resource people responsible for the promotion of school safety in schools; hence the study is geared towards investigating the knowledge, attitude and practice of school safety among primary school teachers in Benin metropolis.

3. Research Questions

Three research questions guided the study:

- What is the level of knowledge of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial district?
- What is the attitude of primary school teachers about school safety in Edo south senatorial district?
- Do primary school teachers practice school safety in Edo south senatorial districts?

4. Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated for the study:

There is no significant difference in the level of knowledge of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial districts based on location

There is no significant difference in attitude about school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial districts based on location

5. Method and Materials

The study employed the cross-sectional form of survey research design. This is because the information about the independent and dependent variables that are gathered represent what is going on at a particular point in time (Best & Kalin, 2009) in relation to the investigation of the knowledge, attitude and practice of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial district. The population of the study comprised all primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial district; however the target population comprised all primary school teachers in Egor and Ovia South west local government areas which are part of the senatorial district which are predominantly urban and rural areas respectively. Egor local government area have 58 public primary schools with a teacher population of 604, Ovia south west local government area have 30 public primary schools with a teacher population of 388. The list of schools in each LGAs and purposive sampling technique obtained from the enlisted schools to obtained was used to select

by balloting, using simple random sampling technique in Egor LGA, while 12 schools were selected in Ovia south west LGA to make up the sample size of 32 schools selected. In the selected schools, all the primary school teachers were used for the study. The total primary school teachers were 394.

A researcher designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A and B. Section A elicited information about the socio-demographic data of the primary school teachers while section B elicited information about the research questions and research hypotheses of the study. The questionnaire was validated by

three experts in the field of health education and a reliability testing was done using test re-test approach in which a 30 validated questionnaires were administered to primary schools teachers in Esan North east LGA which is in Edo central senatorial district and re-administered after three weeks. A Pearson product moment analysis was used to analyse the two scores obtained and 0.81 was obtained. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by the researchers with the aid of three research assistants. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, sorted and coded. Frequency counts and percentage was used to analyse the research questions and T-test was used to test the formulated research hypotheses.

6. Results and Discussion of Findings

6.1 Results

RQ₁: What is the level of knowledge of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial district?

Level of Knowledge	f(%)	Remarks
Good	43(11)	Majority of the primary school teachers in Edo South senatorial district have limited knowledge of school Safety.
Fair	83(21)	
Poor	268(68)	

The table showed the frequency counts and percentage calculation in respect to the knowledge of school safety. The table revealed that only 43 out of the 394 primary school teachers have good knowledge of school safety. 68% of the total sampled teachers have poor knowledge of school safety.

RQ₂: What is the attitude of primary school teachers about school safety in Edo south senatorial district?

Attitude gradients	f(%)	Remarks
SA	288(73)	Majority of the primary school teachers in Edo South senatorial district showed positive attitude of school Safety.
A	102(26)	
D	4(1)	
SD	-	

The table showed the frequency count and percentages distribution of the four options to determine the level of attitude on school safety by the sampled primary school teachers. The table revealed that 73% of the respondents strongly agree to the need and benefits of school safety. Again, only 1% expressed disagreement that school safety is beneficial to learners and staff of school in conjunction with improved learner performance and social, emotional and psychological wellbeing.

RQ₃: Do primary school teachers practice school safety in Edo south senatorial districts?

Practice of school safety	F(%)	Remarks
Yes	71(18)	Majority of the primary school teachers in Edo South senatorial district do not practice school safety
No	323(82)	

The table showed the frequency count and percentages distribution of the practice of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial district. The table revealed that 82% of the primary

school teachers do not practice school safety in relation to physical, social, emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the level of knowledge of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial districts based on location

Table 4: Summary of T-test analysis on the difference between primary school teachers in rural and urban areas of Edo south senatorial district about the level of knowledge of school safety.

Location	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	t-crit.	Decision
Rural	141	4.04	1.36	1.33	292	1.96	Ho accepted
Urban	253	4.28	1.28				

The table 4 above is a summary of t-test on the difference between primary school teachers in rural and urban areas of Edo south senatorial district about the level of knowledge of school safety. The table revealed that the calculated t-test value of 1.33 is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the formulated null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the level of knowledge of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial districts based on location.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in attitude about school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial districts based on location

Table 5: Summary of T-test analysis on the difference in attitude of School Safety between Primary School Teachers in Rural and Urban Areas of Edo South Senatorial District.

Location	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	t-crit.	Decision
Rural	141	3.96	1.29	1.26	292	1.96	Ho accepted
Urban	253	4.02	1.24				

The table 5 above is a summary of t-test on the difference in attitude of school safety between primary school teachers in rural and urban areas of Edo south senatorial district. The table revealed that the calculated t-test value of 1.26 is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the formulated null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in attitude about school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial districts based on location

6.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial district have poor knowledge about school safety and failed to understand that school safety encompasses physical, social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of learners and staff of schools to promote improved academic performance of students. This finding

corroborate with the finding of Odeyemi & Chukwu (2015) which stated that the overall knowledge of school safety among teachers was poor. The study also revealed that primary school teachers demonstrate positive attitude to the necessity and usefulness of school safety programme to promote physical, social, mental, emotional and psychological wellness of the students and staff of schools. The finding is in agreement with Odeyemi & Chukwu (2015) which stated that majority of the teachers studied had positive attitude to school health programme and safety and felt that school safety was desirable and necessary for the general wellbeing of the learners and staff of schools. The finding of Cohen, Guffey, Higgins & Thapa (2013) also agreed with the finding of this study that school safety is desirable and necessary for the general wellbeing of learners and staff of schools.

The study also revealed that majority of the primary school teachers do not practice school

safety and the reason is not farfetched from the poor knowledge expressed about school safety. It can also be deduce that many of the public primary schools do not have facilities and commitment to implement school safety. The finding corroborate with the finding of Abodunmi, Adeoye, Adeomi, Osundina & Ilori (2014) that teachers in public primary schools show low practice to school safety which could be as a result of poor knowledge about school safety and lack of facilities to promote school safety like sick bays, sanitation kits, safe playground and well trained teachers.

The study revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of knowledge of school safety among primary school teachers in Edo south senatorial districts based on location. The findings is in line with that of that Odeyemi & Chukwu (2015) which stated that teachers demonstrated poor knowledge of school health programme and school safety irrespective of the location of the schools.

The study also revealed that there is no significant difference in attitude of school safety between primary school teachers in rural and urban areas of Edo south senatorial district. The finding corroborate with that of Ofovwé & Ofili (2007) which stated that teachers' attitude to school safety programme was not determine by the location of the schools.

7. Conclusion

The study concluded that public primary school teachers showed limited knowledge about school safety and showed awareness of the physical component of school safety with poor knowledge on the social, emotional and psychological components of school safety. The teachers however demonstrated positive attitude to the need and usefulness of school safety. However, due to limited knowledge and insufficient resources in the schools, it was difficult for the teachers to practice school safety. The limited knowledge and positive attitude of school safety exhibited by the teachers was not determined by the location of the schools where they work.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended the followings:

- State government and local government should collaborate effectively to raise school safety programme and enlighten teachers about the components of school safety to ensure schools are safe physically, socially, mentally, emotionally and psychologically.
- Government, school proprietors and school administrators should provide the enabling environment and facilities that encourage school safety in schools.
- There should be periodic forums, seminars and symposia that educate teachers about school safety and provide all needed to encourage the practice of school safety.

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