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**Environmental Factors as Correlates of Accident
Occurrence among Secondary School Students in Lagelu
Local Government Area of Oyo State**

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Abstract

This study explores environmental factors as correlates of accident occurrence among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Multi-stage sampling techniques were adopted to select five hundred (500) students and one hundred (100) teachers from all public secondary schools in the Local Government Area of Oyo State as respondents. A self-developed validated questionnaire titled "Correlate of School Accident Questionnaire" (CSAQ) was used for data collection with reliability of $r = 0.69$. Four hypotheses were raised and the Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha level. The results showed that there were significant correlation between School location (close to the road, forest, bushy, stony and hilly areas); school playing grounds (football field, Sport court and general playing area); School indoor environment (classrooms, library, laboratory and Home Economic Kitchen); and school structure (school building, floors, windows, stairs and doors) and accidents occurrence among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that health and safety education should be organized for school administrators and teachers on the importance of safe school environment and strategies of school accident prevention. Secondary school students should also be taught personal safety.

Key Words: *Environmental factors, School environment, Secondary school students.*

Introduction

A safe learning environment is essential for students of all ages. Without it they are unable to focus on learning the skills needed for a successful education and future. When accident is on high rate at educational institutions all staff and students are affected in one way or another. Even though one child may not be the actual victim of accident in school, there is a very good chance that he or she will witness the acts within the school environment throughout the educational years (Stephen 2006).

WHO (2002) emphasized that the school environment is one of the primary determinant of student's health as regards contaminated water and air pollution in acute respiratory diseases, which can also cause death. Schools are supposed to be "safe" environment, both for staff and for students, but, everyone knows that there is no such thing as a truly safe environment and accident at school do happen (Cairncross 2008). Nwadinigwe (2010) postulated that the quality of the environment in which man lives is inextricably linked with the quality of life he enjoys, especially his socio economic and health status. The school system in Nigeria is not exempted from the environmental factors. In many schools, the environment is not child-friendly; most of the classroom blocks in these schools are dilapidated. Schools with cracked walls, leaking roofs, broken doors and window.

Similarly, before a structure is constructed, planners and community group need to consider potential environmental risk like flooding, busy road and noisy environment in choosing school location (Yisa 2010). WHO (2004) also noted that, the condition of school's environment can impact the health of both students and staff. It had been demonstrated that all members of the school community need unpolluted air to breathe, clean water to drink, a safe way to travel to school to avoid accidents and protection from extreme temperature and ultra violet radiation. According to Esrey, (2006) a safe, clean and well-maintained school with a positive psychosocial climate and culture can foster school connectedness, which in turn boosts students and staff safety

as well as student's educational achievement.

The physical school environment encompasses the site on which a school is located, the school building and all its contents including physical structures, infrastructure, furniture, the chemicals and biological agents in the laboratory, the surrounding environment including the air, water and materials with which students come in contact with, as well as nearby land, road ways and other hazards (WHO 2007). Infectious diseases carried by water, and physical hazards associated with poor construction and maintenance practices are examples of risks students and school personnel face at schools throughout the world. The most important aspect of any school environment is comfort of students and teachers. Learning process becomes easier when students are comfortable. Being comfortable is a combination of several different factors; good location, school size, adequate usable space, noise free zone, good topography of the school, good parking space, well constructed buildings and climate control; well arranged and spacious classroom, good playground and sanitation (Drake, Jukes, Sternberg & Bundy, 2000).

The classroom is the most important area of a school because it is where students and teachers spend most of their time and where the learning process takes place. The following conditions helps to make the classroom a safe place for learning. The classroom should be arranged in such a way that accident will be avoided and also should be designed to accommodate students so that the number of students does not exceed normal class population. A lower density of students per classroom still increases teacher and student interaction and their safety (Bowers, Howard, Charles & Burkett, 2003).

In an attempt to identify the causes and prevention of school accidents, one needs to know the meaning of accident. Accident is an unplanned event that occurs to every individual at any place in time. When it happens it leads to either loss of life, damage to properties and sustaining of injury to the body. Accidents are factors of intimately death which terminate good vision and laudable programmes (Bolarinwa, 2010). Accidents are connected to various types of activity that takes place at different settings in the home and

at school (WHO 2004). The place where students had accidents most often was their school and home. Despite the greater formal supervision, school hours have been estimated to be safer than other hours. Each year, several students suffer from substantial accidents at school which results in significant malfunction of the body, apart from direct medical consequences, excessive absence from school which is associated with education failure may result from injuries (Bundy 2008). Therefore, the data on school injury is important with the fact that school environment and participating in school sport sometimes result in school accidents among students.

Zannu (2012) explains that the rate of accidents in schools has severely disturbed the normal learning activities, which also brought deep hurt to students parents and harmful affection to the whole society. Michael (2013) perceives accident that occurs in the school settings during sport activities include collision, falls, drowning or when there is a case of violence during a sport competitions. Michael further stated that slips or trips account for a large portion of accidents in school. Schools have the same duty of care as any other building or land owner in their responsibility to take reasonable steps to prevent slips or trips. They occur as a result of poor flooring, also when the lockers and chairs are not properly arranged.

Ikulayo (2006) opines that strangulation can occur on playground, often resulting from student getting entangled in playground equipment. Head and neck entrapment is a major cause of strangulation. It occurs when a student's head is placed into an opening, the student's body changes direction and the student's head cannot be withdrawn. Also, when a student's legs pass through an opening and the student's body slips through, the head can become trapped and the student is at risk of strangulation.

In secondary schools, the administrative role might be delegated to facilities coordinators and environmental health specialists. Therefore creating and sustaining a safety school environment requires commitment from everyone (Drake, Jukes, Sternberg and Bundy, 2000).

Theoretical Framework (The Dómino Theory)

The study is anchored on the Domino Theory of Accidents. The Domino Theory was propounded in late 1920's by Herber W. Heinrich, an early pioneer of accident prevention and industrial safety (British Safety Services BSS, 2016). According to Heinrich, there are five factors in the sequence of events leading up to an accident. These factors are;

- i. **Ancestry and social environment:-** Negative character traits that may lead people to behave in an unsafe manner can be inherited (ancestry) or acquired as a result of the social environment.
- ii. **Fault of person:-** Negative character traits whether inherited or acquired, are why people behave in an unsafe manner and why hazardous conditions exist.
- iii. **Unsafe act/ mechanical or physical hazard:-** Unsafe acts committed by people and mechanical or physical hazards are the direct causes of accidents.
- iv. **Accident:-**Typically, accidents that result in injury are caused by falling or bang hit by moving objects.
- v. **Injury:-**Typical injuries resulting from accidents include lacerations and fractures.

Heinrich's theory has two central points;

1. Injuries are caused by the action of preceding factors.
2. Removal of the central factor (unsafe act/ hazardous condition) negates the action of the preceding factors and, in so doing, prevents accidents and injuries (W.H.O 2007).

The implication of this theory to the research work is that it affords the researcher the opportunity to actually verify if injuries could be avoided or eliminated and if in affirmative to what extent environment factors correlate with accident among secondary school students since the theory serve as yard sticks or guidance for the research work. It is obvious that the findings certainly offer accurate result to the question raised.

Hypotheses

To guide the study, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant.

1. There is no significant correlation between School location (close to the road, forest, bushy, stony and hilly areas) and occurrence of accident among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State.
2. There is no significant correlation between school playing grounds (football field, Sport court and general playing area) and occurrence of accident among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State.
3. There is no significant correlation between School indoor environment (classrooms, library, laboratory and Home Economic Kitchen) and occurrence of accident among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State.
4. There is no significant correlation between school structure (school building, floors, windows, stairs and doors) and occurrence of accident among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population for the study comprised all public secondary school students and teachers in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State. The sample of 600 respondents was used for the study. A systematic random sampling was used to select twelve (12) schools out of the twenty-three schools in Lagelu Local Government Area in Oyo state. A proportionate sampling techniques was then used to select 20% of the total population of teachers and students from selected schools as respondents. A total of 500 secondary school students and 100 teachers were selected and was used for this study. A self developed questionnaire titled "Correlate of School Accidents Occurrence Questionnaire" (CSAQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was made up of three sections of A, B and C. Section A used to gather information on the demographic data of the respondents. Section B sort

information on the variables selected for the study while section C was used to seek information on accident occurrence. The instruments were validated by experts in Health Education from Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Ibadan. The reliability methods was also carried out two weeks after the first administration. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) which gave an internal consistency, $r = 0.69$.

The researcher personally distributed and collected the completed questionnaire from the participants. Permissions were obtained from significant authority to facilitate the process. Participants were adequately informed of their confidentiality and the need truthfully fill the questionnaire. The questionnaires were then filled and returned by the participants. Data collected were analyzed using PPMC at 0.05 level of significant.

Results

Hypothesis 1:

Table 1: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between school location and accident occurrence

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Accident Occurrence	46.7920	6.7827	500	.283*	.000	Sig.
School Location	8.2820	1.2860				

** Sig. at .01 level, * Sig. at .05 level

Table 1 that there was significant relationship between School Location and Accident Occurrence among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State ($r = .283^{**}$, $N = 500$, $P < .01$). Null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the school location can determine the safety of the school children. A safe school location will prevent the emergence of school accident occurrence. Furthermore, a school that is located in an unfriendly environment or places close to dangerous areas can lead to accident among the students.

Hypothesis 2:**Table 2: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between school playing ground and accident occurrence**

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Accident Occurrence	46.7920	6.7827	500	.234**	.000	Sig.
School Playing Ground	7.8960	1.4047				

** Sig. at .01 level, * Sig. at .05 level

It is shown in the table 2 that there was significant relationship between School Playing Ground and Accident Occurrence among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State ($r = .234^{**}$, $N = 500$, $P < .01$). Null hypothesis rejected. Therefore, There is significant correlation between school playing grounds (football field, Sport court and general playing area) and occurrence of accident among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State. The school playing ground encourages students to participate in sports. However, the school playing ground plays a significant role in accidents occurrence in schools. Hence, a safe school playground is also a safe school environment.

Hypothesis 3:**Table 3: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between school indoor environment and accident occurrence**

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Accident Occurrence	46.7920	6.7827	500	.210**	.000	Sig.
School Indoor Environment	8.3060	1.3886				

** Sig. at .01 level, * Sig. at .05 level

It is shown in the table 3 that there was significant relationship between School Indoor Environment and Accident Occurrence among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State ($r = .210^{**}$, $N = 500$, $P < .01$). Null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that school laboratory, classrooms, libraries should be kept safe and free from injurious equipment which can lead to accident of the school students. Also, chemicals in the laboratory should be well labeled to prevent acid burns and other physical effects on the body.

Hypothesis 4:

Table 1: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between school structure and accident occurrence .

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Accident Occurrence	46.7920	6.7827	500	.235**	.000	Sig.
School Structure	8.4860	1.5552				

** Sig. at .01 level, * Sig. at .05 level

It is shown in the table 4 that there was significant relationship between School Structure and Accident Occurrence among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State ($r = .235^{**}$, $N = 500$, $P < .01$). Null hypothesis is rejected. The school structure which consist of the school buildings, floors, windows, stairs and doors should be well knitted together. Those facilities that are not in good shape should be timely repaired and should also be painted for easy identification by the students.

Furthermore, the handles of the doors should be firm as it could pose a great health risk to the students.

Discussion

The study examined the environmental factors as correlate of accident occurrence among secondary school students of Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State. Hypothesis one shows significant correlation between school location (close to the road, forest, bushy, strong and hilly areas) and accident occurrence which revealed that a school location has a very large duty to take care to avoid student having an accident in

the school. This study agrees with the EU commission progress report (2010) that the school should be centrally situated with proper approach to roads and at a fair distance from busy places and roads, cinema houses, factories, railway tracks and market places. Hence, the school premises should be properly fenced and kept free from all hazards. Also Claudio, Torres, Sanjurjo, Shermam, and Landrigan (2008) study commemorates the result of the finding when they concluded that before a school is constructed, planners and community groups need to consider potential environmental risk in relation to the school's location e.g the vicinity of a chemical plant or former waste site, an area prone to flooding, or a busy, noisy road. Options for improving existing schools on poor sites include hazardous waste removal, construction of footpaths or bridges for getting to school, and construction of school barriers to provide a buffer to hazardous areas. Furthermore WHO (2002) pointed out that areas where school children are required to cross busy roads, crossing guards or older children can assist younger children and children are required to travel to school by bus, these buses should be in good running order and exposure to diesel or gasoline exhaust fumes should be minimized.

Hypothesis two reveals significant correlation between school playing grounds (football field, hand and basketball courts and general playing area) and accident occurrence which revealed that keeping a school full of student and teachers safe and accident free is not an easy task. A small water spill in the hall way or a pothole on the playground can cause major injury and possibly open the school to legal repercussion if it is not addressed immediately. This agrees with the UNICEF Report (2010) that some school accidents happen as a result of simple slips or trips. The occupiers of the school have the same responsibility as any owner of land to prevent and avoid foreseeable risks of injury so, if for example, a child falls and is injured as a result of a hole in the playground which presented a real tripping hazard which should have been repaired a claim for accident compensation can be brought or demanded.

The finding on the significant correlation between school indoor environment (classrooms, library, laboratory and Home-Economics kitchen) and accident occurrence

shows that there existed significant correlation. Diepiribo (2014) study agrees with this, stated that there are standards for architectural structures which prevent accident for been occurred. His report state that the standards will help the learner to achieve maximum academic performance which will be in line with the climate e.g. halls of residence, dormitories, hostels etc. should have fans and good electrical and electronic gadgets, sport halls, gymnasium, classroom and laboratories should have fans and good electrical gadgets like air conditioners. Dresser (2001) study was also consistent with the finding of this study stated that (cold, damp and poorly ventilated classrooms provide and unhealthy environment for student). WHO (2002) also corroborates result of the findings that the seating arrangement in classroom must allow for easy movement and emergencies. Moronkola (2012) also agrees that there must be proper lightening, good and enough ventilation in the classrooms. The result of school structure (school building, floors, windows, stairs and doors) and accident occurrence indicates that there was significant correlation between school structure and occurrence of accident. This implies that school structure and school environment should be an abode of safety. This agreed with the United States Department of Energy (2000) that the school structure must be well laid out, painted, ventilated and have adequate artificial and or natured lighting making it easy for both staff and students to see each other and school materials very well without eye strain. Also he further pointed that the school structure should be well maintained to make them attractive to learners. Furthermore Stricherz (2000) pointed out that research does show that student health lags in shabby school structure, but thus show that student health performance rises when facilities go from decent structure to those equipped with fancy classrooms, swimming pools, football fields and the like. Yet, as a number of writer argue that, the built school environment can be altered and is open to improvement so that, even if such changes only make a small and uncertain difference to performance they can be morally defended, particularly in schools where student are disadvantages in other less immediately alterable ways (Kamminga and Schiriga, 2003). School structure can affect

interior conditions such as temperature, humidity, lighting and ventilation. Poorly maintained structured also pose a health threat to student with cracks in walls, floors or foundations provide schools for insects such as hookworms, mites and jigger fleas. Broken windows, dilapidated steps, exposed nails and missing stair rails present obvious hazards and increase the risk of accident occurrence.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study it was concluded that environmental factors could cause an accident in the school and unsafe school environment is still a serious issue of concern among the schools in the area as the level of accidents occurrence among students revealed unsafe school environment, the location of school, the structure, the lighting and ventilation, the school furniture and equipment, the curriculum and the time table should be arranged in such a manner that it should not interfere with the health of the students in other to reduce school accidents among secondary school students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Recommendation

Ultimately, healthy places need to be more than free of toxic exposures; they need to be well planned, well built, attractive and functional for all. Based on this, the following recommendations were made:

1. Health and safety education must be organized for both staff and students who school and work in this area in order to prevent accidents.
2. Environmental consideration should be in health education and in school management training in order to improve their knowledge on the importance of healthy school environment.
3. The school health association should advocate for healthy classrooms, school premises, toilets, parking areas for vehicles, well-groomed and trimmed trees and flowers.
4. Regular maintenance should be promoted by the school board (Broken chairs and tables should be refurbished, dilapidated building must be repaired

- promptly; electronic wires, laboratories, school fans must be in good working conditions).
5. Special attention must be given to school kitchen, fields, courts and playground, gymnasium, home economic and other school laboratories in order to reduce accident and exposure to hazards.
 6. There is need to include parents, teachers and members of the community in school safety issues.

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