

Common Causes of Accidents and Required Safety Practices in Pre-Primary School Classrooms in Enugu State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study investigated common causes of accidents and required safety practices in pre-primary school classrooms in Enugu state, Nigeria. Three research questions and one null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population for the study was 2,242 pre-primary schools. The sample size was 400 administrators. Structured questionnaire validated by three experts was the instrument used for data collection. Data were analyzed with mean, percentages and t-test. The result showed 14 common causes of accidents in the classrooms with overall \bar{X} 2.8 to 3.2 accepted by the respondents. There was no significant difference in the mean responses of administrators on the causes of accidents in preschools classrooms based on school types ($p > 0.05$). Only three safety practices were presently adopted in the classrooms:- provision of adequate child sized facilities, well equipped first aid kits, installation of safety devices with 66%, 63% and 52% respectively. Thirteen safety practices outlined were highly rated (81%-97%) required for adoption in the preschool classrooms. Going by the numerous causes of accidents, the study recommends effective and timely implementation of the rated safety practices in the classrooms to ensure safety of all users.

Key words: - Safety, practices, pre-primary, schools, classrooms, accidents.

Introduction

Accidents constitute one of the main causes of death among children aged 1-5 years. Accident is an unplanned, unexpected, and undersigned event

which occurs suddenly, causes injury or loss, a decrease in value of the resources, or an increase in liability. The association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT), (2012)

opined that the leading killer of children in the world including Nigeria is accident/injury. Henry (2010) reported that 200,000 children every year visit US emergency room for injuries sustained on playgrounds. This could be understood since children engage in many physical activities, without considering danger in the process. Report by Eniola (2011) indicated that 400,000 people between childhood and 24 years die around the world each year through accidents while millions get injured. In a study on accidental deaths in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria by Seleye- Fubara and Ekere (2003) showed that 20.1% of the cases occurred in preschool age children.

Varieties of accidents that happen in pre-primary schools include: fall, burns & scalds, poisoning, drowning, head injuries, insect sting, and muscle strains (Amirat, Abd El-Aziz & Salwa, 2014.& Bulus, Lar, Remon, Inyang, Shu'aibu,& Aboiyar, 2015) Accidents/injuries interfere with the orderly progress of activities in the preschools. The sources of accidents/injuries in preschools are many. Charlotte (2001) outlined the sources to include:- the entrance and exits of the activity areas, unprotected windows, furniture/equipment, classroom, toys and supplies, incomplete building sites, and children fighting. Many factors/causes are responsible for accidents in preschools and are classified into human and environmental factors. Human factors/causes are those

behaviors that affect the wellbeing of individuals.

Environmental factors/causes are prevailing conditions within and around the preschools that could cause accidents.

The preschool age is characterized by rapid mental and physical development. Some of the characteristics preschoolers typically display include: curiosity, gaining strength and coordination, engage in pretend play, and lots more (Segal, Bardige and Leinfelder, 2006). The preschooler therefore, requires stimulation and activities that will provide fun, help in the physical development and early learning (Amirat, *et al.*, 2014). In view of the preschoolers' characteristics and their need for stimulation and activities, the necessity for provision of enabling environment is of paramount importance. Such environment could provide them with opportunities and age appropriate facilities for play, stimulate learning and be appropriate for physical activities (Francis, 2008). The pre-primary school is expected to provide such environment.

Pre-primary school is an educational institution for children prior to their entering the primary school. Typical pre-primary school environment is usually organized in basic activity areas where specific preschool activities take place. These activity areas include the classroom, playground, bathroom/toilets, food preparation and eating area etc. The preschool classroom is an environment where young children

can safely explore and learn (Thomson, 2010). According to Diana (2013), preschool classrooms are usually organized around interest areas or learning centers. These defined areas allow children to play and explore materials with the guidance of the teacher either as individuals or in small groups. Pre-primary schools have lots of activities that are fun and entertaining for the preschoolers. The activities help to mold and channel preschooler's growth and set the foundation for better learning and development. Preschool activities include: reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, art and crafts, recipes and games (Catherine, 2012). Most of these activities are performed by the teachers, nannies and preschoolers in the preschools. The administrators are responsible for the provision of equipment and facilities, safe environment, adequate supervision of teachers in the preparation and execution of daily activities among others. For effective participation of the teachers and the preschoolers in the classroom activities, the classrooms should be equipped with child appropriate materials and equipment such as tables, chairs, toys, toy racks, bookshelves, computer, books, television set and so on. The preschool activities as well as the equipment and materials used therein frequently give rise to different forms of accidents or injuries as the class teachers or nannies and the

preschoolers interact with them during indoor activities.

Accidents and injuries among preschoolers could be prevented or reduced to ensure safety in the preschool classroom environment. The prevention of childhood accidents is identified as one of the key indicators in the 2013-2016 Public Health Outcomes Framework for England (Public Health & Child Accident prevention, 2013). Accident prevention includes all measures taken in an effort to save lives, escape from injury, lessen the degrees of injury, and reduce loss of properties. According to European child safety Alliance (2009), it is estimated that if all strategies known to be safe are adopted in preschools approximately 90% of the accidents/injuries could be prevented. The prevention of accidents/injuries in preschools classrooms demands that consciously planned measures or practices should be taken. These accident preventive measures are safety practices. Safety practices are sets of practices or measures that ensure the safety of the workers, equipment and the environment in general (Olaleye, 2012). Safety practices in preschool classrooms are crucial because safety is one of the basic needs of the child. Thus, adequate development of the child cannot take place in a hazardous environment.

Maduewesi, (2002) and Chukwu, (2010) observed that preschool environment including classrooms, playgrounds in Enugu state was

inadequate for physical learning, it follows then that pre-primary schools in Enugu state need to adopt safety practices in order to cut down or eradicate the high prevalence of childhood accidents, injuries and even death. The need to adopt safety practices in preschool classrooms in Enugu state is equally urgent since majority of the preschools are run by private individuals and organizations without specified standard guidelines on safety.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the common causes of accidents and safety practices required in pre-primary school classrooms in Enugu state. Specifically, the study:-

- 1 identified common causes of accidents in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu State
- 2 identified safety practices presently adopted by administrators in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu state.
- 3 determined safety practices required for adoption by the administrators in the classrooms in pre-primary schools.

Research Questions

- 1 What are the common causes of accidents in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu State?
- 2 What are the safety practices presently adopted by the administrators in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu State?
- 3 What are the safety practices required for adoption by the

administrators in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu State?

Hypothesis

The study tested the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of administrators in public and private pre-primary schools on the causes of accidents in the classrooms in Enugu state.

Methodology

Design of the study: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design.

Area of the study: The study area was Enugu state located in the South East of Nigeria. The state is made up of seventeen (17) local government areas. There are six education zones in the state. There is good number of private and public pre-primary, primary and secondary as well as tertiary institutions in the state. The people are interested in educating their children from infancy to adulthood.

Population for the study: The population for the study consisted of 2,242 pre-primary schools in the area. These were made up of 1,034 and 1,208 private and public schools respectively. The population size of the school administrators was 2,242. (Ministry of Education Enugu state, 2011)

Sample and Sampling Technique: A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. Yamane 1967 formula was used to select a sample of

400 pre-primary schools 188 private and 212 public for the study. The number of pre-primary schools to be selected in each zone was determined by simple ratio. All the pre-primary school kindergarten administrators (400) in the sampled pre-primary schools 188 private and 212 public were used for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: Common Causes of Accidents and Safety Practices required in the pre-primary school classrooms questionnaire" was the instrument used for the study. Four and two points scale response options were used. The questionnaire was face validated by three experts from University of Nigeria, Nsukka, from Art Education, Vocational Teacher Education, and Library Science Departments. The reliability of the instrument was determined using

Cronbach Alpha reliability method and reliability coefficients of 0.97 and 0.87 were obtained.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis: Data was collected by the help of three trained research assistants by hand within four weeks, coordinated by the researcher. The 400 copies to the questionnaire given to the preschool kindergarten administrators were all duly completed and retrieved. This represents a 100% return rate. Mean and percentage were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance

Findings of the study

Common causes of accidents in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

Table 1: Mean responses (\bar{X}), standard deviation (SD), t-cal and p-values on common causes of accidents in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu state. (N=400:- private=188, public=212)

S/ N	Administrators Common causes of accidents in the Classrooms	Private		Public		Over- all \bar{X}	Over all SD	DEC	t-cal	p-values	Remarks
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂						
1	Inadequate provision of age appropriate classroom furniture and equipment	3.1	.91	3.2	.84	3.2	.88	A	-1.615	.107	NS
2	Poor, worn out floor covering or layout	3.1	.84	3.2	.79	3.2	.82	A	-1.244	.214	NS
3	Lack of ample space	3.0	.94	3.2	.79	3.1	.87	A	-1.615	.107	NS

4	Excessive cold or heat	3.1	.91	3.0	.97	3.1	.94	A	.567	.571	NS
5	Unprotected windows	3.0	1.1	3.1	1.1	3.1	1.1	A	.222	.824	NS
6	Poor storage facilities	3.1	.90	3.0	.98	3.0	.95	A	.829	.407	NS
7	Dilapidated building	3.0	1.1	3.1	1.0	3.0	1.1	A	-.675	.500	NS
8	Poor ventilation	3.0	.99	3.0	.96	3.0	.97	A	-.823	.114	NS
9	Provision of none age appropriate classroom materials and equipment	3.0	.94	3.0	.89	3.0	.91	A	.271	.787	NS
10	Lack of safety equipment e.g. Fire alarm	3.0	.99	3.0	.92	3.0	.95	A	-.235	.814	NS
11	Inadequate illumination or poor lighting	3.0	1.0	3.0	.94	3.0	.98	A	-.085	.932	NS
12	Excessive noise	2.9	.99	2.9	.98	2.9	.98	A	.165	.869	NS
13	Hazardous location of the classroom	2.9	1.1	2.9	1.0	2.9	1.1	A	.329	.742	NS
14	Presence of poisonous/ toxic substances	2.9	1.0	2.8	1.1	2.8	1.1	A	-.816	.415	NS

Key: \bar{X}_1 = Mean for private school administrators, SD_1 = standard deviation for private school administrators, A= Accept, \bar{X}_2 = mean for public school administrators, SD_2 = standard deviation for public school administrators, Dec. =Decision, Cluster mean=3.0.

Table 1 shows 14 accepted common causes of accidents in the pre-primary school classrooms rated by preschool administrators in Enugu State. All the items listed were accepted by the administrators as common causes of accidents in the classroom. Eleven items had their overall mean from 3.0 to 3.2 up to and above the cluster mean of 3.0 and were ranked 1st to 11th. The eleven items had corresponding overall standard deviations less than 1.0. This showed similar ratings among the respondents

in the items. Table 1 also showed that all the items had their exact p-values greater than 0.05 level of significance. The 14 items showed no significant differences (NS) in the mean ratings by administrators in private and public pre-primary schools on the causes of accidents in the classrooms. The null hypothesis H_0 for all the items is therefore accepted.

Safety practices presently adopted by the administrators in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

Table 2: Frequency counts F and percentage % responses on the safety practices that are presently adopted in the classroom in pre-primary schools by the administrators. (N=400:- private=188, public=212,)

S/ n	Safety Practices presently adopted in the Classroom	Private Administrators				Public Administrators				Total		Dec
		Not Adopted		Adopted		Not Adopted		Adopted		F (P)	%	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
Activity Area Related Safety Practices												
1	Provision of adequate child sized classroom facilities	117	62	71	38	127	60	85	40	156	39	R
2	Provision of well equipped first aid kits	129	69	59	31	153	72	59	28	118	30	R
3	Installation of safety devices like fire extinguisher, alarm	143	76	45	24	171	81	41	19	86	22	R
4	Floor/mats/carpets in good condition to prevent tripping and slipping	108	57	80	43	139	66	73	34	153	38	R
5	Ensure adequate ventilation	70	37	118	63	78	37	134	63	252	63	A
6	Provide adequate lighting	94	50	94	50	98	46	114	54	208	52	A
7	Noise should be controlled	78	41	110	59	58	27	154	73	264	66	A
8	Use of finger jam protectors on the door	136	72	52	28	156	74	56	26	108	27	R
9	Provided ample space for the number of children	110	59	78	42	124	59	88	42	166	42	R
10	Prompt repairs and regular maintenance of facilities	103	55	85	45	118	56	94	44	179	45	R
11	Recruiting qualified teachers and nannies	112	60	76	40	122	58	90	43	166	42	R
12	Organizing safety training for workers	120	64	68	36	147	69	65	31	133	33	R
13	Securing windows and stair cases properly	101	54	87	46	133	63	79	37	166	42	R

Key: F: Frequency count, % = percentage, Dec=Decision, Cluster F (P) =166, A=accept, R= Reject

Table 2 shows three safety practices presently adopted in the classrooms in pre-primary schools rated by preschool administrators in Enugu State. The 13 safety practices listed for the classrooms were rated by the respondents with varying percentages. Only three items had percentages 66.0%, 63.0% and 52.0% above 50.0%

the adoption acceptance level. Seven items had their total adoption frequency counts up to the cluster adoption frequency count 166.

Safety practices required for adoption in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu State.

Table 3: Frequency counts (F) and percentage (%) responses on the required safety practices in the classrooms in pre-primary schools in Enugu State. (N=400:- private=188, public=212.)

S/ no	Required safety practices in the Classrooms	Private Administrators				Public Administrators				Total F(Im)	%	Dec
		Important F	%	Not important F	%	Important F	%	Not important F	%			
	Activity Area Related Safety Practices											
1	Provision of well equipped first aid kits	183	97	5	2.7	204	96	8	3.8	387	97	A
2	Recruiting qualified teachers and nannies	178	95	10	5.3	205	97	7	3.3	383	96	A
3	Organizing safety training for workers	177	94	11	5.9	206	97	6	2.8	383	96	A
4	Provision of adequate child sized classroom facilities	182	97	6	3.2	200	93	12	5.7	382	96	A
5	Provided ample space for the number of children	176	94	12	6.4	204	96	8	3.8	380	95	A
6	Ensure adequate ventilation	176	94	12	6.4	203	96	9	4.2	379	95	A
7	Noise should be controlled	175	93	13	6.9	203	96	9	4.2	378	95	A
8	Prompt repairs and regular maintenance of facilities	175	93	13	6.9	201	95	11	5.2	376	94	A
9	Securing windows and stair cases properly	178	95	10	5.3	197	93	15	7.1	375	94	A
10	Provide adequate lighting	177	94	11	5.9	193	91	19	9.0	370	92	A
11	Floor/mats/carpets in good condition to prevent tripping and slipping	173	92	15	8.0	195	92	17	8.0	368	92	A
12	Installation of safety devices like fire extinguisher,	177	94	11	5.9	183	86	29	13	360	90	A

13	Use of finger jam protectors on the door	162	86	26	14	171	81	41	19	333	83	A
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Key: F: Frequency count, % = percentage, NP = Not important, IM = important, Cluster F (IM) = 373, A= Accept

Table 3 shows 13 safety practices required for adoption in the classrooms in pre-primary schools rated by preschool administrators in Enugu State. The 13 safety practices listed were accepted by the respondents as required for adoption in the classrooms. Nine out of the 13 safety practices listed had their total important frequency count from 375 to 387 above the cluster overall importance frequency count 373 and were ranked 1st to 9th

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed common causes of accidents in the pre-primary school classrooms to include: Inadequate provision of age appropriate classroom furniture and equipment, Poor/worn out floor covering or layout, Lack of ample space, Unprotected windows, Dilapidated building, Poor ventilation, hazardous location of the classrooms, poor lighting, among others. . These findings agree with some of the literature on causes of accidents in activity areas by Ejeh (2006), Obeng (2009), Emeka-Okafor (2014) & Morrongiello & Corbett (2015), who noted that the conditions which lead to accidents in the learning centers include; overcrowding, poor ventilation and lighting, inadequate or poor maintained equipment,

inexperience in the part of staff and preschoolers, poor lighting, bad posture, and to sum it up, the absence of safety plans.. The study also revealed that the null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance on the causes of accidents in pre-primary school classrooms had no significant difference (NS) in the mean ratings of administrators in private and public pre-primary schools. The null hypothesis Ho was therefore accepted. This is in line with the findings by Chukwu (2010) and the researcher's observations during her preliminary visits to some pre-primary schools private and public in some education zones in the state safety practices and general standards in pre-primary schools classrooms in Enugu state are very poor. Most schools were characterized among other things by: inadequate provision of age appropriate facilities, poor location of the classrooms, dilapidated buildings, inadequate classroom space children learn under the shade of trees while many sit on the floor, poor hygienic sanitation, lack of easy access to good drinking water, unqualified workers without safety skills.

On safety practices presently adopted in the classrooms the finding revealed that only Provision of adequate child sized classroom facilities (52%), Provision of well

equipped first aid kits (63%) and Installation of safety devices like fire extinguisher (66%) were presently adopted in the classrooms rated by the preschool administrators in Enugu State. The result shows that there is still much room for improvement to ensure safety in the classrooms. The findings are in line with the report by Maduewsi (2002), Ejeh (2006) and Chukwu (2010) who reported that the physical structures and practices in pre-primary schools in Enugu State vary widely in quality and aesthetics from one establishment to another, the facilities and equipment, teacher qualifications, safety practices etc are not based on specified government standard. Since the policy statement on governments' involvement was mere lip service.

The findings in Table 3 revealed that recruiting qualified teachers and nannies, organizing safety training for workers, provision of adequate child sized classroom facilities, provision of ample space for the number of children, ensure adequate ventilation, noise properly controlled, prompt repair of classroom equipment and facilities among others are safety practices in the pre-primary school classrooms in Enugu State that are required to be adopted. The findings agree with the literature on safety practices by Robertson (2010), Bullard (2011), Mariana (2012) & Riyady, Sahar and Seba (2013) that the child should be closely and constantly supervised, prompt repair and maintenance of facilities, safety

knowledge and skill of caregivers among others are important in ensuring the safety of children at all times. Phil (2006) said that regular maintenance of facilities, Securing windows and stair cases properly and Provision of adequate light among others that accident and injuries among preschoolers could be prevented or reduced to ensure safety in pre-primary school environment. European child safety Alliance (2009) in line with the findings estimated that if all strategies (safety practices) known to be safe are adopted in preschools approximately 90% of the accidents/injures could be prevented.

Conclusion

The causes of accidents in pre-primary school classrooms are numerous both human and environmental sources. Accidents being the leading killer of children would be preventable if required safety practices identified in the study are put in place in preschool classrooms.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1 The identified required safety practices in the preschool classrooms should be implemented by the government unit in-charge of early childhood education in the state.
- 2 Pre-primary schools education unit should develop and use uniform guidelines/ programme with safety

standard spelled out to ensure safety of the programme users and the facilities.

- 3 Preschool classrooms should be equipped with child appropriate materials and equipment to ensure safety of the users.

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