Safety Policy Programmes and Students’ Learning Environment In Universities In Rivers State

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated safety policy programmes and students’ learning environment in universities in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Correlational research design was adopted. Population of the study consisted of all the 56,440 students and all Heads of Departments of universities in Rivers State. Sample size of 497 (75 heads of Department and 422 students) were selected using simple random sampling technique. However, only 472(95%) respondents who correctly filled and returned the questionnaire were used for data analysis. Safety Policy Programmes in Universities Questionnaire and Students' Learning Environment Assessment Scale with 0.82 and 0.70 reliability coefficients respectively were used for data collection. Research questions were answered with mean scores while hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Results showed that first aid facilities were available though not adequate, and workplace safety programmes were implemented in universities in Rivers State. Results also revealed that: there was significant relationship between first aid facilities and students’ learning environment, but no significant relationship between workplace safety programmes and students’ learning environment. It was recommended among others that university management should ensure that there is strict adherence to safety policies by all and sundry in the university environment.

Keywords: Safety, safety policy and programme, first aid facility, workplace safety, Students' learning Environment.

INTRODUCTION
Trend in the management of education, at different level in Nigeria, shows that school administrators are subordinates to the school boards, the ministries of education and other educational parastatals. This suggests that the provision and management of educational service are the duties of educational manager. Safety policy programmes is one of such services. The World Book Encyclopedia (2002) reported that safety is an age long practice. All through the ages, man has been combating with safety problems. Inclination and nature also hold that, everyone desires a safe environment. Safety policy programmes is employer business commitment for protection of health and safety of employees and to the public. It is aimed at accomplishing a clear business objective, with details on what work is to be done. Supporting the view, Ekenedo (2010) asserted that all operations ranging from management to workers and students should receive training in “safety consciousness” and acquire a sense of
correctness about their actions. Okoroma (2000) states that, Nigeria has had lofty educational packages for its citizens, but the translation of these ideas into reality has remained elusive. Ahmed (2011) opined that the challenges confronting universities include; cultism in the school, poor library, poor infrastructures, unavailability of light, sexual harassment and riots. All these call for safety policy programme for students’ learning environment. Armstrong (2009) and Briggs (2011) commented that workplace safety starts and depends on top management’s genuine commitment to safety. Ideally, “safety policy programmes is an integral part of the system; woven into each management’s competency and part of every one’s day-to-day responsibility. Armstrong and Brigg’s opinion has been given academic backing by Hoy and Miskel (2008) who also commented in the same vein, that problems in the universities need safety policy programmes for safe teaching-learning. In the same vein, safety policy programmes plays a vital role in the development of workshops and laboratories of any school because it is the basis for all science and technology (Hogan, 2002). Pain and Sprague in Kipngeno and Benjamin (2009) posited that safety policy programmes is to prevent accidents, injuries, death or reduce to a great extent all available accidents and incidence. They further asserted that:

> typically, people refuse to believe crises could happen to them and school personnel are no exception. But, this tendency towards denial must be replaced by active participation and preparation for potential school crises. Careful planning is required to reduce the accident crises such as disasters, murder, suicides or fire (p. 380).

Safety policy programme can be defined as the reduction of risk to a level that is reasonably practicable. According to the International Labour Organization (2013), safety policy programmes is viewed as a “systematic approach to managing safety including the necessary organizational structure, accountabilities, policies and procedures.” At this juncture, based on the contribution of scholars safety policy programmes is a systematic approach which provides defined methods, processes and organization structure needed to meet safety goals. It also identifies and controls hazards as well as promoting safety culture within all levels of the workplace. It is based on this premise that Piers, Montijn and Balk (2009) asserted succinctly that safety policy programmes is a term used to refer to a comprehensive business management system designed to manage safety element in the workplace.

Safety policy (2013) connotes a definition of managements’ desire on safety. It is a basic guideline which dictates the thinking styles as well as the actions to achieve the goals. A safety policy programmes provides a base for the coordination of safety activities at various levels. Safety policy programmes should not be paid lip service. The governing body and head of departments are expected to take a reasonable step to identify and reduce hazards to a minimum. In the same vein, all staff and students must appreciate the fact that their individual conducts and vigilance that will bridge the lacuna clearly stated in a health and safety policy as stated by Health and Safety (2010) is strictly adhered. According to Offe (2009) a school at the beginning of the road is meant to develop a safety culture and exhibit a safety awareness, consisting of safety posters and warning signs. A school will begin to address physical hazard and develop safety recognition programmes.

Students-learning environment involves the physical and aesthetic surroundings of functional machines and equipment. No hazards, less accidents, less theft and less waste of resources. According to University of Ibadan, (2010) students-learning environment is viewed as a place of learning which anchored on relative atmosphere such as:

- Promoting good teaching and learning practice that will encourage quality assurance.
- Ensuring high quality teaching and learning experiences for all students and lecturers in the university.
- Providing a framework for teaching and learning that will permit flexibility and creativity.
- Creating awareness of how teaching and learning should take place.
- Creating teaching and learning process in the university.
- Ensuring and upholding that there is reciprocal respect between lecturers and students.
- Create an enabling environment for interaction between lecturers and students.

A good climate for learning is a climate in which the students is at ease with the lecturer and with others in the class, and is confident that questions and ideals will be welcomed, respect and answered.

The study therefore, is to find out the extent to which safety policy programmes are available in Rivers State Universities and the extent to which school’s environment are safe for learning. Akpomi and Chiorlu (2015) asserted that workers need to be trained so as to expose them to workshop hazards and their control. This could be achieved by getting help from outside speakers to give talks or engaging consultants.

**Purpose of the Study**
The purpose of this study is to find out the extent to which safety policy programmes are available in universities in Rivers State and the extent to which the school’s environment are safe for learning. Specifically, the study investigated.

1. The availability of first aid facilities in universities in Rivers State.
2. The implementation of workplace safety programmes in universities in Rivers State.

**Statement of the Problem**
The attainment of safety practices in schools call for great concern especially in the universities. Safety policy programme remains a fundamental element in the educational system of any nation. We are not obvious of the fact, that students, lecturers and all workers in the education sector are faced with the challenges of poor safety management in our environment. There are hazards capable of causing harm and injury to human health. Previous research in this area has acknowledged that safety in schools are not fully given adequate attention and as such the need to carry out this work becomes paramount (SPDC Training Manual, 2007). Quality education cannot thrive in a school environment devoid of safety. Serious as the demand for safety is, one is tempted to question the extent to which universities apply safety programmes and how safe the schools’ environment are for learning.

**Research Questions**
The following research questions were address:

1. To what extent are first aid facilities available in universities in Rivers State?
2. To what extent are workplace safety programmes implemented in universities in Rivers State?

**Hypotheses**
For the purpose of this study, the following null hypotheses are formulated.

- **H₀₁**: There is no significant relationship between first aid facilities and students’ learning environment in universities in Rivers State.
- **H₀₂**: There is no significant relationship between workplace safety programmes and students learning environment in universities in Rivers State.

**METHODS**
The study was a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of 56,440 all students and all heads of departments of three universities in Rivers State. A sample size was 497 (50%) made up of 75 heads of department and 422 students who were selected using simple random sampling techniques. However, out of 497 selected respondents, only 472(95%) correctly filled and returned questionnaire which were used for data analysis. The instruments used are two self-structured questionnaire titled: Safety Policy Programmes in Universities...
Questionnaire (SPPUQ) and Students Learning Environment Assessment Scale (SLEAS). The SPPUQ consisted of 32 items and SLEAS consisted of 15 items. The face and content validities of the instruments were determined by two experts in educational management and measurement and evaluation respectively all from the Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt. All the suggestions, observations, corrections and comments made by these experts were carefully utilized to draft the final copy of the instrument. Thereafter, the instruments were administered to a population that is relatively large and related in characteristics to the population of the study, but not part of the study as to determine the reliability of the instruments, hence the Cronbach Alpha formula was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.82 and 0.70 for the SPPUQ and SLEAS respectively, which is high enough for the study.

The researcher with the help of two research assistants executed the process of distribution and retrieval of the copies of the questionnaire after obtaining permission from the school authorities. The research assistants were trained to execute the distribution and retrieval of the copies of the instruments along with the researcher. At the end, there was 95% return rate of the copies of the questionnaire. Thus, out of the 497 copies of the instruments distributed to the respondents, only 472 copies were returned and used for data analysis. The whole process of distribution and retrieving of copies of the instrument for data collection lasted for a period of two weeks.

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 21.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: To what extent are first aid facilities available in universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of First Aid Facilities available in Universities in Rivers State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Heads of Department</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (X) Std Dev. (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (X) Std Dev. (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Provision of first aid box in the school</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Assigning of First Aid personnels</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Provision of safety rules and compliance requirement</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Provision of safety gadgets like apron, hand glove, and safety boot</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Provision of some drugs like paracetamol, nerve and bone</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Provision of clinic in the school</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Provision of emergency ambulance in the school</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Provision of oxygen and water in the school clinic</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Grand X and SD</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.99</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.89</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.24</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mean cut-off point</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.50</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 1 above, revealed that first aid facilities are available in universities learning environment in Rivers State to a large extent. Table 1 shows that there is a high rating of the items by the respondents (heads of Departments and students) with the mean scores of all the items ranging from 2.72 to 3.29 for heads of Department and 2.54 to 3.68 for students which are above the mean cut-off point 2.50. It can also be observed that the grand mean of 2.99 and 3.24 for heads of Department and students respectively are above the mean cut-off of 2.50, which means that all the items are accepted.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent are workplace safety programmes implemented in Universities?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on Workplace Safety Programmes Implemented in Universities Learning Environment in Rivers State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Heads of Department</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Establishment of clear safety objectives.</td>
<td>2.86 (0.98)</td>
<td>3.12 (0.87)</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Transparency in the management of safety</td>
<td>3.18 (0.61)</td>
<td>3.10 (0.74)</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Accountability of management and employees.</td>
<td>3.29 (0.90)</td>
<td>3.29 (0.72)</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Establishment of defined methods needed to meet safety goals in school’s playground, practicals, cultural displays and excursions.</td>
<td>3.42 (0.75)</td>
<td>3.05 (0.83)</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Building upon the existing procedures/processes.</td>
<td>2.95 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.16 (0.90)</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Senior management commitment to safety</td>
<td>3.12 (0.78)</td>
<td>3.12 (0.76)</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Provision of exercise that create a positive safe environment.</td>
<td>2.72 (0.88)</td>
<td>3.22 (0.77)</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Ensuring that everyone has a role in promoting safety in tertiary institutions</td>
<td>3.18 (0.93)</td>
<td>3.08 (0.90)</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grand \( \bar{X} \) and SD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Heads of Department</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std Dev.</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean cut-off point** 2.50

The result in Table 2 showed that workplace safety programmes are implemented in universities learning environment in Rivers State to a large extent, with the mean scores of the items (items 9 to 16) ranging from \( \bar{X} = 2.72 \) to \( \bar{X} = 3.42 \) for heads of department and \( \bar{X} = 3.05 \) to \( \bar{X} = 3.29 \) for students respectively which are above the mean cut-off point of 2.50 and 3.16 for heads of department and students respectively are above the mean cut-off point (2.50), which mean that all the
items are accepted by the respondents. Thus, workplace safety programmes are to a large extent implemented in universities learning environment in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis Testing**

**HO 1:** There is no significant relationship between first aid facilities and students' learning environment in universities in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis of First Aid Facilities and policies and students Learning Environment in Universities in Rivers State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ learning environment</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>45.61</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.116*</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aid facilities</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>24.36</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

b. Listwise N = 472

From Table 13 above, it can be observed that there is a significant relationship between first aid facilities and students’ learning environment in universities in Rivers State at \( r = .116^*, P < 0.05 \). The positive correlation between first aid facilities and students’ learning environment in universities in Rivers State was accounted for by 11.6%. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**HO 2:** There is no significant relationship between workplace safety programmes and students' learning environment in universities in Rivers State.

**Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Workplace Safety Programmes and students Learning Environment in Universities in Rivers State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ learning environment</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>45.61</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.091*</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace safety programmes</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>25.16</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

b. Listwise N = 472

From Table 4 above, showed that there is a significant relationship between workplace safety programmes and students’ learning environment in universities in River State at \( r = .091^*, P = \leq 0.05 \) at 2-tailed. The null hypothesis was therefore, rejected. However, the positive correlation between workplace safety programmes and students’ learning environment in universities in Rivers State was accounted for by only 9.1%.

**DISCUSSION**

From research question 1, it was observed that the grand mean of 2.99 for heads of department and 3.24 for students were recorded as shown in 1, indicating that the research question 1 and the items were accepted. This implies that first aid facilities and policies are made available in universities in Rivers State. This result could be due to the important role which first aid play in the life of a person who suffered from a sudden injury or illness before he/she is being taken to the hospital. Universities tend to provide first aid facilities in the environment in order to save lives and maintain health and welfare of the staff and students. This has been supported by Ekenedo (2010) who observed that the essence of first aid is to preserve life, prevent further harm and promote recovery.

Result of research question 2 which was presented in Table 2:1 indicated that workplace safety programmes are provided in universities in Rivers State. This finding is in agreement with Rao and Jain (2009) who pointed out workplace safety as one of the basic areas where safe work practices have really impacted on the workers. Rao and Jain (2009) also submitted that the steady use of safety gadgets when at work should be a good culture and attitude of every staff.
This has been supported by Maduka (2014) who also observed that work place safety in universities plays important roles. To achieve quality education, there should be strict adherence to safety rules. Maduka (2014) listed the following as part of the work place safety and they include: Responsibilities of the management: He states that divisional heads, departmental heads and other top management officials in the tertiary institution have the definite responsibility of ensuring safe working conditions; necessary protective equipment are in proper use; properly planned work performed in a safe manager; discipline any students that fail to abide by the safety rules.

**Educational Implications Of The Study**

The findings of this study have meaningful educational implications for stakeholders in education industry such as curriculum planners/policy makers, government and school management.

i. For the curriculum planners and policy makers like the National Universities Commission (NUC), the study will form the basis for restructuring the curriculum and education system by introducing a general course on safety education for the first year students in order to enhance safety awareness in the school.

ii. The study will also encourage the policy makers to develop a uniform policy framework on safety policy and programme for universities in Nigeria.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the finding of the study, it can therefore, be concluded that universities in Rivers State make provision for safety policy programmes which can make the schools’ learning environment conducive and safe for teaching-learning. However, the safety policy programmes could be strengthened in order to achieve global standard learning environment in universities in Rivers State.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made based on findings and conclusions drawn from this study. Though, the study has reported that universities in Rivers State made provisions for safety policy programmes, the researcher demand it necessary to proffer some solutions in the form of recommendations to ameliorate the problems hampering the realization of safety policy programmes.

1. The government and management should imbibe good maintenance culture in the utilization of First Aid facilities so as to prolong their life span and enhance the health conditions of all in the university community.

2. The university management should ensure that there is strict adherence to safety policies and programmes by all and sundry in the university environment.

3. The workplace safety policy programmes should be properly defined by the university authorities. This will help to ensure that everyone has a role in promoting safety.

**REFERENCES**


