



Administrators' Communication Strategies for Building a Culture of Health and Safety Awareness among Secondary School Students in Bayelsa State

Epelle, Patience Alazi (Ph.D.)

Department of Educational Management, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State

epellepatalazi@gmail.com

08037027268

Epelle, Tamunoboma Beracah

School of Business and Administration Studies, Department of Business and Administration & Management, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State

beracahepelle@gmail.com

08157611590

Abstract

The study investigated administrators' communication strategies for building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State. The descriptive survey was employed for the study. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A sample size of 368 students was drawn from a population of 24,723 in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State using the simple random sampling technique. The instrument of the study was an 18- item questionnaire titled "Administrators' Communication Strategies for Building a Culture of Health and Safety Awareness Questionnaire" (ACSBCHSAQ), structured on a four-point Likert-type scale of Very High Extent (VHE)=4, High Extent (HE)=3, Low Extent (LE)=2 and Very Low Extent (VLE)=1., and validated by two experts from the Department of Educational Management. The test-retest method was used and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained using the Cronbach's Alpha method. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used to analyse the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results of the findings revealed that administrators' oral and written communication strategies were vital for building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students. In conclusion, there is no significant difference between male and female students in their responses to administrators' communication strategies for building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students. Among the recommendations made was that administrators of secondary schools should undergo training regularly so as to be exposed to innovative communication strategies that enhance a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Keywords: Administrators; Communication Strategies; Culture; Health and Safety Awareness.



Introduction

Education has been described as the key to any national development. It improves the quality of life of a nation's citizens through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Education is the vehicle to social, economic, religious, cultural and political transformation. (Grace & Kalu, 2016). Education at the secondary school level according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) is the education given to the individual for self-reliance and for higher educational pursuit. Secondary education therefore requires a leader who has the wherewithal to effectively manage this level of education to accomplish its aims and objectives. Secondary education level requires the principal who is the school administrator charged with the responsibility of planning, supervising, organizing, planning, controlling, coordinating, communicating, and directing etc. the human and material affairs of the school towards goal attainment.

Communication being one of the administrative tasks of the school administrator and the focus of this study is the process of sending and receiving information from one individual to another. Communication as an administrative task is so vital in the day-to-day running of the school. Okoroma (2019) opined that communication is the ingredient which makes every organizational process possible. Highlighting the importance of communication in school organization, Leigha, Major, Epelle & Matthew (2023) outlined these to include facilitating organizational goal attainment, creating awareness on the challenges, problems, complaints and grievances of students and other subordinates, helping to change the attitude and behaviour of organization members as well as helping to control and moderate the behaviour of group members in various ways.

Communication according to Okoye (2016) is of two types based on the channel: Verbal and Non-Verbal communication. Verbal communication, being the type of communication where a message is transmitted by word of mouth or through a piece of writing while non-verbal communication involves sending and receiving information without the use of words or writing but by the use of gestures, body language, posture and facial expression. An effective communication process that yields better results tend to occur among healthy and safe individuals in an organization who have developed a culture of health and safety awareness. Culture is the way of life of a group of people living together (Grace & Kalu, 2016). The administrator's tasks therefore include creating the necessary atmosphere that will enable school personnel to build the needed culture of a health and safety awareness.

A culture of health and safety awareness refers to a way of life of the school personnel in ensuring that they are conscious of the health and safety of themselves. Moronkola (2012) maintained that school personnel should be conscious of factors relating to accident prevention and control, communicable and non-communicable diseases, health appraisals, first aids and referrals, security of life and property etc. Administrators' responsibilities in the school also includes the task of ensuring that school personnel (teaching, non-teaching and students) enjoy a favourable healthy and safety school environment. Building a culture of health and safety awareness is building a culture that creates health and safety awareness in terms of being aware of individual health and safety needs, creating an awareness of the collaborative efforts of the school, home and the community in health and safety promotion, developing health and safety consciousness among learners, creating awareness on the availability and utilization of various health related resources in the school community and building the skills of learners and staff for health and safety promotion in the community (Moronkola, 2012). It is believed that a good culture of health and safety awareness in the present day would renew the society that is almost engrossed with such issues as communicable diseases, various types of illnesses,

individuals living in fear, insecurity and threat to life and properties, to building a resilience for the future generation.

Administrators' oral communication strategies for building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students has to do with all the efforts of the school administrator to build a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students (Iroriteraye-Adjekpovu & Nwabuaku, 2024). Oral communication according to Leigha, Major, Epelle and Matthew (2023) involves the use of spoken words that usually involve face to face conversations, speeches, telephone conversations, videos, radio, television, voice and now internet and its platforms. Okoye (2016) maintained that oral communication supports quick feedback and makes it easy to establish trust as facial expression and other body language could be visibly detected. Among the oral communication strategies that are necessary to build a culture of health and safety awareness in schools according to Nwosu (2017) include: listening to students complains on health matters as well as organizing health talks and health seminars. Owan & Nonye (2019) conducted a study on principals' administrative competencies and teachers work performance in Calabar Education Zone. The results of the study revealed that school principals' communication competence among other competencies was significantly related to the class teachers work performance.

Administrator's written communication strategies for building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students has to do with all the efforts of the school administrator to build a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students. It has to do with the school administrator ensuring that school personnel live in the school environment devoid of fear, accidents, and threats to life and properties. Written communication involves the use of written signs and symbols to pass information and could be on hand written or printed material (Idoko, 2015). Examples of written communication according to Leigha, Major, Epelle and Matthew (2023) include e-mail, memo, letters, reports periodicals, bulletins, job descriptions, electronic mails, and text messaging etc. Okoye (2016) opined that written communication in terms of displaying health and safety chats, liaising with school PTA and other education stakeholders through writing of letters and memos towards the provision of safety materials and security personnel etc. are necessary factors in building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students. Boma-Cookey & Onuoha (2021) carried out a study on principals' administrative competences and effective management of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The results of the study revealed among others that there was a significant relationship between principals' communication competency and effective management of public senior secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

The researchers observed that in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, information on health and safety matters are hardly adequately communicated to school personnel especially to students, hence the incidences of increased student falls and injuries in the school environment as well as increases in communicable and non-communicable diseases. The vital accident prevention and control information seems to be lacking. It is against this background that the researchers sought to investigate the extent to which administrators' communication strategies enhance building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

The health and safety of student personnel cannot be overemphasized. Building a culture of health and safety among secondary school students is likely to enhance healthy students who are fit and strong for the process of acquiring knowledge, attitude and skills needed at this level of education. Also, building a culture of safety awareness enables students

to be conscious of their safety in the school environment. However, the researchers observed that the student's health and safety in schools in recent times are being jeopardized. Administrators seem to be lacking in providing timely and adequate information on students' health and safety. These have resulted in the poor health and safety needs and awareness among school personnel, especially students who are the final products of the teaching and learning processes. Students more often than not always look tattered and are prone to ill health every now and then because they lack the needed health and safety information on the control and prevention of communicable and non-communicable diseases as well as development of healthful personal practices and wholesome health and safety attitudes. This has resulted in the poor school productivity experienced in recent times since teaching and learning activities may have been affected by poor personnel health and safety conditions. Hence, the question is "what are the administrators communication strategies that could enhance the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State"?

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does administrators' oral communication strategies enhance building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent does administrators' written communication strategies enhance building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between male and female students on administrators' oral communication strategies for enhancing building health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between male and female students on administrators' written communication strategies for enhancing building health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. it involved data collection from a given population in an attempt to elicit their opinions. The respondents comprised of all senior secondary school students with a population of 24,723 students in all the 292 public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The sample size of 368 students was selected using the simple random sampling technique. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The instrument for data collection was an 18-itemed self-structured questionnaire titled "Administrators' Communication Strategies for Building a Culture of Health and Safety Awareness Questionnaire" (ACSBCHASAQ). It comprised of two sections. Section "A" was on the demographic data while Section "B" had 18 items on a four-point Likert-type scale of Very High Extent (VHE)=4, High Extent (HE)=3, Low Extent (LE)=2 and Very Low Extent (VLE)=1. Two experts from the Department of Educational Management and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Amassoma,

Bayelsa State, validated the instrument and their corrections guided the final draft. The research questions were answered using mean and Standard Deviation. While the hypotheses were analyzed using the z-test analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Items above the mean score of 2.50 were regarded as high extent while items below the mean score of 2.50 were regarded as low extent.

Results

The results for the study were obtained based on the research questions answered and hypotheses tested.

Research Question 1: To what extent does administrator's oral communication strategies enhance building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on administrators' oral communication strategy for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State

S/N	Oral Communication Strategy	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
1	Announce on the assembly ground the provision of waste bins at strategy points helps to build health and safety awareness among students.	2.93	0.58	HE
2	Organizing health seminars and talk-shows for students from time to time helps to build a culture of health and safety awareness.	3.22	0.73	HE
3	Organize person to person health inspection on health, uniforms, nails, eyes, teeth etc. from time to time helps to build a culture of health and safety awareness among students.	3.16	0.79	HE
4	Involve students in interpreting health and safety rules and regulations for easy compliance.	3.08	0.59	HE
5	Appoint school health personnel to counsel students on health-related matters helps build a culture of health and safety awareness.	3.01	0.72	HE
6	Organize health and safety campaigns and discussion sessions from time to time builds a culture of health and safety awareness.	2.90	0.66	HE
7	Encourage students to verbally report any threats on their health and safety to school authority builds a culture of health and safety awareness.	2.81	0.71	HE
8	Provide useful explanations on the items of the first aid box and encourage students to know how to use first aid materials builds a culture of health and safety awareness.	2.75	0.7	HE
9	Explain to students on the use of safety materials such as safety helmets and safety boots where necessary builds a culture of health and safety awareness.	3.18	0.73	HE
Grand Mean		3.00	0.69	

N=368; Criterion mean: 2.50

Data on Table 1 showed that all items (1-9) had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Also, the grand mean score of 3.0 is an indication that administrators' oral communication strategies to a high extent enhance the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among senior secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does administrator's written communication strategies enhance building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on administrators' written communication strategy for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State

S/N	Written Communication Strategy	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
10	Display health and safety charts where necessary in the school environment helps to build a culture of health and safety awareness.	2.99	0.67	HE
11	Written health and safety rules and regulations are made known to students using memos.	2.65	0.62	HE
12	Collaborate in writing with education stakeholders (PTA, NGOS etc.) on providing the needed school security personnel that will build a culture of health and safety awareness.	2.74	0.53	HE
13	Provide suggestion boxes for students to make written input on health and safety matters, helps to build a culture of health and safety awareness.	2.89	0.65	HE
14	The punished students who went against health and safety rules and regulations are displayed in the schools weekly and monthly bulletins.	3.04	0.61	HE
15	Ensure that students health records are adequately written and kept in shelves and information are made known to individuals helps to build a culture of health and safety awareness.	3.38	0.67	HE
16	Provide written instructions on the use of soap and water for washing of hands helps to build a culture of health and safety awareness.	3.12	0.68	HE
17	Provide written guidelines on the use of health and safety instructional materials.	3.30	0.64	HE
18	Display health information on school notice board.	2.69	0.60	HE
Grand Mean		2.97	0.63	

N=368; Criterion mean: 2.50

Data on Table 2 showed that all items (10-18) had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Also, the grand mean score of 2.97 is an indication that administrators' written communication strategies to a high extent enhance the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among senior secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant difference between male and female students on administrators' oral communication strategies for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Table 3: z-test statistics on the mean responses of male and female students on administrators' oral communication strategies for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Student	N	X	SD	df	Z-Cal	Z-Crit	Decision
Male	168	3.03	0.66	366	0.82	1.96	Ho1
Female	200	2.97	0.72				Accepted

Data on Table 3 showed that male students have mean and standard deviation scores of 3.03 and 0.66 while female students have mean and standard deviation scores of 2.97 and 0.72 with a degree of freedom of 366. The calculated z-test value of 0.82 was less than the critical table value of 1.96. The null hypotheses is therefore accepted, which says that there is no significance difference between male and female students on administrator's oral communication strategies for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant difference between male and female students on administrator's written communication strategies for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Table 4: z-test statistics on the mean responses of male and female students on administrators' written communication strategies for building health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State

Student	N	X	SD	df	Z-Cal	Z-Crit	Decision
Male	168	2.99	0.61	366	0.71	1.96	Ho2
Female	200	2.95	0.65				Accepted

Data on Table 4 showed that male students have mean and standard deviation scores of 2.99 and 0.61 while female students have mean and standard deviation scores of 2.95 and 0.65 with a degree of freedom of 366. The calculated z-test value of 0.71 was less than the critical table value of 1.96. The null hypotheses is therefore accepted, which says that there is no significance difference between male and female students on administrators' written communication strategies for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.

Discussions

Results on administrators' oral communication strategies revealed that administrators oral communication strategies in terms of organizing safety campaigns and discussions, encouraging students to verbally report any threat to their health and safety, explaining to students on the use of health and safety materials such as safety helmets and safety books, appointing school health and safety counselors, involving students in interpreting school health rules and regulations, organizing health seminars and talk-shows etc., to a high extent enhance the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State. The result in hypotheses 1 showed that there is no significant different between male and female students' responses on administrators' oral communication strategies for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State. This result is in line with the results of Nwosu (2017) who found out that administrator's competencies improve teachers work performances. In corroboration, Kaegon and Madu (2017) in their study, found out that principals' administrative roles are made effective through effective communication strategies. This is an indication that, an improved school communication process is likely to increase a culture of health and safety awareness in the school.

Results on Administrators' written communication strategies also revealed that administrators written communication strategies in terms of providing written guidelines on the use of health and safety instructional materials, ensuring that students health records are adequately written and kept in shelves, written health and safety rules and regulations are made known to students using memos, collaborate in writing with education stakeholders, providing suggestion boxes for students to make written inputs etc., to a high extent enhance the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State. In line with this result, the studies of Moronkola (2012) found that through active participatory approach, learners are empowered with the necessary health and safety knowledge, attitudes and skills to ensure that they develop and maintain necessary healthy lifestyles both now and in the foreseeable future. The result in hypotheses 2 showed that there is no significant different between male and female students' responses on administrators' written communication strategies for enhancing the building of a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State. This result is line with the result of Yemisi (2011) who found out that effective communication in secondary schools enhance effective utilization of fiscal resources in education.

Conclusion

The health and safety needs of secondary school students cannot be overemphasized. Administrators at this level ought to exhibit the needed communication strategies that are capable of building a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students. For the society to be resilient now and be renewed in the near future, requires administrators' communication strategies which would build a culture of health and safety awareness among secondary students in Bayelsa State.

Recommendations

1. Administrators of secondary schools should undergo training regularly so as to be exposed to innovative communication strategies that could enhance the building of culture of health and safety awareness among secondary school students in Bayelsa State.



2. Government should provide the enabling environment by putting up education policies that would empower secondary school administrators to build a culture of health and safety awareness in their schools.
3. Administrators of secondary schools in Bayelsa State should at all times use simple and clear language when communicating health and safety issues to students for clarity and better understanding of their health and safety.



References

- Boma-Cookey, C. S., & Onuoha, A. N. (2021). Principals Administrative Competencies and Effective Management of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State. *Niger Delta Research Review (NDRR)*. 4 (1 and 2), 25-35.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Abuja: NERDC
- Grace, S. O., & Kalu, C. O. (2016). *Educational Administration and Planning Concepts, Theories and Practice*. Abuja: Immaculate Prints.
- Idoko, A. A. (2015). *Educational Management and other contemporary problems*. Wintoren Book.
- Iroriteraye-Adjekpovu, J. I., & Nwabuaku, L. (2024). A Comparative Study on the Effectiveness of Traditional and Computer-Assisted Instruction Methods in Determining Students' Achievement on Graph Plotting. *European Journal of Contemporary Education and E-Learning*, 2(1), 245-252.
- Kaegon, L. E. S., & Madu, O. M. (2017). Administrative Roles of Principals in Managing Functional Secondary Education for sustainable National Development in Imo State. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration and Planning (NJEAP)*. 17 (3) 17. 1006 -1020.
- Leigha, M. B., Major N. B., Epelle, P. A., & Mattew, J. E. (2023). *Introduction to Educational Administration*. Kelrich Educational Publishers.
- Moronkola, O. A. (2012). *School Health Program*. Ibadan: Royal People (Nig.). Ltd.
- Nwosu, J. (2017). Communication Strategies and Teachers Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Ikene Local Government Area of Ogun State. *International Journal of Education Learning and Development*. 5 (9). 1-12.
- Okoroma, N. S. (2019). *Educational Management, Planning and Policy: A broad Perspective*. UNIPOINT Press.
- Okoye, F. O. (2016). Administrative Communication Skills. In Unachukwu, G. O. & Okorji, P.N. (eds). *Educational Management: A Skills Building Approach*. Rex Charles & Patrick
- Owan, V., & Nonye, A. (2019). Principals' administrative competences and teachers work performance in Secondary Schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. *Humanities and Social Sciences Letters*, 7 (1), 20-28.
- Yenisi, O. O. (2011) Control of Education in Nigeria, In O.E Olawolu and C.U. Madumere-Obike (Eds). *Educational Management Practices*. Informedia Grafik, Orogwue.