

# Principals' Awareness and Application of Safety Emergency Management Plan in Anambra State Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

Research overwhelmingly, suggests that effective teaching and learning can occur only in a safe and secure school environment. The global concerns on Safety have necessitated this study on principals' awareness and application of safety emergency management plan in Secondary Schools in Anambra State of Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study which is same as the sample consisted of 256 principals in the 256 public secondary schools in the state. The researchers developed two set of questionnaire titled Principals' Questionnaire on Awareness and Application of Safety Management in Anambra State Secondary Schools. The research questions were analyzed using bar graphs and percentage scores, while the Hypotheses were tested using z-test. The results of the analysis revealed that principals are aware of safety emergency management plan and they apply it in their schools. Further, the finding showed a no significant difference between principals' gender in their awareness and application of safety emergency plan in Secondary Schools in Anambra State. Based on that some recommendations pertinent to the study were made and conclusion was drawn.

**Keywords:** Principals Awareness and Application, Safety Emergency Management Plan

## 1. Introduction

The development and advancement of any nation is a crucial function of the educational system. Education is the most essential social service known and recognized for national and human transformation. Thus, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) alluded to this fact and stated that both the vision 20-2020 and the Transformation Agenda should be anchored on this recognition that the people are the most important assets of any nation. Hence, education is at the forefront of most government agenda for the attainment of national ideals.

Secondary education in Nigeria is a combination of both the Basic Education and Post Basic Education. Children receive three years of junior secondary Education after the primary education, both which forms the Basic Education. Another, three years of Senior Secondary Education are also receive by such children at the post Basic Education. Secondary Education occupy a strategic and prominent position in Nigeria's education system because it serves as the core link to the Tertiary education and the world of work (FRN, 2013).

The administrative head in the Nigeria Secondary Schools is the Principal. The position of the principal is central and strategic in that he is the key drive to the management of activities in the school organization (Ekundayo, 2010). The functions of the Principal as enumerated by Arikewuyo (1999) includes providing instructional leadership, influencing the behavior of members of the school organization and creating an environment that is conducive for realization of human potentials among others. Thus, providing for a safe and thriving environment for students to learn and staff to work is a precursor for attainment of educational and organizational goals.

Safety in Nigerian Secondary Schools has grown to be a knotty issue in the nation's discourse. It has become the concerns of stakeholders and all well meaning individuals in the country. Safety implies a state of being protected, uninjured, out of danger, secured and not involving risk (Okorji & Ibeziakor, 2017). In other words, safety may be seen as a state of being protected from potential harm or freedom from danger. School safety according to (Kelvin n.d) is a process of protecting the school, students and staff and its environment from danger, harm and other hazardous risks and circumstances that might disrupt the school activities and thus militate against attainment of organizational goals.

It is very essential that principals are aware of the many vulnerable areas within and outside the school that may pose potential risk and thus require his attention to safety of staff and students. Kalagbor (2006) maintained that the principal need to protect teachers and students from harm, abuse, rape, disease, and hazardous activities. Awareness according Wikipedia (2015) is the ability to directly know and perceive, to feel or to be cognizant of events. More broadly, it is the state of being conscious of something. kirui, Mbagua & sang (2008) averred that school safety is an integral and indispensable part of teaching and learning process. To this and, no meaningful teaching and learning can take place in an environment that is apparently unsafe to both learners and staff. It is argued that the expectation from principals therefore is to be knowledgeable and familiar with the essential rudiments for effective safety management for school improvement.

In the management of safety in schools, principals are expected to use knowledge which the acquired to

solve problems either in the education sector or in the public sector. In other words, principals are to apply safety management plans when conditions for such arise. Application can be explained to mean the act of putting to a special use or purpose something that is worthwhile. Application is determining how principals are conversant with the use of safety emergency management plan combating safety need.

The comprehensive school safety guide is a safety emergency management plan developed in 2011 in the United State for use by school leaders. The guide is an effective intervention plans that prepare staff and students for emergency situation. Arguably, the guide emphasized that although safety management plan is essential in managing safety, not many principals are familiar with the task involved in the plan process. Therefore, there is need to create individualized plan addressing potential violent situations and emergency situations. Emergency situation maybe referred to as an actual, or imminent event or conditions which endanger or threaten life, property or environment and this requires prompt, and coordinated response and attention that is beyond normal procedures(Osisioma and Onwudiwe; 2015).

In essence, principals need to create safety emergency management plan for their school to take cognizant of any unforeseen situation that might disrupt the school activities. Safety emergency management plan help prepare the school personnel before an emergency incident. It ensures they have necessary equipment, know how to keep safe in obvious emergency situations.

Anambra state which is one of the 36 states in Nigeria, is prone to emergency situations which often triggered by severe flooding and erosion disaster. The state experience pervasive risk of devastation of human and property loss resulting from human and natural disasters. (2004) attributed this to insufficient education, unpreparedness for disaster, insufficient fiscal and economic resources to carefully implement the integrated emergency management. The 2012 flooding was also a case in point; which has its tool in the state school systems. Available data shows that 256 primary schools and 93 secondary schools were totally destroyed in the state (Federal Government Report, (FGR) 2013). The FGR (2013) report stated also that 323 secondary schools suffered partial damages in Anambra state. They were also apparent cases of cultism, kidnapping, community fights which seem to pose threats to life and property of the schools in the endemic zones.

Emergency management plan is focused on mitigating the risks, preparing for possible catastrophes and disasters, responding to threats or actual disaster and recovering from disaster. To this end, for emergency management plan to be effective, creating awareness and application of the plan to the consumers must be well thought out and properly established. Appropriate knowledge of safety management and its application process is crucial for school improvement in Anambra state secondary school education system. Application focuses on how principals are readily familiar with the use of safety emergency management plan in the schools to facilitate safety.

Safety emergency management plan is a critical process that states and involves coherent improvement cycles that supports school leaders in their safety plan efforts which include: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. This research work therefore focused on these keys components as thus;

Preventive/Mitigation is action taken to minimize or reduce risk to life and property in the event of emergency. Generally speaking, school principals may not have control over unexpected phenomena or be able to control all risks or emergencies but to some extent actions to minimize impact of disasters can be taken by school leaders. This can include creating safe, healthy, orderly, and supportive environment through well articulated curriculum programmes and policy and procedures that may help identify students and staff who may pose a threat to safety in schools.

Preparedness is the process of deciding appropriate actions to be taken in an emergency. Determining who will respond in an emergency before it occurs is equally involved. It is the task of the principal to engage the school personnel in drills or activities and exercise to familiarize everyone with the plan to ensure effective responses.

Response is the process of implementing appropriate actions while emergency situation is unfolding. At this point, it is crucial for the school principal to determine if actually the condition outside the school environment is more dangerous or violent than inside the school. By this, it is equally important to choose a response procedure or action accordingly.

The recovery process is concerned with restoring the learning environment and infrastructures of the school as quickly as possible. The plan must be developed at the preparedness phase not after the emergency situation. Recovery phase consist of four main components namely; emotional, academic, physical/structural, and business/fiscal. These components must be included in the recovery. It also involves assisting people with physical, psychology or emotional trauma associated with the tragic events. Physical/structural and business/fiscal recovery requires proper documentation for insurance policies, federal and state laws. According to US Department of Education (2006) the plan emphasized that effective planning will reduce the level of chaos during emergency and will enable schools return to normalcy quicker.

Equally sender is a factor that perhaps could affect principals' awareness and application of safety emergency plan in schools. Puri (2015) is of the view that women have a different set of needs and concern than

men, when it comes to safety issues. This may be seen in decision making and how issues are handled. Gender can affect the attitude and approaches of principals in handling safety issues especially in times of emergency. Gender could also affect the kind of response, actions and even a way to change the way principals react to emergencies.

However, observable situations in Anambra State Secondary Schools show that individual principals have established methods for dealing and coping with emergencies. Although principals may have methods for handling emergencies, to an extent many of them seemed not to have proper plans put in a concise manner. Emergency management plans are classified to be a guide to the school principals for picking and choosing the areas that are specific to them and customizing a plan that is specific to their locality. This research work therefore investigates principals' awareness and application of safety emergency management plans in Anambra State Secondary Schools.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Although, it is obvious that school leaders cannot prevent the occurrence of some natural phenomena like rainfall, but to an extent one could prevent these natural phenomenal occurrences from becoming a disaster, through proper assessment, planning, environmental protection and response preparedness. Keeping a safe school is a crucial task in personnel management. One is therefore worried about the recent emergency situations in some secondary schools in Anambra State. The FGN (2013) registered that a number of schools were destroyed through flooding in 2012. The affected schools lost properties and learning materials worth millions of Naira which were submerged under water. This impacted heavily on education because school children were displaced and staff and students feared for their lives and safety. More worrisome, is that school principals appear not prepared and schools were ill equipped to tackle this emergency. One therefore, wonders what may have been responsible for the inefficient emergency preparedness by the school principals. Could it be the individual principal does not have pre-requisite and relevant knowledge on safety emergency management plans and their application process with regard to the locality, and type of emergency conditions prevalent in the school? These and other problems necessitated this present study on principals' awareness and application of safety management plans in Anambra State secondary Schools for safety in the education system.

## **3. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine principals' awareness and application of safety emergency management plans in secondary schools in Anambra State of Nigeria. Specifically the study sought to:

1. Ascertain principals' awareness of safety emergency management plans in secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Investigate the principals' application of safety emergency management plans in Anambra State Secondary Schools.

## **4. Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the awareness scores of Secondary School principals on the safety emergency management plan in Anambra State?
2. What are the principals' scores on application of safety emergency management plans in Secondary Schools in Anambra State?

## **5. Hypotheses**

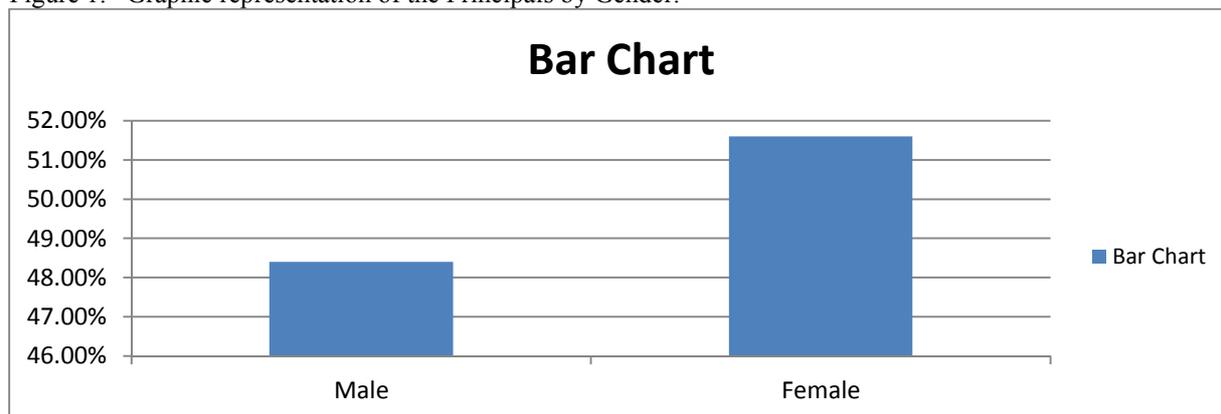
The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on their awareness of safety emergency management plans in Anambra State Secondary Schools.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on their application of safety emergency management plans in Anambra State Secondary Schools.

## **6. Method**

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The research was carried out in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population of the study consists of 256 principals in all public Secondary Schools in Anambra State. There was no sampling in the study due to the relatively small and manageable size of the population. Thus, all the 256 principals in the State public Secondary Schools were the respondents for the study. However, 124 are male principals and 132 are female principals.

Figure 1. Graphic representation of the Principals by Gender.



The instrument used to elicit information from the respondents is the questionnaire. It was developed by the researchers and of two types. One was titled “Principals’ Questionnaire on Awareness of Safety Emergency management plan in Secondary Schools” (PQASEMP) and the other Principals’ Questionnaire on Application of Safety Emergency Management Plan in Secondary Schools (PQASEMP).

The questionnaires had information on demographic data. Both questionnaires had 25 items respectively on each of them that focused on Awareness and Application of Safety Emergency Plan in Secondary Schools in the state under study. Scaling statement of highly aware, moderately aware, low awareness and not aware were used as well as apply or not apply as in the case of principals’ application of safety emergency management plan.

However, percentage was used to analyze the research questions. A percentage score of 50% and above was deemed positive interpretation to regard as aware or apply. Below 50% was regarded a negative interpretation and in this case deemed not aware or do not apply. The hypotheses were tested using z-test, if z-calculated is equal to or greater than z-critical at 0.05 level of significance, and the degree of freedom the null hypotheses is rejected, but if z- calculated is less than z- critical, it is not rejected.

### 7. Presentation of Results

Data analysis and presentation of results were based purely on answering the research questions and Hypotheses formulated for the study.

Research Questions one:

What are the awareness scores of secondary school principals on the safety emergency management plan in Anambra state.

Table 1: percentage range of ratings on principals’ awareness of the safety emergency management plan in Anambra state.

| Rang of scores | N   | %    | Remarks   |
|----------------|-----|------|-----------|
| 50 – 100       | 213 | 83.2 | Aware     |
| 0 – 50         | 43  | 16.8 | Not aware |

Fig 2. Graphic representation of percentage ratings on principals’ awareness of safety emergency management plan in secondary schools in Anambra state

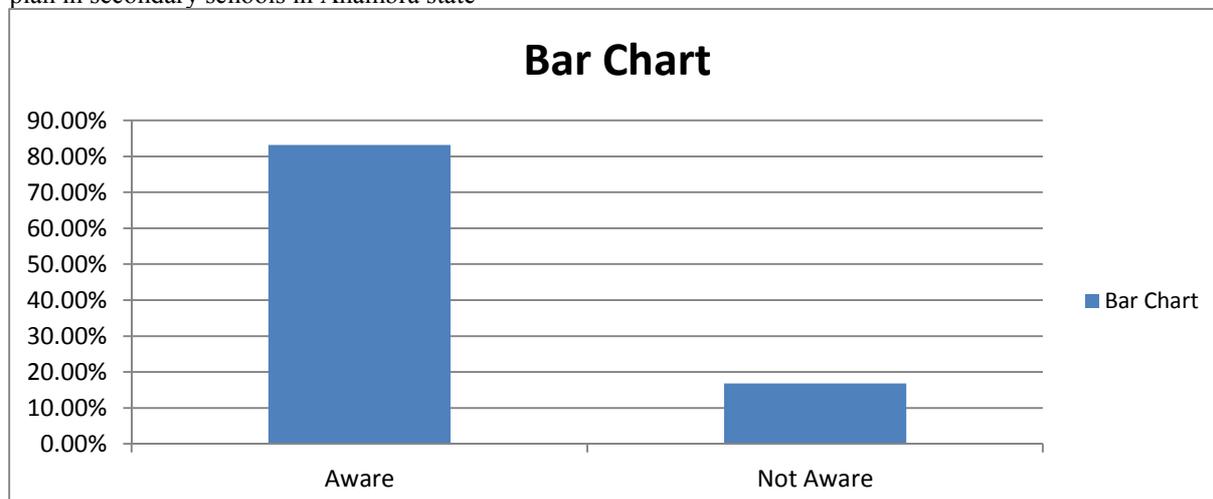


Table 1 and figure 2 shows that 213 (83.2%) of the principals in the state secondary schools are Aware of the safety emergency management plan. 43 (16.8%) of the principals shows no awareness of the safety emergency management plan.

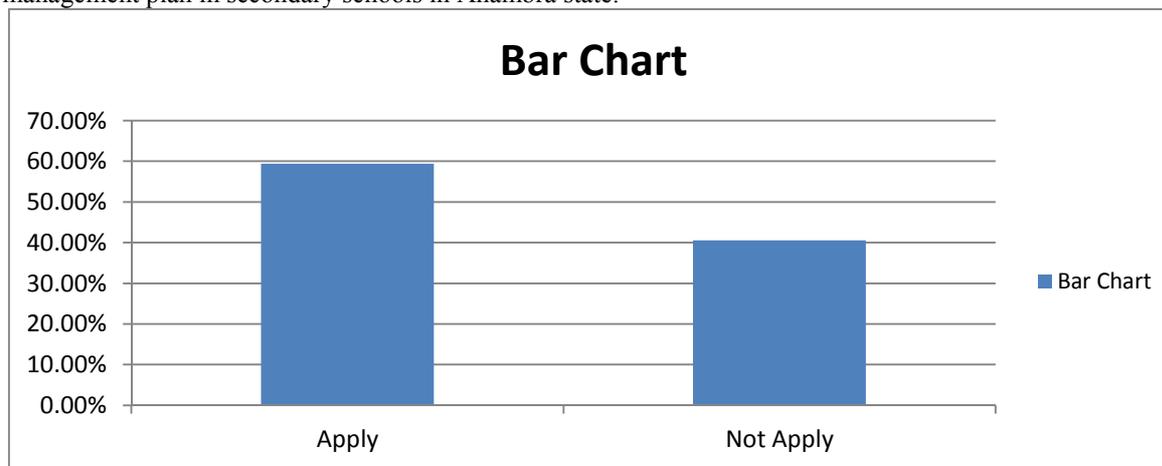
Research Question Two.

What are the principals score on application of safety emergency management plan in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2. Percentage range of ratings on principals' application of safety emergency management plan in secondary schools in Anambra state.

| Rang of scores | N   | %    | Remarks   |
|----------------|-----|------|-----------|
| 50 – 100       | 152 | 59.4 | Apply     |
| 0 – 50         | 104 | 40.6 | Not Apply |

Fig 3. Graphic representation of percentage range of ratings on principals' application of safety emergency management plan in secondary schools in Anambra state.



In table 2 and figure 3, it could be observed that 152 (59.4%) of the principals in the state secondary schools apply safety emergency management plan, while 104(40.6%) do not apply safety emergency management plan in their schools.

## 8. Testing of Hypotheses.

Null Hypothesis 1.

There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female secondary School principals on their awareness of safety management plan in Anambra State.

Table 3. z-test on the mean ratings of male and female principals on their awareness of safety emergency management plan in Anambra State

| Source of variation | N   | X     | sd    | df  | cal.t | p.cal | p≥0.05 |
|---------------------|-----|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|--------|
| Male                | 124 | 70.07 | 10.24 | 254 | 0.29  | 0.77  | NS     |
| Female              | 132 | 70.41 | 8.18  |     |       |       |        |

Table 3 indicate that 0.05 level of significance and 254 df, the calculated t is 0.29. Then the calculated p. value 0.77 is greater than the critical p.value 0.05. The first null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female principals on their awareness of safety emergency management plan in Secondary Schools in Anambra State.

Null Hypothesis 2.

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female secondary school principals on their application of safety emergency plan in Anambra State.

Table 4. z-test on the mean ratings of the male and female principals on their application of safety management plan in Anambra State.

| Source of variation | N   | X     | sd    | df  | cal.t | p.cal | p≥0.05 |
|---------------------|-----|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|--------|
| Male                | 124 | 64.49 | 11.27 | 254 | 0.29  | 0.77  | NS     |
| Female              | 132 | 66.85 | 10.35 |     |       |       |        |

Table 4 shows that at 0.05 level of significance and 254 df, the calculated p.value 0.05. The second null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female secondary school principals on their application of safety emergency plan in Anambra State.

## 9. Discussion of the Results

The findings of the study indicated that majority of the principals are aware of the emergency management plan for safety in schools. This findings to an extent contradict earlier finding made by Keng and Razak (2004) which stated that the level of awareness of safety management plan among school leaders were unsatisfactory. It is argued here that perhaps the possible difference in findings maybe as a result of location and time span between both studies. No doubt, principals' awareness of emergency safety management plan provides guidance in mapping out measures or procedures to enhance safety of schools personnel. The finding of the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the male and female principals on their awareness of safety emergency management plan in the state under study. Earlier study by Ikoya (2009) indicated that there was a clear disparity between male and female principals awareness of emergency safety plan. This contraction could be as a result of difference in the area of study and time span in both studies.

The study revealed that majority of the principals in the state under study in Nigeria apply safety emergency plan in their various schools. The finding is in agreement with the report provided by Kwesi (2016) which showed a higher perception in the level of application of occupational health and safety management at the work place. Nonetheless, this finding did not align with Nhlapo (2006) which found a poor implementation of safety measure at schools. Apparently, the variation in finding could be as a result of location.

The finding further revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female secondary principals on their application of safety emergency management plan in Anambra State. This finding disagree with previous finding of (Besong 2014) who reported that male principals excelled more and even more efficient than their female counter part.

## 10. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations were made:

1. Ministry of Education and State secondary school board should individually and jointly organize training for principals on safety emergency management. Resource persons who are expert in safety management education may be invited to teach principals on appropriate measures to be taken when disaster occur.
2. Principals should plan and form safety clubs or societies as part of co-curricular activities in the school programme. Under such activities students may be taught safety measures to taken in the event of disaster. Students should be taught in their safety club how to take responsibility and be part of maintaining safety by reporting crime and suspicious movement by unknown people who may pose threat to life and properties in the school.
3. Principals of the schools should apply safety measures geared towards controlling access to school during and after school hours.

## 11. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is right to say that principals are aware of the safety emergency management plan in secondary schools in Anambra state. Similarly, the study revealed that principals in the state public secondary schools apply safety emergency management plan. In conclusion, the study shows that gender did not significantly affect principals' awareness on safety emergency management plan, on one hand. On the other hand gender did not have only significant effect on principals' application of safety emergency management plan in secondary school in Anambra state.

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