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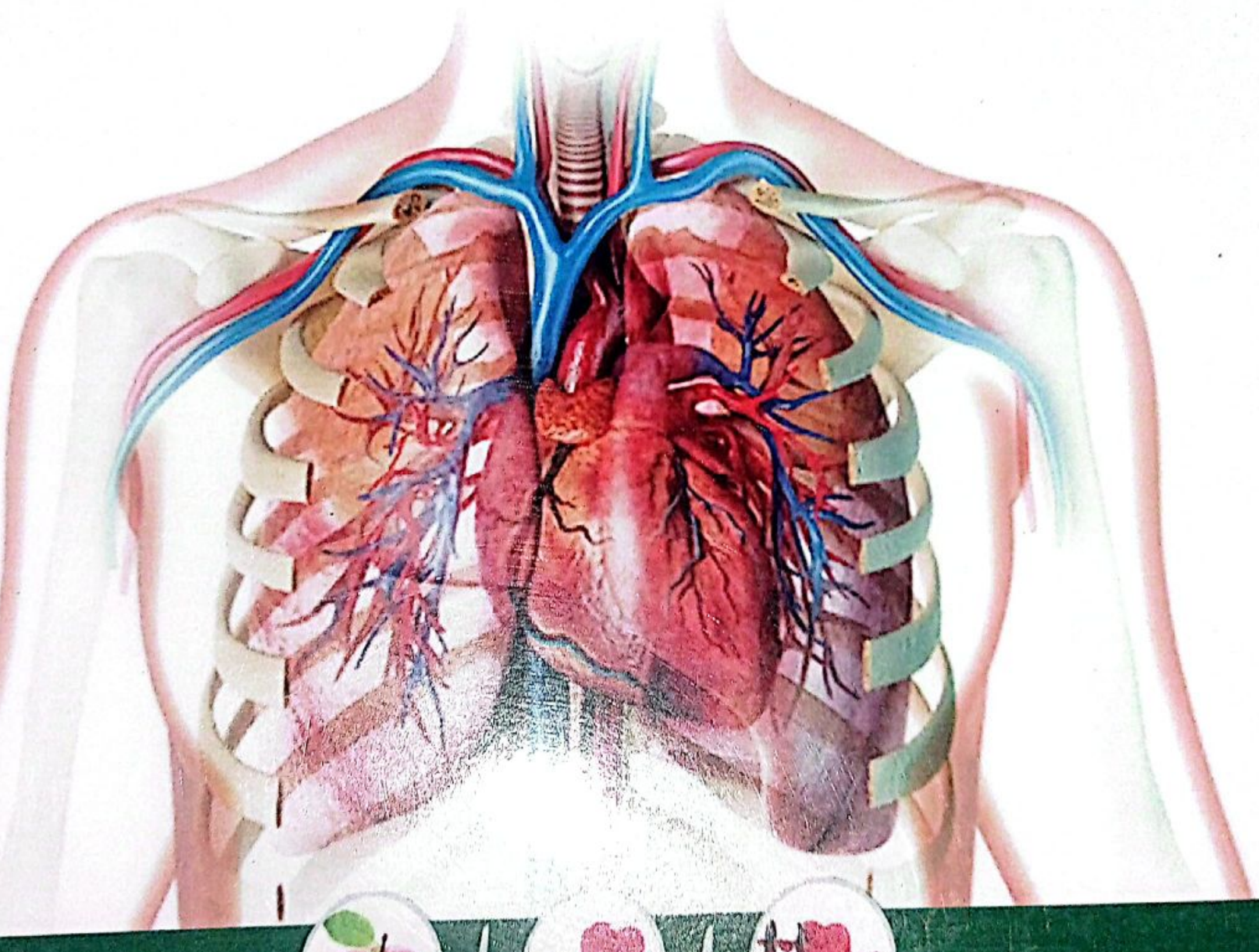

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Table of Contents

PERCEIVED CAUSES AND EFFECT OF LOW SPERM COUNT AMONG MEN IN ETSAKO WEST GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS STATE
Jamiu AbdulQudus Tosin (PhD) and Onchumoh Margaret (PhD) .....

KNOWLEDGE AND UTILIZATION OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE FOR TREATMENT OF MALARIA IN KPANTISAWA 'A' WARD, YORRO LGA, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA
P. Babylon, C.G. Azuchukwuene, T. Galaya, N. F Arnon and S. G. Ishaya .....

ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF COVID-19 PREVENTION STRATEGIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SAMARU, ZARIA
Safiya Yusuf IDRIS ,Adam Abiola AKOREDE and abdulmuhit temitope ISIAQ .....

PREVALANCE OF DRUG ABUSE AND ITS IMPLICATION ON PUBLIC HEALTH: THE WAY FORWARD
Hussaini Garba, Kamar Abdulkadir and Mohammed K. Gana .....

CHEATING IN SPORT COMPETITIONS; A MONSTROUS VICE FAST TURNING TO A GLOBAL CULTURE
Ayotunde Oluwole AJALA and Kehinde Olalekan FALOLA .....

ASSESSMENT OF CARDIO-RESPIRATORY ENDURANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KATSINA STATE
Mohammed Idris Abubakar and Yahaya Mani Tsauri.....

ASSESSMENT OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS HEALTHFUL SCHOOL LIVING ENVIRONMENT AMONG BOARDING SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN NORTH WEST ZONE, NIGERIA
Bala ADAMU, M. A. Suleiman, Umaru Musa and T. N. Ogwu.....

INFLUENCE OF SIZE OF SPECTATORS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF NIGERIA PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE (NPFL) CLUBS
Ayo Hammed Abdulrahaman and Durotoye Bode Alli.....

SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS AS DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG RETIRED CIVIL SERVANTS IN YOLA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA
Abu Adamu Yahaya, Amina Kaidal and Hebron K. Jime.....

IMPLICATIONS OF EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING AMONGST SPORTS ADMINISTRATORS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS IN NIGERIA
Abdulrasheed Oyakhire (M.sc)., Sani Mahmud Dauda (M.sc). Samuel. Monikhe Adodo (Ph.D).....

HEALTH EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG RESIDENTS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA
ALEBIOSU, Emmanuel Olorunleke (Ph.D.), OMOLADE Akinmade Olatunde (M.Ed.) and SHUAIB Khadijat Ohunene (M.Ed.) .....

HEALTH BENEFITS OF CLEAN ENVIRONMENT ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN ASKIRA UBA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BORNO STATE
Waziri Bala Kwata Ph.D And Jemirade Jimmy Adebayo .....

ASSESSMENT OF PORTABLE WATER SUPPLY AND TOILET FACILITIES AS COMPONENTS OF HEALTHFUL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE
ALERU, Olufemi Oluwatobiloba and JIME, Hebron Kanatapwa.....94

ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE OF HEALTHFUL SCHOOL LIVING ENVIRONMENT' AMONG BOARDING SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN NORTH WEST ZONE, NIGERIA
Bala ADAMU, M. A. Suleiman and T. N. Ogwu.....100

ASSESSMENT OF HOUSEHOLD SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL PRACTICES AMONG URBAN RESIDENTS OF YOBE STATE, NIGERIA
ABDULLAHI, Ado and MAIMUSA, A.H. 108

ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN EXCRETA DISPOSAL PRACTICES AMONG URBAN RESIDENTS OF YOBE STATE, NIGERIA
ABDULLAHI, A. and MAIMUSA, AH. 115

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERGRADUATES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA
AGUBOSI L. A., UYANNE E. O., ADEBOYE A. and OLOYE W. A.....122

SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM AS A PANACEA FOR ENSURING SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IFELODUN LGA KWARA STATE
James Joke Felicia (Ph.D).....130

ASSESSMENT OF CANCER PREVENTION PRACTICES AMONG STAFF OF FEDERAL COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NORTH WEST ZONE NIGERIA
Seun Nurudeen Akorede, Abdullahi Mohammed Isyaku, Ahmed Sani Getso, Rabiatu Abubakar Imam and Aliyu Mohammed.....139

MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE AND CHALLENGES OF HEALTHCARE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW OF SOME SELECTED CASES
OLORUNSUWA, Elijah Ola ; AJAYI, Abraham Dare; BOT, Moses Danjuma; Baamshal, Isabel Hoommuk 148

FACTORS INFLUENCING INCOMPLETE IMMUNIZATION OF CHILDREN AGE 11 TO 23 MONTHS IN WUDIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KANO STATE, NIGERIA
Jemirade Jimmy Adebayo And Waziri Bala Kwata. Phd 163

MANAGEMENT OF PRIMARY HEALTHCARE; SIMILARITIES BETWEEN GHANA AND NIGER: SYSTEMIC REVIEW
Yusuf Yakubu.....176

KNOWLEDGE OF IMMUNIZATION AMONG MOTHERS OF CHILDREN AGE 11-23 MONTHS IN WUDIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF KANO STATE.
JEMIRADE JIMMY ADEBAYO AND SHEHU USMAN ADAMU .professor 182

INFLUENCE OF DIETARY PATTERNS ON WEIGHT STATUS OF ADOLESCENTS IN AKURE SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA
KAYODE, M. P. (Ph.D), ABDULQADIR, O. F. and SANUSI, A. A (PhD) 192

SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM AS A PANACEA FOR ENSURING SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IFELODUN LGA KWARA STATE

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Abstract

Supporting school health programs to improve the health status of our school is very important. This study examined school health program as a panacea for ensuring safe school environment among secondary school students in Ifelodun LGA, Kwara State. The objectives of this study was to investigate whether adequate school health services will ensure safe school environment. Descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for this study. Population comprised all secondary school teachers selected across all the secondary schools within eleven wards in Ifelodun LGA, kwara state. Using proportionate and simple random sampling technique with a sample of 250 respondents selected. Researcher's designed structured questionnaire of Likert format rating scale, validated by three experts and tested for reliability through test-retest method was used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to correlate the result and 0.84 was obtained. The three postulated hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of Chi-square at 0.05 alpha level. The researcher concluded that school health services, school health education and healthful school environment will ensure safe school environment among secondary school students. It was recommended that stakeholders of schools should provide the materials, human resources and routine evaluation needed to achieve an effective School Health Program.

Keywords: School health program, safe school environment, school health services and panacea

Introduction

Educating students in a safe, secure and stimulating environment, access to high health care standards and professional teachers, are the basic rights of a growing child. The educational environment should be prepared to facilitate this and promote physical, mental, psychological and social development of a child. This important responsibility should be mutually shared between parents, educational system and national health care system. The school is a vital place for learning, acquiring skills and basic attitudes, which are retained with the students throughout their lives. In the absence of optimal levels of safe school environment, the education programs can fail resulting in academic failure and poor return of investment. Supporting school health programs to improve the health status of our nation's young people is very important (Ajayi-Vincent and Aleblosu)

The school health is an integral part of community health, but it mainly refers to all the health activities and measures that are carried out within the community to promote and protect the health of school children. According to Moronkola, (2017), School Health Program (SHP) refers to all aspects of the school program which contributes to

the understanding, maintenance and improvement of the health of the school population. It is an integrated set of planned school-affiliated strategies, activities and services designed to promote the optimal all-round health of the school community. SHP refers to all the health activities and measures that are carried out within the school to promote, protect, and sustain the health of the students and staff. Children spend a considerable part of their life in school, exposed to a variety of environmental, physical, emotional and social influences. Safe school environment cannot be isolated from the education of the child with emphasis on provision of safe environment in the school community that favor effective teaching-learning process.

According to Ademokun, Osungbade and Obembe, (2014), school health program is an important component of the overall health care delivery system of any country. It comprises four major components: school health services, healthy school environment, health education, and school, home and community relationships. All these components form a complete school health program. If the SHP is handled adequately, it will make the school environment safe and secured to enable the school children enjoy all-round health.

Shrestha; Ghimire and Jimba, (2019), described school health services as all the services that can be given to the students to maintain, improve and ensure a healthy life within and outside the school environment. These may be in form of health screening for early detection of sicknesses, emergency care, health counseling service, good feeding and sanitary system, identification and early detection and control of communicable diseases and the likes. The school health services are grouped under preventive and curative services provided for the staff and students within the school setting. The SHS comprises: nutrition service, counseling and psychological services, first aid and emergency service, medical screening, provision of essential drugs to the clinic, inspection of foods, body and the school compound, and conducting referral service.

As a result of the increasing number of students with health conditions requiring health services during the school day, the school health service program should ensure that efficient and standard care are implemented. Saunders, (2018) explained that effective school health services is a strategic means of preventing many health risks among school children. The physical outlook of the school environment is very important in contributing to healthy academic exercise.

The American Academy of pediatrics (2021) described a healthy school environment as one that protects students and staff against immediate injury or disease and promotes prevention activities and attitudes against known risk factors that might lead to future disease or disability. Healthful school environment means consciously organized, planned and executed activities to ensure safety and healthy living conditions for all members of the school community. According to Amoran; Kupoluyi; Salako, and Kupoluyi, (2017), a healthy school environment (physical, biological and sociocultural) serves as a major determinant of health and greatly influences the individual's level of intellectual growth and development. It is an environment that protects students and staff against immediate injury or disease and promotes prevention of activities against known and unknown risk factors that might lead to future disease or infirmity. Akani, (2017) opined that healthy school environment embraces all efforts to provide at school, physical, and social conditions which are beneficial to the health and safety of the students.

A sound and effective health education emphasizing knowledge, attitudes, and practices to teachers, during their training, provides the foundation for successfully implementing a SHP. It creates a general awareness on human health in both the teachers and the students as well as members of the wider community. It inculcates and promotes good health habits in school children and provides the children with the knowledge useful in taking decisions for themselves on health and well-being and ensures that children remain well during the school session with minimal absenteeism and resulting in better performance (Sofola, 2015). Saunder, (2018) reported that, education about cleanliness, personal hygiene, sanitation, preventive information against various communicable and non-communicable diseases, Guidance and Counseling for adolescent students on puberty issues, Anti-drugs and anti-tobacco education and nutrition, should be an integral part of school curriculum. Provision of information, knowledge,

and skills to the children on above subjects enable them to develop healthy behavior and protect themselves from diseases and practices which can make them vulnerable to various hazards in their life.

Studies carried out by Ofovwe, (2017) among head teachers in the South-West region of Nigeria revealed the level of underdevelopment of the SHP in both primary and secondary schools, most especially in rural areas. Routine medical checks, adequate water supply, toilet and hand washing facilities, sick bay, routine screening of food vendors, for instance, were generally deficient in most of the schools sampled. The school health services are so inadequate to the extent that only 1% of 91 schools in a particular zone is benefiting from services of a school doctor, and less than a third having a sick bay. Many teachers are unaware of the National School Health Policy as some have reported poor refuse and sewage disposal practices in the schools considered, especially in public schools, with potential hazards to the school children and environment

In concept and practice, SHP is multidisciplinary and involves inter-sectoral collaboration. The program is described as the cooperative activities of school teachers, physicians, dentists, nurses and others so as to appraise, promote, protect and maintain the health of all pupils and the school personnel. However, the bulk of the services revolve round the school teacher who serves to counsel students, parents and others about appraisal findings, encouraging the correction of remedial defects, assisting in the identification and education of handicapped children, helping to prevent and control diseases and providing emergency services for injuries and sudden illnesses (Shrestha; Ghimire and Jimba, 2019). It is important to note that lack of basic knowledge of the SHP among the school health policy guideline stakeholders in the implementation of the program will hinder its effective implementation. The implication of this is that it makes them unable to communicate appropriate health knowledge to the children in their care, thereby causing deficiency in health teaching and counseling.

Imoge, (2017), opined that school environment plays a pivotal role in the retention and learning outcomes of students. Availability of proper facilities is a pre-requisite for creating a healthy environment in a school. Provision of facilities such as Safe clean drinking water; appropriate sanitation/toilet facilities; adequately spacious class rooms; comfortable seating arrangements; Play grounds; a child friendly environment; Access for disabled and physically challenged contributes in creating a conducive environment for the children in the school. In the absence of above facilities, overall health and mental concentration of students will be negatively affected. Many children are likely to leave the school due to its uncomfortable and unattractive environment.

Learning environment has been emphasized as an essential requirement for smooth teaching and learning process to take place (National Teachers' Institute, 2015). This is because students' study habits are to a large extent tied to it. According to Ikpaya (2017), "the environment in which you study can have a big effect on how efficient your study time is" identified noise, interruptions, lighting, temperature, neatness, comfort and equipment to have potential effect on study habits. This is supported by World Health Organization (2017) which posits that as schools provide an important learning environment, the promotion of personal hygiene and environmental sanitation within schools is essential. In addition, schools provide ideal environment in which to help children to adopt good habits that will serve for the rest of their lives.

According to Moronkola (2017), the characteristics of safe school environment required for healthful school goals includes, Location of school away from potential environmental hazards, provision of adequate buildings, constructed in line with approved standards, provision of an appropriate and adequate amount of furniture for learners and staff; provision of an adequate number of gender-sensitive toilet facilities; Provision of adequate safe water supply and sanitation facilities for the school environment, provision of proper drainage and waste facilities; promotion of healthy human relationships in the school community; provision of safe recreation and sports facilities. A critical assessment of all these subject matter shows components of SHP.

School authorities have a legal and moral responsibility to provide a safe and sanitary water supply for the schools. Periodic testing of the water supply should occur to assure that it is free of contamination. The preferred location of the toilet facilities is one with an outside exposure to direct national lighting. This is because of the effect of sunlight on some pathogenic organisms. According to Ikpaya, (2017), toilets should also be located on the ground floor level for easy access by the supervisors and the special (handicapped) students. There should be wash hand basins in these restrooms or classrooms equipped with hot or cold running water for washing hands and other needs. Students should not be subjected to an unsanitary environment to avoid outbreak of communicable diseases like cholera and dysentery. Provisions must be made for safe and effective removal of waste from the schools. When installing septic tanks, expert consultation is important. Septic tanks should be located far away and below the source of water in schools that use wells to avoid the possibility of contaminating the water supply. The tank should be accessible for annual evacuation and cleaning to ensure that there are no pathogenic bacteria contained in the tank.

According to Ajayi-Vincent and Alebiosu, (2017), the social environment rests solely on good interpersonal relationship between staff and students. When the social environment is good, there would be less violence demonstration, absenteeism, cult activities, examination malpractice, sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse and suspension and expulsion. Since the school is designed to explore and expand the frontier of knowledge, the social environment in the school must give room for the development of wholesome personal self-concept, healthy activities and practices, as well as special skills of the learner. Also, the staff and student must be motivated through the provision of appropriate facilities, example is a well-equipped library, conducive learning environment and good salary, so that effective teaching-learning process is not hindered. This is important because, for effective learning to take place, both the teachers and the learners must be psychologically ready to perform their tasks

A School Health Program (SHP) is an essential component of the overall health care delivery system of any country. It involves school health environment, school health education, school health services and school nutrition that promote the health and development of the school community. In a developing country such as Nigeria, where infant and early childhood mortality is high, the importance of School Health Program cannot be overemphasized. The School Health Program in Nigeria remains deficient. The deplorable conditions of Nigerian school environments have become an important phenomenon in recent times. Children are often said to be future leaders. The place to lay a solid foundation, build and equip their lives to be better future leaders is the school environment. It is however, a concern that the school environments in which these young minds are trained have not been adequately managed. Location of schools has not been a concern to the authorities running them. As observed by the researcher, it is common to find schools located very close to commercial centers that generate noise such as automobiles, neighborhood human discussions and discotheques to the extent that they distract the concentration of learners. The purpose of this study is to examine School Health Program as a panacea for ensuring safe school environment among Secondary School Students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions are stated:

1) Will adequate school health services ensure safe school environment among Secondary School students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State?
2) Will adequate school health education ensure safe school environment among Secondary School students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State?
3) Will adequate healthful school environment ensure safe school environment among Secondary School students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

1. School health services will not significantly ensure safe school environment among primary children in Ifelodun LGA Kwara State
2. School health education will not significantly ensure safe school environment among primary children in Ifelodun LGA Kwara State
3. Healthful school environment will not significantly ensure safe school environment among primary children in Ifelodun LGA Kwara State

Method and Materials

The descriptive research design of survey method was adopted for this study. The population comprises all the secondary school teachers in Ifelodun Local Government area of Kwara State. Multistage sampling procedure of proportionate and simple random sampling was used to select 250 teachers from the six wards within the LGA. Researcher structured questionnaire titled "School Health Program as a Panacea for ensuring Safe School Environment among Secondary School students was used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of sections A and B. Section A consists of questions to collect the demographic data of the respondents while Section B seeks to elicit information based on the postulated hypotheses. The response mode for statements in section B was based on a modified 4-point Likert-rating Scale of Strongly Agreed (SA= 4marks), Agreed (A =3 marks), Disagreed (D =2 marks), and Strongly Disagreed (SD = 1 mark). The instrument used was validated by three experts from the Department of Health Promotion and Environmental Health Education. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire. To establish the reliability of the research instrument, the researcher adopted the test-retest method. The results were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). A coefficient of 0.81r was obtained Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage was used to analyze the demographic data while inferential statistics of Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses postulated at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Hypotheses 1: School health services will not significantly ensure safe school environment among Secondary School students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State

Table 1: School Health Services and Safe School Environment

S/N	Statement	SA (F%)	A (F%)	D (F%)	SD (F%)	Row Total (F%)	Cal X^2	df	Crit. Value	Decision
1	Availability of school clinic ensure safe school environment	155 (62)	82 (32.8)	13 (5.2)	0 (0)	250 (100)				
2	Provision of well-equipped first aid box and first aider promote safe school environment	143 (57.2)	98 (39.2)	7 (2.8)	2 (0.8)	250 (100)	52.69	9	21.03	H_0 Rejected
3	Regular medical checkup of students ensure safe school environment	87 (34.8)	131 (52.4)	20 (8.0)	12 (4.8)	250 (100)				
4	Presence of school nurse who provides standard health services to students ensure safe school environment	167 (66.8)	77 (30.8)	5 (2.0)	1 (0.4)	250 (100)				

Table 1, revealed that the Chi-square value is 52.69 while the critical table value is 21.03 with 12 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level. Since the Chi-Square value of 52.69 is greater than the critical table value of 21.03, the null hypothesis which stated that School health services will not significantly ensure safe school environment among Secondary School students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State, was rejected. This implies that, adequate school health services is a panacea to safe school environment.

Hypotheses 2: School health education will not significantly ensure safe school environment among Secondary School students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State.

Table 2: School Health Education and Safe School environment

S/N	Statement	SA (F%)	A (F%)	D (F%)	SD (F%)	Row Total	Cal X^2	df	Crit. Value	Decision
5	Introducing health education in the school timetable will ensure safe school environment	175 (70.0)	70 (28.0)	5 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	250 (100)				
6	Organizing school health talk by health care provider will promote safe school environment	150 (60.0)	91 (36.4)	7 (2.8)	2 (0.8)	250 (100)				
7	Education about cleanliness, personal hygiene, and sanitation improve safe school environment	114 (45.6)	135 (54.0)	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	250 (100)	46.52	9	21.03	H_0 Rejected
8	Preventive information against various communicable and non-communicable common diseases will ensure safe school environment	50 (20.0)	170 (68.0)	25 (10.0)	5 (2.0)	250 (100)				
9	Guidance and Counseling for adolescent students on puberty issues ensure safe school environment	43 (17.2)	197 (78.8)	9 (3.6)	1 (0.4)	250 (100)				

Table 2, revealed that the Chi-square value is 46.52 while the critical table value is 21.03 with 12 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level. Since the Chi-square value of 46.52 is greater than the critical table value of 21.03, the null hypothesis which stated that School health education will not significantly ensure safe school environment among Secondary School students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State, was rejected. This implies that, adequate school health education will ensure safe school environment among Secondary School students.

...s & Healthful School environment will not significantly ensure safe school environment among Secondary ...students in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State.

...3 Healthful School Environment and safe school environment

Statement	SA (F%)	A (F%)	D (F%)	SD (F%)	Row Total	Cal X^2	df	Crit. Value	Decision
...constructed ventilated classroom to ...ve safe school environment	153 (61.2)	95 (38.0)	2 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	250 (100)				
...ction of school buildings away from ...area such as markets, motor parks etc. ...safe school environment	172 (68.8)	72 (28.8)	4 (1.6)	2 (0.8)	250 (100)				
...ion of safe, clean drinking water ensure ...school environment	198 (79.2)	36 (14.4)	10 (4.0)	6 (2.4)	250 (100)	38.31	9	21.03	H_0 Rejected
...ability of gender toilet facilities promote ...school environment	81 (32.4)	160 (64.0)	6 (2.4)	3 (1.2)	250 (100)				
...ion of safe recreation and sports ...ities improve safe school environment	141 (56.4)	64 (25.6)	35 (14.0)	10 (4.0)	250 (100)				

...Table 3, revealed that the Chi-square value was 38.31 the critical table value was 21.03 with 12 degrees of ...at 0.05 alpha level. Since the Chi-Square value of 38.31 is greater than the critical table value 21.03, the null ...which stated that Healthful school environment will not significantly ensure safe school environment ...secondary school students in Ifelodun LGA Kwara State is therefore rejected. This implies that healthful school ...ment is a panacea to safe school environment among primary school children.

...of Findings

...of hypothesis 1 revealed that Chi-Square value of 52.69 is greater than the critical table value of 21.03. This ...that school health services will significantly ensure safe school environment among Secondary School ...This result is in line with the report of Imoge (2017) who affirmed that children can be saved from losing ...their studies and dropping out of school when their learning difficulties or disorders are detected through ...screening and addressed at early stages. This report also corroborates with the report of Ademokun etal. (2014), ...stated that the effective implementation of school health program will contribute to the achievement of the ...purposes of health and education of school-age children. According to Cornacchia (2015), the factors that ...safe school environment include Internal Organization and ventilation; water Supply; location of restrooms ...sanitation and sewage disposal.

The result of hypothesis 2 showed that school health education will significantly ensure safe school ...among Secondary School students. This corroborates with Sofola, (2015) who posited that school health ...creates a general awareness on human health in both the teachers and the students as well as members of ...community; inculcates and promotes good health habits among secondary school students and provides the ...with the knowledge useful in taking decisions for themselves on health and well-being and ensures that ...remain well during the school session with minimal absenteeism and resulting in better performance. The ...guideline on school health services in 2021 stated that, there is a link between health and education. Access ...safe, healthy and supportive school environments has connections to better health outcomes. Also, good ...a link with reduced drop-out rates and greater educational attainment and high productivity.

The results of hypothesis 3 showed that Chi-Square value is 38.31 and the critical table value is 21.03. Since the Chi-Square value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis which stated that Healthful school environment will not significantly ensure safe school environment among secondary school students in Ifelodun LGA Kwara State is rejected. This means that healthful school environment will significantly ensure safe school environment among secondary school students in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara state. This substantiate Amoran, etal. (2017), who asserted that healthful school environment plays a pivotal role in the retention and learning outcomes of students because it serves as an essential requirement for smooth teaching and learning process to take place. A classroom that is too hot or too cold will have a negative effect on the teaching-learning process. The recommended temperature for classroom is between 650-700 Fahrenheit, depending on the age of the students and the type of activity that is taking place. The flow of air in a classroom must receive primary attention. The teacher should open windows or doors or secure a fan to ensure adequate air movement. Lighting should be done properly whether natural or artificial. Window shaded can be used to reduce glare and students should not directly face windows or other sources of light.

Conclusions

Based on the findings from this study, the study concluded that:

i) School health services will ensure safe school environment.

ii)Comprehensive health education will ensure safe school environment.

iii)Healthful school environment is a panacea to safe school environment among secondary school students in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

This implies that when School Health Programm is adequately catered for at both primary and secondary school levels, the schools will be physically safe, socially conducive, psychologically and emotionally supportive, as these will improve and protect the physical, mental and social health of all the school populace.

Recommendations

In the light of the conclusions drawn above, the following recommendations were made:

1. Stakeholders should provide the materials, human resources and routine evaluation needed to achieve effective School Health services.
2. Appropriate preventive and curative intervention services should be organized by the government in collaboration with all school stakeholders to reduce the spread of infectious diseases among the school populace.
3. Medical officers and other health workers should provide of an adequate sick bay, health coverage, including medical care and routine medical examination, to individual or groups of schools.
4. School health instruction should be accorded the topmost priority in both primary and secondary school curriculum so that children are provided with basic information about health issues and are thereby influenced to develop desirable health habits.

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