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SAFETY RULES AND ATTAINMENT OF CURRICULUM GOALS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals among senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study employed descriptive survey design. Three research questions and two research hypotheses guided the study. The sample size for this study was 418, comprising of 298 SS students, 100 teachers and 20 senior secondary school administrators in ten selected public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Data were collected using *School Safety Rules and Attainment of Curriculum Goals Questionnaire", Checklist on School Safety for Attainment of Curriculum Goals", and Students' Achievement Test on Civic Education. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 significance. The analysis revealed among others that teachers have fairly good perception about safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in River State; the Senior Secondary Schools in River State are partially safe; and significant relationship existed between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The study concluded that school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State are significantly related. The study recommended among others that government should adopt an integrated approach, which combines physical infrastructure, emergency preparedness, and security personnel to school safety for better attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools.*

Keywords: Curriculum Goals, Physical Infrastructure, Safety Rules, Senior Secondary Schools.

Introduction

Secondary education is crucial for higher education and national development. It makes students acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required for productive citizenship and lifelong learning. This explains why attainment of goals of secondary education cannot be overlooked. The attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools depends not only on the quality of curriculum content and instructional practices but also on the existence of a safe school environment. A safe school environment is synonymous with school safety.

School safety refers to the measures as well as the conditions which create a secure learning environment and protect students from any forms of harm. It is an active state of organisational management where safety measures, emergency preparedness, and internal security mechanisms are aligned to protect learners from growing environmental hazards and

systemic vulnerabilities (Okafor & Egwunyenga, 2023). School safety includes physical features like perimeter fencing, availability of security measures (including CCTV cameras and personnels) and clear emergency procedures; and psychological indices like freedom from harassment and bullying. However, school safety tends to depend on safety rules and measures put in place in schools.

School safety rules constitute another essential component of effective school management. They comprise regulations established to protect students, teachers, school property, and visitors from physical, emotional, psychological, and environmental hazards. These rules address issues such as emergency preparedness, violence prevention, bullying, laboratory safety, fire safety, movement within the school premises, sanitation, attendance, and the responsible use of school facilities. A safe school environment may provide learners with psychological security, promote regular attendance, reduce fear and anxiety, and create favourable conditions for effective teaching and learning. This is why safety rules should be integrated into school governance and codes of conduct to support learners' academic progress and well-being.

Attainment of curriculum goals simply refers to the extent to which the intended objectives of the senior secondary school curriculum are achieved successfully through effective teaching and learning. It includes students' acquisition of the expected knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, and values. The Nigerian Senior Secondary School curriculum seeks to prepare learners for higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning. Achieving these goals requires among others adequate instructional resources, qualified and discipline teachers, supportive leadership, students' discipline and a safe learning environment. Therefore, curriculum implementation is influenced not only by curriculum design, but also by school organisational factors such as safety rules which may facilitate or constrain teaching and learning process.

School safety rules can be regarded as a mechanism which can help in achieving curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools. A school environment which is characterised by well-enforced safety rules have tendency to enhance teaching effectiveness, students' participation in learning, and the successful implementation of the prescribed curriculum. Conversely, schools which are plagued by indiscipline, insecurity, violence, bullying, vandalism, truancy, and other forms of misconduct often experience disruptions that hinder curriculum delivery and reduce students' academic achievement (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023). This is due to the fact that good school safety rules will provide the physical and psychological security necessary for meaningful learning. This may create conditions that maximise instructional time, enhance teachers' effectiveness, improve students' engagement, and promote positive academic outcomes. Conversely, poor school safety management may contribute to absenteeism, instructional interruptions, students' disengagement, teachers' stress, and poor curriculum implementation.

Study by Adewale (2019) showed that schools with robust safety measures tend to have better students' performance and lower incidences of disciplinary issues. Also, UNESCO (2021) reported that safe and inclusive schools are indispensable for achieving quality education and sustainable educational development. Similarly, Magana and Abad (2025) reported that a safe school environment makes teachers to focus on delivering quality instructions and creating

positive learning experiences for all students. This is an indication that maintaining safe environment may enhance attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools. Thus, creating a safe and secure environment may be seen as a necessary condition for promoting effective learning and attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. It is against this background that this study investigated safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The primary objective of the senior secondary school curriculum in Nigeria is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, competencies, values, and attitudes required for higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, and responsible citizenship. Achieving these curriculum goals depends on several school-related factors, among which are school safety rules. A safe school environment may enable teachers to deliver instructions effectively, promote students' active engagement in learning, and enhance the overall quality of curriculum implementation. However, where school safety rules are poorly implemented, the teaching-learning process may be disrupted, thereby limiting the attainment of curriculum objectives. In recent years, many senior secondary schools in Nigeria, including Rivers State have experienced increasing cases of students' bullying, fighting, disrespect for school authorities, and non-compliance with school regulations. Consequently, many schools often struggle to implement the prescribed curriculum as intended, resulting in poor learning outcomes and reduced curriculum goals attainment. Similarly, concerns regarding school safety have become increasingly prominent. Reports of bullying, violence, unsafe school environments, inadequate emergency preparedness, destruction of school facilities, and other security-related challenges have raised questions about the capacity of schools to provide environments that support effective teaching and learning. When students and teachers perceive the school environment as unsafe, concentration, attendance, participation, and instructional effectiveness may be affected adversely. However, if the problems associated with safety rules are not addressed, they may ultimately hinder the successful implementation of the curriculum and the realisation of educational objectives in senior secondary schools. Though previous studies have examined school discipline, academic achievement, and school safety independently, but relatively few studies have investigated safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools, particularly in Rivers State, Nigeria. Also, findings from existing studies have been inconsistent, largely because they were conducted in different educational settings, focused on different variables, or employed different research designs. This inconsistency creates a knowledge gap regarding the extent to which school safety rules contribute to achieving curriculum goals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Hence, this study investigated safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The major purpose of this study was to investigate safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals among Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

i. ascertain the teachers' perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State;
ii. examine how safe the Senior Secondary Schools are for learning in Rivers State; and

iii. establish the relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this paper:

1. How do teachers (male and female) perceive the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?
2. How safe are the Senior Secondary Schools for learning in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided this study:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the male and female teachers' perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study employed descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised all the 35,099 Senior Secondary School three (SS3) Students, 6,557 teachers and 602 senior secondary school administrators in Rivers State (Rivers State Ministry of Education, 2024). The choice of SS3 students was necessitated by the fact that, they are the students in the highest class in senior secondary schools where attainment of curriculum goals can be ascertained. Also, the SS3 students are preparing for Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (SSCE) being conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO). However, the population of the ten senior secondary schools selected for the pilot study was 1,161 Senior Secondary School three (SS3) Students, 223 teachers and 20 senior secondary school administrators. The sample size for this study comprised two hundred and ninety-eight (298) SS3 students, 100 teachers and 20 senior secondary school administrators in the ten selected public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample size for the students was selected using Taro Yamane sample size calculator. The instruments used for data collection were researchers-designed questionnaire titled "School Safety Rules and Attainment of Curriculum Goals Questionnaire (SSRACGQ)", Checklist on School Safety for Attainment of Curriculum Goals (CSSACG)", and Students' Achievement Test on Civic Education (SATCE). The instruments were validated by two experts in curriculum theory and Social Studies education in the University of Lagos, Akoka, Nigeria. The reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha method; while the reliability of the achievement test was determined using Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20). Also, the reliability of the checklist was determined using inter-rater method. The reliability coefficients obtained for SSRACGQ, CSSACG and SATCE were 0.83, 0.85 and 0.89 respectively. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean, and standard deviation; while inferential statistics of independent t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to test the hypotheses formulated in the study at 0.05 significance.

4.0 Results

Out of the 418 copies of the questionnaire administered, only a total of 383 copies were properly filled and returned by the participants. Consequently, the 383 copies were analysed and interpreted in this section.

Research Question One: How do teachers perceive the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Teachers' Perception of the Safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1	The safety rules in this school are clearly stated.	10 11.0%	45 49.5%	16 17.6%	20 21.9 %	91 100%	2.49	0.96	Disagreed
2	Teachers are familiar with the safety regulations of this school.	20 22.0%	71 78.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	91 100%	3.22	0.46	Agreed
3	Safety signs/notices are adequately displayed within the school premises.	18 19.8%	17 18.7%	20 21.9%	36 39.6%	91 100%	2.19	1.01	Disagreed
4	There are adequate measures in place to handle emergencies in this school.	10 11.0%	25 27.5%	41 45.1%	15 16.5%	91 100%	2.33	0.88	Disagreed
5	Emergency procedures are clearly communicated to staff and students in this school.	11 12.1%	15 16.5%	50 54.9%	15 16.5%	91 100%	2.24	0.87	Disagreed
	Grand Mean						**2.49**	**0.84**	**Disagreed**

Scales: Strongly Agree- SA ($x \leq 4$); Agree- A ($x \leq 3$), Disagree-D ($x \leq 2$); Strongly Disagree ($x \leq 1$)

Table 1 showed that analysis of item 1 revealed that 55(60.5%) of the respondents agreed that the safety rules in this school are clearly stated; while 36(39.5%) of them disagreed. Analysis of item 2 revealed that 91(100.0%) of the respondents agreed that teachers are familiar with the safety regulations of this school; while none of them disagreed. Analysis of item 3 revealed that 35(38.5%) of the respondents agreed that safety signs/notices are adequately displayed within the school premises; while 56(61.5%) of them disagreed. Analysis of item 4 revealed that 35(38.5%) of the respondents agreed that there are adequate measures in place to handle emergencies in this school; while 56(61.5%) of them agreed. Analysis of item 5 revealed that 25(27.5%) of the respondents agreed that emergency procedures are clearly communicated to staff and students in this school; while 65(72.5%) disagreed. In addition, the grand mean of the five items is 2.49 with a standard deviation of 0.84. Therefore, it can be deduced from these

analyses that teachers have fairly good perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: How safe are the Senior Secondary Schools for learning in Rivers State?

Table 2: Safety of the Senior Secondary Schools for learning in Rivers State

S/N	Items	AV	PAV	NAV	Total	Mean	Std	Remarks
1	Security Personnel/Officer(s)	2 0.0%	7 10.0%	1 70.0%	10 100%	2.10	0.45	PAV
2	Safe Classrooms (clean classrooms with windows and doors).	1 10.0%	1 10.0%	8 80.0%	10 100%	1.30	0.61	NAV
3	Perimeter Fencing.	2 20.0%	1 10.0%	7 70.0%	10 100%	1.50	0.75	PAV
4	Entrance/Exit Gate(s)	2 20.0%	1 10.0%	7 70.0%	10 100%	1.50	0.75	PAV
5	Safe Playground	6 60.0%	3 30.0%	1 10.0%	10 100%	2.50	0.87	AV
6	Visitors' Check-In and Out	2 20.0%	1 10.0%	7 70.0%	10 100%	1.50	0.75	PAV
7	Muster points	2 2.0%	0 0.0%	8 80.0%	10 100%	1.40	0.68	NAV
8	Clear Demarcation of Entry and Exit points	2 20.0%	1 10.0%	7 70.0%	10 100%	1.50	0.75	PAV
9	Warning/Caution Signs	2 20.0%	0 0.0%	8 80.0%	10 100%	1.40	0.68	NAV
10	Fire Extinguisher	2 20.0%	0 0.0%	8 80.0%	10 100%	1.40	0.68	NAV
11	Personal Hygiene Facilities/Materials (e.g. Toilet, washing hands basing, water and soap)	1 10.0%	2 20.0%	7 70.0%	10 100%	1.40	0.68	NAV
12	Displayed Safety Tips	2	3	5	10	1.70	0.71	PAV

					20.0 %	30.0 %	50.0 %	100%
Grand mean						**1.60**	**0.70**	**PAV**

Scales: Available (AV) x ≤ 3; Partially Available (PA) x ≤ 2; Not Available (NAV) x ≤ 1

Analysis in Table 2 reveals that the mean ranking of the items 1-12 are 2.10, 1.30, 1.50, 1.50, 2.50, 1.50, 1.40, 1.50, 1.40, 1.40, 1.40, and 1.70 respectively; while their standard deviations are 0.45, 0.61, 0.75, 0.75, 0.87, 0.75, 0.68, 0.75, 0.68, 0.68, 0.68 and 0.71 respectively. This indicates that security personnel/officer(s), perimeter fencing, visitors' check-in and out, entrance/Exit Gate(s), clear demarcation of entry and exit points and displayed safety tips are partially available; safe classrooms (clean classrooms with windows and doors), muster points, warning/caution signs, fire extinguisher, and personal hygiene facilities/materials are not available; while only safe playground for students is available. However, the grand mean of 1.60 indicates that security facilities are partially available for students' safety in the Senior Secondary Schools for learning in Rivers State. Therefore, based on these analyses, it can be inferred that the Senior Secondary Schools are partially safe for learning in Rivers State.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std	Remarks
6	Availability of security personnel/officer(s) in schools has tendency to enhance attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools.	40 44.0%	51 56.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	91 100 %	3.45	0.50	Agreed
7	Curriculum goals of Senior Secondary Schools are achievable through displays of warning/caution signs in schools.	25 27.5%	40 43.9%	15 16.5 %	11 12.1 %	91 100 %	2.87	0.96	Agreed
8	Safe playground promotes attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools.	28 30.8%	63 69.2%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	91 100 %	3.31	0.46	Agreed
9	Curriculum goals of Senior Secondary Schools can be attained through	20 21.9%	45 49.5%	15 16.5 %	11 12.1 %	10 100 %	2.80	0.93	Agreed

	clear demarcation of entry and exit points in schools.								
10	Availability of perimeter fencing enhances attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools.	41 45.1%	50 54.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	10 100 %	3.45	0.25	Agreed
	Grand Mean						**3.18**	**0.25**	**Agreed**

Source*:* Field Survey, 2024
Scales: Strongly Agree- SA (x ≤ 4); Agree- A (x ≤ 3), Disagree-D (x ≤ 2); Strongly Disagree (x ≤ 1)

In Table 3, analysis of item 6 reveals that all the respondents 91(100.0%) agreed that availability of security personnel/officer(s) in schools has tendency to enhance attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools; while none of them disagreed. Analysis of item 7 reveals that 65(71.4%) of the respondents agreed that curriculum goals of Senior Secondary Schools are achievable through displays of warning/caution signs in schools; while 26(28.6) of them disagreed. Analysis of item 8 reveals that all the respondents 91(100.0%) agreed that safe playground promotes attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools; while none of them had contrary opinion. Analysis of item 9 reveals that 65(71.4%) of the respondents agreed that curriculum goals of senior secondary schools can be attained through clear demarcation of entry and exit points in schools; while 26 (28.6%) of them disagreed. Analysis of item 10 reveals that all the respondents 91(100.0%) agreed that availability of perimeter fencing enhances attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools; while none of them disagreed. Analysis in Table 3 further reveals that the mean ranking of items 6 -10 are: 3.45, 2.87, 3.31, 2.80, and 3.45 respectively; while their standard deviations are: 0.50, 0.96, 0.46, 0.93 and 0.50 respectively. However, the grand mean of 3.18 indicates that the respondents agreed that there is a relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals of Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Based on these analyses, it can be inferred that significant relationship existed between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals of senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses
H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the male and female teachers' perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

Table 4: Significant difference in the male and female teachers' perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary School students in Rivers State

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	t-Cal	p-value	Remarks
Male teachers' perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools	2.48	0.85	37	89	0.102	0.137	Ho_1 Accepted
	2.50	0.83	54				

Female teachers' perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools	

Analysis in Table 4 showed that the calculated value of "t" (0.102) is not significant since the p-value of 0.137 is greater than 0.05 level of significance with degrees of freedom 89. Based on this result, the null hypothesis which stated that "There is no significant difference in the male and female teachers' perception of the safety rules for senior secondary school in Rivers State" is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the male and female teachers' perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: Significant relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

		School safety rules	Attainment of curriculum goals
School safety rules	Pearson Correlation	1	.475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	91	91
Attainment of curriculum goals	Pearson Correlation	.475**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	91	91

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

Table 5 reveals that the calculated "r" value of 0.475 is significant since the returned p-value of 0.002 is less than the criterion level of significance of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that "There is no significant relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State" was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

This study revealed that teachers have fairly good perception about safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State; and there is no significant difference in the male and female teachers' perception of the safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Supporting the finding of this study, Williams and Williams (2018) found that teachers considered consistent enforcement of school rules as vital to maintaining social and emotional order; and that the school rules are more effective when they are combined with warm and supportive school climate. Also, Mncube and Ndwalane (2023) revealed that teachers reported that complex education laws make enforcement of certain school safety rules and maintaining school discipline; the school environment feel less secure for them; and forced them to restrict their disciplinary measures when students have committed serious offenses. This may be why Otara, Kute, Omolo and Adoyo (2025) reported that despite the high value

placed on safety protocols by secondary school teachers, their ability to execute school safety rules is severely restricted by institutional constraints.

This research found that the Senior Secondary Schools in River State are partially safe. This has tendency to affect goal attainment in most of the secondary schools in the state. Supporting this finding, Magana and Abad (2025) reported that the students perceived safety of public secondary schools along physical, psychological, and procedural to be average. This may be why Ekechukwu and Nduka (2020) reported that schools implementing an integrated approach to school safety that combines physical infrastructure, security personnel, emergency preparedness, and psychological support tend to have more positive educational environments and better academic outcomes. Also, Gbesoevi, Ola and Oladipo (2022) reported that a safe school environment promotes prosocial students' behaviour and has high expectation and standards for effective management of schools and better students' academic achievement and behaviour.

This paper established that there is a significant relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. This aligns with the finding of Olumide (2019) who reported that factors such as inadequate safety policies and inadequate infrastructural facilities are significant threats to well-being of students and their academic performance. Similarly, Ekechukwu and Nduka (2020) argued that schools implementing an integrated approach to school safety that combines physical infrastructure, security personnel, emergency preparedness, and psychological support tend to have more positive educational environments and better academic outcomes. Similarly, Gbesoevi, Ola and Oladipo (2022) reported that a safe school environment promotes prosocial students' behaviour and has high expectation and standards for effective management of schools and better students' academic achievement and behaviour. This implies that the better the school safety rules, the better the attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools. Hence, inadequate safety measures may have negative effect on attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Conclusion

School safety is crucial for fostering conducive environment for effective learning. This indicates that ensuring safety of students and staff in schools have the tendency to enhance teaching and learning process, which may lead to better academic attainment among the learners. Consequently, this study explored safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The study found among others that that teachers have fairly good perception about safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in River State; and the Senior Secondary Schools in River State are partially safe for teaching and learning. Therefore, this study concluded that significant relationship between school safety rules and attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

1. Government should review and monitor implementation of safety rules for Senior Secondary Schools in River State.
2. Government should adopt an integrated approach, which combines physical infrastructure (such as perimeter fencing, CCTV cameras), emergency preparedness, and

availability of security personnel to school safety. This has tendency to create holistic and effective safety strategy for enhancing attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

3. Secondary school principals should ensure effective implementation of the school safety rules as this can help create a safe learning environment for better attainment of curriculum goals in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

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