



Management of Safety and Health in Schools: Benefits, Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

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The management of safety and health in schools is essential for creating safe and healthy learning environments for learners and staff. Through literature review and analysis, this paper examines the benefits, challenges, and prospects of safety and health management in schools in general. From research evidence, the benefits of safety and health management include improved academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better mental and physical health outcomes for learners. However, managing safety and health in schools presents numerous challenges, such as legal and regulatory compliance, risk assessment, emergency preparedness, and ongoing training and education. According to reviewed literature, the prospects for safety and health management in schools are promising, as schools are increasingly prioritizing health and wellness initiatives and investing in the necessary resources and support. To overcome the challenges and realize the benefits of safety and health management in schools, this paper recommends effective collaboration and communication among all members of the school community, including learners, staff, parents, and community partners.

Keywords:

School, safety, health, management

1. INTRODUCTION

The management of safety and health in schools is crucial for creating safe and healthy learning environments for learners and staff. The importance of safety and health management in schools has been widely recognized in recent years, with many schools implementing health and wellness initiatives to improve learner outcomes. The benefits of safety and health management in schools are numerous and well-documented. For instance, research has shown that when schools prioritize safety and health management, it can lead to improved academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better mental and physical health outcomes for learners (Basch, 2011; Mubita, 2016, Denny, Robinson, & Spittal, 2011). However, managing safety and health in schools is not without its challenges. Schools must comply with a variety of national laws and regulations to ensure the safety and health of learners and staff. Additionally, schools must conduct risk assessments, develop emergency preparedness plans, and provide ongoing training and education to staff and learners.

Despite these challenges, the prospects for safety and health management in schools are promising. Many schools are increasingly prioritizing health and wellness initiatives and investing in the necessary resources and support to ensure their success (Roberts, 2010).

Effective safety and health management in schools requires collaboration and communication among all members of the school community, including learners, staff, parents, and community partners. By working together, schools can create safe and healthy learning environments that promote positive learner outcomes. Through literature review and analysis, this paper examines the benefits, challenges, and prospects of safety and health management in schools, with the goal of promoting effective practices and improving learner outcomes.

1.1 Selected scholars' perspectives about managing school safety and health

There has been extensive scholarship on the topic of managing school safety and health. Here are some perspectives from prominent scholars in the field:

- (a) *Michael C. Roberts*: Roberts emphasizes the importance of collaboration and communication in managing school safety and health. He argues that effective safety and health management requires a shared commitment among all members of the

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school community, including learners, staff, parents, and community partners (Roberts, 2010).

- (b) *Kaiko Mubita*: Mubita emphasises on the application of localization in school safety and health planning and implementation. He argues that planning for safety and health should be done by individual schools to address local concerns. He contends that local solutions to school safety and health planning and implementation are sustainable. To this effect, he recommends that individual schools should be allowed to devise their own safety and health management to effectively respond to local needs (Mubita, 2018; Mubita, 2021).
- (c) *Mark Springer*: Springer has focused on the role of school leaders in creating safe and healthy learning environments. He argues that school leaders must prioritize safety and health management and provide the necessary resources and support to ensure its success (Springer, 2019).
- (d) *Charles J. Russo*: Russo has emphasized the legal and regulatory aspects of school safety and health management. He argues that schools must comply with a variety of federal, state, and local regulations in order to ensure the safety and health of learners and staff (Russo, 2016).
- (e) *Susan M. Swearer*: Swearer has focused on the role of social and emotional factors in school safety and health. She argues that schools must create a culture of kindness and respect in order to prevent bullying and promote positive mental health outcomes for learners (Swearer, 2018).
- (f) *Melinda S. Harper*: Harper has focused on the importance of data-driven decision making in safety and health management. She argues that schools must collect and analyse data on safety and health outcomes in order to identify areas of need and develop effective interventions (Harper, 2020).

From the foregoing views of selected scholars about management of school safety and health, it is evident that the whole school approach must be applied if results are to be sustainable. All stakeholders must be involved in management of school safety and health. The government, local authorities, local communities, teachers, learners and so on must be involved in planning and implementation if management of school safety and health is to be sustainable.

1.2 Selected studies on school safety and health management

This paper reviewed literature on selected studies related to school safety and health management. These selected studies continue to highlight advances and efforts made by scholars in trying to find solutions to school safety and management. Certainly, here are some studies on school safety and health management:

- (a) *"School Health Programs and the Prevention of Risky Behaviours"* by *Basch, Charles E. (2011)*

This study examines the role of school health programs in preventing risky behaviours such as substance abuse, violence, and sexual activity among learners. The author argues that school health programs are essential for promoting learner health and well-being and preventing a wide range of negative outcomes. The study provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the topic and suggests that school health programs can be effective in reducing risky behaviours among learners.

- (b) *"Creating Safe Schools: A Comprehensive Approach"* by *Gottfredson, Gary D. and Gottfredson, Denise C. (2010)*

This study proposes a comprehensive approach to creating safe schools that includes a focus on both physical safety and social-emotional well-being. The authors argue that creating safe schools requires addressing issues such as bullying, violence, and substance abuse, as well as promoting positive relationships and a sense of community among learners. The study provides an overview of the evidence-based practices and strategies that can be used to create safe schools.

- (c) *"School-Based Health Centres: Improving Access and Quality of Care for Low-Income Adolescents"* by *Adams, E. Kathleen and Johnson, Vicky (2011)*

This study examines the impact of school-based health centres (SBHCs) on access to health care and the quality of care received by low-income adolescents. The authors argue that SBHCs can be an effective way to improve access to care for vulnerable populations and address health disparities. The study provides an overview of the evidence on the impact of SBHCs and suggests that these centres can improve health outcomes for adolescents.

- (d) *"The Impact of School Violence on Teachers: A Review and Analysis of the Literature"* by *Ruddy, Sean A. (2016)*

This study reviews the literature on the impact of school violence on teachers, including both physical violence and verbal aggression. The author argues that school violence can have significant negative effects on teacher well-being and job satisfaction, and can ultimately contribute to teacher turnover and burnout. The study provides an overview of the research on the topic and suggests that addressing school violence is essential for creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

- (e) *'Developing a Localised Approach to School Safety and Health Management: The Case of Mongu Schools of Western Zambia'* by *Mubita Kaiko (2021)*

This study proposes a localised approach to school safety and health management. The study proposes that individual schools be allowed to localise school safety and health management according to their local needs. The findings showed that the schools explored had a variety of safety and

health concerns unique to those school environments. The study deduced that safety and health concerns inherent at each of the schools needed local solutions if they were to be fully managed because some of them were influenced by socio-cultural aspects of the school environment. The study concluded that a localised approach to school safety and health was more responsive to the needs of an individual schools as opposed to a generic approach planned and prepared at national, provincial or district level. This is partly because a localised school safety approach deals with specific safety and health issues peculiar to a given particular school.

2. BENEFITS OF SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

The management of safety and health in schools comes with several benefits, both to the learners and the school as an institution.

A safe and healthy school environment fosters a *positive school culture*. Learners who feel safe and valued are more likely to participate in school activities, leading to a stronger sense of community and belonging. According to Mubita *et. al.* (2016) a positive school culture also contributes to the overall well-being of learners, which can have a lasting impact on their mental health and future success.

A safety and health management program helps to identify and control hazards in the school environment, reducing the risk of accidents and injuries. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a safety and health program can reduce injuries and illnesses in the workplace by 20-40% (NIOSH, 2018). Implementing a safety and health program in schools can help identify and control hazards that can lead to accidents and injuries, thus reducing the risk of harm to learners and staff.

A safe and health school environment enhances learner performance. By ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment, learners are better able to focus on their studies, leading to improved academic performance. Research has shown that a safe and healthy school environment is associated with improved academic performance (CDC, 2015 and Mubita *et. al.* 2016). When learners feel safe and supported, they are better able to focus on their studies, leading to better grades and higher achievement.

A safe and healthy school environment promotes attendance, reduces absenteeism, and improves the overall wellbeing of learners. A study conducted by the Healthy Schools Campaign found that schools with strong health and wellness programs had better attendance rates than those without such programs (Healthy Schools Campaign, 2017 and Mubita *et. al.* 2016). By promoting a safe and healthy environment, schools can reduce absenteeism and improve the overall wellbeing of learners.

A safety and health management program can save money in the long run by reducing the number of accidents, injuries, and illnesses that result in costly medical bills or legal expenses. According to the Occupational Safety and Health

Administration (OSHA), employers who implement effective safety and health programs can expect to see a \$4-\$6 return on investment for every dollar invested (OSHA, 2017). By preventing accidents and injuries, schools can save money on medical bills and legal expenses.

A safe and healthy work environment boosts staff morale, leading to increased job satisfaction, productivity, and reduced staff turnover (Mubita *et. al.* 2016). Research has shown that a positive work environment is associated with increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover (NIOSH, 2018). By promoting a safe and healthy work environment, schools can improve staff morale and productivity.

Well managed school safety and health enhances a positive public image. A school that prioritizes the safety and health of its learners and staff creates a positive image in the community, which can improve public perception and increase enrolment (Mubita *et.al.* 2021). Schools that prioritize safety and health are seen as responsible and caring institutions by the community. This positive perception can help attract new learners and improve enrolment (CDC, 2015).

3. CHALLENGES OF SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS:

Despite the numerous benefits of safety and health management in schools, several challenges still exist.

Lack of funding: One of the significant challenges of managing school safety is the lack of funding (Mubita, 2016). Most schools, especially those in low-income areas, have limited resources to invest in safety measures. Many schools, especially those in low-income areas, lack the necessary resources to implement and maintain a comprehensive safety and health program (Mubita *et. al.* 2016). This can include funding for safety equipment, training, and personnel. According to a report by the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES), 94% of public schools in the United States require some kind of safety improvement, but many do not have the financial resources to implement them (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2018). Schools need funding to implement safety measures such as hiring security personnel, installing security cameras, and improving infrastructure. Unfortunately, many schools cannot afford these measures, putting their learners and staff at risk. To address this challenge, policymakers must allocate more resources to school safety initiatives.

Poor research engagement: Research engagement can play a critical role in improving school safety and health management. By conducting research, school administrators and policymakers can gain insights into the underlying causes of safety and health issues and develop evidence-based strategies for addressing them. Research can help identify safety and health risks in schools, such as bullying, drug abuse, mental health issues, and physical hazards. For example, a study by the National Centre for Education Statistics found that 20% of high school students reported

being bullied on school property in 2019. By identifying these risks, schools can take targeted measures to prevent and mitigate them (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2021). Lako and Mubita (2021) also noted that research engagement can help find solutions in teaching and learning environments.

Research can evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and programs aimed at improving school management (Lako and Mubita, 2021). This may also include evaluating existing policies related to school safety and health. For example, a study by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention found that school-based programs that promote healthy behaviours, such as physical activity and healthy eating, can improve students' health outcomes (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Lack of resources: Lack of resources including personnel and equipment, is another barrier to managing school safety and health. School nurses, for example, are responsible for monitoring learner health and identifying potential health issues. However, the National Association of School Nurses reports that there is only one school nurse for every 1,750 learners, which is far below the recommended ratio of one nurse for every 750 learners (American Nurses Association & National Association of School Nurses, 2017). This can result in overworked and understaffed nurses who are unable to give adequate attention to each learner's health needs.

Balancing Safety and Privacy: Another challenge of managing school safety is balancing safety measures with privacy concerns. While schools must ensure the safety of their learners and staff, they must also protect their privacy. For example, installing security cameras in classrooms may be an effective way to monitor learner behaviour, but it could also be an invasion of privacy (Mubita, 2021). Schools must find a way to balance safety measures with privacy concerns. They can do this by involving learners, teachers, and staff in the decision-making process and ensuring that their privacy is protected. Additionally, schools can adopt policies and procedures that promote safety without compromising privacy.

Addressing Mental Health Issues: Mental health issues are another challenge of managing school safety. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in five youth aged 13-18 experiences a severe mental health condition, and half of all mental health conditions start by age 14 (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2021). These mental health issues can lead to violent behaviour, putting learners and staff at risk. To address this challenge, schools must prioritize mental health resources and support services. They can do this by providing access to mental health professionals, offering counselling services, and creating safe spaces where learners can seek help. Additionally, schools can implement programs that promote mental wellness and teach learners coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety.

Lack of Training: Another challenge to managing school safety and health is a lack of training for teachers, staff, and

learners. According to Mubita *et. al.* (2021) teachers, support staff and learners should be trained on how to respond to emergencies and follow safety protocols, such as fire drills and lockdown procedures. Additionally, learners should be trained on how to identify potential safety hazards and what to do in case of an emergency. However, schools may not have the resources or time to provide this training adequately (Mubita *et. al.* 2021).

Preventing Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is another challenge of managing school safety. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that occurs online or through digital devices such as smartphones, computers, and tablets. According to a report by the Cyberbullying Research Centre, 34% of learners have experienced cyberbullying (Cyberbullying Research Centre, 2019). To address this challenge, schools must implement policies and procedures that prevent cyberbullying. They can do this by educating learners about the dangers of cyberbullying, establishing clear rules for online behaviour, and providing resources for learners who are victims of cyberbullying. Additionally, schools can partner with parents and the community to raise awareness about the issue and promote responsible online behaviour.

Responding to Emergencies: Responding to emergencies is another challenge of managing school safety. Emergencies such as natural disasters, fires inclusive require a quick and coordinated response from school administrators, staff, and law enforcement (Mubita *et. al.* 2020). However, many schools are not adequately prepared to respond to emergencies. To address this challenge, schools must develop comprehensive emergency response plans that outline procedures for different types of emergencies.

Insufficient Communication: Insufficient communication is another challenge to managing school safety and health. Parents, teachers, and staff should be informed about safety protocols, potential safety hazards, and emergency procedures. However, schools may not have an effective communication plan in place, or they may not communicate regularly with parents and staff about safety concerns (Mubita *et. al.* 2020).

Lack of Support: Finally, a lack of support can be a challenge to managing school safety and health. Schools may not receive support from local government agencies, community organizations, or parents. Without this support, schools may struggle to implement safety protocols, purchase equipment, or train staff adequately.

4. PROSPECTS FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Despite the challenges, there are several prospects for the management of safety and health in schools. One of the most promising prospects is the advancement of technology. Schools can use of technology to improve safety and communication. For instance, many schools are now using mobile apps and online platforms to alert parents and staff to emergency situations and provide updates on school safety

and health initiatives (Liu, 2017). By leveraging technology, schools can improve their emergency preparedness and communication, which are critical components of effective safety and health management (Mubita, 2018). With the advent of new technologies, schools can now implement safety and health measures that were previously unavailable. For example, schools can now use automated monitoring systems to detect hazards and prevent accidents.

The prospects for safety and health management in schools are promising, as schools are increasingly prioritizing health and wellness initiatives and investing in the necessary resources and support. Effective safety and health management in schools requires collaboration and communication among all members of the school community, including learners, staff, parents, and community partners. By working together, schools can create safe and healthy learning environments that promote positive learner outcomes (Mubita, 2018).

One example of a promising prospect for safety and health management in schools is the adoption of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model, which is a comprehensive framework for improving the health and well-being of learners and staff (ASCD, 2021, Mubita, 2018). The WSCC model emphasizes the need for schools to address not only academic achievement, but also the social, emotional, and physical needs of learners. By taking a holistic approach to learner health and well-being, schools can create a positive school culture and promote learner success.

In conclusion, the prospects for safety and health management in schools are promising, but it will require ongoing collaboration, communication, and investment in resources and support to achieve the desired outcomes. By taking a holistic approach to learner health and well-being and leveraging technology to improve communication and emergency preparedness, schools can create safe and healthy learning environments that promote positive learner outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION

As shown by literature, the management of safety and health in schools is an important and necessary aspect of creating safe and healthy learning environments for learners and staff. There are numerous benefits to implementing effective safety and health management practices in schools, including improved academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better mental and physical health outcomes for learners. However, managing safety and health in schools is not without its challenges, such as compliance with various regulations, conducting risk assessments, and providing ongoing training and education to staff and learners.

Despite the challenges, the prospects for safety and health management in schools are promising. The adoption of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model is a comprehensive framework for improving the health and well-being of learners and staff. The WSCC model

emphasizes a holistic approach to learner health and well-being, focusing not only on academic achievement, but also on social, emotional, and physical needs.

Furthermore, technology offers promising prospects for improving safety and health management in schools. The use of mobile apps and online platforms can improve communication and emergency preparedness, allowing schools to quickly and effectively respond to emergencies.

In order to achieve effective safety and health management in schools, collaboration and communication among all members of the school community is essential. By working together, schools can create safe and healthy learning environments that promote positive learner outcomes.

In conclusion, the management of safety and health in schools is an ongoing process that requires ongoing investment in resources and support. By prioritizing the health and well-being of learners and staff, schools can create safe and healthy learning environments that promote positive learner outcomes, and ultimately contribute to a better future for our communities and society as a whole.

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