



CHALLENGES OF TEACHERS' SUPERVISION TOWARDS THE SAFETY OF GHANAIAN KINDERGARTEN LEARNERS

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Abstract:

The study sought to assess the challenges of teacher supervision towards the safety of learners in kindergarten schools within Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The study was situated in the interpretivist paradigm by employing a qualitative research approach. The instrumental case study design was adopted for this study. A semi-structured interview guide was utilized to collect data from 16 participants. A convenience sampling technique was used in selecting the participants for the study. The data were analyzed thematically with the help of an online qualitative analysis tool, Taguette. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of kindergarten teachers are overloaded with tasks that make them inefficient to supervise their learners for their safety. Again, this study emerged that poor maintenance culture in kindergarten schools contributes to the ineffective supervision of most kindergarten teachers. The study findings also suggest that most kindergarten teachers are challenged with inactive supervision because of the inequivalent teacher-learner ratio. It was recommended to the National School Inspectorate Authority (NaSIA), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) to collaborate and make a policy criterion for inspecting all kindergarten schools for safety before certification of operation would be issued to them. It was also recommended to the National Teaching Council (NTC) to include teacher supervision and safety in their assessment modules for licensing kindergarten teachers and school administrators and heads.

Keywords: supervision, safety, practices, teachers, kindergarten

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1. Introduction

Active teacher Supervision has been the most effective strategy for creating a safe environment and preventing injuries among young children (Morrongiello, Ondejko & Littlejohn, 2004). It also helps to protect children from hazards and harm that may arise from their play and daily activities. Again, Morrongiello, Ondejko and Littlejohn (2004) revealed that increased teachers' supervision has a protective effect on children and is associated with fewer child injuries. In addition to this, studies support the centrality of active supervision for creating a safe environment in achieving an all-around or holistic development of children (Mahon, 2018; O'Keefe, Hooper & Jakubiec, 2019). Therefore, the importance of supervision to school-aged children cannot be overstated, since it is directly related to their safety and the prevention of injury, as well as the provision of high-quality care (Morrongiello, Ondejko & Littlejohn, 2004). However, the active supervision of teachers in kindergarten schools has been a very big challenge for schools, this has caused a plethora of threats to learners' safety. A learning environment that is both dangerous and insecure for learners cannot facilitate effective learning. Hazel (2010) confirmed that basic school learners in a marginal elementary school have reported being unable to concentrate in class as a result of fear of an unsafe school environment. These unsafe school conditions which lead to injuries were caused by slippery surfaces, wet spots, untidiness on the floor, poorly placed furniture such as desks, benches and tables, weak rails, insufficient illumination, sitting carelessly on desks, poor aeration and sharp objects (Nyakundi, Zablun, Areba, Onguti & Mikuro, 2014). It is on the premise of this study that, kindergarten teachers must closely supervise learners in their school environment to ensure their safety by preventing or minimizing the magnitude of accidents, injuries, and dangers like burns, falls, bites, cuts, road traffic accidents and harassment children experience within their school settings.

2. Statement of Problem

An unsafe school environment affects learners' class attendance, engagement, and motivation (Kibriya, Zhou, Yu Zhang, Naureen & Fatema, 2018). Donkor (2018) identified that the possible hindrance to active teacher supervision in kindergarten schools can be attributed to overcrowded classrooms and dilapidated classroom buildings. Again, Nyakundi, Zablun, Areba, Onguti and Mikuro (2014) stated that the main causes of accidents in schools are human-related, caused by carelessness, inattentiveness, ignorance, irresponsibility or negligence on the part of the learners and teachers. Research findings by Donkor (2018) also confirmed that a lack of maintenance culture and safety measures in Ghana's basic schools, particularly in the country's rural areas are likely to affect supervision. Again, he added that, even though teachers are responsible for the safety of their learners, they lack the knowledge and skills to deal with unsafe situations acceptably. Lastly, his study found that Ghana's basic schools did not have well-defined school safety rules since the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education

Service did not have such policies in place. Since there are no defined policies guiding teacher supervision for learners' safety, kindergarten teachers may be handicapped in adopting appropriate supervision strategies. It is alarming how inadequate teacher supervision can endanger the safety of kindergarten learners. The most serious part of it is that this unsafe school environment can negatively affect children's learning abilities through fear (Carpman, Grant & Simmons, 2005). Again, it may affect learners' class attendance, engagement, and motivation (Kibriya, et al., 2018). In some cases, learners in unsafe schools may suffer from mental health problems, such as reduced self-esteem, inability to concentrate, and depression (Dunne, Sabates, Bosumtwi-Sam and Owusu, 2013; Kosciw, Palmer, Kull & Greytak, 2013).

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the challenges of teacher supervision towards the safety of kindergarten learners within Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem (K.E.E.A) Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

2.2 Research Question

What are the challenges faced by teachers in supervising Kindergarten learners towards their safety within K.E.E.A. Municipality?

3. Challenges of Teacher Supervision for Learners' Safety

School safety can be defined as the measures put in place by school personnel (including teachers and parents), learners, and other stakeholders to reduce or eliminate risk circumstances or threats that could result in accidents, bodily harm, or emotional and psychological distress. A lack of self-esteem and poor performance can result from accidents if they are not prevented, while emotional and psychological stress can result in a loss of self-esteem and consequently poor performance. Listed below are some of the characteristics that make it challenging for teachers to effectively supervise the kindergarten school environment:

3.1 Poor and Insufficient Infrastructure

According to Azzi-Lessing (2009), infrastructure in education serves as a foundation for the rest of the system. Once infrastructure-related deficiencies have manifested themselves, they may lead to the emergence of other difficulties. Donkor (2018) stated in his study that the majority of basic school buildings in Ghana are over-aged and in bad condition as a result of the poor state of the school infrastructure. Again, there are several schools in Ghana where pupils are studying in dilapidated buildings, some of which are death traps and, in most cases, some children are also learning under trees (Ansah, 2017). It is as a result that when school structures are not appropriate or are in bad condition, they might represent a threat to the lives of teachers and learners which necessitate the need for close monitoring and active supervision.

3.2 Teacher Workload

Teachers professionally conduct themselves and bear responsibility for the overall school program, as well as for the safety and order of the school (Gwambombo, 2013). Teachers' workload is influenced by the number of periods taught by a single teacher each day, internal tests, exercises, marking load, administrative and non-administrative duties undertaken by teachers at the same time, and the number of students enrolled in a class. Gwambombo (2013) went on to say that teachers' everyday activities include overseeing pupils both in and out of class settings, as well as maintaining an adequate personal touch with them while carrying out their other school responsibilities. At the same time, teachers participate in school meetings, where they discuss learners' academic achievement goals, including any academic gains that learners have assigned to their teachers. Stress, burnout, blunders in the workplace, a poor work-life balance, and physical and mental effects on teacher supervision are all factors that contribute to the workload of teachers and can have a detrimental impact on their performance (Gwambombo, 2013). The author went on to say that, when teachers are weary, depleted, and demoralized as a result of a heavy workload, they become ineffective and ill-creative in the classroom, and as a result, the teaching and learning processes are negatively affected.

3.3 Poor Maintenance Culture

The repair, replacement, and general upkeep of physical features found in the school's buildings, grounds, and safety systems are all part of maintaining the school's physical environment (Nhlapo, 2006). With continued usage of school facilities and equipment, they suffer wear and tear, which necessitates the need for maintenance, which includes repairing and replacing damaged items. Some school fatalities were caused by strangling due to ropes, garments, or strings on clothing; some loose objects may have become caught on protrusions or v-openings in the building (Mack, Hudson, & Thompson, 1997). Protrusions can pose a hazard to children's safety and result in catastrophic injury. Many pieces of playground equipment have sharp edges or points that can cut or break the skin of children who are playing on them. As a result of a lack of strong maintenance culture in kindergartens, play materials such as suspension bridges, track rides, merry-go-rounds, seesaws, and swings; equipment and school furniture have not been thoroughly inspected and maintained to ensure that no parts or mechanisms are positioned in a way that could pinch or crush a child's finger. Some other general maintenance concerns that can be hazardous to children include broken, worn, or missing parts; corrosion or deterioration; unprotected concrete footings; and other risks that have the potential to cause more harm than good to children and thus interfere with teacher active supervision. Donkor (2018) discovered that there is a lack of a culture of maintenance and safety measures in Ghana's basic schools, particularly in the country's rural areas, as evidenced by his research findings. *"Maintenance is concerned with ensuring safe conditions for facility users, whether they are learners, teachers, parents, or guests"* (Szuba & Young, 2003, p.43). The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (1998) defines

school maintenance as an organizational activity carried out by the school community to extend the life expectancy of school buildings, their furniture, and other associated equipment. Following the same premises, Xaba (2014) defended that maintaining school facilities and ensuring that all areas of the school are constantly observed and monitored regardless of whether or not they are occupied are all necessary components of securing the school environment and creating safe conditions.

3.4 Distraction by Teachers

Distraction is defined as the diverting of attention away from the activities of children, which can harm the children's safety and learning opportunities. Saluja and colleagues (2004) emphasized the importance of teachers being attentive in their supervision and being free of distractions. Teachers who are in charge of supervising children during indoor and outdoor activities frequently engage in friendly conversation with one another. Because both adults are distracted in this situation, supervision is hampered, and certain areas will not be completely supervised as a result of the inadequacy of the placement. While supervising children, some teachers or supervisors use their cell phones to text, talk, and browse the internet. A report from the NAEYC's 2014 National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development in Minneapolis confirmed that smartphones distract teachers, who are tempted to answer calls and read and write emails or text messages when they should be concentrating on children's learning, safety, and well-being. Hinze (1996) also developed the distraction theory, which proposes that high productivity demands and difficulty impair a worker's ability to concentrate on hazards, increasing the likelihood of an accident occurring. As stated by Bidwell (2015), the human element of ensuring that teachers and other school personnel keep their ears to the ground as well as their eyes and ears wide open daily is the most effective way of identifying potential problems in the school building or the surrounding environment. Accidents can also happen when children interact with one another, which can result in collisions and fighting. Active supervisors can give children "the eye" or position themselves close to the situation once more (Wikipedia). The primary goal of active supervision is to ensure safety and concentrate on injury prevention, and the most effective way to accomplish this is to be free of all distractions.

3.5 Inequivalent Teacher-to-Learner Ratio

This is the number of children per caregiver divided by the number of teachers. According to Dodge and Colker (1992), teachers are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the rising number of learners in the classrooms in which they are responsible. Some studies have discovered that the teacher-to-learner ratio has a significant impact on children's behaviour, safety, and interaction with adults (Phillips & Howes, 1987). Low teacher-to-child ratios ensure a fundamental level of child safety and lay the groundwork for high-quality child caregiving to follow. Small group sizes and low teacher-to-learner ratios are associated with fewer situations that endanger learners' safety, as well as more positive caregiving experiences for those children (Brenda, 2017).

According to Casper and Theilheimer (2010), there is no definitive answer to the question of the optimal number of children to staff when it comes to childcare settings. For infants and toddlers, according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the ratio should be 3:1, 6:1 for toddlers; 8:1 for children under three years old; 10:1 for four- and five-year-olds; and 15 to 18:1 for children in the primary school (Bredekamp, 1987). Maintaining appropriate adult-to-child ratios is critical to ensure playground safety. It can be difficult to determine appropriate ratios because several factors must be taken into account. The number of children, the age of the children, the size of the school environment, the type of structures and equipment available in the environment, and the location are some of the most important factors to take into consideration. This means that, depending on the number of students enrolled in the school, the number of staff members will need to be increased in proportion. Even if enough staff are assigned to the entire school environment, providing adequate supervision will be impossible if there are too many children to watch at the same time.

3.6 Inadequate Training

Inadequate kindergarten teacher training has an impact on active school supervision. It has been confirmed by studies that, in-service training provided by school administrators is insufficient to keep preschool teachers up to date on the most recent developments in the early childhood curriculum. For example, according to Wilson (1989), workers are typically exposed to risk due to a lack of knowledge about workplace hazards or because of a lack of experience and knowledge due to a limited amount of knowledge. As a result, it was confirmed that, while teachers and other school personnel are ultimately responsible for maintaining school safety, they are only vaguely familiar with the fundamental steps that must be taken to ensure a safe school environment (Donkor (2018 cited in Canady, 2015). Donkor (2018) discovered in his research that about 90 percent of teachers and headteachers who are responsible for the safety of learners were unaware of what to do in the event of a crisis. This was due to a lack of proper safety training for teachers. Cornell and Mayer (2010) cited in Donkor (2017) stated that to date, relevant research on school safety in developed countries has far outweighed that in developing countries. To note, research on the relationships between teacher supervision and the safety of learners in developing countries like Ghana is scarce and intermittent, making reliable, comparisons among locations or analysis of trends impossible. Despite this knowledge gap, there is evidence to support the premise that the lack of adequate teacher supervision harms the safety of kindergarten learners in developing countries.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Ferrell's Human Factor Theory (1997)

The human factors model is predicated on the notion that human mistake is the most common cause of accidents (Hosseinian & Torghabeh, 2012). Individuals' risk-taking behaviours and inadequate workplace and environmental design, which do not take into

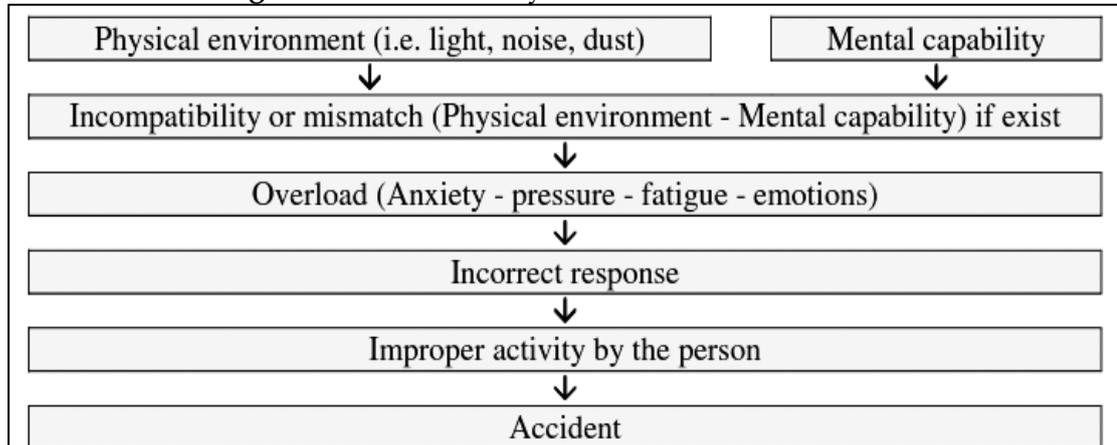
account human limitations, are believed to be contributing causes in this situation. The theory of accidents is based on a chain of human variables that contributed to the accident. While Heinrich described accidents by using a single chain reaction, Ferrell's model takes into account numerous causes and is quite detailed about the causes of accidents (Heinrich, Petersen & Roos, 1980). As an additional point of clarification, according to Ferrell, accidents are defined as the outcome of a human error. Ferrell believes that human errors are the most common causes of accident occurrence and that these errors are produced by the following factors: overloading, incompatibility, and inappropriate actions (Abdelhamid & Everett, 2000; Taylor, Easter & Hegney, 2004; Jha, 2011). Each category is broad that has several specific reasons inside them.

- **Overload:** It is defined as an imbalance between a person's capability at a given moment and the load that person is carrying at a given time in a certain state. The capacity of a person is determined by a variety of elements, including his or her innate ability, training, and state of mind, as well as tiredness, stress, and physical condition. An individual's load consists of tasks for which he or she is responsible as well as additional burdens resulting from external factors such as noise, heat, cold, and vibration; internal factors such as personal problems, emotional stress, and anxiety; and situational factors such as being in a dangerous situation, high-level risk and unclear instructions.
- **Inappropriate Response or Incompatibility:** How a person reacts to a particular circumstance can either create or avoid an accident. When a person fails to follow a safety protocol that has been developed, he or she has acted improperly. Accidents can occur as a result of such responses. Accidents and injuries might occur when a child's school furniture is not compatible with his or her size, force reaches, feel, and other variables.
- **Inappropriate Activities:** People might make mistakes when they engage in improper activities. For example, a person attempts to complete a task but is unable to do so because they lack the necessary knowledge. Also possible is that a person incorrectly assesses the level of danger associated with a specific activity and then seeks to do the task based on that incorrect assessment and so, accidents and injuries can occur as a result of improper behaviours.

Supervisory skills and strategies are some of the most important caregiving strategies that teachers must learn and adapt to provide effective care. In this theory, a mismatch between the school environment and the teachers can create some sort of tension which can cause accidents for learners. The incompatibility between the school environment and teachers results in distraction and workload for teachers which affects proper teacher supervision in schools. The teacher's workload consists of tasks for which he or she is responsible, which are the internal factors such as personal problems, emotional stress, anxiety, state of mind, tiredness, physical condition and inadequate teacher training. Another teacher's workload results from external factors such as noise, heat, overcrowded classrooms, poor maintenance culture, high-level risk and unclear instructions. For example, teachers fail to supervise their learners properly because they

lack the necessary knowledge to do. Also, when teachers fail to follow safety measures in the school, they may not supervise learners properly.

Figure 2: Ferrell's theory of accidents causation



Source: Hosseinian and Torghabeh (2012)

4. Methods and Instruments

The philosophical underpinning of this study was based on interpretivism. Using a qualitative approach, the study employed an instrumental case study design. The instrumental case study employed aimed at uncovering and understanding teachers' attitudes towards the supervision of kindergarten learners and assurance of their safety within the school environment (Stake, 2003). The detailed qualitative accounts in instrumental case studies not only help to explore the data in a real-life environment but also helped to explain the complexities of real-life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research (Zaidah, 2007). In applying this design, the researcher explored the supervisory practices of teachers to understand the safety of kindergarten learners. The accessible population consisted of 227 Kindergarten teachers within the K.E.E.A Municipality. In establishing a sample size for qualitative studies, Bertaux (1981) recommended fifteen (15) as the smallest acceptable sample. Also, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended between 12 and 20 participants in interview studies. Hence, the sample size of 16 kindergarten teachers out of 227 Kindergarten teachers was drawn to maximize understanding of the phenomenon. A convenience sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. Convenience sampling used by the researcher involved selecting participants that happen to be available and are willing to participate in the research at the time (Omona, 2013). Kuranchie (2016) explained convenience sampling as a technique that involves the use of elements of a target group that a researcher has access to or is available to serve as a participant. Based on the homogeneity of the participants, the researcher collected data from kindergarten teachers in a school within the K.E.E.A Municipality. The semi-structured interview guide was utilized in collecting data for this study. In determining the trustworthiness of this study,

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to authenticate the reliability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data were analyzed thematically. The analysis of the data was done with the help of online qualitative software, Taguette. Using the Taguette, the researcher highlighted quotes and phrases from the interviews that were significant to the study.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Results on Challenges of Teacher Supervision for Learners' Safety

The research question sought to establish the challenges teachers face in their supervision of kindergarten learners. In order to achieve this, information was sought from teachers for the study. A number of issues were brought to light from the views of the teachers on the challenges they face when supervising learners towards their safety. It was found by the researcher that; physical inadequacy or an unsuitable physical environment contributes to the creation of a dangerous environment for learners. Based on these barriers, teachers find it inefficient to supervise learners which later results in learners to dangers and risks. The study observed the following teacher supervision challenges such as poor school infrastructure, teacher workload and stress, poor school maintenance culture, teacher distraction, teacher-children ratio, and inadequate teacher training. The most relevant issues collected from the participants were based on the views from in-depth interviews of participants and have been described and interpreted in the following sub-themes outlined.

5.1.1 Poor School Infrastructure

As part of the challenges, observations were made by participants as poor school infrastructure contributes to their improper supervision. Most participants noted that the toilet facilities of their centers were poor. Some participants shared their dissatisfaction with the architecture of their building that generate heat during the day. This is what some participants have to say about how their school infrastructure challenges their active supervision:

"The infrastructure, like I said the chairs are not good so sometimes some of them do not even get chairs to sit on and then it distracts classes a lot because you need to get them a seat to sit because they can't be standing whiles you are teaching. And then sometimes too, some of them will come early and they will come and occupy all the chairs so those that will come late when they come, they will be fighting, this is my seat, this is not yours and then all those things go on to distract classes a lot." (KT 5)

Another participant was of the view that:

"When you talk about KG classroom, it should be colourful. This is a situation that, in our classroom walls, the floor is not well cemented. And we also need colourful thing, so when you paste any colourful thing, because it is not well plastered, it removes." (KT 10)

Another participant also remarked:

"Our place is too much open for us. We need a fence because outside here we can play here, too much open for us to play. We can play football, Volleyball, games even indoor games, but at least a fence here and at the back. During break time supervision, it makes supervision very difficult, the kids will be roaming about. Calling them too, the noise making they won't hear you. You have to walk to that place... it's too open. The compound is too big for us. The school infrastructure where it is located is quite open." (KT 6)

Another participant had a challenge with the structural design of the school building. This is what she had to say:

"...It makes me tired, because when it is 12:00 noon, I cannot even stand in the class. Then, I go out. When they are inside, I used to send my chair to outside to sit there, I sit there for a while then, we come in again and I teach them because the classroom is very hot. Because of the heat, I cannot stand here and do anything or supervise them." (KT 16).

Another participant explained that the cracked walls of the school building pose many challenges to their supervision at their centers. She mentioned that:

"The cracks that are the problem that we have. We even have one of our structures where one-half of that building has collapsed. When you are living in such an environment like this you are always afraid that one day the building will collapse or something unfortunate will happen." (KT 2)

5.1.2 Teacher Workload and Stress

Teachers' workload is influenced by the number of periods taught by a single teacher each day, internal tests, exercises, marking load, administrative and non-administrative duties undertaken by teachers at the same time, and the number of students enrolled in a class. Participants shared a similar idea on the number of things that makes them stressed which includes long hours stay in school, number of learners in the class and number of activities learners have to do in a day at school. This is what some participants have to say:

"I will say because we are two in class, does not make the workload too heavy, so it makes as we feel comfortable, we are able to supervise them well but if it was to be like I was the only one, it will be very difficult, and depends on the enrolment also, some may have a large

class and our enrolment is not all that large we are 33 in a class; 20 boys and 13 girls.” (KT 9)

Contrary to the response of KT 9, this participant has this to say:

“The children are many. We are 65, so the supervision is so tedious and also when you are teaching you have to shout for everyone to hear because they are many. If you don't shout, they will not hear. Every day I get a short throat, I lose my voice. As you are attending to this group, the other group will be disturbing even when you are teaching as you turn, those at your back will be doing different things. Because they are many, sometimes I get tired, so I have to come and sit. Sometimes, you will be supervising and you feel dizzy, so I have to come and sit for them to bring their work.” (KT 15).

This participant also stated that:

“I'm the only person so, when I want to do writing have to hold their hands because they are many maybe time will not permit me to hold everybody's hand to write so I have a challenge. If you are too stressed you can't do much. Yes, oh that one it's true. Sometimes you can give up too because you are stressed so you say I'm tired and I have to rest a little.” (KT 3)

Another participant remarked that:

“The time that we close from school is bad. KG children their attention span is very short. So, you can't just let the child sit for one hour or even forty-five minutes is very difficult so you as a teacher you have to be singing, jumping with them, going around the compound, and by the time you will know you are tired. If you are tired as a teacher, you are tired you can't even come to stand in front of the children to teach; it will not flow, plenty of mistakes. You see for KG everything you have to write for them and that alone is stressful. You have to write the exercises for them before they close. So, sometimes it's not easy. You are teaching and at the same time, you are writing exercises.” (KT 5)

5.1.3 Poor School Maintenance Culture

School maintenance is concerned with ensuring safe conditions for facility users, whether they are learners, teachers, parents, or guests (Szuba & Young, 2003). The challenges in school maintenance according to the participants interviewed were the school buildings, furniture, windows and floor and ceiling problems. The following are the excerpts from the interview:

“Oh, the chairs we normally check, some of them are good so if you see that your chair is shaking, is not helping you, we tell them to go and change it. When we see that, there are more broken we report to the head. So sometimes they even come and buy nails to make

some small maintenance. Sometimes whiles you are teaching and the teacher will be monitoring the chair shaking, the child may fall down and you pick up the chair, so it distracts class, and it delays the work too. Some of the children may even be crying. So, you have to pause and go to the child and say sorry ok, you pick up the chair and change it. So, it really disturbs, it delays work.” (KT 6).

In relation to the earlier quotation by KT 6, this participant confirmed that:

“Some of the metal chairs, the back is broken which is not repaired. They always complain of backache, we need it too. Because our furniture is not enough. And those who will get that chair, they are going to experience that. If the broken chairs have not been replaced, it means we are going to have stress. I get worried because every child has to get a chair and this is a situation, some are not having, so I get worried which affects my delivery.” (KT 10)

Again, another participant was of the view that:

“...for the windows it is spoilt. So, when we go home, thieves come here. I remember though I wasn't here but there was an incident that the thief came here to break the cupboard I think both classes KG 1 and KG 2 then the person took all the items that is pupils' books, pencils and stuffs. So, if the windows are not properly maintained and locked, we experience theft.” (KT 5)

This participant noted this way:

“I've been standing the whole day because I don't have a chair. The chair is spoilt. I've been complaining that my chair is spoilt. As a teacher, I can't be standing there teaching all the time. I can't be standing there bending to teach the children. Some we have to hold their hands to write or put the book on the table for me to write. There's no table. So that time that activity that I will be doing will be out because there's no table, there's no chair so, that activity will be bad.” (KT 4)

Another participant who experienced similar challenges remarked this way:

“Our roof has been leaking when it rains. Sometimes, you have to stop whatever you are doing, if there is a leakage you have to bring a bucket in order not to get the class wet, so things like that distract attention.” (KT 14)

5.1.4 Teacher Distraction

The primary goal of active supervision is to ensure safety and concentrate on injury prevention, and the most effective way to accomplish this is to be freed of all distractions. When one diverts attention away from the activities of children, it can have a negative

impact on the children's safety and learning opportunities. All participants admit to experiencing distractions at school. However, most of the participants who were interviewed dispute that, when supervising children during indoor and outdoor activities, they do not engage chit chat with colleague teachers. Most Participants confirmed that they do not distract their attention with cell phones when supervising learners at school. Some participants shared their views on how they are distracted from active supervision this way:

"We have had a series of snake attacks here. Sometimes it can even distract the whole class. When that attack comes, it means from 12 o'clock to 2 pm that we will close, we will not be able to do anything. Because the teachers and children are even afraid to come to the classroom." (KT 2)

This participant commented that:

"For the phones, we don't normally get near to our phones when we come to school. We just concentrate on whatever we came for; to teach. Sometimes you might need something on the phone to teach with, that one happens so you can get closer to your phone and check for that thing to teach. But for the calls, WhatsApping and texting, we don't normally do that." (KT 3)

In connection with this statement, another participant also related:

"For me, I don't usually use WhatsApp, because I don't get time. Sometimes, I use to receive messages about 1,000 on my phone. Sometimes during break time, you have to supervise the children, some of them may not finish their work at that time, so, I will be still supervising them to do their work. So, for KG, you don't get time." (KT 15)

In another situation, this participant pointed that:

"Sometimes what will distract your attention is when the parents come in at the time you are teaching. That one distracts our attention; you have to attend to the person. You give them a chair outside that they should give us sometime before we can attend to them. That is the only thing that sometimes shifts our attention." (KT 8).

Another challenge that causes distraction for the teachers is the heat. This participant shared her ordeal this way:

"The heat is the major factor. When the room is very hot, because of the heat some children will start complaining, madam my back is itching me, then they all run to the wall and start scratching their back on the wall. It all distracts teaching and learning. As I said earlier when the room is hot, it is difficult for us to concentrate and teach, so early morning

we do all our things, so when it is afternoon, I just let them relax. When they are sweating, they start to complain about the heat. So, the heat, we have an issue about it.” (KT 16)

5.1.5 Teacher-learner Ratio

Low teacher-to-learner ratios ensure a fundamental level of child safety and lay the groundwork for high-quality child caregiving to follow. This study found that most participants experienced inequivalent teacher-learner ratios at their centers. Some participants said that the number of children and the age of the children was a challenge to their active supervision. Some participants also pointed out that, the size of the classroom amidst the number of learners placed there challenges their teacher supervision. Here are some of the quotations from the participants after the interview:

“It’s a very big challenge because I can’t do all the work at the same time. Especially we the KGs, because we have to give them more attention to them since I am alone here and I find it very difficult to handle them.” (KT 1)

Similarly, to this statement, another participant remarked:

“The kids are many and the teacher is only one. That one it can affect supervision. Let’s say I’m handling ten (10) kids, at the end of the year, they can excel very well but fifty (50) children with only one teacher, let’s say twenty-five (25) can excel. Teacher ratio counts a lot.” (KT 3)

Another participant corroborated that:

“Sometimes if the children are many it will affect you because by the time you go around and help the children for a certain work to be done, you yourself will get tired. And then the worst is, you won’t be able to take care of the kids. So is good that even the GES brought a policy that 25 children to one teacher but in Ghana here, it is difficult to do that. In Ghana, if they say 30 learners, it becomes 60. Because of their level and their understanding too is not like the older pupils.” (KT 11)

5.1.6 Inadequate Teacher Training

Data from study participants suggested inadequate teacher training can contribute to inactive supervision of teachers towards their learners’ safety. Most participants said that they lack adequate training on safety and classroom supervision. Some participants even stated that they did not offer early childhood education, and so most of the things they find difficult to implement in their KG classrooms. Some participants also confirm that they do attend workshops and trainings but are not related to classroom and safety. The following are excerpts from some of the participants:

"When I was at the KG2 and I attended a learning workshop but I have not received any safety workshop. It a very big challenge if you don't receive any training on safety." (KT 1)

This participant also corroborated that:

"Well, I think it really affects us because like myself for instance when I came, I didn't know anything about children, and nothing concerning Early Childhood Education, there was nothing like in-service training for me. So, I don't even know some of the challenges like safety precautions in the KG and those stuffs. But if maybe proper in-service training was given, like definitely all these things will come so when a child is doing this, I know it is how it's going to end so I must do this, I must not that." (KT 5)

In relation to this statement, another participant corroborated that:

"...inadequate training because the teacher is not well trained, he/she may not be able to supervise well. You could see that, our kindergartens system we usually used observation in teaching, sometimes questioning those that can voiced it out, we used questioning and observation. So, if the teacher is not well trained in how to observe, he/she may not know how to supervise because if you want to observe a child is not you just observing the child, you have to know what you want to observe, so it may not be systematic. You have to know that am observing this, that and that on this child A or child B, so if the teacher is not well trained or does not have adequate training, the teacher may not be able to supervise well." (KT 9)

6. Results and Discussions on Challenges of Teacher Supervision for Learners' Safety

The results of the study emerged that teachers' inability to actively supervise their learners was a result of poor school infrastructure. This study revealed that some kindergarten school buildings are in a dilapidated state with cracks and partly collapsed. The study found that the architecture of the school was poorly designed rendering the classroom with less ventilation. The study again revealed that most school infrastructure are located in open spaces without boundaries or fence. This study aligns with Donkor (2018) who stated that the majority of basic school buildings in Ghana are over-aged and in bad condition as a result of the poor state of the school infrastructure. Again, Ansah (2017) stated that there are several schools in Ghana where pupils are learning in dilapidated buildings, some of which are death traps.

Also, this study revealed that the majority of kindergarten teachers are overloaded with tasks that make them inefficient to supervise their learners for their safety. The results of this study revealed that teachers are stressed as a result of a large number of learners in the classroom. Also, teachers have been burdened with the writing of children's work, marking, preparing lessons and other curricular and instructional

activities that contribute to their workload. The findings are in line with Gwambombo (2013) who confirmed that, when teachers are weary, depleted, and demoralized as a result of a heavy workload, they become ineffective in the classroom, and as a result, the teaching and learning processes are negatively affected. The findings of the current study further confirmed that stress, burnout, blunders in the workplace, a poor work-life balance, and physical and mental effects on teacher supervision are all factors that contribute to the workload of teachers and can have a detrimental impact on their performance (Gwambombo, 2013).

Again, this study emerged that most participants have challenges supervising their learners as a result of the poor maintenance culture of the kindergarten schools. Xaba (2014) defended that maintaining school facilities and ensuring that all areas of the school are constantly observed and monitored regardless of whether or not they are occupied are all necessary components of securing the school environment and creating safe conditions. The repair, replacement, and general upkeep of physical features found in the school's buildings, grounds, and safety systems are all part of maintaining the school's physical environment (Nhlapo, 2006). Notwithstanding, the finding of the study revealed that some schools have leaking roofs, some school windows were hanging and the majority of participants complained about broken chairs and tables without proper repairs. This study further observed that teachers reported all broken materials at their centres but responses were not coming forth. The findings were evident and corroborated by the findings of Donkor (2018) who discovered that there is a lack of a culture of maintenance and safety measures in Ghana's basic schools, particularly in the country's rural areas. This assertion was confirmed by Hazel (2010) who states that basic school learners and teachers in a marginal elementary school have reported being unable to concentrate in class because of fear of an unsafe school environment.

In furtherance, this study revealed that all the participants experience distractions at school. The study results revealed that teachers had constantly been distracted as a result of a series of snake attacks at their centres. Again, one of the major areas of distraction for teachers is caused by parents and visitors who visit the centre during instruction. Some participants demonstrated that heat was one of the major causes of classroom distraction. This study relates to confirmation made by Saluja et al., (2004) which suggests the importance of teachers being attentive in their supervision and being free of distractions. However, consequently, all teachers disagreed with the previous report by the National Association for Early Childhood Professional Development (2014) in Minneapolis which confirmed that smartphones distract teachers, who are tempted to answer calls and read and write emails or text messages when they should be concentrating on children's learning, safety, and well-being. With this, the finding revealed that teachers are not distracted by the use of phones for calls, Whatsapping, or texting during instructional hours and when supervising. According to Hinze (1997), employees are more prone to be involved in an accident when they are distracted. Teachers' distractions in this current study can be corroborated by a previous study by Hinze (1997) who developed the distraction theory and proposes that high productivity

demands and difficulty impair a worker's ability to concentrate on hazards, increasing the likelihood of an accident occurring. Correspondingly, according to a study published by experts at Safe Kids from 2000 to 2001, 88 per cent of drowning victims were under the supervision of caretakers (Cody, Quraishi, Dastur & Mickalide, 2004). Within that particular study, distractions were identified as common occurrences among caregivers who watch children while swimming [for example, chatting to someone (38 per cent), reading (18 per cent), eating (17 per cent), and using the phone (11 per cent)].

Moreso, this study's findings suggest that almost all of the participants are challenged with inactive supervision because of the inequivalent teacher-learner ratio. Founding shows the participants are overburdened resulting from an increased number of learners in the classroom. Participants demonstrated that the nature of kindergarten learners with alone teachers surrounded by many learners made it very difficult to handle them all and supervise them. This statement from the current study can be corroborated by the study by Dodge and Colker (1992) which confirmed that teachers are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the rising number of learners in the classrooms in which they are responsible. To this, small group sizes and low teacher-to-child ratios are associated with fewer situations that endanger children's safety, as well as more positive caregiving experiences for those children (Brenda, 2017). It was again from the study observed as confirmed by participants that, even though Ghana Education Service had a policy for a ratio of learners to a teacher but the reality is different. The findings of this study can be associated with the study Howes (1997) and Phillips & Howes (1987) who have discovered that the teacher-to-learner ratio has a significant impact on children's behaviour, safety, and interaction with adults.

Finally, the study discovered that inadequate teacher training on safety is a big challenge to teacher supervision for learners' safety. The study observed that participants have not received any training on safety. Results of this study revealed that some participants had no background in Early Childhood Education and so did not have much knowledge about handling children who were sent to the kindergarten classrooms without proper orientation and in-service training for them. As a result of this, some participants don't even know some safety precautions for handling kindergarten learners. In connection to this, other studies conducted by Gundogan (2002) revealed that the training provided for school teachers is insufficient to keep preschool teachers up to date on the most recent developments in the early childhood curriculum. Again, as findings suggested, while some participants had inadequate training about children and safety, other participants however periodically received general instructional workshop training from Sabre Education Trust for some kindergarten teachers in the KEEA Municipality. The findings of this current study can be linked to the study by Donkor (2018) who discovered in his study that, about 90 per cent of teachers and headteachers who are responsible for the safety of learners were unaware of what to do in the event of a crisis. Similarly, by Donkor (2017), the majority of teachers are unaware of the fundamental actions that must be taken to create a secure school environment. This statement can result from a lack of adequate training for teachers.

7. Findings

- 1) The study revealed that the majority of kindergarten teachers are overloaded with tasks that make them inefficient to supervise their learners for their safety.
- 2) Again, this study emerged that poor maintenance culture in kindergarten schools contributes to the ineffective supervision of most kindergarten teachers.
- 3) In addition, the study findings suggest that most kindergarten teachers face challenges with active supervision because of the inequivalent teacher-learner ratio.
- 4) This study lastly discovered that inadequate teacher training on safety was a big challenge to teacher supervision for learners' safety.

8. Recommendations and Conclusions

- 1) National School Inspectorate Authority, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should collaborate and make a policy criterion for inspecting all kindergarten schools for safety before certification of operation would be issued to them.
- 2) Also, National Teaching Council should include teacher supervision and safety in their assessment modules for licensing kindergarten teachers and school administrators and heads. This will help mitigate the threats such as overloaded tasks for teachers, poor school maintenance and inequivalent teacher-learner ratio teachers encounter when supervising learners for safety. In so doing, more appropriate school buildings would be constructed to alleviate the problem of overcrowding in classrooms.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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