EXPERIMENTAL ANALYSIS STUDY OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND THEIR PREPAREDNESS FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

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Abstract

This study examines, through experimental design, the opinion and knowledge of how well Missouri public school teachers and administrators are prepared for any emergency situation. Specifically, this study will consider factors such as: if the school district has emergency procedures currently in place and teachers/administrators awareness of the emergency procedures. It also will consider the following information during surveying: demographics, school district size, number of years’ experience and current school policy.

The null hypothesis tested was: Current teachers and administrators are not knowledgeable about their emergency procedures. The findings of this study showed educators feel their school, colleges and students are prepared for any emergency situation that may arise in their district. After looking at the results the null hypothesis is rejected.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This study examines, through experimental design, the opinion and knowledge of how well Missouri public school teachers and administrators are prepared for any emergency situation. Specifically, this study will consider factors such as: if the school district has emergency procedures currently in place and teachers/administrators awareness of the emergency procedures. It also will consider the following information during surveying: demographics, school district size, number of years’ experience and current school policy.

While researching for this paper I found that the state of Arkansas conducted a study that showed 86 percent of their public school districts have a mass casualty response plan currently in place (ECRMM, 2006). These mass casualty plans are in response to the national statistic stating from 1999 to 2006 116 students were killed in a school associated incident (Schuster, 2009). With students dying because of school related incidents it proves important to have procedures in place to promote safety.

In this study the following information will be imbedded within the contents of this research: background issues and concerns, practice under investigation, school policy, conceptual underpinning, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, null hypothesis, anticipated benefits, and definition of terms.

Background, issues and concerns

While working in a public school district in Missouri I came upon the disappointing fact that they did not have any procedures actively in place for students and faculty to
follow in the case of an emergency. This school district had several assumed procedures but there were no procedural guidelines to be followed. This building also did not participate in the practicing of emergency procedures to insure proper execution in the case of a real emergency.

The practice under investigation is the emergency procedures and the preparedness of our students and faculty within our public school districts. This includes the practices already in place and the opinions of those involved.

Statement of the problem

In the Midwest the weather is highly unpredictable and can become disastrous very quickly; nevertheless the teachers and administrators of the Midwest are not knowledgeable about emergency procedures.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to survey teachers and administrators about emergency procedures.

Research questions

RQ1: What are the opinions, knowledge and beliefs of teachers and administrators about emergency procedures?

RQ2: Is there a difference in the opinions, knowledge and beliefs of teachers and administrators about emergency procedures?

Null hypotheses

The null hypothesis test is: Current teachers and administrators are not knowledgeable about their emergency procedures.

Anticipated benefits of the study
Upon completion of this study school districts will be more aware that they are not as prepared for emergency situations as they believed (if proven). They will then be able to work toward making their emergency procedures more beneficial to the safety of the school district.

*Definition of terms*

Emergency: an unforeseen situation that could be catastrophic; fire, tornado, intruder, gas leak, kidnapping, etc.

*Summary*

Based on the previous lines, my research papers introduction, this experimental study is based on school districts in Northwest Missouri and their preparedness for unforeseen emergency situations. It is through this study that teacher and administrator’s knowledge will be reviewed and Missouri’s policy will be examined. School districts will benefit from this by knowing if their current emergency policies are beneficial or not to their district.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

On an average day there are an estimated 53 million children in the United States’ school system (Staff, 2006). Parents are sending their children to school each day hopes that the school system will keep them safe. So it is only natural for parents to ask themselves, how safe are our schools?

School violence is not anything new to our schools; it is something that has been happening throughout history but is changing with the times and weapon advancements (Dewey, Matthew, 2010, pp7). Because school shootings are high publicized on national news, we cannot assume these situations are isolated incidents (Dewey, Matthew, 2010, pp7). Student violence can be found on the Mesopotamia clay tablets dating back to 2000 B.C. There are also accounts of riots, assaults and shootings during the Middle Ages to the 19th century in Europe schools Dewey, Matthew, 2010, pp7). With this history of student violence we cannot assume our students are incapable of violence themselves, making it important to be prepared for any situation that may arise. Gone are the days when school personnel can ask “Will an emergency happen in my school?” The more accurate question to be raised is “When will the emergency happen and how prepared will we be to handle the situation?” (Hull, 2009)

School shootings were largely brought to our attention on April 20, 1999 when we heard of the massacre at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado. The news of this school shooting caused many schools to dramatically shift their attention to school safety (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, Jimerson, 2010, pp 27). One year later a nationwide survey found that 71% of parents felt the Columbine shooting had changed
their opinion on how safe their child’s school was (Nagy & Danitz, 2000). With the majority of parents feeling their student’s school could be safer educators need to do all they can to be prepared for any emergency situation.

The best defense to any situation is to have a plan to follow. It is also equally important to have all staff and students be aware of this plan and how to adequately put these plans into action (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006).
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

As previously identified, this experimental study will utilize the following information: background issues and concerns, practice under investigation, school policy, conceptual underpinning, and problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, null hypothesis, anticipated benefits, and definition of terms.

Research design

During this study I used an experimental analysis design. I used the results from an online survey I constructed. I did a study to see if the opinion of current educators aligned with my null hypothesis that states current teachers and administrators are not knowledgeable about their emergency procedures.

Study Group

The pool of survey participants were 112 total teacher, principals or superintendents in public school throughout the state of Missouri.
In figure 1 it shows the years of experience distribution of the teachers that participated in the study. The results of the survey showed that 73% of those that responded were currently teacher and had been teaching for five or more years. The figure also shows that the least amount of experience, first year teachers, was at 5%.
Figure 2 shows that 6.4% of those surveyed held the Principal position for 2-3 or 5 or more years. This shows me that a large amount of those surveyed are not considered administrators and are the forefront of implementing each safety and emergency procedure.
Figure 3: Superintendent Years’ Experience

Shown in figure 3, only 1.6% or the surveyed participants are currently holding the position of Superintendent. This information shows me that the participants that were surveyed are working within the schools in close proximity to the students and faculty that we need to keep safe.

![Figure 3: Superintendent Years’ Experience](image)

Figure 4: Emergency Plan Opinions

In Figure 4 it shows the survey results when educators were asked about their personal history with their district’s emergency/disaster plan. These results show that 2% of those survey indicated their school does not have an emergency/disaster plan in place. It also shows that only 81% of these educators have seen a copy of the plan but 16% of them have never even read the plan.

![Figure 4: Emergency Plan Opinions](image)
I Feel the Following Areas Are Prepared if an Emergency and/or Disaster Situation Were to Arise...

![Bar chart showing preparedness levels for different categories: District as a whole, Administrators, Colleagues, Yourself, Students.]

Figure 5: Emergency Preparedness

Figure 5 shows the results of how each educator feels individuals within their district are prepared. When asked if the educators felt their districts (as a whole) were prepared for an emergency/disaster 69% did not feel comfortable answering with the option ‘completely agree’. When questioned on the preparedness of their administrators, 53% did not feel comfortable answering ‘completely agree’. And when asked about the students and their preparedness for these emergency/disaster plans, 86% of the educators could not ‘completely agree’ they were prepared.
Overview

The purpose of this study is to survey teachers and administrators about emergency procedures. I wanted to see if there was a lack of emergency preparedness in public schools in Missouri.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study showed educators feel their school, colleges and students are prepared for any emergency situation that may arise in their district. After looking at the results the null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusions

The teachers and administration have shown they feel they are prepared for emergency situations that may arise in their buildings. They reported in their survey they felt the students, teachers and administration were well versed in their current emergency plans and how to implement them.

Recommendations

I recommend the schools continue to educate their students and faculty on their emergency plans and the proper way to implement them. By having emergency procedures in place and practicing them regularly, schools can keep their students and staff safe during emergency situations.
References


Hull, B. (2000). The question is not if, but when…. American School & University, 72(9).


