ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL CRITICAL SAFETY CONCERNS

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ABSTRACT

The school is every child's second home and safety are everyone's business. The best safety effort will involve all aspects of the child's school, including classroom instruction, school services, and school climate. The focus of this study was to assess the critical safety concerns of Bauan Technical High School, Batangas, Philippines as perceived by the senior high students. Schools are expected to comply with all applicable laws, rules, and standards relating to safety. The study determined the gender and age of the respondents. It also assessed the perception regarding school critical safety along with the school policy, comprehensive safety plan, school building, school grounds, procedures in handling visitors, emergency communication, transportation rules and accident procedures, illegal activities, respect for persons, and getting help. Among the ten safety concerns, handling visitors was observed to a very great extent while illegal activities were observed to a less extent. The descriptive method of research was applied in the study with the questionnaire as the data gathering instrument. The findings were derived from the responses of the 100 senior students comprised 59% male and 41% female teenagers whose age ranges from 15 to 18 years old. Procedures in handling visitors had the highest average which was observed to a very great extent and the other safety concerns were observed to a great extent while illegal activities were observed to a less extent. A proposed school safety activity shall further enhance the school safety program. In general, the school implemented critical safety measures in different concerns under the parameter of this study. High commitment to various safety concerns must be continued, and emergency procedure in case of bomb threat may be strengthened. Future researchers may continue this study with teachers and administrators as the respondents and may conduct studies that may be related to the current research in another research locale.

Keywords: Critical Safety Concerns, Senior High School Students, School Safety Activities, Descriptive Method, Bauan Technical High School, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Safety is everyone's business. Safety in the schools is essential and necessary to support the academic success of each child, allowing them to learn and achieve in a safe and nurturing environment Providing a safe school is both a legal and moral responsibility of the Department of Education. According to the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article 2 s13, the state to recognize the role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, and social well-being. Quality education is necessary, not only for the future of the children and families but for the future of the country. An educated citizenry and workforce are essential to compete in the global economy and to maintain democracy. A safe school environment is a prerequisite towards achieving that goal. If the government is effectively provided quality education, it must provide students an environment conducive to learning. In this view,

schools are expected to comply with all applicable laws, rules, and standards relating to safety. The best safety effort will involve all aspects of the child's school, including classroom instruction, school services, and school climate. The school is considered as the second home of the children. A safe and secure environment is a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. Threats to safety and security of people and property can arise from natural means like an earthquake, floods, drought, volcanic eruption, and typhoons or in human actions such as vandalism, bullying, harassment, terrorism, and violent crime. While catastrophic events and unsafe human acts cannot be eliminated, there is a role for administrator and staff to mitigate the negative impact, prevent the occurrence of such, and make the school safe, and conducive to learning. A safe learning environment is essential for students of all ages. Without it, they are unable to focus on learning the skills needed for a successful education and future. When unsafe conditions and unsafe acts are part of the educational setting, all students are affected in some way. Likewise, parents always wanted to protect their children from any injury, abuse, hurt or maltreatment. They still expected that at the end of every school day, their children would come home safe and sound. The researcher was teaching for more than a decade and found that school safety as the least of the school's priority in the school program. Incidents and accidents could be prevented by eliminating hazards, unsafe acts and unsafe conditions in the schools. A comprehensive safety plan could be a solution to solve such problems with safety and security. This could only be realized if administrators, teachers, parents, and community will work collaboratively and as a team in maintaining a climate which is necessary for developing a safe school.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study on the assessment of school critical safety concerns was anchored on B.F. Skinner's (1953) theory of behaviorism and the work of Kimberly Still (2010) on psychological safety. It served as the framework of the present study in the idea that creating a positive and safe environment can be empowering for students, giving them enough confidence to learn in school. According to Skinner, learning is a process of conditioning in an environment of stimulus, reinforcement, and punishment. Based on Still's work on psychological safety, the key component of student motivation, is they learn better when they feel safe. The school should create an environment where students feel comfortable enough to acknowledge their weaknesses, voice their gaps in knowledge and ask help when they need it. The conceptual framework of the study utilized Ralph Tyler's IPO Model. This presents the operational variables of the study through the system approach comprising input, process, and output. The first box is the input which relates to the Profile of the Respondents, the Critical Safety Concerns and the Comparisons of the Critical Safety Concerns. The second box includes the process which consists of the use of questionnaire as the data gathering instrument. The third box consists of the output which is the proposed school safety activity.
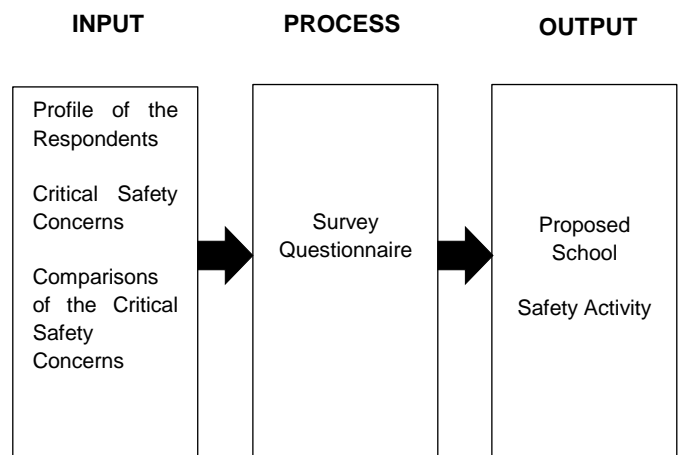

Figure 1. Research Paradigm

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the school critical school safety concerns as perceived by the senior high school students

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of Bauan Technical High School, Bauan, Batangas, Philippines to prepare a school safety activity to enhance the school safety program further. Specific aims included the following: (1) to know the profile of the students which include gender and age. (2) to determine the perceptions of the senior high school students regarding critical school safety along with the school policy, comprehensive safety plan, school building, school grounds, the procedure in handling visitors, emergency communication, transportation rules and accident procedures, illegal activities, respect for persons, and getting help. (3) to prepare school safety activities to enhance the school safety program further.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method of research was used in the study. The researcher made questionnaire was the data gathering instrument to determine the perception of the senior high students regarding critical safety concerns. The first draft of the questionnaire was shown to the evaluator and two practitioners for items content validation. After all the suggestions were incorporated the questionnaire was finalized and administered personally to 100 senior high school students of Bauan Technical High School, the year 2011- 2012, during the second semester with the assistance of the school administrators and advisers. The students were given time to read and answer every item. Some inquiries or questions were clarified concerning the items in the questionnaire. Other than the students' profile, It covered the components on critical safety concerns such as school policy, comprehensive safety plan, school building, school grounds, procedures in handling visitors, emergency communication, transportation rules, and accident procedures illegal activities, respect for persons, and getting help. The questionnaires were retrieved after answering they were tallied, computed and interpreted. The Frequency, Percentage, Ranking, and Weighted Mean were the statistical tools applied in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
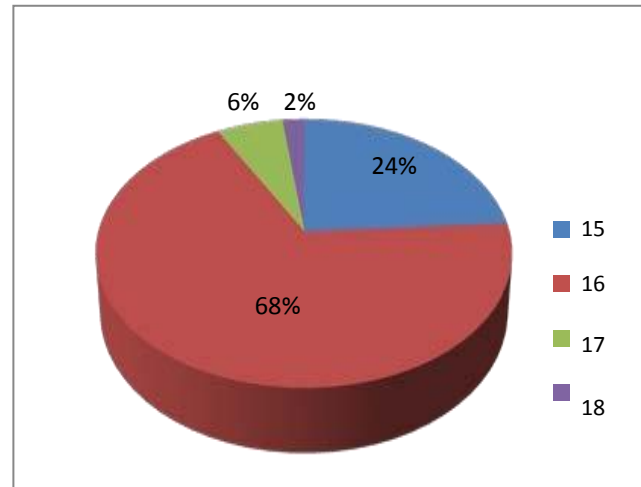
1.   Profile of the Respondents

1.1 Age

Figure 2. Age of Respondents

Based on the graph, most of the senior students were 16 years old which comprised the 68% of the respondents while there are 2% that were 18 years old. The majority belongs to the average age expected of senior high school students.

1.2. Gender

Figure 3. Gender

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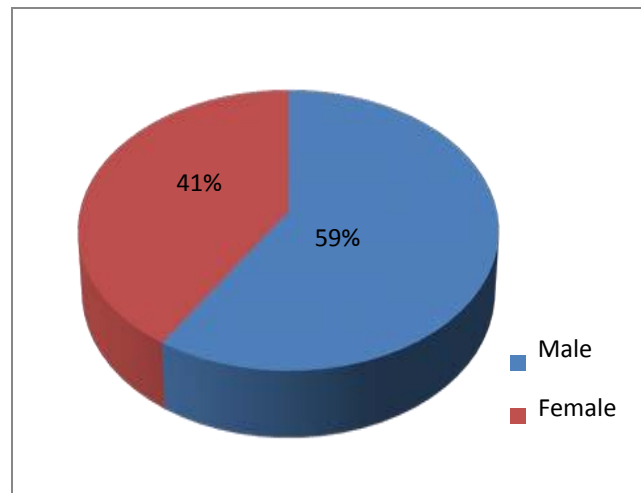
2. Critical Safety Concerns

2.1 School Policy

Table 1. School Policy Safety Concern

Items	WM	VI
1. In the school, penalties for breaking a rule are enforced relatively, everyone gets the same punishment	3.57	OVGE
2. In the school, rules about behavior are posted and everyone knows them	3.56	OVGE
3. In school, there is a policy of zero tolerance for violence	3.52	OVGE
4. In the school, there is no discrimination by gender enforcing rules	3.41	OGE
5. In school, there are rewards for good behavior, and everyone gets the same ones	3.03	OGE
Average	**3.42**	**OGE**

Based on the given table, the school was able to implement penalties for breaking the rules. It was enforced, and everyone gets the same punishment as observed to a very great extent by the respondents. It got the highest weighted mean of 3.57. Furthermore, rules about behavior are posted, and everyone knows them. Each student had his student manual where these rules are enumerated and discussed during the school orientation at the beginning of the school year. This supports the discussion about school discipline in the Manual for Policies, Standards, and Regulation for Philippine School Overseas, Article XI, s 57 (2011) which stated that the school shall maintain discipline inside the campus as well as outside the school premises where and when the students engaged in activities authorized by the school. Although the school officials and academic personnel have the right to impose appropriate and reasonable appropriate measures, there should be no cruel or harmful punishment applied against any student. However, the item, in the school, there are rewards for good behavior, and everyone gets the same ones, got the lowest weighted mean. These rewards come in the form of recognition and other informal methods of appreciating good behavior such as praise and

exemption from punishments. This is in parallel with the discussion of school policy in the Effects of Rewarding Positive Behavior in Children (2012). It was explained that rewards might develop a positive habit, changes negative behavior and creates a positive atmosphere. The average weighted mean for the school policy was 3.42 revealing that the school policy was observed to a great extent by the respondents. This result showed that students were aware of the school policy, rules and penalties of the school and they were explained in an indeed manner and consistently imposed.

2.2 Comprehensive Safety Plan

Table 2. Comprehensive Safety Plan

Items	WM	VI
In the school, an emergency preparedness plan has been developed to address the following emergencies:		
a. Earthquake	3.87	OVGE
b. Fire	3.45	OGE
c. Typhoon	3.09	OGE
d. Intruder	2.85	OGE
e. Bomb Threat/Explosion	2.48	OLE
Average	**3.15**	**OGE**

The school was able to develop an emergency preparedness plan for the earthquake as observed to a very great extent and had a weighted mean of 3.87. Fire and typhoon precautions were observed to a great extent by the students**.** These three emergencies were all experienced by the school community; thus, the school was able to prepare the students for the said situations. This affirms the discussion in Sample School Emergency Operation Plan (2011) that preparedness at all levels including students, parents, teachers, and staff may prevent an incident from occurring. This will reduce the loss of life and property from natural or human-caused disasters and will provide value to the public by creating safer communities. However, the school needs to make a comprehensive safety plan in

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case of bomb threat as this factor was observed to a less extent and had a weighted mean of 2.48. This conforms with the idea of Newman (2011) that the school should develop two types of responses in handling bomb threats in schools. One is an intervention plan aimed at prevention of risks and reducing their harm if carried out, and the other is a response protocol if an actual bomb threat or an incident occurs. The average, the school was made a comprehensive safety plan and implemented them as observed by the senior students to a great extent and had an average weighted mean of 3.15. As revealed in the results in this item, the school had taken action to reduce or eliminate the adverse effects of natural, technological or human-caused hazards to people and property.

2.3 School Building

The respondents observed to a very great extent and had a weighted mean of 3.76 that mechanical rooms and other hazardous material storage areas are kept locked. The main entrance being monitored was also observed to a very great extent. There were two security guards during the school hour while there were also guards during the night. Other safety concerns such as stairways and steps being covered with non-slip materials and access to electrical panels in all areas being restricted were also observed to a very great extent. However, entrance doors having seen through safety glass need to be addressed since such features were observed to a less extent and had a weighted mean of 2.29. Most of the public schools in the Philippines are lack of air-conditioned rooms. This might be the reason why see-through safety glass entrance was observed to a less extent. The classroom doors were usually left open during classes for proper ventilation. In general, the aspect of safety concern for school building was observed to a great extent and had an average weighted mean of 3.30. Based on the findings, the school had an existing monitoring program for school safety and security. This is by the view of Starkman (2008) who explained that locks, cameras, and sound alarms might only be part of the solution to helping school free from

harm or risk. Foremost was having people plan, train, and communicate effectively what to do in an emergency.

2.4 School Grounds

Table 3. School Grounds Safety Concern

Items	WM	VI
1. In the school, barriers exist to prevent unauthorized vehicles access the campus	3.58	OVGE
2. In the school, its perimeter, including field areas, is fenced, and secured gates are installed	3.55	OVGE
3. In the school, visitor parking is marked in a high visibility location as close to the central office	3.39	OGE
4. In the school, a high visibility area is designated as the pick-up/drop-off point for students and staff	3.29	OGE
5. In the school, parking areas are monitored by the school staff	3.16	OGE
Average	**3.39**	**OGE**

In the school ground safety concern, most of the respondents observed to a very great extent that barriers exist to prevent unauthorized vehicle access of the campus with a weighted mean of 3.58. This supports the view of Huang (2012) about the importance of a concrete fence around the perimeter of the campus for optimal security. The result showed that the school designed safety measures in the school ground very well. This also affirms the idea of Lindel (2008) on the research about school safety, that the consequences of safety yield to school policies and rules that may exacerbate community fears. The author added that under the 2001 federal law known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the consequences of accounting for school safety might have generated more opportunities for public fear and panic as opposed to increasing conditions for school safety and security.

2.5 Procedures on Handling Visitors

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Table 4. Procedures on Handling Visitors Safety Concern

Items	WM	VI
1. In the school, visitors are required to report to the office	3.79	OVGE
2. In the school, a policy for interception and response to unauthorized persons on campus is established	3.44	OGE
3. In the school, the signs concerning visitor policy and trespassing are seen in entrances to the campus and buildings	3.38	OGE
Average	**3.54**	**OVGE**

The students observed to a very great extent as shown in a weighted mean of 3.79 that visitors are required to report to the office. The principal even did not allow the visitors to meet the students in their rooms but on the designated place such as the faculty lobby. Because of this, unauthorized entry and contact to students were handled well in the school. The sign concerning visitor policy and trespassing are seen in entrances to the campus and buildings were observed to a great extent and had a weighted mean of 3.38. Collectively, procedures on handling visitor safety concern were observed to a very great extent as revealed in the average weighted mean of 3.54. This conforms with Department of Education Revised Manual of Regulations in Basic Education s159 (2010) which stated that only students shall be allowed to enter inside the campus during school hours except for valid reasons and no students or visitors including parent or guardian shall be allowed inside the school building and the premises after the last class period has ended except for school night classes. It was also mentioned that parents or visitors are required to sign the logbook of the security service. It was revealed in this item that the school follows the regulations of the Department of Education and that there is a clear procedure in monitoring and handling parents, visitors, intruders, and trespassers.

2.6 Emergency Communication

Table 5. Emergency Communication Safety Concern

Items	WM	VI
1. In the school, it has an emergency phone capability	3.61	OVGE
2. In the school, a procedure was developed to notify the services when the emergency evacuation of buildings and grounds is necessary	3.56	OVGE
3. In the school, a communication capability between the office and all teaching stations exists	3.31	OGE
4. In the school, in the event of power failure, alarm systems and phones are operative	2.99	OGE
Average	**3.37**	**OGE**

As revealed on the table, the respondents observed a very great extent that the school has emergency phone capability. The result showed a weighted mean of 3.61. Emergency communication comes in forms of landline, cellphones and handheld two-way radios. This confirms the idea in the Kentucky Center for School Safety (2008) stated communication is a crucial component of emergency management. The types of communication tools effective during an emergency include telephone, intercom, two-way radios, cell phones, fax machines, computers, alarms, and panic buttons. Because the school was also used as an evacuation area for some emergency, the respondents observed to a very great extent that it had developed a procedure to notify the services when the emergency evacuation of building and grounds if necessary. Collectively, the school emergency communication was observed to a great extent and had an average weighted mean of 3.37 in the school. This supports the idea of Ozmen (2009). The author recommends to maintain security in schools, and an emergency communication line should be built to communicate with the basic units and organizations to receive timely support and help in a threatening situation.

2.7 Transportation Rules and Accident Procedures

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Table 6. Transportation Rules and Accident Procedures Safety Concern

Items	WM	VI
1. In the school, parents have been informed in writing of accident procedure and transportation safety rules	3.54	OVGE
2. In the school, transportation safety rules have been developed and distributed to students	3.49	OGE
3. In the school, all students and staff participate in a field trip carry identification	3.35	OGE
4. In the school, there is proper monitoring of how students go to school and return home safely	3.12	OGE
Average	**3.38**	**OGE**

Parents have been informed in writing of accident procedures and transportation safety rules as observed to a very great extent and had a weighted mean of 3.54 by the senior high students. The fourth item, proper monitoring of how students go to school and return home safely, got the lowest weighted mean of 3.12 and was observed to a great extent. The average weighted mean was 3.38, the students were observed to a great extent the school's safety measures on transportation and accident procedure. The result showed that transportation accidents are prevented due to the school's appropriate safety plan and proper monitoring of students' routine from school to their houses and vice versa. This supports the discussion in the manual on the ten ways to improve school transport safety (2010). The ways include reducing speeds on school routes and around schools; setting standards in school transport contracts; assessing the school transport pick-up and drop-off points; reviewing school travel plans, improve qualities and clarify responsibilities; raising awareness of desired behaviors; promoting on-road pedestrian and cyclist training; discouraging young novice drivers from driving to school and transporting others; and evaluation all intervention.

2.8 Illegal Activities

Table 7. Illegal Activities Safety Concern

Items	WM	VI
1. Is there graffiti or signs of vandalism at school or on school grounds?	2.24	Observed to a less extent
2. Have you observed people using cigarette at school or school grounds?	2.14	Observed to a less extent
3. Have you vandalized or defaced school property?	1.58	Observed to a less extent
4. Have you observed people drunk alcohol at school or school grounds?	1.42	Observed to a least extent
5. Has anyone offered, sold, or given you an illegal drug on school property?	1.35	Observed to a least extent
Average	**1.75**	**Observed to a less extent**

The respondents perceived vandalism to a less extent and had a weighted mean of 2.24. This was the most frequently seen illegal activity among the five items listed. Following vandalism is smoking inside the school ground. However, there are students mentioned that they observed an illegal drug sold on school property. The school must investigate this concern in spite that it had the lowest weighted mean of 1.35 and was observed to the least extent in this category. This finding confirms in the discussion about school safety in the Alliance for Excellence Education (2008) which reiterated that schools must provide a safe learning environment for students, educators, and staff. It was added that schools should be drug gang and weapon free and that it should convey an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Conflicts should be handled peacefully, and direct action should be taken to respond to threat, bullying or verbal abuse. In general, illegal activities safety concern was observed to a less extent and resulted in an average mean of 1.75. It was revealed in the result that the involvement of the students from illegal activities such as alcohol and drugs were prevented because the students feel a sense of belonging and value for their life. In addition, the students were involved in various school activities such as academic organizations

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and sports clubs.

2.9 Respect for Persons

Table 8. Respect for Persons Safety Concern

Items	WM	VI
1. In the school, the principal takes the leadership role that everyone respects	3.82	OVGE
2. In school, people with disabilities get the same respect as everyone else	3.57	OVGE
3. In school, teachers show respect to students all the time	3.47	OGE
4. In school, students show respect to teachers all the time	3.4	OGE
5. In the school, making some kids feel left out or unwanted never happens	3.19	OGE
Average	**3.49**	**OGE**

The command of principal was evident as observed to a very great extent and had a weighted mean of 3.82. The principal had moral credibility and committed to excellence that the students recognized. Furthermore, the students observed to a very great extent that people with disabilities get the same respect as everyone else. Teachers and students show mutual respect for one another too. This confirms the idea of Lysaught (2010), the author explained that to respect another means to regard her or him highly, to esteem, to honor and to value in his or her uniqueness or distinctiveness and to make space for the person to be himself or herself. In general, respect for persons was observed to a great extent and had a weighted mean of 3.49. It would be noted that respect is one of the core values of the school. This supports the idea of Cohen, et al. (2009). The authors explained that a sustainable, better school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support people to feel emotional, and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families, and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction from learning. Each person provides to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

2.10 Getting Help

Table 9. Getting Help Safety Concern Summary

Items	WM	VI
1. If I have a personal problem, I talk to friends about it	3.59	OVGE
2. If I have a personal problem, I talk to parents about it	3.38	OGE
3. I use computers or the internet to get help with my problems.	2.84	OGE
4. If I have a personal problem, I talk to a teacher or school counselor about it	2.5	OGE
5. If I have a personal problem, I keep it to myself	2.41	OLE
Average	**2.94**	**OGE**

Based on the table, most of the students talk with their friends when they have a problem as revealed in the weighted mean of 3.59 and was observed to a very great extent. This was expected since the age group belongs to youth whose role model is their age group. Students also went to their parents for their problems. But it would be noted that the use of computers to get help with problems had a higher weighted mean as compared with talking to teachers. This was brought by the broad effect of social networking where students can freely express themselves and the access to information even problems encountered by teenagers had some answers readily available on the internet at their most convenient time. Likewise, some students talk to a teacher or school counselor about their problems. However, some students kept the problems as shown in the result of the weighted mean of 2.41 and were observed to a less extent. Collectively, getting help safety concern was observed to a great extent and had an average weighted mean of 2.94. Considering the school as the children's second home, it is essential for them to feel a sense of belonging. The children would feel safe and secure if they experience a positive school climate and they would realize the collaborative effort of their classmates, friends,

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school staffs, parents and members of the community to become better persons.

3. Comparison of the Critical Safety Concerns

Table 10. Safety Concerns Summary

Safety Concerns	Average	VI
1. Procedures in Handling Visitors	3.54	OVGE
2. Respect for Persons	3.49	OGE
3. School Policy	3.42	OGE
4. School Grounds	3.39	OGE
5. Transportation Rules and Accident Procedures	3.38	OGE
6. Emergency Communications	3.37	OGE
7. School Building	3.3	OGE
8. Comprehensive Safety Plan	3.15	OGE
9. Getting Help	2.94	OGE
10. Illegal Activity	1.75	OLE
Average	**3.22**	**OGE**

In the ten safety concerns, Bauan Technical High School had the highest average on procedures in handling visitors which was observed to a very great extent by the respondents and an average of 3.54. It was followed by respect for persons and school policy which were observed to a great extent. The other safety concerns such as school grounds, transportation and accident procedures, emergency communications, school building, comprehensive safety plan, and getting help were also observed to a great extent. Illegal activities were observed to a less extent by the respondents with an average of 1.75. In general, the school was able to implement critical safety measures in different concerns under the parameter of this study. This was brought by excellent leadership skills and moral credibility established through the years. It was also enhanced by the school's experience in different emergencies it faced in its more than two decades of existence.

5. Proposed School Safety Activity

Based on the findings of the study, Bauan Technical High School is an institution that was implemented the safety precautions which was observed to a very great extent in the procedures of handling visitors. School policy, school grounds, transportation rules and accident procedures, emergency communications, school building, comprehensive safety plan and getting help were observed to a great extent. It was revealed that illegal activities, getting help, comprehensive safety plan, school building and emergency communications were the five safety concerns with the low mean scores which should be given focus and attention. With these findings, the following proposed safety plan is based on the low mean scores to enhance the school safety program. A proposed school safety plan was prepared to ensure the safety and security of the students in the school premises. The activities were intended to focus items which likely manifest the evidence or degree of strengths and weaknesses regarding school critical safety concerns. The researcher came up with the following activities: (1) comprehensive safety plan and conduct drills regarding emergency preparedness which might address bomb threat or explosion. (2) school should replace classroom doors with see-through safety glass for students' visibility from the outside. (3) install CCTV camera in the parking areas for proper monitoring. (4) signage could be posted in the main entrance regarding procedures in handling visitors, and instructions should be apparent to the members of the security. (5) instant back-up generator in case of power failure, provide accessible telephone booth or payphone and display emergency hotlines in classrooms and common areas.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Majority of the respondents belong to the

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age expected of a senior high school student, and there are more male than female.

2. The school implemented safety precautions in different safety concerns such as school policy, a comprehensive safety plan, school building, school grounds, procedures in handling visitors, emergency communications, transportation rules and accident procedures, respect for persons, illegal activities and getting help concerns.

3. Among the ten safety concerns, the school had the highest average on procedures in handling visitors which was observed to a very great extent by the respondents. Other safety concerns are also observed to a great extent while illegal activities were observed to a less extent by the respondents.

4. The school was able to implement critical safety measures in different concerns under the parameter of this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions from this study, the following recommendations were endorsed.

1. The administrators of this school must continue its high commitment to different safety concerns as evaluated by the respondents.
2. The administrators must also address the illegal activities that were observed in the school ground
3. The administrators must also hold the emergency procedure in case of a bomb threat to prepare the community if such would happen in this school.
4. Other researchers may continue this study with teachers and administrators as the respondents, or other institutions would be evaluated based on ten safety concerns raised in this study.

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