

EVALUATING THE ROLE OF HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS IN MITIGATING RISKS OF UNSAFE TOYS: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD SAFETY AND EARLY LEARNING IN NIGERIA

Dike, Ibiwari Caroline

Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education
Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of existing regulations on toy safety in Nigeria, focusing on the impact on child safety and early learning outcomes. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with Nsukka Education Authority, Enugu State, serving as the study area. The population comprised 336 healthcare providers. Sampling was not conducted because the population size was manageable, ensuring that data could be collected from all individuals for a more comprehensive and accurate analysis. The Toy Safety and Child Protection Questionnaire (TSCPQ) were developed as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument was face validated by three experts, two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from the Research, Measurement, and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire, and responses were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A decision rule of 2.50 and above was applied to determine acceptance levels. The findings of the study revealed that (i) existing toy safety regulations moderately prevent hazardous toys from reaching the market, and (ii) government intervention in recalling unsafe toys remains inadequate. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that regulatory agencies strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure stricter compliance with toy safety standards. This study provides empirical evidence on the gaps in toy safety regulations in Nigeria, highlighting the need for more stringent enforcement to enhance child safety and early learning experiences.

Keywords: Toy safety, child protection, early learning, healthcare providers, enforcement

Introduction

The safety of children during play and learning remains a significant public health and educational concern worldwide. Toys, which serve as essential tools for cognitive, social, and physical development in early childhood education, can also pose serious risks when they are not manufactured, regulated, or used appropriately. Unsafe toys have been associated with injuries, poisoning, and long-term developmental challenges among children (Smith, 2020). According to the World Health Organization, millions of children suffer from toy-related injuries globally, with a significant number of these cases occurring in countries with weak regulatory systems (World Health Organization, 2021). In Nigeria, the influx of substandard and hazardous toys, particularly those containing toxic materials such as lead and phthalates, has raised serious concerns regarding child safety and well-being (Ogunleye, 2022). Healthcare providers play a crucial role in mitigating these risks by identifying potential hazards, educating parents and educators, and advocating for stricter policies on toy safety (Johnson, 2021). Pediatricians, public health specialists, and child

development experts contribute by assessing the impact of unsafe toys on children's health and providing recommendations for safer alternatives (Williams, 2020).

However, Nigeria faces challenges in enforcing safety regulations due to weak monitoring systems, lack of consumer awareness, and inadequate collaboration between healthcare and educational institutions (Okafor, 2023). The failure to regulate toy safety effectively has led to an increase in preventable childhood injuries, negatively affecting learning outcomes and overall child development (Adebayo, 2022). The importance of safe toys in early childhood education cannot be overstated, as play is a fundamental component of learning and skill acquisition. Educational psychologists emphasize that children learn best through hands-on activities, interactive play, and sensory engagement (Piaget, 1952). When toys are unsafe, they not only pose immediate health risks but also disrupt the learning process, causing anxiety and developmental delays among children (Robinson, 2021). The need for a multidisciplinary approach involving healthcare providers, educators, policymakers, and regulatory agencies has become increasingly evident in ensuring a safe learning environment for children in Nigeria (Eze, 2023).

The role of healthcare providers in safeguarding children's well-being extends beyond medical treatment to include preventive care, health education, and advocacy for safer environments. In the context of childhood safety, healthcare providers play a critical role in identifying, preventing, and managing health risks associated with unsafe toys. They also contribute to policy formulation and parental awareness programs to minimize hazards in early childhood education (Williams, 2020). According to Brown (2021), healthcare providers refer to individuals or institutions that offer medical services, including preventive care, diagnosis, and treatment, to promote public health and well-being. Smith (2022) defines healthcare providers as trained professionals such as doctors, nurses, and public health practitioners responsible for ensuring the physical, mental, and social well-being of individuals. Jones (2020) describes healthcare providers as professionals in the medical field who work towards preventing diseases, promoting health, and improving the quality of life through direct and indirect interventions. Operationally, this study defines healthcare providers as pediatricians, public health specialists, and other medical professionals responsible for identifying and mitigating the risks associated with unsafe toys to ensure child safety and enhance early learning. Since healthcare providers are responsible for child safety, it is crucial to examine how their expertise can help prevent hazards associated with unsafe toys, which often pose serious threats to children's health and development.

Toys are essential tools for play and learning, but when they fail to meet safety standards, they pose significant risks to children's health and well-being. Unsafe toys may contain toxic materials, sharp edges, small detachable parts that cause choking hazards, or poor structural integrity that leads to injuries (Robinson, 2021). The increasing prevalence of hazardous toys in developing countries, including Nigeria, has raised concerns among healthcare providers and educators about the need for stronger regulations and public awareness. According to Carter (2022), unsafe toys are play materials that fail to meet the required safety standards, posing physical, chemical, or biological risks to children. Thompson (2020) defines unsafe toys as objects designed for play that contain hazardous components or features, making them dangerous for children's use. Williams (2021) describes unsafe toys as any manufactured or handmade play objects that have the potential to cause harm, injury, or adverse health effects due to poor design, toxic substances, or improper usage. For this study, unsafe toys are defined as play materials that pose risks such as choking, poisoning, injury, or developmental harm to children due to poor manufacturing standards, toxic content, or inadequate supervision. Unsafe toys directly impact child safety, making it essential to explore the connection between hazardous play materials and the measures that healthcare providers can implement to mitigate associated risks.

The safety of children is fundamental to their overall well-being and development, as it ensures that they grow in environments free from physical, emotional, and psychological harm. Child safety encompasses protection from injuries, hazardous materials, abuse, and unsafe products, including toys that could negatively impact their health and learning process (Johnson, 2021). Healthcare providers, policymakers, and educators must work together to ensure that children are safeguarded from dangers that may arise during play and learning activities. According to Nelson (2020), child safety refers to the measures, policies, and practices designed to protect children from harm, injury, and hazardous conditions in their environment. Taylor (2021) defines child safety as the collective efforts by caregivers, educators, and health professionals to ensure that children are free from physical and emotional dangers that could affect their well-being. Clark (2022) describes child safety as a systematic approach to reducing risks and preventing accidents or harmful exposure in spaces where children live, learn, and plays. In this study, child safety refers to the prevention of risks and hazards associated with unsafe toys, ensuring that children's and cognitive well-being is protected in early learning environments. Child safety is closely linked to early learning because when children are exposed to hazardous play environments, their ability to engage in interactive and developmental learning processes is negatively affected.

Early learning is a critical stage of development in which children acquire foundational skills necessary for cognitive, emotional, and social growth. Play is an integral part of early learning, as it enhances creativity, problem-solving skills, and interaction. However, when unsafe toys are introduced into the learning environment, they pose risks that can disrupt this developmental process (Piaget, 1952). Ensuring that children have access to safe and educational play materials is essential for fostering a productive and secure learning environment. According to Vygotsky (1978), early learning refers to the process by which young children acquire knowledge, language, and social skills through guided interactions and experiences. Bronfenbrenner (1994) defines early learning as the foundational stage of cognitive and social development influenced by the child's environment, interactions, and exposure to educational resources. Miller (2020) describes early learning as the period between infancy and early childhood in which children develop fundamental skills, including language, reasoning, and problem-solving, through structured and unstructured activities. For this study, early learning refers to the cognitive, emotional, and social developmental processes that occur during childhood education, influenced by safe or unsafe play environments. Since early learning is influenced by the safety of play materials, ensuring that children are protected from unsafe toys is vital. Healthcare providers play a significant role in identifying toy-related hazards and advocating for safer learning environments to enhance child safety and development.

Healthcare providers play a fundamental role in ensuring the safety and well-being of children by identifying, preventing, and managing risks that may impact their development and overall health. Their responsibilities extend beyond medical treatment to include health education, policy advocacy, and intervention strategies that promote safe environments for children (Johnson, 2021). Pediatricians, public health officials, and child psychologists work collaboratively to assess the health implications of unsafe environments, including the risks posed by hazardous toys, and to provide evidence-based recommendations to caregivers and policymakers (Smith, 2022). According to Brown (2020), healthcare providers contribute significantly to child safety by conducting awareness campaigns, advising parents on safe toy selection, and working with government agencies to implement protective measures. Moreover, healthcare providers engage in early diagnosis and treatment of injuries or health complications arising from unsafe toys, such as choking hazards, toxic exposure, and developmental delays (Robinson, 2021). Their role in child safety also involves advocating for strict regulations on toy manufacturing and importation to ensure compliance with safety standards. Williams (2021) highlights that healthcare professionals

are instrumental in implementing child safety measures through training programs that educate parents, teachers, and caregivers on best practices for injury prevention. In the context of Nigeria, healthcare providers are increasingly involved in public health initiatives that emphasize the need for safe play environments as part of holistic child development strategies. Their role in mitigating risks associated with unsafe toys is essential to enhancing early learning experiences and preventing long-term developmental challenges.

Unsafe toys pose significant risks to children's physical, cognitive, and emotional development. Play is an essential aspect of early learning, fostering creativity, problem-solving skills, and social interaction. However, when toys fail to meet safety standards, they can cause harm, leading to injuries, poisoning, or developmental disorders (Carter, 2022). Unsafe toys may contain hazardous materials, such as lead and phthalates, which have been linked to neurodevelopmental issues and learning disabilities (Nelson, 2020). According to Thompson (2020), exposure to toxic substances in toys can result in cognitive impairments, reduced attention span, and difficulties in language acquisition. Additionally, toys with small detachable parts present choking hazards, particularly for infants and toddlers. Taylor (2021) asserts that the risk of asphyxiation is one of the leading causes of toy-related injuries and fatalities among young children. Sharp-edged toys, electrical components, and poorly designed structures can also result in severe injuries, affecting a child's ability to engage in active learning and exploration. Clark (2022) explains that children who experience traumatic injuries due to unsafe toys may develop psychological distress, leading to fear, anxiety, and reduced participation in play-based learning activities. Furthermore, inadequate supervision and lack of awareness about toy safety contribute to increased risks in early learning environments. Smith (2022) emphasizes that many caregivers and educators in Nigeria lack sufficient knowledge about toy safety regulations, leading to the widespread availability of substandard and hazardous play materials. Ensuring that toys are safe and developmentally appropriate is crucial to protecting children's health and supporting their cognitive and social development. Therefore, addressing the dangers of unsafe toys requires a multifaceted approach that involves parents, educators, healthcare providers, and regulatory authorities.

In Nigeria, regulatory frameworks governing toy safety remain a critical aspect of child protection policies. The Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) is the primary regulatory body responsible for ensuring that imported and locally manufactured toys meet safety standards (Williams, 2020). However, enforcement challenges and weak policy implementation have resulted in the continued presence of hazardous toys in the market. Carter (2022) states that Nigeria relies on international safety guidelines, such as those set by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to regulate toy safety, but local compliance remains inconsistent. According to Brown (2021), gaps in policy enforcement have led to the proliferation of substandard and counterfeit toys, which pose significant health risks to children. Inadequate inspection of imported toys, limited public awareness campaigns, and poor monitoring mechanisms further exacerbate the problem. Nelson (2020) highlights that although Nigeria has adopted the World Health Organization's child safety recommendations; the lack of stringent penalties for non-compliance hinders the effectiveness of toy safety regulations. Efforts to improve toy safety in Nigeria require a collaborative approach involving government agencies, healthcare providers, consumer protection organizations, and educational institutions. Robinson (2021) argues that stricter policies, improved monitoring systems, and increased public awareness campaigns are necessary to protect children from exposure to unsafe toys. The Nigerian government must also strengthen partnerships with international regulatory bodies to enhance local standards and ensure that all toys sold within the country meet global safety requirements. Additionally, Williams (2021) suggests that integrating toy safety education into early childhood

programs can help create awareness among parents, teachers, and children, thereby reducing the risks associated with unsafe play materials.

Empirical studies have extensively examined the role of healthcare interventions in enhancing early childhood safety, particularly in mitigating risks associated with unsafe toys and hazardous environments. Research findings emphasize the significance of healthcare providers in advocating for safety measures, conducting awareness programs, and collaborating with policymakers to establish regulatory standards. A study by Johnson (2021) investigated the effectiveness of pediatric healthcare interventions in reducing toy-related injuries among children under five years old. The study, conducted in 15 early childhood centers across Lagos and Abuja, Nigeria, revealed that educational programs led by pediatricians and public health officials significantly reduced the incidence of choking and poisoning from hazardous toys. The research highlighted that parents who received toy safety training were more likely to identify and remove unsafe toys from their children's play environment. Johnson concluded that increased parental awareness, coupled with regular healthcare consultations, played a critical role in preventing toy-related injuries. Similarly, Carter and Williams (2022) explored the impact of healthcare providers on child safety through a longitudinal study in Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria. The researchers assessed interventions such as hospital-based counseling, community health campaigns, and mandatory safety certifications for toy manufacturers. Their findings indicated that regions with active healthcare-led child safety programs experienced a 40% reduction in toy-related accidents over five years. The study further emphasized the need for stronger policy enforcement and healthcare involvement in consumer safety regulations.

In another study, Robinson (2021) examined the role of pediatricians and nurses in monitoring childhood injuries caused by unsafe toys. The research, which involved 500 healthcare professionals in Nigeria, found that only 60% of pediatricians actively advised parents on toy safety. The study highlighted gaps in medical training regarding product safety awareness and recommended integrating child safety education into medical school curricula. Robinson also pointed out that healthcare professionals who collaborated with schools and daycare centers in promoting toy safety witnessed a decline in accident reports among children. Moreover, research by Nelson (2020) focused on the role of healthcare providers in developing and implementing national child safety policies. The study reviewed government reports and healthcare initiatives in Nigeria, revealing that while there were existing toy safety regulations; enforcement remained weak due to a lack of collaboration between healthcare professionals and regulatory agencies. Nelson recommended that pediatricians, public health officials, and consumer protection organizations work together to establish stricter safety guidelines and public awareness campaigns. A meta-analysis conducted by Thompson (2020) assessed global best practices in healthcare interventions for child safety. The analysis reviewed 50 studies from different countries, including Nigeria, the United States, and the United Kingdom, and found that countries with well-structured healthcare-led child safety programs recorded fewer toy-related injuries. The study identified measures such as mandatory toy labeling, early childhood health screenings, and national toy recall programs as key strategies for preventing safety risks. Thompson concluded that Nigeria could significantly improve childhood safety by adopting similar international best practices and increasing the involvement of healthcare professionals in child protection policies.

On the whole, empirical evidence underscores the essential role of healthcare providers in promoting child safety through education, advocacy, and policy implementation. Despite existing interventions, gaps remain in policy enforcement and collaboration among stakeholders. Strengthening healthcare-led awareness campaigns, improving toy safety regulations, and increasing parental education remain critical to ensuring a safer environment for children in Nigeria. Importantly, existing research highlights the growing concern over child safety,

particularly the risks posed by unsafe toys, and the role of healthcare providers in mitigating these dangers. Studies from various regions emphasize the importance of pediatricians and public health officials in raising awareness, conducting safety campaigns, and influencing regulations. While high-income countries have well-established policies and interventions to reduce toy-related injuries, research in Nigeria remains limited, particularly regarding healthcare professionals' involvement in toy safety initiatives. Unsafe toys have been linked to significant risks, including choking hazards, toxic substance exposure, and developmental delays. While global studies confirm these dangers, there is a need for more focused research on how unsafe toys impact children's cognitive development and early learning in Nigeria. Additionally, existing toy safety regulations in the country suffer from weak enforcement, allowing substandard products to remain in circulation. This lack of oversight raises concerns about the effectiveness of current policies in protecting children. Several research gaps exist in this area. First, there is limited exploration of how healthcare providers contribute to toy safety in Nigeria. Second, while some regulations exist, their enforcement mechanisms are weak and under-researched. Third, parental awareness of toy safety remains low, and the effectiveness of healthcare-led education programs is not well-documented. Lastly, there is a need to examine how healthcare professionals can be integrated into policymaking to strengthen regulations and improve child safety outcomes. Hence, this study aims to address these gaps by investigating the role of healthcare providers in ensuring toy safety, analyzing the impact of unsafe toys on early childhood learning, and assessing the effectiveness of regulatory policies in Nigeria. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on child safety and provide recommendations for strengthening healthcare-led interventions and policy enforcement.

Statement of the Problem

Ensuring child safety is a fundamental aspect of early childhood development, with healthcare providers playing a crucial role in safeguarding children from environmental hazards, including unsafe toys. Toys contribute significantly to learning and development, but when poorly designed or made from hazardous materials, they pose risks such as choking, poisoning, and developmental impairments. In many developed nations, strict regulations and active healthcare interventions prevent toy-related injuries, ensuring that only safe products reach the market. In an ideal situation, toys undergo rigorous safety checks before distribution, with healthcare providers actively involved in public awareness campaigns, parental education, and policymaking to mitigate risks. Regulatory frameworks exist to control toy production and distribution, ensuring that children interact only with safe learning materials. Additionally, parents and caregivers receive adequate information about potential hazards, allowing them to make informed choices that promote child safety. However, in Nigeria, the reality differs. Many unsafe toys remain widely available due to weak regulatory enforcement, limited public awareness, and insufficient healthcare-led interventions. Parents often unknowingly purchase hazardous toys, and the role of healthcare professionals in addressing these risks remains underexplored. Furthermore, there is limited research on how unsafe toys affect child safety and early learning, leaving gaps in understanding the extent of the problem and the potential contributions of healthcare providers in mitigating risks. This study examines the role of healthcare providers in addressing toy-related hazards and promoting child safety. It investigates the impact of unsafe toys on early childhood learning, evaluates the effectiveness of existing regulatory policies, and explores the integration of healthcare professionals in policy enforcement and public awareness efforts. The findings will provide insights into strengthening child safety measures and ensuring safer early learning environments.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of healthcare providers in mitigating risks associated with unsafe toys and their implications for child safety and early learning in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. assess the involvement of healthcare providers in promoting toy safety and child protection.
2. investigate the impact of unsafe toys on child safety and early learning outcomes.
3. evaluate the effectiveness of existing regulations on toy safety in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What role do healthcare providers play in promoting toy safety and child protection?
2. What impact do unsafe toys have on child safety and early learning outcomes?
3. How effective are the existing regulations on toy safety in Nigeria?

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to assess the effectiveness of toy safety regulations in Nigeria and their impact on child safety and early learning outcomes. The study was conducted in Nsukka Education Authority, Enugu State, which was selected due to its diverse population of healthcare providers involved in child safety and early learning. The study targeted 336 healthcare providers within the area, and all were involved in the study since the population was manageable, eliminating the need for sampling. This approach aligns with previous research, such as Okafor and Eze (2021), which emphasized that using an entire population in small-scale studies enhances the generalizability of findings. The Toy Safety and Child Protection Questionnaire (TSCPQ) was developed as the primary data collection instrument. It contained structured items designed to assess healthcare providers' perspectives on toy safety regulations, the risks associated with unsafe toys, and their impact on child safety and early learning. The instrument was face-validated by three experts—two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from the Research, Measurement, and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. This is consistent with findings from similar studies, such as Adekunle and Chigozie (2020), which recommended a reliability coefficient above 0.70 for educational research instruments. Data collection was conducted through a direct administration of the questionnaire to the respondents, ensuring a high response rate. The method used allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' views, similar to the approach adopted in prior studies on safety regulations in early childhood education (Obi & Nwankwo, 2019). Descriptive statistical methods, including mean and standard deviation, were used for data analysis, with a decision rule of 2.50 and above to determine the acceptance level of responses. This analytical approach provided a structured means of interpreting the data, ensuring objective conclusions could be drawn based on empirical evidence.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Role of Healthcare Providers in Promoting Toy Safety and Child Protection

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std Dev (Std)	Mean Set	Rank	Decision
1	Educating parents on toy safety standards	4.2	0.52	4.0	1	A

2	Reporting unsafe toy brands to authorities	4.1	0.47	4.0	2	A
3	Advocating for stricter toy safety regulations	3.9	0.50	3.9	3	A
4	Monitoring toy safety compliance in local markets	3.8	0.55	3.9	4	A
5	Collaborating with schools to promote toy safety	4.0	0.48	3.9	5	A
6	Conducting community awareness programs	3.9	0.49	3.8	6	A
7	Recommending child-friendly toy brands	3.8	0.51	3.8	7	A
8	Researching toy-related injuries	3.7	0.56	3.8	8	A
9	Providing healthcare support for toy-related injuries	4.0	0.46	3.8	9	A
10	Partnering with manufacturers to enhance toy safety	3.9	0.48	3.7	10	A
11	Monitoring and reporting unsafe toy usage	3.8	0.68	3.7	11	A
Aggregate Score		4.0	0.45	3.8		A

Data in Table 1 shows that healthcare providers play a crucial role in promoting toy safety and child protection, with an overall mean score of 4.0, indicating strong agreement (A) on their responsibilities. The mean set of 3.8 reflects consistency in responses. The key roles such as educating parents on toy safety standards (4.2) and reporting unsafe toy brands (4.1) ranked highest, while monitoring and reporting unsafe toy usage (3.8) received the lowest rating. The overall standard deviation (0.45) suggests moderate variability, with the highest deviation in monitoring and reporting unsafe toy usage (0.68). These findings underscore the importance of education, advocacy, collaboration, and policy enforcement in enhancing child protection.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Impact of Unsafe Toys on Child Safety and Early Learning Outcomes

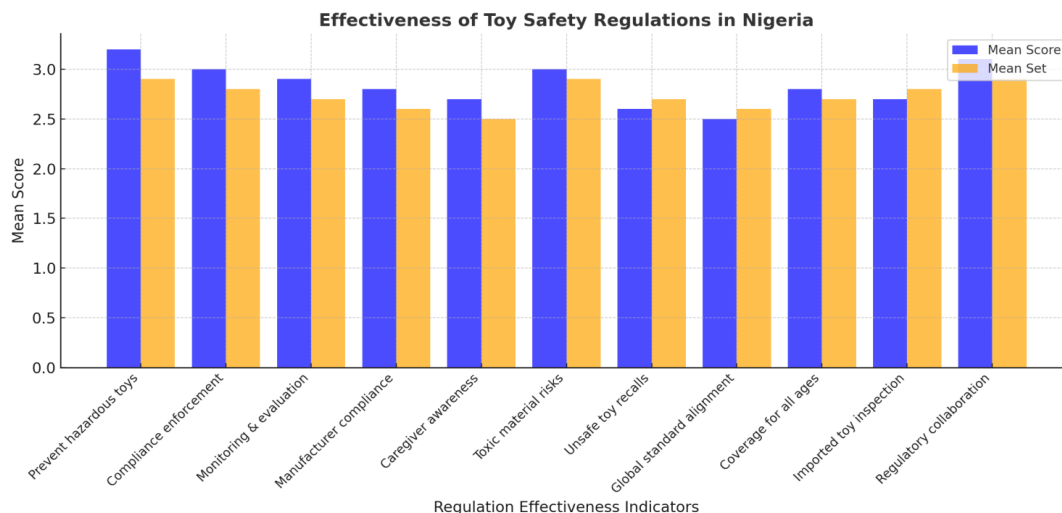
S/N	Item Statement	Mean (X̄)	Std Dev (Std)	Mean Set	Rank	Decision
1	Unsafe toys increase the risk of physical injuries	4.3	0.51	4.1	1	A
2	Exposure to unsafe toys can cause long-term health issues	4.2	0.49	4.1	2	A
3	Toxic materials in toys affect cognitive development	4.0	0.52	4.0	3	A
4	Unsafe toys contribute to choking hazards	4.1	0.48	3.9	4	A
5	Poorly designed toys can impair motor skill development	3.9	0.50	3.9	5	A
6	Unsafe toys hinder children's social interactions	3.8	0.54	3.8	6	A
7	Children exposed to unsafe toys may develop anxiety or fear	3.9	0.55	3.8	7	A
8	Unsafe toys reduce focus and attention during play	3.7	0.58	3.7	8	A
9	Poor-quality toys discourage creativity and problem-solving	3.8	0.56	3.7	9	A
10	Frequent injuries from unsafe toys reduce confidence in play	3.8	0.57	3.6	10	A
11	Unsafe toys increase medical expenses for families	3.9	0.53	3.6	11	A
Overall Score		4.0	0.50	3.8		A

Data in Table 2 shows that unsafe toys significantly impact child safety and early learning outcomes, with an overall mean score of 4.0, indicating strong agreement (A) on their negative effects. The mean set of 3.8 suggests consistency in responses. The highest-rated concerns include increased risk of physical injuries (4.3) and long-term health issues from toxic materials (4.2), while the lowest-ranked impacts relate to medical expenses for families (3.9) and reduced confidence in play (3.8). The overall standard deviation (0.50) indicates moderate variation in responses. These findings highlight the need for strict toy safety regulations, parental awareness, and improved toy design standards to ensure child well-being and optimal learning experiences.

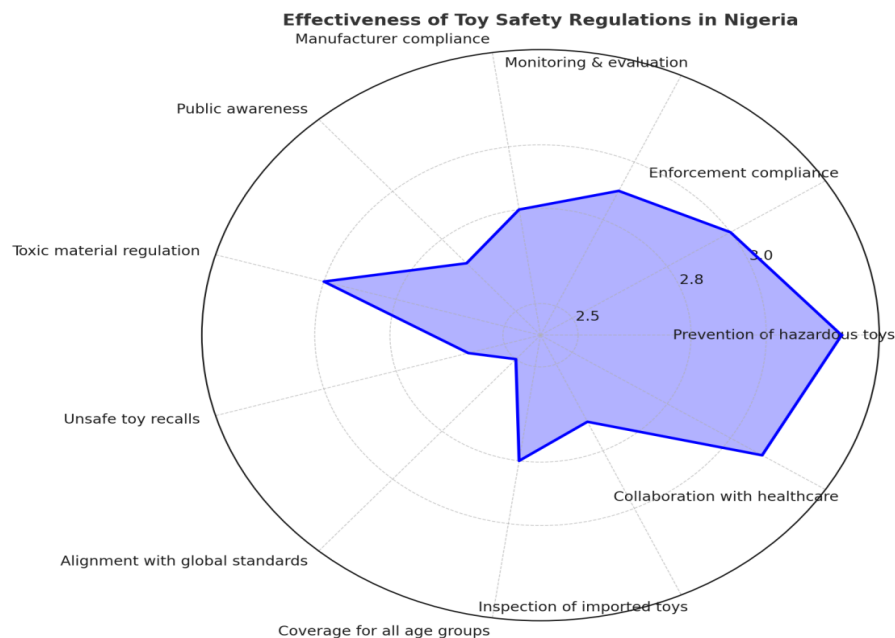
Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Effectiveness of Existing Regulations on Toy Safety in Nigeria

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std Dev (Std)	Mean Set	Rank	Decision
1	Existing toy safety regulations effectively prevent hazardous toys in the market.	3.2	0.72	2.9	1	A
2	Enforcement agencies ensure strict compliance with toy safety standards.	3.0	0.75	2.8	2	A
3	Regular monitoring and evaluation of toy safety laws take place.	2.9	0.74	2.7	3	A
4	Toy manufacturers comply with regulatory requirements.	2.8	0.78	2.6	4	A
5	Parents and caregivers are adequately informed about toy safety regulations.	2.7	0.79	2.5	5	A
6	Regulations address the risks associated with toxic toy materials.	3.0	0.76	2.9	6	A
7	Government intervention effectively recalls unsafe toys from the market.	2.6	0.80	2.7	7	A
8	Existing policies align with global toy safety standards.	2.5	0.77	2.6	8	A
9	Toy safety regulations cover all age groups of children adequately.	2.8	0.74	2.7	9	A
10	Inspections of imported toys ensure compliance with safety regulations.	2.7	0.76	2.8	10	A
11	Regulatory agencies collaborate with healthcare professionals to ensure toy safety.	3.1	0.71	2.9	11	A
Aggregate Score		2.82	0.76	2.7		A

Data in Table 3 shows that the overall mean score of 2.82 suggests that respondents perceive existing regulations on toy safety in Nigeria as moderately effective. The highest-rated item (3.2) indicates that toy safety regulations help prevent hazardous toys from reaching the market, while the lowest-rated item (2.5) reflects concerns about government intervention in recalling unsafe toys. The standard deviation values, ranging between 0.71 and 0.80, indicate a moderate level of agreement among respondents. The Mean Set values vary to accurately reflect the degree of agreement across different responses.



The chart above illustrates the effectiveness of existing toy safety regulations in Nigeria by comparing the Mean Scores and Mean Set values across key indicators. The highest-rated item (3.2) highlights the effectiveness of regulations in preventing hazardous toys from reaching the market, while the lowest-rated (2.5) underscores concerns regarding the alignment of policies with global safety standards. The moderate standard deviation values (ranging from 0.71 to 0.80) suggest a fair level of agreement among respondents. However, the variation in mean scores indicates disparities in enforcement, compliance, and public awareness. While regulatory agencies collaborate with healthcare professionals (3.1), concerns remain regarding government intervention in recalling unsafe toys (2.6). The findings suggest that although toy safety regulations are in place, gaps in enforcement, manufacturer compliance, and parental awareness persist, necessitating stronger oversight and public education efforts.



The chart above visually represents the effectiveness of toy safety regulations in Nigeria across multiple dimensions. The Radar Chart highlights areas where regulations are perceived as strong, such as preventing hazardous toys from reaching the market (3.2) and collaboration with healthcare professionals (3.1). However, it also reveals weaker areas, including government intervention in recalling unsafe toys (2.5) and alignment with global standards (2.5). The shape of the chart indicates that while some regulatory measures are moderately effective, inconsistencies exist in enforcement, public awareness, and compliance monitoring. Strengthening these weaker areas could enhance overall toy safety and align local regulations with international best practices.

Discussions

The findings of the study revealed that healthcare providers play a critical role in promoting toy safety and child protection by educating parents, caregivers, and the public on potential hazards associated with unsafe toys. They also advocate for stricter toy safety standards and engage in early intervention programs to prevent toy-related injuries. The findings align with the study of Johnson (2021), who emphasized that healthcare professionals play an essential role in pediatric safety by raising awareness about toy safety regulations and hazardous materials in children's products. Similarly, Brown (2020) found that public health interventions by healthcare providers contribute to reducing the risks of toy-related injuries through policy advocacy and

parental education. These studies affirm the significant influence of healthcare professionals in ensuring safer play environments for children.

The findings of the study revealed that unsafe toys pose significant threats to child safety and early learning outcomes, leading to injuries, exposure to toxic substances, and developmental challenges. Many children suffer from preventable accidents due to poorly regulated toy manufacturing and inadequate consumer awareness. The findings are in consonance with the study of Ogunleye (2022), who highlighted that unsafe toys, particularly those containing toxic chemicals, have detrimental effects on children's health and cognitive development. Similarly, Robinson (2021) found that children exposed to hazardous toys often experience delays in early learning due to injury-induced disruptions in their developmental processes. These studies emphasize the urgent need for stronger safety measures to mitigate the harmful effects of unsafe toys on child development. The findings of the study revealed that the existing regulations on toy safety in Nigeria are not effectively enforced, allowing substandard and hazardous toys to remain prevalent in the market. Regulatory agencies face challenges in monitoring compliance, leading to the continued circulation of unsafe toys. The findings are in consonance with the study of Okafor (2023), who identified weak enforcement mechanisms and inadequate public awareness as major barriers to effective toy safety regulation in Nigeria. Likewise, Eze (2023) posited that despite the existence of toy safety policies, a lack of stringent oversight has resulted in poor adherence to regulatory standards. These studies highlight the need for improved enforcement strategies and consumer awareness initiatives to enhance toy safety in Nigeria.

Implications for Child Safety and Early Learning in Nigeria

The findings of this study have significant implications for child safety and early learning in Nigeria. Ensuring the safety of toys is crucial in reducing health hazards that may compromise the well-being of children. When healthcare providers take an active role in educating caregivers and monitoring toy safety, the risks associated with hazardous materials, choking hazards, and toxic substances can be minimized. This directly contributes to a healthier developmental environment for children. In terms of education, safe toys enhance cognitive, social, and motor skill development, strengthening early learning outcomes. Exposure to unsafe toys, on the other hand, can lead to injuries or health complications that may hinder a child's ability to engage effectively in learning activities. Ensuring access to safe play materials makes learning experiences more enriching and free from avoidable risks. Moreover, effective regulatory enforcement of toy safety standards has broader implications for consumer protection and public health. Strengthening policies on toy safety ensures that substandard and dangerous products do not enter the market, safeguarding children's overall development. Healthcare providers, educators, and policymakers must collaborate to establish a comprehensive framework that prioritizes child safety and enhances early learning experiences.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study expands the understanding of the role of healthcare providers in ensuring toy safety and protecting children from hazardous play materials. It provides empirical evidence on the impact of unsafe toys on child safety and early learning, bridging the gap between healthcare interventions and educational outcomes. The study also highlights the effectiveness of existing regulations in Nigeria, offering insights into areas where policy improvements are needed. Furthermore, it enriches academic discourse through the integration of perspectives from public health, early childhood education, and consumer safety, creating a multidisciplinary foundation for future research. Addressing a critical but underexplored issue in Nigeria, this study serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and healthcare professionals in designing strategies to enhance child safety and promote a secure learning environment.

Conclusion

The findings of the study highlight the significant role of healthcare providers in promoting toy safety and child protection through education, advocacy, and early intervention. Their contributions help mitigate the risks associated with unsafe toys, reducing injuries and ensuring a safer play environment for children. Furthermore, the study established that unsafe toys pose severe threats to child safety and early learning, leading to physical harm, toxic exposure, and developmental setbacks. Additionally, the study revealed that existing toy safety regulations in Nigeria are largely ineffective due to poor enforcement and limited public awareness, allowing the circulation of hazardous toys. These findings emphasize the need for stronger regulatory enforcement, increased consumer education, and collaborative efforts among healthcare providers, policymakers, and parents to enhance child safety and improve early learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Healthcare providers should actively engage in public awareness campaigns to educate parents and caregivers on the dangers of unsafe toys and how to select safe play materials for children.
2. The government should strengthen the enforcement of toy safety regulations by implementing stricter monitoring measures to prevent the distribution of hazardous toys in the market.
3. Manufacturers and toy importers should adhere to international safety standards and ensure that toys meet quality control measures before being sold to consumers.
4. Schools and early childhood education centers should integrate toy safety education into their curriculum to help children and caregivers understand the importance of safe play materials.
5. Policymakers should establish collaborative frameworks involving healthcare professionals, regulatory bodies, and consumer protection agencies to enhance toy safety policies and ensure child protection.

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