AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMON HAZARDS AND SAFETY PRACTICES IN HOTELS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated common hazards and safety practices in hotels located in Cross River State, Nigeria. Mixed-methods research design was employed, utilizing triangulation to collect data through questionnaire, semi structured interviews and observational checklist. Multistage sampling design combined with stratified purposive sampling was employed to select the LGAs and to categorize hotels within each region. Data were collected from 122 hotel workers in 18 hotels in Cross River State. The findings revealed that 14.75% of the workers identified long working hours with low pay as a common hazard in the hotels. Fire outbreaks constituted 4.01% of the hazards that occurred in the hotels. However, the compliance level with the hotel safety measures was inconsistent across the different categories of hotels. Safety compliance was poor in the one-star hotels across the regions. Hotel workers and guests particularly in the lower ranked hotels may be vulnerable to poor working and service conditions, which could potentially undermine the reputation of Cross River State as a tourism destination.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, hospitality, hotels, safety and hazard.

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of many regions including Cross River State, Nigeria, which is known for its tourism and cultural attractions. Hotels which are part of this industry provide accommodation and related services to tourists, business travelers and other visitors. However, the hotel environment is susceptible to a variety of hazards ranging from fire outbreaks and electrical faults to slips, trips, falls and even security breaches. Thus, safety has become one of the core requirements for the effective operation of hotels. This is because the hotels serve people of different sociocultural background. The operations of the hotels are both complex and varied, likely to expose the workers and visitors to various risks. The safety and well being of both the workers in the hotels and visitors relies on effective safety practices and proper management of the hazards.

Chan and Lam (2013) described safety as a situation in which threats and circumstances that might cause physical, biological or mental harm are minimized thereby protecting the health of people and their property. Hazards in hotels are inevitable. Work places including hotels are sometimes potentially hazardous environment where millions of employees spend at least one third of their life time (Takele & Admassu, 2006). Common hazards in hotels include littered surrounding, food contaminants, electrical faults, wet or slippery floors, malfunctioned machinery, stress, sharp objects, prolong sitting and insecurity (Ikechukwu & Aja, 2023).

The hotel staff could be exposed to any of these health hazards in their work environment depending on the specific tasks they perform (Alazab, 2003). The occurrence of physical, chemical, biological, mechanical

and ergonomic hazards in the work environment such as a hotel has both economic and social impact because it may lead to sickness, increase absenteeism, loss of production, increase pay of compensation for disability, increased death, reduced staff morale and creation of poor working conditions within the organization (Abdalla *et al.,* 2017). A Study by Lawal, *et al.,* (2018) has emphasized that effective safety practices involves comprehensive risk assessments, fire safety drills, proper signage and regular staff training drills. In addition to these recommended measures includes the establishment of safety committees, the use of personal protective equipment (OSHA, 2000), food safety drills (Pilling *et al.,* 2008), adherence to good housekeeping practices, hazard identification (Magnanelli, 2020) and implementation of well defined emergency procedures (Navon *et al.,* 2007).

The hotels in Cross River State (CRS) are important key players in promoting tourism and the destination Cross River, but there is a growing concern over the adequacy of safety measures within these establishments in Cross River State. Many hotels especially low rank hotels may not strictly adhere to safety regulations or may lack the resources to implement comprehensive safety procedures. Incidents of fire, theft, food contamination and physical injury continue to be reported raising questions about the effectiveness of current hazard control mechanisms. Given the increasing demand for the hospitality services in Cross River State, it becomes imperative to evaluate the nature of these hazards and the existing safety measures in place in order to suggest improvement to safeguard lives and property.

1.1 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study was to assess the common hazards and evaluate the safety practices adopted by the hotels in Cross River State. The objectives were to:

1. Identify common hazards encountered in hotels within Cross River State
2. Examine the existing safety practices implemented to mitigate these hazards
3. Evaluate the level of compliance of hotels with relevant safety standards.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a mixed method design, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and observations. This approach involved methodological triangulation drawing data from multiple sources including surveys, semi-structured interviews and through observation to enhance the validity and comprehensiveness of the findings on hazards and safety practices in hotels in Cross River State (Robin, 2018). Structured questionnaire were administered to the workers in the hotels to identify the prevalence and patterns of hazards, existing safety practices and compliance levels in the hotels. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the managers and the heads of the units in the hotels to explore the reasons for non-compliance with safety measures using a checklist. Also, direct observation and safety walk-through were conducted around the hotel premises during nighttime and weekends to obtain real life evidence of safety practices. These observations were carried out using a checklist to verify actual practices against those reported by the hotel staff.

2.1 Study area

Location and size

Cross River State lies within Latitudes $4^0 33'0''$ and $6^0 35'0''$ North of the Equator and Longitudes $8^0 5'0''$ and $9^0 6'0''$ East of the Greenwich Meridian. Cross River State is bounded on the North by Benue, on the South by Akwa Ibom State, on the East by Republic of Cameroun and on the West by Abia and Ebonyi State respectively (Figure I). Cross River State has a total area of 20,156sqkm (Cross River State Report for Congress, 2008).

Climate and Vegetation

Cross River State falls within the tropical rainforest where rainfall is heavy. It has two seasons, the rainy and the dry season, with rainfall of 3000mm and 30^0C mean annual temperature, except in Obudu Plateau (Ushie, 2012). Five distinct ecological zones are

FIG. 1: The map of Cross River State and study area
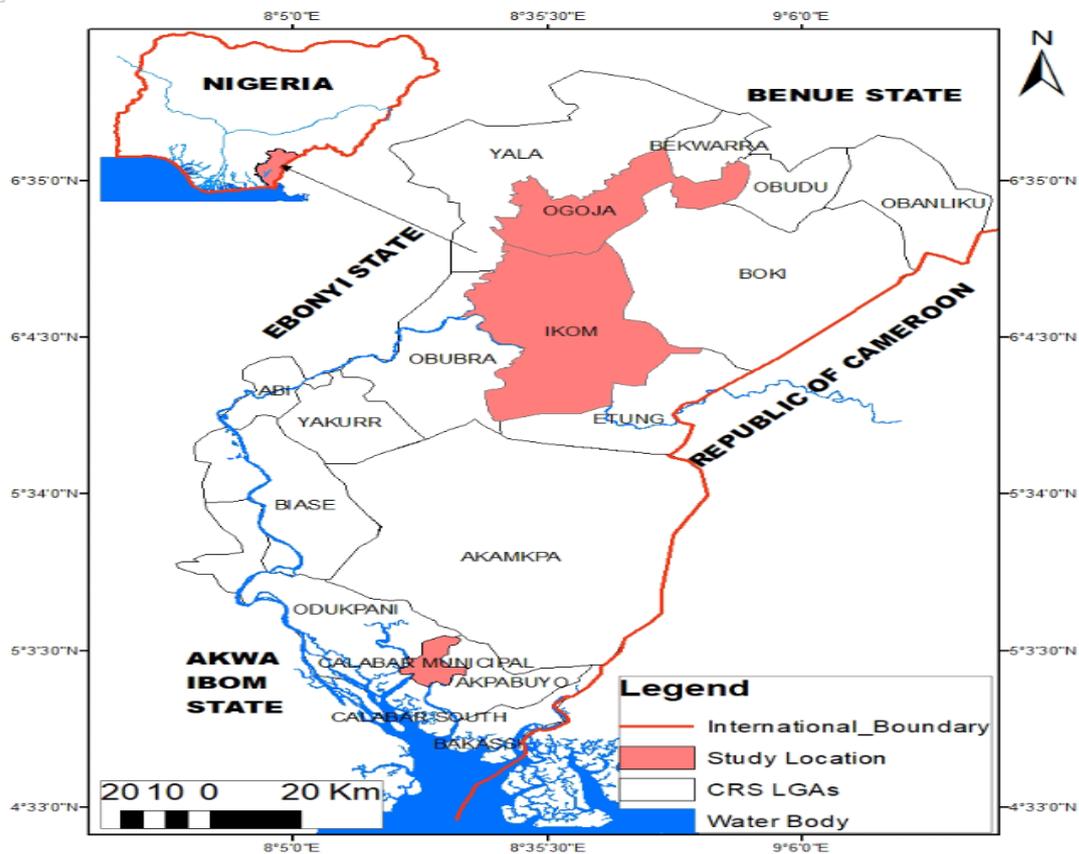
Source: Cross River Geographic Information Agency, Calabar (CRGIA).

identified in Cross River State ranging from mangrove and swamp forests towards the coast, tropical rainforest further inland and savanna woodlands in the northern parts of the state, while some parts of Obudu offer montane vegetation (CR-SEEDS, 2007). Cross River State is rich in biodiversity and is known worldwide for its ecotourism potentials (Philip *et al.,* 2014).

History of hotels in Cross River State

The history of hotels in Cross River State can be traced to the establishment of African Club in 1904 in Calabar. The British erected the African Club as a relaxation and event center along Calabar Road, Calabar.

Nsa (2017) noted that between 1967 to 1979 metropolitan hotel was built with 150 rooms. In 2003 due to development in the tourism sector in the State, many hotels were built to accommodate visitors and tourists. Today, Cross River State has a total of 359 duly registered hotels with the Cross River State Tourism Bureau spread in the 18 Local Government Areas (Nsa, 2017).

2.2 Sampling technique and sampling size

The study population comprised 359 registered hotels in CRS by the Cross River

State Tourism Bureau. Cross River State is divided into three geographical regions (south, central and north) comprising a total of 18 LGAs. A multistage sampling design was employed. At the first stage one LGA was purposively selected from each region using a criterion of having at least 20 registered hotels. Thus, Calabar Municipality was selected for the South, Ikom for the central and Ogoja for the north. At the second stage, hotels in the selected LGAs were stratified by star rating into three categories such as three-star, two-star and one-star. A quota based stratified purposive sampling approach was then use to select the hotels from each stratum as recommended for heterogeneous populations (Saunders et al., 2019). The sample size was determined using a 5% proportion of the total hotel population (359). This resulted to 18 hotels allocated across the strata and LGAs.

TABLE I: Sampled hotels and respondents in the region.

Hotel ranks	Southern region (Calabar Municipality)	Central region (Ikom LGA)	Northern region (Ogoja LGA)	Sampled respondents
3 Star	Metropolitan, UG WIS, Hogis and Monty Suite.	Ebenezer Beim Excellence	All Star hotel	71
2 Star	Pyramid, Adsuit and Five Two Zero Hotel.	Jorany, Gold Palm and Side View Hotel		32
1 Star	Etaval and Kal Vegas	Kengto Plaza and Living Fine Hotel	Gakuna and Monique Hotel	19
Total	9	6	3	122

Source: Researchers fieldwork, 2024.

The respondents were workers in the hotels and were interviewed based on their availability, resulting to 122 respondents across the regions.

3. RESULTS

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that common hazards identified in hotels in CRS include long working hours with low pay (14.75%), the presence of sharp objects (12.29%) and electrical risks such as overloaded appliances, faulty wiring and exposed sockets (9.01%). Table 3 revealed that, 25.40% of the respondents working in the hotels in CRS reported experiencing incidents related to workplace hazards. Among these, 4.01% reported fire outbreaks and falls from heights, while 3.27% suffered burns from hot water or oil. In addition to these, 0.82% of the respondents reported allergic reactions to food and drowning. Furthermore, Table 3 revealed that 31.14% of the respondents reported sustaining injuries from incidents that occurred in the hotels. Injuries resulting from fire outbreaks accounted for 5.73% of the responses. Notably, no injuries were reported in connection with cholera outbreaks and allergic reactions to food. The data presented in Table 4 further revealed that some hotels had basic safety measures such as functional fire extinguishers,

TABLE 2: Common hazards in hotels in Cross River State

S/N	Common hazards	Frequency	Per cent (%)
1.	Vectors such as flies, mosquitoes and rodents	4	3.27
2.	Chemicals used as food additives	10	8.19

3.	Chemicals used for cleaning	9	7.37
4.	Overloaded electrical appliances, wrong wiring, open sockets etc.	11	9.01
5.	Sharp objects like knife	15	12.29
6.	Wet floor around the pools	6	4.91
7.	Odour	3	2.46
8.	Noise	12	9.80
9.	Littered waste	4	3.37
10.	Dirty drainages	3	2.46
11.	Overgrown weeds	5	4.10
12.	Long working hours/low pay	18	14.75
13.	Broken tiles	10	8.19
14.	Poor lighting/ventilation	5	4.10
15.	Security challenges like theft, kidnapping, armed robbery etc.	7	5.73
	Total	122	100

Source: Researchers field work (2024).

TABLE 3: Hazards occurrence in hotels in Cross River State

Incidents			Cases of injuries		Near misses		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Fire outbreaks	5	4.10	7	5.73	10	8.20	22	18.03
Hot water burn	4	3.27	6	4.92	7	5.74	17	13.93
Burn by hot oil	4	3.27	5	4.10	8	6.55	17	13.93
Cholera outbreak	2	1.64	0	0	0	0	2	1.64
Allergic reactions due to food	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	1	0.82
Drowning in pools	1	0.82	0	0	2	1.64	3	2.46
Falling from height	5	4.10	3	2.46	6	4.92	14	11.48
Slip and fall	4	3.27	8	6.55	9	7.38	21	17.20
Cut by sharp objects	3	2.46	6	4.92	8	6.55	17	13.93
Theft, robbery and kidnapping	2	1.64	3	2.46	3	2.46	8	6.56
Total	31	25.40	38	31.14	53	43.44	122	100

Source: Researchers field work, 2024.

TABLE 4: Safety practices by the hotels

Safety practices	3 Star		2 Star		1 Star		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Provision of potable water	9	7.37	4	3.27	1	0.82	14	11.47
Netted doors/windows	8	6.56	2	1.64	2	1.64	12	9.84
Safety rules	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	1	0.82
Provision of PPEs	2	1.64	1	0.82	0	0	3	2.46

	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Regular Medical checks for staff	2	1.64	1	0.82	1	0.82	4	3.27
Provision of First Aid box	7	5.74	3	2.46	1	0.82	11	9.01
Fire Extinguisher	9	7.37	5	4.10	3	2.46	17	13.93
Urinals with steady water supply	5	4.10	2	1.64	1	0.82	8	6.56
Provision standard waste bin	7	5.74	3	2.46	2	1.62	12	9.84
Availability of generator	7	5.74	5	4.10	3	2.46	15	12.30
Availability of refrigerator	8	6.56	5	4.10	4	3.27	17	13.93
Schedule of work	6	4.92	1	0.82	1	0.82	8	6.56
Total	71	58.20	32	26.23	19	15.57	122	100

Source: Researchers Fieldwork, 2024.

refrigerators and access to potable water, which accounted for 13.93% and 11.47% of the responses respectively. Only a few of the hotels provided PPEs and had established safety rules, representing just 2.46% and 0.82 % of the responses. In terms of compliance with safety standards, the data in Table 5 shows that all the categories of hotels sampled, regardless of rating had standard waste bins, functional refrigerators, fire extinguishers and perimeter fencing representing 100% of the responses. However, compliance with practices such as regular staff training and the use of visitors' identification tags were significantly low. Only 16.66% of the two-star hotels adhered to these measures, while none of the one- star hotels reported compliance.

TABLE 5: Compliance of hotels with safety standards

Safety standards	3 Star		2 Star		1 Star	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Potable water	6	100	5	83.33	3	50
Medical checks	5	83.33	3	50	1	1.66
Standard waste bin	6	100	6	100	6	100
Functional refrigerator	6	100	6	100	6	100
Provision of PPEs	3	50	2	33.33	1	16.66
Staff training	2	33.33	1	16.66	0	0
Fire extinguisher	6	100	6	100	6	100
Fire resistant door	5	83.33	3	50	0	0
Muster point	5	83.33	4	66.66	1	16.66
Urinals with water	6	100	6	100	1	16.66
First Aid box	6	100	5	83.33	3	50
Generator	6	100	6	100	6	100
Work Schedule	6	100	6	100	1	1.66
Security personnel	6	100	6	100	6	100
Availability of wash hand station	6	100	4	66.66	1	16.66
Welfare packages	3	50	1	16.66	0	0
Perimeter fencing	6	100	6	100	6	100
Surveillance camera	6	100	2	33.33	0	0
Ventilation/lighting	6	100	3	50	1	16.66
Visitor's identification tag	2	33.33	1	16.66	0	0
Bucket with sand	4	66.66	1	16.66	0	0
Emergency exit	6	100	3	50	0	0

Safety rules	4	66.66	2	33.33	0	0
Clean surroundings, drainages and no bushes	6	100	3	50	2	33.33
Netted doors/windows	6	100	6	100	6	100

Source: Researchers fieldwork, 2024.

4.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that physical hazards, electrical risks and prolonged working hours are the primary safety concerns in hotels across Cross River State. These results are consistent with the observation of Rajat (2019) who similarly identified these issues as common workplace hazards in hotels. Hotel workers in CRS reported experiencing various incidents and injuries, which can be attributed to the failure of the hotel operators to implement and enforce adequate safety measures. This finding aligns with the work of Salvaraji *et al.,* (2022), who noted that the occurrence of workplace accidents is often a result of inadequate compliance with safety regulations. In addition to this, the level of compliance with safety standards among the hotels revealed that only a few conducted safety trainings, but such trainings was not reported in the one- star hotels. This lack of training may have contributed to the incidents recorded in these establishments. This observation supports the findings of Guerin and Toland (2019), which identified inadequate training as a major contributing factor to workplace injuries. It also aligns with Bayram *et al.,* (2022) and Tetzlaff *et al.,* (2021) assertion that safety training increases workers awareness of workplace specific hazards and equips them with knowledge of proper safety practices.

5. CONCLUSION

The study explored the prevalent hazards and corresponding safety practices in hotels across the geographical regions in Cross River State, Nigeria. The hotels in Cross River State have common hazards and have implemented some safety measures such as the provision fire extinguisher, first aid box and standard waste bins but the compliance levels varies significantly with many of the one-star hotel lacking basic safety standards. The study concludes that while the three-star and some two-star hotels in Cross River State maintain more structured safety procedures, the one-star hotels often overlook critical hazard controls largely due to their smaller size and limited facilities. This inconsistency poses significant risks to both the staff and the guests in the hotel environment. Thus, it is recommended that the staff in the hotels must be exposed to regular safety training and safety standards must be implemented and enforced in all the categories of hotels in Cross River State.

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