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Original Article

### Enhancing School Health Services: The Importance of Health Appraisal for Secondary School Students in Warri Metropolis

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#### Keywords:

Healthful Living,  
Health Appraisal,  
Health Status and  
Students.

Promoting healthful living and health appraisal of students and staff in schools is one of the duties of the school health services. This study was designed to find out the socio-economic indices of healthful living of school health appraisal on the health status of students in some selected schools in Warri Metropolis. The survey research design method was adopted and delimited to public secondary school students in Warri Metropolis. 150 respondents were randomly selected from fifteen (15) schools for the study. A Questionnaire of 19 items statement whose reliability was 0.74, was used for data collection. Data analysis was done using percentage and chi-square test at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that there are significant socio-economic indices of school health appraisal on the health status of students. It was revealed that identification of common health problems and students maximally being involved in the school health programme were found as socio-economic indices are significant on students' health status. The study recommended that school management, in collaboration with PTA and government, should endeavour to sustain and promote the school health service unit with the necessary equipment and funds available for efficient health appraisal services in schools.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Health appraisal is a fundamental component of school health services worldwide. It encompasses a series of procedures designed to assess and promote students' physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. These included screening tests, teacher observations, dental /medical examinations, family health histories, and psychological assessments (Moorcroft et al., 2018; WHO, 2021). Global organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have consistently advocated for integrating health-promoting initiatives into school systems. In 2021, WHO and UNESCO introduced new global standards aimed at enhancing the role of schools in promoting student health and well-being, emphasising that healthy student populations are critical to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and 4 (Quality Education).

At the regional level, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the implementation of comprehensive school health services, including health appraisal, remains suboptimal. Countries in the region face numerous challenges such as limited infrastructure, inadequate personnel, poor intersectoral collaboration, and weak policy enforcement (Auger et al., 2010). These limitations significantly hinder the effective delivery of school health programs, resulting in missed opportunities for early intervention, routine health screenings, and health education. Socioeconomic disparities such as poverty, low level of education for parents, and inadequate health systems further compound inequalities in access to quality school-based health services (Guo et al., 2018).

In Nigeria, and particularly in Warri Metropolis, Delta State, the implementation of school health services is often fragmented and insufficient. Although national policies support school health programs, essential services such as routine medical examinations, pre-enrollment screenings, functional sick bays, availability of first aid kits, and deployment of trained school health personnel are frequently lacking (Erumi, 2002; Ikogho & Akpokiniovo, 2025; Durowade et al., 2017). Socioeconomic indicators such as household income, parental occupation, access to healthcare, and school funding critically affect the ability of schools to deliver effective health appraisal services. These factors also influence the early management of students' health concerns (Awadalla et al., 2020; Ikogho & Igbudu, 2013).

Despite the recognised relevance of school health services, several critical gaps remain:

- Limited research on the effect of socioeconomic indicators on how the health appraisal practices in Nigerian secondary schools are implemented, especially in urban centres like Warri Metropolis.
- Inadequate documentation on the availability and quality of health appraisal components, including psychological testing, dental examinations, and cumulative health records in schools.
- Scarcity of stakeholder-focused studies that examine the key roles of parents, teachers, and health professionals in sustaining school health services.

- Insufficient evaluation of how national policies are enforced at the school level and how the schools adhere to health appraisal standards.
- Lack of integration of global health promotion standards into school systems, particularly in underserved socio-economic settings.

This study therefore investigated the socio-economic indices that influence the smooth incorporation of health appraisal practices in secondary schools within Warri Metropolis. It identifies contextual barriers and proposes actionable strategies to strengthen students' health and institutionalise sustainable health behaviour in school environments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Elements of Health Appraisal

The elements of Health appraisal in schools are structured to ensure an extensive and in-depth understanding of students' well-being. These practices are key in the early detection of health issues, ensuring that preventive health behaviours are promoted, which in turn translate to timely interventions. The key components of health appraisal included the following:

#### *Medical Examination:*

This involves the physical assessment of students to identify potential or existing health issues. Such examinations are important, especially during the school admission exercise and may be conducted periodically throughout the academic journey of a student. They are preventive in nature and help to identify conditions that could impair students' learning and growth (WHO, 2021).

#### *Screening Tests:*

Screening test is a cost-effective way of identifying certain health challenges of students at risk for some ailments. The tests are hearing tests, vision screening, measurement of weight and height, and sometimes assessments for anaemia and tuberculosis. Such tests enable early detection of

impairments that may impact academic performance if left untreated (Erumi, 2002; WHO, 2021; Ikogho & Onoharigho, 2025).

#### *Observation by Teachers:*

Teachers observe the students they interact with on a daily basis. As such, they are capable of observing changes in appearance, behaviour, and performance that may be indicative of underlying health issues. Thus, Buhr and Tannen (2020) opined that properly trained teachers can refer students for further medical evaluation, contributing to the early identification of health issues.

#### *Health History and Records:*

The collection and effective maintenance of a detailed health history/cumulative health records for each student is considered essential. These records provided the needed baseline data with which health professionals can track changes in the health status of students over time. They also facilitated communication between schools, healthcare providers, and families, especially when managing chronic illnesses or disabilities (Ikogho & Akpokiniovo, 2025; Guo et al., 2018; Ikogho & Ikogho, 2022).

#### *Psychological and Mental Health Assessments:*

Studies indicated that in the light of increased awareness about students' mental health, psychological evaluations should be incorporated into school health services. These assessments included screening for depression, anxiety or any learning disabilities. Such assessments are designed specifically for the critical periods of the growing adolescence, due to their developmental changes (WHO, 2021; Awadalla et al., 2020; Erumi, 2012).

#### *Dental Examinations:*

Studies have indicated that oral health is often neglected despite significant implications for general health and academic performance. Regular dental check-ups help to identify issues such as cavities, gum disease or poor oral hygiene. These

can lead to pain, reduced concentration in class, as well as being a cause for absenteeism (WHO, 2021; Durowade et al., 2017; Han et al., 2019).

Despite these components of health appraisal, implementation remains inconsistent, particularly in underserved areas such as parts of Warri Metropolis (Igabari et al., 2025; Erumi, 2014). Many schools lack the resources, trained personnel, or policy enforcement mechanisms to sustain these essential health services (Ikogho & Igbudu, 2013). This study therefore examined these gaps by analysing how socioeconomic factors shape the delivery of these appraisal components, ultimately impacting students' health.

**Statement of the Problem:** Global economic challenges are a reality, and Nigeria is not exempt. The socio-economic status in Warri Metropolis is very challenging, affecting the school-aged child greatly. Although it varies from one family to another. Students from poor home backgrounds may experience poor access to health care services, facilities, and teachers who lack the knowledge of the importance of routine health appraisal could have a devastating effect on the health status of students within the school walls. Thus, this study was designed to examine socio-economic indices of healthful living of health appraisal on the health status of post-primary school students in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State.

**Research Questions:** The following four (4) research questions were answered:

- Would post-primary school students have the knowledge of school health appraisal in Warri Metropolis?
- Would School health appraisal enhance the social interaction and health status of post-primary school students in Warri Metropolis?
- Would the lack of funds determine the school health appraisal effect on health status among post-primary school students in Warri Metropolis?
- What are the health benefits of school health appraisal on health status among post-primary school students in Warri Metropolis?

### Research Hypothesis

- There will be no significant social indices for school health appraisal on health status among students in post-primary schools in Warri Metropolis.
- There will be no significant economic indices for school health appraisal on health status among post-primary school students in Warri Metropolis.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design using a cross-sectional survey. This approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for the collection of data on socio-economic indices of healthful living and school health appraisal as they relate to students' health status in post-primary schools. According to Erumi (2016), survey designs are effective for gathering information about people, their characteristics, and behaviours.

### Study Area and Population

The study was carried out in Warri Metropolis, targeting students in post-primary schools. The population comprised students in Junior Secondary School 3 (JSS 3) and Senior Secondary School 3 (SSS 3), who were deemed most relevant for assessing the study variables. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select a sample size of 150 students. This approach ensured that participants were representative of the target group and provided data pertinent to the study objectives. The research instrument was a questionnaire structured to collect data on socio-economic indices, school health appraisals, and students' health status. The instrument was validated by a panel of experts, comprising three specialists, two in Health Education and one in Counselling

Psychology. Their inputs ensured the validity of the instrument to meet the study's objectives. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed to the selected students. Respondents were provided with clear instructions to ensure accurate and consistent responses. The collected data were analysed with descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores to

summarise the socio-economic indices and school health appraisal data. Inferential statistics, where necessary, were applied to test relationships and draw conclusions about the health status of the participants.

## RESULTS

**Table I: Distribution of Respondents' Personal Data**

Variable	Option	Respondents	Percentage	Total
SEX	Male	79	52.7%	150
	Female	71	47.3%	
AGE	9--11 Years	43	28.7%	150
	12-14 Years	86	57.3%	
	14-16 Years	21	14%	
CLASS	JSS 3	35	23.3%	150
	SSS 3	115	76.7%	

The data in Table I show a relatively balanced distribution of gender among respondents, with 52.7% male and 47.3% female, suggesting that perspectives on health appraisal practices were gathered equally from both sexes. A majority (57.3%) of the participants were aged 12–14 years, reflecting early adolescence as a critical stage for health education interventions, while 28.7% were aged 9–11 years and only 14% were 14–16 years, indicating fewer older adolescents in the sample. Additionally, 76.7% of respondents were in Senior Secondary School 3 (SSS 3), compared to 23.3% in

Junior Secondary School 3 (JSS 3), possibly due to assumptions that older students can better articulate experiences with school health services. These demographic patterns provided a meaningful context for understanding students' awareness, access, and attitudes toward health appraisal practices in the region of study.

### Research Question 1:

Would post-primary school students have the knowledge of school health appraisal in Warri Metropolis?

**Table 2: Analysis of Students' Knowledge of School Health Appraisal**

s/n	Items	Strongly Agreed (%)	Agreed (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total
1.	School health appraisal is the assessment of an individual's status	42 (28%)	78 (52%)	23 (15.3%)	7 (46%)	150
2.	School health appraisal is an aspect of school health services that deals with the total evaluation of students/students' health status and personnel.	22 (14.6%)	67 (44.7%)	55 (36.7%)	6 (4%)	150
3.	School health appraisal consists of screening for vision, hearing, speech, physical appearance, etc.	40 (26.7%)	66 (44.2%)	34 (22.6%)	10 (6.7%)	150



The table above shows the analysis of students' knowledge of school health appraisal. From the above analysis, it was revealed that 80% (120) of respondents agreed that school health appraisal is the assessment of individual status, while 20% (30) of respondents disagreed with the statement. In item 2, 59.3% (89) of respondents agreed that school health appraisal is an aspect of school health services that deals with the total evaluation of student's/students' health status and personnel, while 40.7% (61) of respondents which was disagreed less with the statement. In item 3, 70.7% (106) of respondents, which is higher, agreed that school health appraisal consists of screening for vision, hearing, speech, physical appearance, etc., while 29.3% (44) of respondents, which is less, disagreed.

From the above responses and the analysis in the table above, it was observed that the percentage of respondents who agreed with each of the item statements was higher. This means students in post-primary schools in Warri Metropolis have knowledge of school health appraisal. This finding agrees with Erumi (2012), who observed that most secondary schools in urban settings conduct health appraisal twice a week.

### Research Question 2:

Would School health appraisal enhance the social interaction and health status of post-primary school students in Warri Metropolis?

**Table 3: Analysis of Students' Social Interaction and Health Status**

s/n	Items	Strongly Agreed (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total (%)
1.	School health appraisal helps to fix the students in a given social group.	40 (26.7%)	61 (40.7%)	40 (26.7%)	9 (6%)	150
2.	The result of the school health appraisal helps to determine the social activities the child can perform in the school.	50 (33.3%)	60 (40%)	39 (26%)	5 (3.3%)	150
3.	School appraisal will help to improve social interaction among students.	13 (8.7%)	80 (53.3%)	50 (33.3%)	7 (4.7%)	150
4.	Social embarrassment and stigma can affect students through the school health appraisal.	30 (20%)	50 (33.3%)	60 (40%)	10 (6.7%)	150

From the data presented in the table above, it was found that in item 1, 67.5% (101) of respondents agreed that school health appraisal helps to be fixed in the child in a given social group, while 32.7% (49) of respondents disagreed with the statement. In item 2, 73.3% (106) of the respondents agreed that on the statement that the result of the school health appraisal helps to determine the social activities that the child can perform in the school, while 29.3% (44) respondents disagreed with the statement. In item 3, 62% (93) of respondents agreed that school appraisal helps to improve social interaction among school students, while 38% (57) of respondents

disagreed with the statement. In item 4, 63.3% (80) of respondents, which was also higher, agreed that social tags are removed from students through school health appraisal, while 46.6% (70) of respondents disagreed with the statement. These findings aligned with global views that health appraisal should encompass physical, emotional, and social well-being (Moorcroft et al., 2018; WHO, 2021). The inclusion of social development indicators, such as peer interaction and the removal of stigmatisation, reflects WHO and UNESCO's (2021) call for a health-promoting school environment in support of SDGs 3 and 4. In Nigeria,

where such services remain fragmented (Ikogho & Akpokiniovo, 2025; Durowade et al., 2017), ensuring these social factors is key for improving the school environment.

### Research Question 3:

Would a lack of funds determine the school health appraisal effect on health status among post-primary school students in Warri Metropolis?

**Table 4: Analysis of Economic Indices of School Health Appraisal on Health Status**

s/n	Items	Strongly Agreed (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total (%)
1.	School health appraisal costs a lot of money to the school management.	25 (16.7%)	60 (40%)	60 (40%)	5 (3.3%)	150
2.	School health appraisal helps to reduce unnecessary future expenses on a child's health.	30 (20%)	78 (52%)	32 (21.3%)	10 (6.7%)	150
3.	The outcome of school health appraisal prevents emergency health problems/cost of health care.	25 (16.7%)	71 (47.3%)	50 (33.3%)	4 (2.7%)	150
4.	School health appraisal prevents schools from emergency health care risk, which usually takes money.	20 (13.3%)	82 (54.7%)	40 (26.7%)	8 (5.3%)	150

In Table 4 above, the data presentation and analysis show that in item 1, 56.7% (85) of respondents agreed that School health appraisal causes a lot of money to school management, while 43.3% (65) of respondents disagreed with the statement. In item 2, 72% (108) of the respondents agreed that school health appraisal helps to reduce unnecessary future expenses on a child's health, while 28% (42) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. In item 3, 64% (96) of respondents agreed that the outcome of school health appraisal helps to prevent emergency health problems/cost of health care, while 36% (48) of respondents disagreed with the statement. In item 4, 68% (102) of respondents said that school health appraisal prevents schools from emergency health risks, which usually takes money from school students and management, while 32% (48) of respondents disagreed.

These findings tallied with existing literature that highlighted the financial implications of school health services in areas with resource constraints. Such studies have emphasised that efficient health appraisal can reduce long-term health costs by early detection (WHO, 2021; Awadalla et al., 2020). However, in Nigeria, where such services are underfunded (Durowade et al., 2017), economic constraints would hinder to a large extent the sustainability of the such a program.

### Research Question 4:

What are the health benefits of school health appraisal on health status among post-primary school students in Warri Metropolis?

**Table 5: Analysis on Health Benefits of Health Appraisal on Health Status.**

s/n	Item	Strongly Agreed (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total (%)
1.	School health appraisal helps to identify common health problems among school students.	40 (26.7%)	71 (47.3%)	30 (20%)	9 (6%)	150
2.	School students and staff's health status is improved due to health appraisal.	37 (24.7%)	72 (48%)	31 (20%)	10 (6.7%)	150
3.	Students/students' health is given attention due to the result of the health appraisal.	30 (20%)	48 (32%)	64 (42.7%)	8 (5.3%)	150
4.	First aid care is given to students as a result of a health appraisal.	40 (26.7%)	58 (38.7%)	44 (29.3%)	8 (5.3%)	150
5.	Students/students are arranged in a way that they will benefit from school activities due to the outcome of the health appraisal.	40 (26.7%)	58 (38.7%)	44 (29.3%)	8 (5.3%)	150
6.	Common health problems such as poor eyesight, poor hearing problem etc., are identified and improved upon due to health appraisal.	47 (31.3%)	59 (39.3%)	38 (25.3%)	6 (4%)	150

In the table above, the data presented and analysed show that in item 1, 74% (111) of respondents agreed that school health appraisal helps to identify common health problems among students, while 26% (39) of respondents disagreed with the statement. In item 2, 72.7% (109) of respondents said that school students and staff's health improve due to health appraisal, while 27.3% (41) of respondents said that school health appraisal does not improve school students' and staff health. In item 3, 52% (78) of respondents agreed that students' health is given attention due to the result of the school health appraisal, while 48% (72) of respondents which was less disagreed. In item 4 of the table, it was found that 65.4% (98) of respondents, which was higher, agreed that first aid care is given to students from the result of health appraisal, while 34.6% (52) of respondents, which was less, disagreed.

In item 5, the data presented shows that 61.3% (92) respondents agreed that students/students are arranged in a way they will benefit from school

activities due to the outcome of health appraisal, while 38.7% (58) respondents disagreed. In item 6, 70.6% (106) of respondents, which was higher, agreed that common health problems such as poor eyesight, poor hearing problems, etc., are identified and improve upon a clue to health appraisal, while 29.4% (44) of respondents which was less collectively disagreed with the statement.

From the above analysis of data in the table, it was found that the percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement items was higher. This means that the health benefits of school health appraisal include identification of common health problems among school students, improving of school students and staff health status, giving attention to student's health in a way it will benefits from school activities and help to identify common health problem such as poor eye sight, poor hearing problem etc.



**Hypothesis 1:**

There will be no significant social indices for school health appraisal on health status among students in post-primary school in Warri Metropolis

**Table 6:  $\chi^2$  Analysis of Significant Social Indices of Health Appraisal on Health Status**

Responses	Observed	Expected	$\chi^2$ Cal	$\chi^2$ Crit Value	df	Sig. Level	Decision
Strongly Agreed	33	37.5	42.17	7.815	3	0.05	Rejected
Agree	62	37.5					
Disagreed	47	37.5					
Strongly Disagree	8	37.5					
Total	150	150					

The table above shows the chi-square analysis of significant social indices for school health appraisal. From the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) analysis above, it was found that the  $\chi^2$  calculated value (42.17) was higher than the  $\chi^2$  critical value (7.815) under degree of Freedom 3 at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there are significant social indices

for school health appraisal among students in post-primary schools in Warri Metropolis.

**Hypothesis 2:**

There will be no significant economic indices for school health appraisal on health status among post-primary school students in Warri Metropolis.

**Table 7:  $\chi^2$  Analysis of Significant Economic Indices of Health Appraisal on Health Status**

Responses	Observed	Expected	$\chi^2$ Cal	$\chi^2$ Crit Value	df	Sig. Level	Decision
Strongly Agreed	25	37.5	62.72	7.815	3	0.05	Rejected
Agree	72	37.5					
Disagreed	46	37.5					
Strongly Disagree	8	37.5					
Total	150	150					

In Table 7 above, the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) calculation that the  $\chi^2$  calculated value (62.72) was greater than the  $\chi^2$  critical value (7.815) at 0.05 significant level under the degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This suggested that there are significant economic indices of school health appraisal among post-primary school students in the Warri Metropolis of Delta State.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings from this study provided useful insights about the knowledge, social interaction,

economic implications, and health benefits associated with school health appraisals in schools in Warri Metropolis. The study revealed that some students demonstrated a significant understanding of school health appraisals, recognising their role in assessing and promoting health. The majority of respondents (80%) agreed that health appraisals assess individual health status, 70.7% acknowledged the incorporation of screening for hearing, vision and other physical attributes. These findings aligned with Erumi (2012), who emphasised the necessity of teacher observations

and routine health checks in maintaining students' well-being. However, the minority who disagreed supported the idea for enhanced health education programs to bridge knowledge gaps (Ikogho & Onoharigbo, 2025).

**Social Interaction and Health Status.** School health appraisals were discovered to positively influence social interactions and students' health status. A huge proportion (67.5%) of respondents agreed that health appraisals help integrate students into social groups, and 73.3% affirmed their role in determining suitable social activities for students. These results are in agreement with Buhr and Tannen (2020), who highlighted the psychosocial benefits of health appraisals in fostering peer relationships and reducing stigmatisation. Despite these benefits, concerns about potential social embarrassment and stigma (expressed by 63.3% of respondents) indicated the need for sensitive health programs to mitigate negative perceptions.

**Economic Implications of Health Appraisal.** Economic factors surfaced as a significant determinant of an effective school health appraisal. While 72% of respondents agreed that health appraisals reduce future healthcare costs, 56.7% noted the financial burden they impose on school management. These findings resonated with Astell-Burt et al. (2012), who reported limited access to healthcare services among students from a poor economic background. Addressing these challenges requires strategic resource allocation and government support to ensure equitable access to health care services in schools.

The study highlighted several health benefits of these appraisals, including the early detection of health issues, prevention of communicable diseases, and promotion of overall well-being. These benefits were widely recognised by respondents, reinforcing the critical role of appraising students' health in enhancing students' academic performance and quality of life (Han et al., 2019). The inclusion of regular physical fitness tests, psychological evaluations, and cumulative records of health, as

suggested by Erumi (2010), can further optimise these benefits.

The findings underscore the relevance of school health appraisals in promoting the well-being of secondary school students in Warri Metropolis. While students generally demonstrated adequate knowledge of health appraisals, addressing socio-economic challenges and enhancing health education are critical for maximising their impact. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including schools, parents, and government agencies, are essential to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the programs. Other researchers should focus on developing cost-effective strategies for implementing health appraisals and exploring their long-term benefits on students' health and academic outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

School health appraisal, being a core element in school health services, has a crucial role to play in the health of the students during emergencies while students are in school under the auspices of the teacher's/school management. It identifies common health challenges of school children to enable teachers place them in appropriate position where they can benefit maximally from the school programme/activities, reduces tension probably generated by parents in regards to unhealthy school condition, help to supervise the health condition of students and give parents hope and confidence in line with students health while they are in school. This study, among other reasons, has demonstrated that school health appraisal is a necessary requisite for health assurance of students, for the prevention of unnecessary emergency health care expenses that may arise to parents'/school management due to students' unhealthy condition. Thus, it is therefore important for the government, school managements and parents to invest their resources into the school service unit in the school to ensure quality health appraisal of students and school personnel.

## Recommendations

Based on the following and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made;

- Government should endeavour to equip the units/departments with all the necessary tools needed for effective delivery of health services to the school children/personnel.
- Parents Teacher Association (PTA), in conjunction with school management, should participate actively in the provision of facilities and equipment necessary for school health appraisal.
- Pupils/students should be sensitised to make themselves available for regular health appraisal in the school premises.
- The government should employ and deploy adequate school health officials who are professionally trained to be in charge of health appraisal in schools.
- School management, in conjunction with PTA and government, should also try to make funds available for the effective running of school health appraisal and services.
- School teachers should also assist in the provision of knowledge and motivation of students for utilisation of health appraisal/services.

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