

# Parental awareness on Project Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) - Wash in Schools (WINS) program

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## *Abstract*

This study aimed to assess the awareness of the key school stakeholders of the implementation of water, sanitation and hygiene for all (WASH) in Schools (WinS) project of the Department of Education (DepEd). With the use of descriptive and quantitative research design, the data were gathered thru the use of survey questionnaire from 496 students and their parents. The results revealed that the students and parents were both agreed that they are aware of the implementation of WASH-WinS project in their school. Moreover, there is no significant difference between the assessments of students and parents. Hence, recommendations were given in the plan of action to add knowledge to the students thru seminars on water, sanitation and hygiene.

**Keywords:** WASH-WinS Project, stakeholders' awareness, water sanitation, hygiene in schools, communicable diseases

## **Parental awareness on Project Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) - Wash in Schools (WINS) program**

### **1. Introduction**

The challenges of water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) practices in communities of developing countries, such as the Philippines, are becoming alarming due to incessant reported cases of water related illnesses, which continues to be one of the major health challenges in many communities of these nations [UNICEF, 2008]. Accordingly, UNICEF (2008) and WHO (2010), reported that inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene issues account for a large part of the burden of illness and death in developing countries. With incessant reported cases of water related diseases in the hospitals and primary health care centers, which is a clear indication of drinking water contamination, poor sanitation, and abysmal hygiene practices, it was imperative to find an ways on how the communities could be reached to give solution to the looming danger on public health.

The teacher-student-parent-community approach on WaSH practices has been stressed to be a route by which the message of good and acceptable hygiene and sustainable practices can be addressed. This is because schools occupy the pride of place in the total community sanitation campaign. It has also been established that safe WaSH in schools can improve health, boost education accomplishment, promote gender fairness and have a constructive influence on communities (UNICEF/IRC, 2012). Schools are recognized to be the primary place in the community where the students stay during most of their waking time. School sanitation and hygiene education have been given importance and the effective implementation of plans on physical infrastructure, hygiene education and monitoring at school will result in a change in schools children's behavior that will afterward impact on the community. Hence, this study was undertaken in order to find out the awareness of the key stakeholders in school about the WASH-WinS Project. The key stakeholders are consist of the teachers, students, and their parents. The end view of determining the awareness of the key stakeholders was to draft a plan of action on increasing the awareness of the said stakeholders of the project WASH-WinS.

### **2. Literature Review**

The following are the related studies gathered which helped the researcher better understand the topic under investigation. Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 10, series of 2016 provides for the policy and guidelines for the water and sanitation in schools project. The policy aims to ensure correct knowledge and understanding among learners of effective hygiene and sanitation projects, improve equitable access to safe water, adequate toilets, and hand washing facilities, improve hygiene and sanitation practices among the learners to enable them to develop life-long positive hygiene and sanitation behaviors, ensure that schools are kept safe and clean through school-based solid waste management, proper drainage, elimination of breeding grounds for mosquitoes to prevent vector-borne diseases, and food sanitation, and engage public and private partners for program implementation and sustainability. This policy guides the elementary and secondary schools as to the proper implementation of the project which will ultimately leads to a safe and clean school environment necessary for the students to thrive in the learning community. As such, the schools whether public elementary or secondary make it a point to implement the project.

In the study conducted by Olukanni et al. (2014) they identified the social media platforms that will increase the awareness of the key stakeholders on the project WASH. They found out that since some project stakeholders may hardly have access to social media platform, planning could be to hold awareness meetings, particularly with district, wards and local units in target communities where people would be informed of the program objectives. There is need for school and village committees to meet regularly in order to better integrate the various activities related to WaSH education, thus increasing its effectiveness. This idea would also be publicized through Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media outlets. The use of weekly jingle/drama series on

radio and TV, local newspapers and community bulletin, and distribution of mentoring magazines in every school term to create awareness and developments on the project goals and objectives is also a laudable approach (Peters & Giovanni, 2021).

Local and State government authorities and ministries (Education, Health, Water Resources and Environment) should be contacted for intervention and aid. Ministry of Education Department of Curriculum administrators should also support in the communication of the project activities. This is their recommendations after having found the low awareness of the parents and the community of this critical project of the school. Involving families and communities in WASH in Schools interventions promotes a sense of ownership, which is a necessary prerequisite for sustainability. Involvement can take the shape of school management committees, parent-teacher associations or committees, specifically set up for WASH in Schools. These groups are particularly important if health and education departments or local authorities are not prepared to provide such services. Community mobilization and motivation will extend the impact of life skills development beyond schools to the whole community. If parents and the community understand the importance of appropriate hygienic behaviour, long-term effects will result (CFS WASH, 2017).

At the same time, the study conducted by Mohamed et al. (2016), found out that there is a need for more comprehensive educational programs to create awareness regarding the importance of hand hygiene particularly among parents and children. This is very important for prevention of communicable diseases in the community. Educating children on basic knowledge of infection and hand hygiene is crucial to minimize the risk of infection and transmission. It should be started during early learning environment at home where parents set good examples, followed by formal education in preschools, primary and secondary schools. Principles of hygiene should be made part of everyday life and the best way for parents to teach their children about good hygiene is to lead by example. Further, it could be deduced from the related studies reviewed that there is indeed a big role played by the parents and community in the implementation of the WASH project in schools. If the parents are indeed aware of these activities in school, then they will be able to continue the practice at home. In doing so, contagious diseases are prevented to spread (Nicholas, 2022).

As added by Fury and Lou (2023) findings show that school sanitation is getting worse. Sixty-five percent of schools had a basic sanitation service. As mentioned by Okulola and Fins (2023), it is not simply that new toilet facilities are not being built, but they are not maintained properly, they decay and not serve the purpose. Furthermore, School Toilet Report (2023) found out that unclean and neglected school toilets are a reality for many children. The knock-on effect is that children are reluctant to use toilet at school, leading to physical discomfort and poor concentration during lessons, and in some cases children even missing school. However, children are not talking to their parents about school toilets, leaving parents unaware and often assuming that their child's school toilets are clean and well-maintained.

## *2.1 Research Questions*

This study aimed to assess the awareness of the kindergarten learners and their parents of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) –WASH in Schools (WinS) project in order to draft a plan of action for further awareness of the key stakeholders. Specifically, the following were the questions answered.

- What is the assessment of the student and parents respondents on their assessment of the WASH-WinS project as to: water; sanitation; and hygiene?
- Is there any significant difference between the assessments of the students and parents?
- Based on the results, what plan of action could be proposed in order to further the awareness of the students and parents of WASH-WinS project in school?

## 2.2 Scope and Limitation

This research aimed to assess the WASH-WinS project awareness of the students and parents as to water, sanitation, and hygiene. It also aimed to find out if there is a significant difference between the assessments of students and parents. As a result, the study proposed an action plan to further the awareness of the students and parents regarding the WASH-WinS project of the school. The study was limited to the selected learners from grades 1 to 6 and their parents. As to the gender of the parent respondents, it was consisted only of who was available to answer the questionnaire. The parents of the students who answered the questionnaire were also asked to give their response to the same.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study used the descriptive quantitative research with the use of survey questionnaire as the main data gathering. Descriptive research design is concerned with the explanation of a phenomenon, a reality and circumstance. In this study, the particular phenomenon is the awareness of the learners and their parents of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in school project implemented by DepEd.

**Sampling.** The respondents of the study were the learners from grades 1 – 6 who were selected by random. A total of 248 respondents were used. Likewise, the parent of the selected learner was used as respondents, too. Parent respondents totalled to 248. Hence, a total of 496 respondents answered the survey questionnaire.

**Data Collection.** A questionnaire taken from the evaluation of WASH-WinS project was used to determine the awareness of the respondents, the learners and their parents. The researcher translated the items into Filipino for easy understanding of the same by the respondents. The translation was validated by experts in the field. The water indicators contained five (5) items, sanitation had 17 items, and hygiene has 13 items.

**Ethical Issues.** The consent of the parents were asked before administering the questionnaire to their children.

**Data Gathering Procedure.** The researcher asked first for the permission from proper authorities prior to the administration of the questionnaire. The parents were asked also for their consent in answering the questionnaire and in having their children participate, too, in the study.

## 4. Discussion of Results and Recommendations

The following are the results based on the data gathered.

### 4.1 Assessment of the Respondents of the WASH-WinS Project.

Assessment of Student Respondents - The following tables present the assessment of the student respondents as to water, sanitation, and hygiene.

**Table 1**

*Assessment of the Student Respondents of the WASH-WinS Project in terms of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1 Water	3.36	Agree	2
2 Sanitation	3.51	Strongly Agree	1
3 Hygiene	3.27	Agree	3
Composite Mean	3.36	Agree	

The table presents the assessment of the student respondents of the WASH-WinS Project in terms of water, sanitation and Hygiene. It could be gleaned from the data that they were agreed that they are aware of the project. Of the three, the highest is on sanitation. It obtained a weighted mean of 3.51 which shows that they are agreed on their awareness of the project when it comes to sanitation. The respondents agreed that the sanitation in hand washing is important to prevent diseases from spreading. On the other hand, the project on hygiene is the lowest of the three. With the weighted mean of 3.27, the respondents were agreed, too, that they are aware of the need for hygiene. This included the provision for toothbrush, toothpaste, and others that show how to be clean in oneself.

**Table 2**

*Assessment of the Parent Respondents of the WASH-WinS Project in terms of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1 Water	3.37	Agree	2
2 Sanitation	3.53	Strongly Agree	1
3 Hygiene	3.24	Agree	3
Composite Mean	3.36	Agree	

As for the parent respondents, they are also agreed that they are aware of the project of the school with regards to the WASH-WinS. Of the three areas, the one in sanitation is also the highest among the assessments of the parent respondents. It obtained a weighted mean of 3.53 which implied that the parent respondents were also on the sanitation of the students. This is to prevent the spread of communicable diseases accompanied by dirty hands and surroundings. On the other hand, the lowest among the three is on hygiene which obtained a weighted mean of 3.24. But then, the respondents are also agreed that they are aware of this. This implied, too, that they have to deal more on hygiene of their children and might as well of themselves.

#### 4.2 Difference Between the Assessments of the Students and Parents

Table 3 presents the difference between the assessments of the students and parents in terms of water, sanitation and hygiene.

**Table 3**

*Assessment of the Parent Respondents of the WASH-WinS Project in terms of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*

Indicators	t-test	p-value	Verbal Interpretation
1 Water	2.00	0.158	Not Significant
2 Sanitation	.801	0.371	Not Significant
3 Hygiene	.021	0.885	Not Significant

The data presented shows that there is no significant difference between the assessments of parent and student respondents. It is evident with the p-value of the assessments which is greater than the critical value set at 0.05. This implied that the awareness of the parent and students are the same. It could also mean that the parents, who influenced the awareness of the students, have the same awareness when it comes to water, sanitation, and hygiene.

### Proposed Plan of Action to Further the Awareness and Parents of WASH-WinS Project in School

The proposed action plan is based on the results of the study.

Key Result Area	Recommendations	Person/s Involved	Resources Needed	Expected Outcome
1 Water	Monthly water testing for pollutants	School Administration Canteen in-Charge PTA	Certain amount for the payment on water testing	Potable safe water
2 Sanitation	Quarterly Seminar on Sanitation	School Administration Canteen in-Charge PTA	Laptop LCD Slide deck	Students and parents will be aware of what are to be involved in sanitation
3 Hygiene	Quarterly Seminar on Hygiene	School Administration Canteen in-Charge PTA	Laptop LCD Slide deck	Students and parents will be aware of what are to be involved in hygiene

## 5. Conclusions

The following are the conclusions arrived at.

- Students and parents are aware of the projects on water, hygiene and sanitation.
- The knowledge of the parents on water safety, sanitation, and hygiene is the same knowledge imparted to students.
- The plan of action sees to it that there will be new additional knowledge imparted to the students on the WASH-WinS project that they could impart to their parents at home.

### 5.1 Recommendations

The following are recommended.

- The students be given additional knowledge about the implementation of the project.
- The parents be involved actively in the implementation of the project.
- The future researchers to investigate about the effectiveness of the plan of action drafted as a result of the study.

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