

Implementing Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (Wash) Project: Stories of Wash in Schools (Wins) Coordinators

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Abstract:- The experiences of school coordinators involved in the WASH project at different schools were examined in this study. The testimonies highlighted the difficulties and experiences these coordinators encountered. Each of the eight teacher participants in the study was a local WASH in Schools (WinS) coordinator from the Compostela West District. For this phenomenological study, a small number of in-person sessions and in-depth interviews done via virtual platforms were used to collect data. Based on thematic analysis, the WinS school coordinators' experiences with the WASH project's implementation in schools were as follows: Promotes hygiene and sanitation and encourage stakeholder's support. The study's themes and findings about the difficulty's teachers faced when implementing WASH projects in schools were as follows: Inadequate facilities and Insufficient school budget. The results of the study provided the following understandings about the challenges and experiences of instructors: Provision of fund in schools and provide effective plan for school program implementation. From the beginning, this study aimed to provide perspectives on strengthening the implementation of WASH as initiative in schools.

Keywords:- *Implementing WASH Project, WinS coordinators.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In addressing the global issues related to water, sanitation, and hygiene, the education department had implemented the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) project in schools. The health challenges associated with inadequate access to potable water, ineffective sanitation, and hygiene practices have become increasingly pressing. Monse (2010) claimed that around 90% of school-age children reside in low- and middle-income nations, where unfavorable living circumstances frequently result in a high prevalence of poverty-related diseases. Lack of information, inadequate access to sanitary facilities and clean water, congested living arrangements, and inadequate personal hygiene habits.

The demand for WASH implementation increased in light of the urgent need for safe drinking water and health problems brought on by poor sanitation and hygiene. The significance of WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) in educational institutions is underscored by Bonyan Organization (2022), which asserted that access to safe and readily available water is essential for public health. This water had been crucial for various purposes, including drinking, domestic activities, food production, and recreational use. Enhancements in water supply, sanitation, and effective management of water resources can stimulate economic growth in countries and substantially alleviate poverty. Adequate WASH facilities are instrumental in preventing a range of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), including Trachoma, Soil-transmitted Helminths, and Schistosomiasis. During the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) period from 1990 to 2015, the number of diarrheal deaths attributed to insufficient WASH services was halved, largely due to significant advancements in water and sanitation access.

Meanwhile, during infectious disease outbreaks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, appropriately managed water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services were crucial to preventing and safeguarding human health, according to the World Bank (2020). Especially in environments with limited resources, investing in essential public health infrastructure, such as water and sanitation systems, was one of the most economical ways to improve pandemic preparedness.

Moreover, according to the DeafDD (2020), WASH was one of the initial pillars of primary healthcare. The connection between WASH and illness prevention was a relatively new medical discovery. In 1854, John Snow made the now-famous discovery that a water pump was the cause of a cholera outbreak in London. However, it wasn't until the late 1800s that microbiology allowed researchers to identify the germs that caused cholera and typhoid in the tainted water that killed so many children.

With regards to a framework of evidence-based practices focused on water, sanitation, and hygiene, World Vision International (2022) indicated that the WASH Project Model (PM) had been an assembly of evidence-based practices that address the three primary domains of WASH intervention: water, sanitation, and hygiene. Over time, these interventions had proven effective in implementing programs that are impactful, scalable, and sustainable in a range of contexts where World Vision was engaged, particularly in rural area programmed settings.

However, the global baseline report of JMP (2019) highlighted a concerning lack of access to basic water, sanitation, and hygiene services in healthcare facilities (HCFs) worldwide. Approximately 25% of HCFs, impacting over 900 million individuals, do not have access to basic water services, while around 20% do not provide sanitation services, affecting nearly 1.5 billion people. Additionally, one in six HCFs lack hygiene services. In light of these findings, it was imperative that healthcare services adhere to minimum quality standards, particularly in the event of an infectious disease outbreak, and are well-organized to cater to both infected and non-infected patients. Support mechanisms must be in place to ensure the continuous provision of services and the availability of essential products such as soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

Consequently, according to Grossi et al. (2016), children's health, wellbeing, and cognitive development were all impacted by poor WASH. The few studies that have been done showing a strong correlation between school WASH conditions and children's health. A sizable portion of students refrain from using WASH facilities, which had an impact on their health, happiness, and cognitive abilities. Insufficient WASH in schools could lead to constipation, urinary tract infections, dehydration, and, in certain nations, parasite illnesses. The data indicated that insufficient and subpar facilities were not the only factors contributing to toilet avoidance; teachers and students were also unaware of the significance of WASH and the ensuing school rules on drinking and toilet trips.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education Order No. 65, series of 2009, identified dental caries, infectious diseases such as respiratory tract infections and diarrhea, as well as worm infestations, as the predominant hygiene-related infectious diseases found in public schools. These issues arised primarily from inadequate access to water and functional sanitation facilities. If these conditions were not addressed, they would result in malnutrition, stunted physical development, and other health complications, including anemia and dental pain.

Moreover, water has been a scarce resource that regrettably only provides for the needs of half of the world's population, according to the Bonyan Organization (2022). Future planning is essential as water becomes more limited, particularly in areas where it is a problem. Access to clean drinking water and sanitary facilities should allow children to remain healthy and fit for school. Successful initiatives have been made recently in this area, with schools implementing creative water-saving techniques and establishing sanitary facilities on campus.

Further, with the aim to prevent hygiene related disease, promote health seeking behavior and life skills, improve attendance and participation, help them thrive and learn better, the Philippine WASH program intensified the eight key components aimed at promoting health and hygiene in schools. These components included practices for oral hygiene, handwashing, safe water supply, sanitation facilities, environmental sanitation, food safety, menstrual hygiene management, deworming, and hygiene education (DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2016).

Unfortunately, the WASH Project implementation faced challenges, Bolatova et.al. (2021) revealed that results indicated that there was no alternative drinking-water source in schools, and 15% of students said they had access to water only occasionally. Half of the students reported that the water was unsafe to drink because of a poor odor, taste, or color. The toilet in school 3 was locked with a key, and a quarter of the students reported there was no access to a key. Moreover, not having gender-separated toilet facilities was a challenge because of the traditional gender norms.

Meanwhile, Bishogea (2021) unfolded that the results of her study which indicated that lack of financial resources, rapid population increase, socioeconomic disparities among the urban inhabitants, topography, lack of skilled, and experienced personnel, inadequate policies and strategies, and people's behaviours and attitudes were identified as the main constraints to sustainable sanitation and hygiene. Moreover, The reality of WASH in schools, according to Grossi et al. (2016), did not meet the needs of students and did not align with the goals of the established standards. Notwithstanding the existence of laws and rules and the nation's economic standing, WASH in schools posed numerous difficulties. The most commonly mentioned concerns include inadequate planning, physical infrastructure challenges, a shortage of consumables, poor cleaning and maintenance, and insufficient water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services.

In light of this phenomenon, this inquiry explored on the experiences of WinS school coordinators in implementing the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project implementation in school. Musings in the field resonates some gaps in the implementation of the WASH project and this study intends to expound on the reality in the hope of providing new knowledge that may strengthen WASH implementation in schools for the welfare of school populace.

In summary, The Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) project implemented in schools tackled critical health challenges linked to inadequate water access and sanitation, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where many children live in poverty-stricken conditions. Despite significant advancements in WASH services, a substantial number of healthcare facilities worldwide still lack basic water and sanitation services, impacting millions and necessitating urgent improvements to support public health, especially during infectious disease outbreaks. Research indicated that poor WASH conditions adversely affect children's health, well-being, and cognitive development, leading to increased absenteeism and health issues. In the Philippines, the WASH program focuses on eight essential components to promote hygiene and health in schools, yet it faced challenges such as insufficient resources, unsafe water quality, and inadequate facilities. This inquiry explored the experiences of school coordinators in implementing the WASH project, aiming to identify gaps and enhance its effectiveness for the benefit of students.

II. METHOD

This research analyzed the experiences of WinS school coordinators in implementing the program. This research employed a qualitative phenomenological design, diving deep into the essence of human experience. This research embraced a qualitative phenomenological design, diving deep into the essence of human experience. The heart of phenomenology lies in collecting unfiltered, raw data, focusing on the collective journeys of individuals within specific groups. It aims to unravel how a particular phenomenon shapes their lives, revealing the meanings they attach to it. The spotlight was on witnessing authentic events and traits. As highlighted by Flood (2010) and echoed in the work of Tomaszewski et al. (2020), this approach in qualitative research shines a light on the vital aspects of lived experiences or phenomena, which can be viewed through a multitude of lenses.

In this phenomenological exploration, participants shared their reflections and experiences related to the phenomenon at hand. The researcher prioritized in-depth interviews and focus group discussions as the primary methods for data collection. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), as cited in Dunwoodie, Macaulay and Newman (2023), interviews offer participants the opportunity to express their emotions, biases, viewpoints, aspirations, and attitudes toward various

phenomena encountered in the workplace or other organizational settings.

Moreover, unlike quantitative research, which emphasized testing causal relationships, qualitative interviews helped us reveal how individuals ascribed significance to their social experiences. Meanwhile, focus group discussions, as elucidated by Lune and Berg (2017) and cited by Tumen, Akyildiz, and Ahmed (2021), served as an effective method for convening individuals with shared experiences to delve into a specific topic. This approach is recognized for its ability to capture insights from diverse perspectives.

This study uncovered the implementation of WASH in Schools (WinS) program of the Department of Education particularly in our district. This had eight (8) teacher-participants from the schools of Compostela West District. The participants were WASH in Schools (WinS) school coordinators from Compostela West District. The participants had at least 3 years teaching experience and they must have been WinS coordinators for at least a year. The participants were purposively selected based as informants. Purposive sampling will be employed in the selection of participants. The participants are selected from the three (3) different schools categorized as small, medium and large thereby ensuring variety school environment for triangulation.

In the realm of phenomenological research, the art of qualitative analysis often thrives on a more intimate scale, typically involving a modest number of participants. As noted by Creswell (2013) and echoed by Sarfo et al. (2021), a group of five to twenty-five individuals usually suffices to capture the essence of the experience being studied. While these smaller cohorts are a hallmark of phenomenological inquiries, researchers may find it necessary to invite more participants until they reach a point of data saturation, ensuring that the study's objectives are fully realized. Furthermore, my research embraces purposive sampling for selecting participants. This method is widely regarded as the gold standard for gathering subjects for data collection, allowing for a variety of approaches as highlighted by Chun et al. (2019) in Mwita (2022).

Moreover, this research was conducted in accordance with the established ethical standards pertinent to academic inquiry. Securing approval from the RMC Review Ethics Committee (REC) was crucial for this study, as it ensured that researchers maintain their responsibilities towards participants and the communities influenced by the results, which was a vital component of research ethics. The approval process included a detailed assessment of the research proposal to evaluate its ethical considerations, concentrating on participant welfare, informed consent, confidentiality, and the associated risks and benefits of the study.

In my data analysis, the data collected underwent a thorough analysis. I meticulously reviewed the transcriptions and distilled the core insights from the participants' responses to the research questions. The information was systematically organized according to the themes or concepts that arise from the discussions. The accurately capture the true intent behind each statement made by the participants throughout our conversations. I fully grasped their perspectives and meticulously document every detail. A key aspect of this data analysis involved categorizing and coding the ideas derived from the participants' transcriptions. This process, as outlined by Graneheim and Lundman (2004) and referenced in Vinitha (2019), entailed weaving together the underlying meanings that permeate all categories, ultimately interpreting the latent content within the texts.

In addition, the subsequent phase involved the crafting significant themes that unveil essential insights from the data. This analytical approach was known as Thematic Content Analysis, which, as noted by King (2004) in Dawadi (2020), seeks to identify themes that encapsulate the narratives present within the data sets. This process requires meticulous reading and re-reading of the transcribed information to pinpoint these themes. Furthermore, employed triangulation of the collected data. Nightingale (2020) described triangulation as a method that employs various data collection techniques to analyze the results of the same study, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings.

Furthermore, the rigorous and systematic steps were observed in analyzing the information gathered from the teacher-participants. The data were thematically analyzed following the steps outlined by O'Connor and Gibson (2003) who emphasize that data analysis in qualitative research involves a systematic and iterative process to uncover meanings, patterns, and themes within the data. Here's a breakdown of their approach on qualitative data analysis.

In summary, this research explored the experiences of school coordinators implementing the WASH in Schools (WinS) program through a qualitative phenomenological design, which emphasizes the in-depth understanding of human experiences. Data were collected via interviews and focus group discussions, allowing participants to express their emotions and insights related to the program. The study included eight teacher-participants from various schools in Compostela West District, all with relevant experience as WASH coordinators. Ethical standards were upheld throughout the research, with approval from the ethics committee ensuring participant welfare and confidentiality. The analysis involved coding and thematically organizing the data to uncover key insights, employing triangulation to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following section outlines the key findings that emerged from a thematic analysis of the data collected. Through a close examination of participants' responses, several prominent themes were identified relating to the on the experiences of WinS school coordinators on the implementation of WASH project in schools. The in-depth interviews transpired during the participants' vacant time and at their convenience. The participants manifested the willingness to take part of the study and to share their experiences. Their familiarity of the topic provides leeway for them to unravel all views. Based on the information gathered, the following themes on the experiences of WinS school coordinators on the implementation of WASH project in schools were as follows:

➤ *Promotes Hygiene and Sanitation*

Maintaining proper personal hygiene and washing your hands frequently are essential for halting the transmission of disease. Sanitation and hygiene become even more crucial in times of emergency, such natural disasters, when access to clean, safe water may be limited. The participants observed that in the WINs program, students should be aware in promoting hygiene and sanitation to be safety in any kind of diseases. The experiences of the coordinators have really emphasis in the importance of this aspect. This is further supported by the study of Llego (2016) posited that a school-based program had promoted correct hygiene and sanitation practices through hygiene and sanitation education and the provision of standards for safe water supply and appropriate sanitation facilities.

Moreover, According to Saini (2023), maintaining a clean and hygienic school has been crucial to fostering a positive learning environment for pupils. Adopting good sanitary standards in schools increased attendance, motivation, and general well-being in addition to improving health. Students' motivation to learn was strongly impacted by these hygienic habits. Students developed a sense of pride and accountability in a neat and well-maintained setting. Students were more motivated to succeed academically when they believed that their school respected their well-being and offered a hygienic learning environment. For both kids and instructors to be in a safe and healthy environment, school sanitation was essential. Frequent cleaning of common areas and classrooms helped stop the spread of diseases and germs.

➤ *Encourage Stakeholders' Support*

Another theme that emerged from the experiences of WinS school coordinators regarding the implementation of the WASH project in schools was the encouragement of stakeholder support. Participants in this study frequently mentioned this aspect. Additionally, the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in fostering a positive learning environment in their classrooms were also highlighted in this study. The themes developed from the thematic analysis of the participants' narrations are as follows:

Meanwhile, The WinS school coordinators experienced challenges on the implementation of WASH project in schools. Although they had used different ways and strategies to help the students' safe and healthy in school as well as in the surroundings, there are still challenges encountered and presented in this section. During the interview of the participants, the following are the themes on the challenges of WinS school coordinators in the implementation of WASH project in schools:

➤ *Inadequate Facilities*

Inadequate facilities were one of the difficulties WinS school coordinators encountered while putting the WASH initiative into practice in schools, according to the participant accounts. It was evident to the participants that the absence of adequate facilities, like restrooms and handwashing stations, caused a number of issues during the WinS program's implementation. Inadequate handwashing stations, limited access to a dependable water source, and poor hygiene habits continued to be the main causes of sanitation and hygiene problems.

In addition, According to Melaku and Addis (2023), school is where kids build the basis for lifelong cleanliness habits and function as change agents in their families and communities. The absence of flowing water or soap in homes and schools, along with a lack of facilities for hygiene and handwashing, hindered children from practicing good handwashing.

Moreover, Jetha (2021) explained that poor hygiene practices in schools in the Philippines have been identified as a significant issue. Several studies have highlighted the need for improved water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) facilities and practices in schools to prevent diseases and promote better health outcomes for students. One study found that inadequate WaSH facilities and poor handwashing practices were associated with an increased risk of diarrhea and soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infection among schoolchildren.

➤ *Insufficient School Budget*

Another challenge that the participants encountered in the challenges on the implementation of WINs program in schools is the Insufficient school budget. The teacher-participants experienced these challenges during the

implementation of the said program. According to Ifeanyi (2021), inadequate funding in public schools can negatively impact children, particularly in the area of health. According to studies, a lack of funding might make it difficult to properly manage school finances. This can lead to schools finding it difficult to offer basic necessities like books, handwashing stations, sanitary restrooms, and instructional materials, which has a direct effect on the standard of instruction that pupils get.

Consequently, regardless from knowing the experiences and challenges that the participants encountered on the implementation of WASH project in schools, this study also draw insights from the phenomenon. Insights were useful to help cope the problems faced by the WINs school coordinator on the implementation of WASH project in schools. Indeed, Children and their families benefit from WASH in schools. It helps create safe, secure learning environments in schools that can shield students from disease, abuse, and social isolation. WASH in Schools dramatically lowers diseases linked to poor cleanliness.

From both the experiences and challenges on the implementation of WASH project in schools by the WINs school coordinator, this study has developed insights that could support the teachers' on improving their strategies in informing the learners the proper way of maintaining cleanliness among themselves as well as in school environment and to be more successful in employing the said program, and they are as follows:

➤ *Provision of Fund in Schools*

A major consideration in the design of financial allocation methods, according to the OECD (2017), was making sure that resources were allocated fairly to schools that needed the greatest attention. When choosing an equity capital allocation mechanism, the following trade-offs and difficulties have to be taken into account. The design of mechanisms to address the disparate needs of schools was approached in two general ways: either by adding extra funding to the main allocation mechanisms for particular schools (for instance, by using weightings in the funding formula to systematically direct extra resources to certain categories) or by offering targeted funding through one or more separate grants outside the main allocation

➤ *Provide Effective Plan for School Program Implementation*

Another insight of this study was to provide plan to seriously implement the program. This conformed with NCES (2003) articulation that every educational institution must proactively create and carry out a plan for handling the inevitable normal and unforeseen maintenance demands that will inevitably arise. As a result, an organization has to be ready to tackle the difficulties of efficient facility upkeep. The undertaking was too significant to be handled carelessly. After all, the repercussions affected everyday building operations,

staff and student health, teaching and learning, and the organization's long-term financial future. A strong facilities maintenance plan demonstrated that school facilities were being and would be properly maintained. On the other hand, careless planning for facility upkeep could result in serious issues.

In summary, the thematic analysis of the experiences of WASH in Schools (WinS) coordinators revealed several key findings. Participants emphasized the importance of promoting hygiene and sanitation in schools, especially during emergencies, highlighting that such practices contribute to a healthier learning environment and increased student motivation. However, they faced significant challenges, including inadequate facilities, such as insufficient handwashing stations and toilets, and insufficient school budgets, which hindered effective implementation of the program. Insights from the study suggest that improving funding allocation and developing effective program implementation plans are crucial for enhancing the WASH initiative, ultimately benefiting students and fostering a safe, clean learning environment.

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