

## Disconnect between Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Related Behaviours of Children in School and Family

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**Abstract :** Background: Improved Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) practices in schools ensure children's health, well-being and cognitive performance. In India under various WASH interventions in schools, teachers, and other staff make every possible effort to educate children about personal hygiene, sanitation practices and harms of open defecation. However, once children get back to their families, they see other practicing inappropriate WASH behaviors, and they consequently start following them. This show disconnect between school behavior and family behavior, which needs to be bridged to achieve desired WASH outcomes. Aims and Objectives: The aim of this study is to assess the factors causing disconnect of WASH-related behaviors between school and the family of children. It also suggests behavior change interventions to bridge the gap. Methodology: The present study has chosen a mixed- method approach. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection have been used in the present study. The purposive sampling for data collection has been chosen. The data have been collected from 20% children in each age group of 04-08 years and 09-12 years spread over three primary schools and 20% of households to which they belong to which is spread over three slum communities in south district of Delhi. Results: The present study shows that despite of several behavior change interventions at school level, children still practice inappropriate WASH behaviors due to disconnect between school and family behaviors. These behaviors show variation from one age group to another. The inappropriate WASH behaviors being practiced by children include open defecation, wrong disposal of garbage, not keeping personal hygiene, not practicing hand washing practices during critical junctures and not washing fruits and vegetables before eating. The present study has highlighted that 80% of children in the age group of 04-08 years still practice inappropriate WASH behaviors when they go back to their families after school whereas, this percentage has reduced to 40% in case of children in the age group 09-12 years. Present study uncovers association between school and family teaching which creates a huge gap between WASH-related behavioral practices. The study has established that children learn and de-learn the WASH behaviors due to the evident disconnect between behavior change interventions at schools and household level. The study has also made it clear that children understand the significance of appropriate WASH practices but owing to the disconnect the behaviors remain unsettled. The study proposes several behavior change interventions to sync the behaviors of children at school and family level to ensure children's health, well-being and cognitive performance.

**Keywords :** behavioral interventions, child health, family behavior, school behavior, WASH

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