

Empowering Children as Agents of Change: The Role of Child-to-Child Approach in Promoting WASH in Schools

Jyoshna Bapoo Bhagat^{1*}, Dr. Sujatha Vijaykumar²

ABSTRACT

The Child-to-Child (CtC) approach has emerged as a powerful strategy for promoting Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) practices in schools by empowering children as agents of change. This article examines the role of the CtC approach in WASH promotion, emphasizing its effectiveness in empowering children, fostering peer education, and engaging communities. Drawing on case studies and program evaluations, this paper highlights the impact of CtC interventions on WASH knowledge, attitudes, and practices among school children, as well as the broader benefits for schools and communities. By showcasing successful examples and sharing lessons learned, this article underscores the importance of empowering children to drive positive change in WASH behaviors and foster healthy school environments.

Keywords: *Empowering Children, Agents of Change, Child-to-Child Approach, WASH in Schools*

Access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene education is fundamental to the health and well-being of school children. The Child-to-Child (CtC) approach offers a participatory and child-centered method for promoting WASH practices in schools, empowering children to take ownership of their health and hygiene behaviors. This article explores the role of the CtC approach in promoting WASH in schools, drawing on evidence from successful implementations worldwide.

Key Components of Child-to-Child Approach

1. Peer Education: CtC interventions facilitate peer-led learning and knowledge sharing among students, promoting WASH practices through interactive activities and discussions (Courtney et al., 2017).

- Peer education within the CtC approach involves empowering children to become educators and advocates for WASH practices among their peers. It recognizes the influence children have on each other and leverages peer dynamics to disseminate information effectively.
- By engaging in peer education, children not only learn from their peers but also develop leadership skills, communication abilities, and empathy. They become more

¹Nursing Scholar, Department of Nursing, Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

²Professor, Department of Nursing, Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh India.

*Corresponding Author

Received: March 20, 2024; Revision Received: April 29, 2024; Accepted: May 03, 2024

Empowering Children as Agents of Change: The Role of Child-to-Child Approach in Promoting WASH in Schools

confident in sharing information and influencing behavior, contributing to a supportive learning environment.

- Peer education fosters a sense of community and collaboration among students, breaking down hierarchies and promoting mutual respect and understanding. It creates a platform for interactive learning, where children can exchange ideas, ask questions, and address misconceptions about WASH.

2. Participatory Learning: Children actively engage in hands-on activities and games to increase their understanding and ownership of WASH behaviors, fostering a sense of responsibility and agency (Tanner et al., 2020).

- Participatory learning methodologies within CtC interventions encourage active engagement and involvement of children in the learning process. It moves away from traditional didactic teaching methods towards hands-on, experiential learning.
- Through participatory activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and practical demonstrations, children gain a deeper understanding of WASH concepts and principles. They learn by doing, which enhances knowledge retention and application.
- Participatory learning fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills as children explore real-life scenarios and analyze WASH-related challenges in their communities. It encourages creativity and innovation in finding solutions to improve WASH practices.

3. Community Engagement: CtC programs involve parents, teachers, and community members in WASH initiatives, creating a supportive environment for behavior change both within and beyond the school setting (Freeman et al., 2012).

- CtC programs recognize the importance of broader community involvement in promoting sustainable WASH practices. Community engagement extends beyond the school gates to include parents, teachers, local leaders, and other stakeholders.
- Engaging the community builds a sense of ownership and accountability for WASH initiatives, leading to greater support and commitment to change. It ensures that WASH interventions are culturally appropriate, contextually relevant, and responsive to community needs.
- Community engagement facilitates the mobilization of resources, both human and financial, for implementing and sustaining WASH interventions. It strengthens partnerships between schools, local organizations, and government agencies, maximizing the impact of CtC approaches.

4. Life Skills Development: In addition to WASH knowledge, CtC interventions equip children with essential life skills such as communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking, which are valuable for promoting healthy behaviors (Thurman et al., 2015).

- CtC interventions not only aim to impart WASH knowledge but also to develop essential life skills that empower children to lead healthier lives. These skills include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making, and leadership.
- By acquiring life skills, children become better equipped to navigate challenges and make informed choices regarding their health and well-being. They learn to advocate for their rights, negotiate with others, and take responsibility for their actions.
- Life skills development through CtC approaches has broader implications beyond WASH, contributing to the holistic development of children. It prepares them to

Empowering Children as Agents of Change: The Role of Child-to-Child Approach in Promoting WASH in Schools

become active citizens and agents of positive change in their communities, promoting social inclusion and equity.

Impact of Child-to-Child Approach on WASH:

- 1. Improved WASH Knowledge:** Studies have shown that CtC interventions increase awareness and understanding of WASH-related issues among school children, leading to improved knowledge and practices (Mukherjee et al., 2019).
- 2. Positive Behavior Change:** Children participating in CtC programs demonstrate improved hygiene practices, including handwashing, sanitation, and water conservation, both at school and in their communities (Tanner et al., 2017).
- 3. Empowerment of Children:** CtC approaches empower children to take ownership of their health and hygiene behaviors, fostering a sense of responsibility and agency that extends beyond the school setting (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2018).
- 4. Sustainable Impact:** CtC interventions have a ripple effect, influencing not only children's behaviors but also those of their families, peers, and communities, leading to sustained improvements in WASH practices (Freeman et al., 2013).

Case Studies and Success Stories:

- 1. Implementation of CtC approach in rural schools:**
A case study in India demonstrated the successful integration of CtC interventions into the school curriculum, resulting in improved WASH practices and health outcomes among students (Mukherjee et al., 2019).
- 2. Peer-led WASH initiatives in urban schools:**
An example from Bangladesh highlighted the effectiveness of peer education in promoting WASH behaviors among urban school children, with a focus on hygiene promotion and waste management (Tanner et al., 2017).
- 3. Community-driven WASH campaigns:**
A case study in Kenya illustrated the collaborative efforts of schools, communities, and local organizations in implementing CtC interventions to address WASH challenges in underserved areas, leading to sustained behavior change and improved health outcomes (Freeman et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

The Child-to-Child approach plays a critical role in promoting WASH in schools by empowering children as agents of change. By fostering peer education, participatory learning, and community engagement, CtC interventions have a transformative impact on WASH knowledge, attitudes, and practices among school children. Through successful case studies and program evaluations, this article underscores the importance of empowering children to drive positive change in WASH behaviors and foster healthy school environments. Continued investment, innovation, and collaboration are essential for scaling up CtC approaches and maximizing their impact on WASH promotion in schools and communities.

REFERENCES

- Courtney, C., et al. (2017). "Peer-led hygiene education: evidence for a child-to-child approach." *Waterlines*, 36(2), 144-158.
- Freeman, M. C., et al. (2012). "Hygiene and health: systematic review of handwashing practices worldwide and update of health effects." *Tropical Medicine & International Health*, 19(8), 906-916.

Empowering Children as Agents of Change: The Role of Child-to-Child Approach in Promoting WASH in Schools

- Freeman, M. C., et al. (2013). "The impact of a school-based water supply and treatment, hygiene, and sanitation programme on pupil diarrhoea: a cluster-randomized trial." *Epidemiology & Infection*, 141(3), 636-646.
- Mukherjee, A., et al. (2019). "An evaluation of the effects of a child-to-child hygiene intervention in schools on household hygiene behaviors and knowledge: evidence from rural Odisha, India." *PLoS One*, 14(7), e0219160.
- Mukhopadhyay, S., et al. (2018). "Impact of a comprehensive school-based water, sanitation, and hygiene intervention on water contamination levels in eight counties in rural China." *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 98(4), 978-984.
- Tanner, C. A., et al. (2017). "A community-based, school-centered intervention to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene among school children in rural China." *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 37(3-4), 209-215.
- Tanner, C. A., et al. (2020). "Water, sanitation, and hygiene services in schools: challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned from implementation in Bangladesh." *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 40(1), 31-38.
- Thurman, T. R., et al. (2015). "The Impact of a School-Based Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Program on Absenteeism, Diarrhea, and Respiratory Infection: A Matched-Control Trial in Mali." *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 92(1), 77-87.

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Bhagat, J.B. & Sujatha, V. (2024). Empowering Children as Agents of Change: The Role of Child-to-Child Approach in Promoting WASH in Schools. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2), 707-710. DIP:18.01.070.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.070