

# DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION FACILITIES IN SCHOOLS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH: A STUDY OF HAMIRPUR DISTRICT

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## **Abstract**

*Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is essential for children in schools, particularly for girls as well as children with disabilities. Contaminated water, poor sanitation or unhealthy hygiene behaviours increase the risk of contracting diarrhoeal and other WASH-related diseases, making it more difficult for children to stay in school and concentrate on education. Moreover, the implementation of Right to Education Act, 2009 necessitate the school to make sufficient provision related to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in the school. In this background, the present study was conducted in Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh, the education hub of the state. The main objective of the study was to evaluate the status of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in Hamirpur district in Himachal Pradesh.*

**Keywords:** *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Toilets, Urinals, Water points*

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## **1. Introduction**

The global effort to achieve sanitation and water for all by 2030 is extending beyond the households to include institutional settings, such as schools, healthcare institutes and workplaces. This has been reinforced by global education for all strategies highlighting how water, sanitation and hygiene

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(WASH) in schools improve access to education and learning outcomes, particularly for girls, by providing a safe, inclusive and equitable learning environment for all (UNICEF, 2018).

Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is essential for children in schools, particularly for girls as well as children with disabilities. Contaminated water, poor sanitation or unhealthy hygiene behaviours increase the risk of contracting diarrheal and other WASH-related diseases, making it more difficult for children to stay in school and complete their education. This is even a greater challenge for girls – especially girls who are menstruating – as they often face more barriers to enroll, stay in school, learn and perform (World Vision).

## II. Objectives

The present study was conducted to study, examine, analyse, find out and make suitable suggestions on the

- Awareness and knowledge about water, sanitation and hygienic facility in the schools
- Toilets & urinals in schools in terms of availability, location, accessibility, condition, privacy and security with emphasis on physically challenged students
- Availability of water in schools in terms of coverage, adequacy, season-wise supply, accessibility and maintenance of water points with focus on physically challenged

## III. Methodology

The study was confined to government schools in Hamirpur district which has six education blocks. Out of these six education blocks, 24 representative schools (4 from each block) were selected. These schools were selected from the two strata, viz., high school and senior secondary schools with 15 per cent sample size. Out of these schools, 3 girl schools and 21 co-educational schools were selected for the study with fair representation to every area in view of the geographical dimensions and rural-urban classification of the study district. Out of these schools, 240 students (10 from each school) were interviewed through structured schedule. The selection of respondents was

made from students in the age group from 10 years to 19 years of age. Further, a sample of 50 School Management Committee members and teachers were also taken as sample and their opinion was recorded with the help of interview schedule.

#### IV. Analysis and Discussion

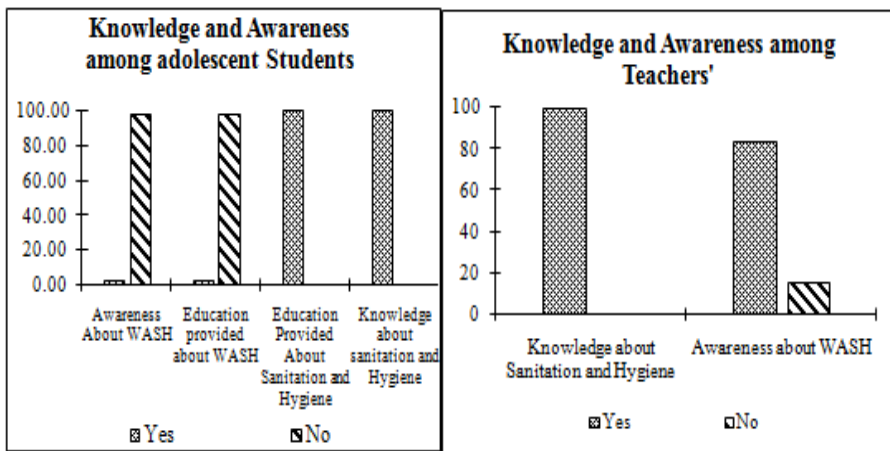
This part has been divided into three sections in accordance with the study objectives to analyse the water, sanitation and hygienic; Toilets/Urinals and water aspect in toilets in the schools of Hamirpur district.

##### I. Wash

##### 1. Knowledge and Awareness regarding Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in School

Poor water facilities and inadequate sanitary conditions play major role in order to spread communicable diseases. The data have been collected from the sample respondents about the knowledge regarding sanitation and hygiene practices in the school. The collected data have been shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Knowledge and Awareness among Adolescent Students and Teachers'



Source: Field Survey.

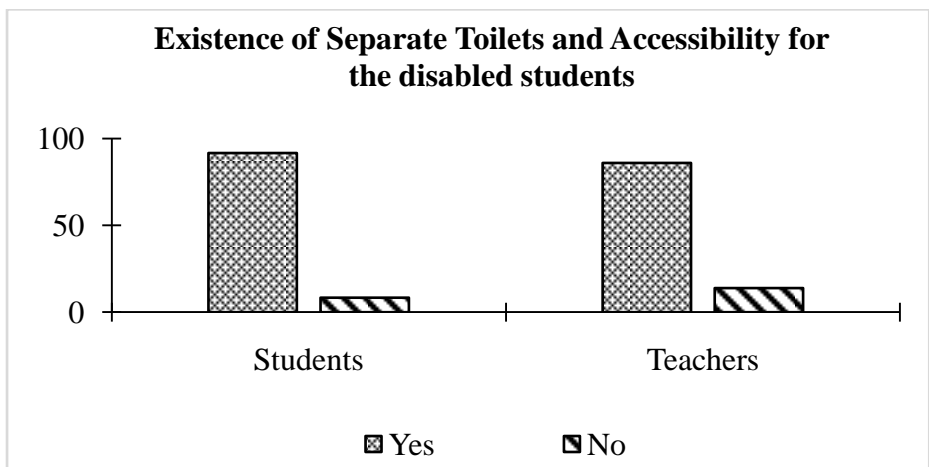
It is evident from Chart 1 that hundred percent students and teachers are having knowledge about sanitation and hygiene. It has also been observed that all the sample schools are providing education to the students regarding the importance of sanitation practices and hygiene. Further, it is interesting to note that only 2.5 per cent students were aware of WASH. It is further noted from the chart 1 that only 84 per cent teachers are aware of WASH.

## II. Toilets and Urinals in Schools

### i) Toilets and Urinals in the School

Each year millions of children fell ill or die from diarrhoeal diseases, making it the second most serious killer of children under the age of five. The main source of diarrhoeal infection is human excreta. It seems clear therefore, that human excreta should be managed as a potentially dangerous material. The construction of toilets, urinals and latrines, especially, in schools can control the spread of infectious diseases. Hence, the data have been collected about the existence of toilets and urinals in the school. The collected data have been enumerated in Chart 2.

**Chart 2 : Existence of Separate Toilets/urinals and Accessibility for the disabled students**



Source: Field Survey.

Data clearly depicts that hundred percent of respondents, both students and teachers, reported that toilets and urinals are there in the school. It shows that the schools in Hamirpur districts have toilets.

Another aspect of toilets is related to the existence of toilets for disabled students or students with special care and also their accessibility. Data in this regard have been presented in Chart 2.

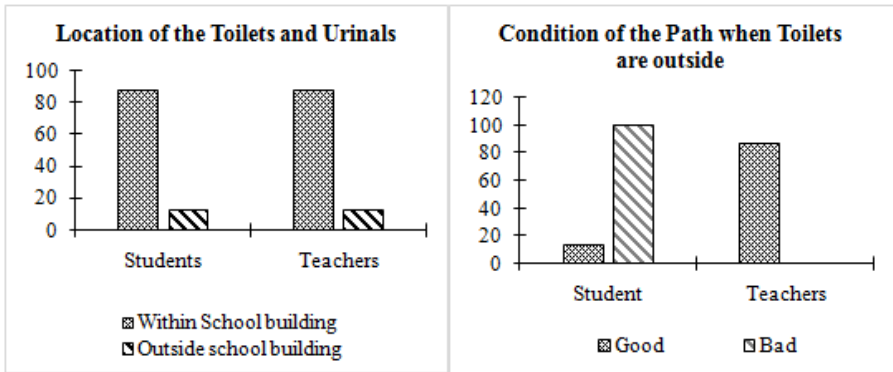
Figures in Chart 2 reveal that the majority of the respondents (91.67 percent student and 86.00 per cent teachers) have disclosed that there was separate toilet for disabled. Out of total respondents (students), 85.91 per cent were of the view that these toilets are easily accessible for disabled whereas rest of the students (14.09 per cent) admitted that toilets are not accessible.

It means that the majority of the students and teachers admitted that government has constructed the toilet keeping in view their accessibility for disabled students.

## **ii) Location, accessibility and condition of Toilets and Urinals**

It is good to have toilets and urinals in schools. The location of toilets and urinals play an important role in the accessibility. The location of the toilets and urinals should be such that each and every student in the school easily reaches there. In some school these are located within school building whereas some have the toilets outside the school building but within the premises and in others these are outside the premises. The data regarding location, accessibility and condition of the toilets and urinals have been enumerated in Chart 3.

Chart 3 shows that 87.59 per cent of respondents (students and teachers) have admitted that toilet and urinal are within the school premises. Rest of the respondents opined that school toilet and urinals are outside the school boundary.

**Chart 3: Location of the Toilet and Urinals in the School**

Source: Field Survey.

Chart3 reveals that out of total respondents (students and teachers), 87.59 per cent have admitted that toilet and urinal are within the school premises. While rest of the respondents (12.41 per cent) opined that school toilet and urinals are outside the school buildings but with in school premises.

With regard to accessibility the chart depicts that hundred percent respondent who admitted that toilets and urinals are outside the school premises reported that these toilets and urinals are accessible in all weather. But out of these respondents, majority (86.67 per cent ) opined that path of these toilets are not in good condition. It was surprising that as compared to students, hundred percent teachers are of the view that path of the toilets which are outside the school building are in good condition. Instead of teacher only 13.33 per cent students admitted that path of the toilet which are outside the school premises are in good condition and 86.67 per cent deny to the good condition of path.

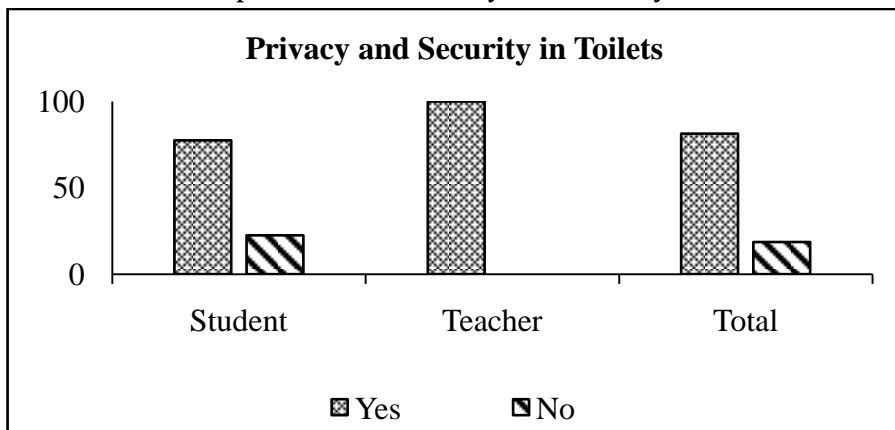
Hence, it is concluded that though in the majority of cases the toilets and urinals are within the school building, yet where these toilets and urinals are outside, the path to these are not in good conditions.

### iii) Privacy and Security in Toilets

The safety and security of students are of utmost importance. The security is not confined only in the premises but also extended to the toilets and urinals. Along with security privacy, especially, in girls' toilets, is also

important. Hence, it is the responsibility of the school authorities to make provision for security and privacy in the toilets and urinals. The data in this regard have been presented in Chart 4.

**Chart4: Opinion about Privacy and Security in Toilets**



Source: Field Survey.

Chart 4 indicates that out of total respondents, 81.38 per cent (students and teachers) admitted that the toilets and urinals in the school maintain security and privacy, especially, to girls. Whereas 18.62 per cent of respondents did not admitted this. As per them the toilets and urinals are not secure. It is obvious that teachers can say positively. But the real position is depicted by the students. Out of total respondents, 22.50 per cent (mostly girls) opined that the toilets in the schools do not provide privacy and security. Hence, it can be said that though majority of students equated the toilets and urinals as secure, the responses of those students who found them unsecured cannot be ignored.

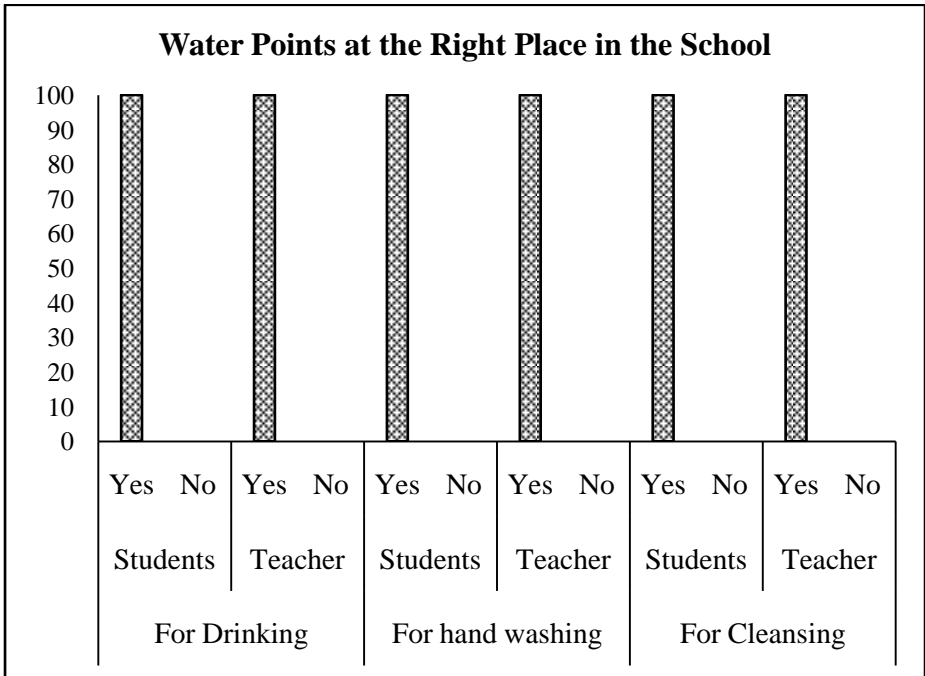
### III. Water Points

#### i) Availability, Coverage and Adequacy of Water and Toilets in School

The provision of water at schools is one of the 'highly effective practices in increasing access and learning outcomes. In addition to the necessity of water to maintain personal and environmental hygiene, reducing student

dehydration in schools has been associated with improved cognitive abilities.

**Chart 5: Sufficient Water Points at the Right Place in School**



Source: Field Survey

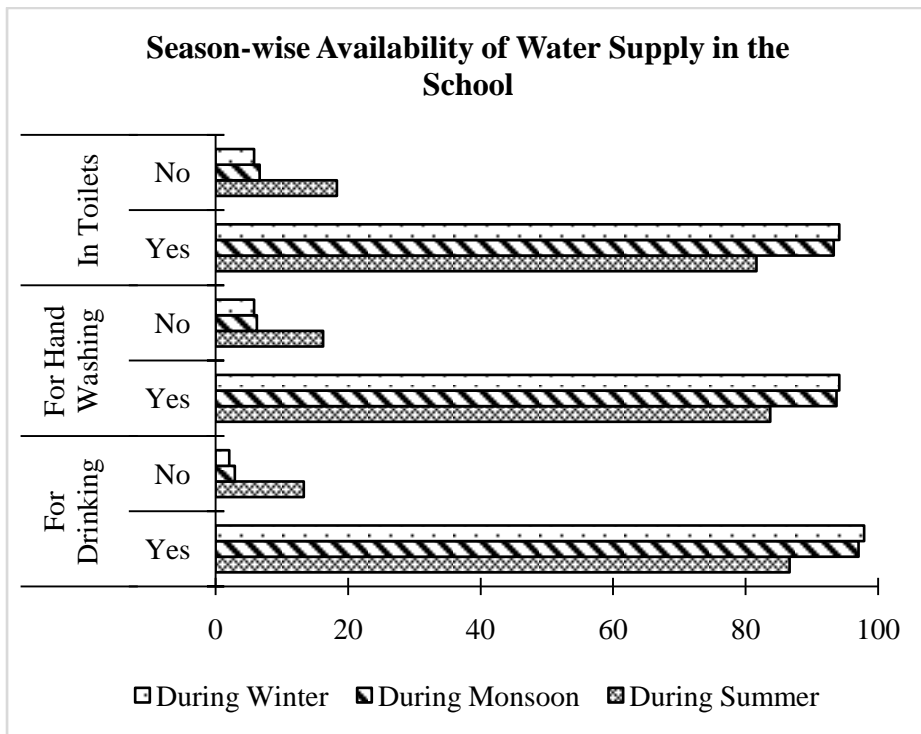
It is evident from Chart5 that 100 per cent respondents have the opinion that there are sufficient water points in the school for drinking as well as hand washing and cleansing. It clearly indicated that in Hamirpur district all the schools have sufficient infrastructure for water.

**ii) Season-wise availability of Water Supply in the School**

As the water is needed every time, continue and sufficient supply of water should be maintained throughout the year. Hence, it is important to know whether the continuous supply of water in school be maintained or not. The data in this regard have been enumerated in Chart6.



**Chart 6: Season-wise Availability of Water Supply in the School**



Source: Field Survey.

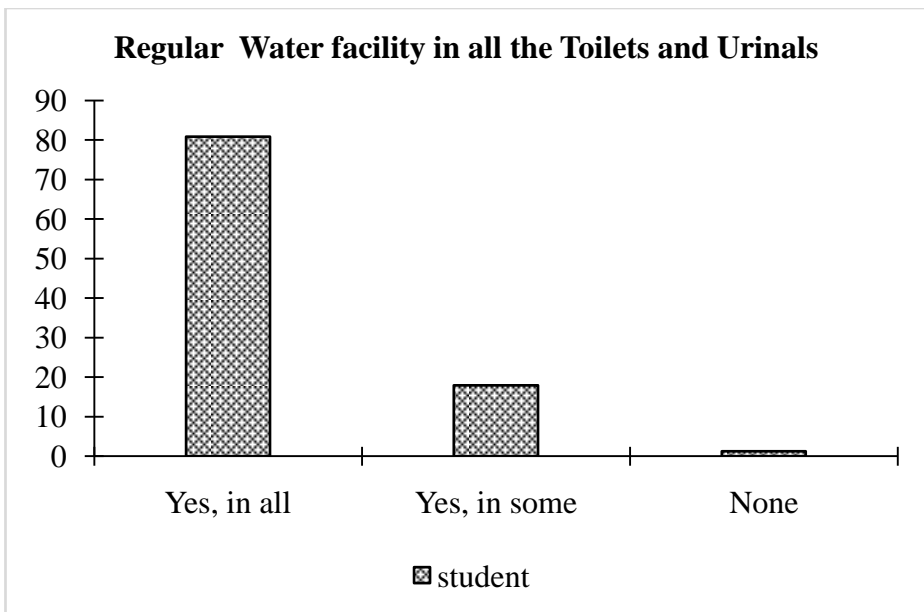
Chart 6 clearly shows that the supply of water in the school in all the seasons. During summer season, 86.67 per cent are of the view that there was sufficient water supply, whereas 13.33 per cent says no, the supply of water was not sufficient for drinking in the school. Majority of the students (83.75per cent and 81.67per cent respectively) told that water supply for hand wash and in toilet during summer was sufficient in school. Whereas rest of the students are of the opinion that there was no sufficient water supply in the school for hand washing and in toilet.

The chart further shows that majority of the students, more than 90 per cent, were of the view that during winter and monsoon water supply in the school was sufficient for drinking, hand washing and in toilet . Whereas, less than 10 per cent students were of the opinion that water supply was not sufficient for drinking, hand washing and in toilet during monsoon and winter season.

### iii) Water facility in or nearby toilets and Urinals

Clean hands play an important role in preventing transmission of infectious disease. The physical quality of any toilet and hand washing facilities is an important determinant of whether and how it is used, especially for school children. Data related to the regular water supply facility in all the toilets and urinals in the school have been shown in Chart 7.

**Chart 7: Percentage Distribution of Regular Water facility in all the Toilets and Urinals**



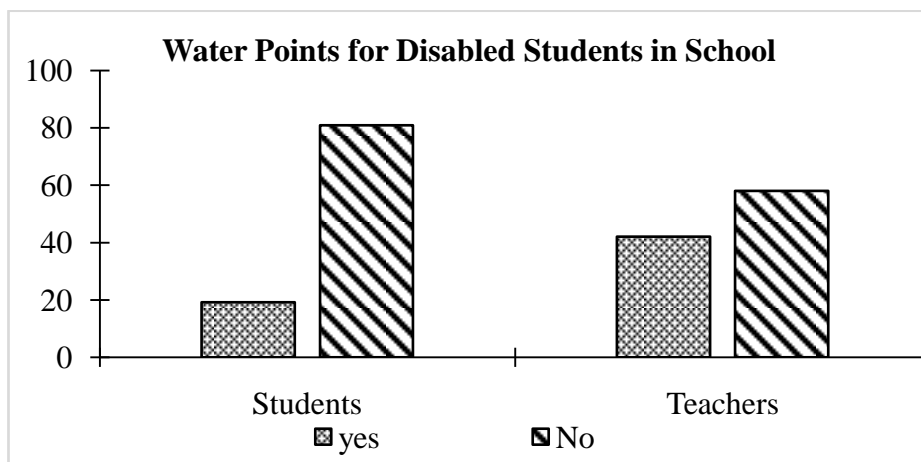
Source: Field Survey.

Data in Chart7 depict that 80.83 percent of respondents admitted that regular water supply facilities are available in all toilets and urinals in the school. Whereas 17.92 per cent are of the view that regular water facilities are only in some toilets and urinals in the school. Only 1.25 per cent negligible population are of the view that none of the school toilets or urinals has regular water facilities. It means that all the toilets are being provided with regular water facilities with not worth mentioning the percentage of respondents opined against that the regular water facilities.

#### iv) Water Points for Disabled Students

Access to safe and clean water and sanitation facilities is a basic right of all people, including people with disabilities, the denial of which can have serious implications on their well-being. Disabled students require special aids and appliances for their daily activities. Along with other things, these students need to be treated special. Hence, it is important that the water points for disabled students should there in the school to enable them to avoid any problem. The data regarding water points for disabled students have been presented in Chart8.

**Chart 8: Water Points for Disabled Students in School**



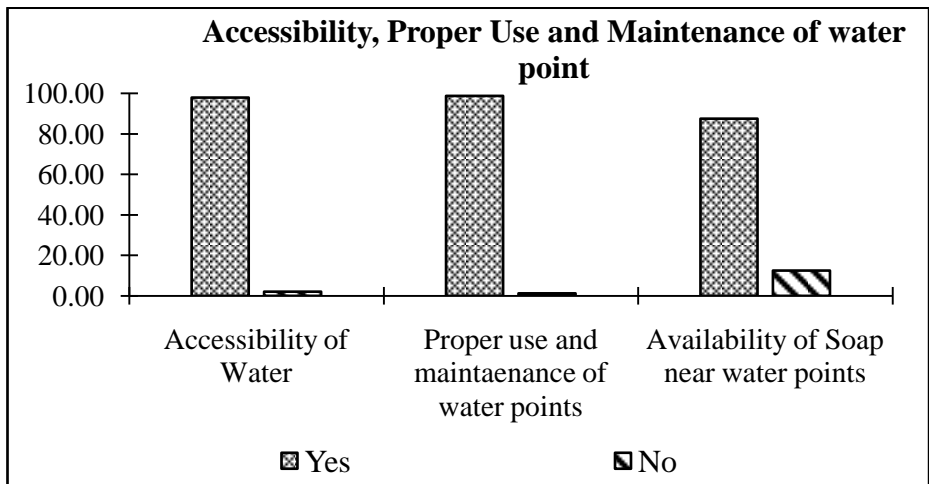
Source: *Field Survey*.

Chart 8 depicts the opinion of the student and teacher regarding water points for the disabled in the school. Majority of the respondents (76.90 per cent) have told that water points facilities for disabled in the school was not available. About 80 per cent student and 58 per cent teachers have disclosed that there are no water point facilities for disabled. Only 23.10 per cent respondents have expressed that there are water points for disabled. It was important to note that only 19.17 per cent students as compared to 42 per cent teachers had opinion that water point was available for disabled. It meant that respondents differ in their views regarding the water points for disabled.

#### iv) Accessibility, Use and maintenance of Water points

Availability of sufficient infrastructure for water does not meet the objectives. It is important that these water point must accessible to all the students and, moreover, these must be used and maintained properly. In this regard, the collected data have been given in Chart 9.

**Chart 9: Opinion about the Accessibility, Proper Use and Maintenance of water point**



Source: *Field Survey.*

Chart 9 depicts that the majority of the student, 97.92 per cent, reported that water points were accessible for drinking and hand-washing in the school. Out of the total respondents, only 2 per cent had admitted that water points were not accessible in the school. Majority of the students (98.75 per cent) had reported that all the water points in the school were used and maintained properly. With regard to the availability of soap out of total respondents, 87.50 per cent of respondents opined that soap for washing hand was available near the water point. While 12.50 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that soap was not available near the water point. Hence, it can be concluded that schools were making efforts to maintain the water point up to the mark along with making provision of soaps near the water points so that students and staff clean their hand.

#### IV. Findings

- It was interesting to note that the majority of students were not aware of WASH. However, maximum teachers were aware of WASH but the knowledge of teachers cannot be further communicated to students.
- All the respondents, both students and teachers, reported that toilets and urinals are there in the school. It proves that the schools in Hamirpur districts have toilets.
- The majority of the respondents, students and teachers reported the availability of separate toilet for disabled, these toilets were easily accessible for disabled whereas a minor group of students did not favour the accesability of toilets to physically challenged.
- The majority of the students and teachers admitted that government has constructed the toilet keeping in view their accessibility for disabled students.
- The teachers and students, both have admitted that toilet and urinal are within the school premises.
- It was not appreciative that majority of respondents opined that path of these toilets was not in good condition but the teachers were of the view that path of the toilets which are outside the school building were in good condition.
- It was heartening to record that mostly girls opined that the toilets in the schools do not provide privacy and security.
- Majority of the students told that water supply for hand wash and in toilet during summer was sufficient in school.
- The majority of the students reported that water supply in the school was sufficient for drinking, hand washing and in toilet during winter and monsoon.
- The maximum respondents admitted regular water supply facilities are available in all toilets and urinals in the school.
- All the toilets are being provided with regular water facilities with not worth mentioning the percentage of respondents opined against that the regular water facilities.
- Majority of the respondents told that water points facilities for disabled in the school was not available.

- It was found that schools were making efforts to maintain the water point up to the mark along with making provision of soaps near the water points so that students and staff clean their hand.
- It clearly indicated that in Hamirpur district all the schools have sufficient infrastructure for water.

#### **V. Suggestions:**

- ❖ There is need to educate the school children about WASH which can be facilitated through some awareness campaign under Swachh Bharat Mission.
- ❖ The provision of toilets for physically challenged students to be ensured rigorously within the school premises. The funds under the control of ESOMSA department may be used for the purpose.
- ❖ The provision of toilets for girls deserve to be given special attention, especially the provision of Samagar Shiksha Abhiyan lay emphasis on this dimension.
- ❖ The provision of water supply facilities in the toilets for disabled may be ensured invariably.

#### **Conclusion**

The investments in school sanitation and hygiene education together can create improved learning environments, thereby facilitating increased attendance and retention of students. Contaminated water, poor sanitation or unhealthy hygiene behaviours increases the risk of contracting diarrheal diseases. It was found that the awareness about the importance of clean water and sanitation among the school children was good enough. But when they were asked about WASH, they responded negatively. The awareness and education about WASH was not very encouraging. Even the teachers were not aware. This was an alarming situation. Water facilities both for drinking and hand washing were found satisfactory. In majority of schools, the authorities made the provision of soap at water point. The toilets and urinals were available in all the schools. Thus, it is concluded that although the schools were very much aware of importance of clean water, sanitation, hygiene and providing education in this regard, yet it was observed that the

education is provided mere to fulfill formalities. There is a need for some concrete efforts in this regard.

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