

# Worldviews of Teachers Implementing DepEd's Water Sanitation and Hygiene Program

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## Abstract

This study explores the lived experiences and worldviews of teacher-coordinators implementing the Department of Education's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WinS) Program in public elementary schools in Region XII, Philippines. Anchored on the global commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 6, Clean Water and Sanitation established by the United Nations for 2030, this research responds to the pressing need for effective sanitation practices in schools. Utilizing a transcendental phenomenological approach, eight teacher-coordinators were purposively selected and interviewed using validated guides and protocols.

Thematic analysis of the data revealed six core themes that shape their worldviews: involuntary appointments; demanding routines and stress; personal health advocacy; socio-environmental support and constraints; evolving responsibilities; and personal-professional

transformation. Contextual influences included key individuals, emotional labor, accomplishments, systemic challenges, coping strategies, and reflective insights. Looking forward, participants envisioned recognition of their contributions, future roles as mentors, and the necessity for sustained capacity-building and institutional support.

Findings highlight the dual burden and transformative impact of implementing WinS at the grassroots level, where teacher-coordinators navigate policy expectations amid limited resources. Despite challenges, they exhibit resilience and initiative, leveraging adaptive strategies and community networks to sustain program outcomes. The study recommends integrative policy reforms and targeted professional development to empower coordinators and ensure the longevity and scalability of the WASH agenda in schools.

*Keywords: clean water and sanitation, transcendental phenomenology, sanitation practices, grassroots implementation, professional development*

## INTRODUCTION

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals in 2030 such as no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent

work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water life on land, place justice and strong institutions, and partnerships for the goals, are a global target of the UN for each member country to follow (UNITED NATIONS, 2018) They are a universal call to combat poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030, all people around the globe can live peacefully and harmoniously (Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). Further, the UN country members will persist in its support for the Philippines as it pursues sustainable development and will enhance local efforts to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations Philippines, 2022).

However, there were still 3.4 billion people, or 2 in 5, who do not have safely managed sanitation, which is impacting their health, dignity, and development, thus contributing to some 1.4 million preventable deaths annually (World, 2024). Hence, UNICEF, World Health Organization, and WaterAid intensified their efforts because the countries are not progressing well and possibly failing to safely manage sanitation for the 2030 deadline (Summary Report: Global Summit to Accelerate Progress towards Safely Managed Sanitation (SMS), 2025). The updated compendium of the United Nations and World Health Organization showed a wide range of health and environmental problems, such as pollution in the air and water, sanitation, hygiene, climate change, chemical radiation, and food systems (Compendium of WHO and Other UN Guidance in Health and Environment, 2024 Update, n.d.)

The World Health Organization (2024) is increasingly strengthening its efforts to promote adolescents' health. Likewise, the UNICEF also secured education and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools (WinS) as the top priorities of SDG 6 (UNICEF, 2023). So, to promote the safe, healthy lives and well-being of the learners in the Philippines, the Oplan Kalusugan sa DepEd under DO no. 28 s. 2018 was created. It is to ensure that WaSH is the top priority to reduce vulnerability among children against lack of safe access to drinking water (World Health Organization, 2023) because safe, affordable, and reliable access to water for drinking and cleaning is a vital human right; therefore sustainable access to water reduces the risk of illnesses and death (Ritchie et al., 2024).

However, Philippines is mostly affected by storms resulting to a damage facilities for safe drinking water (Planet Water Foundation, 2024). Which according to Anthonj et al., (2024) the homelessness largely resulted in inaccessibility of water, sanitation, and hygiene, leading to communicable diseases, diarrhea, and respiratory illnesses, and absenteeism (Pardham et al., 2020). The intense winds and relentless rain caused by Storm Odette resulted significant disruptions to drinking water supplies, electricity, and transportation, impacting tens of thousands of individuals. (john@planet-water.org, 2022).

Further, inadequate facilities affect health and influence children's social experiences at school, highlighting the psychosocial impacts of poor sanitation (*APA PsycNet*, 2025). For instance, the Dumagat Remontados who inhabit a remote mountainous region in the Philippines and are one of the indigenous communities facing ongoing challenges in accessing clean water. The lack of this vital resource leads to significant health issues for community members, particularly young children, who experience malnutrition, weakened immune systems, and an increased susceptibility to waterborne disease (Poom, 2023). On the other side, Tesema Mamo Haile & Enguday Ademe Mekonnen (2024) revealed that mobilization and stakeholders' engagement are also challenges in WASH implementations; therefore, the collaboration among staff and parents impacts the program's success.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene as fundamental elements for ensuring both personal and environmental cleanliness, which are essential for the safe operation of schools. It is crucial to implement specific strategies for the daily functioning of schools,

thereby raising WinS to a higher standard within School-Based Management (SBM) (*WinS MONITORING RESULTS WATER SANITATION HYGIENE DEWORMING HEALTH EDUCATION BACKGROUND, n.d.*). Nevertheless, the WaSH program has encountered various obstacles. Rivera (n.d.) indicated that WinS is often deprioritized within the Maintenance and Other Operating Expense (MOOE) of schools. Additionally, there is inadequate supervision of the implementation of SBM-WinS practices, a lack of direct connections between toilets and water sources, and insufficient financial resources for the repair and upkeep of WinS facilities (Dilao, 2019). This study aims to address these issues by exploring the personal and professional challenges faced by teacher-coordinators and investigating how these challenges can drive change within the Department of Education.

### Literature Review

In 2018, the Department of Education initiated the Oplan Kalusugan sa DepEd to enhance various programs, including the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP), Medical, Dental and Nursing Services encompassing the School Dental Health Program (SDHCP), Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) in Schools (WinS) Program, Adolescent Reproductive Health, National Drug Education Program, and the School Mental Health Program (Abarca, 2022). Each of these initiatives entails specific duties and responsibilities. However, Hutton and Chase (2019) observed that many educators face considerable stress, while Zhao et al. (2022) emphasized that the protective role of self-efficacy against burnout may vary within the context of stress and conflict, suggesting a more intricate relationship regarding job-related burnout. Furthermore, a lack of collaboration and coordination among those tasked with implementation, coupled with inadequate political support, can hinder progress (Health Policy Project, 2014). These challenges may exacerbate the coordinators' concerns regarding the social and emotional well-being and competence of the learners (Reichl, 2017). Consequently, program administrators must engage in effective communication, foster collaboration and delegation, practice self-reflection and contemplation, maintain flexibility and learn from mistakes, achieve work-life balance, and prioritize self-care (Banquerigo & Quines, 2024) as essential coping strategies.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored from the following law and theories: Experiential Learning theory, Theory of Pragmatism, Law of Effect, Program Theory, Implementation Theory, and Length of Service Support and Implementation (LSSI) Theory- the researcher's continuous theoretical statement.

### Significance of the Study

The results of this study is significant to the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as it serve as a guide for the said international program To the Department of Education as it can be a reference of the department in decision making to provide training not just for the coordinators but also to the teachers, administrators, students and financial officers. To the policy makers to consider how this program work in the field, considering that not all schools are placed in a location which water, sanitation and hygiene are well observed. To the administrators, this study will be a basis for personnel to understand how teacher coordinators feel and what they experience while implementing the program in

their schools. It can also provide administrators with a view of creating specific guidelines to ease the workload of the teachers in the school. And also for the school to take actions to the financial issues of the program in order to provide necessary facilities To the coordinators, this can give them the chance to be heard and disclose their experiences about how they achieved three stars. The findings can also benefit the teachers as it help them understand their role to the implementation. To theStakeholders, this can enhance the support system they are giving to school. To the learners, this can be a way to assure them that they are safe in school. And to the future researchers, this study can be a benchmark for the future researchers to apply and move further to the recommendations.

### Research Question

This study aimed to describe the worldviews of teacher-coordinators who are implementing the Department of Education's Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools (WinS) program in the Region XII, Mindanao, Philippines. It specifically sought to answer the question: What are the worldviews of the teacher-coordinators in the WASH in Schools (WinS) program?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The research study used a transcendental phenomenological research design. It aimed to explore and understand the worldview of teacher-coordinators through their narrative statements. Moustakas (1994) believed that the wholeness of the experiences shows an understanding of phenomena.

### Locale of the Study

The research was carried out across various DepEd Division offices in Region 12, Mindanao, Philippines, including Sarangani Province, General Santos City, South Cotabato, Cotabato Province, Kidapawan City, Sultan Kudarat, and Tacurong City. Notably, Koronadal City Division was excluded due to the absence of records indicating schools that achieved a three-star rating as reported by their Division Planning and Research office. Conversely, the researcher identified one (1) elementary school from each of the Sarangani Province, General Santos City, South Cotabato, Kidapawan City, Cotabato Province, and Tacurong City Divisions. To complete the eight (8) participants, the researcher employed a draw lots technique to select two (2) schools and it was the Division of Sultan Kudarat which was selected.

### Participants of the Study

The participants were the selected WinS coordinators from the different divisions within Region 12, Mindanao, Philippines. The program focused on children aged 6 to 12 (Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, 2017). DepEd Order No. 10, series of 2016, is a policy that stated that schoolchildren must be prevented from common diseases to develop positive behavior and help them access their ultimate right to health and education. Hence, the researcher considered eight (8) WinS coordinators in the entire region, specifically the elementary teacher-coordinators from 2018 to the present. According to Fokufuka (2014),

as cited by Accad and Accad (2016), 5-10 individuals are appropriate for extracting rich and varied information. To support and validate the worldviews of the teacher-coordinators for saturation purposes, the researcher also interviewed key informants who were the administrator, co-teacher of the participants, learners, and parent in each respective school.

### Sampling Technique

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants with direct experience as teacher-coordinators in the WinS Program. This technique allowed for the intentional selection of individuals with specific characteristics and experiences relevant to the research objectives. They were purposively selected by the researcher, considering that, according to Creswell (2014) as cited by Ishtiaq (2019), the participants can be selected based on their purpose (*Using Qualitative Sampling to Your Advantage*, n.d.) which the researcher saw as fit for the information needed. They, too, were individuals with diverse experiences in educational settings, including challenges and successes. And they represented different divisions or schools within Region 12.

### Data Gathering Instruments

The Interview Guide used by the researcher comprised three (3) main questions and fifteen (15) sub questions regarding the worldviews of the teacher-coordinator, context of worldviews and the future self-perceptions of the coordinators. They were all modified from the study of Protacio (2021) anchored from the framework of Moustakas (1994). According to George (2022) an interview guide is a document that can help the researcher structure the interview flow.

### Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathered underwent the process of communication, asking for consent/permission, conducting a semi-structured interview, writing a transcription, and using a validation strategy.

### Data Analysis Method

The researcher used thematic analysis of Braunn and Clarke (2006) to identify patterns, themes, and insights from interview transcripts and document reviews. Coded data systematically categorized the information related to the teacher-coordinators' worldviews.

### Ethical Consideration

To protect the participants' rights and dignity, the researcher showed confidentiality and respect for their responses and participation. The responses were treated with all fairness. Revealing the coordinator's audio recordings, personality, names, background, signatures and pictures was prohibited. This is supported by the Data Privacy Act (DPA) of 2012 which emphasizes and protects the individual's personal information disclosure (Ivan Barroga & Doreen Tampus, 2023). Further, the credibility, dependability, confirmability,



and transferability (Enworo, 2023) also ensured participants' rights and protection against biases or subjectivities, maintained the research study's validity. Finally, the researcher's positionality address potential partialities, expectations, and personal experiences that shaped the study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

There are six (6) themes emerging from the thematic analysis of the worldviews of Teacher-Coordination of WinS Program and these are the following:

### **Theme 1: Non-Voluntary Appointment**

The theme discusses the assignment of WinS coordinators by their respective school heads.

School heads and colleagues, particularly master teachers, appoint WinS coordinators, who often do not seek the role themselves. Despite this, coordinators remain committed to the program for at least three years. These recommended and appointed regular teachers lasted in their positions for at least three years and has able to pour their professional and personal selves to serve the program. Moreover, when employees are seen to be overqualified and possess self-confidence, they are more likely to exhibit innovative behaviors who tends to be qualified for a position (Ma, 2024). Therefore, it is important to increase and bolster strategies that will elucidate and enhance leaders' values to the department's ideals (Robiños et al., 2019). The trust and confidence of the school heads affect their kind of decision-making (Almarwani, 2021). Therefore the school heads have shown the trust and confidence theory in selecting WinS coordinators who are fit for the program because they further believed in their teachers' abilities, confidence, and reliability (Simpson & Vieth, 2021).

### **Theme 2: Daily Workload, Routine, and Stress**

The year round and the demanding nature of the WinS program highlights the typical days of the WinS coordinators. They have mentioned that the WinS program is a "year round program," filled with "constant reminders," "high workload," and "stress". Coordinators face exhaustion and pressure due to balancing teaching with administrative responsibilities. They compare their program to other Department of Education programs, requiring sustainability and maintenance of school facilities. Despite stress and nearly surrendering, school heads refuse to allow them to do so. Moreover, teacher-coordinators remind teachers on daily tasks like handwashing, tooth brushing, comfort room cleaning, and waste segregation. They ensure the school's facilities are functional and adhere to the WASH checklist, which is crucial for academic reports. This helps ensure students' safety and well-being. The findings imply that the teacher coordinators are persons who are committed every day to fulfilling their duties and responsibilities despite their large numbers of responsibilities. And they envision seeing learners who are safe and healthy in the school because Wahab et al. (2024) emphasized that educators play a crucial role in ensuring that students receive the highest quality of education, enabling them to achieve their fullest potential.

### **Theme 3: Personal Connection of Teacher-Coordination to Health and Hygiene**

Theme three (3) emphasizes the importance of coordinators' professional duties and personal values in integrating personal life with work, maintaining good health practices, and fostering pride and fulfillment. The coordinators' dedication to health, sanitation, and hygiene has led to successful implementation of programs, and they find fulfillment in promoting cleanliness and hygiene habits among students and teachers. The results indicate that, despite the challenges associated with program implementation, participants experience a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment as they incorporate handwashing and tooth-brushing practices into their daily lives. As noted by Better Health Channel (2021), thorough handwashing with soap is essential in preventing the transmission of infectious diseases. Consequently, the coordinators opted to align their personal values with the program to avoid unnecessary complications (Mind Tools Content Team, 2024).

#### **Theme 4: Social Environment: Support and Hindrance**

The social context, including teachers, school heads, learners, parents, and community stakeholders, plays a dual role in supporting and addressing challenges such as delays or resistance to new initiatives. The WinS coordinators are influenced by the social environment, including teachers, students, school administration, and stakeholders, which significantly impacts the implementation of any program. It has been observed that these individuals can exert both positive and negative influences on the coordinators' daily activities.

The students have actively participated by practicing proper handwashing, tooth brushing, waste segregation, and maintaining hygiene and sanitation standards. Nevertheless, their tendency to disregard school rules poses challenges to the program's effectiveness. Teachers have demonstrated considerable support by integrating the program into their routines; however, their own commitments often lead them to neglect their responsibilities related to the WinS initiative. The school administration provides financial backing for the program, covering aspects such as repairs and maintenance. However, delays in approving requests and proposals can hinder timely actions, necessitating alternative solutions from the coordinators. Furthermore, stakeholders, including parents, have shown their support through the Parent-Teacher Association, contributing resources for hygiene and sanitation facilities. Nonetheless, there are instances when they decline to offer assistance. The coordinator plays a role in the implementation process, but is not the sole contributor. As stated by the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (2019), a variety of employees provide specialized instructional support to students and assist them in utilizing school facilities; these individuals are collectively known as school support staff.

#### **Theme 5: Role Transformation and Expanded Responsibilities**

The WinS coordinator role involves a transformative shift from classroom teaching to school-wide duties, including facility maintenance and policy implementation, requiring coordinators to master additional tasks. WinS coordinators are elementary-level classroom teachers who do lesson planning, educational materials preparation, setting values, connecting with parents, and assessing learning outcomes, becoming teacher leaders to study and implement the WinS program. Since this program is year-round, it requires sustainability of activities. The teacher coordinators felt the complexity of the responsibilities therefore experienced exhaustion and burnout. Despite these challenges, they also acquire proficiency in various additional tasks, such as managing facility upkeep and executing policy initiatives. The findings revealed that the WinS coordinators are regular teachers, who are responsible for creating educational resources and assignments (in 2022) which implies that they have confidence, creativity, participation, and responsibility; therefore, they were chosen by their heads (What Is the Responsibility of Teachers? A

Definitive Guide, n.d.). It further implies that they are selected because they are role models. The Role of Teachers in Supporting Health (2022) agreed that teachers can educate the learners about the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), and they can help them discover.

### **Theme 6: Personal and Professional Growth/Transformation**

This theme underscores that despite challenges, coordinators experience significant growth, including developed leadership skills, improved time management, and increased health consciousness, which enhances their professional competencies and personal development. Coordinators' personal experiences of transitioning from single to married, motherhood, and school roles have boosted their leadership skills and health consciousness, leading to increased recognition from schools and teachers. According to the Thomas Fordham Institute (2021), students' learning is adversely affected when they are concerned about their safety from the anxiety and fear of bullying or perceive that their teachers do not hold high expectations for their academic achievement. Further, the findings imply that the teachers enhanced their leadership styles as they believed that students who practiced good hygiene were less likely to become victims of bullying than those who did not (Murshid, 2018). Moreover, according to Hutton & Chase (2019) enhanced WASH is thus essential for alleviating poverty, fostering equality, and facilitating socioeconomic advancement.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools is a program of the Department of Education which is an ongoing initiative that are designated to the teachers whom, in the first place, have not actively pursued this role but they have been appointed involuntarily by their school administrators. The teacher-coordinator's personal and professional health values are closely linked to this WinS program, which leads to fulfillment and satisfaction, more specifically when the students begin to incorporate proper sanitation and hygiene practices into their daily routines in the school and even at home. Despite the challenges encountered by the teacher-coordinators, they still exhibit resilience and initiative, leveraging adaptive strategies and community networks to sustain program outcomes. Wins is greatly connected to the promotion of health and safety in the school. It is not solely a responsibility of a single person but a product of the school community's efforts and support. Therefore it is recommended that all the teaching and non-teaching personnel of each DepEd schools undergo seminars, trainings and workshop regarding WinS program in order to foster collaboration and sustainability leading towards an ultimately safe, clean and germ-free school environment for the benefits of the learners, teachers, administrators and the community.

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