

Review of: "Examining Water Use and Sanitation Practices in Rural Schools of Chegutu District, Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

General comments:

The manuscript currently lacks clarity regarding ethical considerations and participants' consent, making it challenging to determine if the study adhered to research ethical standards.

It is also essential to specify if the study received approval from a competent Institutional Review Board (IRB), as it is a non-negotiable requirement for research of this nature. Moreover, the study fails to highlight potential limitations that may have directly or indirectly influenced the results.

It would be beneficial to separate the results and discussion into distinct sections for improved clarity. The author's arguments within the discussion are ambiguous, hindering the ability to ascertain if the study's findings align or conflict with existing literature.

In the references, where links are provided, indicate in the date and time the link was accessed in brackets or better still follow the journal's guidelines on referencing or citing web links.

The study cites appendices, however, these are not provided in the manuscript.

Section-specific comments

Introduction

In the third paragraph, refrain from repeating "Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)" and stick to the acronym since it has been introduced in the first paragraph. The cited literature, "(Hirji, 2001; Hirji, 2002)" and "(Faggale and Rabie, 1992)" is outdated. It is advisable to refer to literature not older than ten years, unless information is scarce, or when discussing specific events such as the 2008 cholera outbreak you mentioned.

Be cautious when identifying diseases such as "hepatitis." Not all hepatitis variants are waterborne. Consider specifying the faecal-oral variants, like Hepatitis A and E.

Also, note that "waterborne" is one word and should be used as such. If you must separate them, use a hyphen.

You indicate that "Very few studies have been carried out..." this is untrue as there are several studies conducted on

WASH in schools in sub-Saharan Africa. Perhaps, saying that “*Whereas numerous studies have been conducted on WASH in schools, uptake of hygiene and sanitation practices in schools remain low* [add a reference]” would be more neutral and generally acceptable.

Methodology

Generally, your study does not describe the study design you adopted. Study design is an important part of the methodology of any study of this nature. It appears your study adopted a mixed methods approach given that you indicate questionnaires and interviews in the subsequent sub-sections of this chapter but this is not described. The best place to describe the design and approach is the study design sub section which unfortunately, is not included in this study.

3.2.1. Questionnaires

You indicate that the questionnaire had a 5-point Likert scale, please indicate what the five points were on your scale. Also, indicate the number of respondents based on your sample size.

3.2.2. Interviews

You do not describe which type of interviews were used. Were they key informant interviews, in-depth interviews or other? Please indicate the interview type(s) and the number of respondents based on your sample size.

3.5 Study Sample Size

The study is not quite convincing on how the sample size was determined. Please indicate what your sample size was and how you arrived at it using statistical techniques of sample size determination. The author you quoted “Gay (1987)” is not an authority in sample size determination.

3.6. Data analysis

This section does not describe the statistical software used to analyse the data. It also reads in the first sentence that “Data collected were compiled and analysed using descriptive statistics (graphs and tables),” note that “graphs and tables” are not descriptive statistics, they are formats of data presentation or visualization. Note that descriptive statistics are measures of central tendency such as mean, mode, median, and measures of dispersion such as range, SD, variance, etc. At the bare minimum, this sub section should indicate the descriptive statistics you measured. Since the study seemed to have had qualitative dimension too since you indicate having used interviews alongside the questionnaires, to that end, you might want to describe how the qualitative data was analysed.

4. Results and Discussion

Avoid categorizing schools as A, B, C, and D, and instead, use their actual names unless there are specific reasons for concealing them. If so, please indicate the reasons. Otherwise, if concealed, how will future researchers, stakeholders or policymakers who want to act on your recommendations know where or which school(s) to intervene in?

4.2. Staff Characteristics by Gender

You refer to figure 2 in this section but figure 1 is not referenced in prior sections.

Also, in scientific research, do not present charts in 3-dimensions, it is better to use one dimension as they tend to be clearer and corresponding to the scale of the axis just like you've done for figure 3.

4.7. Information Access and Hygiene Education

In research, corresponding data references should come immediately after the citation, for example, you mention table 2 yet table two comes after figure 7. This can be confusing for readers.