

ABSTRACT

The high incidence of diarrhoea disease and other communicable diseases among children due to poor personal hygiene and sanitation remains a concern on the public health agenda in most countries. To address the problem efficiently an understanding of knowledge, attitude and practice among target populations is needed to plan and design behavioural interventions. It is against this background that the present study was carried out to determine the level of knowledge and practice of handwashing among children in public and private schools in Njoro Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya. A cross-sectional survey research design of primary schools in Njoro sub-county was conducted. Cluster, stratified and random sampling techniques were used subsequently to get a sample of 30 schools, including both public and private, in all the five divisions in the sub-county. Purposive sample of 30 headteachers were interviewed while simple random sample of 360 pupils were issued with researcher administered questionnaires. School conditions and facilities were recorded using observation checklist. Data was analyzed with the aid of SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics, percentages, frequencies and means were used to summarize the findings. Inferential statistics, Chi-square, regression and correlation were used to check the relationships between variable at a 5% level of significance. The findings indicated that knowledge, attitudes as well as school conditions have high influences on handwashing practices among primary school going pupils. Majority of the pupils (91.4%) demonstrated knowledge on the importance of hygiene, however there was low observance of handwashing practice. It was established that majority of the pupils 229 (70.9%) were not washing their hands regularly after visiting the toilet. At least 59.3% of the pupils had at one time in their lives suffered from diarrhea. School conditions and facilities were noted to greatly influence handwashing practices among school children. Among the key recommendations, education stakeholders are supposed to provide adequate facilities and personnel to facilitate the handwashing practice. Campaigns need to be held frequently to sensitize the residents as well as the school going pupils on the importance of handwashing to create awareness as well ensuring their paradigm shift on their attitudes towards the practice. The findings are useful to all stakeholders such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water and Sanitation programmes, Parent Teachers Associations (P.T.A.S.). This union will foster stronger linkages that will pave the way for collaboration between the Ministry of Health and school management in ensuring effective handwashing practices among the children.