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# Promoting Healthy and Eco-Friendly School Through Students' Participation

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## ABSTRACT

Facilities to ensure health and learning skills for children is essential of an effective education system. Safety, supportive environment, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition are the basis to make school environment healthy. Healthy lifestyle includes adequate physical activity, harmony in life and prevention of unhealthy practices. A qualitative study has been conducted to understand the difficulties in following healthy practices in schools through participation of students. There are ten government high schools at Balasore town, Odisha. Ninth standard students from four government schools of Balasore district of Odisha formed the study sample. Participatory discussion and observation methods were used to conduct the study. Students provided their views on various health and environmental indicators such as physical activities, school environment, waste management at school, availability of facilities like safe drinking water, toilets, play grounds etc. in school, and habits of children related to choice of junk foods, tobacco use, etc. Study found inadequate healthy practices among children and lack of availability of facilities supporting health promotion and eco-friendly environment in school. Current study is process oriented which may be applied to make students understand the connection between health and environment and participate in decision making to make school campus healthy and environment friendly.

**Keywords:** School environment, Behaviour, School infrastructure, health, hygiene and sanitation

## INTRODUCTION

World Health Organisation specifies the importance of improving the physical environment at school as children are more vulnerable to adverse environmental conditions than adults.

*.....Between 25% to 33% of global burden of disease can be attributed to environment risk factor<sup>1</sup>*

Transformation of school environment from an unhygienic, unclean, unsafe, congested and unhealthy place to a hygienic, clean, safe, flexible and healthy place turn attitude of students, teachers and community towards positive thinking and action which affect teaching and learning positively<sup>2</sup>. National school sanitation manual highlighted the need for promotion of personal hygiene and environmental sanitation as there are many schools with lack of safe hygiene facilities, and also lack in providing safe drinking water to students.

School level health and environmental education and facilities are essential to make children and adolescence adopt good habits<sup>3</sup>.

Along with sanitation, hygiene and infrastructural facilities, adequate exposure to natural environment is also essential. During childhood, one develops lifelong habits and connection with nature during this time makes child aware of the importance of natural environment and also the essentiality of protecting environment<sup>4</sup>. Exposure to greenspace has positive impact on overall wellbeing of individuals and also enhance their ability to focus<sup>5</sup>.

Existing schools which established decades ago need to reflect sustainability characteristics of various available infrastructures and various practices addressing contemporary social, economic, cultural and environmental requirements. Each school need to find out its needs at school level to adopt flexible ways to