

Understanding Adolescent females' School-Leaving from Junior High Schools in Burkina Faso: A Mix-Method Case Study of Influencing Factors in Gorom-Gorom

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Abstract

Despite global progress in girls' education, rural Burkina Faso continues to experience concerning rates of female school-leaving at the junior high school level. This mixed-method study critically examines factors influencing adolescent girls' withdrawal from school in Gorom-Gorom, integrating perspectives from in-school girls (n=99), school principals (n=2), and retrospective narratives of dropout girls (n=5) through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis reveals that while both school heads and dropout girls identify domestic labor burdens and academic failure as primary drivers, significant perceptual gaps emerge: principals overestimate early marriage and pregnancy as dropout causes—factors the girls themselves do not report. Additionally, the study uncovers that school policies unintentionally accelerate dropout through public humiliation for unpaid fees and administrative barriers (e.g., birth certificate mismatches) that are invisible in conventional surveys. Crucially, four of five girls reported making the final decision to leave—not as free choice, but as constrained agency under duress. Near-universal regret among participants suggests substantial demand for re-entry programmes. This study highlights the urgent need for girl-centered, evidence-based interventions that address the gap between perceived and actual dropout drivers in Sahelian contexts.

Keywords: Burkina Faso; Girls' Education; Junior High School Leaving; Mixed-Methods; Thematic Analysis