

“I have not received any support since lockdown”: Expressions of the impact of school closures among school-attending Bissau-Guinean adolescents

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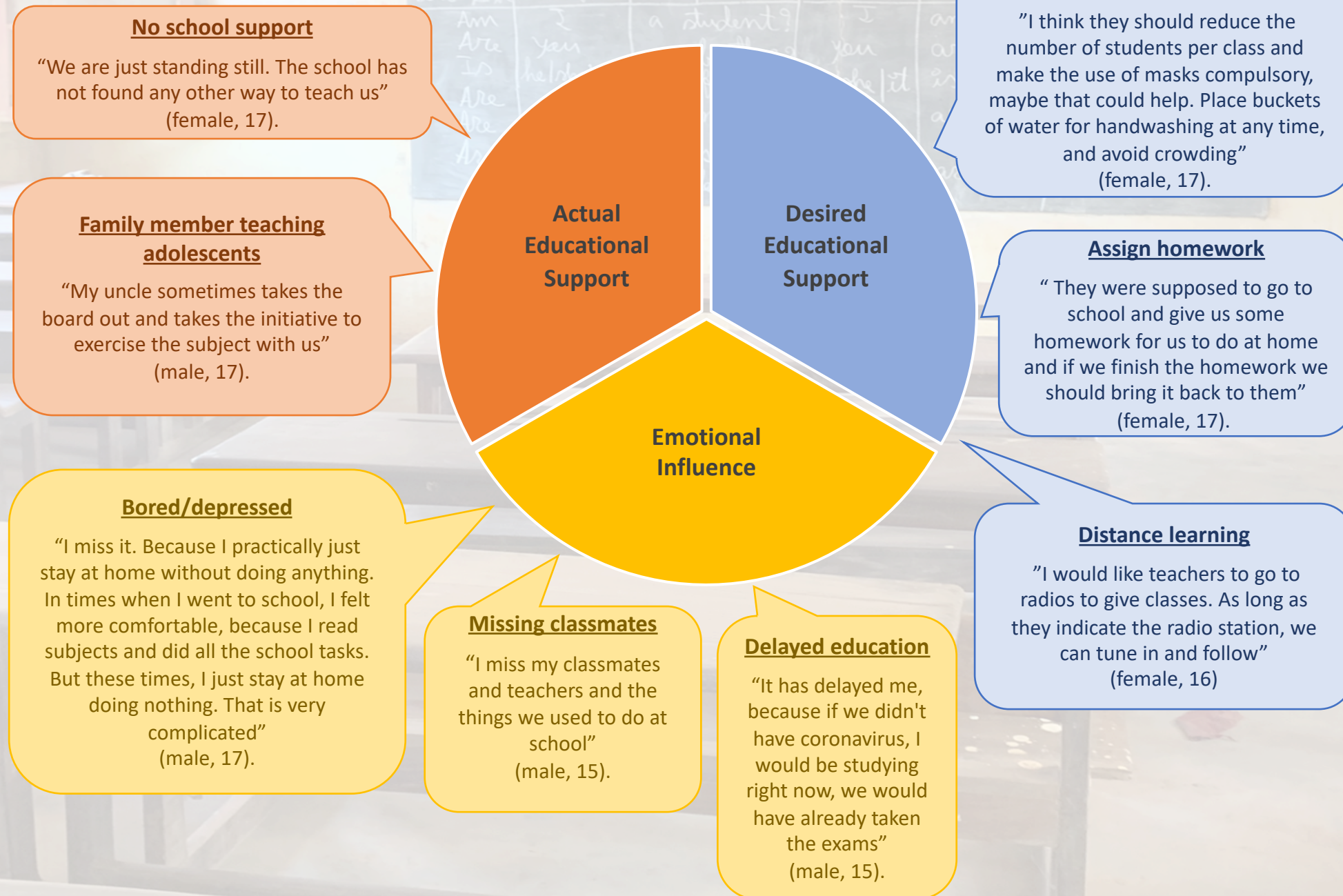
Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all countries in the world. Globally, governments have been implementing strict restrictions on movement and gatherings since early 2020 leading to periodic school closures. In Guinea-Bissau, school closure was one of the first restrictions implemented in battling the Covid-19 pandemic. All schools both private and public were closed in March 2020 until October 2020. The aim of the qualitative study is to describe and analyse the impact of the school closures on adolescents aged 15-17 years in low-income sub-Saharan setting in times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Methods

Snowball sampling was used to find participants living in five urban areas of Bissau, Guinea-Bissau, in June 2020. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with 24 adolescents aged 15-17 years, attending private and public schools. All interviews were conducted in Kriol, recorded, transcribed, translated and analysed.

Main findings: Identified Categories (8) & Themes (3)



Preliminary Results

All participants expressed that they had not received any assistance from their schools during the ongoing lockdown. Although, few participants mentioned that they had received some educational support from family members. Some participants presented ideas on how the schools could assist them in continuing their education during the lockdown. Most commonly they mentioned receiving homework from teachers and distance learning as viable options. Furthermore, many talked about being bored and having nothing to do except sit at home. They missed their school colleagues and were concerned for their well-being. They were also worried about the future and would have to repeat the academic year they had lost.

Conclusion

Young people in Bissau have a clear notion of their existence and current situation, affecting their future prospects. Their voices need to be heard and acted upon to mitigate school closures' negative impact on adolescents in Guinea-Bissau as elsewhere.

