Out of School Children in Guinea-Bissau

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November 2022

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"I dedicate this research to the Children of Guinea-Bissau"

RESUMO

Atualmente o valor da educação é altamente enfatizado, assim como a importância do sistema educativo de qualidade. No entanto, existem actualmente disparidades significativas em termos da qualidade dos sistemas educativos em todo o mundo. O objectivo desta tese é extrair os principais factores que influenciam o abandono escolar na Guiné Bissau. Para responder a esta questão, foi necessário fazer uma análise de dados secundários que foi depois complementada com entrevistas. Os três entrevistados são especialistas da área da educação, com uma experiência comprovada de trabalho em investigação e programas educativos na Guiné-Bissau. A parte teórica da tese discute a história da educação, definição de crianças fora da escola, e dá uma descrição geral sobre a Guiné-Bissau e o seu sistema educativo. Os resultados mostraram como os factores que afectam o abandono escolar estão interligados e interdependentes, o que os torna difíceis de dividir uns aos outros, embora os principais factores extraídos incluam principalmente o valor da educação dos pais e das crianças, atitudes em relação à educação das raparigas, formação e antecedentes dos professores, e estrangulamentos financeiros. Os resultados estão a mostrar como tem havido melhorias nas matrículas escolares na Guiné Bissau, contudo ainda está longe de atingir o seu objectivo.

Para enfrentar todos os factores que influenciam o abandono escolar, especialistas, educadores e criadores de programas devem continuar a desenvolver estratégias e incentivos claros que possam depois ajudar a resolver a questão das Crianças Fora da Escola.

Palavras-chave: Crianças Fora da Escola, Guiné Bissau, Educação, Abandono Escolar

ABSTRACT

In today's world, the value of education is highly emphasized, as is the importance of the quality educational system. Nonetheless, there are significant disparities in terms of the quality of educational systems around the world. The purpose of this thesis is to extract main factors influencing school dropout in Guinea-Bissau. To answer to this question, it was necessary to do a secondary data analysis which was then complimented with interviews. The three interviewees are experts from the field of education, with a proven experience of working on educational research and programs in Guinea-Bissau. The theoretical part of the thesis discusses history of education, definition of out of school children, and it gives an overall description on Guinea-Bissau and its educational system. Results showed how the factors affecting school dropout are interconnected and interdependent, which makes them hard to divide form each other, however main factors extracted, mainly include parent's and children's value of education, attitudes towards girls' education, teachers training and background, and financial bottlenecks. Results are showing how there has been improvement in school enrolment in Guinea-Bissau, however it is still far away from reaching its goal.

To tackle all factors influencing school dropout, experts, educationalists, and programme developers should continue developing clear strategies and incentives which can then help in solving the issue of Out of School Children.

Key words: Out of School Children, Guinea-Bissau, Education, School Dropout

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1. INTRODUCTION

Most countries have a high-quality education, and much emphasis is placed on it. Unfortunately, in many developing countries, education, as one of the most important pillars of society, is neglected and not given the attention it deserves due to a variety of different problems that cast a shadow on it. I first flew to Guinea-Bissau back in the summer 2016. I was on my third year of Master in Primary Education, and volunteering in an orphanage as a teacher was a great opportunity for me to get acquainted with a different culture and education system. This was an eye-opening experience and something that stuck with me until today. I could see the way education is neglected, how children do not prosper from it, but still show their will and persistence. I learned first-hand about the numerous issues that teachers, students, parents, and communities face daily. Year after I came back and got an internship for an NGO. I was working on educational projects and awareness about people with disabilities. Another eye-opening experience. These are precisely the reasons of why I have decided to continue my education and finally write a paper on an educational topic. This thesis focuses on the issue of Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau which is an issue that has a wide-ranging impact. When discussing children leaving school, it's important to consider the psychological and mental effects as well as the implications for future growth and development. The future of the person who drops out of school is impacted, as well as the society in which they live. After initial investigation, research question arose – *what are the main reasons for school dropout in Guinea-Bissau?* This question, as shown further in this thesis, encompasses many issues that Guinea-Bissau face and shows how all is interconnected and interdependent. The purpose of this thesis was to extract the main factors which are influencing a school dropout in Guinea-Bissau, and the ultimate goal is to spread awareness about the importance of quality education for all.

The structure of this master thesis is divided into 6 chapters. Chapters are formed in a way to provide the reader with a logical flow and to give a clear understanding of the topic. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the study and provides a review of the literature. This chapter is divided into two subchapters which discuss the history of Guinea-Bissau and defines out of school children. It is important to give a historical overview of education on the continent to get a better understanding of how education progressed. Chapter two gives a closer look into Guinea-Bissau through a general overview, history, and political situation. Chapter three provides a closer look of education in Guinea-Bissau. It explains educational system,

current status, and situation of out of school children. Chapter four provides a comprehensive explanation on the methodology that was applied through this research. In order to provide an answer, the research question has been examined using a qualitative method in three stages. To become acquainted with the overall country's situation, the first step was to conduct a theoretical investigation and a literature review. The second step was to identify the factors that influence school dropout in Guinea-Bissau. This section of the research relied heavily on secondary data analysis. The third step involved gaining a deeper and more detailed understanding of the issue, which was accomplished recurring to interviews to professionals. The next step in this research was to extract and analyse data from the interviews, which was done using the coding method. This process was important to get clear factors influencing school dropout as it encompasses both theoretical and written data, as well as the personal and professional experiences from the experts in the field. Research study and its results are described in chapter five. All results are supported with quotes from the conducted interviews. Conclusion is a last chapter, and it provides a full summary of this research. This chapter addresses limitations and provides suggestions for future studies and research.

Once published, these findings, interpretation, and conclusion could serve as aid in further research and raise awareness of the value of education. This is crucial for maximizing human potential, which is the most valuable resource for enhancing the functionality of a country.

1.1. Brief History of Education in Africa

A definition by Moumouni as cited by Koma (1976) in Mosweunyane (2013) describes education as "everything that prepares the young people for either integration in a given specific society with the aim of perpetuating the established values and norms of such society or transforming and changing such values and norms." If we look back into prehistory, we notice that the need for preparing young for that society existed even then. It was crucial to transfer knowledge for the sake of survival. Plenty of evidence shows how people at the time transmitted knowledge about the world around them in the form of paintings on cave walls, basic tools, totems, idols, etc. Curiosity, and a desire to discover the unknown, are inherently woven into human nature.

Education on the African continent changed and transformed over several distinct epochs. African societies had a form of education prior to the arrival of the first Arabs and European, as discussed in Mosweunyane (2013). According to the same author, African societies provided knowledge to their people in the form of survival skills, spirituality, and mysticism, the design of agricultural tools, and how to fight for the resources. Education was not based on any formal curricula, but was instead passed down orally, which then, resulted in massive losses of information and knowledge after the colonialization. This can be seen when looking at traditional school *Bogwera* and *Bojale* in Botswana. Girls were sent to *bojale* (initiation school for girls) when they started puberty, which, like the boys' *bogwera*, indicated the transition from childhood to womanhood/manhood. Young girls, just as boys, were taught the society' values, customs, adult obligations, and responsibilities, but also how to interact with people of the opposite sex. (Álvarez Martín & Regueiro Molina, n.d.) This oral transmission of indigenous knowledge and skills plays an important role in packaging and passing indigenous knowledge and skills from generation to generation. (Mosweunyane, 2013) By the very fact that the school as an educational institution was already lending at that time, it is important to understand that though not in the same form as today, curricula existed in African societies. That can be a reason, and clarify that, despite the existence of such curricula, at the time of colonization, most African societies, in the eyes of the calorizators, were innumerate and illiterate as being explained by writers like Meredith (2011). According to Mosweunyane (2013) the training provided was not done at random, but rather in accordance with some strategies that did not always adhere to Western standards. It doesn't come as a

surprise the way Africans transmitted knowledge was altered by colonial powers, creating a differentioation between formal and informal education. The later, also called indigenous education, tends to reflect the community's values, wisdom, and expectations and like that it contrasts with Western forms of education, which emphasize individual intellectual development while paying less attention to societal needs, goals, and expectations, according to Bray, Clarke, and Stephens (1986) in Mosweunyane (2013).

While some historians and anthropologists have investigated precolonial or indigenous forms of socialization, most current studies of education focus on the formal education that came with European colonialism to the continent. According to Decker (2012), Islamic schools have existed in Africa for hundreds of years, dating back to the arrival of Islam while Christian schools were first established in Africa by European missionaries in the late 15th century, but they were not widely spread until the 19th century. Mosweunyane (2013) states that in Botswana, Catholics built schools to provide Western education as well as religious teaching. This was one of the Western ways to "civilize" natives. According to Farouk (1998) in Mosweunyane (2013), missionaries realized that African religion, art, music, and other social activities were all intertwined. Colonialists refused to accept this because their understanding of that way of life differed from their own. According to Koma (1976) in Mosweunyane (2013), colonization endorsed and encouraged individualism, viewed wealth accumulation as an indicator of life success, and conditioned those who received that success, to despise those who did not gain it, made its recipients abhor manual labour, and made its victims embrace anything European as the exemplar of greatness. Evangelization of societies was, undoubtedly, a crucial element of colonization, particularly in the eyes of missionary societies, with multiple motivations and strategies, in a highly competitive, and at times markedly conflictive, process. (Matasci et al., 2021) As stated before, for colonialists, African societies were ignorant and uneducated, and needed to be civilized and forced to change their ways of life after being converted to the Western culture. Colonials were autocrats who did everything they could to destroy African traditions and institutions to replace them with their own. (Osa, 1998, Kunene, 1992 and UNESCO, 1987, as cited in Mosweunyane, 2013.)

It is interesting to see how colonialists used Western way of grading and knowledge to reward Africans who thrived in school with scholarships to study at European and American universities, thus further separating them from their cultures. Because of that it doesn't come as a surprise that in the 1950s, most families and students believed that the primary and secondary school systems were the only way out of the rural economy (Dodd, 1969. in Mosweunyane, 2013.)

However, due to many history transitions and challenges Africa faced, their modern societies have submerged in Westernisation. When observing education as the living system, system that adjust and grow, it is important to know how the World transformed over the time; how cultures, civilization affected each other and how did globalisation leave its mark. Baylis and Smith (2006) distinguish three waves of globalization as a secular historical process, the first of which is known as the "age of discovery" (1450-1850) and shaped globalization during that time. The second wave, known as the 'belle époque' or 'Pax Britannica,' lasted from 1850 to 1914 and saw a dramatic expansion in the spread and entrenchment of European empires, culminating in the collapse of globalization in 1914. The third wave of contemporary globalization (beginning in the 1960s) ushers in a new era of global interconnection, which many argue outperforms that of the *Belle Epoque*. Some claim that a fourth wave of globalization is now underway, propelled by new digital technologies and the emerging economic powers of China, Brazil, and India. Understanding the flow, and movement of human progress can greatly assist us in determining why and how to change, repair, or improve a particular situation. In this case, help us to determine and understand current situation with educational systems in Africa.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Africa benefits enormously from the education offered by the West and North America, and it cannot take the risk of reverting to its pre-colonial educational systems because, according to Bown and Tomori (1979), as stated in Mosweunyane (2013), with constant advancements in science and technology, new modes of communication such as radio and television, and major changes in political institutions, anyone who does not keep up with these changes is condemned to be overtaken. According to Decker (2012), European colonial officials established secular schools for Africans in the early twentieth century, and whilst the French educationalists encouraged educational "assimilation," British territories implemented the "adapted education" system for Africans in the 1920s, a strategy modelled after the American racially divided education system. Moreover, the establishment of the International Bureau of Education in 1925 was a significant step toward the global coordination of educational recommendations (IBE) (King 2016). According to the same author, the IBE's curriculum focus was formalized in 1999, when it was designated as a UNESCO institute in charge of educational resources, methods, and teaching/learning strategies through curriculum development. King (2016) also states that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was one of the most well-known early products of the new United Nations with a goal to address the content and purposes of education and that can be seen in the Article 26 on the right to education which specifies access levels for primary

school, fundamental, technical, professional, and higher education. However, with the growth of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as the progressive movements to political independence, first in Asia and then in Africa, political influence to collect global data on education and established strategic initiative grew.

According to King (2016) the World Survey of Education was one of the methods used for this. The first of which was released in 1955, and the second, focusing on primary education, was published in 1958 and it should be noted that these World Surveys strived to merge an evaluation of global trends with the specific situation in 197 political or territorial parts with unique education systems. (King, 2016) As per Jolly, Emmerij, and Weiss (2005;18), as cited in King (2016), the UN was able to formulate around 50 goals across the entire field of development due to the organization of three major regional conferences organized by UNSECO. Here it is important to mention multiple factors contributed to the increased emergence of these regional conferences including: the imminence or recentness of political independence, as well as the provision of educational economy and planning, contribution of other disciplines and development studies, commencement of international volunteer programs such as the US Peace Corps in 1961 and the establishment of bilateral development cooperation organizations also at early 1961. (King, 2016; 958) According to Matasci et al. (2021), The wave of independence in the early 1960s expanded this plethora of choices and possibilities, and education was seen as a critical priority for African governments. Same authors note that at the time, many politicians, educationalists, and academics began establishing skilled and efficient educational programs ranging from primary to higher education, readjusting and replacing existing colonial frameworks with a new scheme that was less reliant on former colonial paradigms. Therefore, in 1961., a new conference has been held in Addis Ababa by UNESCO. African countries pursued various strategies to develop their own competent functionaries and improve widespread schooling policies, largely with the support of international aid and cooperation, resulting in what has been dubbed a "world educational revolution." (Matasci et al. 2021) What is worth mentioning, according to King (2016) is the fact that the long-term plan only mentions three levels of education: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Although teacher education and adult education were to be prioritized in the short-term plan (1961–1966), there is no reference of vocational and technical and training (TVET) or literacy in either the short-term or long-term goals.

According to Yamada (2019), in the 1990s and 2000s, civil organization endorsed welfare-state policies with the broader goal of reducing poverty. In the education field, at the Education for All (EFA) world conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, six EFA development

strategies were consented upon. *Jomtien World Conference on Education for All Goals and Targets* has very big importance because, according to King (2016), it has been commonly believed that the first collection of global educational targets was set there. Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender disparities were implemented into the MDGs (which demonstrated overall socio-economic growth targets) and therefore made a priority over other EFA goals and as a result of this progression in international society, international aid was concentrated on countries where UPE was challenged, resulting with the impoverished countries of Sub-Saharan Africa receiving the substantial share of it. (Yamada, 2019) Prior to the Millennium Summit in September 2000, the global education community met in Dakar in April, ten years after Jomtien, and agreed on a Dakar Framework for Action, which incorporated six EFA goals. (King, 2016; 963) According to Yamada (2019), the amount of aid received by African countries increased significantly, particularly in areas where basic education was spreading slowly. Same author states show that, aid as a percentage of gross national income in Sub-Saharan African countries was 6.04 percent in 1990, and after a brief decline, it elevated in the 2000s and reached its peak in the mid-1990s (5.42 percent in 2006). This was significantly higher than the low- and middle-income countries' average of 1.06 percent in 2006. World bank (2016), as cited in Yamada (2019), states how Sub-Saharan Africa was becoming the world's most aid-dependent region. Question arises, how sustainable is depending on the donors' aid in a such fragile system? Yamada (2019) provides us with an answer; with the idea of making primary education mandatory, and because at the time there is widespread agreement that public care such as healthcare and education are essential for escaping poverty, a funding mechanism known as "budget support" was initiated to provide financial support directly to the national treasury, which could then be used to cover government expenditures.

The sudden recognition of education in the post-2015 development agenda occurred at the Rio+20 conference in Brazil from June 20 to 22, 2012, when the Future We Want – Outcome Document was released, along with the concept of SDGs, which would incorporate a new development objective with the end of the MDGs in 2015. (United Nations 2012. as cited in King, 2016.). Education exposure had undoubtedly prospered from the existence of two Education MDGs, as explained in King (2016), however, the narrowness of these two goals, as well as their lack of concern for education quality or learning outcomes, meant that a new set of education goals was urgently required. In the May of 2014 was held the very first endeavour to contextualise on these new needed goals, called Muscat Agreement and it included a "overarching goal" as well as seven "Global targets". (UNESCO, 2014) This

attempt, for example, did not place the same emphasis on the domestic or country level dimension of objectives as Jomtien and Dakar, and the notion was pressed that some of the targets are essential, which means they include 'all boys and girls,' 'all youth,' 'all learners,' and 'all governments.' (UNESCO, 2014) Another issue arose, and it relates to perceiving the EFA Dakar goals, and MDGs. Those objectives were widely seen as being for developing countries in the South, rather than for developed economies. The Muscat Agreement's text intentionally emphasizes its global relevance, not just the South's: 'It should be of universal relevance and mobilize all stakeholders in all countries'. (UNESCO 2014, 2)

"In May 2015, UNESCO together with UNICEF, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women and UNHCR organized the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 19 – 22 May 2015, hosted by the Republic of Korea". (UNESCO, 2015) According to the same UNESCO document from 2015, Forum in Incheon produced a Declaration that contained no goal nor targets, and its draft Framework for Action, which did contain the targets was finally agreed on 4th of November 2015. Goal of this Forum was to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". (UNESCO, 2015). Lastly, according to King (2016), UN member countries managed to agree upon the document: *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and its implementation globally.

With all of this said, it is worth noting how the world have changed the perspective on developing countries. According to Yamada (2019), after agreeing on the Education for All development goals, education in Africa improved dramatically. Still there are many more point that should be improved, however, change is visible.

1.2. Defining Out of School Children

In 2010, the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) was established and initiated. Its goal is to assist governments in developing and implementing innovative approaches to better estimate the number of children who are not receiving an education, identify who these children are, and create methods to help them return to school. UNICEF, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) collaborate on OOSCI. (UNICEF, 2018) To fully comprehend the issue of students and early school dropout, it is necessary to define such children and place them within a specific framework. This allows us to focus on individual problems and specific situations that may not be obvious at first but require immediate attention. According to Marshall et al., 2020, and based on the Out Of School Children (OOSC) framework, "out-of-school children include primary and lower-secondary school-aged children (6–14 years old) who have not yet entered school, children who will never enter school, and those who have entered but already dropped out". This definition encompasses the entire issue, including those who have left the system and those who are on the verge of leaving, directing researchers and educators towards the problem solving and prevention. As per UIS (2019), as stated in Marshall et al., 2020, over 250 million children between the ages of 6 and 17 were not in school in 2018, with 19 percent of children in Sub-Saharan Africa classified as out of school. Considering that the focus on education in 21st century is very high, 19% remains extremely significant.

The work of OOSCI is organized around three programme objectives: to increase investment and strong methods for creating profiles of out-of-school children and analysing the obstacles that have resulted to their exclusion; identifying and implementing effective measures and methods to manage out-of-school children, as well as incorporating required changes into school improvement plans [and thus increasing the likelihood of their sustainability]; increasing global recognition and advocacy, which will result in national and international commitments to enrol all children in school (UNICEF, 2018:12) There are a numerous of significant and difficult consequences in failing to adequately address the issue of out-of-school children. According to statistics from multiple studies, pupils who drop out of school exhibit a wide range of individual/interpersonal and social characteristics (Cairns et al., 1989; Elliot & Voss, 1974; Fagan & Pabon, 1990; Rumberger, 1983, 1987; Wehlage et al., 1989 in Janosz et al., 2000). Conjointly, as said in Inoue et al., 2015 the significance of failing to address this issue, will also be felt by society as a whole: economic growth will be limited,

restricting governments' revenue-raising capabilities, while the need for public spending to endorse these youth, who will be more likely to depend on the government healthcare system, social assistance, or housing subsidies, will grow. The consequences are not only reflected in terms of financial pressure on the government and the entire social system but as Inoue et al., 2015 also states, it has been expected that this youth will live shorter lives than their educated peers, they are more likely to become teen parents and commit crimes, and are less likely to raise healthy children, participate in civic activities, vote, or volunteer in their communities. At the same time, the life situation in which these young people find themselves can cause their overall emotional state to be permanently disturbed. As a result, we can get dissatisfied generations of young people who are unaccomplished and unsatisfied. Furthermore, according to the European Commission, early school dropout is a barrier to economic growth and employment, lowering productivity and competitiveness while encouraging poverty and social exclusion[1]. Countries with higher educational growth rates develop faster in the medium and long term than those that do not invest in intellectual capital. A more educated citizenry means not only a more peaceful society, but also a greater ability to absorb and create through the process of innovation. (Popescu & Diaconu, 2009) Education, as one of the most important pillars of society, needs to be in the primary focus of governments and ruling parties. According to IIASA (2008), as cited in Grant (2017), only universal primary education and broad-based secondary education are likely to provide poor countries with the human resources boost required to lift large parts of the population out of welfare dependency. Education is a very complex living system that not only requires but demands constant change and development. It is essential for the state to intervene in commencing and supporting the establishments in charge of education in all its forms – formal, non-formal, and even informal. (Popescu & Diaconu, 2009)

Moreover, another problem mentioned by Inoue et al., 2015 relates to the fact that out-of-school children are frequently "policy orphans," stranded in a *no man's land* with little data in order to create a real proof advocacy structure, low implementation potential, a disinterest in long-term sustainability of projects, inadequate funding, and no collaboration across the various government agencies that bear partial responsibility for these children. Consider how in general it is difficult to reconcile many people in charge of this situation, including the ministries of labour, education, and human services, it is inadmissible for it to be a crucial

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/file_import/european-semester_thematic-factsheet_early-school-leavers_hr.pdf retrieved on 22nd of March 2022

obstacle in solving this problem. Inoue et al., 2015 also notice how African continent is beset by youth programs that were praised with great excitement, only to fade out when the desired outcomes were not achieved quickly enough or were suddenly terminated when resources (often external) ran out. Implemented educational projects and programs take time. It will take years for the programmes to work and begin to show results, as schooling takes years, and education cannot be rushed due to its unique characteristics. For example, during the Education For All (EFA) era it was believed that removing barriers to education, such as school fees, and enacting free education and related policies would result in all children being able to attend school hence, the School Fees Abolition Initiative (SFAI) was conceived based on the assumption that abolishing school fees would, by and large, benefit all children. (UNICEF, 2018) However, according to the UNICEFs evaluation report from 2018, many children from different groups such as: low-income families, ethnic minority groups, orphaned children, children held captive in child labour, and children in communities affected by conflict, wars, and natural disasters were among those for whom such measures were insufficient and even though, while many of the children were able to attend school, securing that they receive a good basic education requires a more complex set of solutions and targeted investments. This is another example of how actually issue about the out of school children is wide and requires expertise in many different areas. The education system which lacks state infrastructure support, actively contributes to the number of children who drop out of school. Teachers do not come to work if the state cannot pay them or if they are in the process of strike (regularly absent), therefore, as a result, students do not come to the classes, and some of the children never come back to school. A similar scenario can occur when the classroom is overcrowded, when there are insufficient school supplies, when there are no bathrooms, etc. (UNICEF, 2018) According to Tesseneer and Tesseneer (1958; p. 143) in Janosz et al., (2000), studying the dropout phenomenon and its causes is difficult because "the same factors may influence different pupils in different ways and even affect the same pupil in different ways at different times." (p. 171) One logical inference from the empirical data is that dropouts are not all the same (Janosz et al., 2000) and we can see a complexity of the issue that needs to be considered very seriously.

UNICEF, 2018 warns policy makers to consider six key characteristics of out-of-school youth: the majority of out-of-school young individuals drop out before finishing middle school; forced early marriage is a major impediment to female youth education; youth is more likely to drop out of school if they live in a rural area; parental educational attainment and

the proportion of working adults in the family is an important and vital component; lack of school availability and poor education performance are supply-side barriers that must be overcome.

1.2.1. Girls' education and Early Child Marriage

An old African proverb, as cited in Suen (2013:61), states: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family (nation)." According to Suen (2013), when James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey first used this proverb in the early 1900s, it was revolutionary because it emphasized the need for women to be educated along with men at a time when this was exceptionally rare, especially in the African context. Today we are in the year 2022 and while we live in a world where many of the major topics in the last decade have revolved around women's empowerment, feminism, and education, however, for many people around the world this narrative still can be seen as just a "Western tale". Girl's education has extreme importance, significance and it is crucial for the development. (UNICEF, 2015; Somani, 2017) There are many benefits of girl's education and according to Bhagavatheeswaran et al. (2016) in Somani (2017) educating girls prevents hunger, decreases the amount of child marriages and early pregnancy, overall socioeconomic circumstances, and contributes to a more stable and peaceful society. Moreover, education is one way to break the destructive cycle of women's abuse, social inequality, and oppression and by educating and empowering women, they become aware of their rights, maintain good health, and are ready to raise healthy children and families. (Khalid,2012; Somani, 2017)

One of the biggest issues with girls' education lies in child marriage. In 1989 by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have been defined as people under the age of 18 and according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to enter a marriage, a person must give her full consent and be at least 18 years old. Hence, child marriage, which has its roots in many cultures around the world (e.g., India[2]), has been defined, as a marriage of a child under the age of 18. The United Nations and other international organizations have proclaimed that child marriage violates the rights of children and adults. Today, two terms are most commonly used for the term child marriage: *early marriage* and *child brides*, and according to

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[2] https://terredasie.com/english/english-articles/history-of-child-marriage-in-india/, retrieved on 25th of March 2022

Nour (2009) both are inadequate. *Early marriage* does not imply the presence of children, and the term is ambiguous because what is considered early in one society may be considered late in another. Example for that can be seen in some parts of Ethiopia where legal marriage is at the age of 15, Sudan where legal (Islamic) marriage is at puberty for girls and 10 for boys, and 13 for girls and 15 for boys in non-Islamic marriage[3]. Second term, *child brides* elevate the tradition by conjuring up images of joy and celebration. (Nour, 2009)

Most children married under the age of 18 years are girls however, child marriage includes boys as well. (Nour, 2009) As stated by Gastón et al. (2019) boys and girls who marry as young children do not face the same possible consequences due to biological and social differences, however the practice is still a violation of both sexes' rights. Both child "grooms" and "brides", are obliged to take on adult responsibilities for which they are unprepared. Moreover, Gastón et al. (2019) warn, the union may result in early parental responsibility and additional economic pressure in the form of household provision; it may also limit the boy's right to education and career development opportunities.

According to Nour (2009), there are three main factors that lead to child marriages: (1) poverty (parents face economic incentives such as ensuring their daughter's financial security and reducing economic burden in the family), (2) establishing social connections and ties (by marrying daughters into "good" families, families improve their own social status), (3) protection (parents believe their daughter will be protected from rape, premarital sexual activity, unplanned pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS). Among these, and according to Fatusi et al. (2021) child marriage is an age-old practice affected by, poor education, religious beliefs, tradition and cultural beliefs, unequal gender norms, and women's low social status. When talking about poor education, it is very important to take into consideration parents' educational level. According to Chowdhury, Nath, Choudhury & Ahmed, 2002; Nath, Hag, Begum, Ullah et al., 2008 in Mhele & Ayiga, (2013) children of more educated parents are more likely to succeed and progress in their educational path as their parents are aware of its importance.

Unfortunately, child marriage is not the only issue girls and boys all over the world are facing. There are many current humanitarian/emergency crises all around the world. Some crises are including armed conflict[4], displacement due to wars or climate change, and

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[3] https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/1197/Minimum-age-of-marriage-in-Africa-June-2013.pdf, retrieved on 24th of March 2022

[4] Current ongoing armed conflicts among others, include Ukraine, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Yemen, Israeli – Palestinian Conflict. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/?category=usConflictStatus, retrieved on 25th of March 2022

socioeconomic and political instability. All of this has a great impact on quality and access to education. In the article written in 2003, "Afghan Women and Girls Still Held Hostage" author Zama Coursen-Neff shares a close-up of the horrible everyday life and the destructive situation in the city Kabul, Afghanistan:

"Neither Farishta, 13, nor her seven-year-old sister are in school in 2003. Their brothers can go, their mother explained, but the girls' school is several kilometres away and armed men had recently raped neighbouring women. They could hear their neighbours screaming for help, Farishta said: *We were afraid. The men had guns and we do not*. Farishta and her sister cannot read; they spend their days working at home*."*

Today, in 2022, the girls of Afghanistan are going through the same situation. According to Malala Fund[5], on March 23, 2022, the Taliban were supposed to reopen girls' high schools after an eight-month extended break, however, they broke their promise, and schools are now closed until further notice. As per everything that has been stated so far in this review, this problematic situation can have a major setback for Afghani girls and women in general, everyone included in educational process, and for society as a whole. It is important for the world to recognize that 'educated' women are more likely to cultivate externalities, or additional benefits that leads to the growth of their households and the country overall. (Suen, 2013)

According to Male & Wodon (2018) child marriage and poor education for girls have a significant impact on female empowerment, or more specifically, their capacity for choice. Capacity for choice, as Kabeer (2008) suggest in Male & Wodon (2018), necessarily involves, and affects three dimensions: the right to determine and act on goals, assets whether they are material, human, or social, and past achievements (because the past serves as the base for an individual's vision of the future). Besides being strongly linked to early childbearing (Petroni et al., 2017) and affecting these three dimensions, child marriage can have many other consequences whereas some more visible than others. The practice can affect mental health and interpersonal violence, as well as issues related to broader social, growth, and gender equity outcomes. (Petroni et al., 2017)

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[5] https://malala.org/newsroom/archive/malala-fund-condemns-talibans-decision-to-keep-afghan-girls-schools-closed, retrieved on 25th of March 2022

These problems and factors are particularly important in West and Central Africa, where child marriage is still widespread (Male & Wodon, 2018), and according to the UNESCO Institute of statistics, 2017 in Male & Wodon, 2018, despite the progress toward universal education throughout the last two decades, girls continue to have lower levels of education than boys at the high school level. West Africa has historically had a high prevalence of girl child marriage, which needs to be reduced significantly in effort to match the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target of ending child marriage by 2030, but latest evidence on progress is limited. (Fatusi et al., 2021) According to the research from 2022 provided by Adesegun O. Fatusi, Sunday A. Adedini & Jacob Wale Mobolaji, in West Africa, the presence of girl-child marriage remains strong, and progress is slow. Authors also state that while there are significant inter-country differences in the overall percentage and trend of child marriage, the rate of improvement is insufficient across all countries. Furthermore, what is interesting is the fact that if child marriage had been abolished in West and Central Africa in 2015, the benefits of lower population expansion, lower potential health risks for young children, and increased incomes for women could have exceeded $60 billion in purchasing power parity by 2030. (Wodon, 2017 in Male & Wodon, 2018)

2. GUINEA-BISSAU

The issue of out-of-school children in Guinea-Bissau, a West African country, will be presented in this master's dissertation. First and foremost, an introduction and a brief historical overview are required to gain a better understanding of the current political, economic, and social situation. We then must examine the current political situation, which provides us with a clear picture of the educational system's current situation.

2.1. Overview

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau, formerly known as Portuguese Guinea until 1974, is a west African country whose territory includes the Bijagós Archipelago to the southwest off the Atlantic coast. (Guinea-Bissau Summary n.d.) Bissau is the country's capital, and the population is approximately 1.9 million people. It is bordered to the north by Senegal and to the south and east by Guinea, and despite its small size, it is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, languages, and religions. (World Bank, n.d.) The official language is Portuguese, but Crioulo, Balante, Fula, Malinke, and Mandyako are widely spoken. The four major ethnic groups are Balante, Fulani, Malinke, and Mandyako. Guineans follow traditional beliefs, and the two major religions that have spread are Islam and Christianity. Guinea-Bissau's economy is primarily agricultural, with cashews being the primary cash crop.

Guinea-Bissau has been listed as one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). According to Yonemura (2015) those countries are characterized as having "weak human and institutional capacities, low and unequally distributed income, and scarcity of domestic financial resources...often suffer from governance crisis, political instability and, in some cases, internal and external conflicts". Low productivity and inadequate funding have an impact on the LDCs' largely agrarian economies, making them extremely liable to shocks to international trade. They also depend heavily on the export of a small number of primary commodities. These limitations reduce the capacity for mobilizing domestic resources, resulting in persistent external deficits and a high reliance on external sources of finance that has kept them in the vicious circle. (UN-OHRLLS, 2013)

Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in the world with Gross National Income (GNI) per capita US$550 in 2012, much lower than the average of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA),

US\$1,345. (Yonemura, 2015) According to the World Bank Data – Atlas method (current US\$)[6], when making the comparison in 2021, we can see Guinea-Bissau arose to US\$780, while still much lower than sub – Saharan Africa US\$1578. (see Picture 1.)
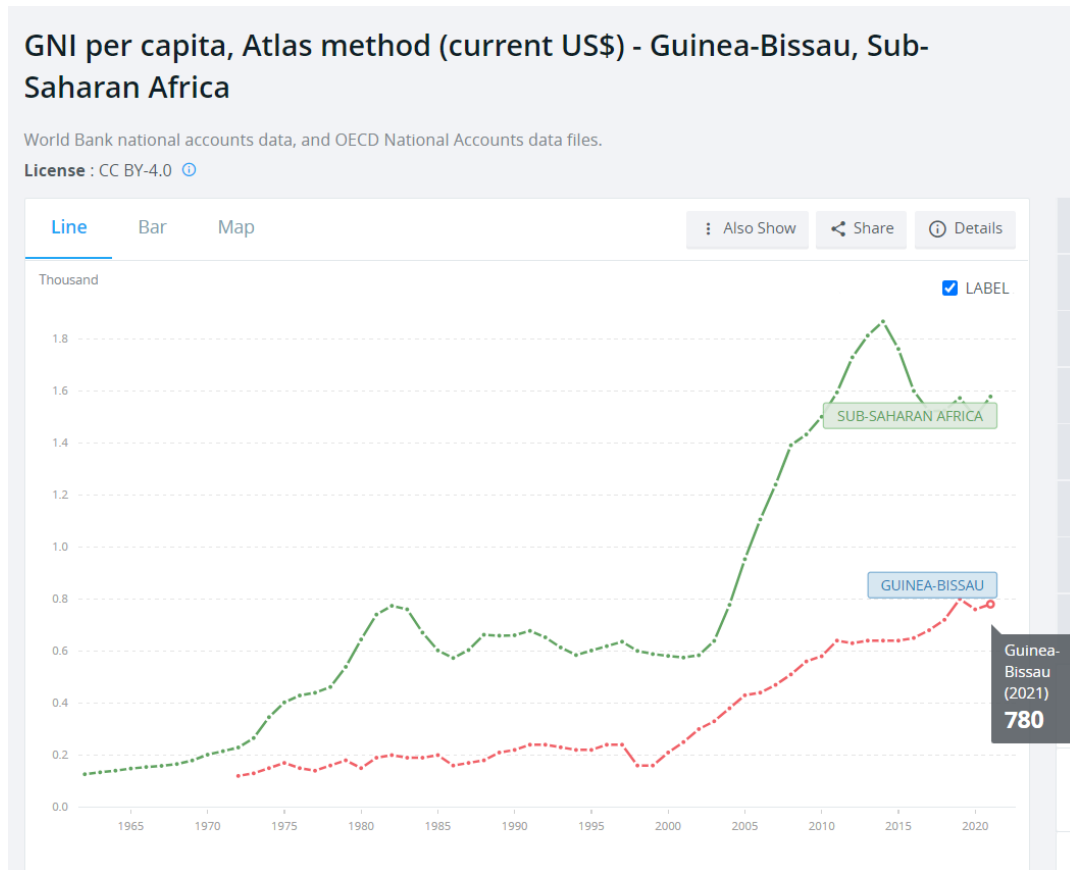
Picture 1.: GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$) - Guinea-Bissau, Sub-Saharan Africa, retrieved on 1st November 2022

More than two-thirds of the population lives under the poverty line (69.3 per cent in 2010) (World Bank 2013a, 2013b). Guinea-Bissau has a high rate of poverty. World Bank's Poverty & Equity Brief[7], in 2018, 47.7% of the population (approximately 891,990 people) were poor, with 13.2% (approximately 246,840 people) living in extreme poverty. Poverty is primarily in rural areas, with more than 75% of the poor relying on subsistence agriculture. The remaining 25% are in Bissau, the capital city. Using the $1.9 international poverty line, projections show that the COVID-19 pandemic increased poverty from 63.8 to 66.2 percent

between 2019 and 2020, resulting in a 75,000-person increase in the number of poor. (World Bank, 2021)

Guinea-Bissau was ranked 176 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index in 2012 (UNDP, 2013), but by 2021, the country had dropped to 177 out of 187. (UNDP, 2021)

2.2. History overview

Guinea-Bissau's precolonial history has not been fully documented in the archaeological record. For at least a millennium, the area has been occupied by hunters and gatherers. Contacts with the European world began in the first half of the 15th century with the arrival of Portuguese explorers and traders. (Guinea-Bissau Summary n.d.) The country was "discovered" in 1446 by Nuno Tristão, and it became a separate colony in 1879. (Paxton, 1987). As Lars Rudbeck states,

When Portuguese navigators and sailors, probably in 1446, first sighted the green and swampy coast of present-day Guinea-Bissau, they were no doubt unaware of the fact that they were beginning to lay the foundations of an international economic and political system that more than five hundred years later would still continue to dominate the lives of the majority of the world's inhabitants (...). Nor did the Portuguese sailors realize that the land they were about to "discover" would not only be among the very first included in this world system yet to be born, but also be among the very last to be forced to belong to it in its classical form of direct colonialism.[8]

According to Harrell-Bond and Forer (1981), in the fifteenth century, the Portuguese began importing slaves from the Guinea region to the uninhabited islands of Cape Verde as an outpost for their mercantile activities, and Cape Verde served as a base for slaving operations as well as the production of cotton and textiles, which were exchanged with Africans for slaves and other products. The same authors explain how although the slave trade was initially based on force, the Portuguese quickly established trading partnerships and coalitions with local individuals and groups that supplied slaves, and there were at least ten such trading points between Cape Verde and the Sierra Leone River by the end of the sixteenth century. Later, at the end of the seventeenth century, Portugal faced inability to provide the foundation for an industrialized economy, and the Portuguese suffered from a perpetual balance of payments

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[8] Rudebeck L., Guinea-Bissau: A Study of Political Mobilization (Uppsala, 1974, p. 3.)

problem, exporting primary products and importing manufactured goods—a practice more akin to a colony than a colonial power leading to the Treaty of Methuen with Britain, signed in 1703, which provided preferential rates for the import of Portuguese wines in exchange for the duty - free entry of British textiles. (Harrell-Bond & Forer, 1981) However, at this point Portugal, regardless of being fully aware on their dependence on Britain, participates in conflict with France, Germany, Belgium, and England over the Congo River area which led to the famous Berlin Conference in 1884. The Conference's assertive goal was to manage the evolving issue of colonisation in Africa to avoid the eruption of armed conflict between rival colonial powers. (Craven, 2015) According to Ferreira (2014), Guinea-Bissau gained independence in 1974, just after a 13-year liberation struggle against Portuguese colonial rule by the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde - PAIGC), founded in 1956 and led by Amílcar Cabral until his assassination in 1973. Since then, political uncertainty has persisted, with a series of coups d'état attempted, particularly during the 1980s, which were primarily caused by s ruling party internal fighting and dissatisfaction among the Balanta (EIU 2008 in Yonemura, 2015). A military coup led by General Ansumane Mané in 1998 triggered a civil war and the installation of a transitional military junta, resulting in the destruction of nearly 80% of infrastructure. (Security Council, 2012) The coup d'état that occurred in April 2012 paralyzed all aspects of society, including politics, and left the nation in a state of lawlessness. (Yonemura, 2015)

2.3. Latest political situation

As previously stated, Guinea-Bissau gained independence from Portugal in 1974 after a protracted armed conflict. However, the anti-colonial war was so destructive that the new state lacked functioning institutions and an economic foundation. Since then, the country has been prone to major political upheavals. Military coups have occurred in Guinea-Bissau, and until 2014[9] no elected President has served a full term. This insecurity has been exacerbated in part by massive drug trafficking through army officers and other officials, and in part by unresolved issues from the war for independence. (Security Council, 2012)

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[9] Jose Mario Vaz who was the first elected president who finished his five-year mandate (2014 -2019)

In the last 13 years, Guinea-Bissau has clearly felt the consequences of unrest in politics and widespread dissatisfaction among its people. On the night of March 1 and 2, 2009, the army chief of staff, General Batista Tagme Na Waie, and the president of Guinea-Bissau, João Bernardino "Nino" Vieira, were killed in the space of a few hours. (Bordonaro, 2013) Shortly after the 2010 military unrest major development assistance in the country was suspended due to worries about security, the military's lack of deference to civilian authority, and drug trafficking. (RoGB 2010; World BAnk 2013b in Yonemura, 2015). In March 2012, presidential election took place, however, second round was interrupted by a military coup on 12 April 2012. The Secretary-General condemned the act, emphasizing how this political/military coup occurred right in front of the United Nations, and he called for the immediate restoration of constitutional order. (Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, 2012) On February 1st, 2022, there was another attempt of coup d'état. Ms. Salomé dos Santos Allouche, Secretary of State for Communities, briefed the Commission on the political situation in Guinea-Bissau and stated that the government had begun investigations into the foiled coup attempt to identify and prosecute the perpetrators. (Peacebuilding Commission, Chair's Summary, 2022)

Guinea-Bissau is a frail post-conflict country, with an unstable political situation, and fragile infrastructures that even nowadays, faces serious challenges that are essential pillars for the foundation of a solid society and the development of every country. Geographic and demographic characteristics, harsh events through the history, economic and political constraints led the country encountering educational challenges. (Yonemura, 2015)

3. EDUCATION IN GUINEA-BISSAU

3.1. Educational system, current status and further sector strategy

Following independence (1974), the colonial education system underwent changes based on different experiences from the emancipated zones as well as restrictions and requirements set by various external organizations. (Carr-Hill and Rosengart, 1982, 1983; Monteiro, 2005; Pehrsson, 1996 in Silva & Oliveira, 2017). Despite numerous attempts to create and endorse an Education Act, which was only passed in the 2009–2010 academic year, the structure of the educational system persisted unaltered until the beginning of 1990. (Carr-Hill and Rosengart, 1982, 1983; Monteiro, 2005; Pehrsson, 1996; Daun, 1997 in Silva & Oliveira, 2017)

Ministry of National Education, Culture, Science, Youth, and Sports (MEN) is responsible for Education in Guinea-Bissau; 11 Regional Education Directorates hold administrative responsibilities. The sector (secção) is the local level, and each region is divided into zones or sectors, such as Sector Autónomo de Bissau (SAB) for the capital region. (Merchant et al., 2017) The Education Directorate of Inspection is assigned with supporting the sector through providing administrative and financial inspection, pedagogical inspection, and technical support. (Article 28, CDM 2006) Education in Guinea-Bissau is primarily governed by the Basic Education Law of Guinea-Bissau, which was passed in May 2010 (*A Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo da Guiné-Bissau*, MEN 2010a). The right to a fundamental education, which is protected by the Constitution, has been confirmed by this law. (Merchant et al., 2017)

According to EDPC (2018), the academic year in Guinea-Bissau starts from October ending in July, and the official primary school entry age is six. Reform was implemented from 2010-2011, in particular by *Law No. 6/2011 of 29 April LBSE*, and it divides the structure of educational system in 6 subsectors: Preschool education, Primary education, Secondary education, Technical and vocational education, Higher education, Literacy. The primary school cycle takes six years, followed by three years in the lower secondary cycle and three years in the upper secondary cycle (EDPC, 2018). The first and second cycles of basic education (EB1 and EB2) include grades 1-6, and admission is free by law. In the third cycle of basic education (EB3, grades 7-9), as well as in secondary education, school fees are imposed (grades 10–12). (Merchant et al. 2017)

The education sector strategy in Guinea-Bissau is constructed in accordance with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), that evolves around crucial sectors pivotal to national development, including: 1) strengthen governance, upgrade public administration, and ensure macroeconomic strategy; 2) promote economic growth and job creation; 3) increase access to social services and basic infrastructures; and 4) improve the living standards of vulnerable groups. (IMF, 2007 in Yonemura, 2015) Looking at this sector strategy, we can see how education is important for development because it fosters the ability to acquire and transmit new knowledge, and it is woven into the most important pillars of what should be or will become a well-organized society.

Guinea-Bissau has recently finalized a new national education strategy. The National Education Plan (*Plano Sectorial da Educaço da Guiné Bissau 2016-2025*) is designed to direct and guide the country's education sector strategy for the next decade. According to Merchant et al. (2017), The National Education Plan puts a strong emphasis on broadening educational coverage, enhancing overall educational quality, and support on higher education as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In the plan, strengthening school management is a key priority outlined, as part of the need to strengthen sector governance by improving coordination, decentralization, and financial management. The goal of universal education has not yet been attained, but access to education has improved over the past ten years, according to MEN et al. (2015). Gross enrolment in grades 1-4 increased from 139% in 2004-05 to 143% in 2012-13, however, only 76 % of students were enrolled in grades 5 and 6 in that same year. (MEN et al. 2015) Another significant issue has been late school enrolment; in 2015, 96% of grade 2 students were older than the target age of 7 years, with the average age being 11 years. (MEN et al. 2015) In the most recent IMF data (2022) presented, Guinea-Bissau's literacy rate is comparable to most of WAEMU[10] countries, however it is still 15-20% lower than other Sub-Saharan Africa and low-income countries. According to the EDPC's National Education Profile - 2018 Update, Guinea-Bissau has 311,000 pupils enrolled in primary and secondary education, with approximately 279,000 (90%) of these pupils enrolled in primary education. Although pupils in this age group may still be in school and pursuing their educational goals, it is worth noting that approximately 16% of youth have no formal education and 39% have attained at most incomplete primary

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[10] West African Economic and Monetary Union was created in 1994 and established as a trade and currency union. It encompasses the eight countries Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

education, implying that 55% of 15–24-year-olds in Guinea-Bissau have not completed primary education. (EDPC, 2018)

Besides typical schools, in Guinea-Bissau we differentiate Catholic schools and Islamic madrassas as an example of religious schools. Both follow an official curriculum and are considered as a part of formal education system. In some communities we can find Koranic centres with a more constrained curriculum and those are not officially recognized by the government. Non-officially recognized school curriculum used by madrassas and koranic canters are considered as a part of the non-formal education offer. (Marshall et al., 2020) Guinea- Bissau's education sector faces several significant problems. Less than two percent of GDP is set aside for education funding, and salaries consume nearly all of it. (Merchant et al., 2018 in Marshall et al., 2020). Sector itself is strongly depended on donor funding (around 30% of the national budget in 2013). (MEN, 2015b in Marshall et al., 2020)

The primary requirement for aid programs in the educational system is the existence of external funding, nevertheless it appears that there is a lack of coordination among the various actors and projects/programs. (Carr-Hill and Rosengart, 1982, 1983; Monteiro, 2005; Pehrsson, 1996; Furtado, 2005 in Silva & Oliveira 2017). As a result, interventions in the education system are fragmented and constrained by the duration of aid projects and programs, with various international organizations playing a crucial role in decision making at the macro level. (Carr-Hill and Rosengart, 1982, 1983; Monteiro, 2005; Pehrsson, 1996; Furtado, 2005; Barreto, 2012b; Silva et al., 2015 in Silva & Oliveira 2017). Additionally, there has been a lot of labour unrest, including teacher strikes that have hampered educational attainment even more. According to MEN (2015b in Marshall et al., 2020) it has been estimated that 40% of school days in the years 2012 – 2013, and multiple months in the 2015–16 and 2016–17 were lost due to those strikes.

However, despite the lower results when compared to neighbouring countries, progress is being made with the assistance of the ministry and support of other organizations and institutions. The completion of the UNICEF-supported study on out-of-school children and its presentation to the LEG by the MoE was a significant achievement in 2018. The findings and recommendations of this study are now being used to develop strategies to address the issue of out-of-school children. (UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2019) Regarding the advancements made since independence, Silva & Oliveira (2017) claim that the education system still does not reach all school-age children, thus fails to meet the objectives and goals of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau and the Education Act.

3.2. Out of School Children in Guinea-Bissau – an overview

Out of school children are by far the most vulnerable and marginalized children in society – vulnerable to child labour, early marriage and to violence. According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019 in Marshall et al., 2020) over 250 million children between the ages of 617 are not in school worldwide in 2018, with Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 19% of the total. The issue of out-of-school children (OOSC) requires additional research and policy consideration because it has significant effects on achieving Sustainable Development Goals. As mentioned before, global Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) has been put in motion in 2010, and the objective was to provide the support to countries in their analysis and monitoring of out of school children. Identifying the various categories of out-of-school children (dropouts, never entered, etc.), analysing the underlying factors and obstacles that explain the phenomenon, and transforming this knowledge into effective policy solutions that address exclusion from a multi-sectoral perspective were the overall goals of OOSC research. (Marshall et al., 2020) As it was stated before, OOSC framework defines out-of-school children as those in primary and lower-secondary school (6–14 years old) who have not yet entered school, children who will never enter school, and those who have entered but already dropped out.

According to UNICEF's 2018 final report *Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau*, a significant portion of children between the ages of 5 and 14 do not attend school, and OOSC continues to be a significant issue in the country despite significant improvements that have been made in recent years. Between 2000 and 2014, the OOSC rate significantly decreased, falling from about 50% in 2000 to 33% in 2014. (UNICEF, 2018) This serves as both an explanation and evidence that the current aid and educational programs, which are being put into place, are in fact improving education, thus making a progress. Furthermore, most children of primary school age (6-11) who are not in school will eventually enrol, which is a significant change from 2000, when most out-of-school children were unlikely to enrol. Nevertheless, this leads us to another problem of OOSC - *late school enrolment*.

When we begin to investigate the issue of out-of-school children, it is critical to both recognize and categorize who are those vulnerable children falling into OOSC category. The OOSC descriptive summary classified several categories with higher rates of OOSC. *Gender* is an important factor. Early in adolescence (around age 12-13), female involvement begins to decline compared to males. As a result, female educational performance decreases far behind

male attainment. (UNICEF, 2018) Around the age of 14 or 15, involvement begins to diverge substantially, and the gender gap becomes very sizable by the age of 18. (Marshall et al., 2020) The attendance and academic success of children are significantly predicted by family background variables like *socioeconomic status (SES), location*, *language*, *religion, parental education,* and *family size*. (UNICEF, 2018) Muslim children are significantly less likely to attend school and complete fewer years of education, children in rural areas complete about three years less education than children in urban areas. (Marshall et al. 2020) In terms of language, the findings indicate that children who speak Creole are more likely to complete their education and are more likely to be in school comparing to children who speak Fula or Mandinga. (Marshall et al. 2020) Parallel can be drawn between gender, and parental education. According to UNICEF (2018) the impact of the father's education is greater than that of the mothers. For instance, children whose fathers have at least secondary education are about 10% more likely to be in school when comparing to children whose fathers never enrolled in school. However, the mother's education has a significant impact on female children. In terms of household (family) size, the fertility rate in 2014 is close to 5 children per woman. Due to the prevalence of polygamy, fathers may be required to support the education of more than 10 children which then urges the parents to decide strategically about the child's education. (UNICEF, 2018) Factors leading to OOSC categorized in <u>economic side</u> include *household poverty*, *direct costs of schooling, child labour and temporary dropout, child hunger in the classroom*. Factors from <u>supply side</u> are *distance to an adequate school*, *inadequate school infrastructure*, *teacher's strike/ absenteeism*, *competencies of teachers*, *inadequate school management*, *lack of preschool offer*, *lack of teaching and learning materials* and *quality of schools to retain children*. From <u>political governance side,</u> l*ack of accountability at school level*, *weak monitoring and evaluation capacity, lack of communication at all levels, insufficient teacher, supply, allocation, and deployment.* Merchant et al., (2017) emphasizes that school autonomy and accountability are key components of an education system that ensures educational quality.

Executive Director of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, Chukwuemeka Eze, in the interview for Al Jazeera (2019) *Why are millions of children not in school in West Africa?* indicates inheritance of educational system from colonial masters, and lack of will within the political elites as a major issue in educational systems of West Africa.

"I think that the educational system itself is a major problem; most of the educational systems are inherited from the colonial masters and have not been changed over a period of time. However, I also think that the major issue here is a governor's deficit which is direct

reflection of the lack of will within the political elites to invest in education or to see the nexus between quality education and the future of Africa". - Chukwuemeka Eze (Al Jazeera English, 2019)

Another speaker at the same interview, UNICEF's Global Director of Education, Robert Jenkins points out another factor that can have a negative effect on the potential increase of OOSC, COVID – 19. When asked about the situation before and after COVID-19, Robert Jenkins said:

"...this is particularly worrying because: nearly quarter of a billion children worldwide that are not in school is actually a pre-covid number, and we don't yet have the global total of the children affected post-pandemic but it's indeed very worrying and we think that number will actually go up due to the impact of the pandemic on school". – Robert Jenkins (Al Jazeera English, 2019)

With the end of The Cold War, the term "globalisation" became commonly used. (Cortesão and Stoer 2002; Smith 2003; Thomas 2005; Little and Green 2009 in Silva et al., 2015) "Globalisation" has been defined by Santos (2002, 32 in Silva et al., 2015) as a "… multifaceted phenomenon with economic, social, political, cultural, religious, and legal interconnected in a complex way …" Result of this interconnectedness led to the fact that: '… all nations of the world are becoming interdependent with one another". (Thomas 2005, 144 in Silva et al., 2015) Living in the era of globalization, when we are greatly influenced by all the major world events, we can only assume what consequences will education and the educational system experience in the future.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research goal and research question

The primary goal of this study was to identify the main reasons/factors influencing school dropout in Guinea-Bissau. The country education system is weak, subject to constant political uncertainty and change, and is dealing with numerous problems for decades. Establishing the main issues enables us in future intervention or program implementation by providing a clearer picture of what is important and what needs to be addressed immediately. Research question - *what are the main reasons for school dropout in Guinea-Bissau* - is analysed throughout three stages and was examined by using qualitative method. Qualitative methodology is open in its logic and nature, with the goal of gaining a deeper insight and understanding of the researched problem. The following considerations must be made when implementing qualitative methodology: 1) the researcher is primarily interested in the process, rather than the results or conclusions; 2) the emphasis in research is on meaning; 3) the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting and interpreting results; 4) research involves field work and going to the real environment; 5) research is descriptive, because the researcher is primarily interested in the process; and 6) the inference process is inductive - from details to conclusion. (Tkalac Verčić et al., 2010).

4.2. Data collection

Namely, because of the complexity of the issue, and regarding the current social and health situation on the global level, the main research method is secondary data analysis, followed by interviews and additional comparison. The first step was to conduct a theoretical investigation and a literature review to become familiarized with the overall country situation. Many different articles were examined in this section, including the importance of education, out-of-school children in the global context, the colonial past, the current political and economic situation in Guinea-Bissau, the educational system etc. Second step was to establish the reasons which influence the school dropout in Guinea-Bissau. The main method of this part of the research was secondary data analysis. Secondary data is usually referring to a data collected for the purposes of another earlier research process for some other purpose (Tkalac Verčić et al., 2010). For this purpose, main articles and reports used were *Study on Out-of-*

School Children in Guinea-Bissau - Final Report, UNICEF (2018), Out-of-school children in Guinea-Bissau: A mixed-methods analysis, Marshall, J. H., Nicolai, M., & Silva, R. D. (2020), Educational System Situation Report for the reconstruction of the Guinea-Bissau School on new foundations, MEN, 2015. Secondary data analysis, together with the theoretical investigation, will give us the guidelines for the context of this research. However, the secondary data will give us only the quantitative data which could be used for determination of the reasons for school dropout and conceptualization of further steps in this very research. The third step involved acquiring a deeper and more detailed understanding of the issue, for which an interview as a method was used. "The interview is an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject" (Mathers et al., 2000:1). There are different classifications of interviews. According to the degree of formality and structure, we distinguish between structured, semi - structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are also standardized, which means that predefined forms for data collection - questionnaires - are used to record respondents' answers. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews can be standardized and non-standardized. An in-depth interview is a relatively unstructured and extensive interview in which the examiner seeks to obtain extensive, in-depth, and detailed answers to the questions asked (Tkalac Verčić et al., 2010).

For the purpose of this very research, the half-structured interview was used as a tool for getting the additional, more qualitative data on the matter. This type of interview was used because of the possible additional useful information that could be gathered, but are not possibly anticipated by the researcher, as they might come from the interviewees experience and the point of view. The questions formed the half-structured interview were constructed after the closer examination of quantitative data gathered from the theoretical investigation and secondary data analysis. It is important to emphasize that questions included general problems and were aiming to initiate productive conversation and gaining insight into the situation on the ground. List of questions presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview questions

Interview questions
Can you maybe say in your opinion what are the main reasons for dropout?
Can you explain who the children are who are considered OOS
How do you monitor children who never entered the school?
Basic education - Is it truly free?
How much of the issue is a cultural problem?
How much influence religion have on education?
How many children are out-of-school based on standard categories in key age groups, and how have these numbers evolved over time across different school levels?
What is the situation regarding women, and gender in general?
How can we address issue of child labour?
What are the issues, researchers are dealing with regarding the collection of the data?
What are the key policy levers for reducing OOSC?
What in your opinion would be a good solution for tackling this issue of OOSC, what would be the first step?

4.3. Analysis

Next step of this research included extraction and analysis of data from the interviews. Data extraction was completed using the coding method. Coded data (coding) "refers to a way of recording material at data collection, either manually or on computer, for analysis. The data are put into groups or categories such as age groups, and each category is given a code number." (MacDonald & Headlam, 2009 p. 63) For this research, deductive coding was executed. Deductive coding is a top-down approach used when there is a pre-determined structure. Transcripts for all three interviews were completed, followed by re-reading and in-depth assessment. Four categories, used as a focal point, emerged from the secondary analysis and were colour coded - blue, pink, yellow, and purple. During the interviews, two new categories emerged - green and red. Phrases, sentences, and citations were assigned a colour and placed in the appropriate group. (Picture 1.) This may be an unnecessary step for this research, but it did assist in visualizing the important/main factors influencing school dropout. The evidence gathered from the interviews was used in two ways; "*thematic generation* – identifying and

drawing upon common themes across the interviews, and *citation* – directly quoting parts of the interview in the main body of the report." (MacDonald & Headlam, 2009 p. 42)

With secondary data analysis already examined, and with extracted, coded data from the interview, next phase of the research begins. Namely, further step was to compare and analyse existing quantitative data regarding the factors influencing school dropout in Guinea-Bissau with extracted data from the interviews.

Main goal of the research is following the logic of problem solving - first we need to address the issue source, then influence the problem with the prevention or intervention. Therefore, by determining the main reasons for school dropout, the thesis can be used in later research. Focal point is to highlight the issues and spread the awareness of the problem.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Research Details

Theoretical framework – secondary data analysis

The question arose from the start: how can we categorize all possible factors that influence school dropout? The initial review of the available literature concluded that the grouping of factors that influence school dropout already exists. Primary, as evidenced by a UNICEF's report from 2018, *Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau - Final Report.* Those categories were used as a focal point and reference for the rest of the research. In addition to the main report, other previously mentioned articles and reports were used as support.

Interviewees – overview

In order to obtain valid results which then lead to answering the research question, chosen experts had to have professional and research background as well as experience from the field. Experts had to be involved to get a valid and non-bias perspective.

Participants in these interviews were three education specialists with a long experience on the ground. First participant was Rui da Silva, a full-time researcher at the Centre for African Studies of the Porto University and Board President of the research group Education, Development and Global Citizenship. Second participant was Cristina Brugiolo who was working for UNICEF as a Deputy Representative in Guinea-Bissau and is currently stationed in Libya. Third participant was Lucy Evelyn Vieira Silva Monteiro who is current Education Specialist for UNICEF in Guinea-Bissau. All participants signed an informed consent form (based on ISCTE principles) outlining the study's main objectives (see Appendix 1.). All interviews were conducted over Zoom platform, in English and Portuguese.

5.2. Factors affecting school dropout in Guinea-Bissau – Categorisation

According to *Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau - Final Report*, the Constitution of the Guinea-Bissau states in Article 16 that "The State considers the elimination of illiteracy a fundamental task," and in Article 49 that "Every citizen has the right and the duty of education; 2 - The State gradually promotes the free and equal access of all citizens to different levels of education ". (UNICEF, 2018, p.41) However, even with the progress made since the independence, the number of children in Guinea-Bissau who are out of school or at risk of dropping out remains high.

As a result, the report analyses existing barriers and bottlenecks to education in Guinea-Bissau and categorized them into the sub-categories listed below.

1. Sociocultural demand-side barriers;

2. Economic demand-side barriers;

3. Supply-side barriers;

4. Political governance, capacity, and financial bottlenecks.

It is critical to note that these factors and barriers are frequently interconnected, making them interdependent. This was established during the interviews as well.

5.2.1. Sociocultural demand-side barriers

We are defining socio-cultural barriers as artificial constructs based on social norms and cultural values. (Savolainen, 2016) Revising available literature on this specific subject we see how sociocultural values, religious views, and practices act as a barrier to school enrolment, retention, and execution, particularly for marginalized groups such as girls, rural children, and children with disabilities. Based on that, in this category, UNICEF (2018) distinguish following subcategories: *Value of education*, *The impact of religion*, *Attitude towards girls' education (Early marriage; Teenage pregnancy; Gendered perceptions of insecurity of the trip to school)*, *Attitude towards children with disabilities*, *Fosterage and placed children*, *Sociocultural tensions between communities*.

Value of Education

Throughout the interviews the researcher notes frequency of each category mentioned by interviewees, as the main reason for school dropout in this category. As shown in Table 1., all three experts confirmed that the *Value of Education* has the biggest impact on school dropout in this subcategory. During the interviews, two aspects emerged regarding this subcategory. First one is *positive/negative opinion on education*, and second one is *late entry*.

Rui da Silva stated how in his research and personal experience from the field, almost everyone he encountered, had a positive view on education:

"...the relevance of the community, of the parents to organize strategies to put kids on school. Because when you talk to everyone, almost everyone will say, that education is very important."

However, while conducting the interview with Cristina Brugiolo, she stated how parents don't care about the education, especially the ones in rural areas:

"...and they don't value education...Because the education system is encapsulated in an economic system which it doesn't prise, and it doesn't value education, and it doesn't give you a better salary if you have finished six years of education or 12, or you have, a university degree, particularly if you're living in a rural area... So simply parents would not send their children to school on the other end".

This fact is supported by UNICEF's report which states that both the data collected for this study and the literature reviewed raised the issue of parental support in both rural and urban areas (Carr-Hill & Rosengart 1982, Ahlenhed et al. 1991, Ba 1996, 1997, Furtado 2007, Monteiro 1996 in UNICEF, 2018, p. 44). Many teachers also claimed that parents do not understand the significance and value of education, and instead prioritize child labour for the immediate financial return it provides. There is also concern about parental capacity and education level; illiterate or undereducated parents frequently feel disconnected from the education system, even if their children are enrolled. (UNICEF, 2018)

The second aspect of this subcategory - late entry was strongly emphasized by all. Guinean people tend to think, that their children are too young for school at the age of 6, which is, according to their educational constitution, appropriate, and right age for enrolment.

"Well, because parents often, for some, for some social groups, they think that the child at that age is not mature enough to be able to enter school." – Lucy Monteiro

The impact of religion

According to Marshal et al., (2020) late entry is closely connected to the next subcategory *The impact of religion*, where parents choose "*religious and moral education over formal education*" *(Lucy Monteiro)*. This is confirmed by local actors:

> *"I do not go to school because my parents do not let me. I was told that I have to go to Koranic centre for 6 years first. Only after that my parents allow me to attend formal education." (Child – Pitche* in Marshal et al., 2020*)*

However, according to Marshal et al. (2020), most Muslim community leaders, parents, and religious leaders are enthusiastic about religious education and its importance in their children's lives. Meaning when and if possible, children should attend both madrassa/koranic centres and public school on the same day.

> *"The children and young people who study in public schools also attend the Koranic centres - at alternate times. The children who attend public schools in the morning attend the Koranic centres in the afternoon and vice-versa." (School Principal, Dará – Gabú in Marshal et al., 2020)*

Rui da Silva confirmed this in his interview, however, indicates how this is a regular practice mostly for privileged children:

> *"...So, he went to the two systems, the guy speaks fluently, Portuguese, Creole, Fula, and also Arabic. Because he was from a privileged background. So he was from the privileged background, so he could, he went to, to both schools." (Rui da Silva)*

In case a child is not from a privileged background, parents usually tend to choose only religious schools for their children to get some kind of education, which was confirmed by a previously statement by Lucy Monteiro.

The first issue with religious schools comes from the implemented curriculum. Madrassas are schools where children will, except Arabic, and Quran, learn Portuguese, basic mathematics etc. However, it is still not on the same level as the formal/basic education. Koranic schools are traditional, Muslim schools where children only get taught the religion and Arabic and must memorize the Quran. In relation with less fortunate economic background, Rui da Silva explains this phenomenon:

"What, what do you think as a parent? You send the kids to the Escola do Branco[11]or you send the, the kids to Koranic school. Then they know how to read, uh, and write Arabic. (...), they will be very respected in the community because they can return to the community and then become a leader because they can teach the Quran again and so on." (Rui da Silva)

Second major issue with Koranic schools comes in relation with forced child labour. According to local research, Koranic centres are usually free, but they always include some sort of child labour, including working in the fields, forced begging, etc. (Marshal et al., 2020). As stated by a school principal in Bafatá,

*"(...) many of the Koranic centres in fact are not Koranic centres because the teachers take advantage of these children and do not repay them with anything, even the Quran. Why do they go out to beg from morning until evening? When will these children have time to learn the Quran?" (*in Marshal et al, 2020 p. 8*)*

This is a common practice in Guinea Bissau in which parents send their sons to Koranic centres in Senegal where they are forced to beg. The fact that UNICEF established the five-year program Reinstating the Rights of the Talibes in Senegal in the early 1990s, and that many NGOs are fighting this issue, demonstrates how serious this practice is. Einarsdóttir and Boiro (2016) studied Bissau-Guinean Muslim boys, known as *talibés*, who are sent to Quran schools, known as *daaras* in Senegal, where they beg on behalf of their teachers, known as *marabouts.* The *marabouts* entice the parents, and according to Einarsdóttir and Boiro (2016) they "come to villages and take advantage of the lack of education and opportunities." Individual and group social status enhancement, long-term economic benefits, and religious and spiritual enrichment are among the stated reasons by Bissau-Guinean parents for sending their sons away for religious studies in Senegal. Many parents stress the importance of spiritual and moral education, as well as connection to a Muslim community. (Einarsdóttir & Boiro, 2016)

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[11] Escola do Branco is a term used when referring to a formal school. Described as the settler's school, meaning the "other" who comes with new ways that can be considered contrary to religion, to religious fundamentals.

Attitudes towards girls' education

Third issue related to religious schools is connected to *Attitudes towards girls' education* which is a third subcategory. Silva states: *"challenge of that schools is that usually girls are not enrolled in that schools"*

Attitude towards girl's education is a widely spread topic and issue mostly affecting developing countries. The quantitative data summary revealed that girls in Guinea-Bissau are significantly less likely than boys to be in school, particularly as they enter the lower-secondary school age range (12-14), and as a result, their grade attainment is considerably lower. (UNICEF, 2018) Several factors, including tradition, religion and social norms, and regional differences, were identified as contributing to girls' limited access to education in the interviews. UNICEF (2018) divide these factors in separate sub-sections:

➢ Religious reasons (limited school attendance for Muslim girls);

➢ Traditional role models;

➢ Early marriage;

➢ Teenage pregnancy;

➢ Gendered perceptions of insecurity of the trip to school.

These categories were confirmed during the interviews, and those harmful practices greatly affect the access and permanence of girls in school. Most girls tend to dropout because they must take care of elder family members, younger siblings, or household/domestic tasks. In Guinea-Bissau, there is still a culture of early marriage (which mostly affects girls). Lucy Monteiro states the following:

(..) for the girls, for example, uh, many reason are related to child marriage, early marriage, and, in many cultures and communities, uh, this is still, an issue. Girls can be given for marriage, very soon at 12 years old. It's very, it's common. Also, the last mix data shows that early marriage is still high".

According to Marshall et al. (2018) early marriage and pregnancy are factors impacting mostly children in the Muslim regions, and rural areas. Lucy Monteiro pointed out another factor, which can be seen as a new separate sub-category – *gender-based violence.* Gender based violence has a great contribution to early pregnancy.

"Uh, so you have those situations and sometimes you have parents that say: No, I'm not going to send my daughter to school because, when they go to school, they come back pregnant." – Lucy Monteiro

During the interview, it was discovered, that sometimes, teachers are the ones involved with gender-based violence and harassment. This is a very sensitive topic, as it is very hard to prove someone's involvement. *"É a palavra do professor contra a palavra da criança" (*It *is the teacher's word against the child's word.) (Lucy Monteiro)*

Another gender-based factor influencing school dropout is connected to gender perceptions of insecurity of the trip to school. In Guinea-Bissau, especially in rural areas, children still have to walk long routs to get to school. Parents are worried about girls taking those walks, and this is particularly dangerous during the rainy season when roads and paths get submerged.

> *"(…) you need to walk several kilometres to go to school. And so, parents and children themselves, they would not be that interested to go to school. Uh, in addition, there are a lot of places that, particularly during the rainy season, get sort of isolated because, so you cannot even have the access to the school." – Cristina Brugiolo*

Attitudes towards children with disabilities

This leads us to another sub-category *Attitudes towards children with disabilities*. Regarding the long walks to school, we must ask a question, how can a child with disability be expected to attend school? Here we talk about the accessibility to education, and school's infrastructure. From personal experience and field work in Guinea-Bissau, it was noted how children with disabilities are hidden and not seen by the country nor system. Disability is still something parents and communities are ashamed of, children are kept in houses, or they are abandoned in orphanages. Rui da Silva points out the cultural practice, infanticide, especially in rural areas. He also said: "*because of the other factors which are so overwhelmed, this became, become, uh, little factor within all the factors.*"

The last two subcategories of the UNICEF 2018 report, *Fosterage and placed children*, *Sociocultural tensions between communities* were not mentioned in interviews.

Table 2. Sociocultural demand-side barriers – summary of results - main factors extracted

The sociocultural factors that contribute to school dropouts are influenced by people's attitudes toward education, their social circumstances, and the social value of education in general. Namely, upon the literature review, it was clear that some of the common issues of why parents are not sending, or rather withdrawing certain groups of children form educational system, are mostly due to stigma (children with disabilities), early pregnancy and safety (girls), and choosing moral education over formal, however, the most common reason is mostly related to the value of education as a social good. After the interviews were conducted, main sociocultural factors which influence school dropout were put in the context. It can be seen from the answers how overall value of education directly impacts three other factors. Even though, as it was previously mentioned, the value of education was the factor, which was most commonly mentioned among the sample, four different sociocultural factors are included in the research and presented in following table (Table 2.).

Value of education
➢ Positive opinion on education
➢ Negative opinion on education
➢ Late entry

The impact of religion
➢ Curriculum
➢ Forced child labour

Sociocultural demand-side barriers

Attitudes towards girl's education
➢ Religious reasons (limited school attendance for Muslim girls)
➢ Traditional role models
➢ Early marriage
➢ Teenage pregnancy
➢ Gendered perceptions of insecurity of the trip to school
➢ **Gender-based violence**

Attitudes towards children with disability
➢ Accessibility
➢ Infrastructure
➢ Infanticide

5.2.2. Economic demand-side barriers

This segment discusses second category of factors affecting school dropout. According to UNICEF (2018) the economic demand-side barriers are divided in following subcategories: *Household poverty in the villages, The direct costs of schooling, Family size and opportunity costs of schooling for the family, Child labour and temporary dropout,* and *Child hunger in the classroom.* Numerous economic issues lead to high rates of household vulnerability, which forces parents in challenging financial situations to make calculated decisions about whether to send their children to school. Almost all participants who participated in UNICEF's research stated that the household's ability to afford the direct and indirect costs of schooling influences school attendance. (UNICEF, 2018)

The direct costs of schooling

The collection of school fees, which is widespread even in the EB1 and EB2 primary grades where this practice is officially prohibited, is one of the more alarming aspects of basic education in Guinea-Bissau. (Marshall et al. 2020) Meaning, in reality, basic education that should be free, in many cases isn't. Lucy Monteiro states that parents need to pay an enrolment fee called *propinas* (registration fee), and a school uniform. There is also another side of public schools which includes *Self – Managed schools*.

"They are public schools that have a certain autonomy in their management and also receive contributions from parents and guardians, to be able to improve the school environment. (...) Those contributions can also be used to pay teachers. For example, when a public school doesn't have a sufficient number of teachers, they can recruit a teacher and that is paid for by the community" - Lucy Monteiro

When discussing free basic education, Lucy Monteiro shared an anecdotal example involving school supplies, in this case, books:

UNICEF, 5 years ago, supported the distribution of books nationally. These books were free and were provided to all schools and were meant to be given for free to children. But what happens? (...) Many of the books were, were not given, were not used properly. Many books were, diverted and sold in the markets, meaning that parents instead of having free books provided by the state, must go buy books from the market for their children. So, even talking about the material resources, the teaching resources, we cannot talk about free, at least in a complete way, because there are still these perverse behaviours that that affect the good management of the system.

This story shows us how weak educational system is when speaking about the economic barriers, when even free school books end up in markets for sale.

Child labour and temporary dropout

Child labour has been mentioned when talking about Koranic schools, however many children of Guinea-Bissau, seasonally participate in field labour on cashew nuts farms, to support their families. Rui da Silva emphasised this question:

> *"And also, you, you, you see on the rural areas, but also impacts on the urban areas, but mainly on the rural area. (...) because the extra income of the main income of the families are the cashew harvest. During that time, you watch a huge, drop out. In that period kids leave school and sometimes they leave school to work, but sometimes they leave school because they have to go with the family because the whole family moves to, to harvest a shoe and then return again." – Rui da Silva*

According to Marshal et al. (2020) the complex relationship between child labour and education in Guinea-Bissau is highlighted by the cashew harvest's economic importance and the country's high out-of-pocket education costs. While agricultural work cuts into students' time in school, the money it generates helps the family pay for educational costs (including fees). As stated by a parent in Bafatá,

> *"The only strategy we have is to harvest and prepare cashew nuts to save money for our children's education." (*in Marshal et al.,2020*).*

The consequences of the cashew harvest are leading to temporary migration, and households take their children with them which then leads to child inability to attend school for multiple weeks or even months.

> *"At the beginning of the school year, all children come to school. But during the cashew harvest period, many drop out of school. As an example: 100 children enrol in school at the beginning of the year. At this stage, we must have 40 or 50 dropouts or even 60." (Parent in Gabú* in Marshal et al.,2020*)*

What can be witnessed is that once children get back to school, they fail class, because of lack of attendance, and inability to compensate for missed subjects. Because of that Rui da Silva states: *these kids fail and so they will go (drop out), or they stay on the same grade.*

The following categories present at the UNICEF 2018 report, *Household poverty in the villages, Family size and opportunity costs of schooling for the family*, and *Child hunger in the classroom,* were not frequently mentioned thorough the interviews.

Table 3. Economic demand-side barriers – summary of results - main factors extracted

The fact that many households in Guinea-Bissau cannot afford the direct and indirect costs associated with education is a significant problem. After interviews and literature review, regarding the economic demand-side barriers, following factors arose as the main ones influencing school dropout (Table 3). Collecting school fees is officially against the law but still takes place all over the nation, school books which end up not being free, but rather sold on the markets, directly influence parent's decision about the education. These issues have a great influence on child labour and temporary dropout.

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┌────────────────────────────┐
│  Economic demand-side      │
│  barriers                  │
└────────────────────────────┘

┌────────────────────────┐        ┌────────────────────────────┐
│                        │        │ Child labour and temporary │
│ The direct costs of    │        │ dropout                    │
│ schooling              │        │ ➢ Field labour on cashew   │
│                        │        │   nuts farms               │
│ ➢ School – free but    │        │                            │
│   not free             │        │                            │
└────────────────────────┘        └────────────────────────────┘
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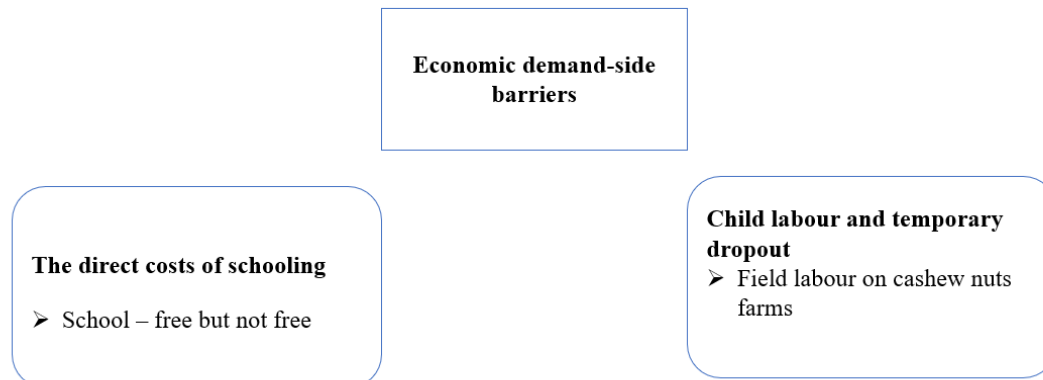
5.2.3. Supply-side barriers

This segment of the research will examine the major educational supply factors that affect school attendance. It's crucial to recognize the connections and relationships between each of these elements and the elements from the other sections. UNICEF's report divides this category into following sub-categories which act as obstacles to school to enrolment, retention, and completion: *Distance to an adequate school, Inadequate school infrastructure, Reputation of public schools, Teachers strike and absenteeism, Competencies of teachers, Lack of preschool supply, Lack of teaching and learning materials,* and *Language of instruction*.

Distance to an adequate school

This factor was emphasized by all experts during the interviews. This is closely related to previous section *Attitudes towards girls' education.* When a community has no complete primary schools (or higher), children must either drop out after completing the highest grade available or commute to schools in other communities. (UNICEF, 2018) Commuting hence, represents a big danger for children, mostly girls, and parents tend to decide that children stay at home.

Another thing happening regarding the distance was pointed out by Rui da Silva:

> *"So, kids have to walk long distances. Usually they arrive, they have no teacher, and it's harder because of the, the walk to school for the parents, let girls go because of safety issues."*

Parents then notice teachers' absence and see no point in sending their child to school, especially when a big walking distance is included. This is connected and it is leading to the next sub-category.

Teachers strike and absenteeism

The primary cause of teacher strikes is the lack of payment of salaries, but other contributing factors include poor working conditions such as class size and poor infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. (Marshal et al. 2020) This problem was strongly emphasized by all interviewees and all of them stated how this must be recognised as systemic characteristics and problem with deep-rooted causes. Absenteeism among teachers is directly correlated with low salary, or the failure to pay teachers' salaries on time, which in turn causes low morale, strikes, a lack of interest in the field, and corruption. (UNICEF, 2018)

"Teachers go on strike most of the time. One of the huge issues because teachers strike is because they don't get paid, or at least they don't get paid as they wish. So, there is a whole cycle that needs to be broken." – Cristina Brugiolo

Another interesting fact was mentioned by Rui da Silva which relates to the way of how teachers receive their money.

"For instance, sometimes in the rural area, the teacher has to miss one or two weeks of classes to go and get the payment of the salary. So, the kids will have only two, two weeks and a half of classes per month because sometimes the teacher to receive the salary, have to move to collect the salary. Then they have to pay all the debts. (...) Then return again to teaching, and then two weeks after they have to go back again to collect the money, to pay all the debts again and go back to the rural area."Rui da Silva

Teacher strikes/teacher absenteeism is one of the main reasons listed as a driver for poor education quality, constrained number of days of schooling per year, student dropout, and negative community perceptions of public schools. UNICEF (2018) This was confirmed by both the literature review and the interviews.

Competencies of teachers

Previous studies have demonstrated the shortage of qualified teachers. (Benavente and Varly 2010, Campos 2009, Campos and Furtado 2009, Cunha and Ba 2008, Daun 1997 in UNICEF, 2018). For instance, in a recent (2015) study, only 6% of teachers who were put to the test showed fluency in the Portuguese language at the primary (grade 5) level, and only 2% were proficient in math. (Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2015a). In general, teachers have low levels of formal education, receive no initial training as educators, do not have access to ongoing education opportunities, and a high percentage of them work in vulnerable positions. (Campos and Furtado 2009, Benavente and Varly 2010 in UNICEF 2018). Two of the interviewers have commented on the teacher training:

"In Guinea-Bissau we have a teacher training system, training school, but that doesn't have the capacity to provide a sufficient number of teachers per year, so we still have this gap. The state tries to cover by hiring people to serve or to act as teachers, but who don't have the pedagogical background that is given by these teacher training schools." – Lucy Monteiro

"You don't have trained teachers, so you try to find the most qualified person that is available in the community to teach. (…) if you move to the periphery out of Bissau, if you move to the rural areas, you find less qualified teachers because of structural conditions. How can you attract the qualified teachers to go to the rural area?" – Rui da Silva

Language of instruction

Guinea-Bissau's language problem is complicated and ambiguous. Only 5% of the population speaks Portuguese as their mother tongue, despite it being the official language and the primary language of instruction. Most people understand and speak creole. (UNICEF, 2018). The problema was raised by Cristina Brugioglo, the former UNICEF representative:

"Language is a huge issue; you know very well. Because the curriculum is in Portuguese, the language of instruction is Portuguese. These kids, they don't speak Portuguese. So, imagine you are six, seven, or eight years old, you get stuck in a classroom, you can't move, and the teacher is speaking to you in a language that is for you, like Chinese." - Cristina Brugiolo

There are 20 indigenous languages, of which most people speak one or more. (Monteiro 2005, Benson 2010, Observatório da Língua Portuguesa 2009 in UNICEF, 2018). Lucy Monteiro added:

"I also think the language issue. It's a big challenge the language, we want, it's true that Portuguese is our official language, but I think, uh, it's a little bit illusory to say that we can achieve the education results this way. We have to be sincere and honest with ourselves to say that "Okay, our population, the Portuguese language is not the mother tongue of the majority. It's a foreign language, I won't even say it's a second language, it's a foreign language to many. So how can you transmit knowledge in a language that the child doesn't understand? That even the teacher doesn't understand." – Lucy Monteiro

Language challenges have been linked to students dropping interest in learning and partaking in school, which results in poor learning outcomes for students and, ultimately, high rates of grade failure. (e.g., Barbosa 2012, Benson 2010, Baldé 2013 in UNICEF, 2018).

Table 4. Supply-side barriers – summary of results – main factors extracted

Supply side barriers are the ones that limit school attendance in Guinea-Bissau due to a lack of educational opportunities and poor educational quality. Table 4 summarizes the key findings from the literature review and interviews. Three out of the four factors are related to teachers. Specifically, their education and competencies. Language makes teaching difficult, particularly when done in a "foreign" language. Distance to an adequate school can have impact both for school dropout and teachers' absenteeism.

Distance to an adequate school		Teachers strike and absenteeism
	Supply-side barriers	
Language of instruction		Competencies of teachers
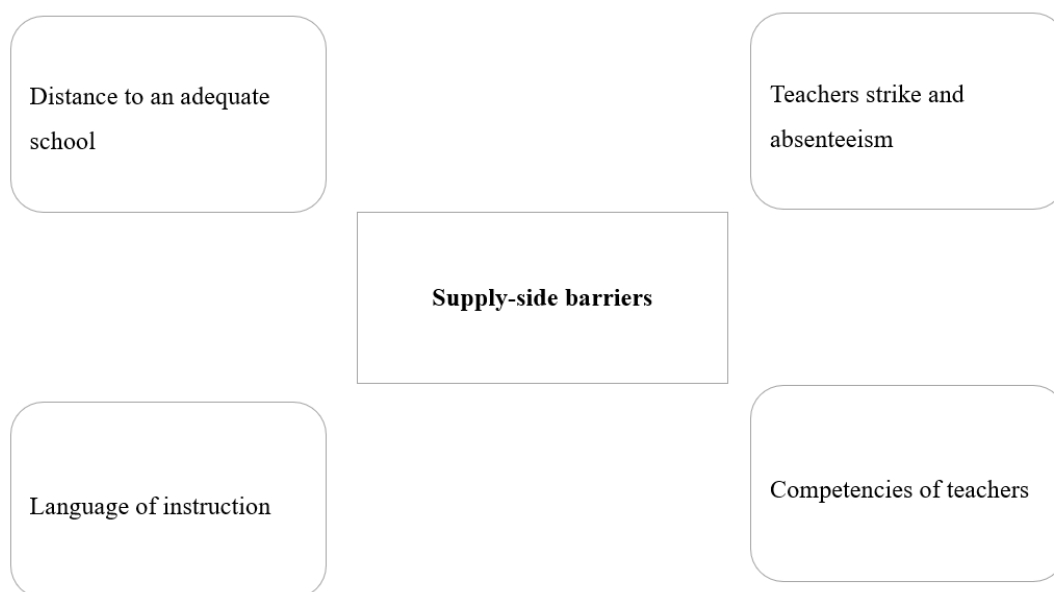
5.2.4. Political governance, capacity, and financial bottlenecks

According to UNICEF (2018), the political and governance bottlenecks are associated to the financial, political, and governance bottlenecks. They include the lack of authority and respect for school management committees (COGES, Comités de Gasto Escolar), the lack of strong parent and community involvement, the absence of accountability at all levels of the educational system, a somewhat absence of adequate monitoring and evaluating, as well as lack of communication at all levels. The financial bottlenecks combine an uneven and inadequate distribution of resources generally, as well as a waste of public funds brought on by high rates of dropout and grade repetition. (UNICEF, 2018).

This category is divided into two sub-categories: *Institutional capacity and effectiveness,* and *Financial bottlenecks.* UNICEF (2018) breaks down these sub-categories into following sub-sections:

Institutional capacity and effectiveness

- ➢ Lack of power of school management committees/COGEs,
- ➢ Involvement of parents and communities in the school,
- ➢ Accountability at all levels,
- ➢ Weak monitoring and evaluation capacity,
- ➢ Lack of communication at all levels.

Financial bottlenecks

- ➢ Inequitable and insufficient resource allocation,
- ➢ Waste of public resources.

Institutional capacity and effectiveness

As mentioned before, parents and communities often involve in education, directly by financially supporting self-management schools and even paying for teachers' salaries. During the interviews, all experts pointed out *community and parents' involvement* as an imperative. Even the current Education Sector Plan (ESP 2017–2025), according to Marshal et al. (2020), emphasize the necessity of effective community involvement practices in schools.

"In my role as village leader, I can call on a father to oblige him to send his boys and girls to school because like I said, it is not possible to drop out of school during the year since others would like to study but did not get a spot. So, the ones who got a space cannot waste this

opportunity" (Eu na qualidade de líder dessa tabanca mando chamar o pai da criança para
obrigar o pai a mandar o seu filho ou filha para a escola porque como já disse não se pode
abandonar a escola porque os outros querem estudar e não conseguem lugar para estudar e
os que conseguem não devem desperdiçar dessa oportunidade)
(Community leader in Bafatá in UNICEF, 2018 p.69)

To convey these kinds of messages and get parents to respond, the school and community must first have good relationships. However, there is another side; UNICEF (2018) indicate how many teachers complained that parents do not understand the value of education and prioritize child labour for the immediate financial return it brings. Five teachers thorough that research, mentioned that parents often send their children to school without having eaten and with dirty clothes and poor hygiene.

Another problem comes with *weak monitoring and evaluation capacity*. It was mentioned during the interviews, how it is very hard to get proper statistics, and demographic data. Lucy Monteiro stated:

"Education data management system is not, operational, enough. It's, very big issue for us, because to monitor data on school, we need two things: of course, enrolments, the statistics from school, but also, we need demographic data. (...) we have projection of the population so we can estimate. For UNICEF, the only data that we have is from, the mix data and also from the intervention."

Rui da Silva made a similar statement:
"As you know, statistics from schools are very hard to get and, and reliable statistics is really hard to get. So, what usually we do, cross several databases with population census."

Financial bottlenecks
Regarding the financial bottlenecks, *inequitable and insufficient resource allocation* came up as a major issue. In comparison to other countries with similar characteristics, public expenditure on education in Guinea-Bissau is low. Education is restricted by limited funds, with the sector receiving 1.7% of GDP in 2013. (UNICEF, 2018) However, according to
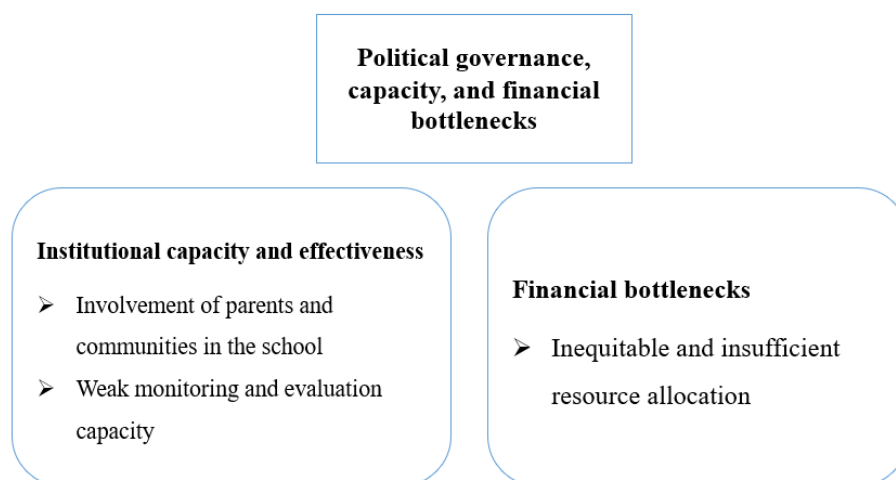
UNICEF (2021), between the fiscal years 2021 and 2022, the national budget allocation to education increased slightly, from 9% to 14%.

"Budget from the government is not enough. We put the system running and 97%, more or less of the budget is to pay for teacher salaries. So, the investment from UN from NGOs and so on, is key to expand the system." – Rui da Silva

This was emphasized in UNICEF's 2018 report as well; 97% of the money the government currently spends on education is for staff, leaving no money for other expenses. "Resources distributed to schools by the central level in 2016-17 included only chalk and a record book for each school". (Merchant et al. 2018)

Table 5. Political governance, capacity, and financial bottlenecks – summary of results – main factors extracted

The weak parent and community involvement in the school, the absence of responsibility at all educational levels, a somewhat limited capacity for monitoring and evaluating, and an absence of communication at all levels are among the political and governance bottlenecks. Table 5 lists the key elements in this category that have an impact on school dropout. Clear and understandable communication between all parties involved in the educational process is crucial.

Political governance, capacity, and financial bottlenecks

Institutional capacity and effectiveness
➢ Involvement of parents and communities in the school
➢ Weak monitoring and evaluation capacity

Financial bottlenecks
➢ Inequitable and insufficient resource allocation

5.3. Unique, characteristic, and new factors

These findings which emerged from the interviews managed to emphasize the key factors affecting dropout rates. However, during the interview, the experts also brought up several factors that are unique, and characteristic to Guinea-Bissau as well as some that have just recently surfaced and are unknown as to how they (will) affect the education and attendance in general. First one, directly affecting school dropout is regarding the *length of school* (duration of the primary). As stated by Cristina Brugiolo,

"And there is one thing that I have seen only in Guinea-Bissau, because I worked also in Angola, which is another Portuguese colony, but they didn't raise this issue. It was not an issue at all. Uh, so, uh, primary education is six years, but the majority of the schools, or many of the schools were actually giving education only until grade 4. And because the other two years were added later, and the excuse was that during the Portuguese time, uh, primary education was only until grade four. And so, the schools didn't manage to change according to the education reform and to add the other two years. So, you would find yourself that probably you have the school in your village, but it provides you only up to grade four. And then you need to go to another village to finish grade five and six." – Cristina Brugiolo

This was also confirmed and raised as an issue in RESEN (MEN 2015) "this impossibility of following a complete primary cycle in the same school affects about half of the students (47%)." According to the same report, this issue forces students (around 147 000) to look for another school in another area, which would then lead to relocation, hence additional expenses which many families are not able to afford, resulting in school dropout.

However, and on another note, Rui da Silva pointed out one really interesting fact.

"One characteristic that, Guinea-Bissau has that is different from other countries. It's the persistence. You have boys and girls that stay during a long period of time in school. They don't drop out. They are at a risk of dropping out, but they stay. You, see 16- and 17-year-olds that are in the primary school. They are, in primary school because they stay long periods of time. But if you, go to Guinea-Bissau, sometimes you see kids selling, working in the formal economy. And if you ask what they do, they say, I'm a student. Why you're not in school? Because I need money to go. So, they are working informally. And then when they have money, they go again. So, they are still enrolled." – Rui da Silva

RESEN (MEN, 2015) confirms this statement and corelates it with the late entry. "This phenomenon that the vast majority of young people between 6 and 24 years old currently in school are concentrated in basic education". RESEN (MEN, 2015) Rui da Silva offers another explanation: *"that's why you see those persistent kids and teenager, they stay long periods of time enrol in schools because people, they give importance to education."*

UNICEF (2018) confirms and includes both explanations about this *vicious cycle*: "the defining characteristic of the Guinea-Bissau education system is the massive age-grade distortion that is present across the entire basic education sequence. These distortions are a natural consequence of late entry, grade failure/repetition, and persistence. In fact, it is remarkable how persistent the average student is, as evidenced by the overage enrolment in lower grades"

As a result of the emergence of the Coronavirus in the last two years, the world has taken a completely new turn. The ramifications were felt in every corner and every country. Rui da Silva pointed out how it would be interesting to see how this impacted already endangered children.

"We don't know what happened now during this last two years of Covid 19. And the virus itself maybe didn't have a huge impact because a lot of public schools are, run as a self-management. But also, the COVID19 had economic impact, so, if the family doesn't have money to pay. Kids don't go to school." -Rui da Silva

He emphasized how this might not be the case, and for now we can only guess, because we have no new research, and data, meaning this cannot be confirmed.

Political instability is another factor directly impacting educational system. Guinea-Bissau, as previously stated, is politically unstable country which again was proved in February 2022 when there was another attempt of Coup d'état.

"I think this is also a consequence of the instability of the country, to approve legislation and to move forward. Some regulations take decades. You can see, for instance, the Education Act was approved in 2010. The unilateral independence was 1973. And then during the 70's, the 80's, the 90's, there was a discussion about the Education Act. The Education Act was approved only in 2010." – Rui da Silva

Rui da Silva goes on to explain how Guinea-Bissau experienced political stability in 2009, 2010, and 2011, with only one person appointed as Minister of Education, which aided in the passage of the Education Act.

"It was the most stable three years. From decades where you have three years that the country didn't suffer a coup. And during that time, the Ministry of Education stays on office."
– Rui da Silva

As stated, political and military instability have had a significant impact on education. Since independence, for example, 34 education ministers have been appointed. (Lopes, 2014 in Silva & Oliveira, 2017) As a result, there are "discontinuities and contradictions resulting from unfinished reforms" in the educational system (authors translation Monteiro, 2005, 131 in Silva & Oliveira, 2017)

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify the major factors that influence school dropout in Guinea-Bissau. To do so, it was necessary to become acquainted with the current situation, previous research, and data available. Secondary data analysis had to be completed with interviews to selected professionals and subsequent analysis. As a result, the qualitative methodology approach was chosen for this thesis' research study. This process led us to identify the main factors influencing school dropout, which can help in future research by pointing out which ones need to be addressed first. This chapter will summarize previous chapters, highlight key realizations, and make recommendations for future similar studies.

Guinea-Bissau, as previously stated, is a small, fragile, and mostly rural country in West Africa, facing significant development challenges such as persistent political unrest, poor governance, infrastructure gaps, food instability, and poverty, making it one of the world's poorest countries. Guinea-Bissau was a Portuguese colony until 1974, when it gained formal independence following a long-armed conflict. The anti-colonial war, on the other hand, was so destructive that the new state lacked functioning institutions and an economic foundation. The country has been prone to major political upheavals since then. Since then, the country has felt the effects of political unrest and widespread dissatisfaction among its people.

Geographic and demographic characteristics, harsh historical events, economic and political bottlenecks all contributed to the country's educational challenges. Following independence (1974), changes were made to the colonial educational system based on the experiences of the various liberated zones as well as the limitations and demands imposed by different external organizations. The educational system's structure remained unchanged until the beginning of 1990, despite numerous attempts to form an Education Act, which was then finally passed and approved in 2010. The education system is divided into six cycles, and it is officially determined that children begin the first cycle at the age of six. The education system's strategy was designed to evolve around critical sectors crucial to national development, such as strengthening governance, promoting economic growth, increasing access to social services, and improving overall living standards. However, a new strategy known as the National Education Plan was recently finalized (2016 - 2025). This plan places a strong emphasis on expanding educational coverage, improving overall educational quality, and providing support for higher education as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and a key priority outlined is a strengthening school management. The education sector in Guinea-

Bissau faces several significant challenges, including the following: less than 2% of GDP is set aside for education funding, and salaries consume nearly all of it; despite this, there has been a lot of labour unrest, including teacher strikes, which has hampered educational attainment even more. The sector is heavily reliant on donor funding, but there is a lack of coordination among the various actors and projects/programs, and interventions in the education system are fragmented and limited by the length of aid projects and programs.

Children who are not in school are by far the most at risk and marginalized in society. Because it significantly affects the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals, the issue of out-of-school children (OOSC) calls for additional study and policy evaluation. As previously stated, a significant portion of children in Guinea-Bissau between the ages of 5 and 14 do not attend school, and according to UNICEF's 2018 final report *Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau*, OOSC remains a significant issue in the country despite notable improvements made in recent years.

Some research studies have been conducted on this topic by different authors, adding to reports mostly made by UNICEF. Given that the most recent studies were conducted in 2014/2015, it was critical to select those which are most relevant and can explain the current situation as precisely as possible. On the one hand, this presented a significant challenge, as many years had passed and, besides estimations, we have no new knowledge and data of the current situation in 2022. Nevertheless, and given the fact that the education as a process takes time, this previous collected data is still valid and can help us for further investigations. Given that the secondary analysis was completed at the very beginning, it was critical to conduct semi-structured interviews with experts from the field. As stated in methodology chapter, for the purpose of this research, three experts were chosen. They all have extensive experience working in education in Guinea-Bissau, and their perspectives added dimension and weight to this study.

Thorough the interviews, all experts enriched this research with interesting, and established insights as well as their personal experience. Some broad conclusions were drawn from the interviews that were conducted. Firstly, all interviewed experts agreed and concluded that the educational system in Guinea-Bissau is constantly influenced by political, economic, and social factors, and that it is subject to abrupt changes. Secondly, all agreed that the factors influencing the issue of Out of School Children are interconnected and sometimes difficult to separate from one another. Finally, it is critical to continue to work on raising community awareness of the importance of education for the purpose of growth and development.

The 2018 Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau - Final Report analyses existing barriers and bottlenecks to education in Guinea-Bissau and categorizes them into the following categories: Sociocultural demand-side barriers; Economic demand-side barriers; Supply-side barriers and Political governance, capacity, and financial bottlenecks. These sub - categories were divided in multiple sub-sections. Throughout the interviews, main factors were extracted. From the category *sociocultural demand-side barriers,* four factors were pointed out as the ones who have the biggest impact on school dropout: value of education, the impact of religion, attitudes toward girl's education and attitudes towards children with disability. All these factors are closely connected to culture and parents' attitudes towards education. In this category, one "new" factor was discovered – gender-based violence, and this can be classified as a separate sub-category. Main factors extracted from following category *economic demand-side barriers* are: the direct costs of schooling and child labour and temporary dropout. These factors are closely related to household economic situation. Regarding the seasonal cashew harvest and temporary relocation, a school calendar adjustment was mentioned as a way of addressing this issue during the interviews, but further investigation revealed that no concrete policy was implemented. For third category, *supply-side barriers*, this study managed to extract following factors: distance to an adequate school, teachers strike and absenteeism, language of instruction, competencies of teachers. This category and factors are emphasizing a sole role of a teacher and how important this profession is, especially in developing country. For the last category, *political governance, capacity, and financial bottlenecks,* research established how both institutional capacity and effectiveness, and financial bottlenecks have a big impact on school attendance, and retention. Involvement of parents and communities in the school, weak monitoring, and evaluation capacity as well as inequitable and insufficient resource allocation were three main factors pointed out during the interviews.

However, in the process of this research, unique, characteristic, and new factors arose regarding the attendance in schools of Guinea-Bissau. First one considers the unevenness of the school's duration (length of school). Meaning, while schools last 6 years in major cities and regional centres, they only last for 4 years in rural areas. The second is that the last two years have been severely impacted in every sector by the Coronavirus, and we have no idea what the current situation on the field is. Third one is connected to newly created political instability (coup d'état, February 2022). Nonetheless, it is very important to emphasize the fact that Guinea-Bissau has a strong civil society, and persistence, as I was able to testify both at a professional and a personal level while living and working in Guinea-Bissau.

This research had limitations such as the inability to obtain new research and data, meaning the difficulty in obtaining relevant latest information. Issue with obtaining new research data comes from the fact that maybe non were made in last years, due to covid or some other factor. However, its leading goal was achieved, which was the extraction of the main factors that influence school dropout.

The findings of this study may be used as a foundation in the future when implementing and discussing new strategies. It can be used as a guide for allocating money from the government or aid organizations. These findings can assist all educational specialists in developing awareness programs for parents, communities, and the government. This study should raise awareness about education in developing countries and the value of education for all. Regardless of the current results, it is critical to remember that education is a living system that changes and must be provided special attention to realize human capacities. As a result, the following research questions can be centred on one of the factors or on one of the stated and expressed problems, such as better teacher training and education.

The education system is an important pillar of society and a reflection of society. Education is an effective and guaranteed tool for long-term development. Without quality education, the country will face a plethora of issues, including political instability, general dissatisfaction among its citizens, overcrowding in the health-care system, etc. It is critical to remember that education is a human right, and it should be approached with great care and attention. In order to achieve SDG 4, Quality Education by 2030, and provide inclusive and equal access to schooling, we must work to raise awareness about the value of education and the benefits it provides.

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APPENDIX 1. Informed consent

Declaração de consentimento informado

Esta entrevista enquadra-se no estudo desenvolvido para a elaboração de uma dissertação de mestrado em Estudos Internacionais no ISCTE-IUL (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa), Escola de Sociologia e Políticas Públicas.

O objetivo do estudo é sistematizar e listar todos os motivos de abandono escolar precoce e fazer recomendações sobre como abordar esta questão nos sistemas educativos da África Ocidental em país - Guiné Bissau realizadas por Mirna Špoljar.

Solicito a sua participação neste estudo, enquanto especialista na questão, através da realização de uma entrevista com gravação áudio, realizada através da plataforma zoom. Comprometo-me a assegurar a confidencialidade das informações recolhidas, e que as mesmas se destinam apenas ao objetivo académico referido.

Comprometo-me a entregar uma cópia do estudo em versão digital quando este estiver concluído.

Apresento o meu sincero agradecimento pela sua colaboração neste estudo.

Data:

Nome e assinatura do entrevistado

Nome e assinatura do entrevistador

Mirna Špoljar

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APENDIX 2. Deductive coding

ECONOMIC DEMAND – SIDE BARRIERS	
Education | Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau Final Report	**Interviews**
Household poverty in the villages	0
Direct costs of schooling	I
Family size and opportunity costs of schooling for the family	I
Child labour and temporary dropout	II
Child hunger in the classroom	I

CAPACITY AND FINANCIAL BOTTLENECKS	
Education | Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau Final Report	**Interviews**
Institutional capacity and effectiveness	**I I I**
Financial bottlenecks	**I I**

SOCIO – CULTURAL DEMAND -SIDE BARRIERS	
Education | Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau Final Report	**Interviews**
Value of Education • Positive/Negative opinion • Late entry	**I I I**
The impact of religion	**I I**
Attitudes towards girls' education	**I I**
Attitudes towards children with disabilities	**I I**
Fosterage and placed children	0
Sociocultural tensions between communities	0

SUPPLY – SIDE BARRIERS and POLITICAL GOVERNANCE	
**Education	Study on Out-of-School Children in Guinea-Bissau Final Report**	**Interviews**
Distance to an adequate school	I I I
Inadequate school infrastructure	I
Reputation of public schools	0
Teachers strike and absenteeism	I
Competencies of teachers	I I
Lack of preschool supply	0
Lack of teaching and learning materials	0
Language of instruction	I I I

CHARACTERISTICAL FOR GUINEA-BISSAU

Staying in school for a long period of time – overaged children

Strong civic society

Length of school – in some rural areas 4 years instead of 6 – reason: it was like that in Portugal times.

NEW ISSUES & FACTORS

Impact of Covid 19

Political instability – Coup d'état in February 2022

Picture 1. – Deductive coding