



Student Dropout Rates and Academic Performance in School-Based Mental Health Support Programmes: An Ethnographic Study in Northern Ghana

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Abstract

Student dropout rates in schools are a significant concern globally, especially in contexts where educational resources are limited. In Northern Ghana, school-based mental health support programmes have been implemented to address students' emotional and psychological needs, yet their effectiveness remains under-researched. This study employed qualitative research methods, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review, conducted over a period of one year across three schools in Northern Ghana. Data collection focused on student interactions within the mental health support framework and their academic performance post-programme implementation. Key findings indicate that students who received mental health interventions showed modest improvements in attendance rates, with dropout rates decreasing by approximately 15% compared to pre-intervention levels. However, these benefits were not uniformly distributed across all schools or student groups. The study supports the potential of school-based mental health support programmes in mitigating academic challenges among students but highlights the need for tailored interventions and comprehensive support systems to maximise their effectiveness. Schools implementing such programmes should prioritise individualized care plans, collaborate with community stakeholders, and integrate mental health services into existing educational curricula. Policymakers are encouraged to invest in mental health resources for schools as a critical component of holistic education reform initiatives. Student Dropout Rates, Academic Performance, Mental Health Support Programmes, Northern Ghana, Ethnographic Study

Keywords: *Geographic, Ghanaian, Ethnography, Mental Health, Contextualization, Education Policy, Community Engagement*

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