

COMPARATIVE STUDY

Navigating Dual Pathways

A Comparative Analysis of Informal Livelihoods and Educational Attainment in Burundi's Urban Centres

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ABSTRACT

{ "background": "In many urban African contexts, youth engagement in the informal economy is widespread, yet its complex relationship with formal educational trajectories remains under-theorised and poorly documented. This is particularly salient in post-conflict settings where economic precarity and educational systems intersect.", "purpose and objectives": "This study comparatively analyses how engagement in informal livelihoods influences educational attainment and aspirations among youth in two major urban centres. It aims to identify distinct pathways and mechanisms through which informal work either supports or hinders scholastic progression.", "methodology": "A concurrent mixed-methods design was employed, integrating a survey of 480 youth aged 16–24 with in-depth phenomenological interviews of 32 participants. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants from diverse informal sectors across Bujumbura and Gitega. Quantitative data were analysed using logistic regression, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis.", "findings": "A key quantitative finding indicates that youth working over 20 hours weekly in the informal sector were 60% less likely to progress to the next expected educational level compared to their non-working or minimally engaged peers. Qualitatively, a central theme was the 'dual burden of necessity', where income generation was simultaneously a facilitator of school attendance through covering fees and a significant drain on time and cognitive resources for study.", "conclusion": "The relationship between informal work and education is not uniformly antagonistic but is mediated by the intensity and nature of work. The study concludes that a critical threshold of engagement exists, beyond which the detrimental impacts on educational progression become pronounced and systemic.", "recommendations": "Educational policy should recognise informal work as a reality for urban youth. Recommendations include developing flexible school scheduling, recognising prior experiential learning from the informal sector within the formal curriculum, and providing targeted financial support to reduce the necessity for excessive work hours during critical examination periods.", "key words": "informal economy, educational attainment, youth, urban education, Burundi, mixed-methods, comparative education", "contribution statement": "

Keywords: *informal economy, educational attainment, urban Africa, comparative education, youth livelihoods, Burundi*

Article Highlights

- Mixed-methods study of 480 youth in Bujumbura and Gitega
- Identifies 'dual burden of necessity' in informal work-education dynamics

Methodological Note

Concurrent mixed-methods design integrating survey data (n=480) with phenomenological interviews (n=32) across diverse informal sectors.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quantitative analysis shows 60% reduced progression with intensive work• Policy recommendations for flexible scheduling and financial support	<p><i>Examines the complex mediation between informal livelihoods and educational progression in post-conflict urban contexts.</i></p>
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