



## Challenges faced by Migrant Girls in Education

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### Abstract

Migrant girls face a range of challenges that make access to quality education difficult. They often need to learn a new language or dialect, adapt to a new school and culture, build friendships, and establish relationships with teachers. In addition, discrimination and financial difficulties can further complicate their educational experience. This article analyzes the main challenges that migrant girls encounter in education.

### Keywords

migrant girls, education, barriers, challenges, social adaptation

### Introduction

Education is widely recognized as one of the most powerful tools for social inclusion, equality, and personal development. However, for migrant girls around the world, access to quality education often remains limited due to social, cultural, economic, and institutional barriers. Migrant girls occupy a unique position at the intersection of gender inequality and migration-related vulnerability.

In recent decades, global migration has increased significantly, resulting in diverse classrooms and multicultural societies. Yet, despite international commitments such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, migrant girls continue to face obstacles that prevent them from fully benefiting from educational opportunities. This article examines the primary challenges migrant girls encounter in education and highlights the potential opportunities that can support their academic success and social integration.

### Language Barriers

One of the most immediate and significant challenges migrant girls face in education is the language barrier. Entering a new school system often requires learning an unfamiliar language while simultaneously adapting to new academic expectations. Limited proficiency in the host country's language can prevent migrant girls from fully understanding classroom instruction, completing assignments, or expressing their



thoughts confidently.

Language difficulties also influence social integration. Migrant girls may struggle to communicate with peers, which can result in isolation, exclusion, or even bullying. As communication is central to building friendships and belonging, linguistic obstacles often deepen feelings of marginalization.

Moreover, language barriers can affect how teachers perceive migrant students. Girls who are intelligent and capable may be wrongly viewed as academically weak simply because they cannot yet speak fluently. Without sufficient language support programs, migrant girls are placed at an unfair disadvantage, making educational success far more difficult to achieve.

### **Adaptation to a New School and Cultural Environment**

Beyond linguistic difficulties, migrant girls often face the complex challenge of adaptation to an unfamiliar cultural and educational environment. Migration frequently involves entering a school system with new social norms, behavioural expectations, and institutional structures that differ significantly from those in the country of origin. For young migrant girls, this transition can be emotionally demanding, particularly when they must balance cultural values from home with the pressures of integration in the host society.

As Morrison et al. (1997) emphasize, adaptation is especially salient for migrant children from diverse cultural backgrounds, as they are required to meet a variety of demands in the new society and school setting. These demands include learning the dominant language or dialect, understanding the rules and expectations of school, forming new friendships, and developing relationships with teachers and other school personnel. Such adjustments are not merely academic but deeply social and psychological, shaping how migrant girls experience belonging and inclusion within the classroom.

When adequate support is lacking, the adaptation process may lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, or withdrawal from school participation. However, inclusive educational practices and culturally responsive teaching can significantly ease this transition, enabling migrant girls to develop resilience and succeed academically.

### **Discrimination and Social Marginalization**

In addition to language barriers and cultural adjustment, migrant girls frequently



encounter discrimination within educational settings. Discrimination represents a serious obstacle because it directly affects students' sense of safety, belonging, and equal access to learning opportunities. Theodorson & Theodorson (1970, p. 115, cited in Bullivant, 1987) define discrimination as “the unequal treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of some, usually categorical, attribute, such as racial, ethnic, religious, or social-class membership.” This definition highlights how migrant girls may be disadvantaged not only because of their migrant status, but also because of intersecting identities related to ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic background.

Schools provide a primary arena in which racial and ethnic encounters take place. As Bullivant (1987) explains, these encounters are often compounded by social class factors and by the lack of understanding or respect for the cultures and values of students from different backgrounds. When educators and peers fail to recognize cultural diversity as a strength, migrant girls may become targets of exclusion and unequal treatment.

Discrimination can manifest in both subtle and overt forms. Subtle discrimination may involve avoidance, lowered expectations, or social isolation, while overt discrimination may include verbal abuse, name-calling, or even physical violence (Bullivant, 1987). For migrant girls, such experiences can reduce academic confidence, discourage school participation, and contribute to long-term educational disadvantage. Addressing discrimination therefore requires inclusive school policies, intercultural awareness, and strong institutional commitment to equality.

### **Low Socio-economic Background and Educational Disadvantage**

Another major barrier affecting migrant girls' access to equal educational opportunities is low socio-economic background. Migration is often accompanied by financial instability, as many migrant families face unemployment, insecure housing, or limited access to social resources in the host society. These economic difficulties directly shape the educational experiences of migrant children, particularly girls, who may be expected to contribute to household responsibilities rather than prioritize schooling. Research consistently demonstrates that parental socio-economic status is closely related to children's academic achievement. As Driessen and Dekkers (1997) and Tansel (2002) note, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to



experience greater educational disadvantages compared to their more privileged peers. Limited financial means can restrict access to school materials, private tutoring, technology, and extracurricular opportunities that support learning and academic success.

For migrant girls, socio-economic hardship often intersects with gender norms, increasing the risk of interrupted education, reduced aspirations, and early school leaving. Therefore, addressing educational inequality requires not only cultural inclusion but also structural support, such as scholarships, free learning resources, and targeted assistance for economically vulnerable migrant families.

### Conclusion

Migrant girls face many challenges that make education harder for them. Language differences, including new languages or different dialects, can make understanding lessons and talking to classmates difficult. Adjusting to a new school and culture can also be stressful, as they need to learn new rules, make friends, and get used to teachers and school expectations. On top of this, discrimination and financial difficulties make their school experience even more challenging, limiting opportunities to succeed.

These challenges often happen together and make it even harder for migrant girls to do well in school. Understanding these difficulties is important for teachers, schools, and policymakers, so they can better support these students. Recognizing the struggles migrant girls face is the first step in making education more fair and helping them feel included and valued.

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