

From Policy to Practice: Bridging Gaps in Child Safeguarding Implementation in Somali Education

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Abstract: *This research, titled "From Policy to Practice: Bridging Gaps in Child Safeguarding Implementation in Somali Education", seeks to examine the effectiveness of child safeguarding policies in Somali educational institutions. The research outlines a comprehensive investigation into the translation of existing policies into practical measures that ensure the safety and well-being of children in schools. By bridging the gap between policy formulation and implementation, the study aims to identify challenges, highlight successful strategies, and offer recommendations to enhance child safeguarding practices in the Somali education system.*

Keywords: Child Safeguarding, Protection, Convention on Rights of Children (CRC), Child rights

Research Work

I affirm that the entirety of the research work, from conceptualization to execution, has been conducted independently at my own pace. This research is a product of author's individual effort, and my organization bears no responsibility for the content, methodology, or outcomes. The findings presented in this research are a result of my independent analysis and interpretation of the collected data. I hold sole ownership of the conclusions drawn. My organization, Formal Education Network for Private Schools (FENPS) is not accountable for the accuracy, implications, or applications of the findings presented in this research.

1. Introduction to Child Safeguarding in Somali Education:

The research titled "From Policy to Practice: Bridging the Gaps in Child Safeguarding Implementation in Somali Education" researches critical intersection of policy formulation and practical implementation in ensuring the safety and well-being of children within the Somali education system. Against the backdrop of Somalia's historical and sociopolitical context, this research aims to shed light on the development and evolution of child safeguarding policies within the nation. It recognizes the importance of a protective framework to create a conducive learning environment. The significance of translating child safeguarding policies into actionable practices cannot be overstated. This study underscores the impact that effective implementation can have on creating a safe and nurturing space for Somali children to thrive academically and personally.

Somalia faces unique challenges in its education system, including regional instability, resource constraints, and cultural distinctions. These challenges contribute to the complexity of implementing child safeguarding policies, making it crucial to identify and address gaps.

This research seeks to comprehensively explore the gaps between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities in Somali education. It aims to understand the nuances of child safeguarding implementation, identifying barriers and proposing strategies for improvement.

Acknowledging the influence of cultural factors on education, this research investigates how societal norms and practices impact the implementation of child safeguarding policies.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for crafting culturally sensitive and effective strategies. An essential aspect of this research involves examining the existing legal framework governing child safeguarding in Somali education. By inspecting the legal foundations, the study aims to assess the enforceability and effectiveness of current policies.

The research places Somalia within the broader international context by examining global standards for child safeguarding in education. It explores Somalia's commitment to aligning its policies with these standards and the implications for implementation. To understand the evolution of child safeguarding in Somali education, the research provides historical perspectives on the initiatives, challenges, and changes in policies aimed at protecting children within educational settings. Recognizing the multi-faceted nature of child safeguarding, this research delves into the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including government bodies, educational institutions, parents, and community leaders.

Somalia's regional disparities have a direct bearing on the implementation of child safeguarding policies. The research explores how variations in resources and stability across regions contribute to differing outcomes in safeguarding practices. Emphasizing the interconnectedness of child safeguarding and human rights, this research contextualizes policies within the broader framework of international human rights conventions, underscoring the intrinsic rights of children to safety and protection.

The economic landscape of Somalia plays a role in shaping the challenges of implementing child safeguarding policies. The study delves into how economic factors contribute to or hinder effective implementation. The research recognizes the pivotal role of communities in fostering child safeguarding practices. It explores the degree of community involvement, ownership, and the impact of community-led

initiatives on policy implementation.

Highlighting the importance of innovation, the research investigates emerging practices and technologies that can contribute to more effective child safeguarding in Somali education, considering both local and global innovations. Addressing the intersectionality of gender, the research scrutinizes how child safeguarding policies consider and respond to the unique challenges faced by girls and boys within the Somali education system.

The readiness of educators to implement child safeguarding measures is crucial. This research explores the adequacy of training programs and the preparedness of teachers to create a safe and protective learning environment. While identifying challenges, the research also aims to uncover success stories and best practices. By analyzing instances where child safeguarding policies have been effectively implemented, the study seeks to extract lessons for replication.

2. Objective

The primary objective of this research is to assess the implementation of child safeguarding policies in Somali educational settings. The study aims to:

- Identify the key components of existing child safeguarding policies in Somali schools.
- Evaluate the extent to which these policies are being effectively implemented.
- Understand the challenges and barriers hindering the translation of policies into practical measures.
- Explore successful practices and initiatives that contribute to robust child safeguarding in educational environments.
- Provide recommendations to bridge gaps and improve the overall effectiveness of child safeguarding measures in Somali education.

3. Methodology

The research employs a mixed - methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding of child safeguarding implementation in Somali education.

- Qualitative methods included in - depth interviews with key stakeholders such as educators, administrators, education officers, students and parents to gather insights into the challenges and successes in policy implementation.
- Quantitative methods involved surveys distributed among a diverse sample of schools to assess the prevalence of child safeguarding practices and the level of adherence to established policies.
- Documentary analysis conducted to review existing child safeguarding policies and identify gaps between policy content and practical implementation.

4. Limitations of the Research Study

The research on relied on self - reported data from educators, administrators, or other stakeholders involved in

child safeguarding. This introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, where participants provided responses that align with perceived societal expectations rather than their actual practices, potentially affecting the accuracy of the findings.

The study is specific to a certain context within Somalia, and the findings might not be directly applicable to other regions or countries with different sociopolitical, economic, or educational contexts. Researchers should be cautious about generalizing recommendations beyond the specific environment under investigation.

Child safeguarding policies are dynamic and subject to revisions. The study is based on a specific set of policies that undergo changes during or after the research period, the findings might not reflect the most up - to - date policy landscape, necessitating a careful consideration of the temporal relevance of the data.

Recognizing these limitations, the study provides a foundation for future researchers to build upon, informs policymakers about the constraints in the current study, and encourages a nuanced interpretation of the findings within the specified context and conditions under which the research was conducted.

5. Background

The research is grounded in the recognition of the importance of child safeguarding in creating a conducive and secure learning environment. Despite the existence of policies aimed at protecting children in Somali schools, the effectiveness of these measures in practice remains a critical concern. The research highlights the significance of investigating this gap to ensure that policies translate into tangible actions that safeguard the well - being of Somali children. The study is motivated by a commitment to improving the educational experience for children in Somalia, fostering an environment where they can learn and thrive free from harm.

Somali children:

Somali children confront severe violations of their basic human rights, highlighting a pressing concern that demands attention at both national and international levels. The alarming statistic that less than 40 percent of Somali children attend school underscores a significant barrier to accessing education, limiting their opportunities for personal and societal development. As a consequence of the low access and high dropout rates, Somali children expect to receive an average of 1.72 years of school in their life - times, with considerable disadvantage suffered by girls, who are expected to receive 1.48 years of school compared to 1.95 for boys (Education Sector Analysis - Federal Government of Somalia, 2022).

The unfortunate reality of child labor and child soldiering attaining a prominent position in Somalia reflects a dire situation, emphasizing the urgent need for protective measures and interventions to safeguard the well - being of the nation's youth. Somali young people face a staggering literacy and numeracy rate, marking one of the lowest in the

world. This poses a serious impediment to their ability to engage with the broader global community and limits their potential for future success.

Reports of poor quality education within existing schools underscore the need for comprehensive reforms in the education system to ensure that students receive an education that prepares them for a competitive and evolving world. The absence of a structured early childhood education system in Somalia is a critical gap that hinders the holistic development of children, missing a crucial opportunity to lay a strong foundation for future learning.

The predominant management and ownership of schools by private individuals indicate a potential lack of standardized educational practices and a need for increased oversight to ensure a consistent and quality learning experience for all students. The imposition of tuition fees on learners further exacerbates educational disparities, as families with limited financial means may find it challenging to afford education for their children, perpetuating a cycle of inequality.

The high prevalence of negative actions against basic human rights for Somali children necessitates a comprehensive human rights - based approach to address and rectify these injustices.

Somalia Child Protection Mechanisms: Progress and Challenges

The statement "work – with girls being disproportionately affected (UNICEF, 2015) " suggests that when it comes to child labor or work, girls are impacted more significantly than boys, as indicated by a UNICEF report from 2015. This could mean that girls are more likely to be engaged in child labor or exploitative work situations, facing particular challenges that need attention and intervention. The disparity may be attributed to various factors such as cultural norms, gender - based discrimination, or specific vulnerabilities that girls face in certain regions or communities. Regarding child protection issues in the context of Somalia, the text highlights several concerns. Child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and compulsory state or non - state military recruitment are mentioned as activities that are not prohibited under national law. This implies that there might be legal gaps or loopholes in the existing legislation, allowing for these harmful practices to persist without legal consequences. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against 701 children (7 boys, 694 girls) recently reported from Somalia¹

Despite the constitutional provision for free public education under article 14 of the General Education Law since 2011, the state faces challenges in retaining teachers due to budget constraints. This could lead to a strain on the education system's capacity to deliver quality education and maintain a conducive learning environment. The struggle to retain teachers at affordable salaries may impact the overall effectiveness of the education system in providing a safe and supportive space for children's development.

¹ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2022/06/situation-of-children-in-somalia-alarming-new-report-details-staggering-levels-of-grave-violations/>

However, there are positive developments mentioned in the text. In 2018, a significant step was taken with the passing of a bill criminalizing trafficking for sexual slavery. This legislative move indicates a recognition of the need to address human trafficking issues, particularly those related to sexual exploitation. Additionally, there is mention of the drafting of a law on human trafficking in 2017, suggesting an ongoing effort to strengthen legal frameworks and combat various forms of human trafficking. On 1 October 2015 Somalia became the 196th of the world's nations to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This report aims to present a comprehensive analysis of the situation of women and children in Somalia that will aid the country in meeting its commitments under the CRC over the next decade (UNICEF, 2016).

Cultural norms and Child Rights:

Cultural norms play a significant role in shaping the perception of society regarding child safeguarding. In many cultures, there exist deeply ingrained beliefs and practices that influence how incidents of child abuse or neglect are viewed and addressed. Understanding and navigating these cultural norms is crucial for developing effective strategies to promote child safeguarding. Cultural relativism often influences the perception of child safeguarding. Some societies may be hesitant to intervene in what they perceive as traditional or culturally acceptable child - rearing practices, even if those practices may be harmful.

Cultures that emphasize collectivism may prioritize the family and community over individual rights. In such contexts, reporting child abuse might be seen as betraying the collective, making it challenging to address safeguarding issues openly. Societal norms can contribute to the stigma and shame associated with child abuse. Victims and their families may fear social harassment if they come forward, leading to underreporting and hindering effective intervention.

Respect for authority figures, including parents or elders, can hinder reporting of abuse. Children may fear repercussions, and adults may be hesitant to challenge authority within the family or community. Societal attitudes toward vulnerability and resilience can shape how child safeguarding issues are perceived. In some cultures, children might be expected to endure hardship as a part of their upbringing. Economic considerations can impact child safeguarding.

Families facing financial difficulties may prioritize economic stability over addressing abuse, perceiving intervention as a threat to the family's economic well - being.

Privacy of Child and Social Media:

Social media and online abusers often violate children's rights by invading their privacy. Children have the right to privacy, but cyber hackers can gain unauthorized access to personal information, images, and messages, leading to potential harm and exploitation. Children have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, including bullying. Cyberbullies exploit social media platforms to harass and

intimidate children, violating their right to a safe and secure online environment.

Online abusers may engage in impersonation, creating fake profiles to exploit children. This violates the child's right to protection from all forms of exploitation, as these impersonators may use manipulated information to harm the child's reputation or lure them into unsafe situations.

Violations of children's rights occur when online abusers share explicit or private content without consent. This not only infringes upon the child's right to dignity but can also have lasting emotional and psychological consequences. Social media platforms are often used to target children with manipulative advertising and marketing tactics. This violates children's rights by exposing them to potentially harmful content and exploiting their vulnerability to influence their behaviors and preferences. Online abusers engage in child grooming, establishing an emotional connection with a child for abusive purposes. This violates the child's right to protection from exploitation and abuse, as online predators may seek to manipulate and harm them.

Cyber hackers may engage in identity theft, stealing children's personal information for fraudulent activities. This infringes upon the child's right to identity and protection from economic exploitation. Violations of children's rights occur when they are subjected to online radicalization, influencing their beliefs and behaviors. This can lead to involvement in extremist activities, posing a threat to the child's right to education and protection from harmful influences. Cyber - attacks and online abuses can disrupt access to educational resources and information, violating children's rights to education. This denial of access hinders their intellectual development and impedes their ability to exercise their right to information.

Aspects of the impact of social media on child rights:

Social media exposes children to potential privacy infringements. Many platforms collect and process vast amounts of personal information. Children, who might not fully comprehend the implications, may inadvertently share sensitive details. This data can be exploited for various purposes, from targeted advertising to more nefarious activities. Protecting children's privacy rights becomes a challenge, and measures to ensure age - appropriate content and settings are crucial. Additionally, cyberbullying on social media can violate a child's right to a safe and secure online environment, potentially leading to emotional distress and lasting psychological impacts. The constant exposure to curated online content can influence a child's self - esteem and body image. Social media platforms often present an unrealistic portrayal of life, fostering feelings of inadequacy or a fear of missing out (FOMO). Cyberbullying, which can manifest through social media interactions, further exacerbates mental health concerns. The right to mental well - being is compromised when social media becomes a source of stress, anxiety, or depression for children. Striking a balance between online and offline activities and fostering open communication about social media's impact can contribute to safeguarding children's mental health rights in the digital age. Constant exposure to inappropriate content may hinder cognitive. Victims might experience stigma,

shame, or guilt, negatively affecting their self - esteem and overall mental health; and the fear or anxiety resulting from online abuse can lead to disengagement from educational activities, impacting a child's overall learning experience.

Islam and child rights:

Somalia has a rich Islamic heritage deeply embedded in its culture and society. Islam was introduced to the region as early as the 7th century, and over time, it became a fundamental part of Somali identity. Somalis are Sunni Muslims, primarily adhering to the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence. Islam has played a pivotal role in shaping various aspects of Somali life, including governance, legal systems, and social norms. The Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) serve as guiding principles for personal conduct and community life. Islam places significant emphasis on the rights and well - being of children, recognizing them as vulnerable members of society deserving of care, protection, and proper upbringing. Islam provides a comprehensive framework of rights for children, encompassing various aspects of their lives and emphasizing their protection, education, dignity, and overall well - being. Islamic teachings guide parents, guardians, and society at large in ensuring that children are raised in an environment that respects and fulfills their rights. Islamic teachings place a strong emphasis on the dignity and respect owed to every individual, including children. The Quran acknowledges the inherent value of each human being, instilling a sense of honor and worth in children. This foundation in Islamic principles serves as a protective shield for the basic rights of children, ensuring they are treated with kindness and consideration. Islam recognizes the importance of knowledge and places a significant emphasis on the right to education. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim." This directive ensures that children are provided the opportunity for intellectual and moral development, safeguarding their right to education. Islam places a strong emphasis on family values and the rights of children within the family structure. The Quran emphasizes the duty of parents to provide for, nurture, and educate their children. This holistic approach ensures that children are raised in an environment that respects their rights and fosters their overall well - being.

Islamic law grants inheritance rights to children, ensuring that they receive a fair share of their family's wealth. This economic protection recognizes the child's right to financial stability and inheritance, providing a foundation for their future well - being and security. Islamic principles seek to prevent economic disparities and promote equity among family members, including children.

6. Findings

The age distribution of the respondents provides valuable insights into the composition of the surveyed population. The largest segment, comprising 47 percent of respondents, falls within the 25 - 45 age range. This age group often represents individuals in their prime working years, suggesting a diverse pool of experiences and perspectives. Analyzing their responses may offer insights into trends or preferences within this economically active segment. A

notable 33 percent of respondents fall within the 18 - 24 age group, indicating a substantial representation of young adults. This demographic may provide insights into emerging trends, preferences, and attitudes, particularly considering the influence of technology and contemporary issues on this age cohort. The 20 percent of respondents aged 46 years and above constitute a mature demographic.

Analyzing this group's responses can unveil insights into more seasoned perspectives, potentially reflecting different preferences, priorities, and experiences. Different life stages often correspond with distinct needs and priorities. Analyzing responses based on age groups enables a nuanced understanding of how life stage factors may influence the opinions and preferences expressed by respondents.

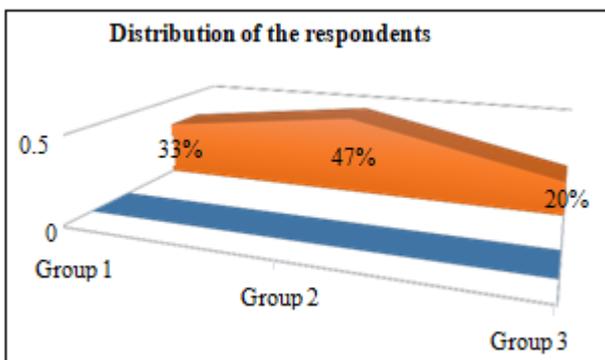


Figure 1: Illustrates distribution of the respondents

The secondary data presented offers insights into a diverse range of perspectives within the educational landscape, drawing from a substantial sample size of 135 individuals who were interviewed in person. This comprehensive dataset includes a balanced representation of both genders, with 72 male and 63 female participants, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity in the research process.

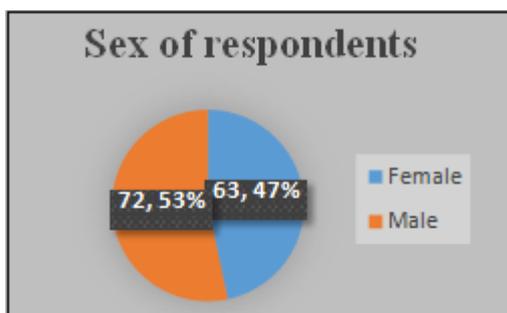


Figure 2: Divides respondents by sex

Among the interviewees, 35 were primary school head teachers, serving as key figures within the educational institutions. Their perspectives provide a valuable glimpse into the challenges and opportunities at the administrative level, offering insights into policy implementation and the day - to - day management of educational facilities.

Teachers, constituting 30 of the interviewees, play a crucial role in the educational ecosystem. Their firsthand experiences with students and the classroom environment provide nuanced perspectives on the effectiveness of teaching methods, the impact of safeguarding policies, and the challenges faced in ensuring a secure learning space.

The inclusion of 30 students in the interview sample is noteworthy as it amplifies the voices of those directly impacted by safeguarding measures. The student perspective adds a crucial dimension, shedding light on their experiences, concerns, and perceptions of safety within the educational setting.

Education officers, with a representation of 5 individuals, bring a broader administrative perspective to the dataset. Their insights into regional and policy - level considerations contribute to a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing child safeguarding measures.

The involvement of 15 employees from Education Cluster Partners enhances the dataset by incorporating the perspectives of individuals engaged in collaborative efforts and partnerships within the education sector. This group likely brings insights into collective initiatives and the dynamics of inter - organizational cooperation.

The participation of 5 university professors contributes an academic lens to the secondary data. Their expertise can illuminate theoretical frameworks, best practices, and potential areas for academic research within the context of child safeguarding in Somali education.

Finally, the inclusion of 15 parents in the dataset is crucial for understanding community perspectives. Parents, as key stakeholders, offer insights into the home - school dynamic, community engagement, and the overall impact of educational policies on the well - being of children.

Research Key Findings-Opportunities	Research Key Findings-Gaps
Government Approval of the Child Rights Bill"	90% of 37 Head Teachers Unaware of Children's Rights Bill approved by the government
Education Cluster Partners Child Safeguarding Working Groups	Absence of Internal Child Safeguarding Policies in schools
Ministry of Education's Child Safeguarding Policy Preparation	Normalization of Child Physical Punishment among Somali community
Government and Education Cluster Support Code of Conduct	Lack of Inclusive Mechanism for Children with Disabilities (CWD)
Improved Community Awareness	No Safeguarding Ethics for Social Media

Figure 3: Key Findings

In summary, this diverse secondary data, collected through in - person interviews with a variety of stakeholders,

provides a rich tapestry of perspectives. The inclusion of primary school head teachers, teachers, students, education officers, Education Cluster Partners employees, University professors, and parents ensures a comprehensive exploration of child safeguarding in Somali education from various angles, enriching the research with a multiplicity of insights.

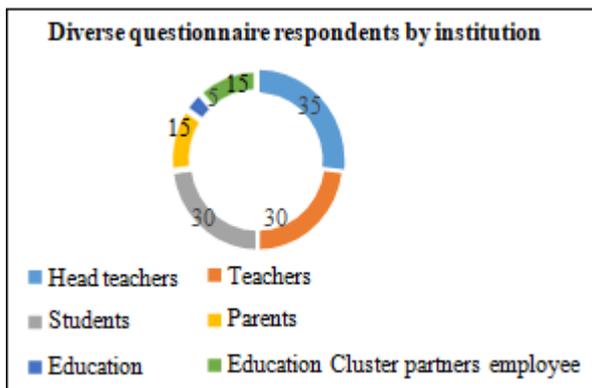


Figure 4: Class of respondents in the community

Overview of Identified Gaps in Child Safeguarding in Somali Education

Child safeguarding is a critical aspect of education, ensuring that children not only receive academic instruction but also experience a safe and nurturing environment conducive to their overall well - being. The research findings have revealed several significant gaps in the implementation of child safeguarding measures within the Somali education context, each carrying profound implications for the educational experience and development of Somali children.

One striking gap is the lack of awareness among a substantial percentage of head teachers regarding the Children's Rights Bill passed by the Somali cabinet. Head teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the educational environment, and their awareness of key legislation is foundational. The absence of this awareness implies a potential disconnect between policy - level initiatives and the individuals responsible for translating them into actionable practices at the school level.

Another critical gap is the absence of internal child safeguarding policies within schools. Safeguarding policies serve as a roadmap for educators and administrators, outlining procedures and guidelines to ensure the protection of children. The lack of such internal policies leaves a void in the systematic approach to child safeguarding, potentially exposing children to risks that could be mitigated through structured and well - defined protocols.

The normalization of child physical punishment within some families represents a deeply ingrained cultural challenge. Physical punishment not only violates the rights of children but also perpetuates a cycle of violence that can have long - lasting effects on their physical and psychological well - being. This gap points to the need for comprehensive efforts to shift cultural norms and promote positive, non - violent disciplinary practices.

The absence of inclusive mechanisms for children with disabilities (CWD) is a gap that directly impacts the accessibility and quality of education for a vulnerable group.

Inclusive education is a fundamental right, and the lack of adequate mechanisms excludes CWD from fully participating in educational opportunities. Addressing this gap requires a concerted effort to create an inclusive educational environment that caters to the diverse needs of all children.

The evolving landscape of social media presents a unique challenge in safeguarding children. The absence of established ethics for social media within the educational context raises concerns about potential risks and exploitation. In an era where online interactions play a significant role in students' lives, the lack of clear ethical guidelines poses a gap that needs urgent attention to protect children from digital threats.

In the Somali education context, these identified gaps collectively contribute to an environment where children may face risks to their safety, well - being, and educational development.

Addressing these gaps is not only a moral imperative but also crucial for creating a holistic and supportive educational ecosystem that nurtures the potential of every Somali child. It necessitates a comprehensive strategy that involves policy reform, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement to bridge these significant gaps and pave the way for a safer and more inclusive educational experience.

Opportunities for Improvement in Child Safeguarding in Somali Education

Ensuring the safety and well - being of children is a shared responsibility that demands collaboration and concerted efforts. In the context of Somali education, identifying and capitalizing on opportunities for improvement in child safeguarding is paramount. This introduction outlines five significant opportunities that have emerged from the research findings, offering a glimpse into the positive strides that can be made in enhancing child protection within the educational landscape.

One notable opportunity lies in the recent government approval of the Child Rights Bill. This legislative milestone reflects a commitment to advancing the rights and protection of children within the educational realm. The bill serves as a foundational document, potentially shaping policies and practices that prioritize the safety and well - being of Somali children in schools. Collaborative efforts within Education Cluster partnerships represent a promising avenue for child safeguarding improvement. These partnerships bring together diverse stakeholders, including government bodies, non - governmental organizations, and educational institutions, fostering a united front in addressing child protection challenges. The collective expertise and resources of these clusters can be harnessed to implement effective strategies that resonate with the unique needs of Somali education.

The ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Education Culture and Higher Education (MOECHE) in preparing a dedicated Safeguarding Policy present a significant opportunity for shaping a protective framework. A policy tailored to the Somali context can serve as a comprehensive guide,

establishing clear expectations, protocols, and mechanisms to ensure child safeguarding becomes an integral part of the educational system.

Empowering teachers through the support of a Code of Conduct is a key opportunity identified in the research. This initiative, endorsed by both the government (Ministry of Education Culture and Higher Education) and Education Cluster partners, signifies a commitment to promoting ethical practices and ensuring that educators play a pivotal role in creating a safe and secure environment for students.

The heightened awareness within the community regarding child safeguarding is a positive trend that presents an opportunity for sustainable change. Informed and engaged communities play a crucial role in reinforcing safeguarding practices and holding institutions accountable. This awareness serves as a foundation for building a culture of protection and care around Somali children within and beyond the educational setting.

In conclusion, these opportunities offer a promising outlook for the enhancement of child safeguarding in Somali education. By leveraging these initiatives, stakeholders can collaboratively work towards creating an environment where children can flourish academically, emotionally, and socially, free from the risks and threats that may impede their development.

Addressing the gap between policy documentation and implementation

The stark reality of a policy being documented on paper but not effectively implemented is a prevalent issue across various sectors, and its implications are particularly impactful when it comes to matters as critical as child safeguarding. The first layer of this challenge lies in the disconnection between policy formulation and practical execution. Policies are crafted with the intention of guiding actions and fostering a specific environment, yet when these ideals remain confined to paper, the intended impact on the ground is compromised.

One significant consequence of policies merely existing on paper is the lack of tangible protection for children. Despite the well - intentioned language and guidelines outlined in the policy document, the absence of active implementation translates to a gap in safeguarding mechanisms. This gap can leave children vulnerable to various risks and harms that the policy aims to prevent, as the protective measures are not translated into actionable practices.

Moreover, the existence of policies only on paper undermines the trust and confidence that stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and the broader community, may have in the system. If policies are not actively exercised, it erodes faith in the commitment of educational institutions and authorities to prioritize the safety and well - being of children. This erosion of trust can have lasting consequences, hindering effective collaboration and community engagement in ensuring child safeguarding.

The discrepancy between policy documentation and implementation also raises questions about accountability. When policies are not exercised, it becomes challenging to

hold responsible parties accountable for any lapses or shortcomings in child safeguarding. The lack of a clear and enforced framework makes it difficult to address issues promptly and effectively, perpetuating a cycle where policies remain unrealized.

Addressing the gap between policy documentation and implementation requires a multi - faceted approach. It involves not only revisiting and strengthening policy frameworks but also fostering a culture of accountability, training stakeholders on policy implementation, and regularly monitoring and evaluating the practical application of these policies. Only through a concerted effort to bridge this divide can child safeguarding policies truly fulfill their intended purpose and create a safer educational environment for children.

7. Conclusion

The provided information underscores the complex challenges faced by Somali children, particularly girls, in areas such as child labor, human trafficking, and access to quality education. While there are legal gaps and financial constraints affecting the effectiveness of protective measures, there are also positive initiatives, such as recent legislative actions aimed at addressing human trafficking issues. The situation calls for continued efforts to strengthen child protection mechanisms and promote the well - being of children in Somalia. The state of education in Somalia is predominantly informal and marked by pronounced gender inequality. Girls and children in rural areas face significant barriers to accessing public schooling, as the majority of schools are concentrated in urban centers. Several factors contribute to this disparity, including safety concerns, entrenched social norms, the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), a shortage of toilets in schools, and a lack of female teachers. Safety concerns, likely stemming from regional instability, pose a hindrance to girls' education. Social norms, influenced by traditional beliefs, contribute to the marginalization of girls in the educational system. The prevalence of female genital mutilation further compounds the challenges faced by young girls, impacting their physical and emotional well - being. The scarcity of toilets in schools, a critical infrastructure component for maintaining hygiene, particularly affects girls and can contribute to their reluctance to attend school.

Additionally, the shortage of female teachers diminishes the availability of role models and mentors for girls, potentially affecting their motivation to pursue education. A concerning trend highlighted in the information is that many girls leave school upon reaching puberty or upon marriage, often occurring before the age of 15. This underscores the need for targeted interventions to address cultural practices and social norms that contribute to early school dropout rates among girls. Exploring the root causes behind the low school attendance rate is essential for developing targeted interventions that can improve access to education for Somali children and break down barriers preventing their participation. Initiatives to eradicate child labor and child soldiering should involve collaboration between government bodies, international organizations, and local communities to create a protective environment that prioritizes the well -

being and rights of children. Addressing the low literacy and numeracy rates requires strategic investments in educational infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development to enhance the overall quality of education provided in the country. Efforts to improve the quality of education should include systematic evaluations of existing schools, identification of areas for improvement, and the implementation of evidence - based strategies to enhance the overall learning experience for students. The establishment of a comprehensive early childhood education system is crucial for nurturing the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children, setting the stage for lifelong learning and success. Public - private partnerships could be explored to enhance the management and oversight of schools, ensuring that educational institutions adhere to established standards and provide equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Policymakers should consider implementing measures to alleviate the financial burden on families, such as scholarship programs or financial aid, to make education more accessible and reduce the impact of tuition fees on learners. Advocacy for human rights and education should be amplified both within Somalia and on the international stage, drawing attention to the critical need for systemic changes that prioritize the rights and well - being of Somali children. Collaborative efforts involving governmental bodies, non - governmental organizations, and international partners are essential for creating a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the multifaceted challenges faced by Somali children in accessing quality education. Raising awareness about the importance of education and its correlation with human rights can contribute to a societal shift in values, fostering a culture that prioritizes and invests in the education of the younger generation. The development of targeted programs to address specific barriers to education, such as gender - based discrimination or geographical disparities, can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable education system in Somalia. Investing in teacher training programs and professional development can enhance the capacity of educators to deliver quality education, fostering a positive learning environment for Somali students.

Collaboration with international organizations and neighboring countries can provide valuable insights and support for implementing best practices in education, drawing upon successful models from similar contexts. Transparent and accountable governance in the education sector is essential for effective policy implementation and resource allocation, ensuring that efforts to improve education align with the needs and aspirations of the Somali population.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of educational initiatives can provide valuable data to assess their impact, identify areas for improvement, and guide future interventions to continuously enhance the education system. A collective commitment to prioritizing the rights and education of Somali children is crucial for building a more resilient and prosperous future for the nation, emphasizing the transformative power of education in shaping positive outcomes for individuals and society as a whole.

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