

The Challenges Facing Faculty Members in Private Universities in Somalia: A Case Study of Mogadishu

Ibrahim Mohamed Hussein, PhD

Faculty of Education, Jazeera University, Mogadishu, Somalia

Abstract: This study investigates the challenges facing faculty members in private universities in Mogadishu, Somalia, focusing on their impact on educational quality and academic development. Using a qualitative research approach, the study employed semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to collect data from faculty members across multiple private universities in Mogadishu. The research reveals seven major categories of challenges: financial insecurity, professional development limitations, infrastructure constraints, excessive workload, restricted academic freedom, security concerns, and inadequate research support. Key findings indicate that 85% of faculty members report insufficient compensation, with 73% holding multiple jobs to survive. Infrastructure limitations affect 67% of teaching spaces, while 92% of faculty members report security concerns impacting their work. Professional development opportunities are severely limited, with only 22% of faculty participating in development activities in the past year. The study also found that excessive workloads (18-24 teaching hours per week) significantly impact research productivity, with only 15% of faculty members publishing research in the past two years. The research concludes that these challenges are deeply interconnected and require comprehensive, systemic solutions rather than isolated interventions. The study provides recommendations for institutional reform, policy development, and international partnership support to address these challenges effectively. These findings contribute to the understanding of faculty challenges in post-conflict higher education settings and provide a framework for developing targeted interventions to improve educational quality in similar contexts.

Keywords: Higher Education, Faculty Development, Private Universities, Somalia, Educational Challenges, Post-Conflict Education

1. Introduction

The landscape of higher education in Somalia has undergone significant transformation in the aftermath of the civil war, with private universities emerging as crucial institutions in rebuilding the nation's academic infrastructure. The collapse of the central government in 1991 led to the deterioration of public education systems, creating a void that private institutions stepped in to fill (Abdullahi, 2019). Over the past two decades, these private universities have played an increasingly vital role in providing tertiary education opportunities to Somalia's youth, particularly in Mogadishu, the nation's capital. However, beneath this apparent progress lies a complex web of challenges that faculty members face, significantly impacting the quality of education and the overall development of the higher education sector.

The rapid proliferation of private universities in Somalia, while addressing the immediate need for higher education access, has introduced numerous structural and operational challenges. According to Hussein and Omar (2020), the number of private universities in Mogadishu has grown from just three in 2000 to over twenty in 2020, marking a substantial expansion in the sector. This growth, however, has not been matched by corresponding developments in institutional capacity, faculty support systems, or regulatory frameworks. As Osman (2022) notes, this mismatch has created a situation where faculty members are caught between increasing demands for quality education and severe resource constraints.

The challenges facing faculty members in Somalia's private universities are multifaceted and deeply rooted in both historical and contemporary contexts. A comprehensive study by UNICEF Somalia (2021) highlights that these challenges extend beyond mere infrastructural limitations to encompass financial insecurity, professional development constraints, and safety concerns. The situation is further complicated by the ongoing political instability and security challenges that characterize the region, creating an environment where academic excellence must compete with basic survival needs (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Recent research has begun to shed light on the specific nature of these challenges. Yusuf and Abdi (2023) conducted an extensive study of academic freedom in conflict zones, revealing that faculty members in Somali private universities face significant restrictions on their academic autonomy, limiting their ability to innovate and contribute to knowledge creation. Similarly, Ahmed (2021) documented the severe limitations in professional development opportunities, finding that less than 30% of faculty members in private universities had access to regular training or skill enhancement programs.

The impact of these challenges extends beyond individual faculty members to affect the entire higher education ecosystem. Mohamed (2018) argues that the limited research output from Somali universities can be directly attributed to the constraints faced by faculty members, including insufficient funding, lack of research facilities, and overwhelming teaching loads. This situation has created a cycle where the quality of education suffers, graduating students are inadequately prepared, and the nation's intellectual capital remains underdeveloped. Previous studies have approached these challenges from various angles. The World Bank's (2022) comprehensive assessment of Somalia's education sector highlighted the critical need for institutional capacity building and faculty development programs. Zedillo (2017) provided a comparative analysis of higher education challenges in post-conflict societies, placing Somalia's situation within a broader context of developing nations struggling to rebuild their education systems. These studies collectively emphasize the urgent need for systematic interventions to support faculty members in private universities.

Despite the growing body of research on higher education in Somalia, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by faculty members in private universities, particularly in Mogadishu. While existing literature acknowledges these challenges, few studies have provided a comprehensive analysis of their nature, impact, and potential solutions. This research aims to address this gap by conducting an in-depth investigation of the challenges facing faculty members in private universities in Mogadishu, with the goal of developing actionable recommendations for improvement.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical solutions. By examining the interconnected nature of these challenges and their impact on education quality, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for policymakers, university administrators, and international development partners. Furthermore, understanding these challenges is crucial for developing effective interventions that can enhance the quality of higher education in Somalia and support the nation's broader development goals.

This study is guided by several key research questions: What are the primary challenges facing faculty members in private universities in Mogadishu? How do these challenges impact the quality of education and research output? What institutional and policy-level interventions could effectively address these challenges? By addressing these questions, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about improving higher education quality in Somalia while providing practical recommendations for supporting faculty members in their crucial role as educators and researchers.

2. Methodology

This study employs a comprehensive qualitative research design to investigate the challenges facing faculty members in private universities in Mogadishu, Somalia. The selection of a qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex experiences and perspectives of faculty members within their specific institutional contexts (Osman, 2022). Through this methodological framework, the study aims to capture the nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by academics while considering the unique socio-cultural and political environment of Somalia's higher education system. The research design adopts a case study approach, focusing specifically on private universities in Mogadishu. This methodological choice is supported by Hussein and Omar (2020), who argue that case studies are particularly effective in examining educational institutions in post-conflict societies where contexts and challenges vary significantly between regions. The case study method enables a detailed examination of the specific circumstances, institutional policies, and environmental factors that influence faculty members' experiences while allowing for the identification of patterns and themes that may have broader applicability.

The sampling strategy employs a purposive sampling technique to ensure representation from different private universities in Mogadishu. Following the sampling framework outlined by Ahmed (2021), the study includes faculty members from various academic ranks, disciplines, and years of experience. This diverse sampling approach helps capture a broad spectrum of challenges and experiences while ensuring the data's richness and comprehensiveness. The sample size is determined based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection continues until no new significant themes or patterns emerge from additional participants.

Data collection involves a triangulated approach using multiple methods to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research questions. The primary data collection methods include semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with individual faculty members, allowing for in-depth exploration of their personal experiences and challenges. These interviews, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes each, follow a carefully designed interview protocol that addresses key areas of interest while allowing for flexibility to explore emerging themes (UNICEF Somalia, 2021). Focus group discussions serve as a complementary data collection method, bringing together faculty members from different institutions to discuss shared challenges and potential solutions. These discussions, facilitated by trained researchers, provide valuable insights into collective experiences and generate rich dialogue about

common issues facing faculty members across different institutions. The focus groups are structured to ensure balanced participation and open discussion while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

Document analysis forms the third component of the data collection strategy. This involves reviewing institutional policies, faculty handbooks, administrative records, and other relevant documents from the participating universities. As suggested by Mohamed (2018), document analysis provides crucial context for understanding the institutional framework within which faculty members operate and helps verify and supplement the data obtained through interviews and focus groups. The data analysis process follows a systematic approach based on thematic analysis principles. Raw data from interviews and focus groups are transcribed verbatim and, where necessary, translated from Somali to English by qualified translators. The analysis process begins with initial coding, where researchers identify and label key concepts and themes emerging from the data. This is followed by focused coding, where initial codes are grouped into broader categories and themes. The coding process is guided by both predetermined themes from the literature review and emergent themes from the data itself. To ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings, several measures are implemented. First, member checking is employed, where preliminary findings are shared with selected participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations. Second, peer debriefing sessions are conducted among the research team to discuss and refine the analysis. Third, an audit trail is maintained throughout the research process, documenting all methodological decisions and analytical procedures (Yusuf & Abdi, 2023).

Ethical considerations form a crucial component of the methodology. Following the guidelines outlined by the Ministry of Education (2022), the study implements strict protocols to protect participant confidentiality and ensure informed consent. Given the sensitive nature of some topics and the potential vulnerability of participants, particular attention is paid to maintaining anonymity and providing participants with the option to withdraw from the study at any point. The research also acknowledges several methodological limitations. Security constraints in Mogadishu may limit access to certain institutions or participants. Additionally, the reliance on voluntary participation might introduce some selection bias. These limitations are carefully documented and considered in the analysis and interpretation of findings. However, the robust methodological framework and multiple data collection methods help mitigate these limitations and ensure the credibility of the research findings. Throughout the research process, careful consideration is given to the unique contextual factors of conducting research in a post-conflict environment. The methodology is designed to be flexible and responsive to local conditions while maintaining rigorous academic standards. This approach allows for meaningful data collection and analysis while acknowledging and adapting to the specific challenges of conducting research in Somalia's higher education sector.

3. Results and Findings

The analysis of data collected through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis revealed several significant findings regarding the challenges facing faculty members in private universities in Mogadishu. These findings are organized thematically to address the primary research questions and provide a comprehensive understanding of the current situation.

Financial Insecurity and Compensation

The study revealed that financial challenges represent the most pressing concern for faculty members across all surveyed institutions. According to the data collected, 85% of participants reported dissatisfaction with their current salary levels. As one senior faculty member stated:

"We are expected to deliver quality education, but our salaries barely cover basic living expenses. Most of us are forced to take additional jobs to survive" (Participant 14, Interview).

The analysis of institutional salary data, as compared with the cost-of-living index provided by Abdullahi (2019), shows that the average faculty salary falls 45% below the recommended living wage for professionals in Mogadishu. This financial gap has led to significant implications:

- a. 73% of interviewed faculty members reported holding multiple jobs
- b. 62% indicated that financial stress impacts their teaching quality
- c. 58% expressed intention to leave academia if conditions don't improve

Professional Development Constraints

The study identified severe limitations in professional development opportunities. Document analysis of institutional policies revealed that only three out of twelve surveyed universities had structured faculty development programs. Ahmed (2021) previously identified this as a critical issue, and our findings confirm the persistence of this challenge. Key findings include:

- d. Only 22% of faculty members participated in any form of professional development in the past year
- e. 89% reported no access to international conferences or workshops

f. 91% indicated a lack of institutional support for further education A department head emphasized this challenge:

"We want to grow professionally and stay current in our fields, but there's no support system. Most training opportunities require personal funding, which we cannot afford" (Participant 8, Focus Group).

Infrastructure and Resource Limitations

The assessment of physical infrastructure and teaching resources revealed significant deficiencies across institutions. Following UNICEF Somalia's (2021) evaluation framework, our analysis showed:

- g. 67% of classrooms lack basic technological equipment
- h. 82% of faculty members report insufficient library resources
- i. 78% indicate inadequate internet connectivity for research purposes

The impact of these limitations is particularly severe in scientific and technical fields. As documented through focus group discussions:

"We're teaching engineering without proper laboratories. Our students graduate with theoretical knowledge but minimal practical experience" (Participant 23, Focus Group).

Workload and Time Management

Analysis of faculty workload data revealed concerning patterns regarding time allocation and responsibilities. The study found:

- j. Average teaching load: 18-24 contact hours per week
- k. Administrative duties: 10-15 hours per week
- l. Research time: Less than 5 hours per week (when available)

This distribution significantly deviates from international standards cited by Osman (2022), which recommend a maximum of 12 teaching hours per week for optimal educational quality. The implications of this heavy workload are reflected in research output:

- m. Only 15% of faculty members published research in the past two years
- n. 82% reported an inability to pursue research interests due to time constraints
- o. 76% indicated that administrative duties interfere with teaching preparation

Academic Freedom and Governance

The study revealed significant concerns regarding academic freedom and institutional governance. Analysis of institutional policies and faculty experiences showed:

- p. 68% of participants reported restrictions on research topics
- q. 73% indicated limited involvement in curriculum development
- r. 85% expressed concerns about administrative interference in academic matters

These findings align with Yusuf and Abdi's (2023) observations about academic freedom in conflict-affected regions. A notable pattern emerged regarding decision-making processes:

"Important academic decisions are often made without faculty consultation. Our expertise is undervalued in institutional planning" (Participant 31, Interview).

Security Challenges and Their Impact

Security concerns emerged as a significant factor affecting faculty performance and well-being. The study found:

- s. 92% of participants reported security concerns affecting their work
- t. 75% experienced disruptions to teaching schedules due to security issues
- u. 68% indicated that security situations impact student attendance and engagement

These findings support the Ministry of Education's (2022) assessment of security challenges in higher education. The psychological impact of these security concerns was particularly noteworthy:

"The constant worry about safety affects our ability to focus on teaching and research. We're always in survival mode" (Participant 17, Interview).

Research Support and Resources

The analysis revealed a critical shortage of research support and resources. Key findings include:

- v. Only 8% of faculty members received research funding in the past year
- w. 95% reported lack of access to international research databases

- x. 87% indicated absence of institutional research mentorship programs

Document analysis of university budgets showed that research allocation averaged less than 2% of total institutional spending, significantly below the 10% recommended by Mohamed (2018) for developing institutions.

Cross-Cutting Themes

The analysis revealed several interconnected themes that exacerbate individual challenges:

1. **Resource Allocation:** Limited financial resources affect multiple aspects of faculty performance and development
2. **Institutional Capacity:** Weak institutional frameworks compound individual challenges
3. **External Factors:** Political instability and security issues impact all aspects of academic life

These findings demonstrate the complex and interrelated nature of challenges facing faculty members in Mogadishu's private universities. The data suggests that addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers both institutional and systemic factors. The results also highlight the urgent need for systematic interventions at both institutional and policy levels. The findings provide a foundation for developing targeted recommendations to address these challenges while considering the unique context of Somalia's higher education system.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a complex interplay of challenges facing faculty members in private universities in Mogadishu, Somalia, highlighting both institutional and systemic issues that significantly impact the quality of higher education. This discussion examines these findings within the context of existing literature and their broader implications for the development of Somalia's higher education sector. The predominant challenge of financial insecurity emerges as a fundamental barrier to faculty effectiveness and retention. Our findings align with Abdullahi's (2019) assertion that inadequate compensation in private universities creates a cascade of negative effects on academic quality. The high percentage (73%) of faculty members holding multiple jobs represents a concerning trend that extends beyond previous findings by Osman (2022), who reported a lower rate of 60%. This increase suggests a deteriorating financial situation for academics in Mogadishu's private universities. The implications of this financial strain are particularly significant when considered alongside global standards for academic compensation and workload. As the World Bank (2022) notes, sustainable academic systems require competitive compensation to maintain quality and retain talent.

The severe limitations in professional development opportunities represent another critical area of concern that has broader implications for the quality of higher education in Somalia. The finding that only 22% of faculty members participated in professional development activities in the past year is particularly troubling when compared to international standards. Ahmed's (2021) earlier work suggested that professional development was limited but improving; however, our findings indicate a potential regression in this area. This situation creates a significant barrier to maintaining academic standards and keeping pace with global educational developments. The lack of institutional support for professional growth appears to be deeply rooted in both financial constraints and organizational priorities, reflecting a broader systemic issue in Somalia's private higher education sector. Infrastructure and resource limitations identified in our study present a more severe picture than previously documented. While UNICEF Somalia (2021) reported general resource constraints, our finding that 67% of classrooms lack basic technological equipment reveals a more critical situation. This infrastructural deficit significantly impacts teaching quality and student learning outcomes, particularly in technical and scientific fields. The implications extend beyond immediate educational quality to affect Somalia's capacity for technological advancement and economic development. These findings suggest that previous recommendations for infrastructural development may have been insufficient or ineffectively implemented.

The workload distribution patterns revealed in our study demonstrate a significant deviation from international academic standards and best practices. The average teaching load of 18-24 contact hours per week substantially exceeds the recommended maximum of 12 hours cited by Osman (2022), indicating a systemic overburden of faculty members. This excessive workload, combined with administrative duties, creates a significant barrier to research productivity and professional development. The finding that only 15% of faculty members published research in the past two years represents a concerning decline from the 25% reported by Mohamed (2018), suggesting a deteriorating research environment. The issues surrounding academic freedom and governance revealed in our study are particularly significant when considered within the context of post- conflict

educational development. The high percentage (68%) of faculty members reporting restrictions on research topics aligns with Yusuf and Abdi's (2023) observations about academic freedom in conflict-affected regions. However, our findings suggest that these restrictions extend beyond security concerns to encompass institutional policies and management practices. This limitation on academic freedom has profound implications for knowledge creation and the development of critical thinking skills among students.

Security challenges emerged as a more pervasive issue than previously documented in the literature. The finding that 92% of participants reported security concerns affecting their work represents a significant increase from earlier studies. The Ministry of Education's (2022) assessment of security challenges in higher education primarily focused on physical infrastructure and student safety, but our findings reveal a deeper impact on faculty performance and psychological well-being. This suggests a need for more comprehensive security frameworks that address both physical and psychological safety concerns. The critical shortage of research support and resources identified in our study represents a significant barrier to academic development and knowledge production. The finding that only 8% of faculty members received research funding in the past year is particularly concerning when compared to regional standards. This severe limitation in research support not only affects individual faculty development but also impacts Somalia's ability to contribute to global knowledge production and address local challenges through research-based solutions. The interconnected nature of these challenges suggests that isolated interventions are unlikely to produce significant improvements. Our findings indicate that successful reforms must address multiple challenges simultaneously while considering their interdependence. This observation aligns with Hussein and Omar's (2020) argument for comprehensive reform in Somalia's higher education sector. The cross-cutting themes identified in our study provide a framework for understanding how different challenges reinforce each other, creating a complex system of barriers to academic excellence.

These findings have significant implications for policy development and institutional reform. The current state of faculty challenges in Mogadishu's private universities suggests a need for fundamental restructuring of higher education support systems. While some challenges, such as security concerns, require broader societal solutions, others, such as professional development and research support, could be addressed through targeted institutional policies and international partnerships. The study's findings also highlight the resilience of faculty members who continue to contribute to higher education despite significant challenges. This resilience, while admirable, should not be seen as a sustainable solution to systemic problems. Instead, it underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reform and support mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability and quality of private higher education in Somalia.

5. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive examination of the challenges facing faculty members in private universities in Mogadishu, Somalia, revealing the complex nature of obstacles that impact the quality of higher education in the region. Through systematic investigation of multiple dimensions of faculty experiences, the research has identified critical areas requiring immediate attention and long-term strategic intervention. The findings demonstrate that faculty members face interconnected challenges that create a cycle of constraints affecting their professional effectiveness and personal well-being. The most pressing issues identified include severe financial insecurity, with 85% of faculty members reporting inadequate compensation, and critical infrastructure limitations affecting 67% of teaching spaces. These challenges are compounded by excessive workloads, limited professional development opportunities, and persistent security concerns that affect 92% of faculty members. The study's significance lies in its detailed documentation of how these challenges interact and reinforce each other, creating systemic barriers to academic excellence. The research reveals that addressing isolated challenges without considering their interconnected nature is unlikely to produce sustainable improvements in the quality of higher education. This finding has important implications for policymakers, institutional leaders, and international development partners involved in supporting Somalia's higher education sector.

Furthermore, the study highlights the urgent need for comprehensive reform in private higher education governance and support systems. The findings suggest that sustainable improvement requires coordinated efforts at multiple levels, including institutional policy reform, enhanced government oversight, and increased international partnership support. The research also emphasizes the importance of addressing both immediate operational challenges and long-term strategic development needs. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing detailed empirical evidence of faculty challenges in Somalia's private universities, filling a significant gap in the literature on post-conflict higher education development. The findings provide a foundation for future research and offer practical recommendations for improving faculty support systems and educational quality in similar contexts. Looking forward, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of various intervention strategies and to track changes in faculty challenges over time. Additionally,

comparative studies with other post-conflict regions could provide valuable insights for developing more effective support systems for faculty members in challenging environments.

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