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The Challenges Facing People with Physical Disabilities in Accessing Public Services in Qardho, Puntland, Somalia

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People with Physical
Disability.

This study examines the challenges faced by people with physical disabilities in accessing public service in Qardho, Puntland Somalia, and explores strategies for improving accessibility. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 115 respondents, including 60 wheelchair users, 23 school principals, 21 mosque imams, 5 restaurant owners, 3 supermarket managers, and 3 hotel managers, selected purposively. The collected data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The study found that 90% of mosques and 100% of schools and supermarkets interviewed do not have physically disabled clients. Additionally, none of the targeted mosques, schools, supermarkets, hotels, and restaurants have special toilets or signposts. Furthermore, 90.48% of mosques, 86.96% of schools, 66.67% of supermarkets, 66.66% of hotels, and 60% of restaurants assessed lack provisions such as ramps, elevators, and stairlifts for the physically challenged. To address these challenges, the study recommends policy enforcement on accessibility standards, investment in disability-friendly infrastructure, awareness campaigns to promote inclusion and training for service providers on disability accommodations.

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INTRODUCTION

Disability is part of the human experience, affecting More than 1 billion people, or 15% of the world's population live with a handicap. When family members of people with impairments are included, the number of people affected by disability increases. The prevalence of disabilities is expected to rise due to global population ageing and increasing chronic health disorders (n.d.).

Disability refers to the inability to control or use one's body or talents fully Ahmed (2014). Disability is also defined as a permanent or long-term entire or partial impairment of one or more of the following abilities: physical, sensory, mental, communication, educational, and psychological. They imply that the impaired person is unable to achieve regular living standards, forcing them to rely on others, or that they require a specialized item that requires specific training or rehabilitation to operate well Disability (n.d.). A physical disability is a condition that severely affects one or more basic bodily actions (such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, carrying, or lifting). These constraints make it difficult for the individual to do daily duties. Physical impairments are very individualized (2021).

The challenges associated with disability vary widely across different regions and cultures. For instance, a study conducted in Malaysia found that individuals with disabilities continue to experience discrimination in multiple areas within the workplace. The research identified several challenges, including an inaccessible physical environment, a lack of appropriate assistive technology, and negative attitudes towards people with disabilities. This ongoing discrimination highlights the need for a more inclusive approach that addresses the specific barriers faced by disabled individuals in various contexts (Narayanan, 2018).

In Africa, about 300 million of the global south's 800 million people with disabilities live in Africa, with at least 740,000 in Ghana. Surprisingly, the rights of persons with disabilities were mostly overlooked until the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006 (2018). The CRPD has been ratified by 167 nations, and at least 45 of them have enacted national disability legislation (UN, 2018). For its part, the Ghanaian government established the Disability Act in 2006 and ratified the CRPD in 2012, reaffirming its commitment to the rights of Ghanaians with disabilities. These policies appear to have encouraged an increase in studies into stigma and disability rights in Ghana, particularly among Ghanaian scholars (2018).

In Tanzania, societal inequities significantly impacts women and girls, particularly those with disabilities. Girls with disabilities are less likely to attend school and often remain at home to perform domestic tasks. Female family members, especially mothers, typically serve as the primary caregivers for children with disabilities, which limits their ability to work or engage socially. The illiteracy rates among adults with disabilities are twice as high as those of their non-disabled counterparts. Consequently, without access to education, full participation in community life becomes nearly unattainable (Uromi & Mazagwa, 2014).

People with disabilities frequently encounter prejudice. In many situations, it crosses with other personal qualities, such as age, gender, and origin, resulting in further stigma and marginalization. Physical and verbal limitations frequently impede people with disabilities from receiving humanitarian help directly. These hurdles may also limit their access to information about their rights and entitlements, as well as their ability to provide information about their needs and concerns,

including through current feedback channels (n.d.). People with disabilities may experience bias and discrimination because of their perceived dependency and weakness. As a result, they are frequently excluded from displaced people's representative organizations, processes, and community support networks. Such misunderstandings also limit their involvement in public life, including educational programs and livelihood activities, reducing their ability to deal with the issue (n.d.)

Although people with disabilities are sometimes referred to as the world's greatest minority, in Africa, as in all other parts of the globe, they experience marginalization, discrimination, and barriers to the enjoyment of their fundamental rights and participation in development. People with disabilities are disproportionately prone to live in poverty, and they frequently lack equitable access to school, health care, economic prospects, housing, social security systems, justice, cultural expression, and political involvement throughout Africa. Persons with disabilities frequently face barriers to participation in society due to inaccessible physical settings, transportation, and information and communication technologies (n.d.).

According to the World Health Organization, 10% of the world's population is handicapped, but it's unclear how many Somalis are impacted because solid data is difficult to collect owing to decades of violence. A 2011 report titled 'Disability Rights in Somalia' released by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency confirms that the number of disabled people in Somalia is increasing by 20 people per day and suggests that 12-15% of the population is disabled, even though there are no official statistics in the country (n.d.) Somalia's national assistance for people with disabilities is minimal. Somalia's Constitution says that people with disabilities have equal rights and are protected from discrimination. The Somalia National Disability Council, which is part of the Federal Government of Somalia, represents Somalis with

disabilities at the national level Manku (2018). However, the Disability Council is dormant, and it is believed that it has not received funds since 2015. Currently, there appears to be no active representation of people with disabilities at the national level in Somalia, even though the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) is the main ministry for disability Manku (2018).

In Puntland, 4% of the population has a disability, with ageing accounting for 25% of all infirmities, 29% of the household population said that their impairment began before the age of five (n.d.). The same data collection includes information on the age of the beginning of impairment. The differences between types of habitation are modest. Significant differences exist between sexes and age groups. As predicted, younger impaired persons developed disabilities at a younger age (n.d.). In Puntland, 29 percent of the household population indicated that their impairment began before the age of five, emphasizing the prevalence of early-onset disabilities. Among these individuals, a notable 36 percent of men and 24 percent of girls experienced disabilities at a young age, with speech impairments being the most common, accounting for 58 percent of cases. Additionally, urban households reported a slightly higher rate of early disability onset (n.d.). These statistics underscore the urgent need to address the challenges faced by individuals with early-onset disabilities, particularly in the context of access to education and support services.

A study on the National Antiretroviral Therapy Policy and Scaleup Plan for the Disabled Community (Namagala, 2004), found that most respondents interviewed believed that disability was caused by a lack of immunization against childhood vaccine-preventable diseases such as polio and measles Ahmed (2014). Reports in a study about the dilemmas of reproductive health and suggestions for scaling up medical facilities in Puntland Somalia for the disabled community, where more than 200 male and female participants were interviewed, that most respondents identified accidents as the leading cause

of disability among people. Many factors cause disability including prenatal disabilities (acquired before birth.), Perinatal disabilities (acquired during birth.) and post-natal disabilities (gained after birth) Ahmed (2014).

The literature on the problems that persons with physical impairments confront while accessing public services in Qardho is shockingly scarce. The majority of what we know about disability issues in Somalia is concentrated in larger cities such as Mogadishu and Hargeisa, leaving smaller communities like Qardho a little unexplored. Because of this lack of attention, the specific issues that Qardho residents experience, such as the quality of rural infrastructure, local economic situations, and community attitudes, are still little known. Without this localized perspective, it is impossible to see the complete picture of what people with physical impairments in Qardho face while attempting to obtain crucial services. Furthermore, there is a considerable gap in understanding how various components of a person's identity, such as gender, age, or socioeconomic class, exacerbate the problems experienced by people with physical impairments. For example, persons with disabilities in Qardho may face unique problems, especially when seeking help. These essential distinctions are frequently neglected, leaving many untold tales and unmet needs. Therefore, this paper explores the challenges facing people with physical disabilities in accessing public services in the Qardhodistrict of Puntland of Puntland state of Somalia.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To assess the challenges facing people with physical disabilities in Qardhodistrict from accessing mosques, schools, restaurants, hotels and supermarkets.

- To identify strategies for addressing challenges facing people with physical disabilities in Qardhodistrict.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Study Design

A quantitative research design was adopted to investigate the challenges facing people with physical disabilities in Qardhodistrict. This design is appropriate for the study as quantitative research allows for the collection of structured, measurable data, enabling a clear and objective assessment of these challenges.

Source Population

The population of this study included school head teachers, mosque imams, hotel managers, restaurant managers, and supermarket owners in Qardho, Puntland Somalia.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed since it determines which people in the population are more likely to have specific traits or experiences and be willing to share them. While this method may introduce selection bias and limited generalizability, it ensures that data is gathered from those most affected by the challenges under study.

Sampling Procedure

A total of 115 participants were sampled, including key stakeholders, such as wheelchair users, educational principals, mosques imams, and business managers. The distribution prioritized wheelchair users as the primary affected group, while other stakeholders provided relevant data on accessibility challenges. The sample size was determined using 30% of the Mugenda and Mugenda formula to ensure a representative sample.

No	Name	Population	Sample
1	Educational principals	76	$\frac{76}{383} \times 115 = 23$
2	Physically disabled people	200	$\frac{200}{383} \times 115 = 60$
3	Mosques	70	$\frac{70}{383} \times 115 = 21$
4	Restaurants	17	$\frac{17}{383} \times 115 = 5$
5	Hotels	10	$\frac{10}{383} \times 115 = 3$
6	Supermarket	10	$\frac{10}{383} \times 115 = 3$
Total		383	115

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Qardho district, a town situated in the northeastern Bari region of Somalia, functioning as a district within the autonomous state of Puntland.

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was first translated into Somali by language experts. 6 University students, specifically from the Department of Social Work and Public Administration, were recruited as data collectors. These students underwent two days of training on basic disability rights, and the research instrument. To evaluate the wording and the appropriateness of questions, a pre-test of the questionnaire was administered before the commencement of actual data collection. During the data collection phase, comprehensive supervision and monitoring were conducted daily by the Director of East Africa University Research and Development Center.

The enumerators visited the targeted schools, mosques, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants, and wheelchair users. Before conducting interviews, informed consent was obtained from the respondents by explaining the purpose of the study and how the data would be used. Measures were taken to ensure respondent confidentiality, and all identities were concealed. After data collection, responses were translated into English for analysis and report compilation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel, employing descriptive statistical methods such as frequencies and percentages in alignment with the study's objectives to summarize the findings. Microsoft Excel was chosen due to its efficiency in handling structured data and performing statistical calculations.

FINDINGS/RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	70	60.86%
	Female	45	39.14%
Age	15-25	30	26.08%
	26—35	45	39.13%
	36-45	15	13.04%
	46-55	25	21.73%

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
The level of education of the respondents	Masters	26	22.60%
	Bachelor	10	8.69%
	Secondary level	15	13.04%
	Primary	20	17.39%
	Quran	44	38.26%
Experience of the respondents.	5-10 yrs.	45	39.13%
	1-5 yrs.	25	21.73%
	Above 10 yrs.	30	26.08%
	Below 1 yrs.	15	13.04%
Marital status of the respondents.	Married	78	67.82%
	Single	37	32.17%

As shown in the table above (Table 1), the surveyed respondents' ages were categorized into groups. Out of the 115 respondents, 45 (39.13%) were between the ages of 26 to 35 years old, 30 (26.08%) were between the ages of 15 – 25 years old, 5 (13.04%) were between the ages of 36-45 years old. As for the gender of the respondents, 70 (60.86%) were male, while 45 (39.14%) were female. The marital status of the respondents revealed that 78 (67.82) of them were married and 37 (32.17) were single. The education level of the participants was 44 (38.26) attended Quranic only, 26 (22.60%) of the respondents were Masters 20 (17.39%) of them were primary, and 15 (13.04%) secondaries 10 (8.69%)

were bachelor degree. Regarding their work experience, 45 (39.13) had between five to ten years, 30 (26.08%), had more than ten years of experience, 25 (21.73%) had between one and five years of experience, and 15 (13.04) had below one-year experience.

Challenges Facing People With Physical Disabilities

Data presented in *Table 2* shows the responses of the participants regarding the assessment of the challenges facing people with physical disabilities in the Qardhodistrict.

Table 2: The Challenges of the Disabled People to Access Mosques

Variable		N	%
Do you have any physically disabled prayer who perform their prayers in your mosques?	Yes	2	9.52
	No	19	90.48
Do you have any of the following provisions in your Mosque?	Ramps	No	19 90.48
		Yes	2 9.52
	Special toilet	No	22 100
	Signposts	No	22 100
Are there any plans relating to providing facilities for those who have physical disabilities to join your Jameca?	No	22	100

As shown in the table above (Table 2), The findings indicate that only 2 (9.52%) of the mosques in Qardhofamiliarize physically disabled individuals for prayer, while a significant 19 (90.48%) do not. Regarding the facilities available, only 2 (9.52%) of the mosques have essential provisions for physically disabled individuals, such as ramps. Conversely,

90.48% of the mosques lack these necessary accommodations such as ramps special toilets and signposts. When asked about future plans for enhancing accessibility for physically disabled individuals, all respondents indicated that there are currently no plans to provide such facilities.

Table 3: The Challenges of the Disable People to Access Education

Variable		N	%
Do you have any students who have physical disabilities?	Yes	0	0%
	no	23	100%
Do you have any of the following provisions in your school?	Ramps	yes	3 13.04%
		no	20 86.96
	Special toilet facilities	no	23 100%
	Disability-related information	No	23 100%
Are there any plans relating to providing facilities for those who have physical disabilities to join the education system?	yes	0	0%
	No	23	100%

From the analysis of the above (Table 3), the findings show that 23 (100%) of the schools assessed do not have any physically disabled students. 20 (86.96%) have no ramps for physically disabled students, while 3 (13.04%) of the schools assessed do not have ramps that the physically disabled students can access. 100% (23) of the

schools do not have special toilet facilities and disability-related information like signposts. The majority of the management of the schools assessed responses indicated that 23 (100%) of the principals of the schools interviewed have no plans relating to providing facilities for the students who have physical disabilities to join the education system.

Table 4: The Challenges of the Disabled People in Accessing the Supermarkets

Variable		N	%
Do you have any customers who have physical disabilities?	No	3	100%
Do you have any of the following provisions in your Business?	Ramps	Yes	1 33.33%
		No	2 66.67%
	Special toilet facilities	Yes	0 0%
		No	3 100%
	Signposts	No	0 100%
Are there any plans relating to providing facilities for those who have physical disabilities to become part of your clients?	Yes	0	0%
	No	3	100%

The above analysis (Table 4) finding is a clear indication that 3 (100%) of the supermarkets in Qardhodo not have a physically disabled client who consumes their products. The findings also show that 2 (66.67%) of the supermarkets in Grado do not have ramps that disabled clients can access, 3 (100%) of the supermarkets assessed do not have

special facilities like toilets, and signposts or information-related disabilities, 3 (100%) of the supermarket managers interviewed do not have any future plans relating to providing facilities for those who have physical disabilities to become part of your clients.

Table 5: The Challenges of the Disabled People in Accessing Hotels

Variable		N	%
Do you have any physically disabled clients in your hotel?	Yes	3	100%
Do you have any of the following provisions in your Business?	Ramps	Yes	1 33.33%
		No	2 66.66%
	Special toilet facilities	Yes	0 0%
		No	3 100%
	Signposts	No	3 100%
Are there any plans relating to providing facilities for those who have physical disabilities to become part of your clients?		No	3 100%

The above findings (Table 5) reveal that all 3 (100%) hotel reception attendants interviewed in Qardho have experience serving physically disabled clients. However, the assessment shows that 2 (66.66%) of the hotels lack ramps for accessibility, while only 1 (33.33%) provides ramps to facilitate

entry for disabled individuals. Furthermore, all 3 (100%) of the hotels do not have special toilet facilities, lack signposts or information related to disabilities, and have no plans to improve services for people with physical disabilities

Table 6: The Challenges of the Disabled People in Accessing Restaurants

Variable		N	%
Do you have any physically disabled clients in your restaurants?	Yes	5	100%
Do you have any of the following provisions in your Business?	Ramps	yes	2 40%
		no	3 60%
	Special toilet facilities	no	5 100%
	Signposts	no	5 100%
Are there any plans relating to providing facilities for those who have physical disabilities to become part of your clients?	yes	2	40%
	no	3	60%

The above analysis (Table 6) The findings indicate that 100% (5) of the restaurants in Qardho serve physically disabled clients; however, 60% (3) of these restaurants lack ramps for accessibility, while 40% (2) do provide ramps to facilitate entry for disabled individuals. Additionally, the assessment reveals that none of the restaurants have special

toilet facilities for people with disabilities, nor do they have any signposts or information related to disabilities. Furthermore, 60% (3) of the assessed restaurants do not have plans to provide facilities for individuals with physical disabilities, while 40% (2) have future plans to accommodate them as clients.

Table 6: Challenges Facing Wheelchair Users

Variable	Strongly Agree	Agreed	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
The specific public services I access from the government include healthcare, transportation, and education.	0 0%	0 0%	45 68.18%	21 31.81
The accessibility of these services for wheelchair users is poor	39 59.09%	27 40.91%	0 0%	0 0%
All these accommodations, including toilets/restrooms, ramps, and signage, are available in public services.	0 0%	0 0%	48 72.72%	18 27.28%
The public service staff have adequate skills to assist individuals with physical disabilities in accessing public services	5 7.57%	6 9.09%	41 62.12%	14 21.21%
I encounter negative attitudes and discrimination when accessing public services.	33 50%	13 19.69%	7 10.60%	13 19.69%
I have attended a Qur'an learning centre (Mal'amah), school, or university.	7 10.60%	9 13.63%	33 50%	17 25.75%
I didn't attend educational institutions due to a lack of accessible facilities, transportation difficulties, financial constraints, and discrimination or negative attitudes.	37 56.06%	29 43.93%	0 0%	0 0%
If the barriers to accessing educational services are solved, I would be interested in pursuing education.	55 83.33%	11 16.67%	0 0%	0 0%

The analysis of the data in Table 6 reveals that a significant majority of respondents disagree, both strongly (68.18%) and mildly (31.81%), regarding the lack of specific public services for physically disabled individuals provided by the government, including healthcare, transportation, and education. An overwhelming majority also agree that the accessibility of services for wheelchair users is poor, particularly in education centres, mosques, hotels, restaurants, and supermarkets in Qardho, with 59.09% strongly agreeing and 40.91% mildly agreeing. Furthermore, 72.72% of respondents strongly disagreed, and 27.28% mildly disagreed, with the assertion that there are no public services available to accommodate physically disabled individuals, such as toilets/restrooms, ramps, and signage.

Additionally, 62.12% of respondents strongly disagreed, and 21.21% mildly disagreed, with the notion that public service staff possess adequate skills to assist individuals with physical disabilities

in accessing services. In contrast, only 7.57% and 9.09% of respondents strongly and mildly agreed, respectively, that public service staff are adequately skilled. Regarding negative attitudes and discrimination in accessing public services, 50% and 19.69% of respondents agreed strongly and mildly, respectively, that they encounter such attitudes, while 10.60% and 19.69% strongly and mildly disagreed that they experience negative attitudes.

A significant portion of respondents (50% strongly disagreeing and 25.75% mildly disagreeing) indicated that they have not attended a Qur'an learning centre (Mal'amah), school, or university, whereas 10.60% and 13.63% agreed strongly and mildly, respectively, that they have attended such institutions. Moreover, 56.06% and 43.93% of respondents strongly and mildly disagreed that they did not attend educational institutions due to a lack of accessible facilities, transportation difficulties, financial constraints, or discrimination. Finally,

83.33% and 16.67% of respondents expressed interest in pursuing education if the barriers to accessing educational services were resolved, agreeing strongly and mildly, respectively.

Strategies For Addressing Challenges Facing People With Physical Disabilities

The data presented below shows the responses of the participants regarding the strategies for addressing challenges facing people with physical disabilities in the Qardhodistrict.

Table 6: The Possible Solutions to Addressing Challenges Facing People with Physical Disabilities in Qardho.

Solutions	Strongly Agree	Agreed	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Government policies should provide a general policy that favours people with physical disabilities.	89 77.39%	15 13.04%	6 5.21%	5 4.34%
The government should take responsibility to ensure that schools, mosques, and all public places are equipped with the necessary services for individuals with physical disabilities.	70 60.86%	20 17.39%	3 2.60%	22 19.13%
Raising awareness about inclusive education is essential to ensure that individuals with physical disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in public life.	60 52.17%	35 30.43%	5 4.34%	15 13.04%
Raising awareness in the community about inclusive education is crucial to ensure that students with physical disabilities have the opportunity to learn effectively	50 43.47%	40 34.78%	4 3.47%	21 18.26%
Ramps, entry and exit doors, corridors, ventilation windows, flooring, and toilets in all public places, especially primary schools, need to be designed to be attractive and accessible to promote a sense of belonging for students with physical disabilities.	62 53.91%	33 28.69%	5 4.34%	15 13.04%
Advocating for special schools for individuals with disabilities is essential to ensure that families of people with physical disabilities can access counselling and support services.	50 43.47%	60 52.17%	3 2.60%	2 1.73%
To be included in the government's general plans, road construction should feature designated pathways clearly marked for individuals with disabilities	50 43.47%	30 26.08	14 12.17%	21 18.26%
Individuals with disabilities should be empowered through awareness-raising initiatives so they can effectively advocate for their rights.	35 30.43%	60 52.17%	4 3.47%	16 13.91%
A public consultation should be held to ensure that the rights of individuals with disabilities are effectively implemented.	30 26.08%	70 60.86%	11 9.56%	4 3.47%

From the analysis above (Table 6), The data reveals strong support among respondents for government policies favouring individuals with physical disabilities. Notably, 77.39% advocated for enforcement of such policies. A significant majority, comprising 60.86% who strongly agreed

and 17.39% who mildly agreed, emphasized the need for government responsibility in ensuring that schools, mosques, and public places are equipped with necessary services for individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, over 52.17% strongly agreed and 30.43% mildly agreed that raising

awareness about inclusive education is vital for the full participation of individuals with physical disabilities in public life. Similarly, 43.47% strongly agreed and 34.78% mildly agreed that community awareness about inclusive education is crucial for effective learning opportunities for students with disabilities. Regarding infrastructure, 53.91% strongly agreed and 28.69% mildly agreed that public places, especially primary schools, should have accessible designs, including ramps and appropriate facilities, to foster a sense of belonging for students with disabilities.

Additionally, 52.17% mildly agreed and 43.47% strongly agreed that advocating for special schools is essential for providing families with counselling and support services. On the topic of urban planning, 43.47% strongly agreed and 26.08% mildly agreed that road construction should include clearly marked pathways for individuals with disabilities. Moreover, 52.17% mildly agreed and 30.43% strongly agreed that individuals with disabilities should be empowered through awareness initiatives to advocate for their rights. Lastly, a noteworthy 60.86% mildly agreed and 26.08% strongly agreed that public consultations are necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the rights of individuals with disabilities.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed significant challenges faced by individuals with physical disabilities in Qardho, Puntland, Somalia, especially regarding facilities that support accessibility to public services such as schools, mosques, supermarkets, hotels, and restaurants, which are completely nonexistent in Qardho.

The study found that 90% of mosques and 100% of schools and supermarkets assessed do not have physically disabled clients, indicating that while there are many individuals with disabilities in the community, they are excluded from society due to the unavailability of assistive devices (e.g., ramps, elevators, and stairlifts). The findings concur with a

study conducted in Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, (Abdullahi, 2019) whose results affirmed that 92% of respondents couldn't access education due to the unavailability of assistive devices mentioned above. The slight difference could be attributed to factors such as the study area and sample size. These indicators confirm that inaccessibility to education for the physically challenged within the Somali community is prevalent not only in a single region but throughout the entire country. This can be attributed to the poor implementation of all-inclusive policies that incorporate individuals with special needs and insufficient sensitization of the masses regarding the plight of persons with special needs.

Furthermore, 100% of mosques, schools, supermarkets, hotels, and restaurants assessed do not have special toilets or signposts. Similarly, 90.48% of mosques, 86.96% of schools, 66.67% of supermarkets, 66.66% of hotels, and 60% of restaurants assessed lack provisions such as ramps, elevators, and stairlifts for the physically challenged. This finding is in line with a study conducted in Malaysia (Narayanan, 2018), which found that disabled individuals face discrimination in the workplace due to various factors such as accommodative physical environments, lack of relevant assistive technology, and negative attitudes toward disabilities. This justifies the conclusion that the challenges experienced by the physically challenged are not limited to one continent but are a global issue. Furthermore, 100% of mosques, schools, supermarkets, hotels, and restaurants assessed do not have future plans to accommodate individuals with physical disabilities. These findings indicate that there is almost no awareness of the plight of the physically challenged in the planning of such public facilities. In addition to this, the study found that there is no legal obligation compelling investors and planners of such public facilities to include assistive devices for the accommodation of the physically challenged.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded to address challenges facing people with physical disabilities in Gardo, Puntland, Somalia.

- The goal of an inclusive education system is to provide all students with the most appropriate learning environments and opportunities for them to best achieve their potential. Therefore, the MOE should ensure that the educational facilities and infrastructure of the schools are geared to welcome children with physical disabilities. The enrolment rate of children with physical disabilities is very low; in all the schools in yet many children with physical disabilities would like to enter the mainstream educational system. The ministry should ensure that all schools, especially the public schools have the right infrastructure to make it easier for students with disabilities to attend school. School teachers should also be trained to help and encourage students with physical disabilities and to Awareness other students without disabilities so that discrimination against students with disabilities can be eliminated.
- Promote the creation and implementation of inclusive disability policies at the district and federal levels, emphasizing anti-discrimination and accessibility measures by raising public awareness advocacy and lobbying, and establishing accountability mechanisms.
- Include disability-related factors in urban planning and public service guidelines, guaranteeing adherence through frequent monitoring and assessment.
- The local governments in corporation with the international agencies have to provide training on the UN Convention and the Islamic inherent dignity and Social Inclusion Rights of Persons with Disabilities and local policies to public servants, educators, religious leaders, and business managers on disability inclusion and how to accommodate people with physical disabilities.
- Since the local government has the highest responsibility in the region, it is necessary to do so to develop a policy for people with disabilities, and to implement the policy, in particular, the Department of Public Works and Housing must ensure that all important buildings for the community, such as schools, mosques, supermarkets, hotels, and restaurants, can be accessible for the people with physical disabilities.
- Create inclusive education rules requiring schools to have ramps, accessible classrooms, and special restrooms, train instructors on inclusive teaching strategies and provide disability-related information and assistance to parents and caregivers.
- The community has the greatest responsibility as they are responsible for the implementation of the international, national, state, and local levels of disability policies. Educational administrators, social activists, mosque committees and imams, traders, youth organizations, and women's organizations, all are required to be involved in how to include physically disabled persons in society those whose rights have been completely ignored.
- Encourage companies, especially supermarkets, motels, and restaurants, to invest in disability-friendly infrastructure like ramps and accessible facilities, develop marketing initiatives targeting clients with impairments and train personnel to enhance customer service for those with impairments.
- Establishment of a disability inclusion task team to track progress towards adopting accessible measures in public and private organizations.

CONCLUSION

The findings show considerable barriers that people with physical impairments encounter in accessing key services and facilities across many sectors in the Qardhodistrict. Key findings include a dearth of accessible infrastructure at mosques, schools, shops, hotels, and restaurants, with the vast majority of these institutions missing ramps, adapted restrooms, and signs. Furthermore, there are no plans to overcome these issues, mainly due to the absence of inadequate policy frameworks, insufficient funding, and a lack of government commitment to disability inclusion in both public and private settings.

The report also highlights structural in public services, including healthcare, education, and transportation, which are mostly inaccessible to individuals with physical impairments, such as wheelchair users, people with limb disabilities, and those who use crutches. Additionally, public sector employees were found to lack the necessary skills to assist people with impairments, and many respondents reported facing prejudice and bad attitudes when seeking support. Financial restrictions, lack of accessible educational facilities, and societal prejudices limit participation in schooling, employment opportunities, and societal activities.

On the bright side, the majority of respondents highly favour measures addressing these issues. There is widespread support for government policies and obligations to increase accessibility in schools, mosques, and public spaces. Awareness-raising activities for inclusive education and enabling people with disabilities to fight for their rights were viewed as critical. Furthermore, the design of public places and infrastructure, such as highways, schools, and other institutions, must prioritize accessibility in order to promote inclusion and belonging.

This data-driven research calls for a collaborative effort by the government, community groups, and private sector actors to implement inclusive policies

and infrastructure upgrades that provide fair access for people with physical impairments. Key measures include enforcing disability-friendly policies, constructing ramps and accessible restrooms in public buildings, training public service employees on disability inclusion, and increasing funding for assistive technologies. The government should lead policy development enforcement, while private sector actors and community groups should collaborate on implementation and awareness campaigns.

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