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**Human Capital Investment in Universities: A Case Study of Gedo
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Human Capital Investment in Universities: A Case Study of Gedo International University

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the role of Gedo International University (GIU) in advancing human capital investment within the Beledhawa District, Somalia. It explores the impact of higher education on socio-economic development, focusing on GIU's contributions to healthcare, education, and regional growth.

Methodology: The research employs a qualitative case study approach, including semi-structured interviews with graduates, faculty, and students, alongside document analysis of institutional reports and district-level socio-economic data.

Findings: GIU has significantly contributed to local development by producing skilled professionals in healthcare and education. Its graduates are instrumental in improving service delivery and fostering economic opportunities, despite challenges such as limited resources and the absence of key academic programs. GIU has also catalyzed the establishment of secondary schools in the district, promoting broader access to education.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice, and Policy (Recommendations): This study highlights the critical role of higher education in human capital development in underserved regions. It recommends strategic partnerships with NGOs and private sectors, expanded academic offerings in agriculture and veterinary sciences, and the establishment of satellite campuses. These measures can enhance GIU's capacity to address the region's socio-economic needs and serve as a model for universities in similar contexts.

Keywords: *Human Capital Investment, Gedo International University, Socio-Economic Development, Healthcare Workforce, Education Sector, Developing Regions.*

Introduction

Human capital investment (HCI) in universities is essential for cultivating a knowledgeable and skilled workforce capable of driving economic growth and fostering social development. Universities play a critical role in HCI by providing education, training, and research opportunities that enhance individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies. Higher education significantly contributes to increased productivity, innovation, and societal well-being.¹ Furthermore, universities shape students' intellectual and professional capacities, equipping them to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving global economy. By offering diverse academic programs and promoting critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, universities foster a workforce that is adaptable and vital for sustaining economic competitiveness and addressing societal challenges.²

Universities also serve as hubs for research and innovation, advancing knowledge and driving technological progress. This research fuels economic growth and contributes to social mobility by enabling individuals to acquire qualifications for better-paying jobs. In developing regions, universities are crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty by expanding access to quality education and promoting social justice through equitable educational opportunities.³ However, adequate investment is necessary for universities to realize their full potential in HCI. This includes financial resources, infrastructure, faculty development, and student support services, ensuring that higher education remains accessible, affordable, and equitable.

Problem Statement:

Despite the globally recognized role of higher education in fostering economic growth and societal advancement, there remains a significant gap in research concerning the specific contributions of universities in developing regions to local socio-economic development. While numerous studies have explored the impact of higher education in developed nations, the unique challenges and opportunities presented by universities in under-resourced regions, particularly in fragile states, are often overlooked. Gedo International University (GIU), the only higher education institution in the Gedo region of Somalia, exemplifies this context.

In regions like Beledhawa District, where poverty, limited infrastructure, and political instability present formidable barriers to progress, universities have the potential to serve as critical agents of change by producing skilled professionals in vital sectors such as healthcare, education, and management. However, there is insufficient empirical evidence detailing how institutions like GIU actively contribute to human capital development and, by extension, regional socio-economic growth. This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by examining the role of GIU in fostering

¹) Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital and the economic theory of education*. American Economic Review, 83(2), 87

²) Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2004). *Returns to investment in education: A further update*. Education Economics, 12(2), 111

³) Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2015). *The Knowledge Capital of Nations: Education and the Economics of Growth*. MIT Press.

human capital investment within the Beledhawa District. Specifically, this research will explore how the university's programs and graduates have affected key sectors of the local economy and social services, as well as how these contributions translate into broader developmental outcomes for the region.

Importance of the study.

This study focuses on Gedo International University (GIU), the only university in the Gedo region of Somalia, and its role in fostering human capital investment. By examining GIU's contributions to healthcare, education, and socio-economic development, the research highlights the importance of human capital investment in universities, particularly in developing regions. This study is significant as it highlights how higher education can drive regional growth, improve service delivery in critical sectors, and create economic opportunities, all of which are crucial for addressing the needs of underserved communities.

Research questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How has Gedo International University (GIU) contributed to the development of the healthcare workforce in Beledhawa District?
2. How has GIU influenced the socio-economic growth of the Beledhawa District through its graduates?
3. What are the potential areas for GIU's expansion, that could further enhance human capital development in the region?
4. How does human capital investment (HCI) in universities, specifically GIU, contribute to the development of a skilled workforce and the overall socio-economic progress of Beledhawa District?
5. What challenges does GIU face in fully realizing its potential in HCI, and what strategies can be employed to overcome these barriers?

Objectives of the study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the impact of GIU on human capital development in the healthcare and education sectors.
2. To analyze how GIU's graduates have contributed to the socio-economic development of the Beledhawa District.
3. To explore potential areas for GIU's expansion into new academic fields that align with regional economic needs.

4. To evaluate the role of human capital investment in universities, with a focus on GIU's contributions to the local economy and workforce development.
5. To provide recommendations for strengthening GIU's role in human capital investment and enhancing its impact on regional development.

2.2. The Concept of Human Capital

Human capital refers to the attributes individuals gain through education, experience, and training that increase their productivity and value in the labor market. Investing in human capital through education, particularly at the university level, is crucial for preparing individuals to meet the demands of a rapidly changing global economy ⁴. Universities are at the forefront of this investment, offering programs that equip students with the necessary skills to excel in various professional fields.

Enhanced human capital leads to a more skilled labor force, which can drive innovation, improve efficiency, and contribute to the overall competitiveness of a nation in the global marketplace. Universities, therefore, act as incubators for talent, equipping students with the competencies required to adapt to technological advancements and evolving market needs. The impact of human capital investment is evident in the correlation between educational attainment and economic prosperity, where countries with higher levels of education tend to exhibit stronger financial performance. ⁵

Moreover, the benefits of investing in human capital extend beyond economic gains. Education enhances individuals' problem-solving abilities, promotes civic engagement, and contributes to social cohesion, thereby improving the overall quality of life. For example, a well-educated population is better equipped to participate in democratic processes, make informed decisions, and contribute to the stability and development of their communities. Additionally, higher levels of education are associated with better health outcomes, as educated individuals are more likely to engage in health-promoting behaviors and access healthcare services. ⁶

3.1. The Role of Universities in Human Capital Development

Universities serve as the primary institutions for higher education and research, playing a significant role in human capital development. They offer a diverse range of academic programs that cater to different fields of study, from the sciences to the humanities. Moreover, universities

⁴ Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

⁵ Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1-17.

⁶ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2018). Returns to investment in education: A decennial review of the global literature. *Education Economics*, 26(5), 445-458.

are instrumental in fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for innovation and progress in any society.⁷

Human capital investment in universities is a cornerstone for cultivating a knowledgeable and skilled workforce capable of driving economic growth and fostering social development. Universities play an indispensable role in human capital development by offering education, training, and research opportunities that enhance individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies.⁸

3.2. Economic Impact of University Education

The economic impact of university education is profound. Graduates with higher education degrees typically earn higher wages, experience lower unemployment rates, and contribute more to the economy through taxes and consumption⁹.

Moretti's¹⁰ *The New Geography of Jobs* (2012) explores how economic growth and job creation are increasingly concentrated in specific geographic areas, particularly those with higher levels of education and innovation. The book highlights the role that universities play in fostering high-skill industries, boosting local economies, and creating a ripple effect where educated workers attract businesses, which in turn leads to more job opportunities. Moretti emphasizes that the presence of universities and a highly educated workforce is critical in shaping the economic landscape, enhancing regional productivity, and fostering long-term economic sustainability.¹¹

In summary, universities not only equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed for personal economic advancement but also act as critical drivers of regional and national economic development, fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and social mobility.

3.3. Challenges in Human Capital Investment in Universities

Despite the recognized importance of investing in human capital through university education, there are several challenges that institutions face. One of the primary challenges is the availability of resources. Many universities, especially in developing countries, struggle with inadequate funding, which affects their ability to provide quality education and maintain infrastructure¹².

Another significant challenge is the accessibility of higher education. In many parts of the world, especially in developing regions, access to university education is limited by factors such as

⁷⁾ Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1-17

⁸⁾ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2004). Returns to investment in education: A further update. *Education Economics*, 12(2), 111-134.

⁹⁾ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2004). Returns to investment in education: A further update. *Education Economics*, 12(2), 111-134.

¹⁰⁾ Enrico Moretti is an Italian economist and Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley.

¹¹⁾ Moretti, E. (2012). *The new geography of jobs*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

¹²⁾ World Bank. (2017). *Higher education in developing countries: Peril and promise*. World Bank

economic barriers, geographic location, and social inequalities. These challenges often result in a lower enrollment rate in higher education institutions, thereby limiting the potential for human capital development¹³

4. Institutional Overview of Gedo International University (GIU)

4.1 Background and Establishment

Gedo International University (GIU) was established in 2015 to address the educational needs of both local and international students in the Gedo region of Somalia. It is the first and only university in the region, playing a crucial role in providing higher education and fostering socio-economic development.

Gedo International University (GIU) was established in 2015 as a response to the growing demand for higher education in the Gedo region of Somalia. The university was founded by a group of well-wishers and academic scholars under the auspices of the Alrahma Foundation for Education and Development.

The Alrahmah Foundation for Education and Development is a Somali-based charity organization founded by the diaspora community around the globe to help less fortunate people back home in the areas of education, health, and water shortage.

With its main office in Mogadishu, Alrahmah is registered with the Somali federal government and concentrates its work in the Southern regions of the country, where international and local charities are absent due to security reasons. Alrahmah members on the ground are handling these challenges and have carried out successful projects since the Foundation's inception in 2014.¹⁴

4.2 Overview of Faculties and Programs

Since its inception, GIU has offered various programs through its five active faculties:

- **Faculty of Shareah and Law:** This faculty specializes in the study of Islamic law (Shariah) and legal studies, offering comprehensive programs that prepare graduates for diverse roles in legal practice, religious leadership, and public service. The curriculum is designed to equip students with a deep understanding of both classical and contemporary legal frameworks, enabling them to serve as judges, lawyers, religious scholars, and advisors in various sectors. Graduates from this faculty are not only well-versed in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence but also trained to navigate the complexities of modern legal systems. The faculty plays a crucial role in shaping ethical and informed leaders who contribute significantly to the legal and moral fabric of the community.

¹³ UNESCO. (2015). *The Role of Higher Education in Sustainable Development*. UNESCO Publishing.

¹⁴ Alrahmah Foundation for Education and Development. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved August 18, 2024, from <http://alrahmahfoundation.com/about-us/>

- **Faculty of Health Sciences:** This faculty offers a range of programs in health-related fields, including nursing, public health, and medical sciences, training professionals who are integral to the healthcare system. Many of the healthcare workers in Beledhawa are either currently enrolled in or have graduated from this faculty. I had the opportunity to meet Shafi' Adam, a 24-year-old nurse at Shifa Hospital, who is graduating from GIU this year. Shafi' expressed how his education at GIU significantly increased his knowledge and made him more skilled and active in his profession. Additionally, I encountered several midwifery graduates from GIU who are working in shifts at the General Hospital. The hospital management praised GIU students as some of the best nurses and health workers, noting their significant impact on improving district healthcare. Furthermore, some of the female graduates from this faculty have successfully secured positions in international NGOs after excelling in competitive exams, demonstrating the high caliber of training provided by GIU.
- **Faculty of Economic & Management Science:** This faculty offers comprehensive education in business administration, economics, and management, equipping students with the skills needed for successful careers in both the public and private sectors. The faculty has become a vital training ground for many of the region's banking professionals, including managers and staff from prominent financial institutions. For instance, Mr. Dahir, a 67-year-old project manager at Amal Bank's Beledhawa branch, which is one of the largest banks in Somalia, is currently enrolled in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. His commitment to furthering his education, despite an already distinguished career, highlights the faculty's reputation for providing valuable, industry-relevant knowledge. The programs offered prepare students for immediate entry into the workforce and enhance the capabilities of seasoned professionals, contributing significantly to economic growth and management efficiency in the region.
- **Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** The Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at Gedo International University plays a crucial role in preparing students for the rapidly evolving digital landscape. This faculty offers programs focused on software development, networking, Web development, and data science, equipping students with essential skills to thrive in a technology-driven world.

As technology continues to reshape industries and economies globally, GIU recognizes the urgent need to enhance its ICT programs. The faculty's graduates can make significant contributions to the local tech ecosystem. The emphasis on practical training is a cornerstone of the ICT curriculum at GIU. The university has invested in a starting art laboratory, providing students with hands-on experience that mirrors real-world challenges.

- **Faculty of Education and Social Science:** This faculty is dedicated to the comprehensive training of educators and social scientists, offering robust programs in education, sociology, and social work. The faculty is instrumental in shaping the region's educational landscape, as a significant number of district and regional teachers are enrolled in its programs. Through a curriculum that blends theoretical knowledge with practical application, the faculty equips future educators and social scientists with the skills and expertise necessary to address the complex social and educational challenges within the community. The impact of this faculty extends beyond the university, contributing to the overall improvement of educational standards and social welfare in the Gedo region.

These faculties provide comprehensive education, equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary for their professional and personal development. Through rigorous academic programs, practical training, and a focus on ethical values, these faculties prepare students to excel in their chosen fields while also fostering critical thinking, leadership, and social responsibility. The holistic education offered ensures that graduates are not only proficient in their professional roles but also well-rounded individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to their communities and society at large.

5. Building a Skilled Education Workforce: The Role of Human Capital Investment in Universities

5.1 Definition and Importance

Human capital investment is the process of improving individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies, which are critical for enhancing their productivity and economic value.¹⁵ In the context of higher education, this investment is vital as it directly influences the quality of education, research, and the overall development of a region. According to Becker (1964), education is a cornerstone of human capital, as it equips individuals with the necessary tools to participate effectively in the economy and contribute to societal growth.¹⁶

The importance of human capital investment in universities cannot be overstated. A well-educated population is a crucial driver of economic growth, as it leads to higher levels of productivity and innovation. Moreover, universities play a pivotal role in research and development, which contributes to technological advancements and the creation of new industries. These advancements, fueled by human capital, can lead to significant improvements in living standards and societal well-being.¹⁷

¹⁵ Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

¹⁶ Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. University of Chicago Press.

¹⁷ Schultz, T. W. (1961). *Investment in human capital*. *The American Economic Review*, (1).

In developing regions, the impact of human capital investment through universities is even more pronounced. Universities help bridge the gap between developing and developed economies by equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in the global economy. This not only benefits the individuals who receive the education but also has a multiplier effect on the community and nation as a whole. The returns on investment in education, particularly higher education, are substantial, leading to increased income levels, improved health outcomes, and greater social mobility¹⁸.

Furthermore, universities serve as hubs for innovation and entrepreneurship, providing the necessary environment and resources for students and faculty to develop new ideas and businesses. This entrepreneurial spirit, nurtured within the university setting, is a key component of economic development and job creation. As such, investment in universities is not just an investment in individual human capital, but also in the broader economic and social fabric of society¹⁹.

5.2 The Role of Universities in Education Sector Improvement

Universities play a key role in the education sector by supporting high schools and opening new schools, particularly in underserved areas. This expansion improves access to education, enabling more students to qualify for higher education. In developing regions, universities act as educational hubs, driving the establishment of secondary schools and enhancing human capital development by ensuring students receive quality education.²⁰

In the case of Beledhawa, Before the establishment of Gedo International University (GIU) in 2015, Beledhawa lacked secondary schools, and the region's educational infrastructure was underdeveloped. Students had to cross the border into Mandera County, Kenya, to attend primary and secondary school. Hundreds of students, including myself, made this daily journey between Beledhawa and Mandera, which significantly affected our education experience. However, the presence of a university in Beledhawa has changed this dynamic, improving local access to education and reducing the need for students to leave the region for schooling. The establishment of GIU provided a strong incentive for the development of secondary education in Beledhawa. Local communities, recognizing the value of higher education, began to establish secondary schools, ensuring that students could continue their education beyond the primary level. This development has had a profound impact on the region, as it has increased access to education and improved educational outcomes for students in Beledhawa. However, with the opening of GIU, secondary schools began to emerge, providing a pathway for students to continue their education

¹⁸ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2018). *Returns to investment in education: A decennial review of the global literature*. Education Economics, 26.

¹⁹ Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2020). *The economic impacts of learning losses*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 225.

²⁰ Johnson, L. (2018). The role of higher education institutions in supporting secondary school development. *Journal of Educational Policy and Administration*, 23(4), 24-25.

locally. This development highlights the critical role that universities play in driving educational progress and inspiring communities to invest in their future.

Human capital investment is a foundational concept in understanding economic growth and development. It refers to the process of improving the skills, knowledge, and health of individuals to enhance their productivity and economic value. Education is a critical component of this investment, as it provides individuals with the necessary competencies to participate effectively in the labor market.²¹⁾ The concept of human capital was first introduced by economists like Adam Smith, but it was further developed by scholars such as Becker (1964), who emphasized the importance of education in economic development. According to Becker (1964), investing in education is one of the most effective ways to improve an individual's economic prospects and contribute to broader societal growth.²²⁾

6.1. The Socio-Economic Impact of Gedo International University

Gedo International University (GIU) has significantly contributed to the socio-economic development of the Gedo region. By providing accessible higher education, GIU has empowered local communities, fostering a sense of ownership and pride. The university's graduates are not only employed within the region but are also active in shaping the local economy. For example, GIU alumni are involved in various sectors such as healthcare, education, and business, driving innovation and improving service delivery. This contribution is critical in a region that has historically faced challenges related to poverty, limited infrastructure, and political instability.

GIU's commitment to quality education and community engagement has had a profound socio-economic impact on the Beledhawa District and the wider Gedo region. As GIU is the only university in the region, it has provided an invaluable opportunity for families with limited resources to keep their children close to home for higher education. This has had two significant effects:

1. **Cost Savings:** Families no longer need to send their children to faraway cities like Mogadishu for higher education, saving significant amounts of money.
2. **Increased Access to Education:** The availability of a local university has allowed many students who might not have pursued higher education due to financial constraints to continue their studies. This has led to a significant increase in the educational attainment of the region's population.

These developments have directly contributed to the socio-economic advancement of the Gedo region. GIU's focus on producing graduates who are well-prepared to meet the needs of the local market has ensured that these individuals play a crucial role in the region's growth. For instance,

²¹⁾ Smith, A. (1776). *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. W. Strahan and T. Cadell.

²²⁾ Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*. The University of Chicago Press.

many GIU graduates are employed in the local healthcare and education sectors, where their contributions are vital to improving the quality of services available to the community.

6.2. The Impact of GIU on the Local Community and Healthcare Services.

The experiences shared by Abdiqafaar Ali, Aisha Abdirahman, and Fardowsa Sh. Ahmed highlights the significant role that Gedo International University plays in not only educating its students but also indirectly contributing to the socio-economic development of Beledhawa District. The increased availability of qualified healthcare professionals has profoundly impacted local healthcare services, particularly in a region where such services were previously scarce.

The presence of well-trained pharmacists and midwives, among other healthcare professionals, has improved the overall quality of care available to the community. This, in turn, has led to better health outcomes, higher patient satisfaction, and a stronger healthcare system capable of addressing the needs of the local population. The university's commitment to practical, hands-on education ensures that graduates are not only knowledgeable but also equipped to handle real-world challenges, making them invaluable assets to the local healthcare infrastructure.

During my interview, Abdiqafaar Ali highlighted how Gedo International University (GIU) significantly enhanced his skills and confidence as a pharmacist. His thesis on Hepatitis B demonstrated his strong grasp of research methodologies, reflecting GIU's robust curriculum that goes beyond core health sciences. Abdiqafaar emphasized the professional and personal benefits of his education, including improved competence, increased income, and social mobility, showcasing the university's role in fostering comprehensive student development.²³

Aisha Abdirahman Osman, a 23-year-old midwife at Khalil Hospital, shared how Gedo International University (GIU) enabled her to achieve her dream of becoming a healthcare professional. Affordable tuition and the convenience of a local campus were crucial in her pursuit of a Health Sciences degree. Aisha credited GIU for boosting her confidence and equipping her with the skills needed to assist patients effectively, citing her daily work as a midwife and her thesis on diabetes as examples of her growth. Her story underscores the transformative impact of GIU in empowering its students to succeed in their careers.²⁴

Fardowsa Sheikh Ahmed, a midwife at Khalil Hospital, highlighted how Gedo International University (GIU) nurtured her passion for healthcare and supported her thesis on hypertension, an overlooked health issue. She credited GIU's supportive environment, particularly Dr. Ahmed Abdiqani, for enhancing her skills and inspiring her to pursue a master's degree. Fardowsa's experience reflects GIU's critical role in empowering healthcare professionals in the region.²⁵

²³⁾ A. Ali, personal communication, 20th August, 2024

²⁴⁾ A. Osman, personal communication, 21st August, 2024

²⁵⁾ F. Sheikh, Personal communication, 21st August, 2024

6.3. Empowering Professionals: The Impact of GIU Education on Careers and Community Leadership

Gedo International University (GIU) has profoundly shaped the professional lives of its graduates by equipping them with practical skills and fostering community development. Alumni and students have transitioned into key roles, such as teachers, headteachers, school administrators, and banking professionals, leveraging the knowledge and leadership skills gained at GIU to drive socio-economic progress in Beledhawa District. For instance, ²⁶Abdiqadir Hassan Abdullahi, a Customer Care Officer at Amal Bank, credited GIU's training in communication and HR management for his career success. Similarly, educators like SayidAli Adan Mohamed²⁷ and Abdifatah Mohammed²⁸ emphasized how their education improved their teaching and administrative capacities, benefiting local schools and the broader educational landscape.

GIU's programs not only enhance individual career trajectories but also contribute to regional human capital development. Graduates lead initiatives that strengthen education, finance, and other sectors, reflecting the university's pivotal role in empowering professionals to innovate and address community needs. This underscores GIU's broader impact on fostering leadership and driving socio-economic growth.

6.4. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While Gedo International University (GIU) has made substantial contributions to the socio-economic development of the Gedo region, it has also faced criticism from educators and community members for not offering key academic programs, particularly in Veterinary Medicine and Agriculture. These faculties are crucial in a region where livestock and agriculture are the backbone of the local economy. The absence of such programs has raised concerns that GIU is not fully addressing the educational and developmental needs of the community, particularly in sectors vital to the region's livelihood and economic stability.

GIU's management, when asked about these gaps, acknowledged the importance of these faculties and confirmed that their establishment is part of the university's long-term strategic plan. However, they cited budgetary constraints and insufficient funding as the primary reasons for the delay. As a relatively young institution, founded in 2015, GIU has focused its resources on developing its core faculties and ensuring the quality of its existing programs before expanding into new fields.

²⁹

Although these financial limitations are understandable, the absence of Veterinary and Agricultural programs remains a significant issue. Addressing this gap is critical for GIU's future growth and solidifying its role as a comprehensive institution that meets the region's diverse needs.

²⁶ A. Mohammed, personal communication, 23rd, August 2024

²⁷ S. Adan, personal communication, 23rd August, 2024

²⁸ A. Mohammed, personal communication, 23rd, August 2024

²⁹ Dr. A. Hussein, University Rector, personal communication, 5th, October 2024

Expanding into these fields would not only contribute to local economic development but also enhance GIU's reputation as an essential educational hub for the Gedo region.

Despite these understandable financial challenges, the lack of key academic programs and the absence of branches in other districts remain significant issues for the university's future growth. Addressing these concerns is crucial for GIU to fulfill its mission of serving the entire Gedo region and ensuring equitable access to higher education. Expanding its academic offerings and geographical reach would enhance local economic development and solidify GIU's position as a regional leader in higher education.

7. Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the role of Gedo International University (GIU) in human capital investment and its impact on the socio-economic development of Beledhawa District. The methodology is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of how higher education at GIU contributes to individual career growth, community development, and regional economic performance.

7.1. Research Design

A case study methodology was chosen for this research to examine the specific context of GIU and its influence on human capital development. This approach allows for a detailed examination of real-life events and their impact on various stakeholders, including students, faculty, and the local community.

7.2. Data Collection

Data collection for this research consists of two primary methods:

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with current students, graduates, and faculty members of GIU to gain insights into their educational experiences and professional outcomes. Key informants included healthcare professionals, educators, and banking personnel who were directly impacted by their studies at GIU. This allowed for a rich collection of qualitative data that reflects personal experiences and professional growth. Interviews focused on how their education enhanced their skills, professionalism, and contributions to their fields.

Document Analysis: Institutional documents such as university reports, curriculum outlines, and faculty profiles were reviewed to understand GIU's academic structure and programs. Additionally, socio-economic reports and district-level statistics were examined to assess GIU's broader impact on regional development.

7.3. Sample Selection

The research sample includes:

Graduates and current students from the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Faculty of Education and Social Science, and the Faculty of Economic and Management Science. These participants were selected based on their current professional roles in the community, particularly in healthcare, education, and banking sectors.

University faculty and administration to gain perspectives on the curriculum, faculty development programs, and the university's strategy for contributing to human capital investment in the region.

7.4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes emerging from the interviews and documents. The data were categorized under major themes such as:

Human capital development through higher education: How GIU's educational programs contribute to skill enhancement and professional competence.

Socio-economic impact: The influence of GIU graduates on the economic and social development of Beledhawa District, particularly in sectors like healthcare, education, and banking.

Challenges and opportunities: Barriers to human capital development at GIU include financial constraints, accessibility, resource availability, and opportunities for growth in education and infrastructure.

7.5. Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of the purpose of the research and their consent was obtained before interviews were conducted. Confidentiality was assured, and all responses were anonymized to protect the identities of participants. The research was conducted under ethical guidelines for academic research, ensuring respect for participants' privacy and well-being.

8. Study Findings

Key Findings: The study revealed the significant role of Gedo International University (GIU) in fostering human capital investment within Beledhawa District. Its contributions span across key sectors:

1. **Healthcare:** GIU graduates, particularly in midwifery and public health, have addressed critical healthcare workforce gaps. For instance, their contributions have improved patient outcomes and enhanced the region's healthcare infrastructure.
2. **Education:** Many local teachers and school administrators are GIU alumni, reflecting the university's role in enhancing educational standards and accessibility.
3. **Socio-Economic Growth:** GIU has boosted local employment opportunities by producing a skilled workforce and reduced the need for external migration for higher education.

4. **Community Leadership:** Graduates have become active leaders, driving regional development initiatives in various capacities.

The findings align with prior research emphasizing the impact of higher education on socio-economic development. Similar studies highlight the role of universities in fostering innovation, improving service delivery, and promoting social mobility in underserved regions.

However, the study also identified areas of divergence:

- Unlike some global models, GIU's challenges include a lack of programs in critical areas like agriculture and veterinary sciences, which limits its potential to address local economic needs comprehensively.
- Resource constraints, typical of universities in fragile states, have posed barriers to expansion and innovation, highlighting unique challenges not often encountered in studies focused on developed regions.

9. Policy Recommendations

Enhancing Gedo International University's Development: Policy, Partnerships, and Growth Opportunities

While large-scale financial support from the federal government may not be feasible, strategic policy-making and logistical support can significantly bolster Gedo International University's (GIU) growth. Federal and state governments can enact policies to enhance accessibility and foster partnerships with NGOs and private sectors, encouraging infrastructure development, faculty training, and student support. Collaborative efforts with educational institutions can further research funding, academic exchange, and professional development.

NGOs can play a vital role by offering scholarships, faculty training, and supporting research initiatives that address regional challenges. Health, education, and economics collaboration can improve healthcare delivery, educational outcomes, and economic growth. For example, partnerships with NGOs in health research could target maternal and child health, while educational collaborations could improve student performance and access to education.

Private sector engagement is equally crucial. Partnerships with healthcare, education, and finance industries can fund research, align programs with market demands, and provide internships. Such efforts enhance student employability while supporting regional socio-economic development. Establishing branch campuses in remote districts and leveraging online learning can improve access to education for underserved populations, expanding GIU's regional impact.

Faculty development is essential for GIU's long-term success. Competitive salaries, research opportunities, and professional growth initiatives can help attract and retain quality educators, ensuring GIU remains a leader in human capital development for the Gedo region. GIU can

continue to drive meaningful regional progress and socio-economic stability through these integrated efforts.

9.1. Actionable Recommendations:

To further strengthen its role in human capital development, GIU should focus on the following key recommendations:

∞ Expansion into Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences

GIU should establish programs in agriculture and veterinary sciences to align its offerings with the region's economic priorities. These fields are critical to the Gedo region, where agriculture and livestock form the backbone of the economy. Addressing workforce shortages in these sectors would enhance economic resilience and attract more students.

∞ Establish Satellite Campuses

To improve access to education, GIU should create satellite campuses in underserved districts such as Garbaharey and Bardhere. This expansion would alleviate the financial burden on families by reducing the need to relocate to Beledhawa, while increasing overall regional educational attainment.

∞ Strengthen Partnerships with NGOs and the Private Sector

Collaborating with NGOs and private entities can help GIU secure scholarships, fund faculty training, and support research. Such partnerships can also create internship opportunities, providing students with hands-on experience and improving their job readiness.

∞ Enhance ICT Programs

As technology becomes increasingly integral to modern workforces, GIU must invest in its ICT faculty. Upgrading laboratories, introducing innovative teaching methods, and fostering innovation in technology will prepare students for evolving market demands.

∞ Increase Research Output

GIU should establish a university-wide research agenda to address regional challenges in education, socio-economic development, governance, and healthcare. Supporting interdisciplinary research will not only enhance the university's academic contribution but also offer evidence-based solutions to local issues.

∞ Focus on Community Outreach

Expanding community-oriented programs, such as adult education, vocational training, and public health awareness campaigns, would further integrate GIU into the region's socio-economic framework. These initiatives would directly impact local development while increasing the university's influence.

By implementing these recommendations, GIU can reinforce its position as a leader in human capital investment and continue driving socio-economic progress in the Gedo region.

9.2. Summarize Key Findings:

Gedo International University (GIU) has played a transformative role in advancing the socio-economic through its role in human capital investment. In the healthcare sector, GIU's graduates, particularly in nursing, midwifery, and public health, have filled critical gaps in local healthcare services. Interviews with graduates like Abdiqafaar Ali and Aisha Abdirahman illustrate how the university's hands-on training and academic rigor have prepared healthcare professionals to address pressing health challenges in Beledhawa, improving both patient outcomes and the overall healthcare system.

In the education sector, GIU has played a pivotal role in developing the local teaching workforce. Many of the region's headteachers and teachers are GIU alumni, whose education in pedagogy and educational leadership has enhanced the quality of instruction and school management across the district. Through these improvements in healthcare and education, GIU has empowered local communities, improved access to essential services, and created new economic opportunities by retaining students and professionals within the region.

Overall, GIU's contributions have led to increased employment, improved services, and a boost in the region's socio-economic standing.

9.3. Emphasize Future Opportunities:

Looking forward, GIU has significant potential to grow its impact through new initiatives and programs. Expanding its academic offerings into critical fields such as agriculture and environmental studies would not only meet the local economy's demands but also attract a broader range of students. Additionally, there are opportunities to strengthen community outreach programs that focus on adult education, vocational training, and public health awareness, all of which would further integrate the university into the fabric of the region's development.

Future research should focus on assessing the long-term socio-economic impacts of GIU's graduates, particularly in sectors like healthcare, economics, and education, and explore ways the university can better align its programs with regional economic priorities. By continuing to innovate and respond to community needs, GIU can become a leading institution for human capital development in Jubbaland state of Somalia and a model for universities in other developing regions.

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