The Implementation of Occupational Health and Safety Management in Schools in Libya:

Chapter 1

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Chapter I: Introduction to the Subject of the Study

1.1. Introduction

Libya is a relatively new and modern country that was developed after the Second World War. It is located in Northern Africa, bordering Egypt, Chad, Tunisia, Niger, Sudan, and Algeria, as well as the Mediterranean Sea. The country's population has encountered poverty, ignorance, and underdevelopment, followed by colonialism; Libya had been a resource-poor land for a long time. However, Libya remains home for millions of people; in 2017, its population comprised approximately 6,750,000 individuals ("Libya"). The ethnic groups presented in the country include Berber and Arab (more than 95%), as well as Greeks, Maltese, Egyptians, Italians, Indians, Tunisians, and Turks (around 5%). All of these nationalities live together, comprising the vast cultural diversity of the country. The urbanization rate in Libya is around 80% ("Libya"). It means that the majority of the population lives in urban areas and has access to high-quality education.

In Libya, about 90% of the country's citizens of age 15 and over can read and write ("Libya"). This fact shows that, despite all the past problems, the country strives to provide opportunities for education and enhance the population's literacy. Education is available free of charge; curricula are designed to help students in establishing their social and personal values, as well as develop academic, technical, and athletic skills that they will be able to apply to practice in the future.

It is vital to mention, however, that the educational system is currently one of the primary challenges the country encounters. The former Gaddafi's regime had resulted in the generally low level of education, which was implemented systematically and deliberately, especially in primary and secondary schools (Rogers 184; Tremlett 208). In addition, there is

a lack of health and safety measures in many educational institutions, which may result in injuries among students and teachers; this issue is the primary focus and consideration of this paper.

1.2. The Problem of the Study

As mentioned above, occupational health and safety (OHS) measures are crucial for establishing a safe working and learning environment, especially in schools. There are various types of threats and risks students and educators can encounter; they can be related to learning equipment, meals, geology, hygiene, sanitation, and political instability of a country (Pazzi et al. 80; Ababio et al. 56; National Centre for Disease Control 3; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 18). The data presented above allow for a conclusion that many schools in Libya may face challenges associated with the implementation of OHS measures. In addition, the problematic issues related to Libyan educational system show that it is vital to analyze existing and needed safety measures and suggest strategies for their incorporation in schools.

The research problem is motivated by personal and objective endeavors. Considering the lack of OHS measures in Libyan primary and secondary schools, the former motive is to examine the current strategies in place to develop, plan, manage, and incorporate different OHS standards in Libyan educational institutions and enhance their performance. The objective motive is to establish best practices that would guarantee better outcomes in the implementation and management of safety standards through the presentation of verified principles of effective OHS integration in the learning environment. The study is expected to contribute to the knowledge about the significance of OHS measures, the approaches to their incorporation, and the challenges associated with the lack of OHS regulations.

1.3. Libyan Educational System and Its History

Libyan educational system involves primary and secondary programs, which are free and compulsory throughout Libya. The country's youth literacy rate is almost 100%

("UNICEF Libya Country"). Libyan elementary education is more extensive compared to the USA, Australia, and China. Primary education lasts for nine years, beginning at the age of six and ending up at the age of fifteen. Although country's residents start attending secondary school, that lasts for three additional years, much later than pupils from the rest of the world, the land-specific educational trends do not prevent students from receiving the required knowledge at every stage of learning (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 4). During secondary education, Libyan students may choose to follow religious, vocational, or technical school programs. Vocational programs are designed for individuals in various fields, including building, electrical, mechanical, and agricultural ones.

The first modern university in Libya was established in 1955 despite the poor economic situation at that time. Between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 2010s, the educational system in the country was primarily guided by Muammar Gaddafi's political philosophy. For instance, students from nine years of age were required to attend so-called Jamahiriya studies. The topics discussed within this framework included Libyan government and political philosophy, presented in Gaddafi's treatise, the *Green Book* (Rogers 184). According to Tremlett, in 1993, students were expected to study the treatise for at least two hours per week (208). It is evident that Gaddafi's regime played a significant role in all aspects of primary and secondary education in the country at that time. Pan-Arabism was promoted, and all people responsible for school curricula were required to belong to local committees (Gillis 105). The regime is known to affect post-secondary education, as, during that time, many educational reforms were implemented.

Gaddafi's educational system was largely criticized in the following years (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 121). The existing approach to teaching was considered ineffective, and the government started to develop renewed curricula after the Libyan Civil War of 2011. The new curriculum was designed to eliminate Gaddafi's propaganda on all levels and present the

information to students objectively. The current educational system of the country aims at raising skilled professionals in various fields, including social, natural, and applied sciences.

1.4. Hypotheses of the Study

The primary research hypothesis is that OHS measures are vital for ensuring a safe environment in Libyan primary and secondary schools and educational institutions in general. The main OHS strategy that should be utilized is prevention; it will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Although, as mentioned above, the Libyan government is working on improving the quality of educational programs after Gaddafi's regime, it should also consider the enhancement of OHS regulations.

Another hypothesis of the study is that many schools in Tripoli, Libya, do not have efficient OHS measures in place. To test the hypothesis of the study, the educational institutions in the following districts of the city will be analyzed: Abu Salim, Al Soanny, Al Qarabooli, Tajura, Janzur, Hay Al Andalous, Souq Al Juma, Tripoli Center, Ayn Zara, Qaser Bin Qeshir. The schools operate in primary and secondary levels of education. Thus, the study is designed to address these preliminary suggestions about the implementations of OHS regulations in schools in Tripoli.

1.5. Importance of the Study

The study in the field of health and safety management in Libyan educational institutions is significant because it is vital to improve the learning and teaching environment for students and teachers. The findings of this study may be used by Libyan primary and secondary schools' stakeholders in the implementation and management of the ideal and effective safety standards frameworks through the improvement of the current infrastructure and approach. It is crucial to ensure that students are not exposed to hazards and the lack of safety measures because, when learning "in a location free from turmoil and conflict," a child demonstrates a higher disposition to material absorbing and shows fewer signs of disinterest

(Friend and Kohn 250). This, in turn, contributes to the process of schools' modernization, resulting in improved quality of education (Abuhadra and Ajaali 13). From this perspective, health and safety measures are a crucial part of educational institutions' development and enhancement.

It is necessary to add that schools' students are expected to be given clear and exhaustive instructions on how to behave at school to eliminate the risks of injuries and hazards (International Labour Organization 8). The present research will focus on the facts proving that health and safety management in elementary schools in Libya is an important step for improving the safety guidelines for students and teachers. In addition, Libyan schools continue to encounter significant challenges related to hygiene and sanitation. For instance, one of the most acute aspects Libyan educational institutions should address is the contamination of water. More than 30% of schools report this problem, which may cause significant risks for students' health and safety (National Centre for Disease Control 3). Another challenge is poor sanitation facilities and hygiene conditions in schools, as many children and educators do not have access to soap (National Centre for Disease Control 3). Moreover, the country experiences water scarcity due to its geographical position. All of these problems may result in poor health outcomes in children and teachers.

Another significant factor that supports the significance of the study is that many schools in Libya, especially Tripoli and neighboring areas, are exposed to additional risks due to the country's political instability and security situation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 18). It is evident that schools' authorities should take these factors into consideration and develop strategies aimed to reduce their effect on children's and educators' well-being. The study is designed to address existing challenges and develop recommendations to improve safety on all levels.

1.6. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the proposed study is to explore the existing procedures and strategies in place to facilitate the implementation and management of occupational health safety in Libyan primary and secondary schools, as well as close the gap between effective and ineffective results by recommending best practices. In addition, the following sub-objectives were created:

i.   To contribute new knowledge on effective management and implementation of OHS standards in Libyan primary and secondary schools.

ii.   To recommend the best approaches that should be integrated by school management authorities to provide an effective framework and infrastructure that supports OHS standards implementation and management.

iii.   To establish the areas that should be modified, overhauled, or improve to guarantee optimal results in the implementation and management of safety in Libyan primary and secondary schools.

The research is designed to enhance knowledge about the current situation in Libyan primary schools, including the hazards and potential threats that can affect children. In addition, it provides detailed information about OHS standards, regulations, and their aims. Based on these data, the study outlines recommendations for school management in for establishing the safe learning and working environment. Moreover, it identifies potential flaws in the existing policies that can lead to the increased risks of hazards.

In addition, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the current methods in place to implement and manage occupational health safety in Libyan schools?

2. How effective are the current strategies in facilitating the implementation and management of occupational health safety in Libyan schools?

3. How focused are the schools' management and other stakeholders in the execution of the OHS standards?

4. What measures should be taken by the ministry of education in its curriculum to implement OHS successfully?

These questions have been designed to provide a multifaceted perspective on current challenges Libyan schools encounter, measure the effectiveness of policies in place and outline the steps responsible stakeholders should take to improve the situation.

1.7. Reasons for Choosing the Subject

The primary reason for choosing the topic of OHS implementation in Libyan schools is the personal interest in this issue. As mentioned above, currently, Libyan primary and secondary schools encounter significant challenges both because of the remaining problems associated with the old regime and the lack of safety. The country's history in the field of education is fascinating because the government has made significant efforts to ensure Libya's development and growth in the field. At the same time, the country still has to eliminate many acute issues to ensure that all students and educators are safe.

In addition, it is evident that the many educational institutions are in need of clear instructions that would help in minimizing the effects of poor hygiene, inadequate sanitation, and water scarcity, as well as mitigating the impact of today's political situation in Libya. The existing problems are complicated by the fact that currently, there is a lack of studies on the issue. There are many investigations on Libya's political situation and civil-military relations; however, the country's educational system and OHS measures that should be incorporated are understudied topics (Gaub 181). Thus, the subject holds not only personal interest but also is vital for improving the OHS measures in Libyan schools and eliminating the knowledge gap on the topic.

1.8. Conceptualization

It is vital to clarify the concepts that will be utilized throughout this report.

Health

Health can be referred to as the state of being free from injury, as well as the person's physical or mental condition in general ("Health").

Safety

Safety is the condition, in which an individual is protected from danger, injuries, and risks, as well as is unlikely to cause them ("Safety"). This concept is used together with the previous one throughout the paper to denote regulations aimed to preserve the population's physical and mental health.

Hazard

Hazard is a risk or a potential source of danger ("Hazard"). In this paper, this concept is also utilized to denote the likelihood of events, activities, and processes that can harm individuals.

Risk

Risk is a possibility of something unwanted or unpleasant happening ("Risk"). From the perspectives of this paper, risk can also be identified as a potential event or situation that can result in individuals' exposure to danger. It is necessary to mention that although often used interchangeably, risk and hazard are concepts with different meanings, as risks are not sources of danger but are associated with it.

Injury

Injury is physical damage to an individual caused by a hazard or an accident ("Injury").

Accident

An accident is an unfortunate, unintentional, or unexpected event that leads to an injury or damage ("Accident"). Sometimes this concept refers to events that occur without a deliberate cause.

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