



AN EVALUATION OF SOMALI YOUTH PROGRAMS  
IN CANADA

BY

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## ABSTRACT

Since the early 1990s a growing Somali diaspora has been identified mainly in the west due to Somalia's unstable political and economic conditions. Somali communities residing in Muslim minority countries face many challenges that hinder many facets of life. In Canada, unofficial records, reported that approximately 150,000 Somalis reside within Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa. Due to the lack of a proper family structure Somali youth have become victims of a failed social structure; that begins with their deficiency in education and employment, along with their high level of criminality and incarceration. Unfortunately for many Somali males these struggles lead to their fatal deaths. Therefore, the Canadian government, local authorities and Somali communities have collaborated together to combat these struggles faced by Somali youth. As a result, youth programs have been established in Somali communities across the country in order to positively develop Somali youth in the Canadian society as productive citizens. This research provides a descriptive and comparative analysis on Somali Youth programs in Toronto, Edmonton and Ottawa. The goal of this research was to examine youth programs in these three cities based on the five Cs model. A total of 190 questionnaires were distributed and five semi-structured interviews were conducted with Somali youth in the three cities. 70.5% of Somali youth have participated in youth programs for longer than three months. The findings suggest that youth are more likely to stay in youth programs for longer periods of time after participating for longer than a month. The mean scores of 3.8 (competence), 3.7 (confidence), 4.2 (connection), 2.9 (character), and 3.1 (caring), suggest that overall, Somali youth programs do provide opportunities to enhance youth development. When the total means scores for all five Cs were combined, the three cities showed to have the same average over all with slight variations. Edmonton scored the lowest for competence however; it displayed the highest means in all other areas. Toronto showed to have the lowest confidence and connection mean scores out of all the cities. Ottawa had the lowest mean score by far in comparison to the other two cities. It had 2.7 for character, which was an all-time low, no other city, scored lower than the average mean. This research concluded that based on the five Cs model; both the questionnaires and interviews determined that, Somali youth programs in Canada effectively promote and enhance positive youth development.

## خلاصة البحث

منذ مطلع التسعينات وحتى الآن يزداد عدد الصوماليين الذين يعيشون في الشتات وخاصةً في الغرب وذلك نتيجة عدم الاستقرار السياسي والاقتصادي في الصومال. فالجاليات الصومالية المقيمة في بلدان ذات الأقليات المسلمة تواجه تحديات كثيرة تُعيق جوانب كثيرة من الحياة. وتفيد السجلات غير الرسمية، في كندا، أنّ ما يقرب من 150,000 صومالي يقيم في ادمونتون، وتورونتو، وأوتاوا. ونتيجة لعدم وجود نظام أسري سليم، فقد أصبح الشباب الصوماليون ضحايا النظام الأسري الفاشل الذي تسبب في وجود نقص في التعليم، والوظيفة، إضافةً إلى ارتفاع مستوى الجرائم والسجن في الأوساط الصومالية. ولسوء الحظ فإنّ هذه التحديات، حسب شرائح الذكور منهم، قد تكون سبباً لوفاتهم. وعليه، أيدت الحكومة الكندية، والسلطات المحلية، وكذا الجاليات الصومالية مُجتمعاً مبادرة التغلب على التحديات والصعوبات التي يواجهها الشباب الصوماليون. وعليه، تم وضع برامج لرعاية الشباب في أوساط الجاليات الصومالية في جميع أنحاء البلاد من أجل تطوير إيجابي للشباب الصوماليين في المجتمع الكندي كمواطنين منتجين. ويعتمد هذا البحث على تحليل وصفي ومقارن لبرامج رعاية الشباب الصوماليين في تورونتو، ادمونتون وأوتاوا. ويهدف البحث إلى دراسة برامج رعاية الشباب في المدن الثلاث استناداً إلى النموذج المعروف بـ سي ايس 5. وقد تم توزيع ما مجموعه 190 ورقة استبيان وخمس مقابلات شبه منظمة مع الشباب الصوماليين في ثلاث مدن. وقد شارك 70.5% من الشباب الصوماليين في برامج رعاية الشباب لفترة أطول من ثلاثة أشهر. وتشير النتائج إلى أنّ الشباب يميلون أكثر إلى البقاء في برامج رعاية الشباب لفترات أطول من الوقت؛ وذلك بعد أن شاركوا لفترة أطول من شهر. وتشير متوسطات درجات: 3.8 (الكفاءة)، و 3.7 (الثقة)، و 4.2 (التواصل)، و 2.9 (السلوك)، و 3.1 (الرعاية)، بوجه عام، أنّ برامج رعاية الشباب الصوماليين تُتيح كثيراً من الفرص لتعزيز التنمية لدى الشباب. عندما تم جمع مجموع متوسطات الدرجات لـ سي ايس 5، أظهرت المدن الثلاث أنّ لديها بالكلّ نفس المتوسط مع وجود اختلافات طفيفة. وقد سجّلت مدينة ادمونتون أدنى مستوى في "الكفاءة"، إلا أنّها تفوقت في تسجيل أعلى متوسطات الدرجات في المجالات الأخرى. ومن بين المدن الثلاث، سجّلت مدينة تورونتو أدنى متوسط لها في مجالَي "الثقة" و "التواصل". أمّا مدينة أوتاوا فقد سجّلت أدنى متوسط الدرجات بالمقارنة مع المدينتين الأخرين. سجّلت 2.7 في مجال "السلوك"؛ وهذا يعتبر الأدنى على الإطلاق؛ إذ ليس هناك مدينة أخرى سجّلت أدنى من متوسط الدرجات. استناداً إلى نموذج سي ايس 5، فقد خلص البحث إلى أنّ الاستبيانات والمقابلات التي أُجريت تفيد بأنّ برامج رعاية الشباب الصوماليين في كندا تعزّز، بشكل فعّال وإيجابي، التنمية لدى الشباب.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts (Islamic Thought and Civilization)

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*The Prophet (peace be upon) said: “He who does not thank the people is not thankful to Allah.” ~Narrated by Abu Hurayrah in Sunan Abi Dawud 4811*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

FYSB	Family and Youth Services Bureau
NFD	Northern Frontier District
NHS	National Household Survey
PYD	Positive Youth Development
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
SYP	Somali Youth Programs
YDP	Youth Development Programs
YDDPA	Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Over two decades of civil unrest an influx of Somalis fled to safer lands in the early 1990's outside Somalia, Canada hosts one of the largest Somali populations amongst the western nations. In 2011, Canada's National Household Survey (NHS) indicated that 44,995 identified themselves as ethnically Somali.<sup>1</sup> Unofficial records that take into consideration language and cultural taboos of filling out national surveys, estimate that 120,000-150,000 Somalis live in Canada.<sup>2</sup> The largest Somali communities reside in Ontario and Alberta.

As the horn of Africa, Somalia remains to be a homogenous country with one language, culture and religion.<sup>3</sup> However, disunity within a clan-based society is the leading cause for Somalia's current state. The Somali diaspora, like many others faces new challenges that threaten all facets of their lives. Livings amongst a predominantly Christian, middle /upper class white society, Somalis have become distinct as the "other", with their future generations trapped in a limbo between two cultures. Consequently as minorities, Somalis in Canada are at a risk to many social problems such as: lack of education, unemployment, poor health, poverty, criminality and many more.<sup>4</sup> Affected most by the above ailments is none other than the Somali youth.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, "NHS Profile, Canada, 2011." Accessed November 26, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> "Ontario Municipal Election: Somali Canadian Prospective," *Hiiraan Online*. 10 November 2006. Accessed on November 26, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Mohamed M. Bakayr, "Somalis: The Trouble with This Homogenous Society." Accessed on November 27, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Makwarimba, et al., "Sudanese and Somali Refugees in Canada: Social Support Needs and Preferences," *International Migration* 51, 5 (2013):106.

Youth are living in a transitional period between two crucial stages of life; childhood and adulthood. They face great difficulties upon their failure to successfully immerse in the transitions of life that include: education, employment, forming families (healthy procreation) and participating as full-fledged citizens.<sup>5</sup> This research will focus on the positive development of youth. This research aims to examine the ongoing Somali youth programs in Canada and evaluate their implementation of positive youth development. It will assess whether Somali youth programs are indeed effectively achieving positive youth development.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE**

Somali youth in Canada face many challenges so the government has allocated funds for their support.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the Somali community established youth programs that were meant to enhance and empower Somali youth. Very little research has been conducted on Somali youth programs in Canada. Therefore, not many have ventured to answer whether these programs actually help promote positive youth development. Based on the positive youth development approach, this research seeks to provide an evaluation of Somali youth programs in Canada. To examine how well they enhance and promote positive youth development; this research in its humble efforts, first aims to contribute to the wider academic discourse of youth development. Secondly, as this research aims to evaluate the success of Somali youth programs in Canada, it is in the best interest of the Somali community and Canadian government to know that the Somali youth are provided with adequate support to enhance and empower them with

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<sup>5</sup> Sophie Naudeau et al., "Programs and policies that promote PYD and prevent risky behaviors: An inter- national perspective," *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 122, (2008):76.

<sup>6</sup> Makwarimba, et al., 2013

positive development. In order for Somali youth to become productive members of Canadian society, there needs to be platforms for them to positively develop their essential life skills. Lastly, and most importantly, this research seeks to reach out to the plight of the Somali youth; who due to many circumstances have been marginalized and left voiceless. This research will be their voice.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This research aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To see how often Somali youth are participating in youth programs in Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of Somali youth programs in these three cities using a positive youth development model (five Cs).
3. To identify the differences of Somali youth programs within the three cities.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How often do Somali youth attend youth programs in Toronto, Edmonton and Ottawa?
2. Do Somali youth programs in these cities facilitate positive youth development based on the five Cs model?
3. What are the overall differences in the Somali youth programs across the three cities?

## 1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyze and evaluate whether Somali youth mentorship programs promote positive youth development or not, the five Cs model was used as the theoretical framework for this research. **Figure 1.1** demonstrates the variables that will be examined, their presence or lack thereof in the youth program will indicate to us, either the success or failure of achieving positive youth development. Our hypothesis is that if youth have shown developmental improvements in these five areas: competence, confidence, connection, character and caring, then it can be concluded that Somali youth mentorship programs successfully achieve positive youth development.

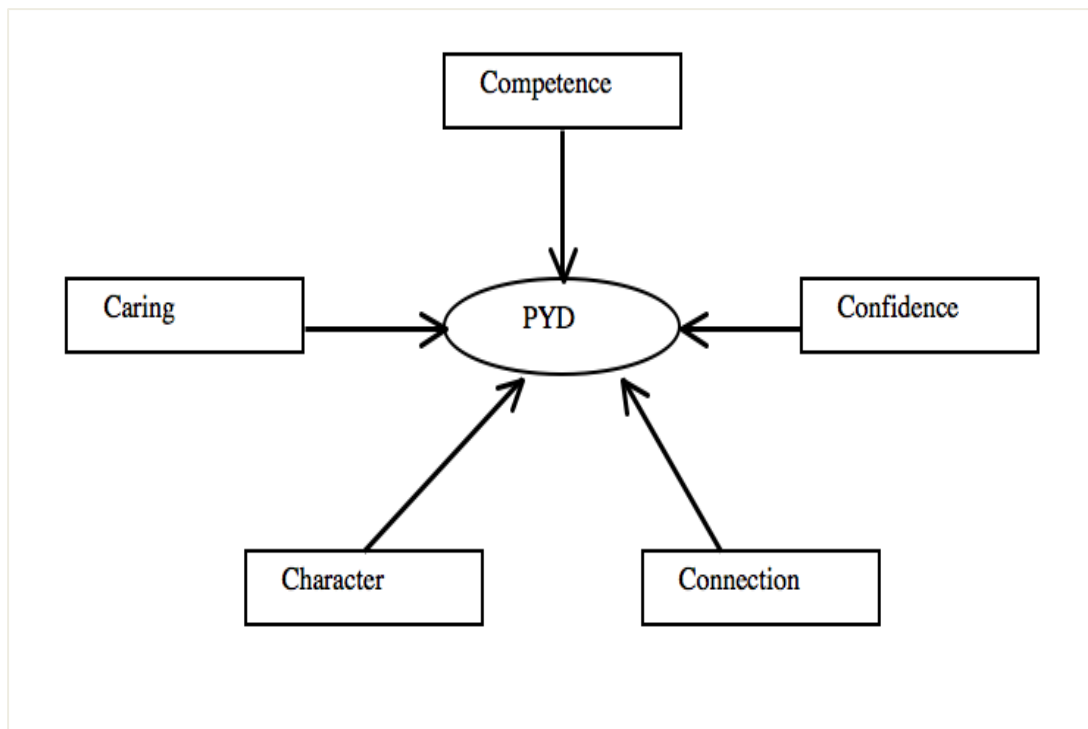


Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework Structure

*Source: Fardowsa Bille*

The following are the definitions of the variables (see Table 1.1):<sup>7</sup>

Table 1.1 The definitions of variables (Five Cs)

Competence	Positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive, and vocational. Social competence pertains to interpersonal skills such as: Communication, Assertiveness, Refusal and resistance, Conflict-resolution skills
Confidence	An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy.
Connection	Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community.
Character	Respect for societal and cultural norms, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity.
Caring	A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

## 1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter one discusses: background of study, problem statement and its significance, research questions, research objectives, research scope and thesis outline. Chapter two provides a detailed a literature review on the history of Somalia its: geography, culture, tribalism, language, religion, agriculture and trade. It also examines Somalia: the failed state, the rise of the Somali diaspora, Somalis in Canada and lastly youth development and positive youth development. Chapter three highlights the methodological approach and steps that were taken to evaluate Somali youth programs. The research methodology, general procedures, method of analysis and instrument of analysis are clearly laid out in this chapter. A detailed analysis of the data, the results, and answers to the research questions are discussed in chapter four. Chapter five summarizes the key findings and outcomes of this research; the limitations, improvements and recommendations of this study.

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<sup>7</sup> Roth, Jodie L. and Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne. "Youth Development Programs: Risk, Prevention and Policy" *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 32 (March 2003),173.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Before beginning any evaluations on SYP in Canada, it's important to identify the global Somali diaspora, specifically in Canada and their significance to this topic. Similarly, the measurable qualities of PYD must be illustrated in order to evaluate SYP. This chapter gives a brief history about Somali people and the conditions that led them into dispersion. A working definition of 'diaspora' and 'youth' was provided to help further understand the main topics of discussion. This chapter further places the Somali diaspora in Canada and provides a descriptive analysis of their current situation with a highlight on Somali youth. Lastly, the various theories about youth, youth development and the best approaches for its evaluation are summarized in this chapter. As the main objective of this research is to evaluate SYP in Canada, a discussion about PYD theory will be carried out in following chapter.

#### **2.2 HISTORY OF SOMALIA**

Somalia, situated strategically on the East Coast of Africa has thrived successfully on coastal trade since before Common Era (B.C.E).<sup>8</sup> The coast's abundance in soil fertility, rainfall along with an easy access for sea travel has made Somalia a rare gem. As every jewel begs to have a beholder, Somalia would later catch the greedy eyes of Western powers during the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>8</sup> John Middleton, *African Merchants of the Indian Ocean: Swahili of the East African Coast*, 16.

The dividing up of Africa among the European powers was inevitable. Famously, this “Scramble for Africa” took place at a formal level through the 1885 Berlin Conference (see page 9 for a map of Somalia at this time); within a few short years after the Berlin Agreement was signed, a large part of northern Somalia, comprising contemporary Somaliland and part of Puntland, came to be completely under British administration. The majority of the south and most of what is now contemporary Puntland came to fall under Italian rule, though the inconvenient distance of the northeast tip from Mogadishu in the south limited the extent and duration of Italy’s hold on it. Italy lost Italian Somaliland to Great Britain at the beginning of World War II, and at the end of the war the Four Powers Commission agreed that north and south were to be prepared for independence, with a target date set for 1960.<sup>9</sup>

On July 1, 1960 Somalia was finally freed from the clutches of colonialism only to plumaged through a series of factional wars and infighting amongst various clans.<sup>10</sup> The vigorous city lights of Somalia became immersed in complete darkness with the collapse of its central government on January 1991.<sup>11</sup> Somalia has remained stagnant, with very little improvement to its social, political and economic status. Consequently this plight, formally known as the ‘*qaxi*’ would lead approximately one million Somalis to seek refuge elsewhere, forming the very first Somali diaspora.

Somalia has the longest coastline in Africa, so it contributed a great importance as the center for commerce, which was noticed since the ancient world. In Somalia, trade between Muslim Arabs and Persians was established between the seventh and tenth century.<sup>12</sup> During the fifteenth and sixteenth century, Somali warriors began to join the armed forces of Muslim Sultanates to help fight in the religious struggle against Christian Ethiopians. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that British, French and Italian imperialism began to play an active role in Somalia. In 1869,

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<sup>9</sup> Abdiwahab Shiil, *Somalia: The Somali people, their History, Culture and Language*.

<sup>10</sup> 2012. "Somalia," *Background Notes On Countries Of The World: Somalia 1*. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Shiil, *Somalia: The Somali people, their History, Culture and Language*.

European expansion into Somalia was stimulated by the opening of the Suez Canal.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, the Somali people were under the foreign rule of three Western powers. The British who controlled northern Somalia today known as Somaliland, The Italians who controlled The Somali people southern Somalia and The French who controlled the northwest known as Djibouti.<sup>14</sup>

The French controlled the northernmost region, the area now known today as Djibouti and the British colonized some of northern Somalia, naming it British Somaliland, while the Italians governed the Southern regions, calling its area, Italian Somaliland. Ethiopia controlled the inland region of the Ogaden, and Kenya controlled land on its northern border inhabited by Somalis, called the Northern Frontier District (NFD).<sup>15</sup>

Somalia, like many other Muslim countries in North Africa, took part in a general reaction against colonialism. In 1899, a twenty-year rebellion against colonial occupation was initiated by Mohammed ibn Abdullah Hassan, famously known as “Mad Mullah” by the British or “the Sayyid” by Somalis. His rebellion spread across the country, which granted him control over a large part of Somalia. The British were the first to make Somalia, the first African nation to be used for flying warplanes. Consequently, “Mad Mullah” was able to easily receive strong support from his fellow country people. Furthermore, his abilities as a poet and orator earned him much love and respect from Somalis as they were highly valued skills in Somalia. Ultimately, “Mad Mullah” won over the hearts of many disciples, which allowed him to have a great command over the sparring clans through trans clan loyalty. Today “Mad Mullah” is revered and celebrated as the founding father of Somalia, a national hero and the epitome of Somalia’s national identity.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Shiiil, Somalia: The Somali people, their History, Culture and Language.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Finally, on July 1, 1960, Somalia gained independence from its European colonisers, the British and French. The unfortunate assentation of President Shermarke allowed for the military government to regain power in 1969.<sup>17</sup> This consequently initiated the recurrent civil wars witnessed in Somalia since 1977.<sup>18</sup> Although not recognized by foreign government, the northern region declared its independence as ‘Somaliland’ in 1991. The Civil war along with the worst drought Africa has yet to see in the century created a famine in 1992; this resulted in the devastating deaths of 300,000 individuals. Similarly, multiple floods in 1997 and a tsunami in 2004 severely affected and destroyed entire villages, taking the lives of 300 people. Even though political strife has yet subsided or been eradicated; it was not until January 2006 that disputing factions finally agreed to convene the ruling Parliament to restore peace once more in Somalia.<sup>19</sup>

### **2.2.1 Geography**

At the Horn of Africa, Somalia is situated alongside the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. It is bounded by three countries: Djibouti, the former northwest Somali region, Ethiopia on the west, and Kenya on the southwest, see **Image 2.1**. As the heart of ancient trade, Somalia’s unique location has come to embody the cultural crossroads of long-distance trade networks. Somalia position as an entrepot in the Indian Ocean trade can be observed in virtually every aspect of Somali culture as discussed later in this section.

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<sup>17</sup> Shiil, Somalia: The Somali people, their History, Culture and Language.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Sunderhaus, “Somalia” (2017):2.

Recently, anthropologists have used archaeological evidence to place the origins of the earliest modern humans in Somalia's landscapes thousands of years ago.<sup>20</sup>

The earliest-known pastoralists of northeast Africa were inhabited the Somali region, as the spectacular rock art of this region indicates, with similarities as far as the Western Desert, Libya, and Arabia.<sup>21</sup>

Image 2.1 Somali Map

Source: Google Images, Map of Somalia



<sup>20</sup> Sada Mire, "Mapping the Archaeology of Somaliland: Religion, Art, Script, Time, Urbanism, Trade and Empire," *African Archaeological Review* 32, no. 1 (March 2015): 111.

<sup>21</sup> Mire, "Mapping the Archaeology of Somaliland: Religion, Art, Script, Time, Urbanism, Trade and Empire," 114.