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Translating Child Safety Norms into Education: A Comparative Study of Lebanon and Morocco

Master in Human Rights and Democratisation:
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“Translating Child Safety Norms into
Education: A Comparative Study of Lebanon
and Morocco”

The Institute of Political Science at Saint Joseph University does not intend to give any approval or disapproval to the opinions expressed in this thesis. These opinions belong solely to their author.

Dedication – To the Voices that Shaped This Work

To the sister that life brought to me... To the daughter of my heart...

To the mother who brought me to life...

Thank you for the girls you have been, and the women you are becoming...

Thank you for being my anchor and making me feel like a rock star...

Dear Zee, Leil, and Kay, this work is for each of you and each of us...

I wrote this thesis with the belief that humanity can only survive if we nourish a culture of human rights. I am a survivor of child abuse, war, and gender-based violence. I have been sick and silenced, yet I survived because of the values of dignity, justice, and solidarity that this program reminded me to uphold. Starting from a workshop on environmental rights in 2010, along with experiences in photography, filmmaking, humanitarian work, along advocacy on identity, violence, and childhood protection, every step of this journey reaffirmed my commitment to justice and my belief in our need for good values that protect humanity...

The Arab Master's Program in Human Rights and Democracy (ArMA) found me at a moment when I did not know I needed saving. Despite physical illness, financial hardship, and emotional trauma, it gave me a space to breathe, to think, and to heal... and build a new tomorrow...

Receiving a full scholarship as one of the program's top-ranked students was not just financial support; it was recognition of my dedication and discipline, and that every human, if given an opportunity, could have a better future... Optimism has a new form today... It is challenging work for the sake of humanity, and we are all responsible...

I believe in tomorrow, in us, and what is meant for you will always find you...

Whatever your faith may be, our shared humanity and how we treat each other are our collective survival plan, or our way to ensure humanity's future...

I drafted this thesis as a drop in the vast sea of interdisciplinary discussions for our future...

Thank you, Zaynab, Prof. Nour-Eddine, and my colleagues, for the ongoing support...

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Abstract - From Global Norms to Local Classrooms: Translating the Right to Safety

From how children's rights to safety are recognized internationally to how it is understood, normalized, and implemented throughout the education systems of Lebanon and Morocco.

Investigating how international legal commitments are translated into national policy and reflected in curriculum, school environments, and perspectives.

This qualitative comparative case study draws on twenty semi-structured interviews conducted with experts, educators, and parents in both countries, revealing that the concept of "safety" is usually interpreted as physical safety, disguised with morals and values, while subjects such as sexual or emotional abuse or neglect are shadow-banned, leaving no room for child participation or evolving capacities.

This research uses norm diffusion and vernacularization theories to examine how an international norm is reshaped in a specific context, by understanding the influence of values, institutional gaps, and political realities on the ground. Lebanon's reality is challenged by instability and a layered crisis, which is reflected in limited resources and gaps in implementing an effective legal framework. While Morocco is more stable, norm translation is still challenged by centralization and bureaucracy. Both cases revealed a high reliance on foreign support.

This thesis contributes to a regional discourse in the MENA region around children's rights to safety and participation, calling for a context-sensitive approach in education policy.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMDH – Moroccan Association for Human Rights (Association Marocaine des Droits Humains)

CDA – Child Development Associate

CDPF – CP Departmental Committee (Comité Départemental de la Protection de l’Enfance)

CFS – Child-Friendly Schools/Spaces

CNDH – National Human Rights Council (Conseil National des Droits de l’Homme)

CoE – Council of Europe

CP – Child Protection

CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRC GC13 – General Comment No. 13 of the CRC on the Right of the Child to Freedom from All Forms of Violence

CRC OPAC – Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

CRC OPSC – Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

CSEFRS – National Major Research Center (Conseil Supérieur de l’Éducation, de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique)

ECD – Early Childhood Development

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

GCED – Global Citizenship Education

HRE – Human Rights Education

ICPC – Central Authority for Corruption Prevention (Instance Centrale de Prévention de la Corruption)

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

IEP – Individualized Education Program

ILO – International Labour Organization

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization

MEAL – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning

MEHE – Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Lebanon

MEN – Ministry of National Education, Morocco

MOSA – Ministry of Social Affairs, Lebanon

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

PNPE – National Plan to protect Children (Politique Nationale de Protection de l’Enfance)

PSS – Psychosocial Support

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 4 – Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education)

SEL – Social and Emotional Learning

SP – Social Protection

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WASH – Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Introduction - A Common Challenge: The Right to Safety Through Education in Lebanon and Morocco

Overview of the Research Topic

“For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” The first article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognizes each human under the age of 18 as a child, while giving an exception if states' national laws recognize adulthood at an earlier age (CRC, 1989). This definition, along with all the articles of the CRC, was the basis for all legal frameworks related to children in the world, in which its understanding helped also develop social and development guidelines. The concept of child rights is a big umbrella that holds many specific rights, including the right to basic needs, along with the right to education, and the right to both protection and safety (Muncie, 2008, p. 110). Also, as a concept, it intersects with many other concepts, including human security, development, and governance (Kaufman, 1999, p. 28). This research will take an interdisciplinary approach, while considering those different concepts and reflecting on children's interaction with the world. The CRC draws rules that apply to children and those interacting with them (Harris, 2024). Notably, the CRC is one of the most ratified conventions in the world, ratified by 196 countries, and there is only one country that did not ratify but still signed it, which was the United States of America (UN Treaty Collection, 2024). Its position comes due to concerns over national sovereignty, parental rights, federalism, and potential conflicts with domestic laws and practices (Rutkow & Lozman, 2006; Engman, 2015).

Children are exposed to many kinds of dangers and risks in today's world, and some are obvious, such as a child begging in the street or working in a factory. Still, some dangers take an obscure form, such as domestic violence or cyber exploitation and abuse (Muncie, 2008). Children are among the main characters in life, holding social, political, and even legal roles (Kaufman, 1999). They should not be excluded from governance, and their safeguarding must be a key priority in all societies (Engman, 2015). On the one hand, we must always include children's rights in our study of humans, along with our understanding of politics, society, and, more importantly, in our planning, writing, and implementation of laws and policies (Donnolo &

Azzarelli, 1997). On the other hand, we must understand that children are part of many spaces and interact with many aspects of life, but they develop in families and schools (Muncie, 2008).

Consequently, the main question guiding this research is “How do education curricula in Lebanon and Morocco enhance awareness of child rights among children and their caregivers?” The study will examine the content and effectiveness of the educational materials provided to children, aiming to uncover gaps that could be optimized to foster a safer environment and enhance child development and knowledge (Kaufman, 1999). Additionally, the research will investigate the international and national discourse around matters such as child safety, protection, development, rights-based education, and access to services, which itself might be affected by social and cultural norms, such as traditions that might tailor the educational approach and the role of parents and educators. This research hypothesizes that, although the educational curricula in Lebanon and Morocco include some elements that address child rights, there are significant gaps in content and delivery, limiting their effectiveness. Thinking that by improving the curricula, there could be a greater chance of reaching more effective and proactive engagement in child safety issues, and contributing to the child rights movement universally, while advocating for a more human rights approach to education (UNICEF, 2014a, 2014b).

Looking into the Lebanese context, we find that child safeguarding has been a significant challenge, with the country suffering from a multilayered crisis that includes the COVID-19 pandemic along with economic and political instabilities (Tuzi & Ghabash, 2024). Therefore, presenting a policymaking challenge that resulted in many children having no access to education, along with an increase in child labor, begging, and exploitation (Jabbour Al Maalouf & Al Baradh, 2024). Most recently, in May 2024, a network of 30 adults, including a lawyer and a TikTok influencer, was put under investigation for the alleged sexual abuse of around 30 children (L’Orient Today, 2024). Even though it was not the first time the Lebanese public has been shocked by such an event, it opened a conversation in the country and imposed many questions about pedophilia¹ and other subjects related to children's safety, starting with “Are we as adults doing enough to protect children”, “What are the roles of parents, schools, society, and government”, “who are the safety drivers” and, most importantly “Do children know their rights and how to protect themselves”. UNICEF has long revealed that one in two children in Lebanon

¹ Pedophilia: sexual feelings directed toward children.

is at risk of physical, emotional, or sexual violence due to the country's deepening crisis. Additionally, around 1.8 million children are experiencing multidimensional poverty, confirming concerns. UN agencies are actively working to protect children by reducing poverty, revising laws, and improving access to social welfare services, education, and healthcare (UNICEF, 2021a). This work contributes to a global child rights movement that includes many actors and is not exclusively limited to governments, local civic organizations, and international actors such as the UN and other organizations. Notably, both the Lebanese and Moroccan education system has a dedicated subject in the curricula to civic education, focusing mainly on citizenship (Center for Education Research and Development, n.d.; Zyad, 2021). Unfortunately, the course lacks a focus on any safety measures, and it is being taught by teachers who lack actual knowledge of the fundamentals of Human Rights, raising a question: “Is there a need to reform the curricula while enforcing better quality in information delivery?” This thesis examines the critical shortcomings of current civic education in both countries. It proposes a group of evidence-based policy recommendations to enhance civic educational outcomes nationwide to promote self-advocacy and protection.

Research Questions and Objectives

Central Question

How are international norms related to children’s right to safety translated into national educational curricula in Lebanon and Morocco, and what are the observable effects at the local level?

Study Objectives

- To analyze the international legal and normative frameworks that define children’s right to safety, with a focus on educational implications.
- To examine how Lebanon and Morocco incorporate international standards into their national education laws, policies, and curricula.
- To investigate how child safety is addressed in educational materials and classroom practices in both countries.
- To assess the roles of educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in promoting or obstructing rights-based education for safety.

- To explore the challenges and opportunities in implementing safety-oriented educational reforms in fragile or transitional contexts.
- These objectives are grounded in the belief that the effective implementation of child rights, particularly the right to safety, requires not only legal compliance but also cultural adaptation, institutional coordination, and pedagogical innovation.

Scope of the Research

Diving back into data I encountered throughout my career as a filmmaker and a humanitarian worker, I observed a recurring pattern among adult survivors who spoke up about experiencing the start of harm around the age of eight, or maybe this is the age they can recall memories from. Harmful incidents happen in institutions, homes, streets, and online. They are usually identified by adults or older children. If the witnesses take the initiative to do something about it, and if there are policies in place, it leaves behind many aggressors not held accountable for their wrongdoing, and many children with neither protection nor voice nor actual participation. This lack of accountability means a lack of follow-up and a lack of addressing impact, which would be reflected within society (American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2005). The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention speaks about the long-term physical, mental, and behavioral health consequences of child sexual abuse (CSA) and how such an experience will significantly affect an individual's life and overall well-being. Those consequences include sexually transmitted infections (STIs), physical injuries, chronic conditions, cancer, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, substance use/misuse, risky sexual behaviors, increased risk for sexual violence, and suicide attempts. It is notable as well that women who experienced CSA are 2 to 13 times more likely to experience sexual violence in adulthood, and people who experienced CSA are twice as likely to experience non-sexual intimate partner violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). UNICEF has published a review examining the nature and extent of this global problem, its drivers and risks, and consequences. Delving deeply into evidence on interventions for prevention, identification, and response, as well as support for child victims (UNICEF, 2020a). Adding to the global movement to combat CSA.

Going back to the question: Who are the actual safety drivers in society? Is it us adults and especially parents, educators, and policymakers within us, what exactly is our role, are we doing enough, or are we part of the problem? By imposing our patriarchal norms on children? (Department for Education & Youth Endowment Fund, 2023). Perhaps all of this could be solved

if we help children develop their actual consciousness to become active participants and safety drivers (Lansdown, 2011). The Lebanese and Moroccan contexts do not allow actual conversation in their societies about those matters. Usually, customs and traditions make it even harder to talk about those matters or raise any kind of awareness, especially if it sheds light on domestic violence, gender-based violence, sexuality, and reproductive health (Human Rights Watch, 2023; UNFPA, 2021). What makes things worse is how society normalizes many harmful actions toward children by calling it “Letting off steam” and “A light beating on the hand and a shout will not end the life of a child” and those matters raise further queries “What is believed to be violence in the Lebanese society” and what are the activities toward children that must be rejected by society (Save the Children, 2011). Local public policies only talk about specific parts of this subject, ignoring the reality that harm could come in many different forms, and we see that highly reflected in the education system (UNICEF, n.d.-a). Here comes the need for awareness, knowledge, and advocacy, which can vary from one age group to another, with a need to change tools sometimes, theories suggest that, if children are taught what harm looks like and what resources are available in their environment, they may be able to identify and utilize these resources to seek help (Lansdown, 2011). This is a real-life problem that affects the current young generation, but it has also affected adults when they were children. As explained before, a pattern of survival of abuse was observed, and only when they grew up to know right and wrong, they somehow understood that the actual harm that identifies them today was done years before they could comprehend it, and it affects them and their mental health, and sets their roles in society. They might or might not count themselves as victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, neglect, or else. But they will probably struggle with mental health, relationships, and behaviors. It is incredibly important at this phase to understand such a phenomenon and see the interconnection between adulthood health, behaviors, and childhood knowledge and experiences, which would give us a better understanding of their deep-rooted effects on society. Therefore, we would be able to see how the use of education could be one of the effective tools used while developing intervention programs that could play a role in solving the problem in the long term. This research aims to examine children's awareness and knowledge of child safety, looking into how to allow children to become change makers through their active participation. Believing the need to address the issue with a comprehensive approach, minimizing risk, and removing intervention obstacles, while including various societal actors.

Interdisciplinary Relevance

This paper will examine the subject from many disciplines to have a full understanding of existing theories, debates, and provide a new discussion. This interdisciplinary approach bridges mainly the fields of law, sociology, social science, and political science to examine “how the right to safety for children is translated and implemented through education systems in Lebanon and Morocco”. Grounded in the conviction that complex social phenomena such as the promotion and protection of child safety cannot be adequately understood through a single disciplinary lens, this research draws on multiple perspectives to generate a more holistic, context-sensitive, and critically grounded analysis. Starting with social sciences, examining the intersection between education, child rights, and social norms. From a sociological lens, child safety interpretation and its manifestation in education, identifying society actors, from a legal lens, looking into existing international legal frameworks that might be translated nationally or not. And finally, looking from a political science lens into governance and policymaking through the idea of norm diffusion theory, the research explores the mechanisms by which international norms travel, mutate, and sometimes resist full integration into national contexts. Posing a question, “Can connecting knowledge with lived reality transform education into a guiding principle for behavior?”

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach to this research does not come only as an analytical choice but also as part of the question and the hypothesis. Aiming to bridge different theories with practices and real life, and building an interdisciplinary discussion between legal obligations, social understandings, and political contexts that inform a more locally relevant approach to child safety in education. In summary, by weaving together these disciplinary strands, this thesis contributes to ongoing debates on child rights implementation, educational transformation, and norm localization. It invites scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to move beyond siloed approaches and embrace interdisciplinary thinking to better serve the holistic well-being and dignity of children in educational settings.

Significance of the Study: Policy, Pedagogy, and Human Rights

This research will take an action research approach to understand a real-life problem that affects adults and children, aiming to generate practical recommendations to develop programs and policies that can lead to long-term improvements in child protection. There are lots of reports on violence against children, making it necessary to understand the impact of education on

awareness, which is usually ignored by scholars. Aiming to understand a real-life problem that affects children, the primary audiences are individuals and entities that can work on wider research or use the paper to develop policies and programs, as NGOs, Policy Makers, the Ministry of Education, public and private school directors, Educators, Social workers, psychologists, civil society, Scholars, and Academia. The research will not solve any of the following, but it will study how having the education system teach us our rights as children might help us grow healthier and maybe be part of solving bullying, violence, sexual assault, early marriage, crimes, and mental health issues. Also, it will impose and answer the questions of whether teaching children their right to safety will add new risks and what obstacles such interventions would face.

Methodology - A Comparative Qualitative Inquiry into Lebanon and Morocco

Research Design: Cross-National, Context-Sensitive Approach

This is a comparative case study that will adopt qualitative methods to collect data, it will explore how international norms in regards of child rights to safety are translated in the education curricula and practices of Lebanon and Morocco. The research will consider many aspects, starting with investigating the existing legal framework and policy, while exploring the perspectives of educators, curriculum specialists, legal experts, parents, and child protection professionals, some of whom have direct interaction with children, and some might only interact indirectly by being part of policymaking or field study. All those stakeholders in both countries will give critical insight into the current situation, strengths, and challenges. Designing this research as a case study will support the analysis of the different contexts in which international norms are built and translated through building and understanding the sociopolitical and institutional complexities. The qualitative approach was chosen because of the main aim of this study, which is to reveal beliefs, practices and meaning regarding to the concept of child right to safety, which is the same reason behind deeming quantitative methods, because given the exploratory nature of this research, along with a lack of existing tools to study child safety norms in curricula, and also the importance to understand the deep narrative on how safety is perceived and enacted. Moreover, document analysis, along with semi-structured interviews, was selected as the primary method for data collection, to enable a full grasp of the issue from many perspectives and build upon the lived experiences of both parents and children, along with revealing what the norms are and whether they are aligned with the international framework.

The cross-national comparative approach was chosen to build a piece of research that could go further, and picking Lebanon and Morocco was for multiple reasons, starting with the researcher's interest and previous studies, along with both countries' context, which differ in political, economic, and institutional dynamics while they are both part of the MENA region, yet their international positioning contrast. This comparison will enable a detailed, comprehensive understanding of the international child rights norms and how they are embedded in educational systems in specific, different local settings.

Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

Safety is not completely a legal or physical aspect; it is also a rational, lived experience influenced by context. Therefore, this research is grounded in a constructivist epistemology with a critical realist bent. It assumes that safety realities are typically shaped and constructed by the local community and interpreted by multiple actors, each with their own positionality, experiences, beliefs, awareness, and institutional or caretaking roles. This critical realist approach acknowledges the structural influences on all aspects of the subject, from law, policies, and historical legacy to institutional hierarchies, which together support, challenge, constrain, or shape individual agency and understanding. By blending constructivist research with a realist interest in systems and structures, this research will explore both normative frameworks and actor interpretations, aiming to trace how meaning is translated through different levels of educational practice.

Theoretical Lenses

This study adopts a multi-level framework that combines critical pedagogy and norm diffusion, while taking into consideration the concepts of child rights and human security. From this perspective, the research assesses how international standards are negotiated, contested, or redefined within specific cultural contexts, despite their formulation at the international level. Case studies, such as culturally responsive models in Australia (Bostwick, 2025) and hybrid educational approaches used in community-based interventions in South Sudan (Save the Children, 2023), are used as comparative references, demonstrating the possibilities to build on grassroots participation to reach an effective translation of norms in Lebanon and Morocco.

Norm Diffusion Theory: This theory guides the understanding of how international child rights norms are translated, which helps the process and what challenges it faces (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998), highlighting the importance of including the theory of “localization” and “vernacularization” to analyze norm interpretation more contextually inclusively (Merry, 2006). For instance, looking at any concept related to human rights, it is important to consider the comprehensive concept of human security because it highlights the multidimensional nature of a concept of such child's right to safety, which is holistic beyond physical (UNDP, 1994).

Critical Pedagogy: guides the analysis on how child safety is approached or not within the educational setting, highlighting the importance of child agency and participation (Freire, 1970).

For instance, the World Health Organization Evaluation Practice Handbook helps in evaluating programs by looking into relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and stakeholder participation, in which the researcher will use this as a guide to impose questions on experts, parents and educators and as an analytical lens for evaluating both policy commitments and practical implementation in Lebanon and Morocco (WHO, 2013).

These frameworks shaped the literature review and helped design the interview questions, along with categorizing and coding data, and most importantly, informed the development of the analysis.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews

Twenty-one interviews were conducted virtually and in person for Lebanon and Morocco. Taking into consideration the limitations of travel and schedule, since it was the end of the education year in both countries. Only a few interviews were done in writing due to the preference of the interviewees. The researcher herself conducted all the semi-structured interviews; all interviews were recorded, and the recording was deleted directly after transcribing. All Participants consented to the interview and recording in a written format. Interviews took between 40 minutes and 90 minutes, depending on the person's elaboration on the subject. Participants were selected from five categories: educators (school directors, teachers, department managers), legal and policy experts, curriculum specialists, sociologists, psychologists, child protection experts, and parents.

The interview guide was designed in both English and Arabic, with tailored sections for each participant group. The questions focused on perceptions of child safety, curricula content, protection mechanisms and gaps, the role of civil society, and the practical translation of international frameworks into schools. As the fieldwork progressed, the questions and tools were updated by adding questions and even interviews due to recurring themes emerging in both Lebanon and Morocco, such as concerns around children's digital exposure, cyberbullying, and the absence of digital safety education. In response, I conducted a targeted expert interview with little research around current methods for digital safety to support the discussion.

Curricula and Policy Analysis

This study included a review of the national curricula for each country, focusing on the citizenship education textbooks. Also, we investigated materials such as policies, guides, codes of conduct, child protection protocols, teacher training manuals UN civil society reports.

Sampling and Participants

Sampling was purposive and guided by research questions. Participants were selected based on their lived experience at the school level and their expertise in different disciplines. Taking into consideration the need for a balance between participants from both countries. Planning the sampling aimed at covering around 28 Interviews as follows in Table 1 below:

Stakeholder Group	Target Participants (approx.)	Role in Study
Curriculum Experts	4 (2 per country)	Norm translation
School Principals	4 (2 per country, from different areas)	Institutional implementation
Teachers	6 (3 per country, from different areas)	Day-to-day classroom practice
Social science/sociologist	2 (1 per country)	Norm translation
Legal Professionals	2 (1 per country)	Policy interpretation
Educational Psychologists	2 (1 per country)	Psychosocial insights
Child Protection Experts	2 (1 per country)	Protection infrastructure
Parents	6 (3 per country, from different areas)	Household perceptions

Table 1 – Sampling plan.

During the fieldwork, I contacted 60 people directly, other than focal points, each several times; some I had to contact more than five times to secure an interview.

Stakeholder Group	Number contacted	Number Interview
Curriculum Experts	5	3
School Principals	7	2
Teachers / Educators	15	2
Social science/sociologist	3	2

Legal Professionals	4	1
Psychologists	5	1
Child Protection Experts	6	2
Parents	15	7
Digital Safety	2	1

Starting in June, most interviews were conducted between June and July. And at a total of 20 people participated in the research field work, purposefully selected across Lebanon, Morocco, and one participant was added for an international level. The participants included experts in sociology, psychology, education, communication, teaching, law, curricula development, and child protection, along with educators and school directors, and parents from diverse regions and socioeconomic backgrounds. The sampling aimed to ensure both institutional and experiential perspectives on children's right to safety in education. In addition to national voices, one international expert was interviewed to address the emergent theme of digital safety. Annex 1 is a detailed profile of all interviewees, including their positions, affiliations, and thematic focus.

Data Analysis: Thematic and Comparative

Interview transcripts and documents were analyzed using a thematic coding framework. Categories included: definitions of safety, curricula gaps, emotional vs. physical safety, reporting practices, teacher fears, role of parents, and impact of NGOs. Thematic matrices were obtained for each country to allow comparison of findings across stakeholder groups. Thematic saturation was reached early in some themes (e.g., lack of emotional safety) but remained open to emergent codes. A cross-case comparative lens was then applied to analyze convergence and divergence in the interpretation and implementation of the concept of safety through education in Lebanon and Morocco. Annex 2 summarizes the methodological design by presenting research phases.

All interviews and lectures cited (e.g., Lerch, 2025) are treated as primary qualitative sources and are referenced as APA 7th edition by last name and year. Full profiles are provided on 5.2.1. Annex 3 provides interview insights coding against the used theory.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to academic ethical standards outlined by the Global Campus of Human Rights and the University of Saint Joseph's. All participants were informed of this research aim

and its goal as academic research and how the data would be used; they had voluntarily participated, and they knew they had the right to withdraw at any time. They have all signed a written consent, while they were assured of confidentiality. Also, given the sensitive nature of discussing child abuse, emotional safety, and institutional responsibility, extra precautions were taken to minimize distress.

Methodological Limitations

The qualitative and comparative design of this study gives rich insights; however, it was challenged by several limitations, such as:

Sample Size and Scope: The number of participants was limited due to the difficulty of travelling, the timing of data collection within the education year, security risk, people's responsiveness, and other factors. Even though the researcher contacted sixty people directly for interviews, only 21 interviews were granted, and not equally between both countries. Which might not reflect the whole nation or all regions' perspectives. However, the researcher considered this when talking to experts, trying to overcome this challenge by giving a nationwide perspective. And when sampling parents, participants tried to cover different areas, which was very difficult for Morocco due to limited resources and no assured visa.

Responsiveness: the researcher tried to overcome many of the limitation that regards access to information and sampling by reaching out to a big range in the first stage of recruitment when inviting people for interviews, approximately around 60 persons across different discipline and sectors, were contacted including schools (principals, teachers), NGOs working in education and legal reform, as well as professionals in psychology and law. Despite this wide outreach, only 21 granted this research an interview, although 5 others accepted to be part of the research but never returned with a reply on when the interview could be, even when receiving a full interview questionnaire. Contact with participants was facilitated through academic supervisors, colleagues, and personal networks, which in turn generated additional focal points for recruitment.

Access to public Schools: the access to public school principals and educators is tied to communication with MEHE in Lebanon. The researcher applied for approval of communication in June, but the approval took more than a month, so the researcher had to stick with a private

school. However, the researcher tried to cover this shortage by interviewing parents of children in public schools. This affected both sampling and access to data.

Access to Data: This research needed access to government data, especially from the Ministry of Education in both countries, which was not possible since it is not government-funded research. During interviews with experts working with the Ministry, additional questions were added to try and cover this gap.

Language and Translation: All interviews were conducted in English or Arabic, trying to adapt to the interviewee's preferred language. A lot of care was put into the translation that had to be done, also to governmental documents that were in Arabic, French, and English; however, some Arabic words have no English synonym, so some cultural nuances may have been lost.

Researcher Positionality: the researcher is a Lebanese with seven years of experience in the humanitarian field and three years in the media field, with an interdisciplinary background in aid, awareness, advocacy, filmmaking, data collection, and interviewing. In addition to academic experience in human rights and democracy, along, cinema and television. Personal journal and peer debriefing accompanied the work on this thesis to reduce bias. Annex 4. Provide Interview guides and questions, along with the consent form, ethical considerations (English & Arabic).

Thesis Structure and Reflections

This research is structured into seven chapters, each building on the next to explore the child's right to safety through education from different angles.

Part I, Framing the Child's Right to Safety, includes two chapters. Chapter One introduces the topic, presents the research questions, and explains why this study is important. Then Chapter Two presents the methodology followed, including data collection across Lebanon and Morocco, and analysis.

Part II includes two chapters. Chapter Three investigates the key theories and theorists. Then Chapter four focuses on the international legal and institutional frameworks that shape how children's right to safety is defined globally.

Part III includes three Chapters. Chapter Five investigates the contexts of Lebanon and Morocco, providing findings and results. Then, Chapter Six provides a discussion going deeper into local

reality vs theory and how they interact. And finally, Chapter Seven brings everything together, summarizing the key findings, challenges, and offering recommendations.

This document begins with a front matter that contains a cover page, dedication, abstract, list of abbreviations, and a mini table of contents, then the thesis (core), and it ends with a back matter that contains a full reference list and annexes, along with a detailed table of contents. Front and Back matter are not counted within the word count of the core thesis, which is ~29,500 words.

By critically examining how the right to safety is framed in international law, adopted in national curricula, and enacted in everyday school practices, this thesis provides a comprehensive, multi-level analysis of the educational dimensions of child protection. Lebanon and Morocco, while different in many respects, share legal commitments under the CRC and face similar implementation challenges. This research aims to shed light on the gaps between commitment and practice, and to contribute to the creation of safer, more empowering educational environments for children in the region. By highlighting both structural gaps and community efforts, this study offers insights that can inform future policies and programs aimed at integrating child safety more effectively into national education systems.

Part I – Theoretical and Normative Framework

Chapter 1. Conceptualizing Child Safety: Norm Formation and Translation

Aiming to investigate concepts and theories to analyze the notion of the child's Right to safety through education. This chapter uses the interdisciplinary lens to draw knowledge from various fields, examining how the right to safety has been conceptualized, posing questions such as whether it has been protected, understood, or challenged across academia. Aiming to identify various theoretical gaps. While looking into specific theories and debates.

1.1 Norm Formation and Diffusion: From Global Frameworks to Local Realities

The theoretical framework will delve into different theories to have a full understanding of how theories affect the interpretation of child safety and may be reshaped and restricted in educational policies on national levels.

1.1.1 Critical Pedagogy and the Right to Safety

Critiques of authoritarian and traditional schooling were expressed in many forms, such as in Pink Floyd's *Another Brick in the Wall (Part 2)*, whose lyrics say, "We Don't Need No Education, We Don't Need No Thought Control." I am not the first to link critical pedagogy to "(Badri, 2020). Viewing education as a deep political activity rather than a neutral one, education can either enable liberation or reinforce oppression. As argued by scholar Paulo Freire, education must be an empowering tool for learners that equips them with critical consciousness, meaning they should become more aware and understanding of the injustice in their realities and work to challenge it. This aligns fully with the hypothesis of this research, meaning in the context of children learning about their right to safety, this will turn them into change makers with participatory agencies and knowledge to foster protection (Freire, 1970). Another scholar, Gerison Lansdown, built on this theory, emphasizing the cruciality of participation in shaping the learning environments for children (Lansdown, 2005). Moreover, children will shape a safe or unsafe space, meaning they should be active rather than passive actors in the process of education. Scholar Tracey Skelton took this theory to a higher level, arguing that educational environments must be legally protective, and there should be institutional accountability and legal literacy set in all school systems (Skelton, 2015). Culturally relevant critical pedagogy is very meaningful; rather than imposing universal standards on children, education that allows for critical reflection from within the local social and religious framework can better cultivate ethical responsibility and agency. This idea aligns with decolonial pedagogies that stress the importance

of "teaching from where the students are," encouraging self-awareness, identity affirmation, and critical knowledge of power structures. In practice, such methods were embedded in Indigenous-led educational spaces in Australia that used community elders, local metaphors, and storytelling to navigate sensitive topics such as violence, identity, and resilience (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; UNICEF Australia & ARACY, 2021, p. 17). This approach exemplifies a bottom-up normative translation model, which is a community-driven method that could create safe learning spaces by restoring dignity and cultural pride, principles that should inspire child safety pedagogy in areas like the MENA region, and it also aligns closely with the work of Merry (2006) on vernacularization and localization of rights. These scholars agree that child safety is not only a matter of protection policy, rather it requires a reshaping of the view of children and seeing them as rights-holders with agency and ability to participate, and this can only happen through a pedagogical reform.

1.1.2 Norm Entrepreneurship and Diffusion Models

There are two models of norm diffusion "Norm Life Cycle Model" developed by Finnemore and Sikkink in 1998, and the "Spiral Model" developed by Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink in 1999. According to the Norm Life Cycle Model, norms pass through three stages, which are emergence, cascade, and internalization. In the case of child rights to safety norm entrepreneurs, international instruments, and actors frame issues like school violence as a moral concern; they propose concrete solutions and then mobilize resources to diffuse these norms on a global level. And here the model is demonstrated, first the "norm emergence" phase, which represents their initiatives and is demonstrated by tools such as the CRC and SDG 4.7. Second comes the "norm cascade" phase, when these international actors engage with the local actors, such as governments and civil society, through strategic socialization, a process that occurs where widespread adoption becomes likely. And here comes the final phase, the "norm internalization," in which national education policies, school practices, and teacher behaviors embody principles of safety and protection (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). According to the Spiral Model, the process passes through five phases, which are repression and denial, tactical concessions, prescriptive status, rule-consistent behavior, and full internalization. First phase, "repression and denial," is reflected by the state's reaction of recognizing school safety as a right. Second phase, "tactical concessions," when states do shallow deviations by signing a treaty like the CRC. Third phase, "prescriptive status," when the local discourse changes, and this might happen due to

advocacy and awareness efforts, making a concept like child safety a priority. Fourth phase, “rule-consistent behavior,” some real change happens when states align policies with CRC, train teachers, and establish a complaint mechanism according to international standards. And finally comes the fifth phase, “internalization,” in which the concept becomes the norm, and it is seen embedded in institutional, curricula content, school codes of conduct, and teacher-student interactions, a real commitment to children’s rights (Risse, Ropp, & Sikkink, 1999). However, those models emphasize that the phase of internalization is not automatic and absolute. Many factors affect the transition to the last phase, such as culture, politics, and resource availability. In the contexts of Lebanon and Morocco, international norms appear in policies and some practices, but there are big gaps between symbolic compliance and meaningful implementation.

1.1.3 Localization and Vernacularization

Investigating global norms needed to take the locality and context as a base to understand applicability. This was done to study instruments such as the CRC and initiatives such as “Safe to Learn,” and how they got reshaped when they traveled to different contexts. Showcasing that the transition is not passive, and the adaptation process takes the dynamic of localization and Vernacularization, navigated by culture, traditions, existing institutions, and the political scene of the receiving society. Amitav Acharya developed the theory of Localization in 2004, which is when local actors reconstruct an international norm or even just an external norm in their society to align with their framework of values, culture, and history, making that external norm resonate with domestic discourses and practices (Acharya, 2004). In 2006, scholars Ennew, Doek, and Brady developed the theory of conflict and tension between the national and international norms, emphasizing that disregarding local values and only applying internal standards could be unrealistic in many contexts, and cultural sensitivity approaches are needed (Ennew, Doek, & Brady, 2005). This resonates when looking into family roles and how honor is looked at in the MENA region, in which girls are protected from sexual assaults as an act of honor, not as child protection, which contradicts gender equality. Sally Engle Merry developed the theory of Vernacularization in 2006 which did not grow away from the previous discoursed concepts; rather, it developed it and added a mediator or a translator of the norm which could be a local organization, institution, or educator, who plays the role of translating the international norm to a local interpretation that resonate with the local society, clearing the air as one would say and breaking the ice between the global understanding and then explaining it in a way that create

meaning for the locals instead of bringing something as external that replace their existing knowledge and clear it out, so they would create resistance (Merry, 2009). In several studies, researchers emphasize the importance of tailoring education to the “cultural logic” of Indigenous communities rather than enforcing universalist Western paradigms (Van Gelderen & Guthadjaka, 2021). This shift toward culturally responsive education enhances psychological and emotional safety by reducing the alienation and marginalization often felt by Indigenous students. Such an initiative was done in Australia, incorporating Yolngu child-rearing knowledge and principles of child safety. It emerged that formal schooling, when integrated with Indigenous epistemologies and local relational accountability, allowed children to develop strong cultural identities while acquiring academic skills. As the report notes: “Children learned through observation, story, ceremony, and practice within their kinship networks, and this was foundational to their understanding of safety” (Christie, 2008, pp. 8, 14). This confirms that norm diffusion is not a unified linear process; alternatively, it is a process of interactive negotiation by embracing the international norm on how it aligns with local structures (Levitt & Merry, 2009).

1.1.4 Synthesizing Perspectives

This intersection between theories is crucial to study the cases of Lebanon and Morocco and how they translate child safety, for instance the aspect of physical punishment, which in many places in the world is an act of violence, while it would be contested with local understanding as an act of legitimate discipline, here comes the need for localization to have success in diffusing that any violence is a violation to child right and will affect child safety, dignity and wellbeing. Those theories together showcase a multidimensional understanding of how international norms and concepts are integrated into any national framework, which encompasses not only policies but also extends to the smallest details, such as classroom practices. This emphasizes that the process is not linear and is shaped by context. Both Lebanon and Morocco engage in international child protection commitments, yet their local translation of concepts varies, which makes it ideal to apply the previous theories of norm diffusion, critical pedagogy, and localization to study their position regarding the child's right to safety in education. For instance, if we investigate critical pedagogy, it shows that teaching safety is not only about preventing harm, but also about encouraging children to be agents of change, participating as rights holders to proclaim those rights. This directly highlights the focus of this research on how the right to safety is presented in the educational curricula and whether it empowers children.

1.2 Scholarly Debates on Childhood, Protection, and Education

This section explores scholarly contributions to child rights, examining historical, philosophical, sociological, and psychological theories, and their intersection with child safety and education.

1.2.1 Constructing Childhood

Childhood as a concept did not always exist as we know it today. Philippe Ariès explored child neglect by societies and how childhood as a concept evolved. He looks at the recognition of children's distinct needs as a relatively modern concept, which he highlighted in his seminal work, "Centuries of Childhood, 1960." he explains that in pre-modern societies, children were treated as miniature adults with little concern for their well-being or safety. His perspective led to the understanding of the historical and social evolution of the concept of child rights. This resulted in the 20th-century discussions on why legal protections for children are necessary (Ariès, 1960). Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau added to this concept by advocating in "Émile, 1762/2009" for child-centered education based on natural development and experiential learning. Rousseau argued that humans are born inherently good, also linking children's best learning with development stages, which was adopted later in modern developmental psychology (Damrosch, 2005). He emphasized the concept of the "natural child and evolving capacities," which continues to influence rights-based education, especially in agency and child ability to be a change maker (Lansdown, 2005). Although Rousseau did not address child safety directly, current child protection frameworks are built on developmental psychology, which shows that children under 12 lack full moral reasoning (UN Committee on the CRC, 2007). Such debate is used to advocate for raising Lebanon's minimum age of criminal responsibility from age seven. Furthermore, child protection and cognitive development practitioners emphasize that teaching children the use of correct terminology for body parts and emotions is essential to empower them to have agency to report abuse (Nationwide Children's Hospital, 2024).

1.2.2 Emotional Bonds and Psychological Safety

Systems that follow a formal child protection approach usually overlook emotional safety. However, scholars have proved its foundational role in children's development of self-confidence and trust in others. The "Attachment Theory" by John Bowlby emphasized that the earliest bonds between child and their caregiver lay the groundwork for emotional resilience or harm, in which the child's psychological development is compromised, with increased vulnerability to future

trauma once the attachment is disturbed (Bowlby, 1969). Mary Ainsworth built on this framework by developing the “Strange Situation” study, which showed how children’s responses to separation and reunion could be categorized into three attachment styles: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-resistant (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Each of these reflects the emotional consistency or inconsistency of caregiving environments. Later, Mary Main and Judith Solomon proposed a fourth denomination: disorganized attachment, which they observed in children who had faced serious trauma or abuse and lacked a clear strategy for seeking comfort or safety (Main & Solomon, 1990). James Garbarino pushed the theory further by linking emotional safety not only to the family unit but to broader systems that might cause violence and neglect. Arguing that societal factors like poverty, war, and domestic violence chronically threaten children’s emotional well-being, even in the presence of legal protections (Garbarino, 2008). His work encourages recognizing emotional safety as a systemic concern, not just as a private issue. This brings us to a critical tension: is emotional safety solely a family's responsibility, or does society also bear a responsibility for ensuring it? These theories suggest that emotional security, if not institutionally supported, especially in schools, will become a privilege rather than a right.

1.2.3 Legal Subjectivity and State Commitment

Geraldine Van Bueren argued that legal frameworks exist on paper but not always in practice. Notably, Van Bueren was one of the CRC drafters, pointing out that the CRC would be useless without accountability mechanisms to hold states accountable when they do not fulfill their role, which might happen especially when enforcement is weak or political will is lacking (Van Bueren, 1998). Jaap Doek, who was the Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, added to this perspective by critiquing how there is a disconnect between states' ratification status and the real changes they make in practices. He advocated for the translation of commitment into local realities and to robust systems of international legal enforcement (Doek, 2010). Adding to state commitment comes how the law looks at children, and the concept of child protection leaves children dependent and lacking agency. Michael Freeman has long argued that legal frameworks treat children as if they are objects that are cared for, but they are not subjected to rights. He called for giving children agency, recognizing their autonomy. This theory attracted many scholars and led to a lot of evolution in policymaking, moving it from protection to involving children in decision-making, becoming change makers themselves

(Freeman, 1997). Together, these scholars pose questions on legal frameworks, practices, accountability mechanisms, and children's agency.

1.2.4 Globalization, Inequalities, and Holistic Approaches

The effectiveness of child protection standards varies in different societies and even between different classes within the same society. All human and child rights are promoted as universal. Moreover, Scholar Judith Ennew critiques this universality, especially in the subject of child labor, explaining that in some low-income societies, children work out of necessity, not neglect (Ennew, 2000). On the same rhythm, Janelle Brady expanded this argument to include that it is not only class, poverty, and economy, rather there is aspects of race and systemic discrimination which intersect to shape a child's reality and their access to services, especially safety. Highlighting how marginalized communities' children are exposed to more emotional and physical harm, arguing the importance of developing holistic protection frameworks rather than abstracts (Brady, 2019). Adding to this perspective, James Garbarino argued about how children grow up in a systematic, damaging environment that normalizes harm through conflict zones, poverty, and lack of services (Garbarino, 2008). Framing protection is not only a behavioral or legal concept, but rather a comprehensive concept that takes the human security² approach.

1.2.5 Education as Empowerment

Education is never neutral; rather, it is a process of reinforcing power hierarchies or challenging them. This is Paulo Freire's view that he shares in “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, confirming the role of education to empower children and give them agency (Freire, 1970). Adding to his argument, a legal scholar, Ann Skelton, has introduced complaint mechanisms as a tool while banning corporal punishment, transforming schools into safer environments, which also confirms the importance of policies being rooted in children's realities rather than abstract pedagogical ideals (Skelton, 2015). And speaking about space and environment and going back to a comprehensive approach comes Fons Coomans, who argues that an unsafe environment, directly like war and domestic violence, affects children's access to education, while calling to link the right to education with the right to protection in legal approaches (Coomans, 2007). Lastly, Gerison Lansdown pointed out the importance of child participation and agency, arguing

² Human Security approach: takes into consideration the person as a whole body, mind and emotion, changing the concept of security from physical to a holistic look at human being

that children's voices must be heard, especially in shaping school systems and preventing harm. Her work on “evolving capacities” demonstrates children as change makers and how they could articulate their needs when given the opportunity, confirming children's role in shaping safe learning environments (Lansdown, 2005). Framing children as powerful rather than powerless beings that only need the know-how and structure to guide them.

1.3 Children’s Rights Theory: Participation, Agency, and Accountability

The foundational notion of this research is the theory of children's rights, in which we find how different theorists have contributed to improving our understanding of the concept and, most importantly, developing our practices. Starting with Michael Freeman, who emphasized on entitling children to be active right holders with the ability to practice decision making and be part of the change needed, which itself contribute to two different concepts human security in which safety is not the only understanding of security rather there is the other kind of elements that contribute to our wellbeing’s and it is all under the umbrella of human security and on the other hand here Freeman linked safety to participation, existing, claiming and defending your right. This paradigm shift underpins the idea that safety is not merely protection from harm, but also about empowering children to recognize, claim, and defend their rights (Freeman, 1997). On another dimension which the legal comes theorist like Van Bueren who emphasizes on the importance of enforcing child right within the legal system of each state not only by making policies but implement and practice them and making sure that obligations are followed and ensuring accountability is obtained when needed because he explained that children rights and human rights principles must always be the guiding principle of states protecting children from abuse, discrimination, oppression and giving them access to basic needs which include education (Van Bueren, 1998). All those interconnected dimensions help us build our understanding of the notion of child safety and contribute to the evolution of our practices regarding children. Those three dimensions are also important to approach countries of the MENA, such as our case studies, Lebanon, and Morocco; even though they are somehow in the same region, they still have differences in their culture, and each needs a tailored approach. And the dimension of cultural sensitivity is highly needed in case you want the state and the communities to apply protection and be part of it, not avoid or ignore it, which takes us back to the norm diffusion models when we speak about the last stage, and how realistically it could be applicable or not.

1.4 Dimensions of Safety in Educational

Safety itself is a multidimensional concept, and to protect children means considering their physical, emotional, digital, legal, health, and economic environments, keeping in mind the comprehensive understanding of the concept of Human Security, which means the overall well-being of a human. The notion of safety in education must be interpreted beyond mere physical protection. It includes emotional, psychological, cultural, and social security that children experience in learning environments. In the case of Lebanon and Morocco, it is highly crucial to apply such an approach, a culturally responsive educational model initiative that was done in Australia showcases how emphasizing local values, healing, and trust-building could be a foundation for learning, using shared cultural references and non-formal pedagogical tools rooted in Indigenous practices (Bostwick, 2025). Such models proved particularly effective where standard approaches had failed, offering an example of how community-led education can address child safety more holistically. Here are the main dimensions of safety:

1.4.1. Physical Safety

Physical safety dimension involves various aspects, starting with environmental hazards in which exposure to pollutants, unsafe housing, affects children's physical and cognitive development (Lanphear et al., 2018; WHO, 2018). Traffic and road injuries are the top cause of child mortality worldwide (UN General Assembly, 2020). Unsafe toys and childcare products lead to injuries (United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2023). Teaching children about fire and electrical Safety is highly important to protect them from injuries (Runyan et al., 2019). The global safety standards to protect children emphasize the importance of food Safety. Contaminated food causes malnutrition and illness (USDA, 2021). Also, children are highly vulnerable to disasters and conflicts.

1.4.2. Online and Digital Safety

Since 1990, an ongoing online and digital safety has occurred. Data Privacy is highly important; there are some legal frameworks, like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which emphasize Article 8 that the collection of personal data from children under the age of 16 must require parental consent (European Union, 2016). While this legal safeguard is critical, its impact on education extends beyond compliance. GDPR has prompted the integration of digital rights and data literacy into school curricula, especially in EU states. Initiatives now include teaching

children how their data is collected, used, and protected, fostering informed digital citizenship, and empowering them to exercise agency online. Schools can use this as a foundation for building comprehensive digital safety modules that align with human rights-based education goals (Livingstone et al., 2018; European Union, 2016). However, this is limited to EU countries. While on a global level, around 33% of children report cyberbullying (Kowalski et al., 2020). Which cases mental health issues along with linking excessive screen time to sleep disruption and emotional distress (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

1.4.3. Emotional and Psychological Safety

Human well-being involves physical, mental, and emotional needs. Here are the threats to consider for emotional and mental well-being: Mental Health Support: Mental health is essential for a child's well-being; therefore, integrating it into the healthcare system is a priority (Patel et al., 2018). Bullying and Peer Relationships: constant exposure to bullying and peer violence leads to academic disengagement and long-term psychological distress. There is a global initiative led by UNESCO that aims to prevent school-based violence and provide psychosocial support while enhancing school policy and curricula. It includes administrators, educators, parents, and students, aligning with Article 19 of the CRC, focusing on rights-based education, and supporting the implementation of Article 19 of the CRC within national school systems (UNESCO, 2019a). Attachment and Nurturing Care: A secure attachment at an early age reduces the risk of later mental health issues (Bowlby, 1988). Resilience and Coping: Children's resilience is critical to post-traumatic recovery. Programs supported by the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies recommend school-based interventions (Masten, 2018).

1.4.4. Social and Legal Protections

Legal frameworks do not stand alone; rather, it is affected by society and institutions. There are international and national efforts in this matter that we will dive into later as a pure legal aspect. Also, to reduce violence, it is important to build safe learning environments, which is driven by national commitment and school innovative policies (Espelage et al., 2019). Parental Supervision and Family Support is such an important aspect that varies from one society to another, yet it is associated with cases of neglect, abuse, along with behavioral, emotional, and mental distress (WHO, n.d.). Child-Friendly Justice Systems that accommodate children's specific needs, such as the Lanzarote Convention that mandates child-sensitive procedures for victims of sexual exploitation (Council of Europe, 2007; Gilbert et al., 2009).

1.4.5. Health and Well-being

Access and availability of services are essential for health. Therefore, lack of resources affects children's well-being (UNICEF, 2022a). Malnutrition causes health problems that might be irreversible, especially because it affects the development of a child, which made the SDG2 focus specifically on “Zero Hunger,” aiming to end child malnutrition (Black et al., 2013, UN, 2015a). On the other hand, neglected or abused children are at higher risk of exposure to substance abuse, which might risk their lives (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021; NIDA, 2023). Disabled children might be at risk of being marginalized from health services (UNICEF, n.d.-b).

1.4.6. Economic Factors

The economy is very significant, especially since it shapes other dimensions. Therefore, a child growing up in poverty might have developmental problems, while they might be at higher risk of neglect, and even if parents do not neglect, there might be a risk of lack of availability of basic needs (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). This highlights that parents with insecure work and unpaid parental leave lack the bare minimum to improve their child's health and bonding (Heckman, 2011). On another hand, it is proven that high-quality early education promotes a child's long-term well-being and cognitive development; children growing up in economic instability usually lack this opportunity (Barnett, 2011).

Chapter 2. Global Legal and Institutional Architectures: Between Universal Commitments and Fragmented Practice

Critically examines how the right to safety has been institutionalized, posing questions that challenge global and local governance. It is also essential to identify, through this chapter, various gaps in international aspects by reviewing legal instruments, organizations, and institutions. Annex 5 provides a summary of international actors and mechanisms.

2.1. International Legal Framework

The international legal framework on all aspects of child rights involves a strong collection of instruments, some of which are binding treaties and others that are more of a soft law, and they all aim to the same goal, granting children their rights and providing them with the protection needed. These instruments create a strong foundation that affects all nations' policies, not only the contexts of Lebanon and Morocco that we will be diving in, but rather, they are the guiding principle for integrating child rights into national laws and into educational curricula internationally. This will be one of the greatest focal points of this academic research.

2.1.1. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The CRC, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 (UNGA, 1989), marks the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, ratified by 196 countries (UN, n.d.-a). It is an international instrument that provides the world with fifty-four articles that collectively draw the foundational legal framework for child rights, encompassing economic, civil, political, social, and cultural rights. The CRC articles are divided into categories, which are Principles, Civil Rights, Freedom, Survival, Health, Development, Protection, Participation, Implementation, and Monitoring. Several articles directly pertain to the child's right to safety: Article 6 gives each child the Right to life which is a mix between protection and survival, Article 19 requires states to protect children from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation", Article 28 guarantees the right to education, Article 29 outlines the goals of education, including the development of the child's personality and respect for human rights, Article 34 protects children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. Article 39 ensures the right to rehabilitation and reintegration for child victims of neglect, exploitation, or abuse. Also, it is underpinned by four general principles: non-discrimination (Art. 2), the best interests of the child (Art. 3), the right to survival and

development (Art. 6), and the right to be heard (Art. 12). These principles are complemented by General Comments issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which guide implementation in diverse national contexts (CRC, 2003; CRC, 2009; CRC, 2019). Therefore, the CRC confirms the child's rights to protection, survival, development, and participation, and recognizes education not only as a right but also as a tool to promote broader human rights values, which contributes to the concept that we will discuss later, the importance of a human rights-based approach to education. Both Legal scholars Lundy and Freeman argue that the CRC created a shift in the childhood paradigm in international law, in which it recognized children as rights-holders with agency (Freeman, 2007; Lundy, 2007). This later supported the development of an optional protocol on child participation in international communication. The way the CRC conceptualizes child rights creates an absolute obligation on states to foster safe, inclusive, and rights-based learning environments (OHCHR, n.d.-a). Todres emphasized that the CRC establishes a legal mandate, requiring countries to protect and provide for children not merely on moral grounds but because they are legally obligated to do so. He also notes that the CRC Article 44 obligates governments to report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child every five years on the steps they are taking to provide for children, the progress made, and the obstacles encountered (Todres, 2014; Todres, 2011).

2.1.2. Optional Protocols on the CRC

The UN produced three optional protocols to complement the CRC. Each addresses an exact aspect that is not fully explored or covered in the convention itself, and in the meantime, there is a big movement supporting the production of a fourth additional protocol that specifically details the right of children to education. We should look at the optional protocols as equally effective as a convention when they are ratified by a state, and legally, they should be signed and ratified separately from the convention. The Optional Protocols are as follows:

The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (OPSC) entered into force in 2002, composed of 17 articles, all of which aimed to strengthen the protection of children from abuse, trafficking, and sexual exploitation. This protocol is ratified by 178 countries (UN, n.d.-b). Requiring state parties to prohibit and criminalize the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (OHCHR, n.d.-b).

The Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) entered into force in 2002, composed of 13 articles, all of which aimed to prohibit the participation of children in hostilities and be subject to compulsory military recruitment. This protocol is ratified by 173 countries (UN, n.d.-c). Requiring state parties to protect children from recruitment and use in hostilities (OHCHR, n.d.-c). Other mechanisms protect children in armed conflict, like the Paris Principles (2007) and UN Security Council Resolution 2427 (2018), emphasizing treating children as victims rather than perpetrators, and stressing reintegration through psychosocial care and education, and looking at prosecution as a last resort (UNICEF, 2007). In this context, education serves as a protective measure ensuring a rehabilitative space for recovery and reintegration (UN Security Council, 2018; UNICEF, 2020b). The Paris Principles specifically call for education and vocational training as core pillars of reintegration, which underscores the role of curricula in restoring children's dignity and preventing relapses into violence.

Highlighting a need to look more into such a protocol when children are affected by conflict.

The Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OPIC) entered into force in 2014, composed of 24 articles that all focus on empowering children or their representatives to file complaints about rights violations to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. This protocol is ratified by only 53 countries (UN, n.d.-d). This protocol allows individual children to submit complaints about specific violations of their rights under the CRC and its other Optional Protocols (OHCHR, n.d.-d).

The Working title of the fourth proposed component to the CRC is “The Optional Protocol on the Rights to Early Childhood Education, Free Pre-Primary Education and Free Secondary Education”. This is a recent development, the UN Human Rights Council established an open-ended intergovernmental working group to explore the possibility of drafting an addition to the CRC back in July 2024. This working group aims to acknowledge the right to education by incorporating early childhood care along with pre-primary and secondary education, to become publicly offered by the state party for free to all children. This proposed protocol emphasizes the importance of international collaboration when it comes to education matters and considers merging all reporting obligations under the optional protocol into their reports. The Human Rights Council has acknowledged the need for assistance, expertise, and expert advice to fulfill its mandate effectively. The working group will invite experts, stakeholders, states, and civil society to engage with the group. The Council also emphasizes the importance of children's

meaningful participation in an ethical, safe, and inclusive manner, allowing them to express their views on the proposed protocol. The first session of the intergovernmental working group is scheduled for September 1, 2025, in Geneva (OHCHR, n.d.-e).

The CRC and its optional protocols represent a significant milestone in international human rights jurisprudence. It guarantees civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights for all children.

2.1.3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The UN issues agendas to address the world's issues, and the recent one adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 is “Agenda 2030”, focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are 17 framework aspects that aim for peace, prosperity, and sustainability to be reached by 2030. An important point to know is that this is a nonbinding tool, but it plays the role of an international and national guide to build strategies that reinforce human rights obligations. Here are the key SDGs that address children's Rights: SDG 4 seeks to guarantee high-quality, inclusive, and equitable education to everyone, while empowering and safeguarding children. SDG 16 seeks to give everyone access to justice through building inclusive, peaceful societies and establishing strong, accountable institutions while protecting children. SDG 5 seeks to empower all women and girls and attain gender equality, which includes GBV in schools. SDG 8 seeks sustainable economic growth through advancing productive employment, inclusive and decent work for all, while prohibiting child soldiers and eliminating all forms of slavery and trafficking. SDG 3 seeks to guarantee healthy lives and advance well-being for people of all ages, lowering child mortality, and improving the survival and development of children. SDG 1 seeks to eradicate poverty worldwide in all its manifestations, protecting children's access to basic services like protection, health care, and education. SDG 6 seeks to ensure accessible, sustainable water for everyone, aiming to foster a safe environment toward preventing illnesses and diseases. SDGs are soft laws that have an impact on human rights programming and national policies, including curricula reforms, and they play the role of ensuring secure, caring, and empowering surroundings for all children (UN, 2015b).

2.1.4. International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions

The UN specialized agency for establishing labor standards, ILO, established in 1946, promotes child safety and protection by addressing child labor through two conventions: Convention No.

138, issued in 1973, addresses the legal minimum age for employment between 13 and 15 for light work, emphasizing the importance of children's access to education and healthy development. This instrument is binding and ratified by 173 countries (ILO, 1973). Convention No. 182, which was issued in 1999, addresses the Worst Forms of Child Labor and mandates member states to urgently eliminate all forms of child slavery, trafficking, sexual exploitation, hazardous work, and forced recruitment for armed conflict. This instrument is binding and ratified by 187 countries, which include all the ILO member states (ILO, 1999). Notably, the ILO advocates for effective laws, education, and rehabilitation for children. Making child labor elimination one of its four fundamental labor rights, as declared in 1998 in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, it also promotes global cooperation by offering recommendations and guidelines (ILO, n.d.). Basu (1999) argues that such international labor standards put in place by the ILO are essential in shaping state behavior through moral and economic incentives. And this is highly crucial in the prevention of child rights violations. And states signal their commitment to both human rights standards and child justice by incorporating such conventions into their national legal framework (Basu, 1999).

2.1.5. Additional International and Regional Relevant Binding Instruments

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), entered into force in 1981, is a binding instrument, addresses GBV and has implications for girls' safety in private and public spheres, including institutions, schools, and homes (UN, 1979).

The Council of Europe (CoE) has specialized instruments on child rights. First, the Lanzarote Conventions, a regional binding human rights treaty to all ratifying members, and invites non-member states that choose to accede to it. It was adopted in 2007. Its focus is the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by setting preventative standards, proactive measures, and ensuring victim support. It also includes digital abuse as part of the provision, and it's monitored by the Lanzarote Committee (CoE, 2007). Second, the Children's Rights Division, a unit under the Directorate General of Democracy (DGII), is responsible for coordinating and supporting the Council's broader work on children's rights, including coordinating awareness-raising, capacity-building, and technical cooperation projects (CoE, n.d.).

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC): is a regional human rights instrument, adopted in 1990, addressing children's rights and welfare within the African states, taking into consideration their specific cultural, social, and economic context balancing universal standards with traditional values and giving the community a role in the realization and enforcement of children's rights, including protection from exploitation, the right to education, health, and participation, and it calls on states parties to adopt measures that respect both the rights of the child and the cultural heritage of their peoples. Morocco has ratified this treaty (African Union, 1990).

The Palermo Protocol is a complement to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), entered into force in 2000, ratified by 180 states. This Protocol emphasizes the vulnerability of children and aims to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking (UN, 2000).

The Convention against Discrimination in Education: this instrument was adopted in 1960 by UNESCO and ratified by 106 states. It plays a critical role in ensuring inclusive and equitable access to education worldwide by eliminating all types of discrimination, whatever it is based on (UNESCO, 1960).

The UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages: entered into force in 1962 and has only been ratified by 55 states. Aiming to ensure that both parties enter marriages with full and free consent, requiring states to enforce a minimum age for marriage to eliminate forced or child marriages (UN, 1962). Despite its relevance to children's rights, particularly girls' right to safety and development, the convention remains among the least ratified, attributing the sensitivity of the subject.

2.1.6. Non-Binding Instruments and Soft Law

Some non-binding instruments are used as guiding principles. On one hand, we start with four instruments that target children in detention, and they all promote child justice. First, the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty were produced in 1990; second, the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice which also known as The Beijing Rules produced in 1985 (UN, 1985). Both were adopted by the UNGA to provide standards for child justice in the treatment of juveniles in detention and justice systems, respectively (UN, 1990a). Then, third comes the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, called the Riyadh Guidelines, produced in 1990, which promotes child well-being

to prevent delinquency (UN,1990b). Finally, the Guidelines on Action for Children in the Criminal Justice System, produced in 1997, recommend child-sensitive justice procedures (UN, 1997). On the other hand, there are other matters. First, the Recommendation on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, produced in 1965, provides guidance on setting marriage standards (UN, 1965), and then the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, produced in 1974, condemns violence against civilians during war, both serving as important normative frameworks without binding legal force (UN, 1974). Additionally, the Beirut Declaration and its 18 Commitments on “Faith for Rights” encourage the integration of human rights principles into faith discourse and practice, including commitments to eliminate gender-based discrimination, protect vulnerable populations, and ensure non-coercion in matters of belief, with several commitments directly relevant to children's right to safety in education (OHCHR, 2017a). Those non-binding instruments are crucial for supporting existing knowledge and providing guidance.

2.2 Institutional and Normative Discourses

Various actors influence the discourses surrounding the concept of child rights to safety in education, including civil society networks, international organizations, along other multilateral partnerships. Playing the role of providing resources and advocacy tools that impact national policies, particularly in education and classroom practices. They also fill the gap between national and international efforts by advocating for policy change and spreading the needed awareness while implementing programs. The integration of children's rights within education frameworks has increasingly relied on structured curricula development methodologies that operationalize the CRC. These methodologies provide a basis for including key child protection principles, such as the right to safety, participation, and non-discrimination, into learning objectives and content design. Organizations like UNICEF and Save the Children have developed tools and benchmarks to assess whether curricula sufficiently reflect the core principles of the CRC (UNICEF, 2014b; Save the Children, 2015). Such methodological frameworks serve not only to inform national policies but also to guide educators in translating legal norms into pedagogical practices.

2.2.1 The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child & Special Rapporteur

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is an independent body within the UN that contains eighteen experts; its main job is to monitor State parties' implementation of the CRC and its

Optional Protocols. Those experts review the periodic reports obliged to be submitted by states under the CRC and accordingly provide conclusive observations and recommendations for each state to improve their CRC implementation for the phase to come, to eliminate any violations of child rights. Another important job for the committee is issuing General Comments, which act as an interpretive text for specific articles of the CRC, which guide states on their obligations along with following the changing world, for instance the General Comment No. 25 (2021) discussed the digital world and it affirms that all children's rights under the Convention are fully apply in this environment, addressing issues such as access, protection, privacy, expression, and education (CRC, 2021). In addition, the committee plays the role of the receiver and processor of the complaints submitted on behalf of children for the Optional Protocol on Communications Procedures. There is also within the UN the system of Special Rapporteurs, which are independent experts who receive communication and follow up on specific aspects, for instance, the Special Rapporteurs on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, mandated to investigate, report on, and provide recommendations concerning child trafficking, sexual abuse, and exploitation (OHCHR, n.d.-f). These instruments, collectively along with the convention and its optional protocols, create a base for the scope of child protection, emphasizing accountability mechanisms and proactive measures.

2.2.2 UN Agencies and Intergovernmental Partnerships:

Intergovernmental actors play a crucial role in shaping concepts and interventions, especially in regards of a child's right to safety, starting with the UN agency for children (UNICEF) working in 190 countries to protect all children's rights (UNICEF, n.d.-c). UNICEF is the leader in linking education and safety through strategic programming, by promoting psychosocial support in schools while eliminating physical punishment, while building a bridge between the education system and other actors establishing a referral mechanism, they advocated and introduced the initiative Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) which defines a safe school as one that is “inclusive, effective, protective, and child-centered” (UNICEF, 2021b). Then comes the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), working in 194 countries, specialized in strengthening our shared humanity through the promotion of education, science, culture, and communication. UNESCO fosters research efforts and builds partnerships while engaging in change-making through initiatives such as Safe to Learn, Ending Violence, and Quality Education (UNESCO, n.d.). It also supports the implementation of SDGs, such as SDG4

(UNESCO, 2023a). Along comes the World Health Organization (WHO), leader of global health standards, which contributes to promoting a healthy school environment, taking into consideration both physical and mental health, and advocates for including safety and health in education policies and curricula (WHO, 2021). Along comes the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), dedicated to monitoring human rights violations, while raising awareness and advocating for improvement (OHCHR, n.d.-g). Along comes the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), mandated to eliminate poverty and promote sustainable development, while reducing inequalities, contributing to improving institutional capabilities and the development of national and international policies, and that improves all spheres for children (UNDP, n.d.). Also, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), mandated to protect refugees and displaced populations by providing them with basic needs and services, such as education and psychosocial support to help rebuild their lives (UNHCR, n.d.). UN-Water coordinates the WASH efforts of other agencies and organizations, aiming to ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all, which is crucial for the health of children and their education (UN-Water, 2023). Also, the World Bank plays a crucial role as an intergovernmental cooperative owned by 189 states (World Bank, n.d.-a). Missioned to eliminate poverty. Investing in WASH programming to improve the infrastructure of water, sanitation, and hygiene, aiming to improve children's well-being (World Bank, n.d.-b), while focusing on promoting health and safety in schools and communities (World Bank, 2021).

2.2.3 Civil Society, Networks, and NGO Coalitions

Internationally, the following actors play a crucial role in promoting child rights; however, their presence differs in each country, depending on context, regulations, and coalitions: starting with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) protects and safeguards migrant children from exploitation and human trafficking, also provides specialized assistance to unaccompanied children (IOM, 2025). Then, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) produces policies with specific recommendations for children in the digital environment, aiming to enhance children's safety online (OECD; 2021, n.d.). ECPAT International conducts evidence-based research and contributes to policy advocacy efforts while delivering direct services to affected children to prevent trafficking, exploitation, and abuse on a global level (ECPAT, 2023). International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) engages in research, training, and advocacy on a global level, aiming to combat child

abuse and neglect, while providing services to vulnerable families and children (ISPCAN, 2022). We-PROTECT is a coalition that unites governments, civil society, and technology companies, aiming to strengthen legal frameworks, build capacity, and facilitate information sharing to better protect children online (We-Protect, 2024). The Watchlist monitors and reports child rights violations in conflict areas, while advocating for accountability and protective measures (Watchlist, 2023). Child Rights Connect is a network of 119 non-governmental organizations leading advocates for children's rights, aiming to ensure child participation in UN processes through capacity-building, technical assistance, and platforms such as the Children's Advisory Team, promoting child-sensitive education and accountability frameworks (Child Rights Connect, 2024). Global Partnership for Education (GPE) aims to strengthen the education sector in vulnerable countries while promoting data-driven reforms aiming for protective curricula considering gender equality, child protection, and inclusion, through financing national education systems (GPE, 2024). The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) develops international educational guidelines in today's digital world to prevent online exploitation, cyberbullying, and digital addiction. In addition, ITU supports states in establishing their cyber policies by strengthening online safety strategies, cyber hygiene standards, and training teachers on digital literacy (ITU, 2023). Plan International aims to protect children from violence and neglect while ensuring their access to development opportunities through providing humanitarian aid, psychosocial support, and educational services in emergency settings (Plan International, 2023). Save the Children, aiming to improve child well-being and resilience in crisis-affected areas through integrating emergency response, protection, and education services to vulnerable children (Save the Children, 2023). Terre des Hommes delivers protection, education, and psychosocial support programs to children affected by conflict, displacement, and exploitation, focusing on the rights and rehabilitation of vulnerable children (TDH, 2023). War Child provides education, psychosocial support, and protection for children living in conflict zones, with programs designed to help children cope with trauma and build safe learning environments (War Child, 2023).

2.3 Global Discourse on Safety and Education

Globally, standards for child safety have been set through mechanisms and actors as mentioned in previous sections, yet applicability varies between cultures. Recently, the global discourse has focused on the need to localize efforts. Therefore, the CRC General Comment No. 13 emphasizes

the need for child protection systems to be “culturally appropriate” and “community-informed” (CRC, 2011). On a similar effort, Save the Children has initiated localized culturally embedded protection strategies in both South Sudan and Australia, which involved community leaders and storytelling traditions to enhance impact and acceptance (Save the Children, 2023). Highlighting an important realization that cultural integration is not a compromise of rights, which could inform future initiatives. Also, the digital world has become part of the global discourse; therefore, the International Expert Policy Brief on Digital Child Protection (IE) has identified five major emerging threats, including cyberbullying, grooming, exposure to harmful content, digital exploitation, and privacy violations. In response, international agencies have urged states to regulate the use of data and digital platforms and to integrate digital literacy into formal education systems, especially in line with SDG Target 16.2, which aims to end violence and abuse against children (UNICEF, 2022b).

2.4 Persistent Gaps in Translating Safety into Education

Despite all the efforts to safeguard children, major gaps persist in embedding rights within education systems. Mechanisms such as CRC and SDGs have advanced, yet translating them into national curricula, pedagogy, and local school governance remains uneven.

Some countries have taken steps toward incorporating child protection into education through curricula reform, teacher training, and legal mechanisms. For instance, in Sweden, the CRC is integrated into civic education curriculum, accompanied by clear reporting mechanisms (Lundström et al., 2021). In South Africa, the Life Orientation curriculum covers physical and emotional well-being by encompassing issues of violence, abuse, sexuality, and health (Prinsloo, 2007). In the Philippines, there is an assigned child protection committee in each school (Department of Education, 2012). However, those models are critiqued when it comes to implementation and coverage.

Institutionally, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights did not address child safety within the education environment; it was only with the CRC article 19 that this issue was directly addressed and became a binding principle, and what helped was promoting child right to safety through programming and policies such as UNESCO’s Safe Schools Declaration and UNICEF’s Child-Friendly Schools, along with WHO’s Health Promoting Schools. More recent campaigns,

the Safe to Learn and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, have attempted to make this measurable under SDG 16.2.

Even with all efforts and progress, many national education systems continue to treat safety as an external welfare issue rather than a central educational responsibility. In the MENA region, these global shifts have had limited traction. Lebanon and Morocco both have ratified the CRC and made formal commitments to child protection, yet their systems remain critically underdeveloped in a rights-based approach to education. Both have unified child protection policies and government-issued civic education textbooks; yet these tools have major limitations in content, training, and implementation, affected by many barriers, such as the lack of intersectoral dialogue and institutional coordination, along with systematic blind spots and an understudied population; the framework remains insufficient. Critically, there is no sustained conversation about whether education itself can be used to teach children about their right to safety, or whether such an approach would be culturally effective, pedagogically sound, or institutionally feasible. This is the central gap this thesis seeks to address, taking existing knowledge produced by governments and civil society actors into consideration while being careful about the framing of such mechanisms as humanitarian or policy rather than pedagogical ones.

Furthermore, there is limited comparative research in the MENA region, especially research that bridges and connects disciplines, and it often frames child protection as behavior management, and never as a holistic issue of how rights like safety are taught, enacted, or resisted in schools. This thesis contributes to filling these gaps by focusing on the curricular, institutional, and pedagogical translation of the right to safety in two underexamined contexts, which are Lebanon and Morocco. It brings together insights from law, education, and sociology to explore how international norms are integrated, or not, into the lived experiences of children, parents, and educators. Research tends to focus on education quality while rarely examining whether classrooms and curricula adopt a human-rights-based approach to teaching, or even include the subjects of child rights, and if they do, the focus goes to obvious physical dangers or the individualized interventions conducted by NGOs.

Knowing that Civic Education exists in Lebanon and Morocco, safety is rarely included, in addition to a limited examination of how societies interpret concepts related to human rights and child rights. This research will address those gaps using theories such as norm diffusion as a base

to understand the translation of the international legal framework into national practices in daily life, as well as the examination of curricula and education materials, and if they reflect the state's international commitment, along with understanding if curricula include or exclude safety, and how it is interpreted in the classroom setting. These axes will help build a multi-level comparison between the two countries while allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the realities of the right of the child to safety, interpretation, implementation, frameworks, and, most importantly, will open the discussion around basic education in Lebanon, Morocco, and the broader MENA region.

Part II – National Commitments and Institutional Contradictions

Chapter 3. Country Contexts and Institutional Landscape

Morocco and Lebanon have both witnessed colonial legacy, in addition to political and social reforms which affected the education structure along with the whole country norm formation and legal framework, considering their context comes as the first step towards building a whole understanding of their implications in regards of child's rights to safety and how international norms are translated in local education curricula. Therefore, this chapter will go deeply into each country's context, taking an evidence-based approach, building upon collected data to provide a case study of each state, highlighting how national commitments are framed in regards of child safety in educational settings.

3.1 Lebanon

3.1.1 Historical Legacy

The French mandate (1920-1943) witnessed the emergence of the Lebanese modern system of education, characterized by a centralized structure with a focus on promoting French cultural values through missionary schools, which resulted in long-term sectarian division in educational governance (Traboulsi, 2007). “Lebanon’s education system has long reflected the country’s confessional makeup, with curriculum and governance tailored to religious affiliation rather than a unified national vision” (Frayha, 2003, p. 96). Frayha further speaks about sectarianism as a rooted issue that affects the development of a comprehensive educational system, particularly regarding citizenship and rights education (Frayha, 2003). After independence, the civil war (1975–1990), which stretched the fragmentation in all state institutions, but particularly in the ones responsible for child welfare, including the education system (Traboulsi, 2007).

Post-civil war came a phase of reforms with the Taif Agreement (1989), which was accompanied by the 1997 curriculum reform that aimed to introduce civil education and promote social coherence, but it was not possible to overcome the sectarian framework. In this regard, Shuayb (2016) and Frayha (2003) argue that negotiations on any structuring and reforming were negotiated among sectarian parties, which led to a specific kind of representation in historical narratives and citizenship values (Shuayb, 2016; Frayha, 2003). However, both public and private schools operate with various visions that reflect their local communities, reinforcing confessional divisions. The start of the Syrian war and the refugee influx added pressure on the

Lebanese education system, which resulted in creating parallel education tracks that deepen social divides (Shuayb, Makkouk, & Tutunji, 2014).

3.1.2 Political and Legal Framework

Article 10 of the Lebanese Constitution emphasizes the importance of education, guaranteeing its freedom (Lebanese Republic, 1926) while giving religious communities the right to provide their schools (Lebanese Parliament, n.d.). Lebanon ratified the CRC in 1991 (UN Treaty Collection, 1991). Law 422 on child protection was adopted in 2002 (Lebanese Republic, 2002), establishing mechanisms for judicial and social intervention in cases of abuse, yet its integration into schools remains limited and has not been introduced or equipped systematically (UNICEF, 2018a). In 2011, Law No. 150 made education compulsory and free up to the intermediate level, approximately until the age of 15. However, this did not change the situation in private schools, which are mostly sectarian, and the government has very limited access to oversight (Frayha, 2003). Additionally, in 2012, the National Plan to Safeguard Children was developed with the contribution of NGOs and international agencies; however, its implementation was highly limited due to a lack of funding and coordination (Save the Children, 2020). Since 2010, there have been many social movements that call for a secular and unified education system that addresses both historical and contemporary inequalities (Frayha, 2003). The You Stink movement was sparked by the national waste crisis in 2015, and it quickly evolved to call for the end of sectarian governance and the restructuring of public institutions, including education (Abu Rish, 2015). Beirut Madinati municipal campaign in 2016 followed the same momentum, advocating for equitable public service, a non-confessional political framework that is reflected in educational governance (Harb, 2018). In 2019, political paralysis along with an economic collapse weakened the public education system, leading to student dropouts and teacher strikes (World Bank, 2022). Student movements across Lebanese universities have actively been organized against sectarian divisions in higher education, advocating for inclusive, rights-based, and de-confessional curriculum as a pathway toward civic cohesion and national unity (Baunkjær & Rohlfing, 2025). This encouraged changes in 2023, a new curriculum framework was introduced that aimed to revive civic education and Lebanese identity, but scholars argue that even with this change, the curricula still prioritize religious and political narratives over universal citizenship and rights education (Asfari Institute, 2024).

3.1.3 International Commitments

Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, alongside the Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, without reservation. However, it has not ratified the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure, reflecting the state's reluctance to open individual complaint mechanisms for children at the international level (OHCHR, n.d.-h). Moreover, a country must submit a report, and the frequency depends on the treaty itself. The last submitted report by Lebanon to the CRC Committee was in 2015, with a gap of ten years, with no reporting highlighting Lebanon's ongoing challenges in compliance and monitoring (OHCHR, 2017b). Lebanon has been a party to many other treaties that are also relevant to the subject of child protection, such as ICCPR, ICESCR, CAT, and CEDAW, but it maintains reservations on some CEDAW articles that indirectly affect children, especially in nationality and family law (UNODC, n.d.). So as for this international commitment, Lebanon is obliged to translate many norms into its legal system and make practical changes, yet that translation is not fully happening, especially on the school level, reflecting the gaps in resources along with the political well of Lebanese confessional governance that limit institutional capacity.

3.1.4 UN and International Agency Support

UNICEF has been effectively supporting MEHE to integrate child protection measures into school systems. Develop a Child Protection Policy for Schools that includes measures of identifying, reporting, and responding to abuse within any educational institution. It also supported the training of educators and school staff on psychosocial support and violence prevention strategies and built a referral pathway (MEHE & UNICEF, 2019). The Reaching All Children with Education (RACE I and II) is a partnership program co-led by MEHE, UNICEF, and UNHCR, aiming to improve access to education for vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian children, even though these program initial aim is access they advocated for the inclusion of safety protocols, particularly in public schools hosting displaced children (UNICEF, 2020c). CERD and UNESCO collaborated on many programs to promote human rights and peace education, particularly in supporting the revision of civic curriculum to include principles of non-discrimination and social cohesion (Ghosn-Chelala, 2020).

3.1.5 Social and Human Rights Context

The role Lebanon plays as a refugee-hosting country from 1948 until now (UNHCR, 2023), with a large population of Palestinian and Syrian refugees, and with some Iraqi and Sudanese refugees placed a big strain on public services, which has affected the education system highly. Children from refugee communities face the risks of corporal punishment, bullying, and inadequate psychosocial support in schools (Human Rights Watch 2022). Political discourse has normalized violence to a level that fuels instability and risks children’s security. Moreover, each child growing up in Lebanon in recent years has faced massive, accumulated vulnerabilities in all aspects of life, from economic to safety, and then psychosocial trauma (Save the Children 2020). Child rights-driven programming had to adapt to these challenges throughout the design and implementation, while also dealing with emergencies at all levels and aspects. This socio-political instability affected children's rights highly, resulting in many Lebanese schools lacking the basic infrastructure necessary to sustain a safe school environment. Schools often operate in aging buildings with no maintenance or renovations offered, classrooms suffer from overcrowding, and the whole schooling system faces severe shortages of personnel who are trained in child protection (UNICEF, 2018a). As one interviewee noted, “some schools have no doors on toilet stalls or broken windows that are never repaired” (Interview with Zeina El Remeh, July 2025). These conditions showed structural neglect affecting children's safety and security, along with the lack of addressing a child's basic needs, which reflects a need to address the whole educational system, along with the investment and the statement put to maintain and sustain it.

3.1.6 Education Laws, Policies, and Institutional Reforms

Lebanon’s Education framework is shaped by its complexities, from sectarianism to political realities, and it is a historical legacy in building privatized schools, while there are ongoing initiatives for reform. Institutionally, the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD), which is part of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), is responsible for the development of the curriculum. This resulted in reforms being delayed due to political will. Moreover, the latest full curriculum reform framework was published by CERD in 1997; while it includes citizenship and civic education, it still lacks child protection-focused content (CERD, 1997). While CERD keeps on working along with local actors to include more resistant issues into school practices, a call for framework reform was rising. Citizenship education in Lebanon is framed largely around national unity and civil behavior, rather than

critical engagement with rights or safety (Akar, 2021). As part of MEHE, the Directorate of School Counselling and Guidance, or the Inclusive Education Unit, is responsible for psychosocial support and counselling frameworks in public schools (UNICEF, 2018b). The MEHE's institutional nature, with a multi-level structure, has weakened its effectiveness with overlapping mandates and a lack of coordination. A mapping study of Lebanon's child protection system found that "coordination between education professionals and child protection actors remains ad hoc and informal, resulting in gaps in response to school-based violence or neglect" (UNICEF, 2018a, p. 24).

Recent years have had several reform initiatives developed in partnership with international organizations and agencies, such as the National Plan to Safeguard Children in 2014, aimed at establishing a robust child protection system, yet it was challenged by fragmented implementation and limited institutional capacity, which resulted in inconsistency and sustainability (UNICEF, 2014c), and the Reaching All Children with Education - RACE I and II plans, increased the access to education for Syrian refugee children; however, there were limitations when it came to the embedding of safety frameworks or protection protocols within the curriculum (MEHE, 2016). Then, the Inclusive Education Strategy in 2018 aimed to unconditionally enroll students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms while providing them with special educators and therapists to facilitate their inclusion. The strategy enhanced teacher training and community engagement, but only reached 1,547 students, meaning a broader national scale-up remained limited (Hteit, 2023). Effectiveness was challenged by a chronic lack of funding and resistance to centralized curricular change. Lebanon's educational reform efforts "are often stalled by sectarian interests and a lack of national consensus on the goals of education" (Frayha, 2003, p. 85). Civil society, NGOs, and agencies have worked to fill gaps by providing funds, programming, capacity building, and most importantly, awareness and advocacy (Save the Children, 2021), with schools relying completely on funds to sustain, reflecting a systematic gap and need to improve matters of children's governance, including all institutions and specifically educational ones.

3.2 Morocco

3.2.1 Historical Legacy

Morocco was influenced by multiple colonial legacies, which shaped its modern education system between 1912 and 1956 during the French and Spanish mandates. And ended up favoring French-language schools and elite education (UNESCO, 2022; Kolli, 2024).

The "hidden curriculum" continues to reflect remnants of French republican ideals blended with Islamic moral codes, producing a tension between universal child rights and localized notions of discipline and morality (Benbabaali, 2018). “The postcolonial state used education as a tool of nation-building but struggled to integrate human rights education into curriculum reform” (Ennaji, 2005, p. 102). The Ministry of National Education, established in 1999, is the central institution for education governance (MEN, Morocco, 2023). However, Morocco has adopted the Charter Nationale de l’Éducation et de la Formation, working for a decade, 1999–2009, in advocating for equality and quality; however, there were high gaps in covering rural areas (MEN, 2023; Morchid, 2020).

3.2.2 Political and Legal Framework

Morocco ratified the CRC in 1993 and has aligned its legal framework with international norms (UN, 1993). Notably, Article 32 of the 2011 Constitution focuses on the importance of protecting education and respecting children’s rights (Kingdom of Morocco, 2011). In 2015, a new strategy was introduced, “Vision 2030,” a 15-year plan to reform education that includes: strengthening education values, building critical thinking, and enhancing digital learning. Notions as citizenship and human rights became a base for education, but were introduced gradually into the curriculum, aiming to protect children in the Moroccan school system (CSEFRS, 2015; World Bank, 2019). However, classroom culture lacks practical application and is challenged by inconsistency (UNESCO, 2019b). Also in 2015, the Moroccan government adopted the Politique Nationale de Protection de l’Enfance (PNIPE) with the support of UN agencies, seeking to install protection mechanisms within the Moroccan schools (UNICEF Morocco, 2020). Law 51.17 was adopted in 2019, introducing compulsory education from age 4 to 16 and encouraging the principles of equal opportunity, inclusivity, and lifelong learning (CSEFRS, 2019). Calling for the decentralization of education to make it more regionally

managed, improving responsiveness to local needs, and reducing territorial disparities (Taleb, 2023).

3.2.3 International Commitments

Morocco ratified the CRC in 1993 and its two initial Optional Protocols, signaling strong formal alignment with international child rights obligations (OHCHR, n.d.-a). The state has also ratified the ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW (with reservations), CAT, and CRPD, forming a broad treaty base for child protection (OHCHR, n.d.-i). Formally, the government is obliged to follow up on its international commitment. Yet, the communication of Special Rapporteurs for the last three years, from 2021 and 2024, has revealed a systematic gap and discrimination, especially towards the Sahrawi community. This included border violence, harassment of children and youth, and very fragile protection in detention settings (OHCHR, n.d.-j).

3.2.4 UN and International Agency Support

UN agencies have long supported initiatives by local ministries and institutions in embedding child protection and well-being into education sector reforms. In this regard, UNICEF has supported Moroccan Vision 2030, Framework Law 51.17, and the 2015 PNIPE, aiming to embed child protection in education and social policy (UNICEF, 2020e). Furthermore, UNESCO contributed to evaluating the impact of violence in schools across Morocco and recommended preventive frameworks, including child participation in decision-making and awareness-raising campaigns on students' rights (UNESCO, 2019c).

3.2.5 Social and Human Rights Context

“The contradiction between national legal commitments and actual school practices illustrates the broader gap between policy and lived experience” (Sater, 2010). International actors, including the ILO and UNICEF, have put a tremendous effort into combating child safety issues such as labor, violence, and neglect; however, cultural barriers have challenged their efforts, leaving Morocco facing inequalities, gender disparities, and high dropout rates, especially among girls in rural areas (Benchemsi, 2012). Moreover, Moroccan public schools lack the understanding of child safety, and it is not built as child-friendly environments, particularly concerning corporal punishment and peer violence (UNESCO, 2019c).

3.2.6 Education Laws, Policies, and Institutional Reforms

The Moroccan education system has undergone a significant transformation since the state's independence in 1956, focusing on bringing rights-based approaches. However, Ennaji (2005) argues, “While rights-based language is increasingly visible in official discourse, the actual pedagogical practices often fall short of empowering students as rights-holders” (Ennaji, 2005, p. 118). As Sater (2010) argues, “the Moroccan state has made significant rhetorical and legislative advances in education reform, but these are often undermined by institutional inertia and the persistence of top-down management” (Sater, 2010, p. 189). Moreover, the Moroccan curriculum focuses on moral instructions rather than a child protection approach, while limiting participatory learning. Institutionally, the Ministry of National Education is responsible for everything related to education, with strategic support coming from the Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research (CSEFRS, 2015). This type of governance often leaves tracks of gaps because it faces localized challenges and difficulty in adapting, resulting in the incorporation of child-centered, rights-based pedagogies into the national curriculum. However, the Moroccan government has established multiple strategic plans to enhance education and children's access to protection mechanisms, especially in rural areas. The government strategic report of 2017–2021 provided insights that confirm this: 56% of new educational infrastructure was constructed in rural areas, and over 94% of school meal beneficiaries were rural students to address the unequal access and school abandonment outside urban centers (Kingdom of Morocco, 2021). More specifically on protection, as mentioned in the UNICEF Morocco report (2020), “mechanisms for early identification and referral of at-risk children are still weakly integrated into the education sector” (UNICEF, 2020e, p. 9). Although the GENIE program has significantly advanced the digitization of public schools and strengthened ICT skills through investments in infrastructure, teacher training, and digital resources, it has not produced documented improvements in school safety or psychosocial well-being among students and teachers (Laaziz, 2018; OECD, 2018). Civic education was added to the national curriculum in 2003 as a response to globalization, extremism, and political instability, with the stated aim of preparing responsible, engaged citizens. However, Ziad (2021) criticized the curriculum by arguing that it has significant structural limitations at different levels, starting with the conceptual stage, in which the concepts are abstract, such as democracy, rights, and constitutionalism are introduced at a young age before the child's ability to comprehend their meaning, compounded by language barriers and overcrowded classrooms. At the

implementation level, pedagogy remains largely teacher-centered, with emphasis on memorization rather than critical active engagement. Textbooks further reinforce this by presenting decontextualized content detached from students' lived realities. At the assessment level, reliance on pen-and-paper examinations measures factual recall rather than civic motivation, values, or practical skills. These shortcomings have contributed to Moroccan youth's widespread disengagement from formal political life (Zyad, 2021). Despite robust legal and strategic frameworks, the operationalization of children's right to safety in education remains a work in progress.

3.3 Comparative Overview

Lebanon and Morocco have both reflected on colonial legacies and their influence while relying heavily on the support of the interagency to implement child-rights-based programming. Those elements affected their ability to localize and develop their educational systems. Ending up applying an inherited system instead, which mixes secularism and religion while creating tensions in some subjects and approaches. Influencing not only pedagogical structures but also the political imaginary of rights and duties. Moreover, they both ratified the CRC in the early 1990s and built their legal framework accordingly, yet they find difficulties in institutionalizing the concepts that come under child rights, especially safety. Morocco showed a higher engagement when it comes to the number of treaties ratified, with a strong centralized education system that has been reformed with the support of international agencies, while Lebanon, on the other hand, has shown a decentralized education system with delays in reporting and reservations on treaties that affect children directly and indirectly. Both countries have big gaps in effective implementation and a lot of gaps in school curricula.

Chapter 4. Fieldwork Overview and Stakeholder Perspectives

The fieldwork was shaped by some limitations, such as the inability to travel to Morocco and to travel to some places in Lebanon, so the main solution was to hold Moroccan interviews online and to do so for some interviews in the Lebanese context. In this regard, Semi-structured interviews were the main tool used to collect data while avoiding unbalanced information in the comparison.

4.1 Participant Profiles

The multidisciplinary approach taken by this study led to engaging with participants from diverse backgrounds in both Lebanon and Morocco. They have been individually selected based on their relevance to the research focus on the child's right to safety through education.

Participants included Parents, educators, practitioners, including child protection professionals, and experts in various other fields, such as curriculum developers, sociologists, psychologists, and researchers in digital media, education management, and norm formation. To ensure a well-rounded understanding of how international norms in child safety were interpreted and implemented across different personnel who all have some kind of role in the life of a child.

Including several high-profile academic and field experts resulted in a comprehensive overview on the subject, not only for Morocco and Lebanon but also in the matter of norm formation struggles that could have commonalities with other localities in the world.

12 interviews for Lebanon: 2 school principals in different areas, 4 parents (from different areas, classes, and backgrounds), 1 teacher, 1 curricula expert from the Ministry of Education, 2 child protection officers for Schools and NGOs, 1 Sociologist, 1 psychologist

8 interviews for Morocco: 1 education policy advisor (Ministry-affiliated), 1 teacher, 1 worker in education reform, 3 parents, 1 university professor in norm formation, 1 lawyer focused on education law.

One interview was added to the international level with an expert in digital safety for children, Veronique Lerch, to address the emerging theme through interviews and to understand the gap that was described by experts, parents, and educators.

Below is a detailed categorization of interviewee profiles:

4.1.1 Experts, Practitioners, and Educators

Prof. Roula Abi Habib (Lebanon) is a sociologist and university professor with a doctorate in sociology. She is the director of the Center for the Study of the Modern Arab World (CEMAM) and the director of the Training Academy for Citizenship. Her expertise explained the sociopolitical dimensions shaping educational discourse and child protection narratives in Lebanon and how societies in general form norms and make changes accordingly.

Mrs. Wardé Bou Daher (Lebanon) is a psychologist, trainer, and mental health advocate, with a focus on women and children. Her contribution critically reflected on the psychological safety of children in educational settings, along with the role of society, parents, and educators.

Prof. Blanche Abi Assaf (Lebanon) is a curriculum developer and coordinator of the Civics Department at CRDP. She is also a university educator whose expertise lies in law, media, and civics education and its role in fostering citizenship values. Her contribution to the research was a comprehensive review of the historic development of the curricula, in addition to highlighting challenges, sharing plans and opportunities, and highlighting the importance of a reformed curriculum and public policies.

Prof. Jimmy Choufani (Lebanon) serves as the director of a private school in Beirut Suburb, Sebtieh, Committee Member at CRDP, and a university lecturer in Philosophy of Education at USJ. His insights centered on leadership, administration, and structural challenges to implement child safety mechanisms, along with highlighting the differences between private and public schools and the importance of a comprehensive child-rights approach to education.

Mrs. Joyce Kawkabani (Lebanon) is a child protection expert, social worker, and counselor who previously worked with civil society, international organizations, and schools, and she is also involved in multi-sectoral education and protection coordination mechanisms. Her insight was focused on a real-life experiment where a Lebanese private school adapted a child-rights-based curriculum that added a lot of subjects and activities that are not included in the original public curriculum. She also highlighted the work of the three different sectors.

Ms. Anna-Maria Hadid (Lebanon) is a case manager with NGOs. Her work focuses on the intersection of legal and social services for child well-being. Her insight gave real-life data about schools and the services provided, highlighting the need for better implementation of law and

accountability measures, along with focusing on the importance of parents' awareness and contribution.

Mrs. Samira Al Haj (Lebanon): Principal of a school in South Lebanon with deep awareness of community-school dynamics. her background in sociology gives insight into the role of leadership in promoting child well-being.

Mrs. Zeina El Remeh (Lebanon): School teacher, curriculum coordinator, and academic department director, with experience managing educational programs in rural areas in Baalbeck. Given insight into school and classroom practices

Prof. Najib Mokhtari (Morocco) is a professor in comparative literature and a curriculum advisor. His contribution lay in giving a great review on the norm formation as a concept in the MENA region, Lebanon, and Morocco, specifically with a high focus on the Moroccan national education reform plans and their philosophical foundations, while highlighting challenges.

Prof. Nadia Khrouz (Morocco) is a professor of political science as well as a legal expert specializing in children's rights and governance. She worked as part of the National Council for Human Rights in Morocco. Her contribution to the research highlighted the contextualized Moroccan legal commitments under the CRC and national law, along with implementation and accountability measures.

Prof. Marzaki BenDaoud (Morocco) is a professor of communication affiliated with the Moroccan Ministry of Education and works on national curriculum development, particularly in the field of computer science and digital literacy. This added a great insight into the current curriculum in Morocco and the challenges for child-rights-based education.

Prof. Loubna Aissawi (Morocco) is a public school English teacher and university lecturer. Her contribution was a real-life insight into Moroccan classrooms, along with highlighting the cultural and systemic barriers to child-rights-based approaches, focusing on child mental health and the role of parents.

Ms. Houda Dehbi (Morocco) is a holder of an educational management master's and plays the role of the president of the Progress partners club within the Mohamad V University of Rabat. Her focus includes education project planning and national engagement strategies related to

youth and governance. This added insight into the national strategies in Morocco and how this affects child safety, highlighting the gaps and challenges faced.

Mrs. Véronique Lerch (International) is a holder of two master's degrees, one in Human Rights and Democracy and the other in international affairs. She specializes in child rights and has worked with UNICEF, the European Commission, Eurochild, SOS Children's Villages International, and Amnesty International. Her insight added contemporary data on digital safety, prompted by recurring themes from discussions with experts, practitioners, and parents.

4.1.2 Parents

Several parents were interviewed from various regions and socioeconomic backgrounds in both Lebanon and Morocco, to reflect on the lived experiences of children, highlighting parents' awareness of child safety. And the interviews were as follows:

From Lebanon: Mrs. Houda Ibrahim (Beqaa), Mr. Haydar Chamas (Baalbeck), Mrs. Zeinab Chokor (Beirut), Mrs. Zahraa Shhaitly (South Lebanon)

From Morocco: Mrs. Hasnaa AlAlami (Rabat), Mrs. Leila AlKouri (Marrakech), Mrs. Nadia Tahraoui (Rabat)

All parents provided real-life reflections on everyday safety challenges faced by their children in school environments, while highlighting child rights challenges in their country.

4.2 Lebanon: Insights on Child Protection in Education

Here is a summary of the recurring theme during the interviews conducted for Lebanon with educators, parents, and experts, which highlights the dynamics affecting children's right to safety in education:

4.2.1 Legal and Policy Gaps

Although Lebanon is a signatory and ratifier of major child rights conventions, interviews revealed that systemic gaps exist between the written legal frameworks and school-level implementation at the national level. Joyce Kawkabani, a child protection expert, stated, “policy exists more on paper than in practice,” with no school obligations that are nationally adapted to protect children (Kawkabani, 2025). While the MEHE partners with NGOs on some initiatives, and MOSA has produced a child protection policy yet there is an absence of accountability procedure and clarity on the legal mandates, which leaves child protection optional. Jimmy

Choufani, a professor of Education and a school principal, confirms this, adding a point that some schools have developed their code of conduct regarding child protection (Choufani, 2025). Educator Zeina Romeh deep-rooted this point by stating that most schools rely on ad-hoc leadership, with principals or teachers acting individually to create safer environments (Romeh, 2025). Parents, Houda Ibrahim, Zahraa Shhaitly, and Haydar Chamas described trusting their schools but noted the absence of formal reporting mechanisms, while parent Zeinab Chokor confirmed their point, especially about her child's school, stating bluntly that, “There are no posters, no flyers, nothing that tells you what to do if something happens” (Chokor, 2025).

4.2.2 Curriculum and Awareness

Both experts and parents stressed that the curriculum is not consistent, nor is it direct or name things as they are; the lack of content addressing child protection and abuse prevention is kind of covered by referring to values such as mutual respect, but not framed in terms of safety or rights. However, some schools integrate extracurricular activities that touch on those subjects and sometimes use the art of theatre or games to translate safety to children, but these are not consistent or monitored (Romeh, 2025; Chamas, 2025). Also, parents noted that safety concepts and measures are taught at home. Houda Ibrahim stated that “We teach them not to talk to strangers, but the school does mention such subjects” (Ibrahim, 2025). Values are taught within the family, not systematically at school, and some kids lack information and might be at higher risk due to their parents or caregivers not giving them that awareness (Chokor, 2025; Shhaitly, 2025). However, the National Curriculum developer mentioned that the subject of child safety is part of the national curriculum, and it is mentioned under child rights in civic books (Abi Assaf, 2025).

4.2.3 Institutional Culture and Protection Readiness

Usually, schools lack any form of a formal structural protection team; it is exceptional that, in rare cases, some schools have formed a team that includes nurses and social counselors. As described by most parents and experts. Moreover, Romeh described her school experience of creating a multidisciplinary team to monitor safety, physical conditions, and well-being. Kawkabani noted that most public schools lack any formal structure to deal with abuse or emergencies. And when it comes to parents, reporting is highly reliant on personal trust and informal relationships with teachers, which, while comforting, offer no safeguard in more

complex abuse cases (Kawkabani, 2025; Romeh, 2025). As mentioned by Shhaitly, “We don't have a system” (Shhaitly, 2025).

4.2.4 Social Norms and Barriers

Culturally, many subjects are avoided or disguised, especially in conservative communities and homes, like sexual abuse, bullying, and emotional harm, which are rarely discussed openly. “Victim-blaming is still strong” (Kawkabani, 2025). Educators expressed that this is not a religious barrier; instead, religion might play a good role in preventing such harm because it considers it bad behaviour (Choufani, 2025; Al Haj, 2025). Parents confirmed that and added that even if something happens, some families often choose silence. Highlighting that shame or fear of scandal deters reporting (Chokor, 2025). Teacher training on psychosocial support is minimal and sometimes nonexistent (Kawkabani, 2025).

4.2.5 Urban–Rural and Public–Private Disparities

The disparities between schools are evident, with most interviewees agreeing on it, but there is no general rule that says, for instance, this school is better just because it is private or in an urban setting. Public schools are usually in a worse shape because of the lack of funds; they struggle with limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and a complete lack of psychosocial staff. Especially in the last few years with economic crisis, COVID, and instability in the country; however, it depends on the school management, awareness, and their capabilities and integrity to make things better. Due to funds, resources, and freedom, private schools can take more proactive steps by adding extracurricular activities and even following a different curriculum than the national one for some subjects, which builds a gap in children's awareness nationally. Parents like Zahraa and Houda expressed concern for children in rural areas who may face emotional neglect simply because teachers are overwhelmed or unequipped. Usually, rural areas rely on less number of schools to cover large areas, sometimes more than one village with limited resources, which causes pressure on the staff and the children.

4.2.6 Civil Society Engagement

NGOs and agencies often support essential initiatives, with Himaya, ABAAD, and UNICEF focusing on both child rights and protection in their work, yet those are project-based programs that are not sustainable and temporary solutions and never embedded as part of the education

system (Kawkabani, 2025; Romeh, 2025). And usually, parents are unaware of them or are only marginally involved, leaving a gap in communication and sustainability (Shhaitly, 2025).

4.2.7 Parental Involvement

“We want to help,” said Zeinab Chokor, “but no one tells us how” (Chokor, 2025). All parents expressed their desire and interest to be more informed and involved in their children’s safety; they recommended visual aids, storytelling, and routine school-home collaboration to reinforce safety messages. And experts echoed that need by recommending the integration of child protection into the curriculum by using accessible, clearer language while training teachers on detection, response, and empathy. While appointing social workers in schools. And most importantly, establishing a child-friendly, visible, and clear feedback mechanism while including parents in awareness and advocacy.

4.2.8 Digital Safety and Vulnerability

An emerging Theme recurs during the interviews with experts, parents, and educators with all of whom agree that digital safety is a high concern, which takes many forms which including the use and technology and cyber vulnerabilities. Digital safety experts highlighted that “schools are not equipped with the language or systems to address digital risks like cyberbullying, privacy breaches, or exposure to harmful content” (Lerch, 2025). Parents shared that children are often unsupervised online, and even if they try, the know-how might be a big challenge for them. Also, not all parents are aware of the harm of the digital world, and neither curriculum nor policies address this new terrain. Gaming itself could be dangerous; some kids killed themselves because of an AI game like Mariam, and some kids were abused on Roblox (Shhaitly, 2025). Kids compare with each other and follow trends that might cause them physical and emotional harm (Al Haj, 2025).

4.3 Morocco: Insights on Child Protection in Education

Here is a summary of the recurring theme during the interviews conducted for Morocco with educators, parents, and experts, which highlights the dynamics affecting children's right to safety in education:

4.3.1 Legal Commitments and Institutional Mechanisms: A Partial Translation

Morocco is a ratifier for several treaty that regards child rights and has adopted numerous legal instruments and national plans aiming to protect children and offer quality education. However, there is a challenge in translating international norms into an actionable or systematic approach, leaving them only as text within the national curriculum, especially since teacher training lacks clarity and depth (Mokhtari, 2025). Legal experts explained that “laws are in place, but enforcement measures are limited, especially in remote regions” (Khrouz, 2025), revealing significant gaps in implementation. All interviews with experts highlighted that there is no obligation on schools to adopt an internal protection system, also the inter-ministerial coordination is highly weak; this administrative gap results in leaving issues of child safety that are interconnected unsolved and lost between mandates.

4.3.2 Curriculum Reforms

Experts agreed that Vision 2030, the recent Moroccan curriculum reform, attempted to promote citizenship and equity; however, it overlooks child protection. Marzaki BenDaoud, who is responsible for international relationships and private schooling within the Ministry of education, highlighted that “values and rights-based literacy are not fully embedded within the curriculum” (BenDaoud, 2025), “Our textbooks highlight the values of mutual respect and community, but they don’t explain to children what abuse is, or that they have the right to speak up” (Aissawi, 2025). Children are usually taught to be obedient rather than assertive, and they do not have space to participate, especially in more traditional school contexts.

4.3.3 Institutional Gaps and Resource Inequities

No established program by the Moroccan government trains teachers on child protection. An interviewee who specializes in education confirmed that only in some urban schools is there availability of counselors or psychosocial staff, while in rural areas, this is nonexistent, along with a lack of basic infrastructure (Dehbi, 2025). Parents confirmed that there are no feedback mechanisms or protection protocols. Leila Alkouri from Marrakech shared an incident where her daughter got bullied, stating that “there was no one to talk to, and the teacher said it was just normal fighting between kids” (Alkouri, 2025), which confirms the lack of awareness among teachers. However, in some schools, teachers take the initiative to learn and raise their awareness

to have a safer space for children, yet this remains a personal initiative that is unsystematic and not sustainable (Aissawi, 2025).

4.3.4 Cultural Norms and Silence Around Abuse

The interviewee described the cultural barrier to child safety as a main reason behind silencing abuse due to shame: “Many families will not report abuse because they fear community judgment” (Tahraoui, 2025). She also added that in rural areas, early marriage, corporal punishment, and stereotypical gender roles complicate the situation. Experts, educators, and parents all agreed that those norms need to be treated, and the curriculum must address them, while teachers must be trained to handle them gently and with no harm, especially since they now have no capabilities to handle sensitive subjects such as sexual abuse, harassment, or gender-based violence.

4.3.5 Role of Civil Society

Civil society engagement is very low; only some NGOs provide training and awareness sessions on an irregular basis, and they rarely scale nationally. On another hand, civil society has been introducing manners concepts along with child well-being; however, it is not becoming part of the system. “Civil society efforts are not institutionalized into the system” (Dehbi, 2025). Keeping their influence limited and depending on external funding.

4.3.6 Parent Perspectives

All parents considered child safety as the responsibility of both educators and parents while expressing their concern about safety situations such as bullying, physical violence, and emotional neglect. Hasnaa AlAlami, mother of two in Rabat, shared that her child often comes home anxious but doesn't know how to express it, and she continues to highlight the gap by saying, “I don't think anyone asks how children feel” (AlAlami, 2025). This is confirmed by an educator who mentions that even well-intentioned schools tend to prioritize academic performance over psychosocial care. This leads to high stress, particularly for girls facing restrictive gender norms (Aissawi, 2025). Parents expressed a desire to have participatory models of education, and they offered specific recommendations to improve child safety, first starting with raising teachers' awareness and empathy, while integrating protective language in textbooks, creating regular, organized communication between educators and parents, and offering awareness sessions along with workshops on emotional health and safety.

4.3.7 Digital Safety and Online Risk

Morocco has no national framework to deal with the digital world while digital safety as a concept is on the rise, parents did expressed their concern over children’s unsupervised access to online platforms, especially with the hybrid learning that came during and after the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting that the use of digital devices in the Moroccan education system is rising, while the focus in the curriculum for the computer science subject is focused on the technicalities rather than on rights or protection (BenDaoud, 2025). “Most teachers don’t know how to talk about cyberbullying or online grooming” (Aissawi, 2025). Those opinions align perfectly with the insight of expert Véronique Lerch, who confirmed that digital education must go beyond technical skills and include aspects of safety such as emotional awareness and respect for boundaries (Lerch, 2025).

4.5. Voices from the Field

Attributed by name and role of the stakeholder, here is a list of selected quotes from the conducted interviews in both Lebanon and Morocco, categorized according to themes.

4.5.1 Meaning of Safety

“Safety is not just about avoiding physical violence. It’s about making sure a child can speak without fear, learn without humiliation, and know someone will protect them if something goes wrong.” – Prof. Blanche Abi Assaf, Coordinator of the Civics Department, CERD 2025 Interview (Lebanon)

“We cannot just say ‘safety’ without explaining what it means. For some parents, it means not falling off a swing. For me, it means a child feels heard, protected, and free to speak” – Roula Abi Habib, Sociologist, 2025 Interview (Lebanon)

“In our rural schools, safety means making sure the girls get home without being harassed. It also means preventing teachers from hitting students when they get angry.” – Leila, Parent from Marrakesh (Morocco)

“In Arabic, we don’t have the words to explain some of these issues. When we talk about ‘abuse’ or ‘psychological trauma,’ the terms sound foreign or exaggerated. So, people ignore them” — Warde Bou Daher, Psychologist, July 2025 Interview

4.5.2 Law-Practice Gaps

“Yes, the laws exist. But in the classroom? In reality? Teachers are not trained, schools are understaffed, and child protection is not prioritized unless there’s a crisis.” – Joyce Kawkabani, Child Protection Expert (Lebanon)

“There’s a big gap between what the Ministry says and what happens in our schools. We have a national plan, but many teachers haven’t even heard of it.” – Prof. Marzaki Bou Daoud, Curriculum Consultant and Ministry Staff (Morocco)

4.5.3 Curricula and Rights Education

“Civic education is very theoretical. It talks about respecting others, yes, but it doesn’t teach children what to do if they’re being hurt or bullied.” – Prof. Jimmy Choufani, School Principal and Lecturer at USJ (Lebanon)

“We mention human rights in some subjects, but it’s mostly textbook-based. We don’t talk about violence or safety because it’s considered taboo.” – Prof. Loubna Aissawi, Public School Teacher and University Lecturer (Morocco)

4.5.4 Teachers and Institutions

“Teachers are not social workers. But they are on the frontlines. If we don’t give them the tools to understand when a child is suffering, they’ll miss it.” – Prof. Warde Bou Daher, Psychologist and Mental Health Expert (Lebanon)

“Most of the time, if something bad happens, we solve it internally. Parents don’t want police involved, and the school doesn’t want to be blamed.” – Prof. Najib Mokhtari, Professor of Education Policy (Morocco)

4.5.5 Psychosocial Well-being and Trauma

“After the explosion and the crisis, children changed. They became withdrawn, aggressive, and scared. And we don’t have enough counselors in schools to support them.” – Principal Zeina El Remeh, Baalback Region (Lebanon)

“Children in some rural areas experience emotional neglect. They come to school tired, hungry, or scared. Teachers try, but we are overwhelmed.” – Houda Dehbi, Educator and University Club President at FSE, Rabat (Morocco)

4.5.6 Family and Community Engagement

“Sometimes, parents don’t want to admit there is a problem. They see discipline as normal. We need more awareness-raising with families.” – Anna-Maria Hadid, Child Protection Case Worker (Lebanon)

“Parents in my village often feel that talking about abuse is shameful. They don’t want their children to be labeled. But this silence is dangerous.” – Hasnaa, Parent from Rabat (Morocco)

4.5.7 Change and Resistance

“We tried to introduce activities around self-expression and well-being, but some principals said it was ‘too Western’ or against our values.” – Roula Abi Habib, Professor of Sociology (Lebanon)

“Teachers want to do better, but they need training and support. Otherwise, they just continue doing what they were taught.” – Prof. Loubna Aissawi, Public School Teacher (Morocco)

An in-depth analysis was provided on Lebanon and Morocco’s national commitments, institutional structures, and lived experiences related to the child’s right to safety in education. In the following chapter, we will draw a critical discussion looking into how those field realities engage with theories while exploring the implications for policy, pedagogy, and future research.

Chapter 5. Assessing Risks and Curricula: Tools and Gaps

The results from both countries confirmed that the concept of child safety is complex and multidisciplinary, giving importance to the idea that professionals, along with parents, need to unite to achieve effectiveness, highlighting the importance of law, institutions, and society. With many challenges arising in both countries, despite the differences between those countries, from economic to political and even to governance type, they both exhibit structural gaps and implementation disparities, highlighting the importance of culture and localization. The highest risk is that these are the realities of children's lives in those two countries, meaning they are growing up in an environment with no permanent, sustainable preventive measures. Revealing an urgency to have child safety policies, which need to include training on observable indicators of maltreatment. Taking us to the next section, which will present a standardized contextually adaptable set of indicators used by NGOs in both those countries to help in the understanding of assessing child abuse and neglect in educational settings.

5.1 Risk Assessment Tool

Assessing child safety and recognizing risks relies on observable indicators. This section will highlight internationally recognized frameworks that are adapted in protection manuals in both Lebanon and Morocco, highlighting indicators that can guide educators, counselors, social workers, and parents to detect and take protective measures.

5.1.1 Indicators of Maltreatment and Neglect

Physical abuse is usually indicated more easily than other kinds of abuse since it leaves visual indicators, including unexplained bruises, burns, or fractures, particularly when injuries appear in various stages of healing or resemble the shape of specific objects such as belts or handprints. Children might try to hide such injuries by wearing covering cloths and giving explanations that might appear vague or inconsistent. But also, there are other behavioral symptoms that might appear, such as aggression, fear of physical contact, or social withdrawal are also common signs. Sexual abuse is usually identified through physical and behavioral signs. The physical symptoms will include genital itching, infections, or unusual discharge, while the behavioral indicators could be recognized as a sexualized behavior inappropriate for the child's age, fear of undressing, or withdrawal. Emotional or psychological abuse is often the most challenging to identify due to the absence of visible marks. However, it might appear in the child's development such

symptoms as cognitive, emotional, or speech-related issues, hypervigilance, attention-seeking behaviors, and difficulties in forming trusting relationships. Along with other psychological symptoms such as chronic anxiety, low self-esteem, and a lack of a sense of belonging. Neglect is often an extensive failure to meet the child's basic needs. It is indicated through observable indicators, including persistent hunger, poor hygiene, hoarding or stealing food, untreated medical conditions, and clothing that is unsuitable for the weather or visibly unclean. But also, it might be indicated through symptoms such as emotional withdrawal or developmental delays (The Alliance, 2019).

5.1.2 Risk Scale

To be able to guide intervention, the risk itself needs to be assessed and marked; in this regard, professionals rely on a risk assessment scale to classify the level of the threat to a child's safety:

- High Risk: Evidence of serious threats or physical harm likely to impede the child's development or survival. Immediate intervention is required.
- Moderate Risk: Ongoing concerning behaviors or threats affecting the child's well-being without immediate harm. Action recommended.
- Low Risk: Situations of minor concern not currently threatening the child's safety. Preventive monitoring advised.
- No Apparent Risk: The child appears to be in a safe and supportive environment with no visible indicators of harm.

This is a unified Scale adapted by all organizations through the Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (The Alliance, 2019). This helps in referral mechanisms, allocation of resources, and ensuring effective intervention. Annex 6 showcases the risks in child maltreatment while providing recommendations.

5.1.3 Rationale for Tools

In the cases of Lebanon and Morocco, two countries with no unified policy to govern child safety, such tools play a great role in identifying and protecting children, filling the institutional structural gap, especially with interviews reflecting on this gap and highlighting that even when some educators and practitioners use such tools, it is not usually unified, except if it is by NGOs. Embedding a standardized tool guided by these indicators in a national policy that includes

teacher training along with a code of conduct for school protocols could strengthen early warning systems and enhance the protection of children's right to safety in education.

5.2 Curricula Analysis: Civic Education and Safety Content

Understanding norm translation needs many levels of examination, so to investigate how child rights norms are translated into the curricula requires a close examination of each country's framework for the civic education subject, which usually includes the teaching of concepts related to citizenship, rights, and regulations. This section analyzes the content, structure, and positioning of both Lebanon's and Morocco's civic education curricula to highlight opportunities and gaps within them. Both countries are somehow classified as partly democratic and free. However, when it comes to practices and classroom environment, it relies heavily on rote instruction and authoritarianism. Building a gap in what is intended in the curricula and actual pedagogy undermines development of genuine civic competencies" (Faour, 2012). Annex 7 showcases a side-by-side comparison of safety elements in the curricula of Lebanon & Morocco.

5.2.1 Lebanon

The CERD developed the Lebanese civic education curriculum in 1997. This subject aims to foster national identity while giving legal and democratic value awareness. It was introduced in the late primary period and expanded at both intermediate and secondary levels. It genuinely prioritizes national unity along with moral behaviour over critical engagement with rights-based concepts, particularly child safety (Faour, 2012). Some schools try to refer to international treaties and human rights to educate children on child safety, while others try to frame it as a moral or religious issue. "The idea of 'rights' is sometimes replaced by 'values' like obedience, respect, or family honor" (Abi Assaf, 2025). It is culturally more acceptable to make this shift in terminology; however, this is problematic because it builds a lack of understanding of safety as a right and builds agency, keeping children as passive recipients of moral instruction. This is also fueled by the lack of Arabic equivalents and rights-based language, which further complicates the translation of norms. Interviews confirmed that some terms are absent or misused in pedagogical vocabulary, like "psychosocial" or "emotional abuse". Scholars confirm that citizenship education is highly focused on teaching obedience and social order rather than treating children as active rights-holders (Akar, 2020). The curriculum tends to deliver abstract notions of duty and coexistence, with limited integration of content related to violence prevention, bodily integrity, mental health, or protection mechanisms. Lebanon's established

Law 422 (2002) on child protection, which was advocated to be introduced within the classroom setting on child rights to safety (TDH, 2020). The reality of Lebanon, from the decentralization of education to the high number of private schools which some are confessional, leads to variation in the way the civic education subjects are interpreted and applied. Teachers lack child-rights-based training and awareness, which leads to the avoidance of controversial topics such as abuse, domestic violence, or gender-based discrimination (Frayha, 2003; Bou Akar, 2020). Some NGO-led initiatives, such as the “Hakki” project and the MEHE’s collaboration with Save the Children, have attempted to supplement existing curriculum with modules on protection and participation. However, these remain extracurricular or externally implemented and are rarely institutionalized in formal school programs (Save the Children, 2020). In conclusion, while the subject of civic education is part of the national curriculum, it falls short in providing children with agency to understand, claim, and protect their right to safety in daily life and in institutional settings. However, an interview with the curriculum developer confirmed that a new curriculum addressing those shortcomings is in the making; though, there was no possibility to review the new curriculum since it is not publicly shared yet (Abi Assaf, 2025).

5.2.2 Morocco

Morocco’s approach to the subject of civic and moral education is more centralized, and recent curriculum reforms have attempted to embed human rights and citizenship values across disciplines. In 1999, a National Charter for Education and Training was adopted, and later in 2019, Framework Law 51.17 entered into force. This positioned civic education as a pillar in the national curriculum and appointed it to be reformed and enhanced with the Vision 2030 strategy (CSEFRS, 2015). The textbooks for both primary and secondary education teach about nationalism, duties, and Islamic values, with very little focus on child rights, which is usually an approach that spreads morals but lacks the space for participation and understanding of rights-holding, leaving no room to critically analyze protection issues (Ennaji, 2005). As Sater (2010) mentions, “while human rights language has entered the curriculum, the pedagogy often reinforces hierarchy and obedience rather than rights-claiming or accountability” (Sater, 2010, p. 189). More recently, MEN initiated, in collaboration with UNICEF and other NGOs, a program that aims to improve this landscape by training teachers in child rights, revising textbooks, and introducing new modules on gender equality, digital safety, and school violence prevention (UNESCO, 2020). However, this program needs time to be implemented, and it is

challenging in rural and less-resourced regions. In conclusion, the education curriculum seems strongly aligned with the legal framework, yet both are not comprehensive enough and lack practical tools to provide critical pedagogy and integration of safety-related content as a core educational objective.

Chapter 6. Comparative Findings: Shared Vulnerabilities, Divergent Pathways, and the Digital Frontier

Child's right to safety is a complex concept that needs a comprehensive approach to be understood; therefore, this section will draw a deep analysis from interviews that have been done with educators, parents, and experts, comparing the collected data from both countries to investigate how children's right to safety is understood, addressed, and operationalized within educational systems by identifying patterns and challenges. Both countries have exhibited an international commitment to child rights through their legal and institutional frameworks. Yet, the findings revealed many gaps in the structure itself and implementation, with variation in the understanding and interpretation of the child rights concept. In this part of the research will highlight four areas: perceptions of child safety, protection barriers, the role of civic and human rights education, and emerging concerns around digital safety.

6.1 Shared Patterns and Common Challenges

Significant gap between what is in the national framework and the implementation in schools. In both countries, some laws assure child protection; for Lebanon, it is Law 422, and for Morocco, it is Law 51.17. However, when interpreted and implemented, gaps persisted at the school level, and laws are not translated into practical measures. Teachers lack training and awareness; there is no structurally clear reporting mechanism and no assigned roles in case of abuse (Choufani, 2025; Khrouz, 2025). Cultural barriers add to the complexity. For Lebanon, sectarianism and social taboos silence the conversation about subjects as emotional distress and corporal punishment (Abi Assaf, 2025; Bou Daher, 2025). While in Morocco, religious and social values limit any kind of discussion about abuse, sexuality, or mental health (Mokhtari, 2025; Aissawi, 2025). In both countries, there was a reference that disciplining children is part of the culture, and sometimes religion protects us from harassment because it adds manners, and child participation might be somehow not fully accepted culturally, which somehow normalizes harm in the name of culture. Both countries lack institutional coordination. Lebanon relies heavily on NGO support for child protection cases from referral to providing services, reflecting a big gap in government service provision (Kawkabani, 2025). While in Morocco, there are restraints on NGOs, and the effort put into reforming the education system is somewhat overly bureaucratic, making services inconsistent and delayed, especially in rural areas. In both countries the civic education subject is present, yet it is symbolic when it comes to right

awareness and building agency, in Lebanon it promotes nationalism and coexisting (Kawkabani, 2025) while in Morocco it promotes moral values, obedience and respect for authority, which limit children's ability to perceive themselves as rights-holders (BenDaoud, 2025; Aissawi, 2025).

6.2 Distinctive National Features

Lebanon's decentralized educational system, which allows for confession to be part of teaching, creates differences in school culture, leading to inequalities and disparities between children. Public schools have no unified code of conduct to use for child protection, while some private schools create their child protection policy with comprehensive approaches, and others that are limited, with the ongoing economic crisis adding more pressure and reducing institutional capacity to respond to protection concerns (Hadid, 2025; Samira Al Haj, 2025). While in Morocco, the education system is centralized, which itself allows for policy consistency; however, it often restrains teacher autonomy and allows them to deliver what is prescribed, with few opportunities to adapt to local needs or address sensitive issues with nuance. and the curriculum reforms such as Vision 2030 and PNIPE have introduced child-friendly frameworks, but their practical reach remains limited (Dehbi, 2025). Child safety as a concept is interpreted differently in those two countries. Lebanese participants focused in the discussion on the emotional well-being of children and frequently referenced trauma, broken trust, and fear as common. The psychological toll of recurring crises, including the Beirut blast, economic collapse, and political instability, was a prominent theme (Bou Daher, 2025). While Moroccan interviewees emphasized that the right language is within reformed textbooks but not fully integrated, and safety is more translated as protection from harm.

6.3 Role of Parents and Community Actors

Experts in both countries agreed on the importance of parent engagement, yet they also mentioned that the role played is small and could take a more proactive form. For some parents in Lebanon, the concept of child protection is inappropriate; however, if parents' awareness is increased, safety will be higher (Romeh, 2025). Mokhtari (2025) mentioned that "people are child rights illiterate, and they think schools are like a space where you park your children to go to work and return and take them home after you finish your shift." (Mokhtari, 2025). This reality about how some parents in Morocco perceive schools themselves is questionable, especially since other experts have mentioned that schools are giving authority to teach children

obedience, although some parents are worried about their children's safety, yet they do not have the know-how. There is a lack of mechanisms to engage parents in school governance or protection planning (Aissawi, 2025). Since the civil society organizations are more active in Lebanon and they often fill the gap of protection, they also offer parental awareness sessions along with facilitating reporting and psychosocial support (Hadid, 2025). While in Morocco, the centralization and top-down nature of the system do not allow for much space for NGOs to intervene (Dehbi, 2025).

6.4 Emerging Digital Safety Concern

All interviewees in both countries raised their concern about the harm caused by the digital world, raising the flag for digital safety as the most emerging theme that lacks any structural framework, along with little awareness from all sides. Cyberbullying, online grooming, and the lack of digital literacy among children and educators. In Lebanon, digital safety was mentioned as an evolving need that lacks institutional response and has already caused several cases of abuse being exposed and yet finding few mechanisms to deal with it (Lerch, 2025). Although safety is discussed in computer science classes in Morocco, it is presented as a technical rather than a protective issue (BenDaoud, 2025). Particularly with children in post-pandemic learning contexts who are navigating the online environment with minimal adult supervision, international actors like UNICEF and Eurochild are advocating for the inclusion of digital safety indicators in national policy benchmarks. This supports framing it as both a pedagogical and ethical imperative (Lerch, 2025). Data from the field revealed how norms around child safety are formed and translated into context in Lebanon and Morocco. Highlighting the influence of political unpredictability, institutional unwillingness, and cultural taboos, which all limit effective implementation, despite the existence of formal commitments and reform initiatives. In both countries, an urge to approach the concept with comprehension is advised by most interviewees, emphasizing that a child is unsafe online and offline, and agency is needed to a certain level, while focusing on digital safety as a high thematic concern nowadays, adding to the complexities of safety. Moreover, including local actors is crucial for successful and effective implementation, but it should be in all phases, starting with planning, training, and developing curricula, taking into consideration the cultural and legal aspects.

Part III - Local Translation of Norms: Comparative Discussion and Thematic Insights

Chapter 7 - Revisiting Research Questions through Theory: Child Safety as a Contested Norm

The main question guiding this research is “How are international norms related to children’s right to safety translated into national educational curricula in Lebanon and Morocco, and what are the observable effects at the local level?”

7.1 Integration of Empirical Findings and Theoretical Concepts

Field interviews, along with context and curricula analysis, revealed gaps in the local understanding and implementation of the concept of child safety in both Morocco and Lebanon, although both countries are formally committed to adopting their international child protection commitments through the CRC and SDG 4. Safety is discussed from a psychosocial and material perspective in Lebanon due to multi-layered crises. While in Morocco, a country with a more stable system, the gap appears in the structure and the shallow classroom-level engagement. This confirms Acharya’s (2004) theory of “localization” and looking at norms as a layered complex that needs processing from a local perspective and adapts to pre-existing institutions. Supported as well by “vernacularization,” which has been later explained by Merry (2006), in which international norms are translated through cultural and shared meaning to fit institutions, these two theories were observed in the current context of Lebanon and Morocco in the understanding of safety itself and its interpretation.

Although most participants gave importance to the concept of safety and rights in general, rarely anyone mentioned the CRC, General Comments, or SDG; however, their perspectives aligned with international goals to safeguard children and treat them as right-holders by highlighting the importance of a child's dignity, participation, emotional security, and feeling of safety before learning which reinforce that child safety is foundational to any educational process. Interviewees often used terminologies that are more culturally fitting, like “resilience,” which highlight how the curricula is written yet interpreted differently to be culturally acceptable and understood, highlighting a hidden curricula and a gap that changes the learning experience for children in different schools and revealing inequality especially with some schools relying on secularism and else relying on religious values, making the whole process a community based approach rather than rights-base. Acharya, A. (2004) questions how society perceives norms differently and how norms translate and change within each context, which raises a question:

how could this norm traveling be effective even if the norm changes? Could norms be tailored to fit the context, yet do not lose its meaning?

This takes us to the theories on norm diffusion, which itself is a theory with different layers. It was confirmed in both countries that norms were repackaged, diluted, and resisted based on local experience, and by local, we don't mean only per country; it might change from one community to another in the same country, and even in the same area. Also, parents' and educators' beliefs might change their interpretation of concepts. However, norm diffusion, as explained in theory, remains partial in both Lebanon and Morocco. Confirming the core idea of norm negotiation and hybridization in critical norm diffusion literature (Zwingel, 2012).

7.2 The Digital Gap in Curricula and Policy

In response to field data signaling growing concern regarding the digital safety of children in today's world, an interview with Veronique Lerch was conducted to understand the big structural gap in the integration of digital safety within educational norms. The CRC application within the digital world is underdeveloped, exposing children to harm that is yet to be understood and controlled. However, Lerch explained that it is not about the legal framework but rather about norm translation and enforcement, stating that "Children's rights already apply online. The problem is that we're not translating them into accessible tools, curricula, or regulations." She drew attention to initiatives like the International Telecommunication Union's child online protection guidelines, which offer frameworks for age-appropriate education and school-based awareness campaigns, but noted that few ministries of education in the MENA region have meaningfully adopted such models. This gap is yet to be dealt with on an international level, because online norm diffusion shows risks coming from global platforms that lie outside of the formal governance structures. Lerch emphasizes that digital safety must become part of education curricula, but not as a technical issue like what we have seen in Morocco, rather as a rights-based issue while rethinking pedagogy, educator training, and children's participation (Lerch, 2025).

Chapter 8 - Cross-Sectoral Actors and the Politics of Translation

The child's right to safety norm is complex, layered, and it has been translated through a broad societal ecosystem in both contexts, the interdisciplinary approach of this research informed the way the results and findings were studied and confirmed the need for different fields to contribute to child right to safety, also it was confirmed that in educational settings everyone have a bit of the responsibility and parents along with experts and educators confirmed their believe that safety could be improved if taught as a life skill, here is a broader look on disciplines:

8.1 Legal Frameworks: Formal Protection vs. Informal Gaps

Lebanon and Morocco both are committed to the international legal framework that protects children, from conventions to additional protocols, not fully and with some reservations, yet to a sufficient extent, which is reflected in their national framework. However, all interviews in both countries confirmed that those legal norms are not translated into actionable terms in the school environment. Educators, along with parents, expressed unfamiliarity with the national commitment to the international legal framework, and they have a lack of information about the national plan to safeguard children; some even had no idea if there was a plan or not. However, principals reported that the ministry has specific rules on who teaches in public schools and that it is a must to have specific training that includes safeguarding children. Notably, in all interviews with parents, teachers, and principals showed a lack in the interpretation of child safety, with perspectives that lack comprehension and think mostly about physical safety as the main issue, ignoring, in some cases, the danger of emotional and mental harm. Moreover, there is an aspect of safety that comes with restorative justice, which is an alternative protective mechanism to deal with children in conflict with the law, by prioritizing the rehabilitation of the child, and repairing this concept aligns best with Article 40 of the CRC (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2002). Both Lebanon and Morocco have undergone reforms to align with this concept, yet implementation remains inconsistent, which was revealed in communications with the special rapporteurs. Annex 8 provides a chronological list of relevant legal instruments in Lebanon & Morocco.

8.2 Faith-Based Actors as Norm Translators.

While INGOs, along with UN agencies, promote children's right to safety in education, there has been the use of cultural approbation and faith in both Lebanon and Morocco. Therefore, the

Beirut Declaration and its 18 Commitments on “Faith for Rights” could be utilized as a base to make systemic change and approach child rights to safety more effectively, especially since Commitment XIII is on child protection, and interviews revealing that some schools do use faith as a base to introduce children to rights however it also highlight that these commitments are not widely known among local actors, although to enhance the use of the Faith for Rights there is a need to include targeted training for religious educators, integration of rights-based principles into religious curricula, and intersectoral partnerships between ministries of education, faith institutions, and child protection agencies (OHCHR, 2017a). Annex 9 showcases the interconnection between the 18 commitments along with CRC and SDGs.

8.3 Art and Media as Cultural Carriers of Norms

Media and Art are both very powerful tools in today’s world for advocacy and awareness, which could be used in norm translation, changing, reforming, and promoting. Both Lebanon and Morocco have used those tools. Civil society actors, inter-agencies, and INGOs lead campaigns on national and regional levels that contain activities such as school-based mural projects, workshops, interactive theaters, short film production, and screening, which promote the concept of child rights while giving awareness and accessibility information, yet resonate emotionally in a culturally sensitive way (UNICEF, 2019). As one teacher from Lebanon explained, this was illustrated in the classroom environment in the COVID-19 era through an animation film that helped her open a conversation with students about domestic violence in a soft way that led to effective results (Romeh, 2025). However, most interviews and collected data reveal that access to such activities remains uneven, with some schools, especially in rural areas, being under-resourced and lacking accessibility to such tools in classrooms. This was seen in both countries, yet it is more of a challenge in the Moroccan context. It is important to point out that such tools and initiatives do not translate a norm, but they reframe it as an emotional, visual concept that can be acceptable and resonate with local narrative. This aligns with two findings, one from the field where Professor Najib Mokhtari, who explained in his interview the importance of emotional engagement to promote awareness and parental involvement to form norms or diffuse them (Mokhtari, 2025), which also aligns best with the code of conduct of War Child, which encourages the use of communication and expressive tools to advocate for child protection especially in settings where formal training fail (War Child, 2021).

8.4 Civil Society, Digital Innovation in Child Protection

There are civil society actors who play an instrumental role in translating international child protection norms into local practice in both countries, such as Himaya in Lebanon and the Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains in Morocco. Those actors provide services such as workshops, training, and parent sensitization sessions, which bring rights-based language into schools; however, such activities are affected by multiple aspects, such as the political structure of the country and the limitations imposed by donors, since they are project-based. Furthermore, norm formation is not a process led only by states; instead, it emerges from a broader ecosystem of institutions, cultures, and communicative tools. Subsequently, the Safe to Learn initiatives by UNESCO work in a way that provides a global framework that can be localized by redefining safety as a pedagogical commitment to embed protection principles into curricula, classroom dynamics, and institutional behavior while highlighting that structural innovation is required to protect children from emerging risks such as digital safety (UNESCO, 2019a). In this regard, the use of regulatory sandboxes that are safe to test EdTech tools under data protection supervision could be an efficient model for countries like Lebanon and Morocco that lack comprehensive digital governance (UNICEF, 2025). Especially with growing concerns regarding how children's data is used by digital platforms, which is called “surveillance capitalism,” this concept confirms the lack of informed consent, which compromises children's rights to privacy, safety, and agency (Zuboff, 2019). Despite this growing attention, digital safety in both countries remains narrowly defined, with the most focus limiting its definition to cyberbullying awareness or device monitoring.

Chapter 9 - Lebanon and Morocco in Comparative Perspective: Policy Implications and Pedagogical Futures

9.1 Similarities and Differences

Grounded in comparison and drawn from the theory of norm diffusion, the examination of two different countries revealed a fundamental divergence in how Lebanon and Morocco translated the child’s right to safety into their education systems. Exposing entirely distinct ways of feeling, framing, and practicing. This is observed as follows: the Lebanese case is shaped by instability and crisis with a bottom-up approach to norm formation, where educators operate under structural pressure. Safety is interpreted from a survival lens, from psychosocial support to trauma-sensitive care. This model of translating the norm of child safety is deeply humanitarian, driven by civil society actors who fill gaps left by the government's weak institutions, so it is a kind of reactive model. By contrast, the Moroccan case is shaped by national strategies that include the curriculum and a top-down approach, which is rich in policy yet weak in practice, with implementation lacking depth at the classroom level, and giving importance to obedience, which signals that normative compliance has not translated into participatory or critical pedagogical practice. Both countries have some aspects of child rights covered in their civic education curricula, yet it is not fully integrated into classroom practices, and limited interpretation when teaching. The table below summarizes key comparative dimensions:

Dimension	Lebanon	Morocco
Political Stability	Unstable Crisis-affected	Stable Reform-oriented
Norm Diffusion Pathway	Bottom-up NGO and interagency mediated	Top-down Policy-driven
Teacher Engagement	Burnout Emotional fatigue	Misinterpreted Performative engagement
Parent Engagement	Irregular Trust deficit due to system breakdown	Increasing Often, through state-led programs
Curricula Content	Rights in civic texts Informal learning activities	Rights in civic texts Limited classroom practice

Cultural Taboos	High (esp. gender, violence, sexuality)	High (esp. gender, violence, sexuality) State-navigated and regulated
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This comparison strengthens the idea that norm formation/translation is never a unified process; rather, it is always shaped by the context and the location where this norm is being formed, affected by many aspects of political will, trust, governance type, and cultural resonance (Acharya, 2004; Merry, 2006). Highlighted also in coping with the structural constraints and filling the gaps, for instance, Lebanon tends to use emotional labor and relational trust, while Morocco tends to rely on formal planning and symbolic reform.

This perspective is sharpened by international comparisons. On one hand, the Israeli military law treats Palestinian children detained, showing a high failure in translating international child rights, with child protection not being integrated into the Israeli legal system, even though Israel is a ratifier of the CRC. Children end up prosecuted in military courts often without legal representation or protection (UNICEF, 2013). Showing a disconnect between states' international commitment and practices that are formed by political will. Also, imposing a question on what kind of accountability mechanisms are needed for the international community to enforce the full integration of treaties by state parties. On the other hand, Australia has a localized education models that provide an alternative approach to rights, treating them not as universal impositions, but rather as a localized concept of dignity, protection, and belonging. Each program aims to enhance community capacity by expanding formal and informal resources and establishing a normative cultural context capable of fostering collective responsibility for positive child development (Daro & Dodge, 2009, p. 70). And finally, drawing on comparative research, the differences in context-responsive approaches show how children's rights can be embedded into schooling cultures in ways that reflect both local epistemologies and international standards (Lundy et al., 2022).

Applying those approaches to the Lebanon and Morocco cases in a collaborative norm formation process by including parents, educators, civil society, and the government to co-create a meaning behind the concept of safety that is culturally defined and approved. Since they both have structural challenges, especially in public schools and rural areas that lack resources, this structure shapes their child's rights and educational governance and their way of translating international norms and relying on civil society, INGOs, and inter-agencies. Understanding the

differences and the similarities allows for the creation of localized public policy that puts children as a priority, yet respects the realities and local culture of children. As a consequence, this comparison confirmed a big issue in international governance sustainability, although the SDGs are international, yet studying concepts like child safety highlighted that sustainability is a complex issue that needs to consider the realities of each context, while starting from the bottom up instead of imposing international concepts, which confirm as well that there is no golden rule that will obtain a sustainable improvement. In Lebanon and Morocco, not only did the law, policy, or curricula play a role, instead cultural, social, and religious values and traditions also reflected on how people collectively and alone interpreted universal norms like safety and shaped it as a form of mutual respect and protection. Annex 10 provides a comparison matrix of the themes found in both Lebanon and Morocco.

9.2 Engagement with Theory and Literature

Several countries in the region promote civic education within their curricula, yet there are lots of gaps in school-level engagement due to structural, emotional, or external pressures. This paper contributes to a series of studies conducted in other countries. A previous study from Tunisia revealed that democratic shifts post-2011 did not transform civic education in classrooms; rather, teaching remains limited in scope, and teacher training is insufficient (Saidi, 2019). While another study from Palestine revealed that translating the values of forgiveness and reconciliation in a classroom setting is challenged by emotional strain and contextual constraints (Nasser & Abu-Nimer, 2012). These studies, along with this thesis, confirm a pattern in which adopting a law or a policy does not guarantee institutional change; rather, dynamics are shaped through emotional labour, institutional hierarchies, economic collapse, and pedagogical anxieties. The importance of this thesis comes from its intersectional, qualitative, and comparative approach: bringing perspectives of parents, educators, and experts in different fields that affect child development, rights, education, sociology, and law to understand how the norm formation process is reshaped by local realities.

Theoretically, this research draws on Norm diffusion theory predicts that once a universal norm is adopted legally, it will cascade through domestic institutions (Acharya, 2004; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Zwingel, 2012), Vernacularization theory adds that this process requires cultural translation into locally resonant meanings (Merry, 2006), and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970). Findings of this research regarding the child's right to safety confirmed these models. In

Lebanon, a bottom-up approach with the support of civil society is led by teachers with interpretation tailored to culture, echoing the vernacularization emphasis on local adaptation. While in Morocco, it's a top-down approach with a big gap in classroom integration with interpretation, so far from what safety means, showing that norm diffusion is not possible without critical pedagogy. Critical and decolonial perspectives sharpen this analysis. Especially that both Lebanon and Morocco were previously colonized, and their educational norms were affected by secularism, but this thesis's findings reveal that their educational norms are currently shaped not only by state policies but also by parents, community, and religious values (Mahmood, 2005). Therefore, effective norm diffusion must not be imposed rather, it must be based on a discussion with the culture of the local context, taking into consideration how it could use what already is an acceptable, approved, common ground between the people of this context to build upon an embedding of a new norm or maybe defining an already existing norm clearer, this way communities will recognize that norm as legitimate. This resonates with a critique of secularism as a colonial imposition, highlighting why communities do not accept norms when they are perceived as a foreign imposition, unless it's anchored in their lived realities and found meaning that resonates with them (Asad, 2003). This engagement with these theoretical and empirical debates revealed that this thesis contributes to multiple debates. First, a mix between norm diffusion and vernacularization is useful, yet context fragility must be considered, and diffusion is not static. Second, sustainability is shaped by the existing structure of donor dependency, which aligns with previous studies from the region (Saidi, 2019); however, the comparative side of this thesis showed depth and differences. Third, critical decolonization revealed how norm translation is a layered process, and even when it is about child rights to safety, it is political, cultural, legal, and institutional. In children's rights to safety norm translation, there is a need for a broad framing by integrating cultural legitimacy, political economy, legal compliance, alongside educators, parents, and children's well-being.

9.3 Policy and Pedagogical Implications

Findings from Lebanon and Morocco resonated with broader research from other countries. For instance, a program in Australia related to human rights-based education was designed as a co-initiative between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where rights was anchored to a local tradition, using artistic tools such as storytelling, highlighting collective identity, created a safe learning and exchanging environment where norm translation was localized and

illustrated in an acceptable way to the community (Aussie Childcare Network, 2025; ACARA, n.d.; AIHW, 2023). Confirming the conclusion of this thesis, legal adoption is insufficient to translate norms; localization is a priority for norm diffusion.

Localized Capacity for Rights-Based Protection: Education governance must move beyond public policies; it must include activities and mechanisms like trained focal points on child protection, a referral and accountability pathway, services of psychosocial support, and, most importantly, inter-ministerial coordination to benefit from different actors and discipline that could play a role in prevention, services and post trauma (UNICEF, 2020d; Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021). Both Lebanon and Morocco, rights-based education that includes safety, could be co-developed with respect to the locals and by making them part of the process, by including contributions from civil society, cultural and religious scholars, along with community leaders, which harmonize child rights concepts with culturally accepted values.

Teacher Training for Emotional and Rights-Based Safety: Teachers' capacity must be built taking into consideration child development along with addressing any issue that might affect this development, from gender equity, emotional literacy, psychosocial support, and participatory pedagogy (UNESCO, 2023b). Those workshops must be continuous, to equip teachers to bridge universal rights with cultural norms, especially in crisis, where context consideration allows for strengthening trust and the ability to demonstrate participatory safety planning, making rights more tangible in everyday school life (People in Need, 2020).

Shift Pedagogical from Text to Practice: integrating rights and safety across multiple subjects and using interactive method of learning, which could be perfectly done in subjects such as literature, history, sociology, theatre, and sport, through activities such as role plays, group projects, and case studies which encourage the child critical thinking along with practical application which then include safety and rights norms. Teacher preparation then needs to move from purely technical and abstract to situated and actionable, instead of teaching what the CRC then, they could teach how the CRC enacts with a child's dignity and what dignity is, giving the child space to act instead of being only a watcher (Lundy et al., 2022).

Parents' Engagement, communication, and expressive tools: workshops and dialogue with parents help find a link between norms to existing values while raising awareness. Another way

to shift attitudes is by using expressive activities that include media and art, especially if done while including children and teachers. The War Child's Code of Conduct (2021) explained how the use of media and building a collective responsibility enhances the process of norm diffusion.

Framing Norm Diffusion as Empowerment: The concept of child safety should be narrated through existing values such as cultural and religious traditions, aiming to secure legitimacy alongside security and accountability, instead of being framed as an external imposition.

Development and Sustainability: Instead of building a parallel short-term solution, INGOs, agencies, and interagency must support the public sector to become more effective, self-sufficient, and enhanced by supporting the building of a sustainable structure of schooling rather than a project-dependent outcome.

Finally, this research confirmed that schools could be a safe learning space where children gain not only knowledge and skills but also build their value system to be safeguarded. The above discussion, policy, and pedagogical implications inform the final chapter, where reflection, recommendations, and synthesis of the study's findings will be presented on the evolving role of education as a protective space for children.

Conclusion: Bridging Global Norms and Local Realities

Summary of Key Findings

Examining the translation of the norm of the child's right to safety to education practices and curricula in Lebanon and Morocco, basing the study on the CRC, its Optional Protocols, General Comments, and other legal commitments, along with guides, but not stopping there, instead highlighting lived experiences by listening to educators and parents along with including experts' opinions from both countries. Results indicated that the concept of safety, along with norm formation related to child rights, is usually context-specific and challenged by culture and political well. In both countries, there are laws to regulate child safety, and the curricula have a specific curriculum for civic education. Yes, both suffer from gaps and a lack of comprehension. The Lebanese education system is decentralized, teachers deal with personal stress, and their approaches are led individually with each interpreting concepts as they believe leaving lots of bias and misinformation, in a country that suffers from economic, political and security instability, which challenges and disables any reform with an existing fragile structure which rely on donor support and programing to maintain safety, making the main focus is physical safety, ignoring other aspects, resulting with children with no agency or unequal in opportunities and a broken structure with lots of gaps to be addressed. On the other hand, the Moroccan education system is centralized with several reforms aiming to enhance the curriculum of civic education, yet the problem is in the interpretation and school practices, where cultural beliefs make the norm of safety look like an imposition, and concepts like enforce obedience and discipline dominate the scene, resulting in children with lack of emotional safety and engagement, so structurally the Moroccan case is stronger than the Lebanese, however the gap between policy and practice limit impact across both countries, with recurring patterns such as:

- Safety interpretation is misleading to be understood as discipline rather than agency, dignity, and participation.
- Teachers lack training, knowledge, and tools to embed rights-based education.
- Curricula reforms are not part of a bigger policy that includes monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that result in accountability when needed to enhance the whole system.
- Parents' engagement is limited, while they could be utilized as an effective part of the process.
- Civil society fills gaps in a way that is not sustainable and always dependent on donor well.

These findings affirm that an effective norm diffusion requires a holistic approach that takes policy, practices, and textbooks into consideration within the process. While involving different parts of the community, including parents, teachers, and experts. While keeping cultural legitimacy as a tool to anchor rights in values that are already recognized by the community, giving agency to the community is the start of the road to giving agency to children.

Contribution to the Field

This research offered a comparison between two countries from the MENA region, driven by context analysis and debating human rights-based education, norm diffusion, localization, and the importance of safety as a concept. It traced how norms translate, while questioning the importance of structural norm formation in parallel to practices. Here are the key contributions:

Bridging Theory and Practice in the MENA Region

A rare comparative analysis, providing evidence that fills a gap in the empirical research on how norms from the CRC are translated into the Lebanese and Moroccan context and broadly to the other education curricula within the region. The combination of curricula analysis along with field data analysis showed how aspects like politics, culture, economy, and stability play a role in norm formation, answering the call for localized human rights education research on the region that is not policy-oriented, like most literature (Faour, 2012; Abu-Harfeil, 2021).

Centering Emotional and Cultural Dimensions of Safety

This thesis highlighted the concept of human security along with concepts from psychology, focusing on how emotional and relational safety are rooted in communication, expression, mutual respect, and trust. While those are positive, there are negatives, such as silence, shame, and obedience, which can weaken the uptake of rights. Contributing to a different opinion than the current literature that positions safety as a legal or physical condition rather than looking at it holistically from a cultural perspective, making implementation effective (Payne et al., 2003).

Elevating Everyday Actors in Rights Implementation

By challenging top-down norm diffusion, this thesis contributed to a democratized model where teachers, parents, and community play a role in rights implementation for sustainable change, making them active partners rather than passive recipients of policy.

4. Proposing an Integrated Translation Methodology: This study brings together norm diffusion

theory (Acharya, 2004), feminist legal anthropology (Merry, 2006), and decolonial critiques (Mahmood, 2005; Asad, 2003), applying them to the analysis of interviews and curricula. This mixed theoretical lens allows for a multi-dimensional assessment of rights localization, covering structural, pedagogical, and affective dimensions

Challenging Eurocentrism Approaches

By applying decolonial and feminist perspectives, this thesis challenged the assumption that “best practice” in human rights education must align with Eurocentric models. Instead, it shows that co-designed, culturally grounded approaches can strengthen the meaning and practice of rights rather than dilute them (Zwingel, 2012).

Research Challenges and Contextual Limitations

There have been several constraints to this research, such as:

- **Restricted Field Access:** The researcher did not get an answer on her visa to Morocco, even though, applied in January 2025, and by August 2025, there was no reply from the embassy. Preventing in-person research in Morocco, which not only affected the interviews but also affected observation, leaving the researcher to look at the Moroccan case from afar; constant instability and conflict in Lebanon hindered some in-person interviews and school visits.
- **Time Constraints:** the research timeline within the year comes around the end of the school year, making it harder to recruit people for the study, especially concerning any subject related to education, and also restricting school visits because of school priorities.
- **Sensitivity of Topic:** the subject opened many discussions that are related to sensitive topics such as abuse and gender norms, along with institutional shortcomings; however, the researcher's previous experience in conducting interviews and data collection previous experience helped overcome this particular part with cultural sensitivity and ethical navigation taken into consideration to avoid risk or discomfort.
- **Generalizability:** the findings are specific to Lebanon and Morocco, while in case this research method is applied to a broader context in the region more further comparative case studies need to be done. the sample size was small yet effective; more recommendations and challenges might be revealed if applying the research on a bigger scale.

This is layered research with a multidisciplinary lens on safety translation despite all the limitations.

Policy Recommendations for Practice and Reform

This process includes curriculum Reform, involvement of educators and parents,

Embed safety in different subjects, not only in civic education, and make it a theme that covers all aspects of physical, emotional, social, and digital safety. And include sport, digital, artistic, communication, and expressive tools in the translation.

Include more local actors in the development of safety modules, including civil society actors, parents, teachers, religious educators, cultural historians, and community leaders, to find common grounds between CRC principles and local values, for effective translation.

Aligning all teachers with rights-based pedagogy, abuse detection, disclosure response, and inclusive classroom practice through workshops and training

Aligning all parents with the sensitivity of the subjects through culturally sensitive awareness campaigns, linking child rights and safety to ethics and values.

Activate parental communities to co-create the whole system and establish a sustained dialogue.

Make not only teaching right-based but also activities, where promoting right values could happen, in an informal setting, where even parents and members of the community are involved.

Coordination and cooperation between ministries is very valuable; it could help establish a structural prevention and accountability mechanism along with an improvement dialogue, where everyone is responsible for part of the process, from the Ministry of Education to Health, to Social Affairs, and Interior.

Establish a child-friendly pathway for referral, follow-up, complaint, and roles in each school, nation-wise, and if maybe, in each region or district.

Utilize international indicators to create a nation-level indicator list for relational safety, participation, and reporting at the school level.

Conduct MEAL tools such as baseline and endline assessments on child protection knowledge and practice by the beginning and the end of each year, not an exam.

Those are a list of recommendation that resulted from all the data collected in this thesis, they are hard to be done and research must be done on each country ability to adapt any of them,

because sure they need fund but there is the mean of other resources that already exist, so here are this list to open the discussion on child-rights-based-education that aim to safeguard children not only but making them aware but also by giving them long term agency.

Final Reflections

The right to safety is not fulfilled through the ratification of treaties and optional protocols and putting subjects in textbooks; it is only fulfilled by a comprehensive approach to child rights by itself and to the right to safety in specific, which itself is complex and has more than multilayers. Moreover, the right to safety is an everyday practice in classrooms, homes, institutions, streets, and actors in protecting children are somehow the whole community, if not by practice or by setting the norms. Moreover, some norms are set to depower children by telling them they should obey. Rather, if trust is obtained between parents, educators, and institutions, children will thrive not only by learning but also by gaining agency as co-creators of their future and change makers. This thesis was written at a crossroads of scholarship and lived experience, shaped by personal resilience and political instability, with a high commitment to a better future for children in the MENA region. And with the belief that the transformation of child safety norms comes from an accumulation of efforts by educators, parents, policymakers, and children themselves. While anchoring that human rights education is a priority for humanity. I hope this work contributes toward a time when children’s rights are a shared reality.

“I only survived the past 33 years of my life because of the human rights culture.”

Dedication, Kamila Lakkis

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Annexes

The following annexes are included to provide supplementary materials that support and contextualize the findings of this research on children’s right to safety in Lebanon and Morocco.

Annex No.	Title
Annex 1	Interview Participant Table
Annex 2	Methodology Overview Table
Annex 3	Codes and Theoretical Relevance Table
Annex 4	Research Tools and Instruments
Annex 5	Key International Actors and Their Roles
Annex 6	Child Maltreatment & Risk Assessment Scale
Annex 7	Curricula Analysis: Lebanon and Morocco
Annex 8	Relevant Legal/Policy Instruments Table
Annex 9	“Faith for Rights” Commitments of the Beirut Declaration
Annex 10	Thematic Findings Matrix

Annexes Summary Table

Annex 1 – Interview Participant Table

This table represents the 21 participants, their background, focus, and key contributions to the research.

Name	Position	Country	Category	Thematic Focus	Key Contributions
Prof. Roula Abi Habib	Director, CEMAM, & Sociologist	Lebanon	Expert	Norm formation, sociopolitical discourse	Sociopolitical factors in norm formation and education reform in Lebanon.
Mrs. Warde Bou Daher	Psychologist & Trainer	Lebanon	Expert	Psychosocial safety, mental health	Children's psychological safety and role of educators and parents.
Prof. Blanche Abi Assaf	University Lecturer, Curriculum Developer at CRDP	Lebanon	Expert	Curriculum development, civic education	Historic and structural analysis of curriculum and citizenship education.
Prof. Jimmy Choufani	Principal & University Lecturer at USJ	Lebanon	Expert	Leadership, structural gaps, public-private comparison	Leadership, public-private sector differences, and structural gaps.
Mrs. Joyce Kawkaban i	Child Protection Expert	Lebanon	Expert	Child protection systems, alternative curricula	Case study on rights-based private school and cross-sectoral coordination.

Ms. Anna-Maria Hadid	NGO Case Manager	Lebanon	Expert	Law-social interface, accountability, parental awareness	Implementation challenges in legal-social child protection interface.
Mrs. Samira Al Haj	School Principal	Lebanon	Expert	Leadership and school-community engagement	Leadership and community dynamics in South Lebanon schools.
Mrs. Zeina El Remeh	Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator	Lebanon	Expert	Classroom-level practice, curriculum implementation	Insights on curriculum and classroom practices in rural Lebanon.
Prof. Najib Mokhtari	Professor & Curriculum Advisor	Morocco	Expert	Norm diffusion, reform philosophies	Norm diffusion and philosophical basis of Moroccan education reforms.
Prof. Nadia Khrouz	Legal Expert & Professor	Morocco	Expert	Legal frameworks, CRC obligations	Legal obligations, CRC implementation, and human rights governance.
Prof. Marzaki BenDaoud	Communication Professor & Curriculum Developer at Ministry	Morocco	Expert	Digital education, curriculum innovation	Digital literacy and curriculum development in Morocco.

	of Education				
Prof. Loubna Aissawi	Public School Teacher, Professor	Morocco	Expert	Mental health, cultural barriers	Cultural and systemic classroom barriers to child rights education.
Ms. Houda Dehbi	Education Project Manager	Morocco	Expert	Governance, participation, safety policy	Governance strategies and youth engagement in education policy.
Mrs. Veronique Lerch	Child Rights Consultant (UNICEF, EU, SOS CV)	International	Expert	Digital safety, online rights, global standards	Digital safety, regulatory gaps, and translation of norms online.
Mrs. Houda Ibrahim	Parent in Beqaa (Lebanon)	Lebanon	Parent	Emotional safety, teacher-student relations	Reflections on school safety and parental awareness (Lebanon).
Mr. Haydar Chamas	Parent in Baalbeck (Lebanon)	Lebanon	Parent	Peer dynamics, community norms	Reflections on school safety and parental awareness (Lebanon).
Mrs. Zeinab Chokor	Parent in Beirut (Lebanon)	Lebanon	Parent	Emotional well-being, parent-school interaction	Reflections on school safety and parental awareness (Lebanon).
Mrs. Zahraa Shhaytle	Parent in South Lebanon	Lebanon	Parent	Trust, gender and safety perception	Reflections on school safety and parental awareness (Lebanon).

Mrs. Hasnaa AlAlami	Parent in Rabat (Morocco)	Morocco	Parent	Discipline practices, emotional safety	Reflections on school safety and parental awareness (Morocco).
Mrs. Leila AlKouri	Parent in Marrakech (Morocco)	Morocco	Parent	Infrastructure, socioeconomic barriers	Reflections on school safety and parental awareness (Morocco).
Mrs. Nadia Tahraoui	Parent in Rabat (Morocco)	Morocco	Parent	Digital exposure, peer pressure, and emotional risk	Reflections on school safety and parental awareness (Morocco).

Annex 2 – Methodology Overview Table

The following table represents each methodological phase of the research.

Methodological Component	Description
Research Design	Qualitative comparative case study focusing on Lebanon and Morocco.
Ontological & Epistemological Positioning	Interpretivist ontology with a constructivist epistemology to capture context-specific meanings.
Theoretical Framework Revisited (as Methodological Lens)	Integration of norm diffusion theory, critical pedagogy, human security, and vernacularization to guide analysis.
Data Collection Tools	Semi-structured interviews, curricula, and policy document analysis.
Sampling & Participants	Purpose and snowball sampling of educators, policymakers, parents, and child protection actors.
Data Analysis Strategy	Thematic analysis combined with comparative cross-case synthesis.
Ethical Considerations	Informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity in discussing sensitive child safety issues.
Methodological Limitations	Constraints in time, resources, and participant access; potential researcher positionality bias.

Annex 3 – Codes and Theoretical Relevance Table

Those codes outline the framework applied during data analysis.

Code / Category	Description	Theoretical Relevance(s)
Child Participation	Children’s involvement in shaping safety policies and reporting mechanisms.	Lundy (2007) – Model of Participation; CRC Article 12 - Lansdown (2005); Freeman (1997)
Community Engagement	Parent and community involvement in sustaining safe learning environments.	Epstein (1995) – Overlapping Spheres of Influence; Save the Children (2014) – Child Protection Guidelines
Cultural Adaptation	Adaptation of global safety norms to local cultural and religious contexts.	Acharya (2004); Ennew et al. (2005)
Curriculum Gaps	Missing safety content in educational materials and lesson plans.	Ball et al. (2012) – Policy Enactment in Schools; CRC Articles 28 & 29
Digital Safety	Protection from cyberbullying, online exploitation, and harmful digital content.	Livingstone et al. (2011) – Risks and Safety on the Internet; UNICEF (2017) – Child Online Protection Guidelines
Emotional Safety	Measures fostering psychosocial well-being, anti-bullying, and trauma-informed care.	Maslow (1943) – Hierarchy of Needs; CPMS Standard 15
Institutional Commitment	Level of government and institutional adherence to safety commitments.	Van Bueren (1998); Doek (2010)
Norm Translation	How international child safety norms are interpreted and adapted locally.	Acharya (2004); Merry (2006)

Policy-Implementation Gap	Discrepancies between policy commitments and actual school-level practices.	Finnemore & Sikkink (1998); Risse et al. (1999)
Reporting & Referral Mechanisms	Processes for identifying and addressing safety incidents.	CPMS Standards 3 & 4; GC No. 13 on the Right to Freedom from All Forms of Violence
Rights vs. Values Discourse	Tensions between universal rights frameworks and local cultural/religious values.	Merry (2006) – Human Rights & Cultural Translation; Levitt & Merry (2009) – Vernacularization of Norms
Safety Dimensions	Specific aspects of child safety addressed in the curriculum and practices.	WHO (2013); UNESCO (2019); Bowlby (1969)
Structural Barriers	Institutional, infrastructural, and socio-economic factors limiting safety implementation.	Bourdieu (1990) – Social Reproduction Theory; Bronfenbrenner (1979) – Ecological Systems Theory
Teacher Agency	Teachers’ capacity to adapt, advocate, and implement safety measures in schools.	Freire (1970) – Pedagogy of the Oppressed; Lansdown (2005) – Evolving Capacities of the Child
Teacher Training	Capacity-building for educators on child protection and safety.	Alexander (2008) – Pedagogy, Curriculum and Culture; CPMS Standard 14

Annex 4 – Research Tools and Instruments

Tool Name	Purpose
1 – Interview Guide For All Participants Questions For Educators Questions For Parents Questions For Experts Arabic Translation	Unified questions for all interviewees Guide conversations with child protection, education, and policy experts Assess school-level experiences and protection practices Explore parental understanding and response to child safety Provide Arabic versions of all interview guides
2 - Unified Informed Consent Form	Ensure voluntary participation and understanding of research objectives
3 – Letter of Commitment to Confidentiality	Outline participant rights, confidentiality, and researcher obligations

Interview Guide

This interview guide was developed to collect qualitative data from key stakeholders in Lebanon and Morocco on the translation of children’s right to safety into educational policy, curriculum, and practice. The questions are grouped into four categories: general questions for all participants, questions for educators, questions for parents, and questions for experts in law, psychology, education, curriculum development, and ministries of education.

Section A – Questions for All Participants

1. How do you define a safe learning environment for children in your context?
2. What are the main safety concerns you observe or hear about in schools?
3. How do you think the concept of children’s right to safety should be reflected in the school curriculum?
4. What role should teachers, parents, and the community play in ensuring child safety?
5. In your opinion, how well do current school policies protect children from harm?
6. How can schools balance academic priorities with the need to address children’s physical, emotional, and digital safety?
7. What examples can you share of good practices in promoting safety in education?

8. What are the biggest obstacles to achieving a safe and inclusive school environment?
9. How do social norms or cultural attitudes in your community affect child safety in schools?
10. What changes would you like to see in how schools and authorities handle safety incidents?

Section B – Questions for Educators

1. How do you integrate safety-related topics into your teaching or school activities?
2. What training or support have you received on identifying and responding to child protection concerns?
3. How do you handle situations where a child reports abuse, bullying, or other safety issues?
4. In your experience, are safety protocols clearly communicated and applied in your school?
5. How are vulnerable children (e.g., with disabilities, refugees, marginalized groups) supported in your school?
6. How does your school collaborate with parents, NGOs, or government agencies on child safety issues?
7. What challenges do teachers face when trying to address safety concerns in the classroom?
8. How is digital safety addressed in your teaching and school policies?
9. Are there examples where safety interventions improved student well-being or engagement?
10. What recommendations would you make to improve safety-related teacher training and resources?

Section C – Questions for Parents

1. How do you assess whether your child's school is a safe environment?
2. What kinds of safety risks concern you most in your child's education?
3. Have you ever raised a safety concern with the school? How was it handled?
4. How informed do you feel about the school's safety policies and procedures?
5. How do you communicate with your child about safety at school?

6. In your opinion, how well does the curriculum address life skills and safety awareness?
7. How do you think parents can contribute to improving school safety?
8. Have you observed differences in safety practices between public and private schools?
9. How do cultural values in your community influence attitudes toward child protection?
10. What changes would make you feel more confident about your child's safety in school?

Section D – Questions for Experts

1. How do you interpret the concept of “children's right to safety” within the Lebanese and Moroccan education systems?
2. Which international frameworks or conventions are most relevant to child safety in schools?
3. How effectively are these international norms translated into national education policies?
4. What are the key gaps between policy and implementation in ensuring child safety in schools?
5. How do legal frameworks in your country address issues like bullying, harassment, and digital risks in education?
6. In curriculum design, what strategies can be used to integrate safety and child protection principles?
7. How can teacher training be improved to address safety and protection issues?
8. How should monitoring and evaluation of school safety be carried out at the national level?
9. What role do ministries, NGOs, and international agencies play in supporting safe learning environments?
10. Based on your expertise, what policy changes would have the most immediate positive impact on school safety?

فيما يلي النسخة العربية من دليل الأسئلة المقترح لملحق المقابلات، مع الحفاظ على تقسيمه إلى الفئات الأربع:

القسم (أ) – أسئلة لجميع المشاركين

(الآراء والتجارب العامة حول سلامة الأطفال في التعليم)

1. كيف تعرّف بيئة التعلم الآمنة للأطفال في سياقك؟
2. ما هي أبرز المخاطر أو المخاوف المتعلقة بالسلامة التي تلاحظها أو تسمع عنها في المدارس؟
3. كيف ينبغي أن ينعكس مفهوم حق الأطفال في السلامة داخل المناهج الدراسية؟
4. ما هو الدور الذي يجب أن يلعبه المعلمون، والأهل، والمجتمع في ضمان سلامة الأطفال؟
5. برأيك، إلى أي مدى تحمي السياسات المدرسية الحالية الأطفال من الأذى؟
6. كيف يمكن للمدارس أن توازن بين الأولويات الأكاديمية والحاجة لمعالجة السلامة الجسدية والعاطفية والرقمية للأطفال؟
7. ما الأمثلة التي يمكنك مشاركتها حول ممارسات جيدة في تعزيز السلامة في التعليم؟
8. ما هي أكبر العوائق أمام تحقيق بيئة مدرسية آمنة وشاملة؟
9. كيف تؤثر الأعراف أو المواقف الثقافية في مجتمعك على سلامة الأطفال في المدارس؟
10. ما التغييرات التي تود رؤيتها في كيفية تعامل المدارس والسلطات مع الحوادث المتعلقة بالسلامة؟

القسم (ب) – أسئلة للمعلمين والإداريين

(المعلمون، مدراء المدارس، الكادر الإداري)

1. كيف تدمج موضوعات السلامة في تعليمك أو في أنشطة المدرسة؟
2. ما نوع التدريب أو الدعم الذي حصلت عليه للتعرف على قضايا حماية الطفل والتعامل معها؟
3. كيف تتعامل مع الحالات التي يبلغ فيها طفل عن تعرّضه لإساءة، أو تنمر، أو مخاطر أخرى؟
4. من واقع خبرتك، هل يتم توضيح وتطبيق بروتوكولات السلامة بوضوح في مدرستك؟
5. كيف يتم دعم الأطفال الأكثر عرضة للخطر (مثل ذوي الإعاقة، اللاجئين، أو الفئات المهمشة) في مدرستك؟
6. كيف تتعاون مدرستك مع الأهالي أو المنظمات غير الحكومية أو الجهات الحكومية في قضايا سلامة الأطفال؟
7. ما التحديات التي يواجهها المعلمون عند محاولة معالجة المخاوف المتعلقة بالسلامة داخل الصف؟
8. كيف يتم التعامل مع السلامة الرقمية في التعليم والسياسات المدرسية؟
9. هل هناك أمثلة على تدخّلات في مجال السلامة أدت إلى تحسين رفاه أو اندماج الطلاب؟

10. ما التوصيات التي تود تقديمها لتحسين تدريب المعلمين والموارد المتعلقة بالسلامة؟

القسم (ج) – أسئلة للأهالي

(أولياء أمور الأطفال في سن الدراسة)

1. كيف تقيّم ما إذا كانت مدرسة طفلك بيئة آمنة؟
2. ما أنواع المخاطر التي تقلقك أكثر في تعليم طفلك؟
3. هل سبق أن رفعت مسألة تتعلق بالسلامة مع المدرسة؟ كيف تم التعامل معها؟
4. إلى أي مدى تشعر أنك مطلع على سياسات وإجراءات السلامة في المدرسة؟
5. كيف تتواصل مع طفلك حول موضوع السلامة في المدرسة؟
6. برأيك، إلى أي مدى تغطي المناهج الدراسية مهارات الحياة والتوعية بالسلامة؟
7. كيف يمكن للأهالي المساهمة في تحسين سلامة المدارس؟
8. هل لاحظت فروقاً في ممارسات السلامة بين المدارس الرسمية والخاصة؟
9. كيف تؤثر القيم الثقافية في مجتمعك على المواقف تجاه حماية الطفل؟
10. ما التغييرات التي تجعلك أكثر اطمئناناً لسلامة طفلك في المدرسة؟

القسم (د) – أسئلة للخبراء

(القانونيون، الأخصائيون النفسيون، خبراء التعليم والمناهج، مسؤولو وزارة التربية)

1. كيف تفسّر مفهوم "حق الأطفال في السلامة" في نظام التعليم في لبنان والمغرب؟
2. ما هي الاتفاقيات أو الأطر الدولية الأكثر صلة بسلامة الأطفال في المدارس؟
3. ما مدى فعالية ترجمة هذه المعايير الدولية إلى سياسات تعليمية وطنية؟
4. ما أهم الفجوات بين السياسات والتطبيق في ضمان سلامة الأطفال في المدارس؟
5. كيف تعالج الأطر القانونية في بلدك قضايا مثل التنمر، والتحرّش، والمخاطر الرقمية في التعليم؟
6. في تصميم المناهج، ما الاستراتيجيات التي يمكن استخدامها لدمج مبادئ السلامة وحماية الطفل؟
7. كيف يمكن تحسين تدريب المعلمين لمعالجة قضايا السلامة والحماية؟

8. كيف ينبغي أن يتم الرصد والتقييم لسلامة المدارس على المستوى الوطني؟
9. ما الدور الذي تلعبه الوزارات، والمنظمات غير الحكومية، والوكالات الدولية في دعم بيئات تعليمية آمنة؟
10. بناءً على خبرتك، ما التغييرات السياسية التي يمكن أن تحقق أثراً إيجابياً فورياً على سلامة المدارس؟

Consent Form for Research Participants

General Information

Study Title: Investigating the Role of Education Curriculum in Enhancing Children's and Parents' Awareness of Children's Right to Safety in Morocco and Lebanon.

Researcher: Kamila Lakkis

Master's student – Arab Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights

Faculty of Political Science, Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ)

Email: kamila.lakkis@net.usj.edu.lb | Phone: +96170623377

Supervisor: Pr. Yousra Abourabi

Email: yousra.abourabi@uir.ac.ma | Phone: +212617797493

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee at Saint Joseph University (USJ).

For Phone Interview/Survey

Hello, my name is Kamila Lakkis, I am a master's student at the Faculty of Political Science at Saint-Joseph University of Beirut. I am currently conducting a research study called "Investigating the Role of Education Curriculum in Enhancing Children's and Parents' Awareness of Children's Right to Safety." This study explores how schools and caregivers can support children in knowing and practicing their right to personal safety. This research has been approved by the USJ Ethics Committee. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may skip any question or end the conversation at any point. By participating, you are helping us better understand how to design more inclusive and protective educational systems. Would you like to proceed with the survey/interview?

Yes

No

For In-Person or Video Interview

Hello Sir/Madam, My name is Kamila Lakkis, I am a master's student at the Faculty of Political Science at Saint-Joseph University of Beirut. I'm conducting a research study titled "Investigating the Role of Education Curriculum in Enhancing Children's and Parents' Awareness of Children's Right to Safety." This study focuses on how educators, parents, and experts can work together to improve child safety through education. The project has been approved by the USJ Ethics Committee. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and your identity will remain confidential. You may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. By participating, you're helping provide valuable insights that may contribute to shaping safer, more inclusive curricula in Lebanon and Morocco. With your permission, this interview may be audio-recorded for accuracy, but your name or identity will not be used in any publication.

Consent Confirmation (Universal for All Formats)

Please review the following:

- I have read (or heard) the information about this study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and confidential.
- I understand I may stop participating at any time.
- I agree to participate in this research.
- (If applicable) I consent to the recording of this interview.

Full Name: _____

Signature (if written): _____

Date: _____

نموذج موافقة للمشاركين في البحث

معلومات عامة

عنوان البحث: دراسة دور المناهج التعليمية في تعزيز وعي الأطفال وأولياء الأمور بحق الأطفال في الأمان

الباحثة: كامله لقيس

طالبة ماجستير – البرنامج العربي لحقوق الإنسان والديمقراطية

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تمت الموافقة على هذا البحث من قبل لجنة الأخلاقيات في جامعة القديس يوسف.

للمقابلة أو الاستبيان عبر الهاتف

مرحبًا، اسمي كامله لقيس وأنا طالبة ماجستير في كلية العلوم السياسية في جامعة القديس يوسف في بيروت. أُجري حاليًا دراسة بحثية بعنوان "دراسة دور المناهج التعليمية في تعزيز وعي الأطفال وأولياء الأمور بحق الأطفال في الأمان" تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف دور المدرسة والأسرة في دعم الأطفال لمعرفة وممارسة حقوقهم في الأمان.

تمت الموافقة على هذه الدراسة من قبل لجنة الأخلاقيات في جامعة القديس يوسف. مشاركتك طوعية بالكامل، ويمكنك الامتناع عن الإجابة عن أي سؤال أو إنهاء المقابلة في أي وقت. بمشاركتك، تساعدنا في تطوير أنظمة تعليمية أكثر شمولية وأمانًا. هل تودين الاستمرار في المقابلة أو الاستبيان؟

للمقابلات الحضورية أو عبر الفيديو

سيدي/سيدتي المحترمة،

اسمي كامله لقيس وأنا طالبة ماجستير في كلية العلوم السياسية في جامعة القديس يوسف في بيروت. أُجري بحثًا بعنوان دراسة دور المناهج التعليمية في تعزيز وعي الأطفال وأولياء الأمور بحق الأطفال في الأمان" يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف دور التربويين، والأهالي، والخبراء في دعم الأطفال من خلال التعليم. تمت الموافقة على هذا المشروع من قبل لجنة الأخلاقيات في جامعة القديس يوسف. مشاركتك طوعية، ويمكنك الامتناع عن أي سؤال أو إنهاء المقابلة في أي وقت. بمشاركتك، تساهم/ين في تقديم رؤى قيمة يمكن أن تساعد في تحسين المناهج الدراسية في لبنان والمغرب. بموافقتك، قد يتم تسجيل هذه المقابلة صوتيًا لأغراض التوثيق، دون ذكر اسمك أو أي معلومات تعريفية.

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أفهم أن مشاركتي طوعية وسرية

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الاسم الكامل: _____

التوقيع (في حال التقديم الخطي): _____

التاريخ: _____

Letter of Commitment to Confidentiality – English

Title: Commitment to Confidentiality

Researcher: Kamila Lakkis

Project Title: Investigating the Role of Education Curriculum in Enhancing Children's and Parents' Awareness of Children's Right to Safety

Declaration: I, Kamila Lakkis, hereby commit to ensuring the full confidentiality and privacy of all individuals participating in my research project. This commitment applies to all data collected during the course of interviews, surveys, focus groups, and observations. I understand that:

- Personal information will not be shared or published in any form that identifies participants.
- Participation is voluntary, and individuals have the right to withdraw at any time.
- All digital and physical data will be securely stored and accessed only by the researcher and supervisor.
- Audio recordings (if used) will be securely stored and deleted after transcription and verification.

I am fully aware of my ethical responsibilities and will follow the standards and procedures set by the Ethics Committee at Saint Joseph University.

Signature: 

Full Name: Kamila Lakkis

Date: 02/06/2025

تعهد بالسرية – النسخة العربية

العنوان: تعهد بالسرية

الباحثة: كامله لقيس

عنوان المشروع: دراسة دور المناهج التعليمية في تعزيز وعي الأطفال وأولياء الأمور بحق الأطفال في الأمان

التصريح: أنا، كامله لقيس، أتعهد بالحفاظ التام على سرية وخصوصية جميع الأفراد المشاركين في هذا البحث الأكاديمي. يشمل هذا التعهد جميع البيانات التي سيتم جمعها أثناء المقابلات، الاستبيانات، مجموعات النقاش، والملاحظات الميدانية.

وأقر بما يلي:

- لن يتم مشاركة أو نشر أي معلومات شخصية يمكن من خلالها التعرف على المشاركين.
- المشاركة في هذا البحث اختيارية، وللمشارك/ة الحق في الانسحاب في أي وقت.
- سيتم تخزين جميع البيانات (الورقية أو الرقمية) بطريقة آمنة ولن يكون لها أي وصول إلا للباحثة والمشرفة.
- سيتم حذف أي تسجيلات صوتية بعد التفريغ والتحقق منها.

أنا على دراية كاملة بمسؤوليتي الأخلاقية، وسألتزم بالمعايير والإجراءات التي حددتها لجنة الأخلاقيات في جامعة القديس يوسف.

التوقيع :

الاسم الكامل : كامله لقيس

التاريخ: 2025/06/02

Annex 5 – Key International Actors and Their Roles

Category	Actor / Instrument	Role / Function
International Instruments	CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child)	Provides the overall legal framework on child rights
	CRC Optional Protocol (Communications)	Mechanism for children to report rights violations
	CRC Optional Protocol (Armed Conflict)	Protects children affected by armed conflict
	CRC Optional Protocol (Sale, Prostitution, and Pornography)	Prevents child trafficking and sexual exploitation
	ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)	Prohibits hazardous child labor
Intergovernmental Organizations	OECD	Economic welfare for children
	IMF	Global economic policy and financial stability
	World Bank	Infrastructure development and WASH financing
	IOM	Migration and refugee protection
UN Mechanisms, Bodies, and Agencies	UN-Water	Coordinates water, sanitation, and hygiene efforts
	UN Special Rapporteur on Sale & Sexual Exploitation of Children	Investigate child sexual exploitation cases

	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child	Monitors CRC implementation
	ITU	Telecommunications and online child safety
	OHCHR	Human rights monitoring, including child rights
	UNDP	Sustainable development and poverty reduction
	UNESCO	Education, science, and culture
	UNHCR	Refugee protection and assistance
	UNICEF	Child protection and humanitarian aid
	WHO	Global public health
International NGOs and Networks	ECPAT International	Child protection and combating sexual exploitation
	ISPCAN	Child abuse prevention and protection
	Plan International	Child rights, education, and empowerment
	Save the Children	humanitarian aid for children
	Terre des Hommes	Child rights and anti-trafficking initiatives
	War Child	Support for conflict-affected children
	Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict	Child protection in armed conflict
	WePROTECT Global Alliance	Ending online child sexual exploitation
Public–Private Partnerships	GPE	Education funding and support for children

Annex 6 – Child Maltreatment & Risk Assessment Scale

As adapted from Inter-agency Working Group on Child Protection (2019), WHO (2016), Save the Children (2014), and MOSA (2018).

Risk Level	Description	Recommended Action
High Risk	Evidence of serious threats, physical abuse, or neglect likely to impede the child’s development or survival.	Immediate intervention; refer to child protection services or judicial authorities.
Moderate Risk	Ongoing concerning behaviors or unmet needs affecting the child’s well-being without imminent harm.	Initiate psychosocial support; coordinate with school counselors and social workers.
Low Risk	Mild concerns not currently threatening the child’s safety; early signs of vulnerability.	Monitor regularly; engage family and provide preventive educational support.
No Apparent Risk	Safe and stable environment; no observed indicators of abuse, neglect, or psychosocial distress.	Maintain a supportive environment and routine check-ins.

Annex 7 – Curricula Analysis: Lebanon and Morocco

The following table represents a mapping of policies and curriculum in both countries, highlighting that both countries can benefit from new norm diffusion approaches since both have policy, implementation, and curricular gaps.

Country	Curriculum / Policy Document	Targeted Age or Grade Level	Safety Elements Present	Safety Elements Missing	Relevant Normative Relevance(s)
Lebanon	National Curriculum Framework (MEHE)	Primary (Grades 1–6)	Basic safety rules in civics, anti-bullying awareness	Digital safety, disaster preparedness, and emotional resilience training	CRC Art. 19; CPMS Standard 3
Lebanon	Civics Textbooks (Updated Editions)	Middle & Secondary	Human rights principles, hygiene, civic duties	Practical emergency drills, participatory safety planning	CRC Art. 28; GC No. 13
Lebanon	MEHE School Safety Policy (2019)	All school levels	Child protection reporting, first aid protocols, referral mechanisms	Digital literacy on cyberbullying, psychosocial safety support	CPMS Standards 4 & 15; SDG 4. a
Lebanon	NGO Education Programs (e.g., Save the Children)	Varies	Training for teachers in safe classrooms	Sustainability and integration into national curriculum	CPMS Standard 14

Morocco	Civic Education Textbooks	Middle School	Human rights awareness, basic conflict resolution	Disaster risk reduction, digital safety education	CRC Art. 28; SDG 4.7
Morocco	National Education Vision 2030	All school levels	Commitment to inclusive and safe schools, infrastructure safety	Explicit integration of safety competencies into all subjects	SDG 4.a; CRC Art. 3
Morocco	Ministry Guidelines on School Safety	Primary & Secondary	Hygiene awareness, anti-violence policies	Comprehensive emotional well-being curriculum	GC No. 13; CPMS Standard 2
Morocco	Partnerships with UNICEF & NGOs	Varies	Child rights campaigns, safe school labeling	Monitoring and evaluation frameworks for safety practices	CPMS Standard 6

Annex 8 – Relevant Legal/Policy Instruments Table

Chronological list of relevant laws, policies, and education reforms in Lebanon & Morocco.

Year	Country	Instrument	Description / Relevance to Child Safety in Education
1989	Lebanon	Ratification of the CRC	The core treaty recognizes children’s right to safety and education.
1993	Morocco	Ratification of the CRC	Same as above, contextualized to Morocco.
1998	Lebanon	Law No. 220 on Persons with Disabilities	Provides educational protections relevant to child safety.
2002	Morocco	Education Charter Reform	Introduced safety and inclusion as guiding principles.
2014	Lebanon	MEHE Child Protection Policy (Pilot)	First formal policy linking school safety with child rights.
2019	Morocco	Framework Law No. 51-17	Comprehensive education reform law, including student protection measures.
2020	Lebanon	RACE II Programme Guidelines	Operationalizes safety measures in public schools.

Annex 9 – “Faith for Rights” Commitments of the Beirut Declaration

This table investigates the interconnection between the faith of rights with CRC and SDGs, highlighting that the ministries of education in both countries align with the vision on paper but not in practice, and including ethical cultural values might enhance the applicability of safety.

No.	Faith for Rights Commitment	Relevant CRC Article(s)	Relevant SDG Target(s)
1	Defend freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief.	Art. 14	16.1
2	Respect the right to choose, change, or renounce a religion or belief.	Art. 14(2)	16.1
3	Engage in critical thinking and contextual interpretation to promote dignity.	Art. 29(1)(d)	4.7
4	Avoid manipulation of religious beliefs for political or violent purposes.	Art. 29(1)(d)	16. a
5	Revisit interpretations that perpetuate discrimination, especially against women/girls.	Art. 2; CEDAW	5.1
6	Reject discrimination based on religion, gender, ethnicity, etc.	Art. 2	10.3
7	Condemn incitement to hatred or violence in the name of religion.	Art. 19	16.b
8	Protect the rights of minorities and marginalized groups.	Art. 30	10.2
9	Promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all.	Art. 2; CEDAW	5.5
10	Advocate for children’s rights and protection from violence, exploitation, and harmful practices.	Arts. 19, 32, 34, 36	16.2
11	Safeguard refugees, migrants, and displaced persons.	Art. 22	10.7
12	Promote environmental stewardship.	Art. 24(2)(c)	13.3, 15.1
13	Incorporate human rights education into religious teaching.	Art. 29(1)(b–d)	4.7

14	Stand against extremism and promote peaceful coexistence.	Art. 29(1)(d)	16. a
15	Use media responsibly to spread tolerance.	Art. 17	16.1
16	Collaborate with civil society and state actors.	Arts. 4, 42	17.17
17	Develop capacity-building for faith leaders on human rights.	Art. 42	4.c
18	Encourage interfaith dialogue and cooperation.	Art. 29(1)(d)	16.7

Annex 10 – Thematic Findings Matrix

This table presents a comparison of the main themes identified in the research.

Theme	Lebanon – Key Points & Quotes	Morocco – Key Points & Quotes
Teacher Agency	“We are responsible for safety, but we have no training” (Educator, Beirut).	“Teachers act as protectors, even outside class” (Teacher, Rabat).
Reporting Mechanisms	Informal, often mediated by personal networks.	Formal but slow; sometimes ineffective.
Curriculum Safety Content	Safety is mentioned in civic education, but not integrated across subjects.	Integrated safety content in some subjects.
Legal and Policy Framework	Legal reforms and alignment with international treaties are noted, but enforcement gaps remain.	Legal alignment with CRC is acknowledged, but enforcement is critically weak; the low criminal age of responsibility.
Teacher Training and Capacity Building	Limited teacher training on child rights; inconsistent ongoing efforts.	Training widely seen as superficial; emotional intelligence training lacking.
Cultural and Societal Barriers	Cultural norms, especially in rural areas, hinder protection efforts.	Strong cultural resistance to addressing early marriage and abuse.
Public vs Private School Dynamics	Private schools show better implementation due to resources.	Private schools have robust safety protocols; public schools suffer resource shortages.
Role of NGOs and Community Engagement	Strong in Lebanon; often fills state gaps.	Limited in Morocco; mostly awareness campaigns.
Psychological Impact and Long-	Psychological effects of lack of safety are noted; growing awareness.	Psychological trauma from inadequate protection is prevalent and persists into higher education.

term		
Consequences		
Digital Safety and Modern Challenges	Emerging concern; minimal in policy.	Acknowledged in policy but low in practice; cyberbullying is an issue.
Recommendations and Strategic Priorities	Experts call for better training, community involvement, and law enforcement.	Calls for curriculum reform, community integration, and stronger educator training.

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