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Protecting Minority Children against Intersectional and Multiple Discrimination

Hosein Sharifi Tarazkouhi^{1*}, Narges Rashidi²

1. Department of Law, Faculty of Humanities, Imam Hosein University, Tehran, Iran.

2. Department of Public and International Law, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

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*Corresponding Author:

Hosein Sharifi Tarazkouhi

E-mail:

hsharifi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Minority children - those under the age of 18 belonging to ethnic, religious, linguistic or national minorities - face distinctive vulnerabilities in the global human rights landscape. While all children require heightened protection due to their dependence on others for survival and development, minority children frequently endure discrimination shaped by overlapping identities such as disability, gender or migration background. These intersecting disadvantages restrict their access to education, healthcare and protection, perpetuating cycles of exclusion. This paper critically examines how intersectional and multiple discrimination affect minority children and demonstrates that existing legal frameworks, despite broad guarantees of equality, insufficiently address these compounded harms. By drawing on intersectionality theory and international human rights law - particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - the study highlights significant protection gaps and their real-world consequences. The significance of this research lies in bridging a critical gap between abstract legal commitments and the lived realities of minority children. It underscores the urgent need for data-driven, inclusive and intersectionally - informed policies that recognize the full complexity of children's identities. By offering concrete recommendations for policymakers, international organizations and civil society, this paper advances a more effective child rights agenda - one that moves beyond formal equality to ensure substantive justice and dignity for all children.

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Introduction

The protection of minority children from intersecting forms of discrimination stands as a critical and often neglected challenge in contemporary human rights

discourse. Historically, international human rights frameworks have largely adopted a Universalist perspective, which, while well-intentioned, often overlooks the layered and compounded vulnerabilities faced by children who are

members of ethnic, linguistic, religious and national minorities (1). This report addresses a central gap in legal and policy frameworks, where traditional anti-discrimination models tend to address single axes of identity - such as race or gender in isolation - and fail to capture the intricate realities of individuals situated at the nexus of multiple marginalized identities. The central question guiding this research is: To what extent do existing international legal frameworks effectively protect minority children from both multiple and intersectional discrimination and how can these frameworks be strengthened to address their unique vulnerabilities more effectively? The hypothesis is that while current international human rights instruments provide a foundation, their single-axis, formalistic application inadequately recognizes and responds to the compounded harm faced by minority children. This necessitates a more nuanced approach to law and policy. This study contributes to the fields of human rights law and child advocacy by providing a comprehensive critique of legal frameworks that move beyond the fragmented and single-axis analysis prevalent in existing scholarship. This analysis focuses on the specific vulnerabilities of children, whose age-related dependence and limited agency amplify the effects of intersecting forms of discrimination (2). By presenting tangible examples and drawing on diverse global data, this report provides a clear, evidence-based demonstration of how a single-axis approach to data collection and analysis contributes to the invisibility of the most marginalized children. The findings have direct practical implications for policymakers and advocates, providing a foundation for strengthening child protection mechanisms worldwide.

The paper is structured to provide a comprehensive conceptual and legal analysis of discrimination affecting minority children. Part I, entitled “Multiple Discrimination”, establishes the foundational framework by defining key terms and examining the limitations of traditional single-axis approaches within anti-discrimination law. Part II, “Intersectional Discrimination”, builds upon this foundation by analyzing how overlapping identities shape the lived experiences

of minority children through thematic case-based discussions in education, poverty and social justice and vulnerability to violence. The final sections evaluate the adequacy of the current international legal framework, identify persisting protection gaps and propose targeted legal and policy recommendations to strengthen intersectional child protection mechanisms.

1. Key Definitions

Minority Child: children under the age of 18 (3) belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic and national minorities (4).

1-1. Intersectional Discrimination

Discrimination resulting from the interplay of multiple identity factors leading to a unique disadvantage (5).

1-2. Multiple Discrimination

Discrimination on several distinct grounds either separately or simultaneously (6).

Article 26 of ICCPR lists the reasons for discrimination in twelve cases, which include race, color, gender, language, religion, political opinion, any opinion, other national origin, social origin, property, birth and any other status (7).

1-3. Discrimination against Children

Discrimination against children is any act or omission on any of the grounds listed in Article 2 of the Convention that directly or indirectly harms the human dignity of the child and negates or jeopardizes the maximum possible development of the child's personality, talents and physical and mental abilities (8).

2. Theoretical Framework

Understanding the compounded vulnerabilities of minority children requires an analytical framework that moves beyond traditional single-axis thinking. The concept of intersectionality, formalized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, has deep roots in earlier social movements and critiques of existing legal and social structures. The development of intersectionality has deep roots in various social movements. Critical Race Theory (CRT), emerging in the mid-1970s, challenged the notion of racism as an isolated occurrence and instead posited it as an ordinary, ingrained part of society (9). This provided an initial framework for understanding how power relations are embedded

in social structures. The groundwork for intersectionality was laid more explicitly by Black Feminism (10), which highlighted the “compounded oppressions” faced by Black women that were not adequately addressed by either the civil rights or feminist movements alone. Long before the term was coined, Black women eloquently described their experiences as “multiple oppressions” and “double jeopardy” (11). Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term in 1989, but she built upon a legacy of thought and political struggle that recognized the inseparability of race, gender and class (5). This historical context ensures that the application of intersectionality remains grounded in the pursuit of substantive social justice (12). Intersectionality provides a critical legal lens demonstrating that discrimination is not merely the additive result of separate identity grounds such as race, gender, religion or disability, but rather emerges through their interaction within specific social and institutional contexts. This approach highlights how overlapping systems of power produce unique and intensified forms of disadvantage that cannot be accurately captured through single-axis legal reasoning. Consequently, an intersectional framework requires anti-discrimination law to move beyond formal equality and to recognize the complex, structural nature of marginalization as experienced by individuals with multiple and intersecting identities (13). The analytical lens has since expanded to encompass other axes of oppression, notably disability, which was historically marginalized within early frameworks. This expansion illustrates that the application of intersectionality is an ongoing, reflexive process that requires constant vigilance against new forms of exclusion, even within progressive spaces (14).

Children's inherent developmental stage and dependence on adults create a foundational layer of vulnerability that is distinct from that of adults. This makes them particularly susceptible to discrimination. The experiences of racial discrimination, for example, are reported among Black youth as early as age seven, profoundly affecting their self-perception and development before they have the coping skills to process such experiences effectively (15). This early exposure

acts as a chronic stressor that can alter brain development and lead to maladaptive coping strategies, perpetuating intergenerational deprivation (16). Furthermore, children's limited legal capacity to advocate for their rights independently makes them reliant on institutions and adults. This dependence is not merely a passive state but is often compounded by a form of age-based discrimination known as “childism”, which views children as inferior to adults and as serving adult interests rather than as rights-holders. This prejudice interacts with other forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism and ableism, to create unique and compounded vulnerabilities (17). Policies and legal frameworks must therefore move beyond simply protecting children from discrimination on other grounds and explicitly address age-based discrimination as a distinct, yet intersecting, form of oppression, thereby challenging the underlying power imbalances between adults and children (18).

The instillation of hate and prejudice in children is not an isolated event but a systemic and often intergenerational, form of harm. Children learn prejudiced attitudes and beliefs from society - including their families, teachers and the media - through both verbal and non-verbal messages. This process begins at an early age, as infants and toddlers are acutely aware of differences and without positive reinforcement, these differences can become a source of fear and negative attitudes (19). The impact of this exposure is significant and long-lasting. Racism, for example, can feel deeply personal for a child and acts as a pervasive social issue that shapes their environment, school quality and even physical health. Children who are exposed to or targeted by racism face higher rates of depression, anxiety and behavioral problems. Experiencing or witnessing discrimination can negatively impact a child's identity and self-esteem, making them feel “less connected and less worthwhile” (15). The cumulative effect of regular microaggressions and overt racism can lead to a state of chronic stress, where the body's stress hormones can damage a child's physical and emotional health over time. This phenomenon also includes the concept of “historical trauma”, which explains how a child can be affected by the realization of how their

racial group has been oppressed over generations (16). When children are taught to hate or internalize prejudice against their own identity, it permanently skews their perceptions of the world and causes personal distress. This transforms hate into a force that breaches the well-being of both the hater and the hated, perpetuating cycles of disorder and injustice across generations (20).

3. The Single-Axis Framework

At the core of the problem is the traditional approach to anti-discrimination law, known as the “single-axis framework”. This model treats each ground of discrimination - such as race, sex or disability - as an exclusive and separate category. By doing so, it artificially simplifies the complex realities of discrimination and fails to recognize that individuals can be subjected to disadvantage that arises from the synergy of multiple identities. The consequences of this framework are profound, leading to what can be described as the legal invisibility of discrimination. If a legal system requires a claimant to prove discrimination based on one ground alone, it is structurally incapable of recognizing and remedying the harm that arises from the interconnected effects of multiple identities. Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term “intersectionality”, used three landmark Title VII cases to illustrate this failure (5):

- In “DeGraffenreid v. General Motors Assembly Division”, five Black women sued the company, alleging that its seniority system perpetuated past discrimination. The court rejected their claim, arguing that “Black women are not a special class to be protected from discrimination” and that plaintiffs could not “combine statutory remedies to create a new 'super-remedy’”. Because the company had hired women (white women) before 1964, the court concluded there was no sex discrimination and the Black women's claim was effectively erased because their specific, combined experience of race and gender discrimination did not fit into a single-axis category (21).

- In “Moore v. Hughes Helicopters, Inc.”, the court refused to certify a Black female as a class representative for race and sex discrimination actions. Crenshaw explains that this refusal to

allow a “multiply-disadvantaged class” to represent others “who may be singularly-disadvantaged” limits the scope of antidiscrimination law and its remedial power. The court's decision forced Moore to support her claim with statistics on Black females alone and by limiting the relevant statistical pool, made it virtually impossible for her to prove discrimination under a disparate impact theory (22).

- Finally, in “Payne v. Travenol Laboratories, Inc.”, the court held that Black women could not represent an entire class of Black people because of a presumed class conflict, as their claims of sex discrimination could not be shared by Black men. These cases highlight a fundamental contradiction in the legal system's approach: Black women's claims are sometimes rejected for being too distinct from those of white women or Black men and at other times, their unique claims are harmed by being treated as if their experiences are the same as those of a single-axis group (23).

These cases serve as powerful illustrations of how the single-axis framework, by ignoring the cumulative effects of multiple identities, leaves the most marginalized without legal recourse. Bazargan and Zarei argue that traditional anti-discrimination law is methodologically limited because it relies on rigid single-ground categorization and narrow comparative models, which often fail to reflect the lived realities of individuals subjected to intersecting harms. They explain that conventional legal tests frequently fragment experiences of discrimination, forcing claimants to isolate one ground of disadvantage and thereby rendering compounded discrimination legally invisible. This critique underscores the need for more context-sensitive evidentiary and analytical approaches that can capture structural and cumulative forms of exclusion, particularly in cases involving vulnerable groups such as minority children (24).

4. Multiple Discrimination

This part of the paper examines the concept of multiple discrimination, its conceptual underpinnings and its limitations as a framework for protecting minority children. Multiple discrimination provides a foundational

understanding of how different forms of prejudice can affect an individual, but it ultimately falls short of capturing the full complexity of their experiences.

4-1. The Impact of Multiple Discrimination on Minority Children

This section examines how different forms of prejudice, when viewed additively, affect minority children across key areas. Multiple discrimination creates distinct, yet cumulative, disadvantages that limit opportunities and access to fundamental rights.

4-1-1. Education

Minority children facing multiple forms of discrimination often encounter systemic barriers to education, where each barrier is treated as a separate problem. In Australia, educational retention levels for Indigenous students are lower than for non-Indigenous students, with the gap in attendance widening in secondary school. In New Zealand, Māori and Pasifika students consistently underperform compared to their European and Asian peers, a disparity linked to socioeconomic challenges and parents' lower educational attainment and income. The legal framework often attempts to solve these problems individually, such as by offering financial aid or specialized language programs, rather than recognizing that they are compounding factors that form a cycle of disadvantage (25).

4-1-2. Poverty and Social Justice

Multiple discrimination in the context of poverty and social justice highlights how different forms of disadvantage can accumulate. A 2022 report found that 333 million children globally live in extreme poverty, a condition that children are more than twice as likely as adults to experience (26). This poverty is often a result of structural disadvantages rooted in historical policies. For instance, in Latin America, Afro-descendant families are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty, which contributes to lower educational attainment and higher dropout rates. This economic disadvantage, when viewed separately from their racial identity, is treated as a distinct problem. However, the accumulation of these issues - poverty in one context and ethnic discrimination in another - creates an additive

burden that is difficult to address with single-issue solutions (27).

4-1-3. Vulnerability to Violence and Abuse

Children from marginalized groups are at a heightened risk of violence. This vulnerability can be understood in terms of multiple discrimination when different forms of violence are seen as separate, cumulative harms. For example, in the Middle East and North Africa, over 90% of children in some countries suffer physical punishment at least once a month, a form of violence that governments often fail to outlaw or enforce laws against. Globally, children are disproportionately affected by displacement, accounting for 40% of all forcibly displaced persons, which increases their risk of exploitation and trafficking. These instances, while often affecting minority children, are frequently addressed through broad-based child protection programs that do not necessarily account for how a child's ethnicity or migrant status compounds their risk. The psychological impact is also significant, with racial discrimination being a risk factor for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and poor mental health outcomes for Black youth. While this shows a strong link, a multiple discrimination approach would view this as one of many risk factors that accumulate, rather than seeing the synergistic interplay of race and childhood experience as a unique phenomenon (28).

5. Intersectional Discrimination

This section of the report delves into the more complex concept of intersectional discrimination, examining its manifestation in the lives of minority children and the legal and policy reforms needed to address it effectively.

5-1. The Manifestation of Intersectional Discrimination on Minority Children

Intersectional discrimination, in contrast to multiple discrimination, is defined by the simultaneous and interconnected effects of multiple identity-based oppressions, which together create a qualitatively distinct and often more severe form of disadvantage that cannot be understood by examining each factor in isolation. A powerful example is that of a Roma girl with a disability. Her experience is not merely the sum of

sexism, racism and ableism; she faces an entangled form of discrimination that is specific to her unique identity at the nexus of these oppressions (29).

5-1-1. Education

Minority children facing intersecting discrimination often encounter systemic barriers to quality education, where different forms of disadvantage reinforce one another. A key

example is the pervasive “model minority myth” in the United States, which portrays Asian Americans as universally successful. This aggregated data conceals significant educational disparities among subgroups. As Table 1 demonstrates, certain subgroups, such as those of Burmese, Cambodian and Hmong descent, have college attainment and high school completion rates that are significantly lower than the national average (30).

Table 1: Educational Attainment among Asian American Subgroups (Ages 25 and Older) in the United States (31).

Ethnic/ Origin Group	Percentage with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher (2019)	Percentage Without a High School Degree (2022)
U.S. Average	35%	12%
All Asian Americans	56-60%	7%
Taiwanese	82%	Not specified
Indian	75%	8.2%
Korean	57%	7.7%
Filipino	48%	7.6%
Vietnamese	32%	29.2%
Hmong	23%	32.1%
Burmese	23%	23%
Cambodian	22%	12%

This quantitative evidence directly challenges the “model minority” narrative, which, by generalizing a diverse population, makes the profound vulnerabilities of certain subgroups, such as those of Burmese, Cambodian and Hmong descent, legally and socially invisible. This invisibility means that their specific needs are not addressed in policymaking or resource allocation. This analysis reveals that the “model minority myth” itself is a form of intersectional discrimination. By ignoring the ethnic differences among Asian Americans, it acts as a structural factor that actively contributes to the perpetuation

of disadvantage for these subgroups, as their unique struggles remain hidden (32).

In Canada, a recent study found that Black students in Southern Ontario were twice as likely as white students to be suspended and four times as likely to be expelled, while Indigenous students were expelled at over three times their representation in schools. This categorization conceals these disparities, demonstrating why an intersectional analysis is indispensable for accurate policymaking and targeted interventions (33).

5-1-2. Poverty and Social Justice

Intersectional discrimination directly perpetuates cycles of poverty, unemployment and homelessness among minority children and their families. This structural disadvantage is often rooted in historical policies that have had cumulative adverse effects on the economic stability of Black, Native American and Latine families. In Latin America, Afro-descendant families are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty, which directly contributes to low educational attainment and high dropout rates. The purposeful denial of homeownership opportunities due to historical racism has had cumulative adverse effects on the economic stability of these families, hindering intergenerational wealth accumulation (34).

Another critical aspect of social exclusion is the prevalence of child labor. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that there are 5.7 million child laborers in Latin America, with Indigenous children being twice as likely to work as non-indigenous children. These children are often subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including bonded and domestic labor and are particularly vulnerable to abusive labor practices due to their poverty and marginalized status. For example, in remote haciendas in the Chaco region, Guaraní indigenous peoples, including children, have been subjected to slavery-like conditions since the late nineteenth century, working for little to no monetary remuneration. These instances are often largely invisible and not captured by traditional data collection methods (35).

Globally, women are disproportionately affected by poverty, a vulnerability that compounds the existing marginalization of minority girls and young women, making it harder for them to escape poverty. The problem is a multi-directional reinforcement of disadvantage, where discrimination in one domain, such as education, directly leads to or exacerbates discrimination in another, such as economic exclusion (36).

5-1-3. Vulnerability to Violence and Abuse

Children facing multiple marginalizations are at a heightened risk of physical, psychological and sexual violence. Gender and ethnicity often intersect to expose minority girls to severe forms

of exploitation and trafficking, as seen in the case of Rohingya refugee girls in camps in Bangladesh who are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence. In the Middle East and North Africa, surveys have found that more than 90% of children in some countries suffer physical punishment at least once a month, with governments often failing to outlaw or enforce laws against violent discipline in schools or homes. Globally, children are disproportionately affected by displacement, accounting for 40% of all forcibly displaced persons despite making up only 30% of the global population, which increases their risk of exploitation and trafficking (37).

A particularly disturbing example is the violence faced by persons with albinism in Africa, where harmful practices and ritual attacks are linked to erroneous beliefs, such as the notion that sexual intercourse with a woman with albinism can cure HIV/AIDS. This demonstrates how a single axis of discrimination (ableism) can intersect with other axes (gender and age) to create extreme forms of violence and vulnerability (38).

The psychological toll of this compounded discrimination is significant. Black youth experience racial discrimination at higher rates than other racial and ethnic groups in the United States, which is a significant risk factor for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and poor mental health outcomes. The “Culturally Informed ACEs (C-ACE) model” incorporates racism not only as a traumatic event in itself but also as a factor that puts Black youth at risk for other ACEs and poor post-ACE outcomes (39). This is a crucial shift in understanding; instead of viewing racism as a separate problem, this model shows it as a central, pervasive force that both causes harm directly and increases vulnerability to other harms. LGBTQ+ minority youth also report higher rates of suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual peers (40).

6. The Current Legal Framework for Protecting Minority Children

International legal frameworks provide a foundation for protecting children's rights, but they are often criticized for failing to address the complexities of intersectional and multiple

discrimination. Children, due to their inherent vulnerability and dependence, require enhanced protection and when combined with factors such as ethnicity, religion, language, gender, disability or migration status, their susceptibility to discrimination increases significantly (41).

6-1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, is the first comprehensive international treaty devoted entirely to the rights of children (3). The CRC provides a foundation for the protection of children's rights through its core principles, yet it struggles to fully address intersectional harm.

6-1-1. Non-Discrimination (Article 2)

This principle obliges States Parties to respect and ensure the rights of every child “without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status” (3). The Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No.11 on Indigenous children stresses the importance of respecting cultural and educational rights, representing an interpretive effort to address these issues (42).

6-1-2. Best Interests of the Child (Article 3)

This principle mandates that the best interests of the child shall be a “primary consideration” in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private institutions. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stressed that the interpretation of this principle must be consistent with the entire Convention and its other guiding principles, such as non-discrimination and the right to development (43).

6-1-3. Right to Life and Development (Article 6)

The CRC recognizes that every child has the “intrinsic right to life” and that States must guarantee, to the maximum extent possible, the survival and development of the child. This is interpreted broadly as a comprehensive concept embracing a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (8).

6-1-4. The Views of the Child (Article 12)

This principle emphasizes the child as an individual with their own views and feelings and as a subject of civil and political rights, applicable in all “matters affecting the child” (44).

While the CRC's universalist approach is its greatest strength, it also creates a significant paradox when faced with intersectional realities. By treating the “child” as a single, monist identity, the CRC framework risks obscuring the complex, intersecting identities that profoundly shape children's experiences of discrimination. The Convention largely treats identity factors independently, failing to fully capture the compounded nature of intersectional discrimination and leaving critical gaps in protection for those who face more than a single form of marginalization (1).

6-2. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Its Interpretive Work

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides a crucial layer of protection. Its Article 26 establishes an “autonomous right” to non-discrimination that is not limited to the rights guaranteed within the Covenant. This article prohibits discrimination in law or in fact in any field regulated and protected by public authorities (45-46).

The Human Rights Committee's interpretive work, such as General Comment No.18, clarifies that Article 26 provides a general right to equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on grounds such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion and other status. This General Comment is significant because it also acknowledges that affirmative action may be necessary to correct “discrimination in fact” where conditions prevent a part of the population from enjoying their human rights (47).

Article 27 of the ICCPR is also highly relevant, as it protects the rights of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion or use their own language. The approach of this article is primarily focused on cultural preservation and it may not fully address the compounded

discrimination faced by individuals who occupy multiple marginalized identities (45).

6-3. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and Its Evolving Mandate

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) provides a targeted framework to combat racial discrimination (48). While it has been criticized for a single-axis approach, there is an evolution in the interpretive work of the committees that oversee these treaties (49). The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has issued General Recommendations that demonstrate a growing recognition of the interconnected nature of discrimination. For example, General Recommendation No 37 (2024) addresses equality and freedom from racial discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to health. This is a significant development, as it directly links a core human right to the structural issues of racial discrimination and acknowledges that health disparities are not isolated but are rooted in systemic injustice (50). This interpretive work shows that existing legal frameworks have the potential to adapt and address intersectional harm, provided that their monitoring bodies adopt a more nuanced analytical approach that moves beyond single-axis frameworks (42).

7. The Current Gaps and Proposed Solutions

Despite international legal advancements in child rights protection, the specific needs of minority children facing intersectional and multiple discrimination remain insufficiently addressed. Historical biases, fragmented legal protections and weak implementation mechanisms continue to hinder their full enjoyment of human rights (1). A critical gap identified throughout this study is the absence of a specific international legal instrument solely dedicated to minority children experiencing intersectional discrimination. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other treaties provide general protection, they fail to capture the compounded and unique vulnerabilities of minority children. To address this, it is recommended that the international community advocate for the development of an Optional Protocol to the CRC that explicitly

addresses intersectional and multiple discrimination affecting minority children (2). Additionally, national legislation should incorporate intersectional frameworks in child protection laws, education policies and anti-discrimination measures. Discriminatory attitudes embedded within historical, cultural and institutional structures also remain major barriers. These include systemic racism, ethnocentrism, linguistic exclusion and gender-based stereotypes that affect policy-making, service provision and community engagement. To combat this, public education campaigns should be implemented to target discriminatory cultural narratives and historical biases. Anti-bias and cultural competency training should be integrated for educators, healthcare providers, law enforcement and social workers (4). Furthermore, establishing Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) focused on marginalized children could address historical injustices and propose restorative measures (51).

One of the major impediments to addressing intersectional discrimination is the lack of robust, disaggregated data that reveals how multiple identities interact to produce exclusion. It is imperative to mandate the systematic collection of disaggregated data by ethnicity, gender, disability, migration status and socio-economic background in all child-related national statistics. This will make intersectional vulnerabilities visible, allowing for the identification of specific needs and the development of targeted, evidence-based interventions (52). Participatory research methodologies involving minority children and communities should be adopted to ensure culturally relevant indicators are used. For example, the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children by UNICEF and UNESCO employs intersectional data analysis to identify and reach marginalized groups (53).

Intersectional discrimination often requires localized, flexible and community-driven interventions. Policies designed without the participation of minority communities are less effective and risk reinforcing existing power imbalances. To counter this, it is recommended to strengthen community-based child protection systems that recognize intersectional identities

and experiences. It is also important to support minority-led organizations and child rights defenders to participate actively in decision-making processes and develop empowerment programs that enable minority children to become agents of change within their communities.

Conclusion

The protection of minority children against intersectional and multiple discrimination is an urgent and complex issue. While existing international legal frameworks, notably the CRC, ICCPR and ICERD, provide important and generalized protections, this study has demonstrated that they remain insufficiently responsive to the specific, compounded vulnerabilities faced by minority children who stand at the nexus of multiple marginalized identities. The analysis reveals that the problem is deeply rooted in historical injustices and perpetuated by structural and cultural biases, fragmented policies and a pervasive lack of awareness. The CRC's Universalist approach, while laudable in its intent, paradoxically risks obscuring the complex identities that profoundly shape children's experiences of discrimination. This is compounded by legal limitations, such as the single-axis focus of anti-discrimination laws and the burden of proof often placed on complainants, which render intersectional harm legally invisible.

Intersectional discrimination against minority children manifests across every domain of their lives, from education and healthcare to social participation and protection from violence, creating a multi-directional reinforcement of disadvantage. The psychological and developmental toll of this cumulative discrimination, including the long-term effects of hate and prejudice, transforms a personal injustice into a public health and social crisis. As with any study, this research is subject to limitations. The analysis primarily relies on secondary sources, such as international conventions, scholarly articles and human rights reports, due to constraints in conducting primary empirical research. The scope of the study, while comprehensive, cannot fully capture the diverse

experiences of all minority children across different cultural, national and regional contexts. Additionally, the rapidly evolving nature of intersectional scholarship and policy innovation means that some emerging trends may not have been fully addressed. Future research incorporating empirical data from minority children themselves, comparative case studies across jurisdictions and longitudinal analyses would enrich the understanding and practical applicability of these findings.

Achieving the goal of protecting minority children is not merely a legal obligation but a moral imperative rooted in the principles of human dignity, equality and justice. This requires a fundamental shift in approach - one that moves beyond formalistic interpretations of rights and embraces an intersectional and child-centered vision. By actively dismantling structural inequalities, promoting cultural change and implementing comprehensive legal and social reforms, the international community can move closer to realizing the full promise of human rights for every child, regardless of their identity, background or circumstance.

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Authorship

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest in relation to the conduct of this research and the publication of this article.

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