

Original Research Article

Empirical Evidence: 70% of University of Southern Somalia Female Trainee Teachers Say “Execution” and “Life Imprisonment” for SGBV Perpetrators

Loul Mohamed Ali-Clay^{1*}, Loul Adan Mohamed¹, Faiza Noor Ali¹, Mohamed Hassan Isak¹, Ahmed Abdiladhif M. Jawaani¹, Mohamud Abukar^{1,2,3,8}, Mohamed Aweys^{1,3,4,7,8}, Mohamoud M. Haji^{6,7}, Amina Mohamed Abubakar^{6,8}, Mohamed A. Eno^{3,5,8}

¹Dept. of Social Work & Social Administration, University of Southern Somalia, Baidoa, SWSS

²Dept. of Public Health, University of Southern Somalia, Baidoa, SWSS

³Dept. of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Southern Somalia, Baidoa, SWSS

⁴Dept. of Public Administration, University of Southern Somalia, Baidoa, SWSS

⁵Faculty of Education, University of Southern Somalia, Baidoa, SWSS

⁶PhD Student, Faculty of Education, University of Southern Somalia, Baidoa, SWSS & St Clements University, Lausanne, Switzerland

⁷Dept. of Community Development, University of Southern Somalia, Baidoa, SWSS

⁸Hakaba Institute for Research and Training, Baidoa, SWSS

Article History

Received: 27.08.2025

Accepted: 18.10.2025

Published: 04.11.2025

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

Quick Response Code

Abstract: A 70% majority of the female students from the Rajo Kaaba trainee teachers studying at the University of Southern Somalia provide their opinion that they would prefer SGBV perpetrators either be executed or sentenced to life-imprisonment. The results came from a study jointly carried out by faculty and students of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration of the same institution in July 2025. Despite massive global efforts to tackle the pandemic, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains one of the most frequently experienced incidences by women and girls across the globe. The impact is dreadfully unbearable, harmfully intolerable, and in some cases fatally overwhelming if the survivor contemplates solving the agony by committing suicide. Somalia, a war-ridden nation gradually recovering from lawlessness and a host of ailments that consumed many sectors of its of human development, represents a unique example of an underdeveloped country grappling with the challenges of SGBV. Existing previous studies, mainly carried out by humanitarian organizations operating in the country, unraveled causes and factors contributing to SGBV, its impact on the survivors, arbitration of elders and community leaders through customary law, and the challenges needed to be faced to overcome the problem. To contribute to the scanty but growing body of knowledge on SGBV in Somalia and all over the globe, this essay explores the perceptions of female undergraduates studying in the Faculty of Education of the University of Southern Somalia based in the city of Baidoa, Southwest State of Somalia.

Keywords: arbitration, customary law, female students, GBV, SGBV, Somalia

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution **4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)** which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SGBV: A Universal Disease

The viciousness of SGBV is a reality which attracted a universal attention both in developed and underdeveloped countries. It is noteworthy that even after joint collaborations among international and local organizations, experts and scholars from diverse professional backgrounds, the menace is enduringly prevalent everywhere. More incidents are reported in

countries all over the world. Reports, conferences, policies, and legislations, though useful components of the strategies for the prevention of SGBV and provision of support to the survivors, remain inadequate in eradicating or mitigating the level of its occurrences in many parts of the world.

Organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, and others in Asia

***Corresponding Author:** Loul Mohamed Ali-Clay

Dept. of Social Work & Social Administration, University of Southern Somalia, Baidoa, SWSS

among them the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence (APIGBV), and the Southeast Asia Gender-based Violence Prevention Platform are actively involved in the fight against all forms of SGBV. In Africa, where the fight against SGBV is between stagnation and slight progress, direly needed interventions and prevention are provided by establishments such as MenEngage Africa Alliance, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), and TrustAfrica. In the Republic of Kenya, Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) provides several support services to survivors, while groups like Female Solidarity for Peace and Integrated Development (SOFEPADI) in the Democratic Republic of Congo are heavily involved in fighting against the problem in order to improve the rights and wellbeing of women and girls in all aspects of human development.

In post-war Somalia, women-led organizations emerged that promote women rights and development. For instance, Save Minority Women and Children (SMWC), among others, is a minority-led local NGO focused on the wellbeing of minority women and children by implementing numerous activities that include advocacy, awareness campaigns, training programs on SGBV prevention, and interventions with support services to survivors. It carries out activities under volatile circumstances, particularly in the IDP camps, where targeted SGBV incidents are extremely high against the vulnerable minority communities suffering without ability to avert the violence (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025).

1.2 An Overview of GBV Advocacy in Somalia

The advocacy for women rights and more specifically the fight against gendered discrimination were brought into meaningful discussion in Somalia during the military rule of Mohamed Siad Barre. In 1975 the military junta introduced *Xeerka Qoyska* (Family Law) under the ideology of Scientific Socialism (Somalia 1975). It was a very controversial legislation but one which the military regime claimed was intended to modernize the rudimentary customary and traditional legal system. On the contrary, prominent Islamic scholars thought the introduction of *Xeerka Qoyska* was meant to directly challenge the traditional *Islamic Sharia Law*. Citizens discomfited with the new law denounced it as disreputable and contrary to the sacred teachings of Islam as it brought reforms such as the prohibition of polygamy and equal rights for spouses. The dispute culminated to serious criticism by leading Islamic scholars, some of whom were prosecuted in the National Security Court, condemned to death, and finally executed by firing-squad.

1.3 Prohibition of Gender Discrimination

Despite the criticism and heinous execution of the Islamic scholars, one of the most remarkable steps by Siad Barre's regime was the massive awareness and advocacy given on women rights and fight against

female genital mutilation (FGM) and infibulation, commonly labelled in Somalia with the disreputable name of *Gudniinka Fircooniga* (Pharaonic Circumcision). By associating FGM with Pharaoh, a devilish ruler of pre-Muhammaddan Egypt, described in the Islamic Scripture as an unholy leader too contumacious and cursed with wrath of Allah, along with heavy manipulation of the media and support from the talented Waberi Artistes Troupe, Barre's military regime might be credited for the initiation of anti-FGM campaigns supported by *Ururka Dhaqdhaqaaqa Haweenka Soomaaliyeed* (Somali Women's Democratic Movement). The military rulers, through their ideological platform, the Somali Revolutionary Social Party (SRSF), advocated for gender equality and inclusion of women, from education to employment (Mohamed 2015).

2. MOST RECENT SGBV LITERATURE ON SOMALIA

2.1 Abukar *et al.*, (2025)

Abukar *et al.*, (2025) covered a large volume of select secondary sources to review the GBV situation in Baidoa in the Southwest State of the country. Advancing a strategic point of view, they proposed a contextualization of the SGBV interventions according to the needs of a specific community and pronouncements of their culture. Furthermore, they emphasized intensification of prevention and intervention strategies with well-tuned approaches that address the violence according to the particular needs of the survivor and not necessarily as per the intervention and arbitration of the traditional elders.

Abukar and his coauthors analyzed various reports by UN agencies and scholarly contributions. Dissecting the magnifying scope of the prevalence, they invoke a United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) research report that from 2022, about 2.3 million individuals in Somalia were predicted to need GBV programs and support services, with speculations that the number might rise in the next few years. As a result of discrimination presumed based on their low social standing and gendered social norms, adult married women, teenage girls, widows, divorced women, female-headed households, pregnant and lactating women, orphans, and women and girls with disabilities are disproportionately targeted with various forms of gender violence (Abukar *et al.*, 2025).

Intimate partner violence, rape, sexual exploitation, harassment, and abuse as a result of displacement are also common in Somalia, while GBV and gender discrimination in the country are linked to pre-existing gendered norms and behaviors, which subsequently make teenage females more vulnerable due to their age and gender, as postulated by Abukar *et al.*, (2025, p. 3). The review essay by Abukar *et al.*, (2025) further acknowledged that the customary system, which is the primary traditional device for arbitration in most of

the SGBV cases in the country, often favors the perpetrator by not providing sufficient justice or financial compensation to the victim. Abukar and coresearchers indicate that the customary approach of mediation is used because the common law courts have either not been reestablished effectively or are incapable of handling crucial civil cases involving gender violence and violation of women's and girls' human rights.

2.1.2 Ibrahim *et al.*, (2025a)

Based on "a systematic review of select sources on GBV," Ibrahim *et al.*'s (2025a:98) article analyzed GBV from a triangular viewpoint: (a) prevalence of GBV in Somali society, (b) the cultural burden under which the survivors suffer, and (c) the need for qualified professionals to lead the interventions and provision of support to the victims. They recommend the establishment of a countrywide civic education that brings men and boys on board in the process of finding solution for the problem. Furthermore, Ibrahim *et al.*, shed light on the survivors' reluctance to report the abuse, a matter related to cultural beliefs that embarrassing incidents are better left undiscussed, unrevealed, in order to preserve the victim's honor and that of her family.

Remarkable in Ibrahim *et al.*'s (2025a) review article are the identification of critical issues as a precursor to tackling SGBV: (a) emphasis to recruit competently skilled community social workers and well-trained psycho-trauma counsellors to intervene in the provision of support services to the SGBV survivors; (b) "Retooling and capacity-building working social work practitioners" who have vast practical experience in the field but with insufficient professional training; (c) involvement of the various sectors of society including community elders, men and boys, women and girls, NGOs and women-led community-based organizations, as well as government institutions in a national strategic approach to confront GBV in Somalia; and (d) establishment of a nationwide policy and the enactment and implementation of legislation that addresses SGBV away from the involvement of traditional elders and their arbitration of applying customary law.

2.1.3 Jawaani & Eno (2025)

Conducting a desk review of published materials, Jawaani and Eno (2025:295) censure Somali society for the incessant occurrences of SGBV cases in the country. They describe it a malpractice emanating from "a complicated history of gender marginalization as a cultural norm," very comfortably tolerated in the society. Jawaani and Eno take a hard shot at the cultural anomalies devastating women's and girls' aspirations with criticism that "[t]he multi-diagonal challenges the country is grappling with is the consequence of the inherited socio-cultural attitude of bias against women, reinforced through generations of little action to heal the wound." Adding more flavor to the voices advocating for a violence-free and safe spaces for women and girls,

scholars Jawaani and Eno highlight the paucity of SGBV research in Somali Studies and the need for the young generation to deem the topic the attention it deserves.

2.1.4 Ibrahim *et al.*, (2025b)

While Ibrahim *et al.*'s first study (2025a) was a review article analyzing the state of GBV in Somalia via secondary sources, their second study was a powerful empirical research which "examines narratives of empowerment of survivors of gender-based violence (GBV)," with particular focus on communities in IDP camps selected from Mogadishu, the Somali capital, and the district of Afgoye in the Lower Shabelle Region, Southwest State of Somalia. The in-depth qualitative attributes of the data in this study using KII, FGD, and face-to-face interviews, along with the personal narratives of the survivors, voices of advocates for women's wellbeing, and views of experts in the eradication of GBV in the Somali context, make Ibrahim *et al.*, (2025b) an unprecedented piece of work that will make unparalleled contribution to Somali Studies and SGBV nationally and globally. From assaults by intimate partner, sibling, clan/sub-clan adversary, police imposter, to violence by cunning recruiters who double as sex-opportunists, Ibrahim *et al.*'s (2025b) research lays open the seriousness of the discriminatory attitudes exacted on women on the basis of their gender. Moreover, the study delves into the SGBV predicament by identifying a number of factors determining women's silence, or rather reluctance to report incidents of attack and abuse—matters Ibrahim and colleagues (2025b) feature as concerns begging for massive intervention and awareness campaigns, involvement of professional community social workers and engagement of well-trained psycho-sexual trauma counselors.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

The study used triangulation approach that combines the characteristics of both descriptive and exploratory research with its main focus on the quantitative approach of statistical presentation and descriptive analysis of data results. It follows this method because the topic is an under-researched area that aims to utilize the advantages bestowed upon quantitative research and the recompences offered by the qualitative/exploratory questions focusing on in-depth details of individual respondents. The idea was for the approaches to complement each other in whichever area the counterpart method might have produced a weakness. Triangulation or mixed methods, is a more preferable model whose harmonization of exploratory and descriptive devices far exceeds the benefits offered by either approach used individually (Dawadi *et al.*, 2021; Sharma *et al.*, 2023).

3.2 Research Instruments

A questionnaire with structured qualitative and quantitative questions (Hansen & Świdarska 2024) was distributed to female respondents who are trainee

teachers in the Faculty of Education of the University of Southern Somalia. Issues on consent and confidentiality were explained and addressed before distribution of the self-administered questionnaire with the statement of consent and confidentiality placed in the first paragraph. The female researchers were present at the venue in case participants needed elaboration on any arising issues. A set of two questionnaires was prepared with one in English and the other in Somali to provide options on language preference.

3.3 Sampling

Although the target population was 135 female trainee teachers studying in the Faculty of Education of the University of Southern Somalia, a sample size of all the 81 respondents who participated in the exercise was used.

3.4 Data Analysis

Since this was the first study of its kind in Baidoa, the Southwest State, and the entire Federal Republic of Somalia, a descriptive statistics was used to characterize the perception of the undergraduate female respondents. The study used tables and figures to demonstrate the results alongside the analysis and discussion. Variables were measured and described according to frequencies and their corresponding percentages.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Matters on anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, following suggestions and recommendations given elsewhere by Kang & Hwang (2023); no names or other forms of personal identities of the respondents were revealed in any part of the study.

4. ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

The study findings were obtained from a total of 81 respondents from female trainee teachers studying at the University of Southern Somalia during the conduct of the study. The particular interest in this group was because they are tomorrow's teachers and educational leaders who are at the same the appropriate agency for social change, especially in the improvement of matters affecting women and girls. They are under training to teach the next generation of students and are expected to advocate for their rights with awareness of the causes related to sexual and gender-based violence. This exclusively selected young women are freshers in a two-year Higher Diploma scholarship program under the auspices of the World Bank through a project named: "Somalia - Empowering Women Through Education and Skills Rajo Kaaba Project." It is implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education of the Federal Government of Somalia through 25 higher learning institutions in different parts of the country. In the ensuing section, the results are presented in tables and figures illustrating their breakdown in frequencies and percentages along with the discussion.

Table 1: Gender: Exclusively Female

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

Table 1 illustrates that 100% of the participants were exclusively females. The invitation was initially sent to all the 135 Rajo Kaaba trainee teachers studying in the Faculty of Education of the University of Southern Somalia, although the study worked with the responses of the 81 girls who answered to the invitation and volunteered to participate in the survey. Therefore, the 100% female participation should not be a surprise as that was one the objectives of the study.

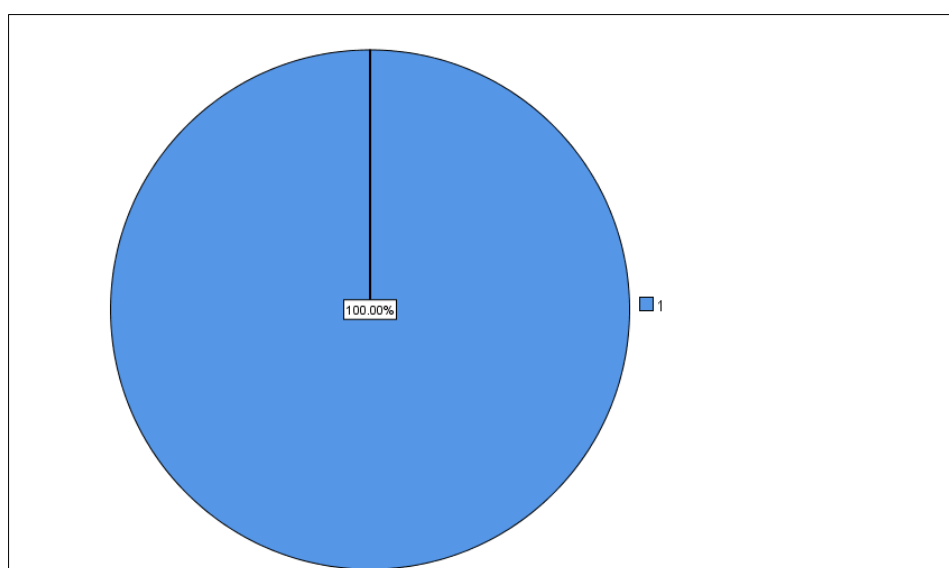


Figure 1: Gender of the respondents

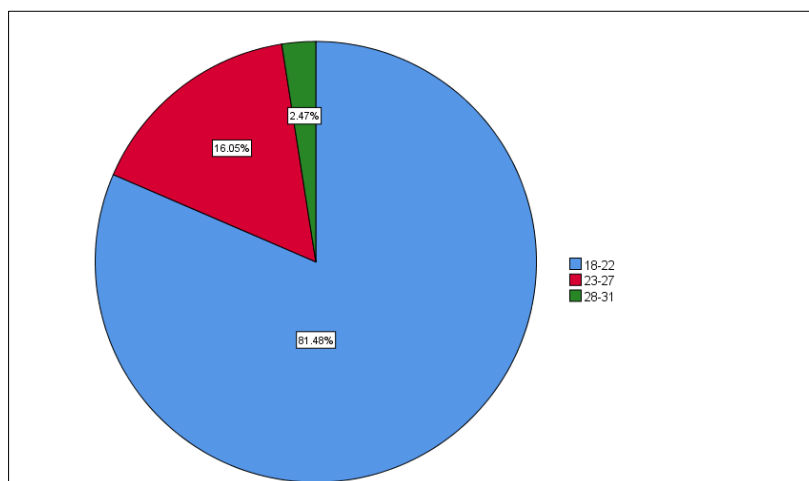
Table 2: Age of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18-22	66	81.5
	23-27	13	16.0
	28-31	2	2.5
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

According to Table 2, majority of the respondents, 66 (81.5%), were aged between 18–22 years, followed by those of ages between 23–27 years which had a frequency of 13 responses (16%) while ages 28–31 consisted of a minority of only 2 informants (2.5%). That most of the respondents were between 18–22 years and almost 82% demonstrates that the age of the participants corresponds exactly to the college age of students in Somalia. The age brackets with 16% and almost 3% give us the hint that some participants among

this particular group might be working teachers with a range of experience but who have joined the course in order to benefit from the scholarship offered through the Rajo Kaaba Program and obtain a professional teaching qualification that supports their expertise. In other words, the age factor of the participants adds to the validity of the data in that it was collected from the right people whose age corresponds to the level of education they are pursuing.

**Figure 2: Age of the respondents****Table 3: Marital Status**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Single	73	90.1
	Married	7	8.6
	Divorced	1	1.2
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

Table 3 dissects the marital status of the respondents, displaying that a staggering majority were unmarried, 73 (90.1%), against 7 (8.6%) who were married, while only 1 (1.2%) among them, was divorced. The results seem to disagree with the frequently reported scenario that many Somali girls are married while still underage and that many of them are denied the opportunity to pursue their studies to higher education. Here, the results furnished in Table 3 indicate that a new trend could be evolving among young Somali girls that the old perception or rather tradition of early marriage or marriage before higher education is shrinking. Assuming hypothetically that such a shift might be truly underway,

there is hope for the girl-child and the society that the old belief and/or (mal)practice of early marriage is dwindling, at least in some urban settings. The outcome of the particular question on marriage is very encouraging by showing us that girls are focused on the attainment of higher education and a better future that will enable them realize much better opportunities along the path of their career. Comparative to the overwhelming majority, married participants make almost 9%, a reasonable percentage though, considering that almost 19% of them are between 23 and 31 years old (Table 2), a common age-bracket for marriage in Somalia and in other African societies.

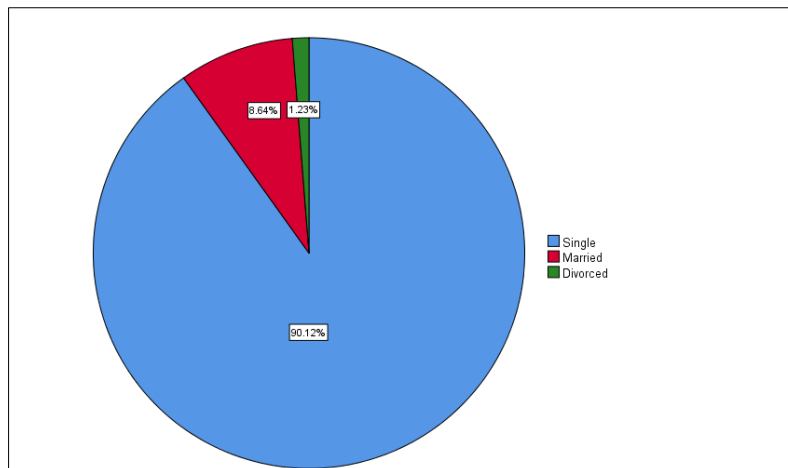


Figure 3: Marital Status

Table 4: How do you rank the occurrences of SGBV?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very frequently	28	34.6
	Frequently	10	12.3
	Sometimes	33	40.7
	Rarely	10	12.3
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

According to Table 4, a majority of 33 respondents (40.7%) believe that GBV occurs sometimes, while a counterpart of 28 (34.6%) thought the violence takes place 'very frequently', with those who perceive the occurrence is frequent make 10 (12.3%) of the participants, a figure equally the same as respondents who consider it happens 'rarely'. Studying Table 4 gives us a very clear understanding of the prevalence of GBV in Somali society, especially as viewed by the female respondents surveyed in this study. In their individual opinion, GBV occurrences in the scale of the two 'frequently' choices of almost 47% exceeds its nearest choice 'sometimes' (40.7%) by nearly 6%. The two figures and the difference between them indicates the considerable threat GBV poses against

women and girls. Examined from another vantage point, that *only* 12.3% think GBV is a rare occurrence does not give relief as to imagine that the violence is low. Instead, the concern here should be not merely the low figure but the fact about the physical and psychological torment that 12% or 10 out of every 81 women and girls undergo as a consequence of the abuse—a social factor that calls for an urgent intervention. A reading through a sharper lens reveals how slightly over half of the respondents 41/81 view GBV as a significant threat challenging the rights and sound wellbeing of women and girls; in other words, that the prevalence is a reality evidently confirmed by a considerable proportion of educated young women as explained in this report.

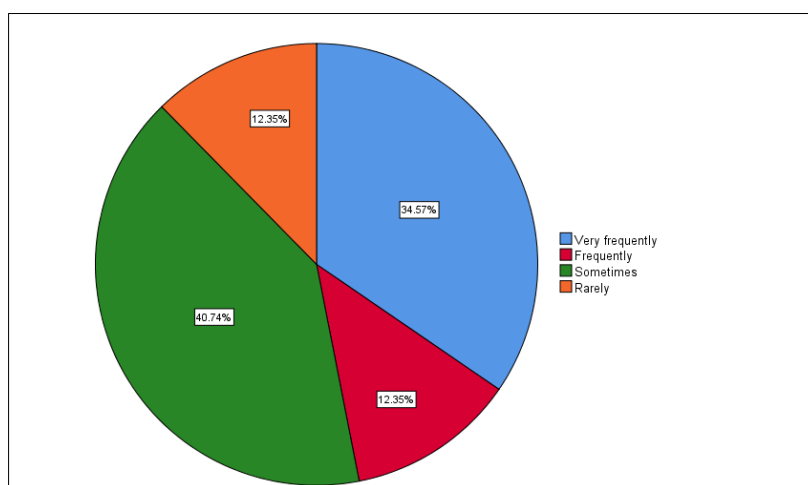


Figure 4: How do you rank the occurrences of SGBV?

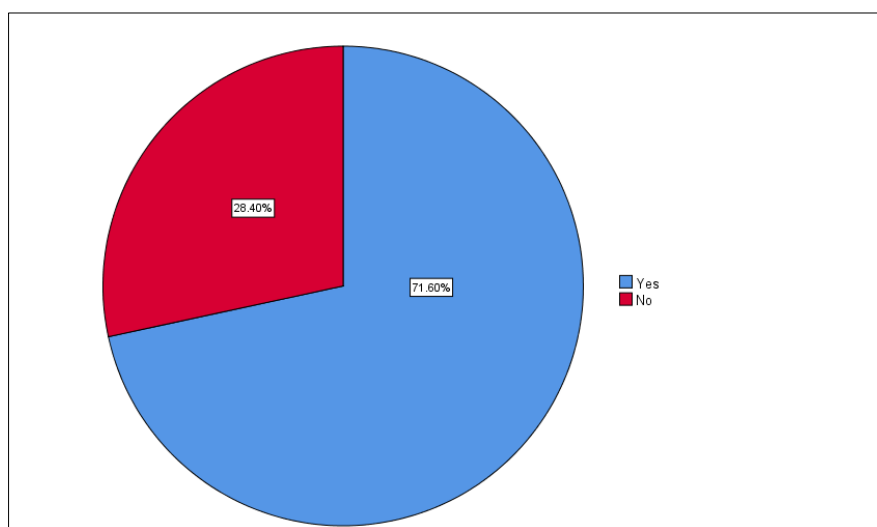
Table 5: Do you think the practice of SGBV is influenced by the gender inequality in the family?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	58	71.6
	No	23	28.4
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

Table 5 examines interesting responses from a very crucial question, one that analyzes women's and girls' perception of Somali parents' cultural and traditional beliefs when dealing with GBV issues within the household. Fifty-eight (58) respondents (71.6%) were positive about parents' biased attitude against their female children and more favorable treatment towards their male kids. Participants who think parents do not indulge in gender inequality in their families with a solid 'no' response are 23, equaling 28.4%. The huge rate of positive responses to the question supports the anecdotal statements as well as studies and reports that the roots of gender inequality in Somali society are firmly sowed in the family environment where, as a patriarchal society, Somali parents militate gender discrimination where boys are treated with high credence than girls. Hence, the fact that 28% of the female surveyees exonerate parents as guardians who treat their children equally could be an

indication that they live in families where parents are sensitive about gender issues in this modern age where gender awareness and advocacy for fairness to the girl-child are part of the common social discourse prevailing in the educational, health, economic, as well as employment environments. The disparity between the two groups and the huge tendency towards the assumption of parents playing a role as promoters of gender inequality responds to the cultural and traditional anomaly of Somali society in matters related to gender and the empowerment of women as a potential force whose role is not merely absent but one that is crucially needed in all aspects of national development (Ibrahim *et al*. 2025b). But for the nation to realize that development, society has to pledge prioritization of equal treatment and opportunity for women and girls from the family level to the top seat of the nation's leadership so that every member benefits from their contribution.

**Figure 5: Do you think the practice of SGBV is influenced by the gender inequality in the family?****Table 6: What should be the ideal punishment for a SGBV perpetrator?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Life-imprisonment	32	39.5
	Execution	25	30.9
	Below 10 years in jail	9	11.1
	More than 10 years in jail	15	18.5
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

Question 6 was included in the questionnaire to measure participants' opinion of the kind of punishment they would prefer to be meted to a SGBV perpetrator. From a covert analytical point of view as well as that of design, the question is posed in order to determine how

women's and girls' judgment would equate to or disagree with the judgments frequently made by community and clan elders following the Somali customary law known as (xeer).

However, contrary to the bias-laden customary judgment which usually considers a nominally meagre token fee as a compensation to the victim in exchange of acquittal of the GBV perpetrator, the female trainee teachers in this study favored different types of punishment for the culprit: punishment that, in their perception, would be commensurate to the gravity of the crime committed. The types of punishment are displayed in the stunning results in Table 6 where a majority of the respondents, close to 40%, recommended life imprisonment to be handed over to GBV perpetrators in order for them to be taken away from women's spaces for their lifetime.

Almost 31% suggest execution as the most appropriate punishment for a GBV committer so that he never lives any longer to either harm another female or

remember and talk about the incident any longer. Those who would endorse a penalty of more than 10 years in jail for a violent abuser of women are 18.5% and above their counterparts of 11.1% who would be more favorable to a perpetrator by preferring against him an incarceration period of under 10 years.

The fact that virtually a third of the participants would propose execution as a commensurate sentence to an act of sexual abuse or other types of violence against women is a clear sign of the excruciating pain women endure as a result of SGBV and the level of psychological and emotional devastation it causes to them. It signals an important message to society in general and to the authorities in particular that an immediate shift in perspective is needed for the containment of the iniquity.

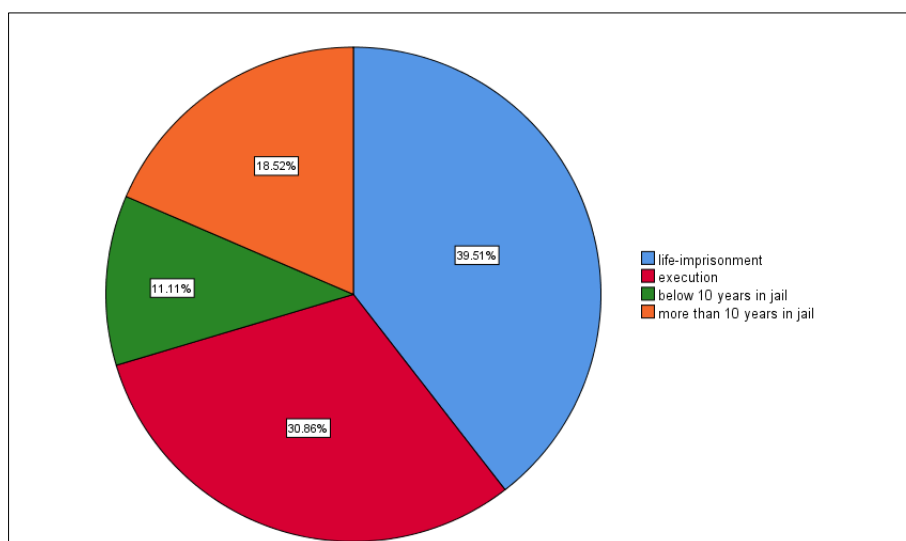


Figure 6: What should be the ideal punishment for a SGBV perpetrator?

Table 7: What should be the compensation for the survivor?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	I'm forgiving myself	1	1.2
	Lif-imprisonment	3	3.7
	More than 10 years in jail	3	3.7
	Financial compensation	56	69.1
	Execution	18	22.2
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

In Q7, as tabulated in Table 7, each participant expressed her mind about her ideal type of compensation to a GBV survivor. An overwhelming majority of almost 70% thought financial compensation would be acceptable while 22% would still recommend execution of the culprit as a rewarding type of reckoning rather than any other recompense. This is less than the almost 31% in Table 6 who responded execution as a reasonable punishment for the perpetrator. The reason for the high choice for financial compensation could be because the response 'financial compensation' was not included in the choices displayed in Table 6.

In any case, financial compensation, though useful in terms of helping the survivor in meeting some of the medical and other financial burdens to be met as a consequence of the menace incident, it can never compensate for the social stigma and massive psycho-trauma ensuing the violence. Life imprisonment and more than 10 years in jail have also significantly decreased to 3.7% each, a very significant drop which could probably be related to the financial inducement that also affected the number of participants who had previously opted for execution as an ideal punishment for committing GBV.

As far as clemency or forgiveness is concerned, a factor very much recommended in Islam, it has the lowest of all the answer options measured as it returned an insignificant 1.2% of the entire sample covered in this study. Avoidance of clemency by a hefty majority of the interviewees marks a significant decision, a powerful message these female trainee teachers are sending that:

as far as SGBV is concerned, there are very few and insignificant chances of any offender benefiting from their benevolence. It is also a solid warning to any felon, community elder, or fanatic of customary law (xeer) not to expect leniency or mercy from a SGBV survivor but for the violator to face the full force of the law for his crime.

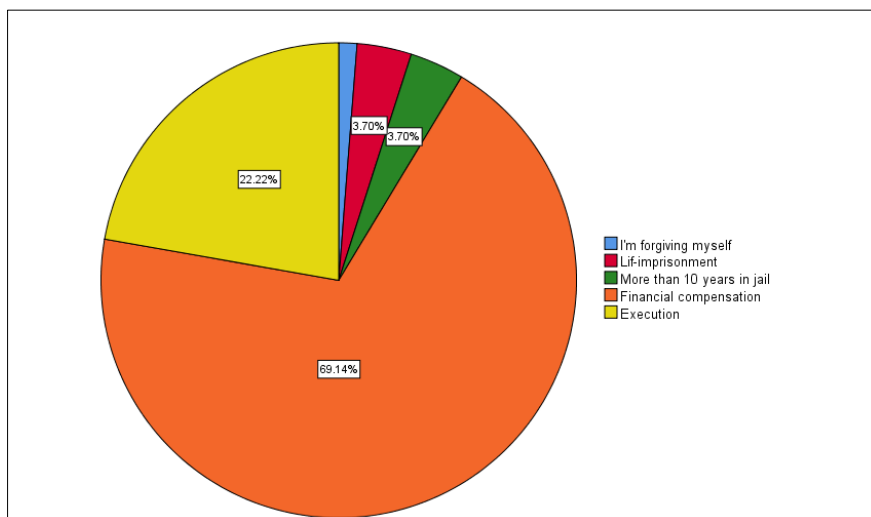


Figure 7: What should be the compensation for the survivor?

Table 8: Is Somali customary law (xeer) suitable to apply in SGBV cases?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	46	56.8
	No	35	43.2
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

The statistical descriptions demonstrated in Table 8 submit a favorable judgment for *xeer* Somali or Somali customary law, an institution often blamed by many for gender bias and unsuitability for arbitrating in GBV cases. But unlike the anecdotal stories against it, close to 57% provide a high rate of appreciation that *xeer* Somali stands suitably applicable in adjudicating SGBV cases, although 43% of their colleagues disagree with

that perception, considering instead that the traditional institution is an instrument unfit for mediating matters concerning GBV. The higher rate of positive response in favor of *xeer*, customary law, connotes the respondents' resilience to adhere to the traditional norms of negotiation and reconciliation in domestic problems, despite it being blamed for the bias of providing insufficient compensating to SGBV victims.

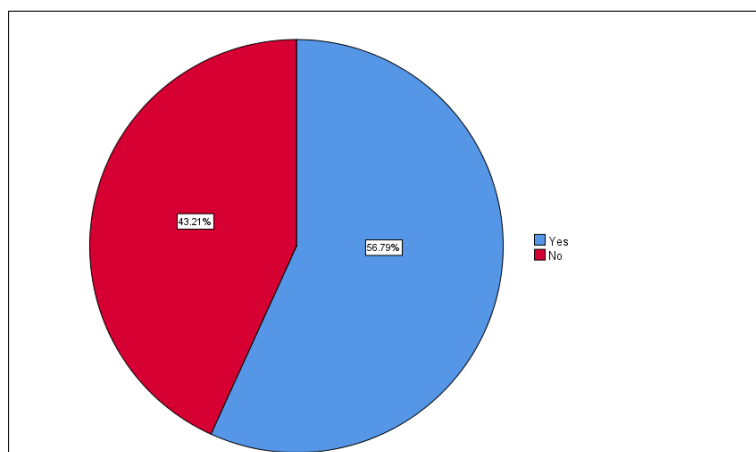


Figure 8: Is Somali customary law (xeer) suitable to apply for SGBV cases?

Table 9: Do you support female circumcision and female genital mutilation (FGM)?

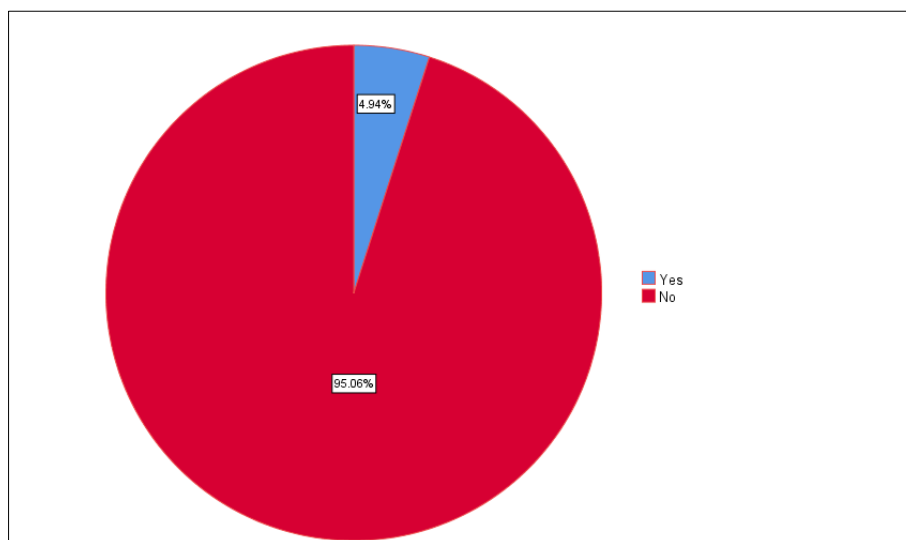
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	4	4.9
	No	77	95.1
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

According to the results in Table 9, female circumnutation and female genital mutilation (FGM) is perceived as an unacceptable malpractice. An almost unanimous number of 95% acclaim the malpractice cannot be supported. A very small section of 5% approves support for the practice, a clear sign that a traditional aspect of FGM is still alive in the modern mind of even some of the learned young Somali women.

The results are appreciable in the sense that most of these young women, especially modern females

of college age, feel the fatality of the abuse and its physical and psychological torture to women and girls. Although the violent exercise has been so enduring and pervasive in Somali society for so long, and still continues in many parts of the country, particularly in rural Somalia, the social campaigns on the severity of FGM and its negative impact on females is being consciously recognized and dealt with devastating blows.

**Figure 9: Do you support female circumcision and female genital mutilation (FGM)?****Table 10: Why 'yes' or 'no'?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	FGM causes both physical and psychological problems.	74	91.4
	FGM is not permitted in religion	7	8.6
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

The follow up question illustrated in Table 10 is aimed to explore further elaboration supporting the 'yes' or 'no' answers given in Table 9 through each participant's personal perception and self-expression using their own words. An overwhelming majority of 74 participants (91%) out of the total of 81 expressed that they do not support FGM due to its harmful physiological and psychological impact, compared to about 9% who observed it from a religious perspective that the practice of FGM is not accepted in the Islamic faith—although *Sunna*, a mild form of it, is recommended in Islam. The religious point of view is supported by the fact that FGM, as a traditional (mal)practice, is described in Somalia as *Gudniinka*

Fircooniga, which, translated into English, means the *Pharaonic Circumcision*, although older generations of the Somali society unanimously believed (though wrongly) that it was a religious ritual. A detailed reading of the data illuminates the fact that even the low percentage of female respondents in Table 9 (4.9%) who supported FGM seem to have endorsed one of the two categories of answers furnished in Table 10 which are physical and psychological as one category of response and a matter of faith, a religious concern which was the other factor mentioned by the respondents. Moreover, the results tend to suggest a unanimous 100% sweepstake for the unacceptability of FGM due to the responses the female future teachers highlighted in Table 10.

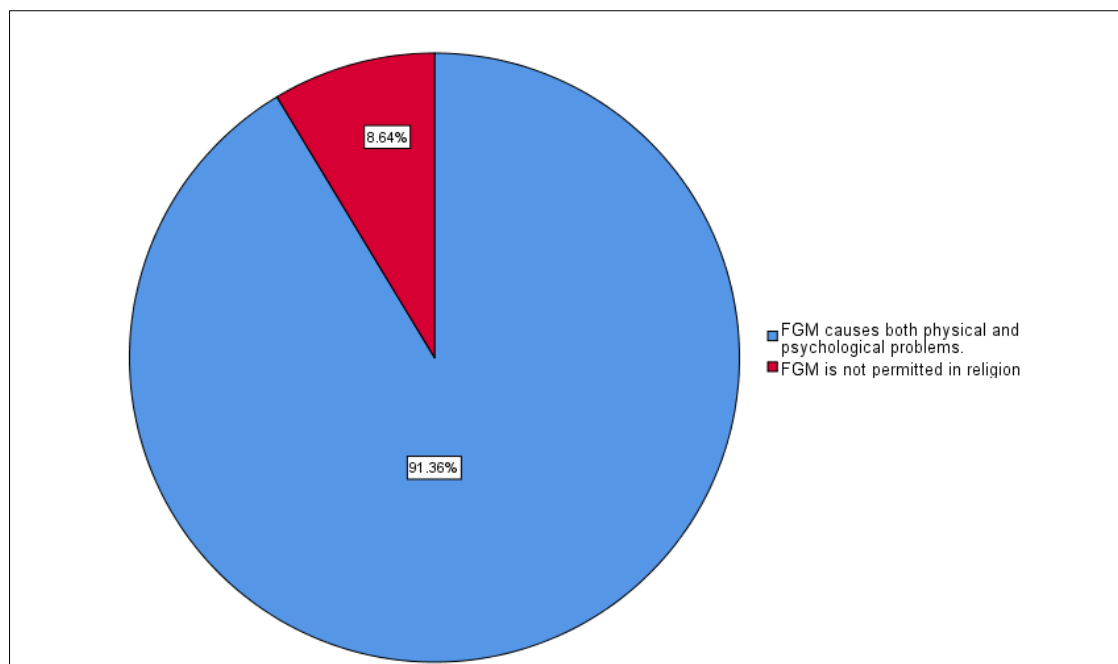


Figure 10: Why 'yes' or 'no'?

Table 11: How do you rate the occurrences of SGBV in learning institutions?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very frequently	8	9.9
	Frequently	10	12.3
	Sometimes	14	17.3
	Very rarely	15	18.5
	Never	34	42.0
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

Exactly 42%, which is a slight majority of the participants, have the perception that SGBV never occurs in learning institutions, suggesting that they have not experienced such a violence in schools where they had studied. What makes the high frequency of the 'never' response credible is the response of those who think it happens 'very rarely' (18.5%), the second highest answer, with a likelihood that they have not encountered frequent occurrences of the abuse taking place in the surroundings of their learning environments. However, for whatever reason or experience, the girls who gave the two responses of 'very rarely', and 'never', who together comprise 61% of the average number of participants, are telling us that from their perspective, learning institutions are not common settings severely infested with the SGBV virus. Comparative to their view, though, there is a section of the respondents (40%) who believe that

SGBV takes place in educational institutions with 'very frequent' occurrences (9.9%), supported by 12.3% that it happens frequently, and a higher group of 17.3% who hold the belief that it occurs sometimes. With about 40% answering for the perception that it is not only prevalent but that it indeed occurs very frequently, frequently and sometimes, means that educational institutions have a responsibility to create a safer space for women and girls who are affiliated with the institutions of learning either as employees or students. School heads and principals, along with other stakeholders including parents, Ministry of Education officials, foreign donors, international and local NGOs involved in the education sector, have a responsibility to consider a more effective involvement in addressing gender issues that may hinder women and girls from their right to education and employment.

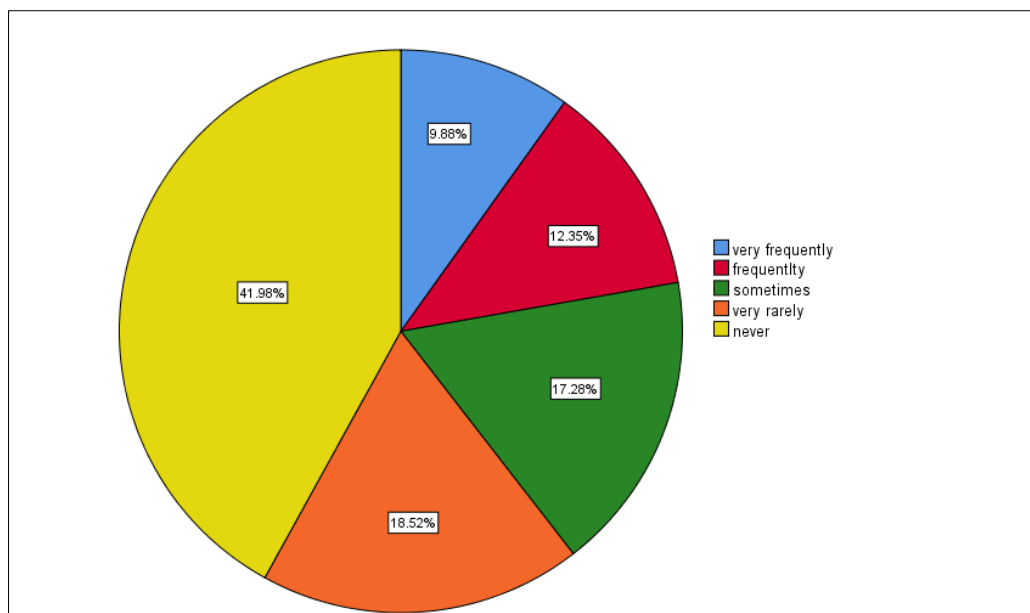


Figure 11: How do you rate the occurrences of SGBV in learning institutions?

Table 12: In an incident of SGBV, would you report it?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	74	91.4
	No	7	8.6
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

Inclusion of Q12 was particularly inspired by reports available in the public domain that many women in Somalia, like others elsewhere in some parts of the world, do not feel comfortable reporting cases of violence and abuse, preferring instead to hold the incident secretly to themselves only. And in the few instances that they dare themselves to report it, they do not inform the authorities responsible for holding the perpetrator accountable for the flagrant crime. On the

contrary, however, the results established in Table 12 on whether they would report a GBV incident or not, a convincing 91% of the female trainee teachers of the Rajo Kaaba sponsorship program at the University of Southern Somalia, confirm that they would be comfortable enough reporting the abuse had they encountered it. Their colleagues of almost 9% would not report such an incidence had they been in the unfortunate situation of falling victim to the violence.

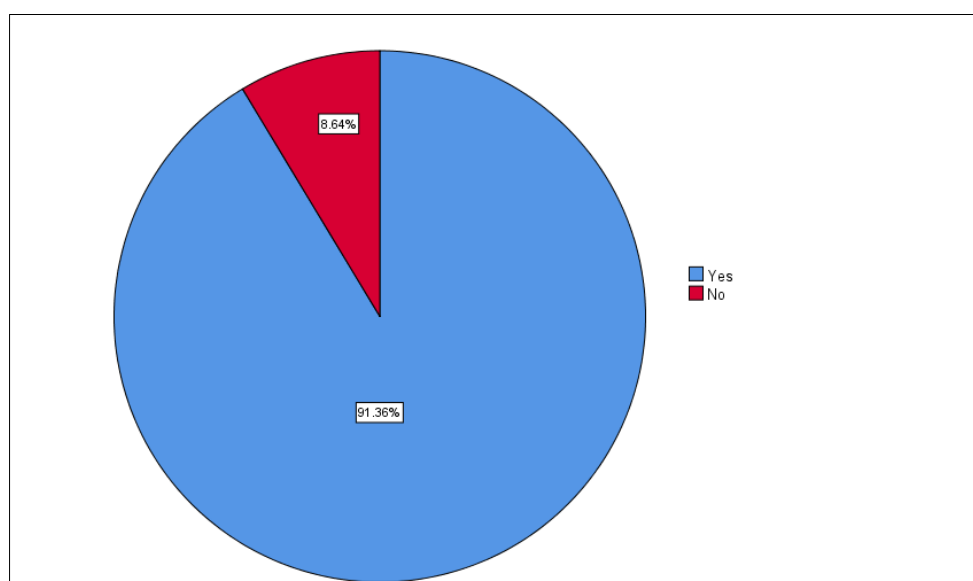


Figure 12: In an incident of SGBV, would you report it?

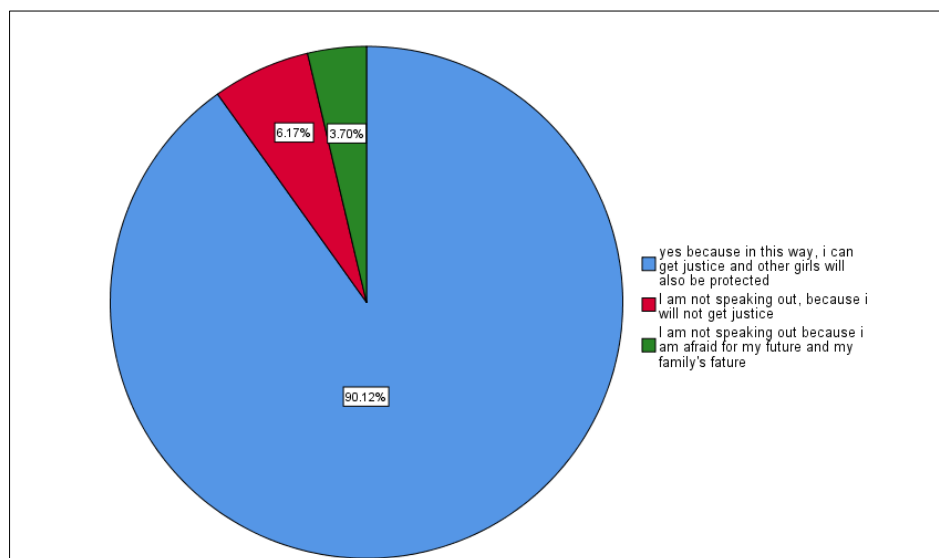
Table 13: Why ‘yes’ or ‘no’?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes, because in this way, I can get justice and other girls will also be protected	73	90.1
	I am not speaking out, because I will not get justice	5	6.2
	I am not speaking out because I am afraid for my future and my family's future	3	3.7
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

According to the results in Table 13, the respondents were given the opportunity to express the reasons behind their answer to the dichotomous question given in Table 12 using their own voice. They have given lucid responses as to why they would or would not report their ordeal after a SGBV incident. An astounding 90% of the future teachers gave not simply a response but one with a strong conviction that envisages their search for justice, which they believe they believe can be obtained from the legal institutions in the country. Despite the corruption and ineffectiveness associated with the legal system, the results demonstrate the respondents' confidence in the national courts with terms like "I can get justice," a tone of self-determined expression, a determination to unlearn the traditional silence that aggravated the situation for others who live among perpetrators whose criminality are not exposed due to sheer silence of the survivors. The other segment of the same answer envisions the responsibility to protect other women and girls who might become victim of such violent acts and abuse if the silence is perpetuated. Here,

in the sub-segment of the same answer, the girls prefer to report the incident so that "other girls will also be protected" from the violent perpetrator once he has been exposed and held accountable for his crime of abuse and violence, punished for it, and taken away from an environment where he can repeat the act against other women and girls. The findings also inform that a small segment of 6% of the trainees does not have much confidence in the justice system. According to them, they would "not speak out" about the incident because of having no confidence in the justice system that it would give them any fair judgment against the culprit. While some of the respondents would remain silent due to mistrust in the legal system, there is a comparably smaller percentage of nearly 4% who would prefer to stay silent about SGBV incidents because they are afraid of any harm the incident might bring to the family reputation. Anxiety about the family reputation relates as well to the fear of stigma that would come from society to the victim herself.

**Figure 13: Why ‘yes’ or ‘no’?****Table 14: Most perpetrators are:**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Someone the victim knows	53	65.4
	Someone unknown to the victim	28	34.6
	Total	81	100.0

Source: USS Social Work (SGBV) Research Team

In Table 14 the results disclose that 65% of the participants think that usually a SGBV perpetrator is

someone familiar to the victim. This supports facts established by previous scholars and organizational

reports that those least suspected by the victim are most likely to be the abusers. Close to 35%, however, believe that perpetrators are usually people unknown to female victims of SGBV. Although majority of the participants have the idea that someone known to the victim is more likely to victimize her than a stranger, there is need to

influence a large number of women that SGBV is a painful reality and a social predicament which every member of society should contribute to its prevention and intervention, so as to protect women and girls from those who are tempted to aggravate their rights due to their gender.

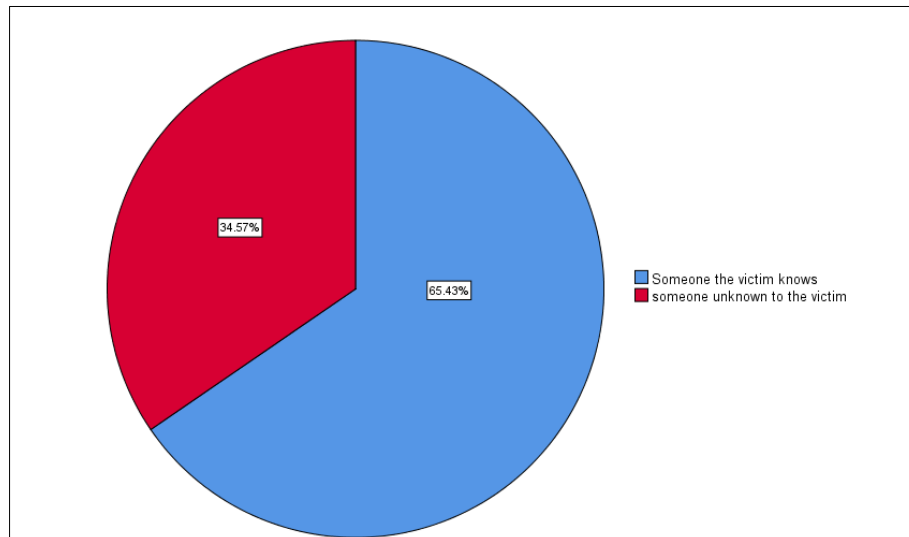


Figure 14: Most perpetrators are...

5. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand the perception on sexual and gender-based violence among a group of undergraduate female trainees studying in the Faculty of Education of the University of Southern Somalia (USS) in Baidoa, the Southwest State of Somalia. The study displayed the various opinions the participants had about the SGBV phenomenon relevant to Somali customary law (Xeer Soomaali) as a viable avenue in the arbitration of GBV cases, the types of punishment to be preferred against perpetrators, and that female discrimination starts at early age in the family where the male child is privileged more than the female. Majority of the participants did not agree with the practice of female genital mutilation, although an insignificant number of them seems to endorse the practice, probably those with strong attachments to the traditional ways of approaching customary practice. The study demonstrated the participants' strong aversion towards SGBV, and their preferred types of punishment for the perpetrator such as execution and life imprisonment, financial compensation for survivors, rejection of Somali customary law (xeer) as a suitable avenue for intervention, as well as strong support for the eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM).

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the results, the study proposes the following recommendations:

- Creation of SGBV awareness teams that mobilize the communities in different areas of the country;
- The Ministry of Women, Family Affairs and Human Rights at state and federal level to organize strong SGBV awareness and prevention campaigns and improve accessibility of support service;
- Establishment of state/federal gender policy and legal framework that protects the rights of women and girls against SGBV; by including people from different departments of the state administration and sectors;
- Establishment of SGBC committees by district, regional, state, and federal administrations comprised of the Ministry of Women, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and other relevant government agencies and development partners, civil society organizations and community members including religious leaders, elders etc. to strengthen the fight against the SGBV scourge;
- Increase of the number of community social workers in order to enhance intervention and community awareness in IDP Camps, rural areas, and urban dwellings so that support services by trained professionals are easily accessible;
- Employment of a sufficient number of well-trained and qualified social workers for effective intervention and accessibility of services provided by social work professionals;

- Establishment of women- and girls-friendly centers in selected areas to provide safe entry points/shelters for survivors where they can get safety and support services;
- Setting up of confidential hotline systems where survivors can report abuse and obtain counseling and referral support;
- Engagement of Mobile SGBV response teams to reach remote communities for intervention.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The current study has a limitation of geographical scope as well as number of participants covered. To overcome the limitations, further studies with broader scale and coverage across multiple districts, regions, and states are necessary in order to investigate the problem thoroughly and from different angles. More extensive scholarly research with wider scope will yield more extensive results that can expand the limited information available from this study and provide detailed results for a nationwide strategic action.

Conflict of Interest

The authors express no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

We are very thankful to all the Rajo Kaaba girls in the Faculty of Education of the University of Southern Somalia who participated in the study.

REFERENCES

- Abukar, M., Eno, M. A., and Kebaya, C. (2025). Advocating for Context-Based Interventions to Mitigate Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination in Baidoa, Southwest State of Somalia, *East African Scholars Journal of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences*, 7(2): 51-59.
- Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., and Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-Methods Research: A Discussion on its Types, Challenges, and Criticisms, *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2): 25-36. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED611786.pdf> (accessed 27 July 2025).
- Hansen, K. and Świdarska, A. (2024). Integrating open- and closed-ended questions on attitudes <https://muslimfamilylawindex.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Family-Law-No.-23-1975.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2025).
- Ibrahim, S. A., Ilyas-Ahmed, H., Kebaya, C. and Eno, M. A. (2025a). Battling Gender Based Violence in Somalia: The Need for Qualified Community Social Workers and Psycho-trauma Counsellors, *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13(9): 295-302. Available at: <https://www.saspublishers.com/journal-details/sjahss/162/1651/> (accessed 3 September 2025).
- Ibrahim, S. A., Haji, M. M., Ilyas-Ahmed, H., Kebaya, C. and Eno, M. A. (2025b). Bridging the Gender Divide through Empowerment Narratives: A Case of Survivors of Gender-Based Violence in Mogadishu and Afgoye in Somalia, *EAS Journal of Psychology & Behavioral Sciences*, 7(3), 91-102.
- Jawaani, A. A. M. and Eno, M. A. (2025). Glimpsing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV): A Qualitative Secondary Research, *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences*, 13(9): 295-302.
- Kang, E., and Hwang, H.-J. (2023). The Importance of Anonymity and Confidentiality for Conducting Survey Research. *Journal of Research and Publication Ethics*, 4(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.15722/JRPE.4.1.202303.1>
- Mohamed, I. A. (2015). Somali Women and the Socialist State, *Journal of Georgetown University-Qatar Middle Eastern Studies Student Association*, 4. Available at: <https://www.qscience.com/docserver/fulltext/messa/2015/1/messa.2015.4.pdf?expires=1757152035&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=366F8173815D9AE6CE3AC2CE1CA3D399> (accessed 6 September 2025).
- Sharma, L. R., Bidari, S., Bidari, D., Neupane, S., and Sapkota, R. (2023). Exploring the Mixed Methods Research Design: Types, Purposes, Strengths, Challenges, and Criticisms. *Glob Academic Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 5(1): pp-3-12.
- Somalia. (1975). Family Law No. 23, 1975. Retrieved from towards outgroups with different methods of text analysis, *Behavior Research Methods*, Aug; 56(5): 4802-4822. doi: 10.3758/s13428-023-02218-x. Epub 2023 Oct 16. PMID: 37845422; PMCID: PMC11289311.

Cite This Article: Loul Mohamed Ali-Clay, Loul Adan Mohamed, Faiza Noor Ali, Mohamed Hassan Isak, Ahmed Abdiladhif M. Jawaani, Mohamud Abukar, Mohamed Aweys, Mohamoud M. Haji, Amina Mohamed Abubakar, Mohamed A. Eno (2025). Empirical Evidence: 70% of University of Southern Somalia Female Trainee Teachers Say “Execution” and “Life Imprisonment” for SGBV Perpetrators. *EAS J Psychol Behav Sci*, 7(4), 153-167.