

## Perception of Social Work Female Students toward Challenges to the Female Students in Higher Education in Mogadishu

Ms. Su'ad Ali Omar Arif

Faculty of Education and Humanities, Mogadishu University

Email: suadarif6@gmail.com

DOI: 10.1104/SEJ.2023277856

### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate female students' barriers in higher education in Mogadishu. The study examined several factors that contribute to these challenges, including safety and security, early marriage, sociocultural practices and beliefs, household responsibilities, and poverty. A survey was conducted among female students in Mogadishu, and the results revealed that these barriers significantly impact their ability to complete their education. Based on the findings, the study proposes several recommendations to address these challenges, including prioritizing student safety on campus, and challenging societal expectations and beliefs regarding gender roles and expectations. By implementing these recommendations, we can ensure that female students have equal opportunities to succeed in higher education in Mogadishu and beyond.

**Keywords:** Social Work, Female Students, Challenges, Higher Education.

### Introduction

Access to education is a fundamental human right, yet in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries, women and girls face various obstacles that hinder their access to and success in higher education. In Mogadishu, Somalia, female students face unique challenges that are deeply rooted in poverty, safety security, socio-cultural practices, early marriage, and household responsibilities. These challenges are particularly evident in the social work field, where female students face additional obstacles due to the nature of the field.

### Gender Inequality in Education

Every child has the right to access education as it is the most powerful and valuable tool for socioeconomic development and a crucial factor for national development and integration. Therefore, education should be easily accessible to everyone. Despite this, women and girls are often the most impacted. (Fatimayin 2012). Ensuring access to quality education for everyone is a

key factor in addressing gender inequality. The education system must address the various obstacles that hinder progress toward eliminating gender disparity in education. Given the inadequacies of the current conventional education system, open and distance learning (ODL) has emerged as a viable alternative that allows education without barriers and provides a second chance for those who may have missed out on traditional opportunities.. (Fatimayin 2012).

## **Household Responsibilities**

People from deprived, marginalized, and economically weaker sections of society often discourage their daughters from pursuing education due to their involvement in household duties. The management of household responsibilities involves various tasks, such as meal preparation, cleaning, washing, gardening, and other related duties. In rural households, there are additional responsibilities such as fetching water from water sources and taking care of livestock. In urban communities, domestic helpers and cleaners are commonly employed to assist with household tasks, allowing other family members to engage in other activities. However, in rural areas, individuals must carry out these duties themselves. Children, particularly girls, are often encouraged to participate in household responsibilities. (Kapur 2019).

## **Lack of Safety Security**

The education of the girl child in South-Central Somalia is under significant threat due to insecurity, which hinders their enrollment and retention in schools. Insecurity not only jeopardizes the existence of schools but also poses a direct threat to the safety of girls. To address this issue, a comprehensive approach is recommended to promote stability in the region. This includes supporting the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and regional authorities, as well as providing a safe and secure learning environment in schools.(INTERSOS and Somalia 2016) , In 2020, there was progress in the female enrollment rate for higher education in Somalia, which reached 43.3%. This increase is a positive indication that more opportunities for higher education are becoming accessible to female students.(Abubakar, Ahmed, 2023).

## **Early Marriage**

Child marriage is when the marriage of the individuals takes place, when they are below 18 years of age. Child marriage imposes negative effects upon individuals, particularly girls. When girls are married at a young age, then they are normally deprived of acquisition of education, getting engaged in employment opportunities, and participation in other childhood activities. They merely are required to remain within the homes, implement household responsibilities and take care of the needs and requirements of other family members. (Fatimayin 2012).

## **Conditions of Poverty**

When living in poverty, individuals and families face numerous challenges, including difficulty in meeting daily nutritional needs and generating sufficient income to sustain their living conditions. Even when education is provided free of cost, poverty-stricken individuals often struggle to meet other expenses such as stationary items, books, bags, uniforms, and transportation costs. As a result, girls are often discouraged from pursuing education and are instead trained in household responsibilities and minor jobs to earn income. Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to attend school to secure good employment opportunities. To address the financial barriers that contribute to the preference of boys over girls for education, incentives such as school uniforms, books, and stationery should be provided to girls. Additionally, engaging parents in school activities and

utilizing religious leaders to advocate for girls' enrollment and retention in schools can help inspire parents to keep their daughters in school. (INTERSOS and Somalia 2016).

## **Problem Statement**

Despite the importance of education, female students in Mogadishu face various challenges that hinder their access to and success in higher education. These challenges include poverty, safety security, socio-cultural practices, early marriage, and household responsibilities. These challenges are particularly evident in the social work field, where female students face unique obstacles due to the nature of the field. Therefore, it is important to explore the perception of female social work students towards the challenges faced by female students in higher education in Mogadishu.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it will provide insights into the challenges faced by female students in higher education in Mogadishu, particularly in the social work field. By exploring the factors of poverty, safety security, socio-cultural practices, early marriage, and household responsibilities, the study will identify the unique obstacles faced by female social work students. Additionally, the study will provide recommendations on how to address these challenges, which can inform policies and interventions aimed at improving access to and success in higher education for female students in Mogadishu.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the perception of female social work students towards challenges faced by female students in higher education in Mogadishu.
2. To identify the factors that contribute to the challenges faced by female social work students in higher education in Mogadishu.
3. To explore the relationship between poverty, safety security, socio-cultural practices, early marriage, household responsibilities, and the challenges faced by female social work students in higher education in Mogadishu.
4. To provide recommendations on how to address the challenges faced by female social work students in higher education in Mogadishu.

## **Research Questions**

1. How do female social work students in higher education in Mogadishu perceive the challenges faced by female students in their field?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the challenges faced by female social work students in higher education in Mogadishu?
3. How do poverty, safety security, socio-cultural practices, early marriage, and household responsibilities impact the challenges faced by female social work students in higher education in Mogadishu?
4. What recommendations can be made to address the challenges faced by female social work students in higher education in Mogadishu?

## **Methodology**

This study utilizes a correlation research design to identify the relationship between two

variables: Independent Variable (challenges) and Dependent Variable (female students). The design is used to identify the factors that influence the academic continuity of female students. The study uses a quantitative method for data collection and analysis. The target population of the study is female students in higher education, specifically those studying social work at Mogadishu University. These students were chosen as respondents because they have relevant information and answers to the research problem, and can provide insights into the relationship between the two variables with the sample size of 44 respondents randomly selected for the study.

The primary instrument used to gather information from the sample size was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was selected because it is relevant to the study, cost-effective, and easily accessible for gathering data from the intended population. The questionnaire consisted of a written set of questions that respondents recorded their answers to.

In this study, every respondent was asked to answer the questions. The Author kept the privacy, confidentiality, and secrecy of the respondents throughout the research project. The ethical considerations were taken into account during the study to ensure that the respondents' privacy and confidentiality were maintained.

## Results

Table 1. Female students face a higher risk of harassment or assault on college or university campuses compared to male students

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	13	29.5
Disagree	10	22.7
Neutral	10	22.7
Agree	7	15.9
Strongly Agree	4	9.1
Total	44	100.0

According to Table (1), and figure (1), the results revealed that 4 (9.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 7 (15.9%) of the respondents agree, 10 (22.7%) of the respondents were neutral, 10 (22.7%) of the respondents disagreed, and 13 (29.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that female students face a higher risk of harassment or assault on college or university campuses compared to male students. As we can see the survey results it asserts that their's number of harassments that girls meet but the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that female students are at a higher risk of harassment or assault on campus compared to their male counterparts.

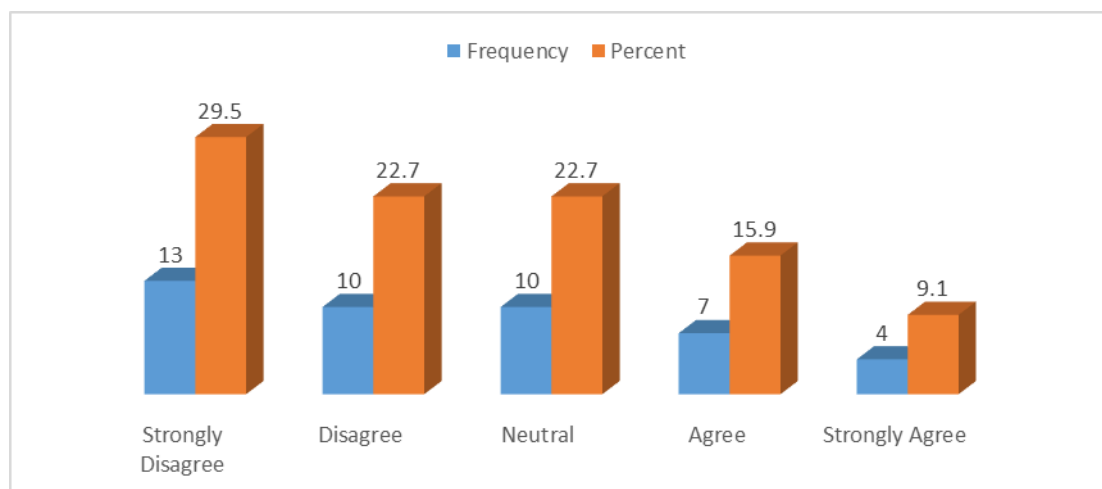
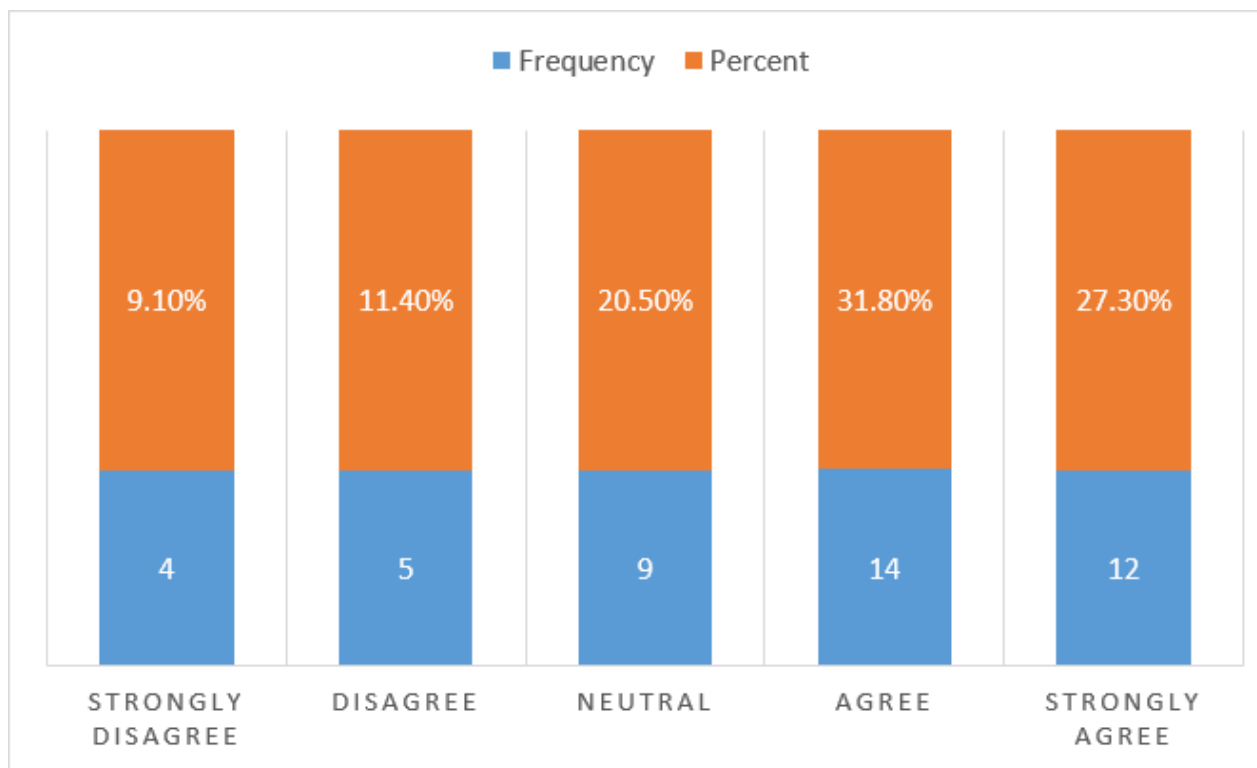


Figure 1. Female students face a higher risk of harassment or assault on college or university campuses compared to male students.

Table 2. Female students in higher education are often confronted due to the dual responsibilities of parenting and achieving academic excellence.

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	9.1%
Disagree	5	11.4%
Neutral	9	20.5%
Agree	14	31.8%
Strongly agree	12	27.3%
Total	44	

Table (2), and figure (2) illustrate that the collected data shows 4 (9.1%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 5 (11.4%) of the respondents disagreed, 9 (20.5%) of the respondents were neutral, 14 (31.8%) of the respondents agreed, and 12 (27.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed. The majority of the respondents agreed that women in higher education often face the dual responsibilities of parenting and academic excellence.



Female 2. Female students in higher education are often confronted due to the dual responsibilities of parenting and achieving academic excellence.

Table 3. Safety and security measures on college or university campuses areadequate for female students.

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strong Disagree	3	6.8%
Disagree	6	13.6%
Neutral	10	22.7%
Agree	20	45.5%
Strongly agree	5	11.4%
Total	44	100%

Table (3), figure (3) reveal that a minority of respondents strongly disagreed (3, 6.8%) or disagreed (6, 13.6%) that safety and security measures on college or university campuses are sufficient for female students. A larger proportion of respondents were neutral (10, 22.7%) or agreed (20, 45.5%), with a smaller proportion strongly agreeing (5, 11.4%). Overall, the majority of respondents agreed to some extent that safety and security measures for female

students on college or university campuses are adequate.

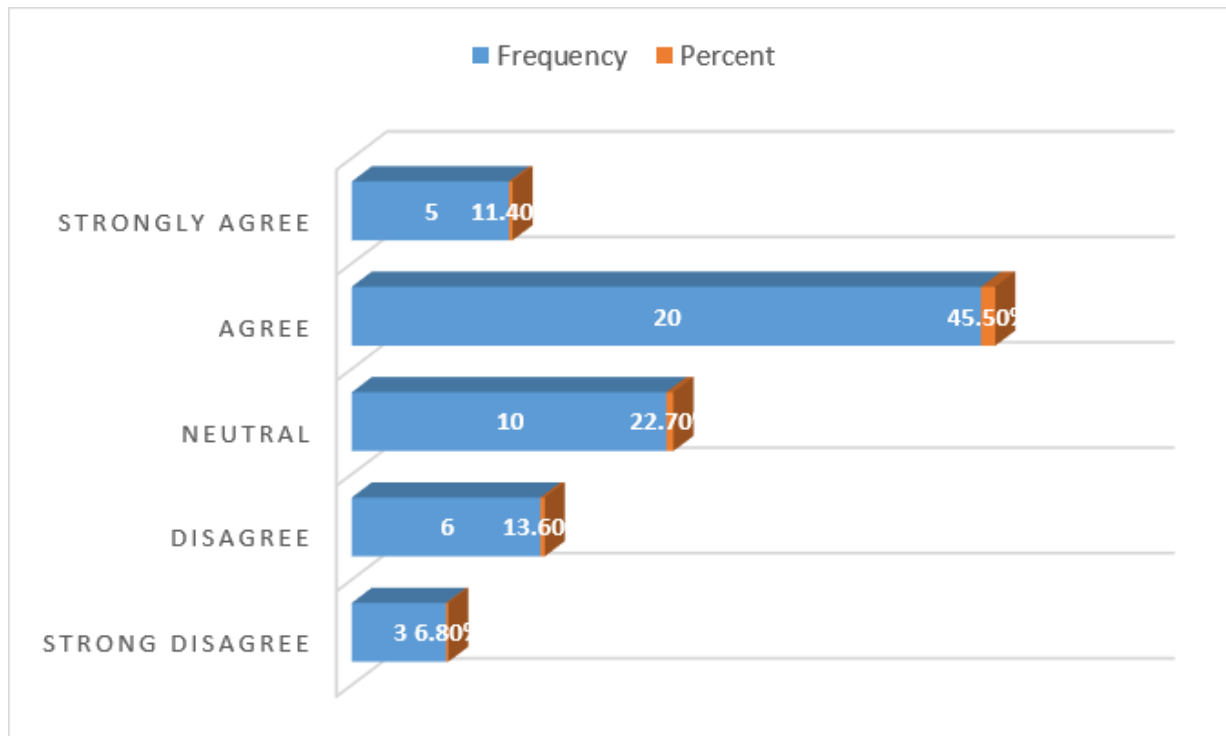


Figure 3. Safety and security measures on college or university campuses areadequate for female students

Table 4. Socio-cultural practices, such as gender roles and expectations, affect female students' ability to succeed in higher education

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	20.5%
Disagree	5	11.4%
Neutral	8	18.2%
Agree	10	22.7%
Strongly agree	12	27.3%
Total	44	100%

Table(4), and figure (4) indicate that 9 (20.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 5 (11.4%) of the respondents disagreed, 8 (18.2%) of the respondents were neutral, 10 (22.7%) of the respondents agreed, and 12 (27.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that socio-cultural practices, such as gender roles and expectations, affect female students' ability to succeed in higher education. Therefore, the majority of the respondents agreed to some extent that socio- cultural practices impact female students' success in higher education.

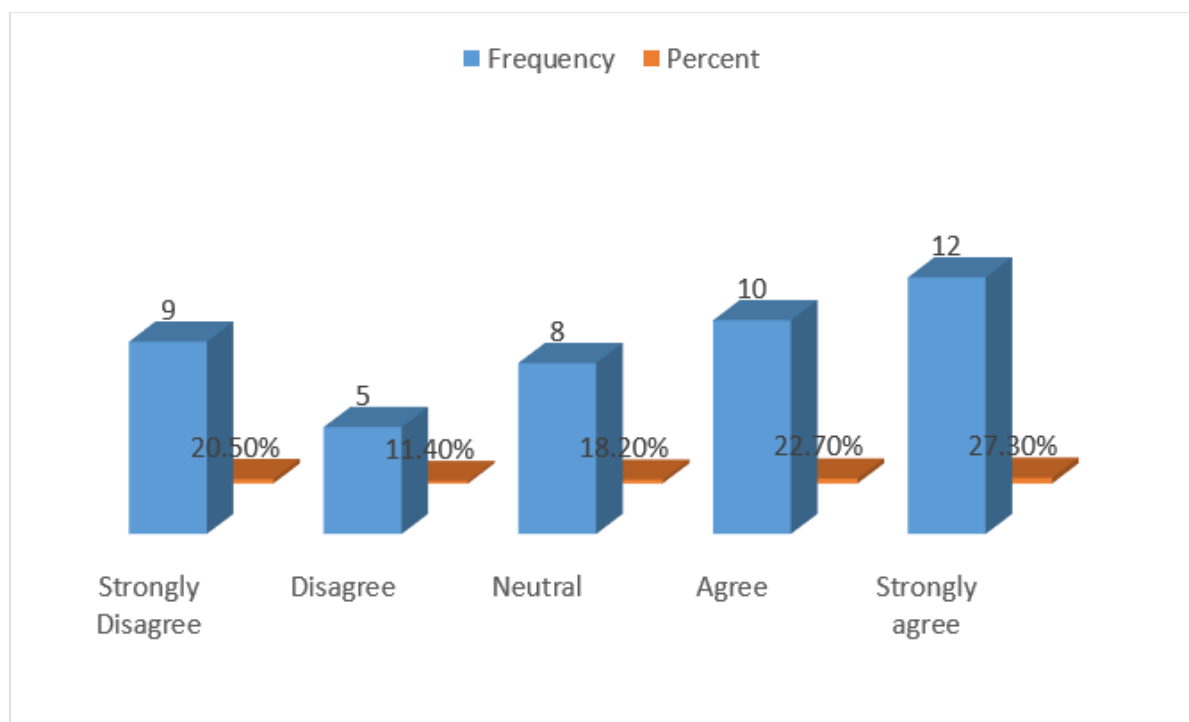


Figure 4. Socio-cultural practices, such as gender roles and expectations, affect female students' ability to succeed in higher education.

Table 5. Female students are often discouraged from pursuing certain fields of study or careers due to sociocultural practices and beliefs.

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	13.6%
Disagree	6	13.6%
Neutral	11	25.0%
Agree	11	25.0%
Strongly agree	10	22.7%
Total	44	100%

Table (5), and (5) indicate that 6 (13.6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 6 (13.6%) of the respondents disagreed, 11 (25.0%) of the respondents were neutral, 11 (25.0%) of the respondents agreed, and 10 (22.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that female students are often discouraged from pursuing certain fields of study or careers



due to sociocultural practices and beliefs. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were neutral or agreed to some extent that sociocultural practices and beliefs discourage female students from pursuing certain fields of study or careers.

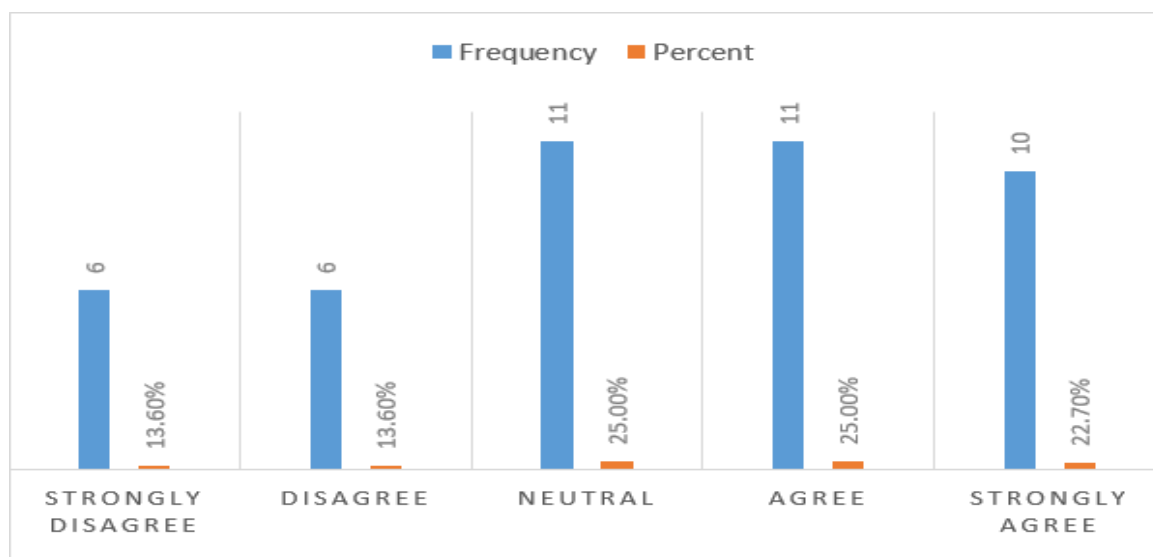


Figure 5. Female students are often discouraged from pursuing certain fields of study or careers due to sociocultural practices and beliefs.

Table.6 Early marriage is a significant barrier to female students' ability to complete their education.

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strong Disagree	5	11.4%
Disagree	9	20.5%
Neutral	6	13.6%
Agree	15	34.1%
Strongly agree	9	20.5%
Total	44	100%

Table (6), and figure (6) show that 5 (11.4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 9 (20.5%) of the respondents disagreed, 6 (13.6%) of the respondents were neutral, 15 (34.1%) of the respondents agreed, and 9 (20.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that early marriage is a significant barrier to female students' ability to complete their education. Therefore, the majority of the respondents agreed to some extent that early marriage poses a barrier to female students' education.

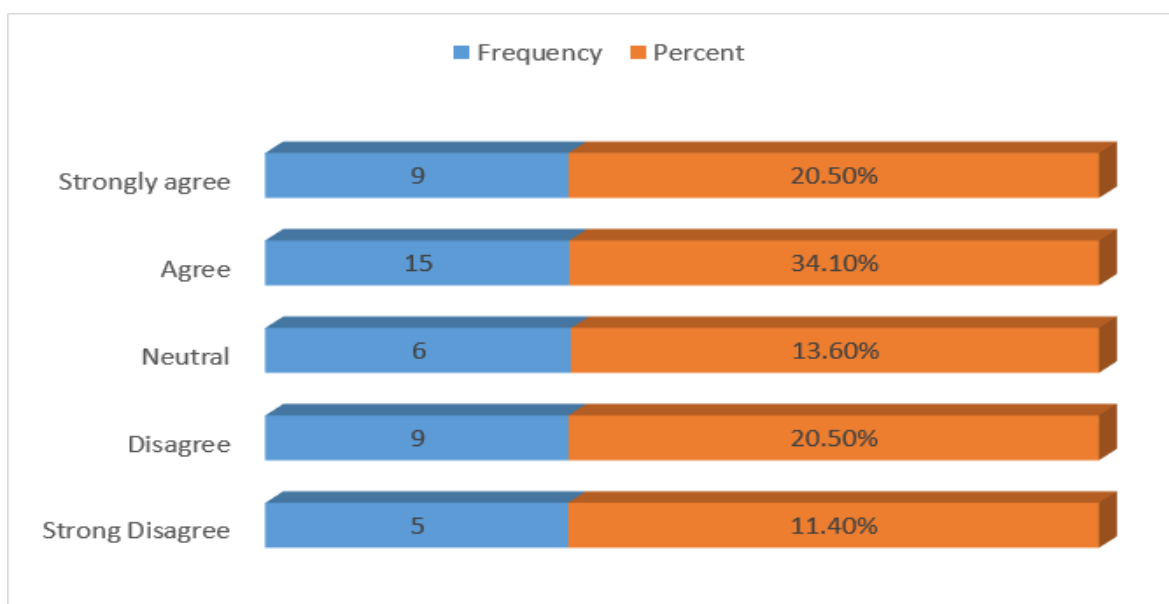


Figure 6. Early marriage is a significant barrier to female students' ability to complete their education.

Table 7. Female students who get married early are more likely to drop out of higher education compared to their male counterparts.

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strong Disagree	4	9.1%
Disagree	11	25.0%
Neutral	8	18.2%
Agree	11	25.0%
Strongly agree	10	22.7%
Total	44	100%

Table 7, and figure 7 indicate that 4 (9.1%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 11 (25.0%) of the respondents disagreed, 8 (18.2%) of the respondents were neutral, 11 (25.0%) of the respondents agreed, and 10 (22.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that female students who get married early are more likely to drop out of higher education compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, the respondents were equally divided between agreeing and disagreeing with the statement.

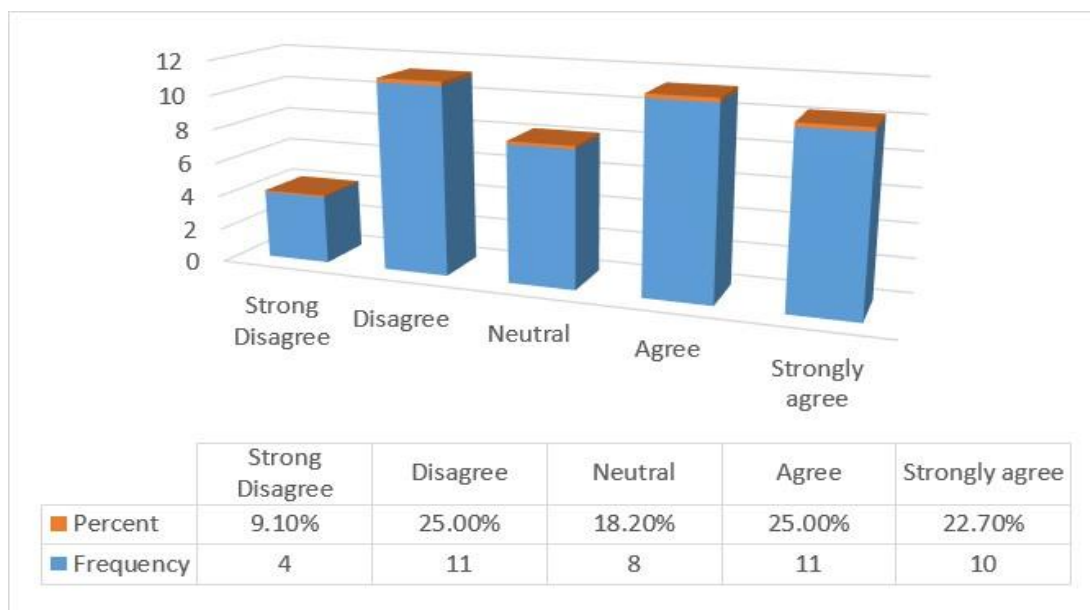


Figure 7. Female students who get married early are more likely to drop out of higher education compared to their male counterparts.

Table 8. The university provides more support and resources specifically targeted toward female students facing challenges related to safety, socio- cultural practices, and early marriage.

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strong Disagree	12	27.3%
Disagree	6	13.6%
Neutral	9	20.5%
Agree	8	18.2%
Strongly agree	9	20.5%
Total	44	100%

Table (8), and figure (8) show that 12 (27.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 6 (13.6%) of the respondents disagreed, 9 (20.5%) of the respondents were neutral, 8 (18.2%) of the respondents agreed, and 9 (20.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the university provides more support and resources specifically targeted toward female students facing challenges related to safety, socio-cultural practices, and early marriage. Therefore, the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that the university provides targeted support and resources for female students facing these challenges.

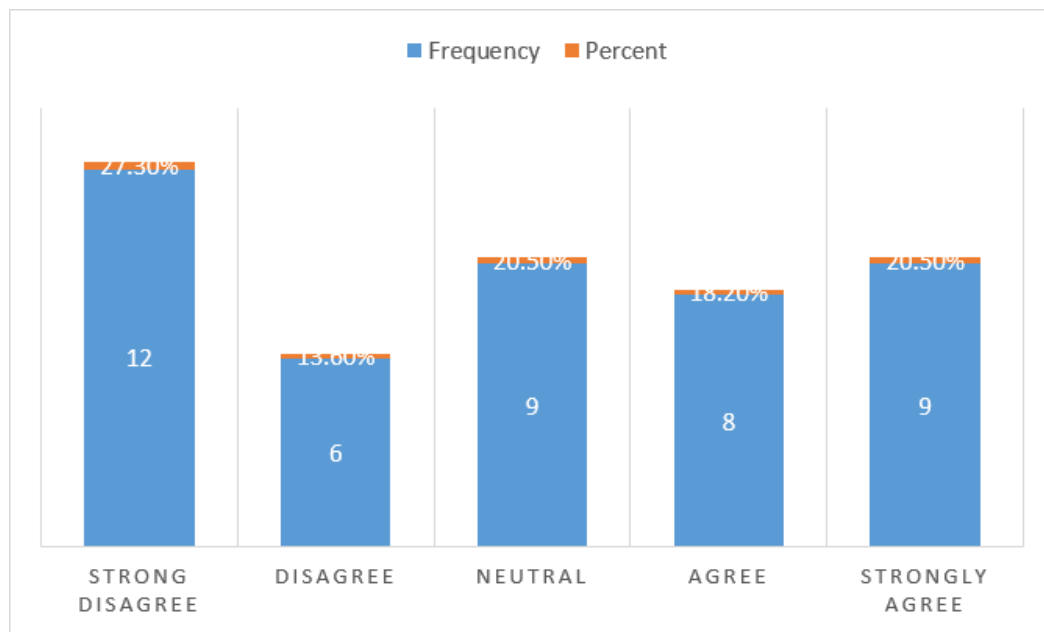


Figure 8. The university provides more support and resources specifically targeted toward female students facing challenges related to safety, socio- cultural practices, and early marriage.

Table 9. Female students feel empowered to speak up and report instances of harassment or assault on college or university campuses.

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strong Disagree	6	13.6%
Disagree	9	20.5%
Neutral	13	29.5%
Agree	12	27.3%
Strongly agree	4	9.1%
Total	44	100%

Table (9), and figure (9) suggest that 6 (13.6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 9 (20.5%) of the respondents disagreed, 13 (29.5%) of the respondents were neutral, 12 (27.3%) of the respondents agreed, and 4 (9.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that female students feel empowered to speak up and report instances of harassment or assault on college or university campuses. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were neutral on the statement that female students feel empowered to report incidents of harassment or assault.

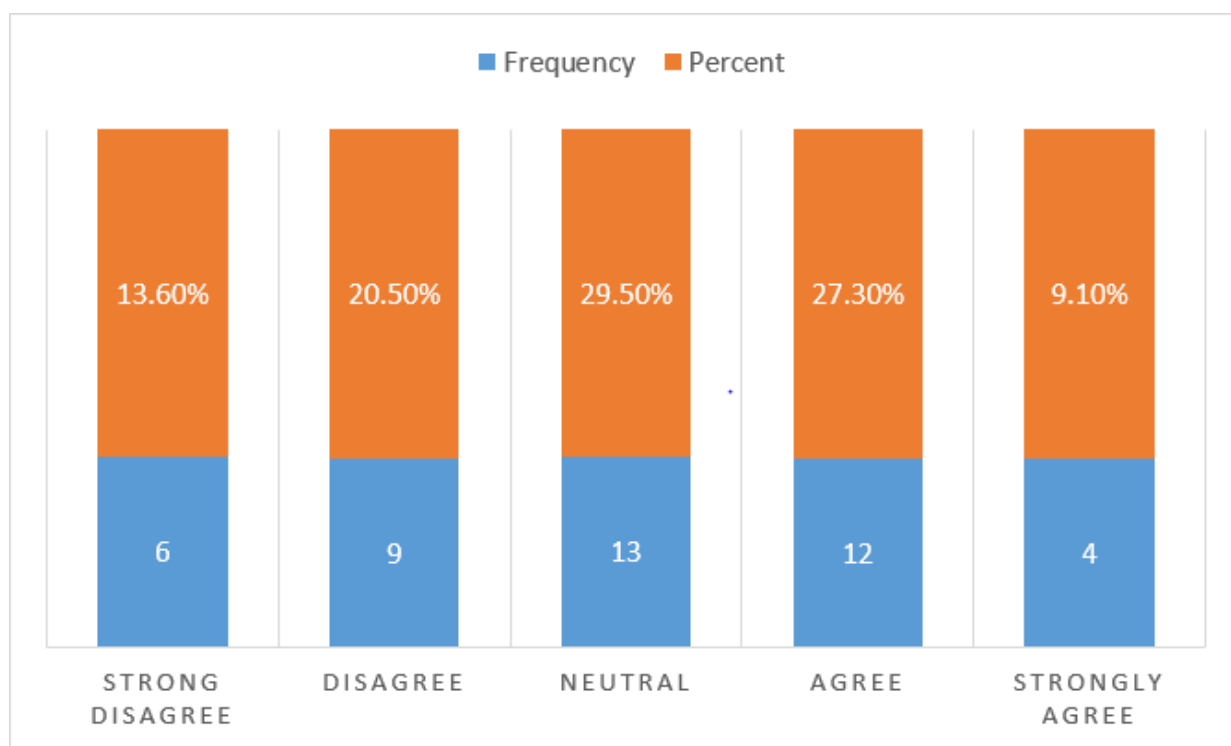


Figure 9. Female students feel empowered to speak up and report instances of harassment or assault on college or university campuses.

Table 10. Do you believe that addressing the challenges faced by female students in higher education is important for promoting gender equality and empowering women?

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Strong Disagree	5	11.4%
Disagree	5	11.4%
Neutral	14	31.8%
Agree	7	15.9%
Strongly agree	13	29.5%
Total	44	100%

According to Table (10), and figure (10), the collected data reveals that 5 (11.4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 5 (11.4%) of the respondents disagreed, 14 (31.8%) of the respondents were neutral, 7 (15.9%) of the respondents agreed, and 13 (29.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that addressing the challenges faced by female students in higher education is important for promoting gender equality and empowering women. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were either strongly agreed or neutral on the importance of addressing the challenges faced by female students in higher education for promoting gender equality and empowering women.

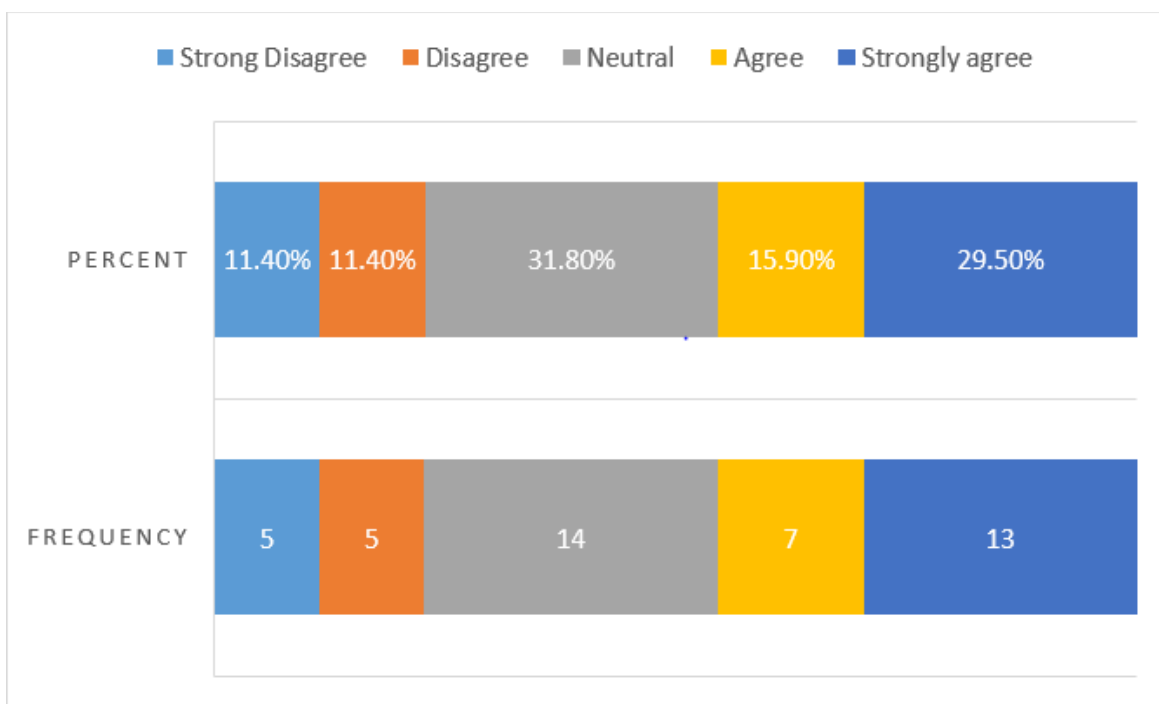


Figure 10. Do you believe that addressing the challenges faced by female students in higher education is important for promoting gender equality and empowering women?

## Discussion of Findings

The aim of my study was to research the barriers that female students in higher education confront across Mogadishu, the hypothesis was that factors including; Safety and security, Early marriage, sociocultural practices and beliefs, household responsibilities, poverty, are the visible challenges that confront female students to their achievements in Higher Education.

According to the survey results, since the majority of the respondents (**29.5**) strongly disagreed that female students are at a higher risk of harassment or assault on campus compared to their male counterparts, there is still a number of threats that girls face on campuses. Early marriage (**34.1%**), since the majority of the respondents agreed Early marriage is a significant barrier to female students' ability to complete their education. And even the survey result shows that female students who get married early are more likely to drop out of higher education compared to their male counterparts. As a prior study shows early marriage in the form of early and or forced marriage is the second most significant barrier to girl child education in South-Central Somalia. (Sulaiman, Kipchumba, and Magan 2017). UNICEF &GOK, 2014) points out that this practice affect girl child in numerous ways and it's a common in Africa. (GULED 2016)

Sociocultural practices and beliefs (**27.3%**) such as gender roles and expectations, affect female students' ability to succeed in higher education and discourage from pursuing certain fields of study or careers. In general Somalia has a number of examples of cultural practices that compromise girls' access to education and therefore their participation in complete cycle of education especially in Puntland. These practices underline the fact that in such cultures and indeed in many areas in Africa, girls like in traditional times continue to be considered the property of their families, with little or no say in their future. (Mohamed, Mberia, and Muturi 2017) even the survey result demonstrates that the majority of the respondents with a number of (**27.3%**) strongly disagreed with the

statement that Societal expectations and beliefs are helpful for girls' educational accomplishment

Household responsibilities (27.3%) women in higher education often face the dual responsibilities of parenting and academic excellence that confront them from pursuing their excellence. Issues of poverty the survey result shows that female students confront poverty or financial challenges to have a higher education. Also, for financially it is difficult to pay for the transportation and other expenses to go to the place of study as the result demonstrated.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, this study has identified several barriers that female students face in higher education in Mogadishu. These barriers include safety and security concerns, early marriage, sociocultural practices and beliefs, household responsibilities, and poverty. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring gender equality in education and promoting the development of the country.

To address these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Universities and colleges should prioritize the safety and security of their students, particularly female students. This can be achieved by implementing policies and procedures that prevent harassment and assault on campus.
2. Societal expectations and beliefs regarding gender roles and expectations should be challenged. This can be achieved through education campaigns that promote and encourage girls to pursue careers in fields traditionally dominated by men.
3. Universities and colleges should provide support services to female students with household responsibilities, such as childcare and flexible study options.
4. Financial assistance programs should be established to support female students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may face financial barriers to accessing higher education. By implementing these recommendations, we can ensure that female students have equal opportunities to succeed in higher education in Mogadishu and beyond. This will contribute to the development of the country and the empowerment of women.

## References

- Abubakar, Said, Sheikh Ahmed, 2023. “Gender Education Trends in Somalia from 2016-2026 ‘ A Forecasting Study on Gross Enrolment , Net Enrolment Rates , and Gender Parity Index for Primary and Secondary Education .” 4. doi: 10.0513/SEJ.2023532325.
- Fatimayin, Foluke. 2012. “GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.” 8:148–59.
- GULED, MOHAMED MOHAMUD. 2016. “International Journal For Research In Social Science And Humanities ISSN: 2208-2107.” 4(3):37–44.
- INTERSOS, and Somalia. 2016. “Barriers to Girls’ Education in South-Central Somalia.” (April):15–15.
- Kapur, Radhika. 2019. “Gender Inequality in Education.”
- Mohamed, Abdigafar Mohamoud, Dr. Hellen K. Mberia, and Dr. Willy Muturi. 2017. “Influence of Socio-Cultural Practices on Girl Child Participation in Secondary Schools in Garowe, Puntland.” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 22(05):78–85. doi: 10.9790/0837-2205077885.
- Sulaiman, M., E. Kipchumba, and M. Magan. 2017. “Changing Social Norms in Somalia: Baseline Report on CHANGES Project Addressing Women Empowerment, Female Circumcision and Early Marriage.” *Save the Children* (June). doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.15374.87362.