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The Determinants of Rape in Puntland

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Based Violence.

The aim of this study was to examine the determinants of rape in Puntland. Quantitative and qualitative research designs were both used in this study. The study was guided by three objectives, which included a) to explore the major causes of rape in Puntland, b) to assess the effect of rape on victims, and c) to examine the possible solutions to rape in Puntland. A literature review, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and a standardised questionnaire were used in data collection. The study contacted 60 respondents who consisted of rape victims, elders, gender-based violence workers, elders, government officials, and protection experts; the data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Significant demographic characteristics of the research respondents indicate that 55% were male and 45 were female. Of the sixty responders, 32% were between the ages of twenty-one and thirty; 42% were between the ages of thirty and forty; 18% were between the ages of forty and fifty; 3% were between the ages of fifty and sixty and 5% were older than sixty. The study identified a number of factors responsible for rape cases in Puntland, including lack of law enforcement, drug and alcohol usage, social acceptance of rape, and low levels of education. The study recommends that the enforcement of laws is a major factor in eliminating rape cases well as a motivating factor in the increase of rape cases in Puntland.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the course of more than two decades of strife in Somalia, various actors have committed numerous human rights abuses, including rape. Government security personnel, armed members of opposition groups, militias, and private individuals have all been involved in the crimes (International., 2013). Since there has not been a functional central government for decades, various state and non-state actors, as well as strong interest groups, have been able to exert authority and influence, and as a result, lawbreakers operate with impunity. Women and children are still vulnerable to sexual assault, and there are very few ways for them to obtain justice in this environment of lawlessness (International, 2013). The most common form of violence against women and girls is rape. According to residents from Puntland's Sanaag region's Dhahar area, rape is one of the most common forms of violence in the district. When their families are away, women are raped in their houses (UNFPA., 2021). Rape can encompass various types of sexual assault, such as a variety of actions from unwanted touching to object penetration. Rape is when an assailant uses an object or any part of their body to penetrate the victim's mouth, vagina, or anus without the victim's consent (Easteal, 1992).

Among the Somali community, rape is viewed as a degrading and humiliating offence. If it occurs, it must be addressed promptly to prevent the negative effects of victim marginalisation and stigma and inter-communal violence (centre. P. D., 2020). However, gender-based violence persists in a culture of silence despite endangering the autonomy, security, dignity, and well-being of those who experience it. Violence against women can have adverse effects on their sexual and reproductive health, such as unintended and forced pregnancies, unsafe abortions, traumatic fistulas, HIV infection, and even death (centre. P. D., 2020). In certain societies, such as Somalia and Puntland, it also leads to discriminatory practices, mental health disorders, severe injuries, trauma, and stigma. Additionally, GBV has a significant negative economic impact on society,

which hinders economic expansion. The UN calculated that violence against women cost the world's economies almost US\$ 1.5 trillion in 2016 (UN Women, 2016), corresponding to about 2% of the world's gross domestic GDP. But the most prevalent instances of gender-based violence in Puntland are early marriage, domestic abuse, gang-related rape, and female genital mutilation (FGM). According to WHO estimates, one in three women globally will be sexually or physically abused at some point in their lives. One of the most common human rights abuses in the world is associated with rape. It affects the social, political, and economic facets of women and girls' lives regardless of age (Center, 2020).

Survivors of rape and their children are shamed and ostracised in Somali society, resulting in severe emotional suffering. Because of conflicts over inadequate family resources, Somalia is seeing an increase in intimate partner violence (IPV). Furthermore, despite the growing humanitarian crisis, men are refusing to employ birth spacing measures, resulting in worsened situations for women, newborns, and families. Furthermore, according to the gender-based violence information management system (GBVIMS) report for the second quarter of 2022, 14% of women and girls who reported GBV incidents were raped, up from 12% in the first quarter of 2022. Furthermore, 60% of reported instances (mostly women) were victims of Intimate Partner Violence in the second quarter of 2022, up from 51% in the first quarter. The rise is ascribed to worsening drought circumstances in Somalia's regions and states and the impact on household dynamics and female power dynamics (Refugees, 2022).

According to the United Nations, 800 incidences of sexual and gender-based violence were reported in the last six months of 2013. According to the UN Minors' Fund, approximately one-third of sexual violence victims in Somalia are minors. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 800 incidences of sexual and gender-based violence were reported in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, in the first half of the year. According to

Jens Laerke, an OCHA spokesperson, the rape perpetrators were armed individuals and men wearing military uniforms. In the same conference, UNICEF spokesman Marixie Mercado stated that around one-third of the victims of sexual violence were youngsters, predominantly boys, with UNICEF and partners assisting approximately 2,200 victims (Mugo, 2024).

The experts interviewed unanimously agreed that rape is prevalent in Puntland and has been on the rise in recent years: “92 cases were reported in Puntland between 2017 and 2020, this means that the cases are extremely high”. Changes in gender norms connected to free movement for women, in rural contexts, girls travel great distances to take animals out, frequently alone and in isolated places, are significant contributory factors. The judicial systems, which lack coverage, as well as the parallel traditional judiciary system, are also factors causing rapes in Puntland. Drug addiction is another cause of GBV, as men become violent after consuming drugs such as marijuana and Khat. Drug addiction is also linked to diaspora gangs and IDP camps insecurity because of a lack of infrastructure such as electricity, latrines, and safety in toilet zones, which have become deadly zones for women and girls (Hook, 2021).

The legislation criminalises rape of a woman and imposes penalties ranging from five to fifteen years in jail for infractions. There is no law against raping a man. Military courts can impose death sentences for rape (Bureau of Democracy, 2022). The government does not enforce the law correctly. Women and girls were raped by government soldiers, militia members, and others dressed in what appeared to be military uniforms. While the army arrested some members of the security forces accused of such rapes, impunity was the norm (SWCCA, 2023.)

This paper aims to present the status and determinants of rape in Puntland. It examines the roles played by the community and government in the protection of rape, the existing challenges and factors, and formulating possible solutions and recommendations to the concerned bodies.

Statement of the Problem

According to Somali customs, women are regarded as “Birimagaydo,” or a group in society that is protected from harm and violence. Rape has escalated in Puntland recently with new forms of gang rape, grouping, and killing following rape, even though rape is forbidden in both the Muslim and Somali penal codes.

According to a policy brief by Puntland Research and Development (PDRC) in 2020, this instilled a great deal of dread in Somali women and girls. Rape offences have no age restrictions; victims range in age from 2 years old to 75 years old (Messages, 2020). For instance, two men who were accused of rape and killing of 9 years old girl in Galkacyo in 2019 were sentenced to death and killed. A third man who had been given the death penalty in connection with the same gang rape case was released at the end of February 2020 after paying compensation of 75 camels. Police in Bari detained two men in November 2020 on rape and murder charges involving a 14-year-old girl in Bossaso. Teachers, government officials, Sheiks, and scholars have all been accused of involvement in the rape.

There are no studies published on rape in Puntland; the available studies have concentrated on gender-based violence, which broadly examines all forms of violence against women. This study focused explicitly on rapes in Puntland and aimed to profoundly explore the determinants of rape, its effects, and a possible solution for eliminating rapes in Puntland, Somalia.

Objectives of the Study

The paper examines the determinants of rape in Puntland. The specific objectives of this study were:

- To explore the major causes of rape in Puntland.
- To assess the effect of rape on victims.
- To examine the possible solutions to rape in Puntland.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in three cities, Garowe, Bossaso, and Qardho, in the Puntland state of Somalia. The study population comprised 600 persons who are court staff in Qardho and Garowe, gender-based violence workers based in these districts and recent rape persons registered in these districts by the police unit. A total of 60 interviews, 3 focus group discussions, and 6 key-informant interviews were collected and administered. The sample size was determined using the Mugenda and Mugenda formula, which argues that 10% is adequate to get much information with limited resources. The researchers ensured the validity of the instrument through expert judgment, and the researchers ensured the coefficient of validity was at least 75%. The researcher consulted the University's head of the research and development centre for expert knowledge on questionnaire construction. After the assessment of the questionnaire, the necessary adjustments were made to the objectives of the study. The formula that was used to calculate the validity of the instrument is:

$$CVI = (\text{no. of items valid}) / (\text{total no of items}) \times 100$$

Twenty interview participants, one focus group discussion, and two key informant interviews were carried out in each city. The respondents included rape victims, gender-based violence workers, elders, government officials (district courts and Ministry of Women and family affairs), and protection experts. A descriptive research design was employed in the study as an advantage of describing a detailed and accurate picture of determinant factors of rapes in the Puntland state of Somalia. In the data analysis, Microsoft Excel was used to generate percentages, frequencies, tables, and statistical conclusions that addressed the study objectives.

Data Collection

This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. A detailed literature review, focus group discussion, key informant interviews, and a structured questionnaire were employed during the data collection. The variables and factors examined in the data collection included demographic, law enforcement, drug, social acceptance, social 'rejection, public education community awareness and psychological factors.

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel was employed in the data analysis to generate percentages, frequencies, tables, and statistical conclusions that address the study objectives.

FINDINGS/RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

As shown in the table above (*Table 1*), five factors were used to collect the demographic information of the respondents relevant to the study. The surveyed respondents' ages were categorised into groups. Out of the 60 respondents, 19 (32%) were between the ages of 21 to 30 years old, 25 (42%) were between the ages of 31 - 40 years old, 11 (18%) were between the ages of 41 - 50 years old, 2 (3%) were between the ages of 51 to 60 years old, and 3 (5%) were above 60 years old. As for the gender of the respondents, 33 (55%) were male, while 27 (45%) were female. The marital status of the respondents revealed that 36 (60%) of them were married, 15 (25%) were single, and 9 (15%) of the respondents were divorced. The education level of participants was 7%, 2%, 2%, 60%, and 30% for primary, secondary, diploma, bachelor, and master respectively. Regarding their work experience, 21 (35%) had between five to ten years of experience, 16 (27%) had between one and five years of experience, 13 (22%) had more than ten years of experience, and 10 (16%) had less than a one-year experience.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Variable	N	%	
Age	21-30	19	32%
	31-40	25	42%
	41-50	11	18%
	51-60	2	3%
	Above 60	3	5%
Gender	Male	33	55%
	Female	27	45%
The level of education of the respondents	Masters	18	30%
	Bachelor	36	60%
	Diploma	1	2%
	Secondary level	1	2%
	Below secondary	4	7%
Experience of the respondents.	5-10 yrs.	21	35%
	1-5 yrs.	16	27%
	Above 10 yrs.	13	22%
	Below 1 yrs.	10	16%
Marital status of the respondents.	Married	36	60%
	Single	15	25%
	Divorced	9	15%

Causes of Rape in Puntland.

Data presented in *Table 2* shows the response of the participants regarding the causes of rape in

Puntland. The findings of the score values were derived from the Likert numerical scale of 1-5 (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

Table 2: Causes of rape in Puntland.

Causes	Strongly agree	Agreed	Strongly disagree	Disagree
Lack of law enforcement for perpetrators of rape is a major determinant in rape cases.	24 40%	25 42%	8 13%	3 5%
Drug and alcohol use are major determinants of rape cases.	26 43%	21 35%	9 15%	4 7%
Social acceptance of rape is a major determinant of rape cases.	9 15%	22 37%	9 15%	20 33%
Low levels of education are major determinants of rape cases.	17% 29%	26 44%	6 7%	11 20%

From the analysis of the above (*Table 2*), the result shows that most of the respondents agreed on both strong and mild terms (40% and 42%), respectively, that lack of law enforcement for perpetrators of rape is the major cause of the rape cases in Puntland. An overwhelming majority of the respondents, 43% and 35%, agreed strongly and mildly, respectively, that drug and alcohol use construct a strong contributory element of Puntland rape cases. On the same line, 15% and 37% of respondents agreed on strong and mild terms that social acceptance of rape also contributes to the increasing rape cases in the

Puntland state of Somalia. Low levels of education are also said to be a significant cause of rape cases in Puntland. A surprising figure of 29% and 44% of the respondents strongly agreed and mildly ticked, respectively, that this factor threw in the rape cases in Puntland. The majority of the Somali community, particularly vulnerable and marginalised people, are not equipped with education, which further increases the rape cases in the region based on the feedback from respondents.

The Effect of Rape on Victims

Data presented in *Table 3* shows the response of the participants regarding the effect of rape on

victims in Puntland. The findings of the score values were derived from the Likert numerical scale of 1-5 (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

Table 3: The effect of rape on victims

Effects.	Strongly agree	Agreed	Strongly disagree	Disagree
Social rejection and isolation (stigma and discrimination against SGBV survivors) are among the effects of rape on victims.	18 30%	25 42%	8 13%	9 15%
The feminisation of poverty and increased gender inequality are among the effects of rape on victims.	7 12%	26 43%	9 15%	18 30%
Chronic pelvic pain and menstruation disorders are some of the effects of rape on victims.	9 13%	28 48%	10 17%	13 22%
Psychosocial problems are one of the effects of rape on victims.	21 35%	26 43%	7 12%	6 10%

From the above analysis (*Table 3*), a vast percentage of the respondents, 35% and 43%, have stated that Psychosocial problems. The study also disclosed that social rejection and isolation exert a great effect on rape victims. A significant percentage (48%) have shown that Chronic pelvic pain and menstruation disorders are also major effects of rape-on-rape victims. Thus, this study has realised that the Feminization of poverty and increased gender inequality are among the effects

of rape on victims and scored 12% and 43% strongly and mildly agreed, respectively.

The Possible Solutions to Rape in Puntland

Data presented in *Table 4* shows the response of the participants regarding the possible solutions to rape in Puntland. The findings of the score values were derived from the Likert numerical scale of 1-5 (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

Table 4: The possible solutions to rape in Puntland.

Solutions.	Strongly agree	Agreed	Strongly disagree	Disagree
Enforcement of laws against rape is the only solution to eliminating rape cases in Puntland.	30 50%	25 42%	2 3%	3 5%
Removing traditional ways of solving rape cases can be a solution to eliminating rape cases in Puntland.	20 33%	27 45%	7 12%	6 10%
Public education and community awareness on issues related to rape can be solutions to the reduction of rape cases in Puntland.	22 37%	32 53%	4 7%	2 3%
Eradication of alcohol and drug use can be one of the solutions to eliminating rapes in Puntland.	26 43%	26 43%	7 12%	1 2%

From the analysis above (*Table 4*), the majority of the respondents (50%) anonymously suggested that enforcement of laws against rape is the best solution to eliminating rape in Puntland. Significant findings indicated that 45% to 33% of the respondents strongly and mildly agreed, respectively, that removing traditional ways of solving rape cases can be a solution to eliminating rape cases in Puntland. On the other hand, more than 86% of the respondents strongly and mildly

agreed that Eradication of alcohol and drug use could be one of the solutions to eliminating rapes in Puntland. A substantial percentage of the respondents, 37% and 45%, strongly and mildly agreed, respectively, that Public education and community awareness on issues related to rape can be solutions to the reduction of rape cases in Puntland.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that new forms of rape have emerged in Puntland, including group rapes, gang rape, rape with murder, and filmed rape cases. This confirms the finding of a policy brief by the SIDRA institute about a rising crisis and reality for women in Somalia (institute., 2019) which states that violent rape by multiple perpetrators (gang rape) is a new phenomenon in Somali culture that has caused alarm among the usually conservative Somali people, who have struggled with rape behind closed doors for decades due to the perceived shamefulness. The study found that drug and alcohol use is among the major causes of rape in Puntland, in which 43% of the respondents strongly agreed on this while 35% agreed mildly on it. This confirms previous research findings by the SIDRA institute about a rising crisis and reality for the women in Somalia (institute., Rape: a rising crisis and reality for the women in Somalia., 2019) which consequently reported that abuse of drugs (particularly Qat addiction), alcohol, and access to and availability of pornographic material have all been linked to the onset and rise of sexual violence and rape in Somalia.

It was found that enforcement of laws related to rape is the best solution for eliminating rape in Puntland, half of the respondents (50%) strongly agreed on this, and this shows the importance of these factors to rape elimination in Puntland. Similar findings have been produced by previous researchers (development., 2020) who recommended the implementation of sexual offences law, including prosecution of members of law enforcement agencies that might obstruct the elimination of rape. Additionally, The study found that Psychosocial problems are one of the effects of rape on victims, 35% and 43% of the respondents agreed strongly and mildly respectively in this notion. This is in conformity with research findings (Mohamed., 2020.) which found that the victims/survivors of sexual and gender-based violence are at high risk of severe health and psychosocial problems, sometimes death, even in the absence of physical assault.

Finally, the study found that public education and community awareness on issues related to rape is very important for the elimination of rape in Puntland. The community needs to understand the causes, effects, and consequences of rape as well as the prevention methods available at individual and state levels; low levels of education is found to be one of the major causes of rape in Puntland. This is in line with previous research findings of a policy brief by the SIDRA institute about a rising crisis and reality for women in Somalia (institute., 2019) which narrated that there is no public awareness, community outreach, or training on rape and other sorts of sexual offences. Similarly, women and girls lack adequate knowledge and instruction about how to report rape and preserve evidence in the event of rape or other sexual offences. Due to those profusions of difficulties, there is insufficient evidence in many rape cases to prosecute and convict perpetrators.

CONCLUSIONS

The study has emphasised that rape is increasing in Puntland, and the key determinants need to be addressed to prevent further impacts and drawbacks. The study revealed that lack of law enforcement is a key factor both in leading the cause and bringing the solution to exterminate rape in Puntland. Likewise, Drug and alcohol use are also ranked as major determining factor factors of rape in Puntland. The studies indicated that Social acceptance of rape is not a major factor causing rape in Puntland. On the other hand, The result of data analysis revealed that Social rejection and isolation are the major effects of rape on victims, followed by Psychosocial. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents indicated that chronic pelvic pain and menstruation disorders are among the effects of rape in rape victims. With the same eyes, more than 50% of the respondents strongly and gently agreed that enforcement of laws against rape is the only solution to reducing and eliminating rape cases in Puntland. Similarly, a good number of respondents have suggested that removing traditional ways of solving rape cases can be a solution to eliminating rape cases in Puntland. The study also established that public education and

community awareness on issues related to rape and the eradication of alcohol and drug use can play a significant role in reducing and eliminating rapes in Puntland.

Recommendations

Given the findings and analysis demonstrated above, the study suggests the following recommendations: it is highly suggested that the laws against rape should be fulfilled to eliminate rape cases in Puntland. It is advised that police, prosecutors, and judges receive training on the appropriate methods for looking into, prosecuting, and deciding cases considering Puntland constitutions, Islamic perspectives, and other rape laws. According to the study, rape offenders ought to be prosecuted in court rather than through traditional routes for handling such situations. It should never be the practice for traditional elders or other alternative dispute resolution methods to handle rape cases in Puntland. Victims of rape ought to have a readily available platform where they can file complaints and receive fair consideration for this matter. Legal organisations and health workers should provide support to rape victims. Raising public knowledge about the legal ramifications of rape cases and empowering women is crucial for ending the problem of sexual assault in Puntland. The economic status of women, education, and political participation is recommended as the key factors that can reduce rape against women in Somalia.

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