

**COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GENDERED RITUAL
MURDERS IN GREATER MUKONO, CENTRAL UGANDA**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled, ‘Community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in greater Mukono, Central Uganda’ is my own, and has never been submitted to any academic institution for the award of any qualification.

BOGERE SUZAN

Signature..... Date.....

APPROVAL

This is to certify that Suzan Bogere’s dissertation titled, ‘Community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in greater Mukono, Central Uganda’ has been under our supervision.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my husband Mr. Kazibwe Baziwe Saul and the children; Ssemuyaba Ryan Mwesigwa, Mbaziira Ryemon Paul Zechariah and Namirimu Ariel Eliezra for the great contribution in my academic life which has enabled me to succeed. This was evident in the all-round support from my husband; financially, morally, socially and emotionally which made me move forward to attain this success. The children provided both direct and indirect support that included spiritual, emotional and social needs during the course of study.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
ABSTRACT.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE	
STUDY	1
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	11
1.3 Main Objective	12
1.4 Specific Objectives of Study	12
1.5 Research Questions.....	12
1.6 Scope of the Study	13
1.6.1 Content Scope	13
1.6.2 Geographical Scope	13
1.6.3 Time Scope	13
1.7 Significance of the study	13
1.8 Definition of Key Concepts	14
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.0 Introduction.....	17
2.1 Gender-related perceptions about ritual murders.....	18
2.2 Gender-related factors responsible for ritual murders	20

2.3 The impact of gender-related ritual murders	24
2.4 Conclusion	25
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	26
3.0 Introduction.....	26
3.1 Research Approach and Design	26
3.1.1 Qualitative Research Approach	26
3.1.2 Phenomenological Design	27
3.2 Study Area	28
3.3 Study Population.....	29
3.4 Sampling Methods & Procedure.....	30
3.5 Sample Size	30
3.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments	31
3.6.1 Data Collection Method.....	31
3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation	33
3.8 Validity and Reliability of Data	34
3.9 Limitations and delimitations	35
3.10 Ethical Considerations	35
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	38
4.1 Gender-Related Perceptions About Ritual Murders	38
4.1.0 Introduction.....	38
4.1.1 Perceptions on the Prevalence of Ritual Murders by sex	41
4.1.2 Perceptions on Ritual Murder Perpetrators.....	45
4.1.3 Perceptions on Targeted Body Parts	46
4.1.4 Perceptions on Birth Order in relation to Ritual Murders	47
4.1.5 Perceptions on Virginity and Ritual Murders	48

4.1.6 Perceptions on Blemish and Ritual Murders	48
4.1.7 Perceptions on the Location of Gendered Ritual Murders	49
4.2 Factors Responsible for Gendered Ritual Murders in Greater Mukono	
Area	51
4.2.0 Introduction.....	51
4.2.1 Cultural Factors.....	51
4.2.2 The Economic Factors Responsible For Gender-Related Ritual	
Murders	58
4.2.3 Individual Factors Responsible For Gender-Related Ritual Murders.	62
4.2.4 Social Factors Linked To Ritual Murders	65
4.2.5 Other Factors That Triggered Ritual Murders	67
4.2.6 Conclusion	73
4.3 The Impact of Gender-related Ritual Murders on Community	73
4.3.0 Introduction.....	73
4.3.1 Gender-related Impact of Ritual Murders on Families	73
4.3.2 Gender-related impacts of ritual murders on females.....	76
4.3.3 Impact Of Gendered Ritual Murders On The Local Community	76
4.4 Conclusion	79
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND	
RECOMMENDATIONS	81
5.0 Introduction.....	81
5.1 Summary of Findings	81
5.1.1 Gender-related perceptions about ritual murders.....	81
5.1.2 Gender- related Factors Responsible for Ritual Murders	83
5.1.3 Gender-related Impacts of Ritual Murders	86

5.2 General Conclusion	87
5.3 Recommendations.....	89
5.3.0 Introduction.....	89
5.3.1 Recommendation to the Parliament of Uganda	90
5.3.2 Recommendation to Law Enforcement Personnel (Police and Prison).....	92
5.3.3 Recommendations to the Local Councils	92
5.3.4 Recommendations to Families.....	93
5.3.5 Recommendations to Cultural and Religious Leaders.....	93
5.3.6 Recommendations to non-governmental organization.	94
5.3.7 Recommendation for further research	94
REFERENCES	95
APPENDICES	109
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE	109
APPENDIX 2 : INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS OF RESPONDENTS	117
APPENDIX 3: RAW DATA	119
APPENDIX 4 : INTRODUCTORY LETTER.....	121

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sample size	31
Table 2 Back ground characteristics of articipants	38
Table 3:Religion of Participants.....	39
Table 4: Age Range of Respondents	40
Table 5: Education level of Respondents	40
Table 6: No. of victims of ritual murders by sex from 2019-2024	41
Table 7: Annual Ritual Murder Cases from 2019 to 2024 in Greater Mukono area	42

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Atr	Traditional religion
Ba	Born-Again faith
CAAACS	Community Amber Alert Against Child Sacrifice, Project (2013-2015)
CCAPC	Community Child and Adult Protection Committee
CHL	Child/Community Help Line
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CMO	Case Management Officer
CPGRM	Community Perception about Gendered Ritual Murders
CTDH	Camouflaging Traditional Doctors/Healers
DOVCC	District Orphans Vulnerable Children Committee
DPC	District Police Commander
EDRM	Evolving Dynamisms of Ritual Murders
FTHD	Fraud Traditional Healers/Doctors
GNR	Gender-nature of Ritual Murders
GRC	Gender-related circumstances of ritual Murders
GRF	Gender-related Factors of ritual Murders
GRI	Gender-related Impacts of Ritual Murders
KCM	Kyampisi Childcare Ministries
KIRM	Kidnaps Intentioned for Ritual Murders
LC	Local Council
LEP	Law Enforcement Personnel
NGO	Non-government organizations

NSA	Non-state actors
OC	Officer in-Charge
PAP	The Pan African Parliament
PRMI	Physically Ritualistic Murder Incidences
RTMI	Ritually Torture Murder Incidences
SFB	Science Foundation Bukwe
SOVCC	Sub county Orphans Vulnerable Children Committee
TH/D	Tradition Healer / Doctor
THA	Traditional Healer Association
TRs	Teachers
VLPC	Village Life Protection Committee
VSF	Victim Support Fund
WPF	Witness Protection Fund

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in greater Mukono. Ritual murders have become a big challenge to community members with women and girls constituting approximately 70% of the victims. The study objectives were; to establish the gender-related perceptions of ritual murders in greater Mukono, analyse factors responsible for gendered ritual murders and examined the impact of gendered ritual murders on the greater Mukono Community. The study was purely qualitative in nature, as it employed a qualitative approach alongside a phenomenological design; adopted to enable the researcher describe and interpret the community perceptions about the gendered ritual murder. An in-depth interview method was employed on all categories identified to provide data on one-to-one interaction. Study findings indicated that, over the 5-year period (2019-2024), females were more affected compared to the males. Females were ritually murdered for various reasons: their brains are good at positive thinking, breasts are a symbol of beauty and power growth. These mixed with charms prevent curses and preserve culture. Males were ritually murdered because of their body parts being able to ignite vigilance and power, determination and fearlessness, among others. The study concludes that Cultural and religious leaders must transform and embrace the Prevention and Prohibition of Human Sacrifice Act, 2023 (Act No. 27 of 2023), to eliminate ritualistic murders; must spread awareness about the Act and discourage harmful practices. Organizations like the Science Foundation (SF) should screen traditional healers and prevent fraudulent registration. The study recommended the implementation of the newly amended Act 27 Nov. 2023 by the parliament of Uganda. It also Recommended that the ritual murder suspects should be produced before courts of law within 48 hours. Police and prison personnel should work closely with community members in order to get information that can help them effectively investigate and convict perpetrators. The Education Curriculum developers should integrate religious values which are life-protecting all levels of education; also include a well-laid down Citizenship education in the curriculum of Uganda.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Ritual murders continue to be a global challenge the world over. For example, in Europe, 1% of all violent death between 2006 and 2014 were due to gendered ritual killings of women, most especially virgins and babies (European Union Agency for Asylum [EUAA], 2022). In North America, especially in the United States, ritual murders are a reality and practiced on religious grounds by the followers of the SanteMuerte Religion. The practice is done in honour of a Supernatural Personification of death (Bunker, 2017). Other religious sects in the world include; Aztec religion, Inca religion, Maya religion, Shaktism religion, the Thebaid religion and African Traditional Religion (ATR) not exceptional. All these world religious perspectives demonstrate that ritual murders are a religious phenomenon approved or not approved by religions all over.

Similarly, in Central America, Russia, and Ancient China, ritual murders are practiced (Jean la, 2011; Rose, 2015; Celia, 2010; Thomassen 2014; Eugene et.al., 2017). According to Murav (2014), members of the Udmurt ethnic group (known as Votyak) in Russia were accused of murdering a beggar in order to use portions of his corpse in service to their gods in 1892. This indicates that motivations for ritual murders varied across societies globally, with those in North America, Central America, Asia among others, being connected to religion and religious cultic activities. Ritual murders are also evident in Australia (Trove, 1953).

In much of the Arab world, ritual murders are religiously motivated (Frankel, 1997; Ehrman 1976; Hannah, 2015). Studies indicate that in India and Pakistan, ritual murders are prevalent. For example, 200 cases of ritual murders were reported from 2005 to 2017. Since 2014, 60% of ritual murders of females were reported from Uttar Pradesh and the victims ranged from 18 to 20 years mostly virgin girls and women. These murders were committed with the intention of redeeming the honour of the society and maintaining the status quo and according to this community, the honour of the society lived in the body of a woman (Lima, 2020; Srishti, 2021).

In Africa, the aspect of ritual murders has been in existence since pre-colonial times, (Owusu, 2022). Ritual murders achieved their discursive force through post-colonial transformations in the structuring of power and its ideological legitimation, (Ornulf, 2002). To that date, the phenomenon was widely written about by scholars as well as non-academic organizations..It was noteworthy that whereas both men and women had been victims; women more than men were seen to be victims, as ritual killers hunted for female body parts. Rowlands (1993) and Jean la (2011) confirmed that ritual murders were practiced for the reason that; ‘human sacrifice was needed to support the magical powers of Oba,Osa and Osuan, the attendant head priests of the cults of Owen and Ora’, in the West African kingdoms such as Asante, Benin, Dahomey, Calabar and the River Ibo. Reports on countries such as Ghana, Cameroon, Tanzania, among others show that ritual murders are prevalent. The targets were mostly young girls, women and albinos because their body parts were considered to be more potent (Adigun, 2022; Anthony, 2000; Apinga, 2021; Pan African Parliament [PAP], 2021).

According to the Pan African Parliament document (2021), ritual attacks by persons with albinism had been recorded in at least 28 African countries. This was evident in many reports from various African countries, whereby several victims who were young boys and girls were found dead with missing body parts especially genitals, eyes and tongues. The report indicated that the major reason for the practice was using boys' and girls' private parts to make magical charms. There were also reports of ritual killings of women or girls per week in Cameroon (Anthony, 2000).

In Nigeria, ritual murders were evident in primitive religious communities where a human being was considered the most acceptable offering to the gods or deities (Aghawenu, 2020). Nigeria was in an era of ritual murders as human body parts were found littered in some houses and forests (Adigun, 2022). Occultists were using diabolic means to scam their victims and targeted young girls for rituals, and panties-jazz chronicles were the perfect recipe for rituals. The response to ritual killing had taken a different turn, blaming women for the reasons behind their killing. Women were also blamed for pushing men to do rituals, and boys doing *yahoo* (the cyber crimes in Nigeria empowered by dark magic which involves ritual killings) to satisfy girls, and so, these rituals were a result of pressure from the society (Adigun, 2022). In central Africa, specifically in Gabon, reports showed that in 2013, there were 20 killings confirmed as ritual murders (Dabany, 2013).

Similarly, in South Africa, females were the most targeted victims for 'muti' on the notion that their body parts held magical qualities that provided good fortune or rendered offenders to be invisible to police and other authorities (Lyncaster,

2014; Thenga, 2018). In case of males, the motivation was cultural beliefs such as potency of children's body parts, attributed to purity enhancing traditional medicine and rituals, and the financial gains or ensuring wealth, business success and prosperity (Lyncaster, 2014; Thenga, 2018).

East Africa was of no exception as the subject of the study was concerned. Research indicated that in some places of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, the breasts and women's private parts promoted commercial success, than men's private parts. The male body part were believed to increase virility whereas their tongues could smooth one's road to a lover's heart (PeaceWomen, 2011). In Tanzania alone, thirty victims were reportedly murdered for ritual purposes in 2008 (PAP, 2021).

Furthermore, PAP reports indicated that Southern and Eastern Africa were areas that experienced more ritual murders than other parts of the African continent (PAP, 2021). In Kenya, reports showed that there were 61 cases of ritual murder cases, with more than half of the number involving children (Owusu, 2022). In Southern Sudan, ritual murders of women were reported in Khartoum (Fabricius, 2020). Such cases, categorizations and justifications for ritualistic murder across African continent illuminated the gendered nature of such murders, which had nonetheless received little scholarly attention.

Uganda is one of the countries where ritual murders are still prevalent. Ritual murders surfaced publicly in late 1990s, when the first report on child sacrifice appeared in the media (Masoga, 2018). Since then, ritual murders were frequently reported in the media and to police. These ritual murder cases are on the rise, with one hundred fifty-nine [159] cases reported in 2019 alone, and 207 cases were

reported in 2020 (Ochola, 2021). In a study that was conducted in twenty-five communities of South-Eastern Uganda, the tongues and the genitals were the most desired parts for such ritual murders. In this study, females between the ages of three and eighteen were the most at risk of ritual murders (Ninsiima, 2013). According to police reports, it was evident that there were unreported ritualistic murder cases from various places of Uganda (Ochola, 2021). Amongst the ten leading districts of Uganda that practice ritual murders, the report ranked, Mukono and Buikwe at number 'eight' and 'nine' respectively. However, these studies lacked a gender perspective.

Similarly, many researchers both academic and non-academic have studied ritual murders in Uganda on the grounds of tradition, culture, religion and politics. These researchers contended that, ritualistic murder happenings were fuelled by some cultural beliefs & traditions, yearning for economic and political powers (McCrary, 2014; Byansi et al, 2019; Bukuluki, 2018; Community Amber Alert against Child Sacrifice, Project [CAAACs] 2013-2015; Ninsiima 2015). Just like in the studies seen across the African continent, despite the fact that there were gendered undertones on ritual murders, studies on ritual murders in Uganda had ignored a deeper analysis of the gendered nature of the phenomenon of ritual murders. There is inadequate literature on the seemingly selective actions of ritual murderers to have young girls or boys, men or women. Inadequate explanations were given for the extraction of body parts that define the gender of the victim. In addition, outcries have been heard from the femicides/feminists advocates of gender most especially the female gender for example, Russell (2012), Loza (2022), and many others. These challenge and concern themselves with the way women are treated in the patriarchal societies; that is being objects and symbols

of honor, women being killed because they are women and so forth, but have overlooked the 'whys' ritual murders are occurring on the grounds of female or male dimension.

The first gap in literature is that most of these studies were not done in Uganda, more so in greater Mukono. Most of these scholarly pieces of work identified were concerned with ritual murders, but lacked a gender perspective. Yet it seems that ritual murderers had preferences in terms of gender depending on the reason for which they committed the murder. In addition, scholars used different lenses while studying and collecting data. For example, in one of the most current study by Owusu (2024); the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), was used to understand the contemporary phenomenon of ritual murders in African countries; Uganda inclusive.

Ritual Murders in Greater Mukono

Greater Mukono is historically and culturally called *Kyaggwe* in the Patriarchal system of Buganda. It is also identified with the name *Bukunja* because of some cultural practices well known in the area due to earlier people of the community. Greater Mukono (Kyaggwe/Bukunja) initially embedded Bukunja (Buikwe district), Bugerere (Kayunga district), Buvuma and Mukono district. In this area, ritual murders are commonly labelled *Okusaddaaka*. This area was selected as the site of study on the ground of the frequent reports; both scholarly and media or non-government reports about the prevalence of ritual murders (*Okusaddaaka*).

Existing reports that pin the area for the practice include: Mukono district police report, 2022; Ochola, 2020; Uganda police force, 2022; Ninsiima, 2015; Kimbowa, 2021; Kyeya, 2017; Kato, 2015; Yiga, 2020 & 2023; Kabazzi, 2019; Bulikasa, 2023; Capital Crimes, 2023; Edema & Jjingo, 2021; Police Security Alert, 2024; Muzaale, 2022; among others. All these reports confirm the recurrence of ritual murders in greater Murders in greater Mukono, despite the penalty passed in the Act No. 27 of 2023 concerning a person who carries out *okusaddaaka* (human sacrifice); being liable, on conviction, to the penalty prescribed in subsection (3). These frequent ritual murders communicate historical, social as well as cultural implications on the entire greater Mukono; leaving a lot pain and trauma among the innocent inhabitants. Hence, calling for an investigation on gender-related ritual murders in the area.

Religio-cultural Context of Ritual murders (*Okusaddaaka*)

In this context, *Okusaddaaka* is the killing of a human person whether male or female of any age as part of a religious, spiritual or medical rite (Atabo et al, 2023; Madfis, 2024). To clearly understand *Okusaddaaka*, one had to have a reflection on cultural settings of various cultures like the one in Greater Mukono. According to Masoga (2018), *Okusaddaaka* existed in many years ago and also in the ancient Bible. People in Greater Mukono attach strong feelings to the traditional religion therein and their culture. Therefore, the convictions, attachments and commitments to the numinous (Maya, 2012; Holdcroft, 2006), has influenced *Okusaddaaka* in the area in quest for meaning and purpose in life. This relationship of individual human beings with the numinous however, began with people offering animals and birds to their gods as communal or burnt

offerings. But this has dynamically evolved from the use of animals/birds to human beings of either gender in the post colonial era.

The Biblical Context

These ritual murders can be found in the Bible, forexample, in Genesis 22:2-16 and in Deuteronomy 12:31. There was preference for the boy-child mostly, and on rare occasions, a girl-child could be offered. According to Judges 11:38-39, a girl-child was ritually murdered by her father as he vowed to his God. This girl was ritually murder because of a successful battle the father had agnaist his enemies. Therefore, the girl was sacrificed to appease God for the war-victory and as a fulfilment of the vow. Masoga (2018) confirms that in the ancient biblical era, ritual murders were very common. However, God warns the Israelites over taking part in sacrificing human beings. Instead, He encouraged them to sacrifice clean animals such as sheep. Cattle and goats (Deuteronomy 18:9-10; Deut. 12:14; and Leviticus 22:19).

Whereas in the Quran, Leeming (2010) contends that ritual murder is depicted when Abraham was instructed in a dream to offer his son as a burnt offering to Allah. In the line of traditional religion; traditional healing gave rise to ritual murders on the grounds of outcompeting each other (Masoga, 2018). In addition, human skulls could be put in the shrines; buried in the ground or covered in half broken pots (Ndemanu, 2018). The reason for ritual murders in the biblicacal context is induced by the belief in the supernatural identity, as well as the personal attachment to God or gods.

1.1.2 Theory that under-pins the research

The Theory of Rational Human Sacrifice

The theory that speaks to this study is the Theory of Rational Human Sacrifice, (Leeson, 2014) argues that human sacrifice is a technology for protecting property rights, which improves property protection by destroying part of sacrificing communities' wealth, depresses the expected payoff of plundering them. The theory assumes that societies or individuals engaging in human sacrifices understand the expected benefits, like; appeasing gods, ensuring fertility, social stability, deterring enemies to outweigh the costs such as, loss of life, social disruption, power (moral implications) and wealth (Layad et al, 1994; Mishra et al, 2020; Pierce, D.W (1986).

The preposition of the theory spins around the belief that appeasing powerful entities by sacrificing a high value, like human life could be seen as the most effective way believed to control crucial aspects of life, for instance, wealth, power, fertility and health among others. Although Leeson's (2014) argument is a general concern of loss of human resource or wealth triggered to protect property rights, his theory effectively speaks to gendered ritual murders and the stimuli behind the practice: this theory helped the researcher to understand the context with which societies or individuals engaged in human sacrifices. It encourages a deeper exploration of underlying motivations for such inhuman practices.

Another theory is 'the Femicide Theory', Russell (2012). This theory posits that the intentional killing of women by men is systematic, not isolated, rooted in patriarchal structures influenced by harmful stereotypes, cultural beliefs, among

others. The Femicide theory also confirms that femicide is not an individual act but a social phenomenon deeply rooted in social and cultural structures that devalue women. The theory is described in a way that societal structures can create conditions that make femicide more likely, according to the way the society is organized. The theory also assumes that femicide is a gender-based crime distinct from the general homicide. This is basically positive to the gendered ritual murders which are prevalent in greater Mukono; where females are more affected than males.

Influence of the two theories and how they inform the study

The theory of 'Rational Human Sacrifice' prioritizes human beings as the communities' wealth; which is being destroyed through human sacrifice as a technology for protecting property rights. It stresses the awareness of individuals about the practice of human sacrifice going on in societies, along-side benefits to perpetrators. In addition, the theory brings out the human life as the most highly valued sacrifice to the powerful and supernatural powers (deities or gods). This kind of knowledge has deeply spread in greater Mukono where adherence to deities is great.

On the other side, the Femicide theory traces the roots of femicide far back from the burning of the witches in the past, to the most recent widespread custom of female infanticide in many societies. The theory emphasises the killing of females because they are females by male perpetrators. This communicates loudly to the study where most of the victims of gendered ritual murders were females; most especially infant females. The theory further, puts it forward that femicide is not only limited to male perpetrators who kill women and girls, but it also considers

some women who kill females because of their gender as collaborators with males. This was evident during data collection when participants pointed out some women perpetrators who were on the lead of ritually murdering infants as well as adults in greater Mukono.

All the assertions of the two theoretical rationalities above, inform the study: Community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in greater Mukono, central Uganda. The practice is real with strong stimuli behind its prevalence. Both men and women perpetrators were identified. Female victims of ritual murders out numbered male victims with heightened numbers of infants. All these were majority as a result of cultural beliefs and the value attached to supernatural powers (deties) to realise personal, family/societal gains; which the two theories stress out.

1.2 Problem Statement

In Greater Mukono region of Uganda, ritual murders are common, with women and girls constituting approximately 70% of the victims (Uganda Police Force, 2020). Between 2018 and 2022, a total of 150 ritual murders were reported, with a staggering 105 (70%) of these victims being female (Mukono District Police, 2022). The consequences of these crimes are far-reaching (Kabazzi, 2019; Muhanguzi, 2018; Tamale, 2011).

Despite the efforts of the government of Uganda to address the issue through the establishment of the National Task Force on Ritual Murders (2019) and the Uganda Penal Code Act (2000), the problem persists. In addition, the current discourse on ritual murders by the scholars and wider public concerned itself with the concerns of religion, culture and ritualization, violence against women and

children as well as legislations with regard to understanding the phenomenon of ritual murders. ‘Genderisation’ of ritual murders had not received adequate attention in the scholarly discourse.

This study seeks to explore the community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in selected communities in Greater Mukono. By examining community perceptions on this complex issue, this research aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based community perceptions about gendered ritual murders, factors responsible for gender-related ritual murders and the gender-related impact on greater mukono.

1.3 Main Objective

The study sought to examine the community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in the selected communities of greater Mukono.

1.4 Specific Objectives of Study

- a) To establish the gender-related perceptions about ritual murders in the selected communities of greater Mukono.
- b) To analyse the gender-related factors responsible for ritual murders in Buikwe South, Mukono central, and Busaana in Kayunga.
- c) To examine the impact of gender-related ritual murders on greater Mukono community.

1.5 Research Questions

- a) What are the community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in Greater Mukono area?
- b) What are the gender-related factors responsible for ritual murders in Greater Mukono?

c)What is the impact of the gender-related ritual murders on Greater Mukono community?

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Content Scope

The study was set to examine the community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in selected communities of Greater Mukono.

1.6.2 Geographical Scope

The study was carried out in the three districts of Greater Mukono that is, Buikwe, Mukono, and Kayunga. This was specifically in the communities of Buikwe South (constituency), Kyampiisi village, Nagalama parish and Nakifuma town council in Mukono central, and lastly Busaana town council in Kayunga. Ethnographically, people in Kyaggwe/Bukunja, Bugerere and Buvuma are a cultural sharing group. The four district were and are governed by the same cultural system and principles under the initial name, Kyaggwe/Bukunja that is; people in Kyaggwe are Bakunja as in the public-knowledge. Therefore, taking the initiatives to collect data on the same topic from the selected areas, would give detailed and credible data about gendered ritual murders.

1.6.3 Time Scope

The study was carried out from May 2023 to May 2024, taking duration of one year. To be more current, the researcher focused on a period of five current years that is from 2019 to 2024.

1.7 Significance of the study

The study provides new insights on ritual murders as it focused on the gendered nature of ritual murders. Further, it provides literature to researchers and

practitioners in the field of religious studies and other disciplines who would like to conduct further research on gendered ritual murders.

Similarly, on the practical part, policy makers and implementers can use the findings to come up with new interventions and design policies that can reduce the occurrence of gender-related ritual murders. In addition, religious leaders and local council leaders in the community can base on the findings to sensitize the people about the impact of the prevalence of gendered ritual murders, so as to create an attitudinal positive change among the people. In the same line, the study findings can serve as an eye-opener to the policy makers and implementers of the newly passed Act No. 27 of 2023. This is because the study brings on board the magnitude of gender-related ritual murders in greater Mukono.

Importantly, the study findings would give insights the Educational Curriculum Developers as key players in attitudinal changes; to redesign keenly how to integrate important life-protecting religious values and citizenship education at all levels of the education curriculum of Uganda. This would serve greatly in remolding a new human mindset that helps to discurd the already corrupted mindset; being influenced by dubious cultural and religious knowledge ending in ritual murdering.

1.8 Definition of Key Concepts

Rituals

The word ritual means a religious ceremony comprising of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order; it is parterned, repetitive and symbolic (Floyd, 2022; Government Girl General Degree Collage [GGGD], 2016; Olupona, 1990).

Rituals (*Obulombolombo*) are actions, words and chanteries repeatedly performed for the good of a person/persons; under the guidance of a family/clan or cultural/religious or community elder(s). These rituals include purification of an individual or family or clan/community, marriage and birth, funeral rituals, and so on. They influence and involve both the inner and outside person, individually or as a group/community. These rituals are accompanied by sacrifices as subscribed by the community. To sacrifice here means to offer an animal, a bird, food, property or even humans to the numinous for some considerations.

Ritual murders

Theoretically, Jean la (2011) explained ritual murder as the killing of human beings to obtain spiritual powers that were not recognized as morally right but evil and dangerous.

From another theological perspective, Celia (2010) describes ritual murder as the killing of a person for religious purpose or taking of a life in a ritually prescribed manner. Agazue (2021) asserts that ritual murder is a hit and run medicine murder.

Ritual murders (*Okusaddaaka*) in this context is a component of human behaviour deeply rooted in both cultural and religious knowledge; where human life or body parts are taken to be the most valuable and acceptable sacrifice to the numinous bodies. This practice has been developing due to different understanding of religiosity, but Christianity influencing a bigger part in the religious mindset. The Christian Church regards ritual murders as a sin, morally wrong and detestable before the Christian God. The state considers ritual murder or as unlawful and punishable by law.

Gender

Gender in this paper refers to a marking word that brings out the fact of a person being a female or male.

Gendered ritual murders

As for this study, gendered ritual murders constituted those kinds of murders with specific inclinations to the utilization of body parts of the murdered persons due to their gender status, that is, because they were women/girls or men/boys.

Community

As per the study a community means those people living in the same locality of greater Mukono, having common beliefs and attach importance to certain cultural values.

Perception

Operationally, the term perception refers to how people in greater Mukono understand; interpret and regard gendered ritual murders.

Community perceptions

Community perceptions refer to how the local people for example, those in Greater Mukono bound to common cultural beliefs and values; understand, interpret and regard ritual murders (*Okusaddaaka*).

Greater Mukono means the initial Mukono known as “Kyagwe” among the twenty counties of Buganda. It includes Mukono main, Buikwe, Kayunga and Buvuma districts.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section took into account the available scholarly work, both academic and government reports on ritual murders. Literature was reviewed under three sub headings of; gender-related perceptions about ritual murders, gender-related factors responsible for ritual murders, and the impact of gender-related ritual murders.

2.1 Gender-related perceptions about ritual murders

Gender-related perceptions of ritual murders entail how community members understand, interpret, and regard these crimes. Community perceptions of gender-related ritual murders are significantly shaped by prevailing gender stereotypes, cultural beliefs, and media narratives. These factors can influence how communities understand victimhood, assign blame, and react to these violent acts. For instance, Nwakanma and Abu (2020), note that in Nigeria, ritual killings for body parts often target women. They also highlight societal and media portrayals that predominantly frame women as victims. Studies on ritual child homicides (juju-driven pedicide) in Ghana and Kenya Owusu (2022) indicate that while both children's genders are victims, the perpetrators are primarily young adult males. The United Nations defines femicide as the intentional killing of a woman or girl because of her gender. This extreme form of gender-based violence can be linked to harmful stereotypes and unequal power dynamics. (UN Women, 2023). The theory of femicide (Russell, 2012) affirms these arguments; as women being killed because of being mere women. However, these assertions did not clearly bring out hidden agenda of child homicide or killing women as mere women and not men other than basing patriarchal structures rooted in cultures.

The study on ritual child homicides in Ghana and Kenya (Owusu, 2022) identifies unemployed young adult males as the primary offenders. While less common in the overall statistics of violent crimes, women are not absent as perpetrators in ritual killings, Agazue (2021a), in an article on female perpetrators of ritually motivated pedicide, argues that women's involvement in these crimes has been understudied and that they participate in brutal acts, sometimes alongside men. This is in line with the femicide theory which asserts that femicide

is not only limited to male perpetrators who kill women and girls, but considers some women who kill female because of collaborating with men.

Gender-based violence, including ritualistic forms, is often rooted in patriarchal structures and unequal power dynamics between men and women (Agbo & Choji, 2014). These structures can normalize violence against women and girls. Beliefs about gender roles and harmful traditional practices can contribute to the vulnerability of certain groups to ritual violence. Baumeister et al., (1996) observed that some societal constructions of masculinity, where violence is sometimes seen as a way to assert power or respond to perceived threats to male identity, can play a role in perpetrating violence, including ritualistic forms.

Feminists emphasize the importance of intersectionality, recognizing how gender intersects with other social categories like race, class, and sexuality to shape experiences of violence, including ritualistic forms. Feminist perspectives in ritual studies aim to move beyond traditional male-centric interpretations and explore the roles and experiences of women in ritual practices, including as victims and sometimes as perpetrators (Sever, 2001). Feminist analysis often critiques the underlying power structures that enable and perpetuate gender-based violence, including murders within ritual contexts.

Ellison and Anderson (2001) argue that religious texts and interpretations have historically been used to reinforce the subservience of women, potentially contributing to environments where violence against them is normalized or even justified. Within religious contexts, men's misinterpretation of their authority over women can contribute to violence. Religion can be both a risk factor (normalizing violence, encouraging staying in abusive relationships) and a protective factor

(providing coping mechanisms, community support) for survivors of gender-based killings. However, scholars who have endeavored to investigate ritual murders on a religious basement have not asked themselves ‘why that female or male victim?’ This created a gap in literature for which the study was set to investigate.

2.2 Gender-related factors responsible for ritual murders

Nwakanma and Abu (2020), suggests women and girls as victims in certain forms of ritual killings. These scholars argued that, the targeted vulnerability of women, was often linked to societal objectification and the commodification of their bodies. Similarly, studies on femicide, defined by UN Women (2023) as the killing of women and girls because of their gender, provide a broader framework for understanding gender-based lethal violence that can manifest in ritualistic contexts. Owusu (2022) contends that child sacrifice are linked to beliefs in witchcraft or Juju practices. But the underlying motivations to his argument may carry gendered dimensions related to purity, sacrifice and perceived magical potency which he did not bring out clearly.

Theories on hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), suggest how dominant societal constructions of masculinity can link violence to expressions of power, control, and social status. The majority of documented cases and research across various forms of violent crime, including ritual killings, point to a higher prevalence of male perpetrators (Owusu, 2022) and often identify young adult males as the primary offenders. However, Agazue (2023) elaborates in his report on; *Female Perpetrators of Ritually Motivated pedicide and Mutilation*, challenges the singular focus on male perpetrators. This is also

supported by the femicide theory of Russell (2012). These arguments highlight the need to understand the complex roles women play, sometimes acting independently or in complicity with men, driven by diverse motivations including belief systems, coercion, or perceived benefits with regards to gendered ritual murders.

Agbo & Choji, (2014)) argue that patriarchal social structures, characterized by male dominance and female subordination, create an environment where gender-based violence, including ritualistic forms, can be normalized or even sanctioned by cultural or religious interpretations. Harmful traditional practices, rooted in unequal gender roles and beliefs, can contribute to the vulnerability of certain groups to ritual violence, (Baumeister et al., 1996) especially masculinity as performance, particularly in contexts where male identity is tied to dominance and aggression, can manifest in the ritualistic assertion of power through violence. Furthermore, Crenshaw (1989) recognizes how gender intersects with other social categories like race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality to shape vulnerability and perpetration in ritual violence. Critiques underlying gendered beliefs and ideologies that inform ritual practices, contribute to the justification or rationalization of violence against specific genders.

Some critical analyses of religious texts and interpretations (Mendez, 2025; Bdeho, 2023) suggest how they have historically been used to reinforce gender hierarchies, potentially contributing to environments where violence against women is normalized or even divinely sanctioned within certain belief systems. The misinterpretation or selective application of religious or spiritual beliefs can

be used to justify violence against women in ritualistic contexts, often drawing on notions of female impurity, temptation, or subservience.

Basing on some scholars like McCrary (2014), ritual murders were prevalent and on the rise due to culture and traditions. Following this line of argument, Rowlands (1993) asserted that; the rigorous exercise of ritual power to close and protect boundaries (bodily, physical and spatial) was also emphasized in the report that other rulers as far as Dahomey begged ritual objects and medicine from Benin. For this reason, the male gender mostly falls victim for ritual murders as they are perceived to be stronger naturally than the female gender. When considering Byansi et al (2014) report; “Responses to Child Sacrifice in Uganda”, he identifies that the most structural motivations for the practice include: poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and lack of regulatory framework for traditional healers, inadequate mechanisms for child protection at the community and family level, and the socio-cultural beliefs and practices. This is grounded in the belief that children of either sex (male or female) are considered to be pure to bring about the needed results.

Owusu (2024) argued that the major contributing factors to the practice included; obsession to Juju (black magic/occultism) and unrestrained quest for luxurious effect. Babies and teenagers; both boys and girls are the most victims because the society views them as innocent, pure and with the growing capercity to make things move. In addition, Leeson (2014) confirms that innocent persons are ritually murdered on religious grounds to appease the gods. To explain further, advancing witchcraft in wealth, power and business had ignited the phenomenon. Witch doctors (juju men) from the West African countries were behind the

happenings of ritual murders, incidents of child kidnapping and beheading. Many innocent people lost their lives at the expense of those who pursued wealth and power (Smith, 2001). These witchdoctors in the category of diviners, soothsayers, sorcerers, a cult, capos and traditional healers believed that objects such as eggs, cowries, garments, leaves or plants, animals or human blood, and body parts could be used to manipulate events (Owusu, 2022). In addition, Ornulf (2002) asserted that although the intensity and public character of what was going on in various parts of Africa apparently resembled the witch-hunting that took place during the colonial era.

In addition, the Legal Aid Board (LAD, 2010) puts forward that ritual murders are directly linked to the rising levels of development and prosperity, and the increasing belief that witchcraft can help people to quickly become rich. In the contemporary world, witchcraft and sorcery are looked at as a remedy to challenges, and the state and politics seem to be the bleeding grounds for its modern transformation (Ornulf, 2002). To elaborate further, this is supported by the Rational Human Sacrifice Theory (Leeso, 2014) which argues that, people who engage in human sacrifice understand the benefits. However, placing the matter on the ground, these scholars categorically looked at ritual murders with close attention to black magic without a gender dimension attachment to the subject. Further, the studies were done in different geographical settings in Africa and outside Africa. However, the situation in Uganda (Greater Mukono) is not the same as the situation in those countries. Even the context in which the problem was explored, was not the same. Whereas scholars differently took on different dimensions such as cultural approach, in-depth analysis of literature, legislative lens, socio-cultural and religious line, this study took on a qualitative approach

grounded in a phenomenological design, with purposive sampling and in-depth interviews inclined to genderization of ritual murders.

2.3 The impact of gender-related ritual murders

As pain is individually measured and felt, one could not generally tell how families of the victims for ritual murders feel and what the community loses. But this can be felt through public outcries by either the community actions such as we are badly off (*ttulibubi*), destroying property of the ritual murder offender and so on, through media or through Literature. On this note, in India and Pakistan, many women especially those in early twenties have lost lives through predetermined ritual murders. These women are viewed in terms of honour and for this reason, they are the targets and victims of ritual murders for social redemption and honour. This has put women at risk and psychologically traumatized as they continually become the targets for ritual murders, (Lima, 2020; Srishti, 2021). Thus, the need for the study of ritual murders with a gender aspect in the administrative units of Buikwe south, Kyampiisi, Nagalama, Nikifuma and Busaana of Greater Mukono in the Uganda context.

In addition, D.J. Smith (2001) portrayed that child kidnapping and beheading continued to occur in quest for 'fast wealth' in Southeastern Nigeria. This had resulted into innocent civilians losing their lives prematurely, uncontrollable riots and mob justice, among others. In the same vein, Smith argues that young elites had achieved their wealth through satanic rituals, which have negatively impacted on both gender regardless of age. Consequently, the community is robbed of important human resources and left with many orphans. Furthermore, Aghawenu (2020) and Schlesinger et al (2010) asserted that ritual murders are common in

any form and women most especially girls fall victims. This has left the female gender in trauma with limited movements and their contribution to society through entrepreneurship.

Further, Leeson (2014) identifies that the practice of human sacrifice in the United States of America is an effective vehicle for destroying wealth. Additionally, Leeson (2014) contends that far and near, human beings whether men/women or boys/girls are a great wealth or resource for a given community. According to Russell (2012), the influencing factors are the cultural beliefs rooted in patriarchal systems leading to many females losing their lives.

2.4 Conclusion

Conclusively, given the literature above, reports showed that these ritual murders were being practiced before the coming of Jesus Christ (Schultz, 2010). It is clear that the understanding of ritual murders varied from society to society. This is because in the scholarly work, authors expressed different lines of arguments in investigating about ritual murders that is; anthropological, legislative, religious or cultural dimension. Therefore, it becomes binding to examine the community perceptions about gendered ritual murders in selected communities of greater Mukono. The reviewed literatures indicate that causes of ritual murders include religious, witchcraft in wealth, power and business. This left out the salient motivations for targeting either girls/women or boys/men which is practiced in some communities in greater Mukono.

The literature also pointed out that the impact of ritual murders as increased predetermined loss of lives, riots and mob justice affecting innocent civilians, and women/girls as well as men/boys. This literature majority bothered itself with

general causes and impact of ritual murders in specific study areas which is not greater Mukono. Even the trend is totally different that is; in greater Mukono, a ritual-murder prey can be got via telephoning. The moment one answers that unknown phone-call, her/his is captured and instantly the person dies (*affudde kibwattukira*). As others think of the physical extraction of the body parts, some have advanced to direct spiritual attack. Hence, creating the gap for the researcher to investigate community perceptions about ritual murders following a gender dimension in the selected communities in greater Mukono.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section discussed the research approach, design and methods that were used during the study. It further includes the study area, study population, sample size, data analysis and presentation, validity and reliability, limitations and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach and Design

3.1.1 Qualitative Research Approach

The study employed qualitative research approach which is described by StatPearl (2022), as a research approach that gathers participants' experiences,

perceptions and behaviour. In addition, Scribbr (2020) argues that qualitative approach is that approach that involves collecting non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, and experiences. Therefore the approach seeks to provide deeper insights into the real-world problems or events.

In this study, the researcher used the qualitative approach because of its ability to: provide rich data, uncover patterns and trends, provide deep insight into human behaviour and complex issues, provide detailed descriptions of how and why people experience certain phenomena, allow flexibility in data collection, uncovers new problems and opportunities because of the use of open-ended questions, (Hollstein, 2011). Thus, this approach was ideal in studying and understanding human behaviours such as gendered ritual murders and perceptions about ritual murders in the selected areas in greater Mukono.

3.1.2 Phenomenological Design

According to Bhandari (2023), the Phenomenological design is that research design which entails a researcher to investigate an event by describing and interpreting participants' perceptions, feelings, or lived experiences. Experiences include perceptions, feelings, memories, imaginations, thoughts, and emotions (Deakin, 2024). The design seeks to investigate these experiences from the individuals' perspective (Branna, 2022).

In this study, the researcher employed a phenomenological design because of its strengths such as: it sets aside bias and preconceived assumptions, describes how human beings make sense of their world or event, provides in-depth and detailed data, flexible in data collection, minimises chances of missing information, uncovers complex subjective dimensions and it is a powerful way of

understanding the subjective experiences and to gain insight around people's actions and motivations (Mwita, 2022; Rodriguez and Smith, 2018). In addition, the design makes it easy to identify themes during analysis which makes it possible to make generalization in relation to how a particular event is perceived or experienced. Therefore, the phenomenological design enabled the researcher to describe and interpret the community's perceptions about gendered ritual murders.

The Philosophy that underpins the methodology above

The overhead paradigm that influenced the entire research process is an interpretive philosophy. The paradigm assumes the participants as the expert and the researchers as subordinates (Boswell & Babchuk, 2022). Further, it assumes an in-depth understanding of the problem under investigation that is gendered ritual murders; interpreting multiple subjective meanings that participants give; allows a phenomenological analysis which the researcher employed as a design based on participants' point of view. While following this philosophy, the researcher's role was to interpret and reflect on the participants' knowledge, value, feelings, thoughts and perceptions about the topic under study. Additionally, the researcher had to reflect on own opinions so as to avoid biases that might have influenced the study findings.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in the greater Mukono area specifically; in Buikwe South (*constituency*), Nagalama (*palish*), Nakifuma (*town council*), Kyampiisi (*village*) and Busana (*town council*). Greater Mukono is bordered with Kamuli district in the North-East, Jinja in the East, and Mayuge in South-East. In the

North-West, it is boarded by Luweero, Wakiso in the West, Kampala in the South-West, and in the South, it is boarded by Lake Victoria. These communities' main activities include fishing on top of agriculture and business. Majority of the men both youth and adults depend on the lake for livelihood. Others engage in commercial farming that includes growing of vanilla, coffee, sugar canes and other foods like tomatoes, potatoes and cassava for sale. Some provide manual labour in the many industries set up in greater Mukono and among others.

The researcher picked on these administrative units in Greater Mukono because of the frequent reports in the media. For example, a nine-year old girl was found ritually murdered in Njeru. Also in June 2021, it was reported that a body of a twenty-year old bodaboda cyclist and a fifty-year old man, all of Kitutu village of Ngogwe sub county in Buikwe South were found dead with missing parts of their bodies (Edema and Jjinga, 2021). In Mukono, Namaliiri trading Centre; a three-year old child went missing after leaving Skylack Junior School whose body was later found when the neck had been slit, the tongue, breasts and the private parts cut off (Muzaale 2023). These were just a few of the many reports in Newspapers like Monitor and Bukedde.

3.3 Study Population

According to Babbie (2010), a study population is a group of individuals or subjects that are selected to answer a research question. It is the subset of the target population from which the sample is actually selected. The study population included the following categories of people: families of the victims: cultural and religious leaders, local council leaders, and traditional healers, law enforcement personnel (police and prison), and non-government organizations

(NGOs) for example, Kyampiisi Child care Ministry, LOHAM Child Ministry and Makonge International Needs and teachers. The study population also included shrine operators (the owners of masaabo) commonly known as ‘abasamizze’ or witch doctors/traditional healers (*abasaawo abaganda*) where ritual murders are suspected to be done.

3.4 Sampling Methods & Procedure

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of the population to study and draw conclusions about the entire population (Saumya V., et al, 2019). In qualitative research, sampling helps to select participants who could offer rich relevant information (SAGO, 2023). The researcher used purposive sampling method because of the following justifications: it focuses on specific characteristics, enhances data quality, efficiency and practicality, captures a diverse range of perspectives and experiences relevant to the research questions, among others (Nikolopoulou, 2023; SAGO, 2023; Subedi, 2021). Purposive sampling was employed to categories of participants like NGOs such as Kyampiisi Child care Ministries (KCM), LOHAM Child Ministry, and Makonge International Needs (in). However, for the researcher to locate traditional healers, religious/cultural leaders and families of the victims of ritual murders, she used snowball technics Nikolopoulou (2022). In this way, the researcher identified the initial participants who helped to refer her to those with credible data (SAGO, 2021).

3.5 Sample Size

According to Meyer LS., et al (2024), sample size refers to the number of participants or cases selected for the study with the focus of gathering in-depth insight into the phenomenon.

Table 1: Sample size

Category of Informants	Number
Family members of the victim	10
Religious leaders	05
Law enforcement personnel	04
Local council one authority	03
NGOs responsible persons	03
Traditional healers/doctors	02
Teachers	03
Total	30

The researcher selected 30 participants as demonstrated in the above table. This number is supported by Mocanasu (2020) as a recommended number is appropriate for qualitative studies . In addition, DePaulo's (2021) confirms that 30 as a sample size is the optimal number in qualitative research, as it provides increased confidence. The researcher reached saturation point in the sense that; the data collected was able to capture the diversity and the depth of gendered ritual murders in greater Mukono, (Hennink, 2022; ScienceDirect.com; B Saunders, 2017).

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

3.6.1 Data Collection Method

The methods for data collection included:

In-depth interviews

For all the categories except local council authorities, in-depth interviews were conducted that is; family members of the victim, religious leaders, law enforcement personnel, NGOs, traditional healers/doctors and the teachers. Interviews were semi-structured in that, the researcher engaged participants on a one-to-one setting. This was because it allowed flexibility to ask open-ended

questions based on participant's responses. During these interviews, the researcher was the note-taker herself using note book. She used pseudo names to hide the identity of the participants. This was because she could not employ a note taker due to financial hardships. Note-taking was supplemented by voice recordings using the phone at the expense of video coverage, which the participants requested not to be conducted for safety of their identities.

Key Informant Interviews

Additionally, the researcher also employed key informant interviews as a method for data collection. This was used on participants during testing the the instruments and on the local council authorities.

3.6.2 Research Instruments

A research instrument is a tool used to collect, measure, and analyse data Belotto et al (2018). The researcher employed an in-depth interview tool as described below:

In-depth interview guide

The researcher used this instrument to collect data from parents of the victim and guardians who were thought to have credible information. This guide was also employed on , religious leaders, law enforcement personnels, NGOs, traditional healers/witch doctors and the teachers.

Key Informant Interview Guide

Further, the key informant instrument was employed on key participants during testing the instrument and to collect data from the local council authorities. These interview guides helped to avoid the interviewer's biasness, and therefore made the process more structured (Hulatt & Freitas, 2024). This made it easy for

researcher to have a systematic way of asking the questions, and also probing the interviewees in a logical manner. Hence have variety of information to pick valid data and make reliable inferences. For the sake of participants who could not understand English, the researcher used translated questions in luganda; to allow quick understanding and expression.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

Belotto et al (2018) explains data analysis as a process to distil data into a narrative and then interpret it to extract insights. Data was analysed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis refers to a step-by-step data analysis in which the researcher examines each interviewee's opinions, perceptions, feelings and experiences in order to come up with credible findings (Braun and Clark, 2006). Through this step-by-step data analysis, the researcher got familiarized with the interview-field notes and the recordings. This was done through reading and rereading the notes, and listening and relistening to the recordings to deeply comprehend the data content. This helped to identify and highlight statements which carried similar meanings, and attached codes to generate themes that brought together codes of the same meaning.

Progressively, the researcher reviewed the identified themes, patterns and concepts to find out whether, they were supported by the data collected and in line with the research questions. During the process, some themes were emerged, others remained and some were left out. This was followed by renaming of the emerged themes, and giving them more descriptive names compared to the previous ones. For, example, perceptions on ritual murders by sex, on body parts, on virginity, and so forth under objective one. Cultural factors, economic factors,

individual factors and so on under objective two. Impact of ritual murder on families of the victims, on the females, and on the local community under objective three.

Finally, The researcher had to make sense of what was noted down about each element under discussion; documented what was transcribed, interpreted and analysed to come up with the final report. However, this was done with a careful reflection on own opinions so as not to influence the study findings. Data was presented following the three specific objectives which formed the three broad themes under chapter four.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of Data

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure and validity refers to the accuracy of a measure (Middleton, 2025). According to Rodon (2008), validity refers to the truthfulness and authenticity of the findings as they reflect the lived experiences, perspectives and meaning participants share. In this case, the researcher first tested the instruments before interviewing participants. The testing was done by conducting some interviews with a few individuals who voluntarily provided answers to the research questions. This helped in reformulation of some questions in order to ensure validity and reliability.

In addition, participants' views, feelings, experiences and perceptions obtained during data collection were accurately interpreted to ensure credibility. In this sense, credibility means trustworthiness of the findings (Sirwon, 2024). This data was got from a one-to-one engagement of hour with each participant. Then a careful reflection and transcription was done to ensure the believability of the findings. The continued reviewing of the data, improved the quality of the

research work; making it transferable and dependable. Hence, it allows the applicability of knowledge to another area of study; thereby, informing other real-world due to its new insights it offers.

3.9 Limitations and delimitations

The study was very expensive in terms of locating and reaching the informants in order to collect data. However, the researcher managed this financial problem by soliciting for a loan that catered for all the expenses during the course of study. Secondly, participants expected money plus other incentives from the researcher. She managed the situation by sticking to the reason of being a student who also needed support to complete the course. Thirdly, the researcher encountered a challenge with majority of police officials who claimed to have stayed in office for one to two months. These hesitated to look into police records so as to provide genuine information. However, I insisted by requesting them to support me as a student to complete the study. On this note, they could request me to give them one to two hours waiting outside office; after which we could resume our interview. Some gave me other days to go back and I abided by their commands.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

According to Schwab (2022) and Ssagala (2019), ethical considerations refer to codes of conduct regarding appropriate research behaviour. The researcher took care of this, by doing the following: obtained an introductory letter from Kyambogo University (Religious Studies and Philosophy department), that permitted to conduct research in greater Mukono and proceeded to get an acceptance letter from the local government. Informed consent forms were given, signed and obtained from all the participants. These ensured that each participant

was fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The researcher took the initiative to explain clearly each specific objective and the purpose of the study to participants. This helped them to develop confidence that the study was purely academic.

Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was taken care of. Pseudo names were used to protect the participants' identities that is, family A to F, WTH, W, X, Y, Z, OCM, among others. This made all the data to be anonymized and securely stored in the researcher's notebooks. The interviews were conducted privately in safer places such as; around the shrine alter, under isolated trees in compounds and in offices without interference from other people. The researcher fostered a supportive environment by encouraging honest and open responses, maintained integrity of the research process and therefore, the credibility of the findings.

The researcher used her personal note book to store the data collected, and the recordings by the telephone were protected with a password so that no one could have access to the information collected except the researcher. The researcher did not employ video-recording as suggested earlier, because participants requested not to capture them on a video; that is why voice recordings became convenient. All these were done for matters of confidentiality and safety.

After the entire process, the needed hard copies of the data collected were safely kept and those that were not needed any longer, were burnt. This helps to avoid any other person to have access to the data as got from the field. Hence, increased confidentiality even after the research exercise; whereby even the work on the laptop had a separate password known to the researcher alone.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Gender-Related Perceptions About Ritual Murders

4.1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents findings about the gender-related perceptions about ritual murders in the selected communities of greater Mukono, the factors responsible for the gender-related ritual murders and the impact of gendered ritual murders on the communities where these gender-related ritual murders occur.

Table 2 Back ground characteristics of participants

The study employed 30 participants from seven categories. The researcher was interested in the following demographics to be able to assess the degree and point of view at which each participant rationalized the issue under discussion.

Table 2 a

	category of participants	Male	female	total
1	Family members of victims	3	7	10
2	Religious and cultural leaders	05	00	05
3	Law enforcement personnel	04	00	04
4	Local council authorities	01	02	03
5	NGOs representatives	03	00	03
6	Traditional healers	01	01	02
7	Teachers	01	02	03
	Total	18	12	30

Basing on the illustration above, it was found out that out of the 30 participants, 18 were males which made 60% and 12 were females making 40%. It was found out that females rarely take on administrative posts of being religious leaders or

cultural leaders in the communities where the study was carried. In the same vain, no female was either found head of crime investigating unit in police or an NGO responsible person within the three NGOs the researcher identified during the study. This was may be because they lacked qualifications to take on such responsibilities or because of their vulnerability in nature. However, it was found out that both men and women could serve as traditional healers within the selected communities of the study.

Table 3:Religion of Participants

Table 2 b

1	Roman Catholic	14
2	Anglican (C/U)	07
3	Pentecostal/Born Again	05
3	ATR	02
5	Islam	02
TOTAL		30

From the table above, the results indicated that most of the participants were Catholics and Members of Church of Uganda (Angelicans). This was because the study area was predominantly occupied by catholics and Angelicans (Church of Uganda) compared to other religions. Out of 30 participants, 14 were Catholics (46.6%), Angelicans were 7 out of 30 which made 23.3%. For the Pentecostal/ Born Again, they were 5 participants (16.6%). The two last religions in the table had two participants that is African Traditional Religion had 2 (6.6%) and Islam also had 2 (6.6%).

Table 4: Age Range of Respondents

Table 2 c

Age range	Number
20-40 years	03
40-60 years	26
60 years & above	01
Total	30

Furthermore, the information about gendered ritual murders was well known by all the categories of the participants; both the elite and the unelite in greater Mukono. In addition, most of the participants were in the age-range of 40-60; that is 26 out of 30 which made 86.6%. This age group plus the others, contributed more on the validity and reliability of data. These people were believed to possess wisdom and a lot of valid and reliable information on the happenings within the local community. The findings on age-range illustrate further that few people live above sixty years.

Table 5: Education level of Respondents

Table 2 d

Primary school level	05
Secondary	12
Tertiary	13
Total	30

About the level of education, 5 out of the 30 (16.6) were primary seven dropouts and 12 participants (40%) were O'Level dropouts compared to those who reached tertiary who were 13 out of 30 (43.3%). The study revealed that all family members of the victim did not exceed secondary level (O'Level). In the same

vain, some Local Council ones and traditional healers were O’Level dropouts. This portrayed a poor mindset towards Education in the localities where the study was carried out. It further unveiled the reason as to why gendered ritual murders were prevalent in the region of greater Mukono.

4.1.1 Perceptions on the Prevalence of Ritual Murders by sex

The study findings revealed that, physical attributes were a key in understanding the prevalence of gender-related ritual murders. Community people in the selected areas of study in greater Mukono most especially the local authorities understand gender-related ritual murders with inclination to Physical attributes. These involved torture and killing of victims (girls/boys, women/men) for ritual purposes due to their sex and gender, with physical attacks targeting specific body parts (head, private parts, tongue, breasts, eyes, brain, or blood) based on victim's gender and sex, and extraction of required body parts or tissues, often resulting in victim's death. In addition, the perpetrators believe that the victim’s pain during the process of extracting the needed body parts enhances the ritual medicine’s effectiveness (Religious Leader, 30 / 01/ 2024).

Evidence from one of the key informants (NGOs category, 01/2024) indicated that, gendered ritual murders were widely spread in greater Mukono. And that, the victims of ritual murders in Mukono lost lives due to their sex and gender. In support, out of the thirty-seven ritual murders cases identified during the study; twenty-three of them were female while fourteen of the victims were males as reflected in Table 3 below;

Table 6: No. of victims of ritual murders by sex from 2019-2024

Females	Number
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Women	04
Teenagers	05
Infants	14
Totals	23
Males	Number
Men	06
Teenagers	00
Infants	08
Total	14
Grand Total	37

Source: Police Reports (2022 - 2024)

Table 7: Annual Ritual Murder Cases from 2019 to 2024 in Greater Mukono area

YEAR	Females			Males			TOTAL
	Women	Teenager	Infants	Men	Teenager	Infants	
2024	01	01	01	00	00	02	05
2023	00	02	01	00	00	00	03
2022	01	00	00	00	00	00	01
2021	00	01	01	02	00	01	05
2020	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
2019	02	01	11	04	00	05	23
TOTAL	04	05	14	06	00	08	37

Source: Police Report (2022-2024)

The researcher augmented the dataset to provide a 5-year statistical trend (2019-2024), disaggregated by gender, utilizing data from police and family members of the victims. This analysis aimed to determine the gender-specific prevalence of ritual murder victims over the specified period, with a focus on recent years (2019-2024). Study findings indicate that, over the 5-year period (2019-2024),

females were the most affected victims of ritual murders, accounting for 23 out of 37 victims (62%), compared to 14 males out of 37 (38%). The annual breakdown reveals varying numbers of cases, with no cases reported in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. In subsequent years, females consistently comprised the majority of victims, with infant females and girls being particularly vulnerable. While males, particularly infant boys, were also affected, the findings indicate that females were the greatly targeted victims.

A participant at Kyampisi Childcare Ministries stated:

In the past, boys were more affected by ritual murders. This was on the ground that people were much interested in having power politically and economically.

Therefore, from above narratives, it can be noted that the boys' body parts were believed to be used together with charms to respond to the needs of power and wealth. However, data from 2021 after COVID-19 and later revealed a shift, with girls becoming the primary victims. This was attributed to the demands of the spirit Kifaalu, which required the breasts and blood of young, virgin girls as pointed out by WTH (12/2023).

The study found that the prevalence of gendered ritual murders varied by season, with peaks towards Independence, Christmas, Easter, and the New Year. Female victims were often targeted compared to the male victims during these periods, driven by desires for socioeconomic, cultural, religious, or political success. In the same vain, female victims, particularly infants and teenagers, were also commonly targeted outside of these periods, due to the demands of Kifaalu (Religious leaders, 2023).

About the places where ritual murders often happened, one of the local council key informant asserted that ritual murders occurred in secluded areas, varying by victim and gender. Male victims often ambushed while alone, were killed in isolated locations such as shrubs, railway lines, and gardens. In contrast, female victims were targeted near shrines, markets, rental houses, lodges, and disco halls, frequently using allurement techniques (Police Security Alerts, 2024; Local council N, 2023).

According to one Religious leader (RL, 01/2024), female victims were often lured by false promises of love, money, and protection, exploiting their perceived vulnerability. Some women became victims after visiting shrine operators, who utilized these interactions to orchestrate ritualistic murders. The study revealed that female victims were more likely to be targeted in areas with high social activity, whereas male victims were targeted in isolated areas, requiring more planning and skill from the perpetrators. These findings reflect the perpetrators' strategic use of context and manipulation to facilitate ritual murders, either within the shrine, around the shrine or far from the shrine courtyard (*embuga*).

Additionally, there was an attachment of shrine presence to ritual murders in greater Mukono. Local traditional healers/doctors, "*abasamize*," were often linked to these crimes. Despite distancing themselves from witchcraft, their practices were intertwined with spiritism (Woman traditional healer, 2023). In addition, Bulikasa (2024) gave a recent example, such as the "*Omusamize*" case of ritually murdering a teenager girl for her tongue, blood and genitals in Njeru, illustrated this connection. During investigation, the community together with the police found the body of a teenager girl in a sitting-position leaning against

a big tree within the ‘*embuga*’, (Bulikasa E, 2024, Feb 21st). The study also revealed that areas like Buikwe town council and Njeru were associated with young female victims, often lured by male ritual murderers as they become so close to them in husband and wife relationships.

From family of victims in areas like Salye and Kikoko, male victims predominated. These were often ambushed along their way-back in the night hours or betrayed by acquaintances.

The study found that individuals exploited their position to serve as agents to facilitate ritual murders. For instance, one of the sugar-mummy in Nambeta village in Buikwe south, used her position as a wife and lover to aid in a victim's ritual murder, (Head teacher, 2024). The study also revealed that ritual murders often involved individuals with direct power over the victims.

4.1.2 Perceptions on Ritual Murder Perpetrators

A chain of participants in gendered ritual murders was traced including; ritual specialists, parents/guardians, spies, business people and transporters. According to the local council authorities (Local Council. N, 2023), ritual murder perpetrators included both men and women, although men were more likely to be involved. Male ritual specialists mostly operated as witchdoctors/traditional healers in shrines, trusted by the public for cultural, religious, economic, and political guidance. These male shrine operators worked with male agents to identify and kill victims. According to the religious category and the woman traditional healer (2023), female ritual specialists although fewer, also used male agents to hunt and kill victims, regardless of gender. A notable example is the woman operator of a shrine in Lubanyi who sent male agents to ritually murder

Asker. But men were predominantly at the forefront of perpetrating ritual murders, whether directly or through agents. This was attributed to men inheriting clan ancestral spirits and shrines, as well as their brevity in attacking and killing victims (woman traditional healer, 2023).

4.1.3 Perceptions on Targeted Body Parts

According to participants (2023-2024), ritual murders were highly gendered, with offenders targeting specific body parts. For male victims, blood, brain, genitalia, and tongue were extracted. The brain was particularly valued for its perceived potency in traditional healing and medicine, reflecting societal constructs of male superiority and intelligence. These targeted body parts remained consistent regardless of the victim's age. For example, an adult male victim in Buikwe town council had the same body parts harvested as young male victims. Notably, brains were exclusively extracted from male victims, reinforcing cultural beliefs of male superiority.

Similarly, cultural leaders revealed that wisdom was believed to be exclusive to males, making them targets for ritual murders, particularly for their brains. This belief drove individuals seeking success in business, academics, and other areas to engage in ritual murders. For female victims, perpetrators targeted body parts defining femininity, such as breasts, blood, tongues, and throats. Traditional healers revealed that breasts from teenage girls were highly valued, hence leading to their vulnerability.

The study found that extracted body parts served specific purposes. For example, male genitalia were used to create traditional tubes for burning and blowing

medicinal charms, symbolizing male power and superiority. The male eyes were perceived as instruments for sight in the spiritual world especially during the time of *okulaggula* (spiritual-mirroring) and watching over property, business, family, clan, as well as community. Whereas, female blood has spiritual significance of being food for *Kifaalu spirit* (blood-eating/drinking spirit), sealing covenants, and sustaining other people's lives on a belief that, "life is in blood" and most especially the human blood. The breasts are perceived as instruments of beauty, growth and development. The victims' tongues and throats were extracted to disable communication with the spirit world or to manipulate voice instruments for divination purposes. All these perceptions subjected the female gender to be more vulnerable to gendered ritual murders than males. However, a systematic selection process by the perpetrators was observed, considering both age and gender.

4.1.4 Perceptions on Birth Order in relation to Ritual Murders

The study revealed a significant relationship between birth order and ritual murders. First-borns and last-borns were targets for ritual murders; extracting their brains, private parts and blood, regardless of age or gender, (RL, 17/12/2023). For cases of first bornes having been ritually murdered, were reported in villages of Buikwe south. In greater Mukono, first-born males are perceived as special, with spiritual significance and responsibilities, as also noted by Kabazzi (2020). First-borns, particularly males, are often associated with desirable qualities like leadership, wisdom, and intelligence. Equally, last bornes are believed to possess blessings which act as remedies to long-held challeges of a given family. This perception is also supported by Kagitcibasi (2017), in his assertion that birth order can have a significant impact on an individual's

personality, behavior, and life outcomes, with first-borns often exhibiting more responsible and achievement-oriented traits. This perceived significance made them ideal targets for ritual murders.

4.1.5 Perceptions on Virginity and Ritual Murders

The study revealed that both boys and girls were victims of ritual murders, with young female virgins mostly targeted and the perception was that; perpetrators viewed virgins as pure and innocent, making them ideal victims. For example, nine virgins were ritually murdered in places of Buikwe village, Kasoga-Tegga, and Kikooli; all in Buikwe south (Religious leader 17/12/2023; Woman traditional healer 30/12/2023; Family B 01/12/2023). This perception was also noted by Lyncaster (2014), who stated that young children, particularly those who had not yet reached puberty, were the most vulnerable to ritual murders.

4.1.6 Perceptions on Blemish and Ritual Murders

The term "*blemish*" referred to physical defects disqualifying victims from ritual murder. Both men and women were targets, but only those without defects were considered. Individuals with pierced ears, scars, or tattoos were rejected as ritually worthless. For example, a four-year-old girl escaped ritual murder due to a protruded scar on her chest (Teacher Feb, 2024). Those with defects were deemed impure and unacceptable sacrifices, were believed to have shade and lost blood either intentionally or unintentionally on evil grounds. In understanding blemish, the local people adopted self-defense mechanisms like ear/nose piercing, body tattooing, and circumcision. However, circumcision proved ineffective, as seen in the case of a circumcised male Muslim victim who suffered

ritual murder, with his penis, eyes, tongue, and a broken jawbone extracted. This was in line with Doortmont (2012) findings in Ghana.

4.1.7 Perceptions on the Location of Gendered Ritual Murders

Ritual murder scenes in Mukono, Uganda, exhibited distinct signs that differed between male and female victims. This study identified two common signs, '*enswagiro*' and '*ensitaano*', which characterized the immediate surroundings of the crime scene. '*Enswagiro*' referred to the newest signs of pathways created by perpetrators in bush-like areas, intended for ambushing identified victims. In contrast, '*ensitaano*' signified signs of serious struggles during attacks, characterized by slippery foot-marks and broken grasses and bushes. The study findings revealed that adult male victims exhibited more '*ensitaano*' signs, indicating a strong defense against their attackers. Examples included three cases of adult male victims and four cases of grown up females (Family members of the victims, 2023).

The study further revealed that perpetrators, mostly men, selected locations where victims' cries and screams could not be heard. They operated during times when people were distracted, such as market days, disco times, or night hours when individuals walked alone (Key informant LC1, 2023). This highlighted the importance of considering the role of gender in ritual murders. The findings of this study also support the notion that men are more likely to be perpetrators of ritual murders, while women are more likely to be involved in planning and luring victims, (Teacher, 01/2024; NGOs informant, 30/01/2024).

Additionally, the study found that gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area were unpredictable and occurred in various settings, including

homes, markets, and workplaces; depending on the social net-working procedures. Perpetrators employed trickery and allurements, using fancy things to lure victims, particularly females. This was in line with D.J. Smith (2001) who found out that women/young girls were tricked using money and ended up being ritually murdered; hence highlighting the use of seduction and deception. The study also revealed that males including adults, were also victims of ritual murders. In this case, physical attacks and money deals were used to lure male victims, who were then murdered for their body parts, such as heads, tongues, blood, eyes, and private parts. For example, the 2021 incident in Kituntu village, where two men were ritually murdered, illustrates this trend.

Gendered ritual murder is an action and practice of human slaughter for body tissue or parts on the ground that they are either female or male. This practice involves not only one individual, but a group of able-bodied persons most especially males of above 18 years of age. This is properly explained by the germicide theory (Russell, 2012) which confirms the predominance of men killing women because they are mere women as predetermined by the patriarchal systems embodied in culture. On the other hand the theory also considers women who collaborate with men to kill other women. This was evident during data collection, when the participants revealed who participated in ritually murdering fellow females and males. The move and collaborations between male and female perpetrators support Papachristos' (2009) net-work approach in analysing gang murder.

Therefore, argument here is that gendered ritual murder perpetrators do not operate in isolation or on individual basis. In other words, there is coordination

and collaboration among these ritual murderers who include shrine operators (*Abasamizze*), spies, ritual specialists, transporters, business people, fathers, stepfathers, uncles, neighbours, politicians plus other kinds of religious groups. This indicated that the practice is not a one man's/woman's activity, but involves a chain of individuals in the practice that is; *who prescribe the prey for ritual, who spies over, who kills whom, when, where, why and who benefits*, for which the study sought to address in terms of gender. The constructions in the social setting of these ritual murderers clearly, define each other's role in the group as they continue to net-work for the desired motive. For example, a group of five men and one woman were arrested in Namaliri, a place in Mukono district for ritually murdering a nursery child. The five men in action, strongly communicates the male dominance and power imposition in the ritual murder practice stressed by the femicide theory (Russell, 2012).

4.2 Factors Responsible for Gendered Ritual Murders in Greater Mukono Area

4.2.0 Introduction

In this section the researcher presents factors responsible for gendered ritual murders which include: cultural factors, economic factors, individual factors, and other factors which triggered gendered ritual murders in greater Mukono.

4.2.1 Cultural Factors

Female body parts good for cultural preservations

Culturally, many practices including gendered ritual murders are performed within the areas where the study was carried out in the interest of preserving culture. One of the law enforcement personnel (04/01/ 2024) in Ggoli village explained that females were targeted for their breasts as demanded by some spirits

to continue working as expected by the shrine operators in terms of preserving boundaries and preventing calamities. In addition, traditional worship required sacrifices, including female human beings, to appease hosted spirits and ensure protection, blessings, and spiritual guidance throughout individual lives. Further, these breasts, possessed healing properties and problem-solving abilities (Traditional healer, 2023 in an In-depth interviews). These ritual murders due to cultural beliefs emphasize the importance of traditional worship (*obussamizze*) in greater Mukono. In addition, one teacher (2024) revealed that for every after two or three homes in Ssi sub-county of Buikwe south, there is a shrine (*essabo*) culturally set up to emphasize power, healing and preservation of culture. The worship in these places involve the adherence to ancestral spirits at family, clan, and regional levels, key informant (11/2023) in Buikwe TC.

The blood of virgin girls is good for sealing covenants

Additionally, the blood of virgin girls was believed to be particularly potent for sealing covenants, leading to the targeting of infant females. The ideological thinking surrounding blood and virginity was rooted in the belief that life was in blood, and that virgin blood was the most potent (Woman traditional healer, 2023). This led to the increased targeting of infant girls, with 14 cases reported in the study area (Key informants, 2023-2024). This ideological thinking supports some of the recent studies such as (Tumwine, 2020 and Kagwa, 2022); which highlighted the importance of addressing the cultural and ideological roots of ritual murders in Uganda.

Female brains good for positive thinking

Another cultural factor was that female brains are good for Positive thinking. This was inform of females possessing a quality of optimism, characterized by a forward-

looking attitude and a desire for positive outcomes. This made ritual murderers target their brain so as to be used in charms mainly to boost businesses. Key informant (17/12/2023) explained:

Even though women and girls are considered weak and inferior generally, they have unique attributes that God gave them. They are focused in thinking, not easily diverted, and they are result oriented despite the challenges encountered. All these make them very good remedies when it comes to cultural beliefs.

This trait, coupled with their perceived perseverance, made them targets for ritual murders, as their body parts such as brain, eyes, tongue and the throat were believed to enhance the efficacy of charms in manipulating situations to produce desired results. Thereby, reinforcing the notion that positive thinking and hope for a better future rendered women and girls vulnerable to ritualistic murders.

Female body parts prevent curses

Similarly, female body parts of the first-borne girls were perceived as remedies for curses. This was pointed out by one member of the religious category (11/2023) that female first-borns were targeted for ritual murders due to the cultural belief that they possessed special blessings and were crucial to their families' redemption, hopes, and successes. Further more, the local people believed that first-borns, brought unique blessings to their families, and their failure to fulfill certain roles, such as marriage, would have negative consequences for their siblings (NGOs responsible person, 30/01/2024). Consequently, female first-borns were sacrificed to prevent perceived curses from affecting their families, clans and the local community. Hence, highlighting

the complex interplay between cultural beliefs, gender, and ritual murders in this region.

Male body parts symbolize vigilance , power and strength

On the side of boys and men, it was found out that the people in greater Mukono attributed unique qualities to the male gender, stemming from natural or divine origins; which rendered them distinct from females and other creations. These perceived qualities made men and boys appealing targets for ritual murders, as they were seen as physically fit and reliable as elaborated in the examples below:

The boy's or man's penis and the testicles symbolizes vigilance, power and strength. Those who blow the traditional tubes (Emmidi) use these parts mixed with charms. The very parts can heal impotence of other men. The penis and its blood culturally, symbolizes superiority and fame. And for this, the first-borns oo young age were the targets, said key informants (12/5/2023), (27/11/2023) and (30/01/2024) Lubanyi, Bugoya and Buwooya villages.

According to the verbatim above, the male gender was perceived as vigilant, powerful, and strong in the greater Mukono area, a belief held by local people, which rendered men and boys vulnerable to ritual murders. Additionally, ritual murderers believed that incorporating male genital parts into locally made charms would enhance their efficacy in traditional healing of impotence, thereby achieving desired outcomes, ultimately leading to the targeting of males for ritual murders in the region. Similarly, the construction that males are superior dependant on the penis with its blood, made boys targets for ritual murders, particularly young first-born males, who were believed to possess purity, sanctity, and unique blessings. Therefore, relatives as well as non-relatives who were the pursuit for personal gains like fame and superiority led to the exploitation and murder of males, particularly first-borns for their penises with its blood.

Determination and fearlessness

Additionally, determination and fearlessness were also symbolic in the male body parts. The community people revealed that the former were composed in males' heart and blood. The traditional healer (05/2023) in Buikwe south explained:

Both boys and men are culturally perceived to be determined with the fearlessness of the heart and protective in nature. This makes them qualified targets for ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. Ritual murderers believed that male victims' heart and blood would enhance their spiritual warfare capabilities, providing protection and victory over opposing spirits. The murderers use the male body parts with confidence that nobody would tamper with their area of operation called "embuga" in Luganda.

This belief was rooted in the notion that the spirit of a male victim would be implied in the hosted spirits of the clans like Lubaale, Kiwanuka, among others, and the hosted bought spirit like Kifaalu, effectively performing duties required of them such as spiritual warfare, wellbeing of the families, child-baring, disciplining, boundary protection, hunting and among others. The study's findings highlight the complex interplay between cultural beliefs, spiritual practices, and ritual murders in the region.

Male body parts for Leadership and authority

Furthermore, the study revealed that leadership and authority were to the men and boys and it came down from the creator and no one should take it away from them. Religious category (2023) argued:

some of the local people in the greater Mukono area hold a belief that men and boys possess god-given authority to rule, making them targets for ritual murders as the murderers hunt for brains to be mixed with charms. Therefore, individuals seeking leadership positions, from family to societal levels, consult spiritualists; often shrine operators, who incorporated the ideology of male embodied authority into their charms to ensure effectiveness.

This belief fueled the desire for leadership and competition for political positions, leading to the targeting of boys and men for ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. To add on, the study found out that male body parts were believed to enforce growth and development of individuals plus community. This could be manifested horizontally as well as vertically. Cultural leaders as well as Religious leaders (2023) asserted:

The local people in the area believe that family and clan growth and development depends on the male gender' musculinity. As the family grows, it influences clan development in social, cultural, religious, economic, and political aspects.

As spiritists (*abassamizze*) are often the family heirs, sought to please clan spirits and leave a lasting legacy, they resorted to ritual murders to ensure family and clan prosperity. They appease the family and clan gods with the tongue and the eyes in order to boost their power and bring about development. This belief led to the masterminding of ritual murders of boys and men, who were perceived as contributors to family and clan growth.

The traditional medicine institution

Amazingly, the study found that the Buganda ne'ddagala lyayo specifically the Traditional Medicine Institution (TMI), despite its efforts to cure diseases naturally was linked to ritual murders in greater Mukono (NGOs, 2023 & 2024). In its attempt to solve people's problems in-terms of traditional healing, some traditional healers had resorted to involving witchcraft in the course of healing. This had diverted the initial intention of the TMI. Some traditional healer/doctors ended up importing foreign gods/spirits such as the blood-eating spirit (*Kifaalu*); which demands blood and breasts of young girls to effectively execute its duties, (Woman traditional healer, 2023). On the same note, one of the key informant explained:

In all over Uganda, traditional healers are compelled by the government to form associations. At Buikwe District, the Science Foundation was formed to deal with the healing system as culture commanded (Individual interview on 30/01/2024).

Despite government's efforts to regulate traditional healers, the practice of ritualistic murders persisted. Notably, some traditionalists in Njeru town council were arrested for ritually murdering individuals, including a teenager and a mature woman, in February 2024 (Bulikasa, 2024) This raises concerns about the TMI's role in promoting traditional healing and culture in the greater Mukono area.

In the same vain, the study found that the desire to promote traditional science and healing in the greater Mukono area led to gender-related ritualistic murders. A key informant explained that traditional healers, named "*abasaawo a Baganda or abasamize*" (Shrine operators), sought to prove the efficacy of traditional medicine over modern medicine. As noted in the In-depth interview with Local

Councils (27/11/2023), traditionalists in the greater Mukono area resorted to forced inducement of concerned spirits through gender-related ritualistic murders to gain publicity for their industry. Additionally, one of the police officer, emphasized the centrality of ritual murders to witchcraft:

Your topic is the centre of witchcraft and 95% of the people in this locality believe in witch-craft... In Ssi-Bukunja after almost two homes, the third has a shrine. (Individual interview on 04/01/2024).

This narrative suggests that witchcraft, as a component of traditional religion, relies heavily on ritual murders to perpetuate its beliefs and practices. The findings support Okoye-Ugwu et al.'s (2021) observation that the tolerance of witchcraft practices has strengthened its grounds for ritual murder.

Furthermore, traditionalists believed that hosted spirits induced them to commit ritual murders, which they performed under the spirits' influence and obedience. According to the Officer in-Charge Buikwe Prison (22/05/2023), *"they were serving 'gods' (Deities) as willed"*. This claim legitimized the practice, making it unquestionable when presided over by cultural or religious leaders. Ignorance among cultural and religious leaders and their subjects was identified as a key driver of gendered ritual murders, according to the head of a Non-governmental Organisation in Buikwe District (Individual interview on 30/01/2024).

4.2.2 The Economic Factors Responsible For Gender-Related Ritual Murders

These economic factors mainly include the needed to boost business, to out compete others, to fight unemployment, and legacy making.

Need to boost businesses

The study established that the pursuit of booming businesses facilitated gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. One Key participant revealed that community members were ritually murdered to boost business entities, such as schools, to realize a good number of pupils or students (Key informant, 2023). For instance, a boy from Family A was ritually murdered to boost the school's enrollment. These findings support Thenga's (2018) assertion that some offenders believe ritual murder will help them succeed in business ventures. The study highlights the connection between the pursuit of profit and ritual murders in the greater Mukono area, where business entities, such as privately owned schools, prioritize financial gain over human life.

In the same vein, interview with religious leaders (2023 & 2024) revealed that factory routines in greater Mukono, particularly in industrial areas contributed to ritualistic murders of both males and females. Participants argued that factories required human sacrifices, as implied in the narrative:

"When the owner of one factory built in Buikwe got involved in ritual murders, was forced to transfer the factory. But on transfer, one of the workers during the demolishing of the factory to remove machines landed on human skulls" (Individual interview, 2023).

This suggests that industrial growth and development in greater Mukono was linked to ritual murders as revealed by the religious category.

Need to out compete other businesses

Additionally, alongside boosting business, there was a need to outcompete other businesses. The interview with woman traditional healer (12/2023) revealed that the desire to outcompete others in traditional healing drove the occurrence of

ritual murders in the community. A woman traditional healer confessed that fraudulent healers, mostly males, acquired foreign spirits like Kifaalu-Ejjembe, also known as Kinywa Musaayi (the blood-drinking spirits), which demanded human sacrifices, particularly girls with specific breast characteristics such as the heart-like breasts (Individual interview). These spirits were believed to be effective in solving problems, and traditional healers would ask clients to bring body parts such as the eyes of a person in exchange for wealth, business success, or problem-solving (Individual interview). This highlights the connection between traditional healing and ritual murders in the community of greater Mukono.

Need for quick money

Further, it was pointed out that the driving force behind gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area was the pursuit of quick money and wealth, (In-depth interviews with key informants 27/11/2023 & 05/12/2023). Specifically, individuals dealing in traditional medicine, operating private businesses, and constructing large buildings were identified as perpetrators. For example, one member from the religious category narrated:

*There near school W; once lived a sorcerer (**omusamizze**) who killed a man and got his head and genitals and placed them in the shrine so as to get many customers (Individual interview on 17/12/2023).*

This act was driven by the belief that the spirit of a strong and determined man would enhance the shrine's efficacy, supporting PAP's (2021) assertion that ritual attacks were fueled by the belief that body parts enhanced the efficacy of charms and potions in bringing wealth and good fortune. This also supported what

McCrary (2014) noted that those involved in ritual murders expected tangible financial gains or riches.

Producing single sex children (female only or male only)

Additionally, producing single sex children in a family is yet another contributing factor to gender-related ritual murders in the selected areas of study. Families in the greater Mukono area who produced only one sex of children especially girls, felt troubled and some sought solutions that ended in ritualistic murders. A key informant (12/2023) shared a narrative about a father who, instead of being happy about the birth of a baby boy after having only girls, behaved erratically and later buried the three-week-old baby alive:

The father did so to fulfil the demands of the cult; that he should ritually murder the first baby boy in order to have a stable business, produce more boys and for their survival. In Misindye, a family used to produce only one sex (girls). ... By the time he confessed the baby could not be rescued, it was already dead... (Individual interview on 17th Dec, 2023).

This scenario highlights the ignorance of reproductive biology among community members, particularly ritual murderers, which contributed to the driving force behind gender-related ritual murders. The verbatim further revealed that the father had consulted the gods over his collapsing plans about income-generation; upon which he was instructed to ritually burry the first baby boy in his life alive for stability in business.

4.2.3 Individual Factors Responsible For Gender-Related Ritual Murders

Moving late at night

The study found that moving late at night increased vulnerability to ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. Participants shared an incident where an adult man in Salye village was ritually attacked and murdered while he had gone to visit a friend after having supper (In-depth interview with the Local Council on 05/12/2023). This finding is consistent with Edema and Jjingo (2021), who reported a similar incident in Najja sub-county where an adult man met his ritualistic death while walking home from his sister's house at night. This argument was followed by the type of work an individual engaged in. Participants revealed that some community people carried on their businesses at the time when most of the people had closed theirs which increased their vulnerability to gendered ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. A participant noted that boda-boda riders, who work late hours between 10:00pm and mid-night, were at risk:

Boda-boda men are at risk of falling victims of these ritual murders... We lost a boda-boda youth from Lweru Trading Centre who took a client to Jinja at around 9:00pm. But only to meet his ritualistic murder (Individual interview with the local council on 22/05/2023) Kyamabale.

This verbatim suggests that working beyond traditional hours (beyond 9:00pm) increased the risk of the local people falling victim to gendered ritual murders.

Disco-going

Similarly, disco-going was a contributing factor to gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. Participants noted that teenagers frequenting discos, locally known as "*Kaliyoki*," made them vulnerable to ritual murders:

Young girls and boys... frequent discos...from where they are lured to places where they are slaughtered like animals, the case of a teenage girl from the disco was murdered at the end of the foot-ball pitch of Buikwe (In-depth interview with the local council on 27/11/2023).

Disco-going created opportunities for ritual murderers to target victims, particularly teenage girls, who were less likely to be protected by others.

Alcohol abuse and selling

Besides, the study found that alcohol abuse and selling were individual factors contributing to gendered ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. A key informant noted that alcohol abuse impaired self-defense, while sellers/attendants were exposed to potential traitors (ritual murderers) who pretend to be friendly clients with motives of making the attendants become drunk and helpless. A case in point was the ritual murder of an alcohol seller (woman) in Kinoni village:

In Kinoni village, an alcohol seller [woman] was ritually murdered and her remaining body was dumped in Meta sugar cane plantation--- (Individual interview on 17/12/2023).

This narrative highlights how ritual murderers, disguised as alcohol consumers, targeted the seller when she was most vulnerable. This proved that ritual murderers could employ alcohol abuse as a trick to make their targeted people drunk and helpless.

Therefore, the time of work and the work-related habits were other contributing factors to gendered ritual murders. The study conducted in greater Mukono revealed that both men and women were affected by ritual murders due to their occupation, work experience, and daily routines. The findings indicated that men were more vulnerable to ritual murders than women, particularly those engaged in occupations that required late-night movements or isolated work environments. For instance, a teacher in Kibuzzi-Kiwangula who was also a supermarket

attendant in the evening hours upto 10:00pm and an adult male in Salye who was a brick-layer; were victims of ritual murders due to their occupation and work-related habits . These victims were murdered in the night in isolated places. The teacher was murdered for his wisdom and prosperity, whereas the brick-layer was murdered for his strength and determination (Family C Lubanyi village, 01/12/2023; Local council Salye village, 05/12/2023; Police, 25/05/2023).

Low levels of Education and unemployment

Importantly to note was that low levels of education and unemployment on the side of individuals heightened the practice of gender-related ritual murders in the study areas. The study found that individuals who engaged in gendered ritual murders in the greater Mukono area were predominantly school dropouts with little or no education. A participant explained:

People who deal in hunting and attacking fellow human beings of either gender for ritualistic murders attained little or no education... They have ended in establishment of traditional healing points [shrine establishments] to help themselves to get a living at any cost (Individual interview on 05/01/2024).

This suggests that the level of education in the area contributed to a lack of innovative thinking and problem-solving skills, leading to desperate measures such as ritual murders.

In the same vein, the study found that the trend of education system in Uganda prioritized theoretical knowledge over practical skills, leading to unemployment and increased vulnerability to engaging in ritual murders. A key informant (NGOs, 2024) noted:

The education offered to people in Uganda is fully packed with class work. Nothing much that can enable one to stand on his/her legs for life

if he/she misses out the governmental call for work (Individual interview on 30/01/2024).

This suggests that the education system's emphasis on theoretical knowledge contributed to unemployment among youths, driving some to engage in ritual murders as a means of survival.

4.2.4 Social Factors Linked To Ritual Murders

The social positioning and status of females

The study revealed that the social positioning and status of females in greater Mukono, characterized by patriarchal constructions of inferiority, rendered them vulnerable to ritual murders. This makes their body parts capable in upgrading the superiority of the male gender as in the proverb that; *'the power of the chain lies in its softness'* (CL, 11/2023 Buikwe TC). In the same vain, RL (12/2023) asserted that behind a strong man, there is a strong woman. Hence making their bodies ritually vulnerable to support the male gender superiority. These findings suggest that the perceived expendability of females, stemming from their exclusion from family and clan lineage continuity, made them more susceptible to being sacrificed by close relatives, who prioritized the preservation of male-dominated family and clan structures. This patriarchal ideology perpetuated the targeting of females for ritual murders in the greater Mukono area.

Broken family relationships

In addition, the study found that broken family relationships contributed to ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. A key informant shared a narrative about a step-father who ritually murdered three girls and a boy, allegedly sparked by a rejected romantic relationship with their mother: "Two years back a stranger went into a home (house) of woman-headed family and slaughtered four children of which three were girls and one boy..." (Individual interview on 17th Dec, 2023).

This act was likely to accomplish the step-father's hidden mission of ritualistic murder, driven by a gender-related motive that required specific victims: three teenage girls and a boy under ten years old.

Abuse of freedom worship

Further, abuse of freedom of worship was another factor that triggered gender-related ritual murders in the communities where the study took place. The researcher found that some recommendations on freedom of worship inadvertently fueled the practice of gendered ritualistic murders in the greater Mukwaro area. Key informants (NGOs) argued that excessive freedom to express religious beliefs led to the resurgence of harmful practices, including human sacrifice.

As one informant noted:

Freedom of worship has made people go on with what their religions require in terms of rituals/practices and teachings, including those that are life-terminating. The freedom has given rise to shrine operations [obusamize] in greater Mukono, characterized by sacrifices, including humans (Individual interview on 01/01/2024).

This verbatim suggests that the protection of religious freedom, as enshrined in the Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 2) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 18), may have inadvertently enabled harmful traditional practices like gender-related ritual murders to persist in the greater Mukono area. Additionally, the study found that individuals from various religious backgrounds faced challenging situations that led to ritual murders. A notable example is a Christian church leader who sought help from a Traditional religious leader to increase his following, resulting in the ritual murder of a four-year-old girl (Wafula, 2021). A woman traditional healer (30/12/2023)

corroborated the age of the victim, stating that fraud traditional healers preferred young girls, especially virgins, for their "blood-drinking spirits" to achieve effective results.

Afro-Cinema and local media

According to participants, the community of Greater Mukono, most especially the youths had got attracted to the watching of these films; majority the Nigerian films and local news about other places. This form of socialization through the media, had played a very big role in informing the consciousness of gendered ritual murders as a means of gaining money. This was evident in the communication of six-arrested ritual offenders of Namaliri, in Mukono before the police (NGO, 2024).

4.2.5 Other Factors That Triggered Ritual Murders

These factors included school schedules and desires, the trend of education, factory routines, the human rights commission of Uganda, and the traditional medicine institution, witchcraft and ritual murders ie inducement by the spirits, appeasement of gods, solving people's problem, promotion of traditional healing and science as well as and weakness in police.

The school schedules

The study found that school schedules, particularly in private schools, contributed to the vulnerability of school-going boys and girls to ritual murders. Participants argued:

Schools... require that learners by 5:00am are in class... They again end lessons at 6:00pm then release day-scholars to walk back home late in the evening subjecting them to attack by the ritual murderers (In-depth Interview on 04/01/2024).

This suggests that rigid school schedules increased the risk of pupils or students falling prey to gendered ritual murders, particularly during late-evening commutes.

Weaknesses in police institution

Whereas police executes its duties, it exhibited weaknesses when it came to issues regarding gendered ritual murders within the area of study. The study revealed a serious weakness in police institution which was the law enforcement officers' lack of understanding of traditional science and witchcraft, and failure to acknowledge it. This contributed to the rise of gendered ritualistic murders in the greater Mukono area as police deals with evidence which is not the case with witchcraft. One of the law enforcement officer (01/2024) emphasized this point, stating;

Police does not know witchcraft and your topic is the centre of witchcraft... (Individual interview with Police officer on 01/04/2024).

This limitation hindered effective investigations, as issues related to traditionalists and their practices fell outside the police's jurisdiction due to the emphasis on evidence-based investigations in the Crime Investigating Department (CID). This knowledge gap allowed ritual murders to persist, with the police's inaction perceived as a means to protect the political wing from accusations linked to these heinous crimes.

Additionally, corruption in police was yet another weakness. The study found out that the prevalence of gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area was exacerbated by the Crime Investigating Department's (CID) composition and practices of corruption. For example, Police's response to ritualistic murder

reports in the greater Mukono area was characterized by delays. Participants in in-depth interviews (family B, 2023; NGO category, 30/01/2024) explained that Police often cited lack of fuel for transportation as a reason for the delayed response. This delay was particularly problematic for the family members of the victims from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who were often required to raise transport charges for the Police. As a result, the urgency of the response was slowed, leading to a loss of evidence and enabling the persistence of gender-related ritual murders in the area.

The corruption and lack of objectivity in investigations led to the misclassification of ritual murders as ordinary murders. For instance, at Buikwe Prison, over 53 approved murder cases between 2016 and 2023 had none approved as ritual murder cases. This finding is consistent with Ornulf (2002), who observed that nearly everywhere on the Continent, the State and Politics seem to be breeding grounds for modern transformations of witchcraft and sorcery. Nkimba (2015) also highlighted the opacity in the law enforcement system. His assertions suggest that corruption and lack of transparency within the law enforcement system had contributed to the persistence of gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area.

Furthermore, lack of witness protection had resulted into poor relationship between police and community members. The study found that the relationship between police and community members in the greater Mukono area was severely strained, leading to a lack of trust and cooperation from local residents (Key informants, 05/12/2023). Participants reported that police responded to

ritual murder cases by arresting individuals who came forward with information, rather than protecting them as witnesses. As one participant recounted:

A twelve-year-old boy... was lost..., Police got informed very well but turned against the reporter and after a short while, the suspected traditionalist was released (In-depth interview on 05/12/2023).

This lack of protection for witnesses and the subsequent release of suspects created an environment where ritual murderers felt emboldened to continue their practices, knowing they would not be held accountable. The poor police-community relationship ultimately contributed to the persistence of gender-related ritual murders in the area.

Additionally, it was said that police services were expensive to access. The study found that police services were very expensive; for example, accessing Police-dog services to follow up ritualistic murders was problematic for civilians that is; delays and high costs were being significant barriers (RL, 2024). Furthermore, even when Police-dog services were accessed, there were loopholes in the subsequent investigation process. For example, one participant explained:

When the Police-dog identifies the culprit, the Police officer again asks for other tangible evidences which could not be traced at the moment. The Police guide neglects the evidence of the Police-dog and moves on with what he feels 'should be' than the Police-dog's confirmation (Interview on 01/02/2024).

This suggests that Police guides may be intentionally disregarding reliable evidence from Police-dogs, potentially to cover up ritual murderers. This lack of accountability creates an environment conducive to the persistence of ritual murders in greater Mukono.

It was also pointed out that if at all a ritual murderer was got, he/she was exposed to weak sanctions. The study found that the sanctions imposed on individuals convicted of gender-related ritual murders were insufficient, failing to deter others from committing similar crimes. Participants expressed frustration with the leniency of the law, stating:

What makes us feel stressed and restless is the law which has no power over the ritual murderers. The arrested could only serve sentence for a year and then released to repeat actually what they had previously committed (In-depth Interview on 27/11/2023).

This lack of stringent penalties emboldened ritual murder perpetrators, who believed they would not face severe consequences for their actions. As a result, both males and females remained vulnerable to ritual murders in the greater Mukono area.

Another weak area pointed out by the participants was the male dominated police force in the department of crime investigations. This was even evident during the study, where the researcher only met and interviewed male police CIDs and OCs. Members of family A, B and C (2023) said:

The problem is that when a ritualistic murder happens, police sends only men to do the investigation. Yet, there could be a police woman on the team who understands the pain of losing a child through ritual murders. The police woman could not comprimize, instead could fight to find out the truth and give a genueine report.

From the above expression, the police force's investigation and prosecution of ritual murder offenders in greater Mukono, were compromised by the predominantly male police staff's relationships with male offenders. This undermined the fight against ritual murders, as male police officers tended to empathize with fellow men's economic struggles, leading to cover-ups; a gesture

which could not be found in a woman CID or OC. This finding was in line with Vasko (2024) and Hao (2024) who contended about the male dominated police and the importance of including more women in the police force.

Culturally, men inherited traditional roles, including hosting spirits (obussamizze), which influenced their involvement in ritual murders. These individuals were feared by community members, including police officers, who hesitated to convict them (Key informant Police, 04/01/2024). To supplement on, the study's findings revealed that police and prison officials did not report any registered ritual murder cases, except those in the media. This led the researcher to conclude that many registered murder offenses, such as the 53 cases at Buikwe Prison (key informant, 05/2023) most were likely concealed ritual murder cases.

Therefore, lack of female investigators in the police force's crime department contributed to the concealment of evidence, as male officers allied with fellow male offenders, (key informant Family B, 2023). This suggests that, including female police officers in investigations could led to more truthful outcomes while investigating on sensitive cases like ritual murders; as also argued out by Abaho, (2023) in his book; *“Transforming Uganda’s Security Sector”*.

Similarly, adult females engaged in self-employment, such as selling alcohol or food in evening markets, were also vulnerable to ritual murders. Their late-night work hours and isolated environments put them at risk, as evident in the case of a woman victim in Kinoni village (Police officer and Teacher, 25/05/2023). Research has shown that the nature of work can increase an individual's vulnerability and insecurity that could result into trauma or loss of life (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022; Bazzoli, 2023).

4.2.6 Conclusion

The study's findings indicated that gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area were influenced by the beliefs in female purity in effecting change, while male victims were sought for their perceived strength and power. The body parts obtained from male victims included heads, genitals, eyes, tongues, heart and blood, whereas those from female victims included heart-like breasts, genitals, tongues, throats, blood, heads, and sexual purity. These findings highlight the complex and deeply ingrained nature of gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area, underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of these crimes to inform effective prevention and intervention strategies.

4.3 The Impact of Gender-related Ritual Murders on Community

4.3.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed the third objective which was to examine the impact of gender-related ritual murders in greater Mukono community. The impact was discussed in two sub-themes of gender-related impact of ritual murders on families of the victims, gender-related impact of ritual murders on females and gender-related impact of ritual murders on the development of the local community.

4.3.1 Gender-related Impact of Ritual Murders on Families

The impact on families of the victims included the following: loss of family bread winner, psychological torture over loss of family heads/heirs/loved ones, and failure to access justice.

In the first place, the study found out that families lost their bread winners. This made these families to face significant challenges in coping with the loss of a loved one to ritual murders, particularly when the victim was the head of the household. For example, a widow of one of the deceased victims illustrated this point, stating that:

...the house is incomplete as well as leaking and I have to look after six children. My children have stopped schooling at an early age and getting food, soap and clothing have become a hurdle.

This testimony highlights the devastating impact of ritual murders on family members, particularly women and children, who lose protection, provision, and stability. The loss of a male head of household often led to disrupted education, early marriages, and limited economic opportunities. Additionally, in some families girls were forced into early marriages and boys became fish mongers.

Another impact was the loss of family heirs which left profound effects on families in which ritual murders occurred. The study found that ritual murders had a profound impact on families, particularly when the victim was a boy; considered to be the family's future provider and protector. For instance, a parent whose eight-year-old son was ritually murdered expressed the significance of the loss, stating:

He was a family binder, wanted to be a mechanic and the expected heir of the family.

The study revealed that the death of a male family member, especially a first-born son, led to more psychological torture and trauma among family members. The mother of the deceased boy reported that her daughters feared attending school, saying:

If our brother was killed, what about us?

Additionally, another family member of the victim (mother) shared her experience, stating that:

The death of my daughter... directly affected my son; the heir who narrowly escaped the murder.. From the day the sister was ritually murdered, he has never become well. He is growing mad day after day and yet he is the only son who even inherited their late father. He lost memory of many things.

This testimony highlighted the long-term psychological effects of ritual murders on family members, particularly women and children, who may experience trauma, memory loss, and mental health issues.

Besides, family breakdown was another impact caused by gendered ritual murders on families. The study revealed that some parents, driven by economic stress, were involved in ritually murdering their own daughters. Participants attributed this phenomenon to the pressure exerted by nagging wives who demanded luxurious lifestyles that their husbands could not afford. As one participant narrated: "Another incident was in Kasoga... the father compelled her daughter of seven years to go to the shop... The father played a trick... grabbed his real daughter and ritually murdered her in order to become rich as advised by the shrine operator (*omusamize*) (Individual interview with religious leader on 17th Dec 2024). This case resulted in the family's breakdown, with the father imprisoned and the mother leaving with their remaining child. A female traditional healer shared a similar account:

Another example was of a man who had a wife with three children... It was ascertained that the sacrifice had his two girl children... The tongue,

the breast and the genitals were cut off. After the burial the mother had to run away with the third boy child (Female traditional healer/doctor, 30th Dec, 2023).

These cases illustrate the devastating consequences of gendered ritual murders, including family disintegration and unhealthy relationships between spouses. Key participants emphasized that these murders led to blame-shifting and finger-pointing between husbands and wives, causing irreparable damage to family relationships together with unceasing economic stresses.

4.3.2 Gender-related impacts of ritual murders on females

The study also identified several gender-related impacts of ritual murders on females, including: Restricted movement, disrupted education, with female siblings foregoing schooling, denied opportunities for networking and development, increased prevalence of female-headed families/single mothers and heightened exposure to sexual abuses. These findings highlight the far-reaching and devastating consequences of ritual murders on the female gender.

The study found that; on the side of movements, ritual murders had a profound impact on females, extending beyond the loss of life. Women feared managing businesses or working beyond 6:00pm, leading to reduced income and livelihood opportunities. This was particularly challenging for single parents, who shouldered sole responsibility for caring for their children and relatives.

4.3.3 Impact Of Gendered Ritual Murders On The Local Community

The study found that the fear of ritual murders led to increased school dropout rates among girls. The female gender's vulnerability to these crimes made them forego education to ensure their safety. This resulted in early marriages and reduced the efficiency of girl-child education. The vice-chairperson of

Nalubabwe local council expressed concern about the impact of ritual murders on girls' education, stating:

Surely girls being timidly weak and sensitive for their lives and bodies, they shy away from any condition that may dishonour their dignity or inflict pain upon them. They do not want to walk to schools for fear of their lives, for fear of being attacked by the gendered ritualistic murderers... (Key informant interview, 27th November, 2023).

The study's findings highlighted the significant impact of ritual murders on girls' education, leading to increased school dropouts, and early marriages, ultimately hindering community development. Similarly, the spread of information about women/girl murders led to increased fear among women and girls, causing them to avoid leaving their homes for work. This fear limited their opportunities for social, economic, political, religious, and cultural interaction and networking, which are essential for self-development, family development, and community development.

Additionally, gendered ritual murders had contributed to the increase of female-headed families and single mothers. The study found that gender-related ritual murders had a detrimental impact on the institution of marriage in the greater Mukono area. Key informants reported that some victims were murdered by men who had promised to marry them, leading to trauma and mistrust among women. This experience resulted in an increase in single mothers and female-headed households in the area. Young girls, aware of such scenarios, became wary of marriage relationships, opting instead for independence. The study's findings highlight the far-reaching consequences of gender-related ritual murders,

extending beyond the immediate victims to affect the social fabric of the community.

Further, the study found that females, particularly those seeking consultations at shrines, were vulnerable to sexual abuse by male shrine operators. Participants reported that some women and girls were raped and later murdered, as seen in the cases of a woman in Najjembe and a teenager in Njeru. A participant shared:

*...the case of a woman in Najjembe who was raped and later murdered...
(Individual interview on 05/12/2023).*

Another participant revealed:

*...a teenager in Njeru who was raped first and murdered later and her
body was dumped under a big tree near the shrine courtyard of the shrine
operator... (Revealed on 21/02/2024).*

The study also found that some women and girls were raped and released, only to later develop mental health issues, such as madness, and eventually die. Participants cited the examples of two women from Kiyajji and Nalubabwe who were sacrificed through sexual intercourse to the gods of the basamize. Research by Schlesinger (2010) supported these findings, reporting that 39.2% of ritualistic behavior involved penis penetration. Isiko (2018) also noted that the commercialization of traditional healing had led to unethical behaviors, including the rape of female clients seeking treatment from traditional healers.

Another impact was that gendered ritual murders led to migration and underdevelopment in affected areas, as people sought safer locations (Local council authorities, 01/2024). This was evident in Ssi-Bukunja, where potential developers abandoned the area due to fear of their lives and of their families. This

had left such areas where these moral-perversive actions occurred economically undeveloped as able people continually fear to buy land and invest in such areas. The local communities were robbed of the useful human resource, left with many orphans and helpless people, hence underdevelopment of some communities in greater Mukono.

In brief, the prevalence of gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area had a profound impact on women's livelihoods and economic development. Women entrepreneurs, including hotel operators, shop attendants, and market vendors, faced significant challenges in operating their businesses due to insecurity and fear of ritual murders. Civil servants, including teachers, nurses, and security personnel, were also threatened, with some being compelled to work extended hours, further exacerbating their vulnerability. The impact of these murders extended to household food security, as women feared leaving their children alone to tend to their gardens, resulting in reduced food production and economic opportunities. Furthermore, women seeking remedies from traditional institutions were exposed to sexual abuse, highlighting the intersectional nature of these crimes.

4.4 Conclusion

Gender-related ritual murders had really negatively impacted on either gender, but more so the female gender in greater Mukono. These impacts had left physical, emotional as well as psychological consequences on vulnerable groups of people in the areas where these ritual murders occur. Survivors of these ritual murder attacks experienced ongoing trauma; paralyzing the entire future life of individuals and families. Therefore, the local people of greater Mukono perceive

these acts as wicked, evil, unbearable and foreign (borrowed from other cultures through watching Afro-cinemas most especially the Nigerian films. To support the argument, Okeke (2024) pointed out that Nollywood films create awareness that one can easily become wealthier through ritual killings). Gender is a significant factor in understanding ritual murders. While men are often identified as perpetrators, women and children are frequently the victims, reflecting existing gender inequalities and harmful social norms.

Ritual murders in greater Mukono, have evolved into sophisticated methods, including stage-managed accidents, witchcraft-induced suicides, and ritual torture as put forward by law enforcement personnel and religious leaders (LEP, 05/2023; RL, 11/2023). These mechanisms enable offenders to collect victims' body parts without arousing suspicion. Male victims were primarily targeted through stage-managed accidents, while female victims were targeted through witchcraft-induced suicides, ritual torture, and sexual exploitation.

Both male and female victims, regardless of age, were affected by ritual murders. However, female victims were more frequently targeted. The evolution of ritual murders in Mukono is driven by the advancement of witchcraft and moral perversion on the side of some people; as also cited by Kasozi (2020), Yiga E.,(2020), and Kyaye (2017). This has resulted in the development of new gender-based mechanisms of ritual murder. Recent studies have also highlighted the importance of addressing the root causes of ritual murders, including poverty, unemployment, and social inequality (Tumwine, 2020; Kaggwa, 2022).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is presented in three sections. The first section is the discussion of findings, and then followed by the second section that focuses on conclusions in relation to the research objectives, while the third and final section presents the recommendations, and proposed topics for further research, which will explore community perceptions of gender-related ritual murders in selected communities of greater Mukono.

5.1 Summary of Findings

5.1.1 Gender-related perceptions about ritual murders

The study's first objective was to establish gender-related perceptions of ritual murders in greater Mukono. Findings from various participant categories revealed a common understanding of gendered ritual murders, with perceptions centered on physical attributes, prevalence, targeted body parts, and vulnerability of victims most especially females. For instance a key informant narrated:

A family in Kasoga... lost a seven-year-old girl due to ritualistic murders. The father wanted quick money and was told to take the 'blood' of his first-born daughter by the musamize'... (Individual interview, Lubanyi village, 17/12/2023).

This supports Neil (2012)'s argument that, among the Thebaid, women offer loved ones, especially first-borns, in ritual murders.

Findings also revealed that victims were often targeted due to their relationships with perpetrators or their vulnerability, supporting Lyncaster (2014)'s assertion that "only those related to the perpetrators, chiefs or politician fell victims. Also

supporting Smelt (2001), Owusu (2022), and Ornulf (2002)'s contention that witchdoctors/traditional healers are often behind ritual murders, highlighting the complexity of ritual murder cases.

The study revealed that ritual murders were often unreported or unrecorded, with police requiring evidence that was not provided, leading to collapsed investigations.

A key informant stated:

Okumanya nga police etulyamu olukkwe (police betrays us).

This is supported by Nkimba (2025) who argued that police demands for evidence, hindered investigations. In contrast, Okuye-Ugwu et al (2021) noted that district officials were not authorized to convict witchcraft cases, despite ritual murders being linked to witchcraft.

Findings revealed that both female and male victims were targeted, with perpetrators motivated by desires for wealth, success, and power.

A woman traditional healer noted that fake traditional healers sought young girls with 'heart-like breasts' for ritual sacrifices (30th Dec, 2023).

The above is in line with Kanyoro (2001) who argued that African women were custodians of cultural practices, which sometimes led to harmful traditional practices being passed down as cultural values.

The findings further revealed that mature men were targeted for their strength, tactics, and confidence, with perpetrators extracting body parts such as blood, brain, tongue, and private parts. A key informant described the ritual murder of a mature man and stated:

..his head was cut across, brain taken, blood, part of his tongue and his .. privates are taken and used to give power and used as vessels for ritualists' actions of 'okufuwa emmidi' (In-depth interview with OTT, 12/05/2023).

This concurs with Doormont (2012) observed that perpetrators extracted specific body parts, including the penis, eyes, tongue, and jaw bone, from male victims. This aligns with Lyncaster (2014), who noted that ritual murders were committed to maintain power and status. Which aligns with Okoye-Ugwu et al (2021) noted that witches were believed to possess supernatural powers, perpetuating fear and terror.

5.1.2 Gender- related Factors Responsible for Ritual Murders

Ritual murderers in the greater Mukono area targeted males, particularly children and infants, due to beliefs in their natural strength and authority. A participant noted:

Here in Bukunja, you don't talk about the wizard anyhow or else they come to know and torment you.

The above findings support McCrary's (2014) observation that ritualistic torture and murder have historical roots, dating back to ancient Egypt. And Okuye-Ugwu et al (2021) who noted that witches are believed to possess supernatural powers, enabling them to harm their victims. This perception is prevalent in African localities, including the greater Mukono area; suggesting a deep-seated fear and cultural taboo surrounding the discussion of gendered ritual murders.

However in the same line, there were common and various factors contributing to gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. These were identified and primarily driven by individualistic or selfish interests. For instance,

the study found that the need to boost business entities and attract customers fuelled the phenomenon in the greater Mukono. Business entities, including shrines, private schools, and companies, were found to be involved in ritualistic practices to realize their objectives. This is supported by McCrary (2014) who observed that, the desire for monetary gain encouraged individuals to hunt and kidnap children. Also Lyncester (2014) noted a similar case in India, where a businessman hired individuals to acquire specific body parts, including the eyes of a European.

These findings highlight the role of economic interests and business entities in perpetuating gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area. As Walton (2018) noted, the cognitive toll of being poor can lead to bad decisions, also Celia (2010) noted a similar practice in ancient Rome, where children were drowned at sea by haruspices: suggesting that a poor mindset, characterized by superstition, ignorance, and a lack of understanding; contributed to the prevalence of gendered ritual murders in the greater Mukono area.

Perpetrators of gender-related ritual murders in the greater Mukono area confirmed that girls and women were easily persuaded due to their desire for fancy things and love. As a police officer noted: “*getting girls was so easy*”, (APS, 2024). Another key participant argued:

Your topic is the centre of witchcraft and 95% of the people in this locality believe in witch-craft... In Ssi-Bukunja, after almost two homes, the third has a shrine (CID Police, 2023).

The above argument supported Kimbowa (2021) and Nkimba (2015) who eluded that prevalence of witchcraft and ritual murders in a locality was linked to the

area's history of inhumane practices. In the same vain, ritual murderers networked with married womem on the grounds of money; to use their social powers to handover their spouse for ritual murders. Foristace, one participant said:

...she connived with a rich man who promised her lots of money to hand in her man-lover for his blood (CMT. Nalubabwe 30/05/2023).

This illustrates the concept of gendered power dynamics, as discussed by Connell (2014), where individuals use their social positioning to exert power and control over others.. Ritual murders often involved perpetrators close to the victims, including kin, parents, friends, spouses, and neighbors. Strangers were less commonly implicated. The study found that both female and male victims were frequently masterminded by close relatives, driven by selfish desires spanning social, economic, cultural, religious, and political motivations.

However, from the biblical perspective, the Bible established that ritual murders were as old as man that is; before the coming of Christ Jesus, ritual murders had taken root. This was in line with the participants' argument that;

ritual murders have been there for long, silent and unreported (Traditional healer, 05/2023; Religious leader, 11/2023).

The above verbatim supports theological scholarly findings that many communities were predominantly engaging in ritual murders of either gender, but most especially the children, (Schultz, 2010). Adults (men and women) were rarely sacrificed, (Neil, 2012). These assertions conquers with the biblical texts such as Deuteronomy (12:31). In the same vain, the study's findings unveiled that children (boys and girls), but most especially girls fell victim of ritual murders on similar reasons based on religion and culture, economic as well as social constructions.

However, the Bible strongly discourages the study's findings in the sense that the God of the Bible warns His people not to engage in ritual murders. This is portrayed in the statement as stated:

You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in fire as sacrifice to their gods. See you do all I commanded you; do not add to it or take away from it (Deut, 12:31-32).

5.1.3 Gender-related Impacts of Ritual Murders

The study's third objective was to examine the impact of gender-related ritual murders on greater Mukono community. Gendered ritual murders had majorly impacted negatively on the female gender (women and girls) in greater Mukono. This argument is in line with Schlesinger et al (2010) who contends that; ritual murders are common in any form and females most especially girls fall victims. As highlighted by the local council category (27/11/2023), many school-going girls dropped out of school due to the continued traumatization caused by ritual murders in the locality. This construction is supported by Lima (2020) who asserts that women/girls being the targets for ritual murders puts them at risk and psychologically traumatized. Given the vulnerability of girl children, walking to schools in areas where ritual murders occur for example, in Ssi-Bukunja had become a huddle. Hence sitting back home for fear of their lives and lose out education.

Whereas girls continued to lose out education, gendered ritual murders had left many women single mothers; heading families unwillingly in areas where ritual murders are prevalent. As the study revealed that most ritual murder perpetrators

were men, most young women fear to relate fully with them. This illustration by the religious category (01/2024) supported Nkimber's (2015) findings in his Community Amber Alert Against Child Sacrifice.

Additionally, as the local authorities argued that; communities had gradually lost men/boys and women/girls who would support the future development of the local communities, confirmed Leeson (2014)'s findings. About the same, Leeson (2014) argued that people are a great wealth for a given community and human sacrifice is an effective vehicle of destroying this wealth. Therefore, the targeting of youngones as well as the adults of either gender for ritual murders had consequently slowed down the development of areas where ritual murders are prevalent. Also, this contention is in line with Kimbowa (2021)'s findings.

Recent studies have also highlighted the importance of considering the occupational risks associated with ritual murders (Kasozi, 2020; Kyaye, 2017). These findings suggest that policy-makers and law enforcement agencies should take into account the nature of work and occupational risks (safty, health and psychological hazards) when developing strategies to prevent ritual murders.

5.2 General Conclusion

Community perceptions about gendered ritual murders are rooted in culture and religion. Greater Mukono has become a den of the evolutions of *okusaddaaka* (ritual murders) inclined to the gender nature with many female victims compared to male victims. It is in this area that a prey for *okusaddaaka* can be accessed in any form based on perceptions held and gender inclinations. The method is progressively transiting from the well known physical attacks to spiritual attacks; as ameans of dodging death penalties/life imprisonment by the state law, if

identified. This predicts and communicates that culprits have immersed themselves in ritual murdering with strong hearts to uphold their faith and belief in them. This predicts a continued upsurge of gendered ritual murders in Greater Mukono, alongside griefs and trauma of the offended.

Nowonder, the Christian Church and the Moslem institution have relaxed and taken on 'laissez-faire' tendencies regarding the enforcement of attitudinal changes among the masses of Greater Mukono, as well as Uganda. These institutions are fundamental in matters of spiritual lives of the people, and their connectivity to the numinous powers. Instead, they are concerned with luxurious things, getting VISA, and going abroad; forgetting the core principles that govern the entire human life in a harmonious setting. What is needed is a changed mindset which can not be majorly attained through enforcing death penalties/life imprisonment to culprits of ritual murders of any form. Therefore, the Legislative system would work well on the grounds of the Christian Church and Moslem institution in enhancing attitudinal change that causes a positive mindset in individuals. This would be enriched further by the Education curriculum; that needs to be restructured and emphasize life-protecting and saving Christian/ Moslem values at all levels of Education. The curriculum should further be geared towards job correction. This would enforce a changing mindset of the local people, most especially the youth to rightful means of making money other than getting involved in gendered ritual murders.

The freedom of worship should not include practices linked to ritual murders. Articles 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and 2 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) should be amended to

prevent the misuse of religious freedom. Further, death should be left to its natural order, and the violation of this order is a rebellion against the author of death (Genesis 3:19). However, since pain and trauma could not be measured but expressed by outside actions, The local people have lost trust and confidence in the police due to their handling of ritual murder cases with subjective interests. This had been followed by mob-justice and concealment of information. The police bond for ritual murder offenders and delayed prosecutions have laid a fertile ground for the wicked practice to continue surfacing in greater Mukono. The study's limitations included participants' fear and hesitation to discuss the topic, limited sample size, and financial constraints. Future studies are recommended for a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.0 Introduction

The findings revealed that ritual murders were dependent on qualities exhibited by targeted individuals, believed to possess natural or in-born powers that could effect change when attached to healing or magical powers. The study identified various forms of ritual murders, including physical and evolving dynamisms such as starvation, beatings, burning, abandonment, live burial, and sudden death. These forms were enforced using two methods that is; physical attack and spiritual attack. The motivations behind these murders included gender-related factors, and the impacts were far-reaching, affecting individuals, families, and communities.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that;

The ritual murder culprits be presented to court within 48 hours and a police bond to such crimes be abolished. The Educational curriculum developers ought to keenly integrate and emphasize Religious values such as love, care, respect and protection of life at all levels of education. Additionally, a well-laid citizenship education to be paramount in the Education Curriculum of Uganda with aspects of love for one's nation and people. Similarly, a job-creation curriculum would occupy people in rightful skills of generating money, other than engaging in gendered ritual murders for money and fame. Further, the freedom of worship should not include practices linked to ritual murders. This could be done through joint sensitization and monitoring of the local people by religious leaders (Christian and Moslem leaders), cultural leaders, police, local council authorities, as well as the Non-governmental Organisations. Importantly, death should be left to its natural order, and the violation of this order is a rebellion against the author of death (Genesis 3:19).

All the above would help to inform both the growing youth and adults of the primary value of the human resource in the contemporary Uganda. They would also gain new insights while dealing with cultural traditions based on Patriarchal laid-down systems (Leeso, 2014; Russell, 2012). In so doing, the educational curriculum together with the role of the Christian Church and the Moslem institution would help to enhance the attitudinal change among the local people to stop the gender-related ritual murders in Greater Mukono, as well as in the entire Uganda.

5.3.1 Recommendation to the Parliament of Uganda

The study recommends:

The parliament of Uganda should immediately take action to save the situation by enforcing the Prevention and Prohibition of Human Sacrifice Act. The parliament should focus on law enforcement and implementation of gazetted laws, drawing the Act from paper to its efficacy at the grassroots level.

The Witness Protection Law should be advocated for, supporting poor witnesses, the intelligence, and investigation units. A Victim Support Fund should be provided to support victims who narrowly escape death due to ritualistic murders. The parliament should work closely with non-governmental organizations in implementing sensitive Acts.

The government should strengthen child protection units at the local government level, such as the District Orphans Vulnerable Children Committee and the Sub-county Orphans Vulnerable Children Committee. A Child Help Line should be established to ease communication and bring transparency in reporting gender-related ritual murders. In the same line, the government should empower cultural and religious leaders to implement the newly approved Act No. 27 of 2023.

The government should set up safety homes to support NGOs flooded with victims. This would help children left as orphans due to ritualistic murders have secure environment and a better future. This would further create opportunities for the girl children who dropout of school for fear of their lives; by not walking long distances to access education.

Gendered ritualistic murder offenders should face tightened penalties, including life imprisonment or death penalty for offences resulting in total loss of life. This would breed complete fear among the ritual murderers not to continue with the practice.

5.3.2 Recommendation to Law Enforcement Personnel (Police and Prison)

This study recommended that;

There is need for enhanced training of police and prison personnel to address gender-related ritual murders in greater Mukono, Uganda. Police and prison officers should be supported by the government through workshops about witchcraft and ritualistic murders to effectively identify culprits, provide appropriate therapy, facilitate further investigation, research, and convict perpetrators.

5.3.3 Recommendations to the Local Councils

The study recommended that;

The local council should ensure the safety and protection of village members, including, teenagers, and adults. Their responsibilities extend to addressing barriers that hinder girl-child and boy-child education, as well as supporting adults who are terrorized and unable to contribute to community development. They should Acquire and implement the Prevention and Prohibition of Human Sacrifice Act, 2023 (Act No. 27 of 2023). This involves familiarizing themselves with the newly passed act and implementing its requirements to address gender-related ritual murders and their impacts.

Should Establish community committees like community Child and Adult Protection Committee (CCAPC); committees through village meetings will help bring attention to education, especially for the girl child. The chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary for security and defence of the local council authorities should spearhead this initiative. Similarly, the Local council defence department should make toll-free telephone numbers available to village members. This

would enable them to report challenges or strange occurrences promptly and on time.

5.3.4 Recommendations to Families

The study recommends that;

The Family, Parents, guardians, and relatives must be vigilant and aware of their children's whereabouts and activities, and educate them about potential dangers. In addition, families should be cautious of suspicious individuals, including those operating shrines, and report any unusual behaviour. Further, Parents or guardians should accompany children to school and pick them always. Secondly, if there are village, clan and school functions, parents (father, mother or guardians) ought to take turns in attending the functions. This would give opportunity for some elders to remain at home to ensure the safety of the young children.

5.3.5 Recommendations to Cultural and Religious Leaders

The Christian Church ought to awaken and embark on its earlier grounded principles of christianizing people of different cultures, as it fosters attitudinal change among the masses. In the same line, the Moslem institution should not lag behind in the struggle to combat the prevalence of gendered ritual murders in the area. The study also recommends that the Registration of all traditional healers is sufficiently done. In the same line, the study recommends that in the government's effort to implement the Prevention and Prohibition of Human Sacrifice Act, 2023, it should sensitize the cultural and religious leaders and traditional healer to reform and adhere to the laws of the state, while highlighting the importance of preventing these heinous crimes.

5.3.6 Recommendations to non-governmental organization.

Non Governmental Organizations in Uganda such as LOHAM Childcare Ministries, Makonge International Needs, and Kyampisi Childcare Ministries (KCM) among others should Increase awareness activities, led by security forces, to ensure children feel safe attending school. To add on, NGOs should also Collaboration with Non-State Actors and Partner with organizations like the Science Foundation (SF) and the Police Investigating Department to screen and monitor traditional healers or shrine operators. Finally, there should be a collaborative effort among the State, police, NGOs, local authorities, cultural and religious leaders, the Village Life Protection Committee (VLPC) and families to combat gender-related ritual murders.

5.3.7 Recommendation for further research

The study recommends topics for further study, that includes;

1. Ritual murders and their impact on learners in greater Mukono
2. Shrines operators ("*abasamizze*") and their effect on community

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

An Interview guide for Law Enforcement Personnel

Introduction

My name is Bogere Suzan. I am a student of Kyambogo University and I am here to carry out an interview on Community perceptions about Gendered Ritual Murders in Greater Mukono and Impact of Ritual Murders. I am requesting that you give me time to answer some of the questions for the study. Thank you for accepting to be a participant in this Study. Here I have some simple questions for you and feel free to answer. The information provided will be kept confidential. The objectives of the study are: to explore the manifestations of gendered ritual murders, to establish the factors responsible for gender-related ritual murders, and the impact of gender-related ritual murders in Greater Mukono.

1. How often are ritual murder complaints in this area?
2. How many cases are reported or have been reported at this police?
3. Who are the most victims of ritual murders, women or men, boys or girls?
4. Who are the most reported offenders/perpetrators of ritual murders, men or women? For the male/women offender, how old was he/she? What does the offender do for a living?
5. Why is it that most victims of ritual murders are women/men, or boys/girls?
6. What are reasons/testimonies given by the offenders for murdering the innocent women or men, boys or girls?
7. What was the female or male offender interested in the killed victim?
8. How did the victims of ritual murders meet their death?
9. How was the physical state of the ritual victim [for the male or woman]? [Describe physical environment, the cuttings, what was taken from the victim, which specific body parts were cut and taken, were there any other suspected acts performed on the 1 victim apart from killing it e.g. rape?]
10. Timing of the ritual murders i.e. at what time are they most common?
11. Were there signs that showed that the victim [male or female] was attached to a ritualistic murder? If yes, what signs?

12. In your interaction with the families, how have these been affected by the ritual murder occurrence in their families and wider community?

13. How easy has it been for the families to pursue justice for their lost members?

14. What do you think should be done culturally, religiously, politically or economically to stop the gendered ritual murders in this community?

An Interview Guide for Cultural Leaders (Traditional healers & Shrine operators)

Introduction

My name is Bogere Suzan. I am a student of Kyambogo University and I am here to carry out an interview on Community perceptions about Gendered Ritual Murders in Greater Mukono and Impact of Ritual Murders. I am requesting that you give me time to answer some of the questions for the study. Thank you for accepting to be a participant in this Study. Here I have some simple questions for you and feel free to answer. The information provided will be kept confidential. The objectives of the study are: to explore the manifestations of gendered ritual murders, to establish the factors responsible for gender-related ritual murders, and the impact of gender-related ritual murders in greater Mukono.

1. How often are ritual murders complaints in this area? Who are the most victims of ritual murders, women or men, boys or girls? And why?
2. What do community members of this area think about ritual murders ?
3. Can you share with me your personal experience of a victim of a ritual murder?
4. Could you say more about the way they were killed and the parts taken?
5. Who are the most offenders/perpetrators of the practice [women, men or boys, girls] and why?
6. Is ritual murder of women or men, boys or girls culturally allowed and for what interests?
7. What items/body parts are specifically taken from a woman or man, boys or girls and why?
8. How are these specific body parts of the male/female victims culturally used?
9. What do you think are the effects of the ritual murders to women and men/ boys and girls; and the wider community?
10. How have the families of the ritual murder victims been affected? How about persons of either gender in this area?

An Interview Guide for Religious Leaders (Priests, Reverends, Pastors & Sheiks)

Introduction

My name is Bogere Suzan. I am a student of Kyambogo University and I am here to carry out an interview on Community perceptions about Gendered Ritual Murders in Greater Mukono and Impact of Ritual Murders. I am requesting that you give me time to answer some of the questions for the study. Thank you for accepting to be a participant in this Study. Here I have some simple questions for you and feel free to answer. The information provided will be kept confidential. The objectives of the study are: to explore the manifestations of gendered ritual murders, to establish the factors responsible for gender-related ritual murders, and the impact of gender-related ritual murders in greater Mukono.

1. How often are ritual murder complaints in this area?
2. Where did they take place, which gender and body parts were taken?
3. Who are the most vulnerable to ritual murders [men or women, boys or girls] and why?
4. What is your role as a religious leader in areas where people are engaging in ritual murder ?
5. Who are the most offenders/perpetrators of the practice [women, men or boys, girls] and why?
6. What do you think are the effects of the ritual murders to women and men/ boys and girls; and the wider community?
7. How have the families of the ritual murder victims been affected? How about persons of either gender in this society?

An Interview Guide for Family members of Victims

Introduction

My name is Bogere Suzan. I am a student of Kyambogo University and I am here to carry out an interview on Community perceptions about Gendered Ritual Murders in Greater Mukono and Impact of Ritual Murders. I am requesting that you give me time to answer some of the questions for the study. Thank you for accepting to be a participant in this Study. Here I have some simple questions for you and feel free to answer. The information provided will be kept confidential. The objectives of the study are: to explore the manifestations of gendered ritual murders, to establish the factors responsible for gender-related ritual murders, and the impact of gender-related ritual murders in greater Mukono.

1. How often are ritual murder complaints in this area?
2. Which gender of child or relative was ritually murdered?
3. How did you come to know about the ritual murder of the child or relative?
4. Can you describe the physical appearance of the victim's body [body cuttings, physical environment around the body, etc.??]
5. What did you base on to say that he or she was ritually murdered?
6. Who do you think was behind this the occurrence/offender – man or woman?
7. What do you think are the reasons behind the murder of the boy/girl/ man or woman?
8. How has the ritual murder of the member affected persons of your family, man and women, boys and girls?

LUGANDA VASSION

1. Luvanyuma lwabanga ki lwemuffuna okwemulugunya kukusaddaka abantu?
2. Yali muntu kikka ki eyasaddakibwa?
3. Wajja otya okutegeera okusaddakibwa kwo muntu wo?
4. Ossobola okunyonyolako engeri gyewamusanga mu ne bittundu ebyamussalwako?
5. Kiki kyosinziirako' kukakasa nti bamusaddaka?
6. Ani gwolowooza eyali emabega wokusaddaka omwaana, omukazzi oba omussajja?
7. Olowooza, birubirirwa ki ebyaali emabega wo'kusaddaka omuntu wo?

8. Okusaddaka omuntu wo, kukosezza kutya amaka ganno?

An Interview Guide for Local Council ones

Introduction:

My name is Bogere Suzan. I am a student of Kyambogo University and I am here to carry out an interview on Community perceptions about Gendered Ritual Murders in Greater Mukono and Impact of Ritual Murders. I am requesting that you give me time to answer some of the questions for the study. Thank you for accepting to be a participant in this Study. Here I have some simple questions for you and feel free to answer. The information provided will be kept confidential. The objectives of the study are: to explore the manifestations of gendered ritual murders, to establish the factors responsible for gender-related ritual murders, and the impact of gender-related ritual murders in greater Mukono.

1. How often are ritual murder complaints in this area?
2. How many cases have been reported at this local authority or at the nearby authority?
3. Who are the most victims of ritual murders, women or men, boys or girls?
4. Who are the most reported offenders/perpetrators of ritual murders, men or women? For the male/women offender, how old was he/she? What does the offender do for a living?
5. Why is it that most victims of ritual murders are women/men, or boys/girls?
6. What are the reasons/testimonies given by the offenders for murdering the innocent women or men, boys or girls?
7. What was the female or male offender interested in the killed victim?
8. How did the victims of ritual murders meet their death?
9. How was the physical state of the ritual victim [for the male or woman]? [Describe physical environment, the cuttings, what was taken from the victim, which specific body parts were cut and taken, were there any other suspected acts performed on the ritual victim apart from killing it e.g. rape?]
10. Timing of the ritual murders i.e. at what time of the day are ritual attacks most common, day or night?
11. Were there signs that showed that the victim [male or female] was attached to a ritualistic murder?

12. In your interaction with the victims and their families, how have these been affected by the ritual murder occurrence in their families and wider community?
13. How easy has it been for the families to pursue justice for their lost members?
14. What do you think should be done culturally, religiously, politically or economically to stop gendered ritual murders in this community?

**APPENDIX 2 : INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS OF
RESPONDENTS**

**TITLE OF STUDY: Gendered Manifestation and Impact of Ritual
Murders in Greater Mukono Area, Central Uganda**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Bogere Suzan, Kyambogo University,
Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

SPONSOR: The study is self-sponsored

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. If there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information, please feel free to ask. The study is purely for academic purposes and no private information (as you will guide) will be included in the research book.

STUDY PROCEDURES: Your participation in this study will involve you providing answers during the interview session with the researcher. With your permission we will conduct audio and video taping during interview sessions.

Reason for choosing you

You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are in the best position to guide on issues concerning gendered ritual murders in this community. You can also advise on how the government and other stakeholders can come in to minimize this societal challenge.

I just wish to assure you that there is no risk associated with your participation in this study.

BENEFITS

Students of theology will use the findings to carry on more research about ritual murders and develop their findings.

Religious leaders will use the findings to advice communities and preach against gendered ritual murders.

Community leaders will use the findings to sensitize their subjects on dangers of ritual murders and therefore promote a sense of security in human life.

Families will use the finding to eliminate cultural beliefs that entertain ritual murders thereby preserving life.

Political leaders will use the findings to promote the policies and practices that campaign against the gendered ritual murders.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The researcher will build confidence in participants that their responses to the survey or interview questions will be anonymous, in that there will be no need for them to write their names anywhere. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve utmost confidentiality through: assigning code names and numbers for participants on all research notes and documents; keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information under lock and key.

Questions: If you have any questions related to the study as a research participant, you can contact the principal investigator; Bogere Suzan, on Phone: 0781244402 or 0759023374, Email: suzanbogere@gmail.com

Statement of voluntariness: Participation in the research study is voluntary and you may join on your own free will. You have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you have any issues pertaining to your rights and participation in the study, please contact the public relations officer, Kyambogo university, Tel: (+256)-41-4-287354; Email: prokyu@kyu.ac.ug

CONSENT STATEMENT

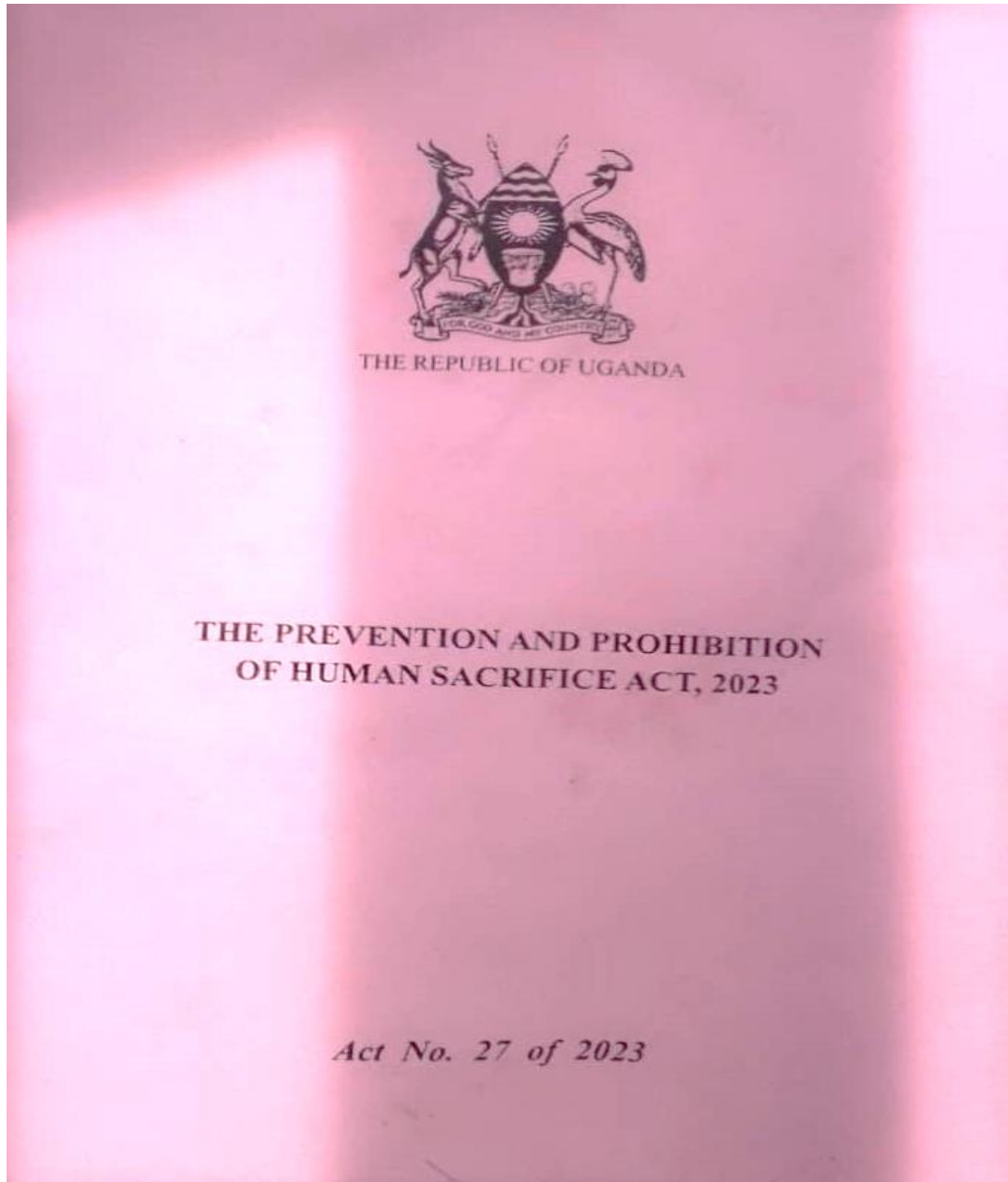
.....has described to me what is going to be done, the risks, the benefits involved, and my rights as a participant in this study. I understand that my decision to participate in this study will not affect me in any way. With the use of this information, my identity will be concealed. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I do not waive any of my legal rights but merely indicate that I have been informed about the research study in which I am voluntarily agreeing to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to me.

Signature of participant.....Date

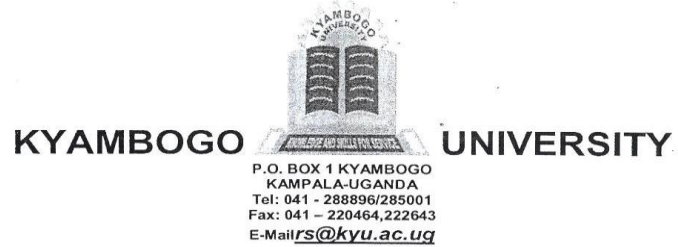
Name.....Signature of interviewer.....Date.....

APPENDIX 3: RAW DATA

**Act No. 27 of 2023; The Prevention and Prohibition of Human Sacrifice Act,
2023**



APENDIX 4 : ITRODUCTORY LETTER



DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

21st March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

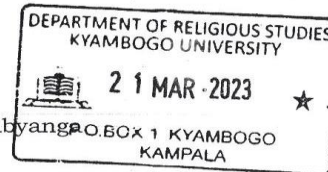
The bearer of this letter BOGGE SUZAN is a student Kyambogo University pursuing a Master's Programme.

He/She is conducting a research which is part of the requirements for t fulfillment of the award.

You are therefore requested to assist him/her with data collection.

Yours sincerely,

Assoc. Prof. Robert Kuloba Wabyanga
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



c.c. Academic Registrar

IN ANY CORRESPONDENCE ON
THIS SUBJECT PLEASE QUOTE

Our Ref: ADM/164/1

Your Ref:



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
BUIKWE DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT
P.O. Box 3, Lugazi, Uganda.
Tel. 0772 451 556/0752 935558/0759 465039
Email: cao@bukwe.go.ug
Website: www.bukwe.go.ug

03rd April, 2023

The Head of Department
Department of Religious Studies
KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY.

RESEARCH ACCEPTANCE LETTER.

This Office is in receipt of your letter dated **21st March, 2023.**

This serves to inform you that we have allowed **Ms. Bogere Suzan** a student at the Department of Religious Studies to carry out a research in Buikwe District under a topic "**Community Perceptions about Gendered Ritual Murders in Buikwe**".

Please note that the District Management will not meet any expense with regard to facilitation of the Student.

By copy of this letter, the **District Education Officer** is requested to provide the student with all the necessary information/support towards this research project.



Ssenyonjo Jude Mark
For: CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
BUIKWE DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Copied to:

- District Education Officer, Buikwe
- Bogere Suzan, Student