

**THE IDEAL WIFE OF PROVERBS 31:10-31: A CONTEXTUAL STUDY IN RELATION  
TO CONTEMPORARY MARRIAGES IN UGANDA**

**BY**

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**21/U/GDRS/14417/PE**

**DOCTORAL THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND  
GRADUATE TRAINING IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
OF KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY**

**OCTOBER 2025**

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all sources I used have been acknowledged as reflected in the references.

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## **APPROVAL**

This is to certify that this thesis has been written under our supervision and is now ready for examination with our approval.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to all gallant women who are wives playing a significant role in the public space in nation building as well as family building against the odds of African patriarchy. I also dedicate this work to all men, who as husbands will espouse the ideas in this work to appreciate the tremendous roles played by their wives in society and family.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to thank all the people who have contributed in all ways to this research project. I thank Associate Prof. Robert Kuloba Wabyanga my principal supervisor who has been instrumental in informing and shaping this study through his wider expertise in Bible, African culture and contemporary issues. His prompt responses, constructive criticisms and readiness to guide shaped my line of thought and arguments. I thank Rev. Can. Dr. Joy Mukisa Isabirye whose contribution has been paramount to this study in various forms. She was available to read my drafts, offer guidance and her experience of the challenges that affect the modern marriage family significantly informed the study.

I am also very grateful to the entire department of Religious Studies and Philosophy of Kyambogo University, and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. In a special way, I thank Associate Professor Kyazike Elizabeth (Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities) for the tremendous support and good will in the progression of this work.

I would like to thank the Humanities department of Kabale University especially Dr. Ruth Tibesasa, Rev. Assoc. Prof. Medard Rugyendo and colleagues from the Religious Study section who always stood with me in this journey. The tremendous contribution of the research participants like the female politician (parliamentarians), mothers' and fathers' union groups among others cannot go unmentioned.

In a special way, I am indebted to Spalding UK for the financial support towards my studies. This work has been only possible because it was sponsored by Spalding. Spalding sponsored my academic trip to the University of Leeds-UK. It was a life time experience, which gave me an opportunity to interact with scholars in the field of Biblical Studies like Prof. Emma Tomalin, whose insights impacted my study, and also interacted with the university library resources.

Lastly, I want to thank my family members who have stood with me in this academic journey right from the start, their endless support, encouragement and prayers have heavily impacted on the success of this study. In a special way, I dedicate this work to my mother whose biggest wish was for me to attain a PhD, but more so for enduring the excess of the African patriarchy as an African woman and wife.

## **ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS**

This study used the following abbreviations

ABH	African Bible Hermeneutics
ANE	Ancient Near East
AU	African Union
ASV	American Standard Version
CBS	Contextual Bible Study
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all form of Discrimination Against Women
CRE	Christian Religious Education
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
FP	Female Politicians
ISV	International Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
TCA	Thematic Content Analysis
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a contextual analysis of *לְיָדָהּ* (the ideal wife) of Proverbs 31:10-31 in relation to the African ideological conceptualizations of a good wife. The contemporary African society is a multi-ideological environment, which includes Afro-Christian and women emancipation ideals. These ideologies play concurrent and conflicting roles in informing value judgements in marriage and family life. This study problematizes the contemporary ideological constructs of a good wife and advocates for an ideological framework, which protects the African family and marriage. This ideological framework should emerge from the negotiations between the Afro-Christian and women emancipation ideologies. The study is hinged on the following objectives: to examine the textual and contextual meaning of *לְיָדָהּ* in Proverbs 31:10-31; Explore the African contextual Bible interpretation of *לְיָדָהּ* in Uganda; and lastly, to establish ways in which the contextual understanding of *לְיָדָהּ* can inform an understanding of an ideal wife in the contemporary African society. The study took a textual and contextual Bible Study (CBS) approach, which revealed an array of interpretations of the concept of ideal wife (*לְיָדָהּ*) across different settings and categories of participants. The lexical analysis of the Hebrew word *לְיָדָהּ* revealed fluidity especially in the functionality of the concept of *לְיָדָהּ*. Moreover, the textual analysis across contemporary language translations revealed the cultural whims of the audience on the idea of an ideal wife. On the other hand, the CBS revealed resistance and adaptations from the participants on the notion of an ideal wife, which inevitably highlight differences in the ideological lenses. The views from the textual and contextual analysis were used in informing the advocacy for the new ideological space. The fluidity in the Hebrew *לְיָדָהּ* gave the researcher liberty to reimage and reconstruct *לְיָדָהּ* in view of an ideal wife in the contemporary context. It is from this framework that the religio-cultural notions of a good wife, as well as the excesses of emancipation ideals are questioned in search of a third ideological space that is friendly to contemporary marriages and family relation.

### Key words

*Ideal wife, ideologies, Afrochristian, postmodern, women's emancipation, Proverbs 31:10-31*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1. Introduction

The illustriousness of contemporary marriage processes in Africa would make one concur with the traditional belief that marriage is a rite of passage, a noble course and sacred institution. From young age, girls and women are trained, and equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills and techniques to become successful wives. The curriculum for this training is enmeshed within the traditional cultural rubrics and tapestry of society within which these girls are born and nurtured. Among other aspects of the curricular, an African wife should demonstrate hard work, fertility in child production, hospitality, domesticity (which include home making and home keeping) and sex satisfaction (Kinyua 2022). A good example of the curriculum is the Baganda idea of *Kisaakaate* which illustrate the fact that traditional ideas are not left in the debris of African past but permeate the strata of time and space to inform a large section of the contemporary African expectations of a good wife. These ideals, it can be stated nuance the patriarchal cultural mindset of women and family relations. The drive in all these curricular details is to ensure the training of a good wife for successful marriage, family life and culturally stable society.

The Bible, which has been the hallmark of Christianity, has inevitably become an African book. Africans read the Bible as interested parties, partly because several pages of the classic book is a reflection of the cherished African values and identities. One of the values is patriarchy, which spells the position and status of women in society. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, the authority of men is affirmed, God and Jesus are portrayed as male, and all twelve disciples were male. Specifically, Paul in I Corinthians forbids wives from speaking in church and instructs

that they can only speak through their husbands. Relatedly, though not recorded in the Bible the Church history speaks of church fathers like Clement, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Origen and many others who shaped the theology and outlook of Christianity as a religion. The cultural relationship between the Bible and African context gained momentum when the Bible was translated into African languages. The linguistic and symbolic expressions familiar to African contexts were used in Bible translations. This significantly made Africans read and hear the Bible in their native cultural languages without vagueness. Various scholarly writings have attested to this reality which on the positive note facilitated the rapid expansion of Christianity especially in Sub-Saharan African, Uganda inclusive (Nzwili 2012; Dube and Wafula 2017; Wendland 1987; Togarasei 2009; Tshihli 2003; Mojola 2000). According to John Mbiti, the translations promoted the encounter between the two religious traditions in which African religion says yes to biblical tradition and readily accommodates it and biblical tradition also says yes to similar elements of African religion (Mbiti 1980).

Besides the African cultures, the Bible, believed to speak the voice of God and Christian religious holiness, is another force that nuances the sentimental values of marriage in Africa. It is not surprising therefore that the Bible is central in African marriages and marital issues as a book of reference. In many cases, marriages are performed in dual form, first in the traditional *model* and then followed by the Christian church weddings. The Bible is also used in counseling especially in Christian pastoral activities related to family and marriages. As shall be seen later, Bible texts especially Proverbs 31:10-31 are read. The Proverbial good wife character is emphasized as the model to be emulated by women in marriage. As shall be demonstrated later in chapter 4 of this book, Proverbs 31:10-31 is one of the texts which have been translated into various African languages, and suffice to say that the translations are engrained in strong cultural sentiments which

spell out the qualities of a good wife in vivid African cultural and linguistic accents. For example, in the Zulu Bible translation of Proverbs 31:10 the idea of a good wife is rendered as *Omfazi Okhuthuleyo*, which means a hard-working woman (Andresen and Carter 2016, Aiseng 2024), the Xhosa has *Omfazi Onesidima* which means a woman of dignity (Van Warmelo 2024, Seethal 2023); the Yoruba of Nigeria have *aya oniwa* which literally mean honest or morally upright woman (Bewaji 2007). The Baganda and other related Bantu languages in Uganda prefer *Omukazi Omwegendereza* literally meaning a cautious wife, which convey a sense of carefulness.

If I may refer to the old CRE Ugandan curriculum at “O” Level had a theme called: Man in the Changing Society, the making and thoughts behind the theme foresaw the dynamic and transitional nature of society, and how changes are inevitable for the man and woman. The phenomenon of change has been underscored in various academic discussions of anthropological and sociological nature (Parton 2002; Glenn 2004; Portes 2010; Kahane 2009; Wagoner and Power 2023; McMichael and Weber 2020). In the works of Anshika Arthur, change is inevitable and no society remains unchanged, change is universal and a necessary process whether planned or not (Anshika and Mahavidyalaya 2021). In many scholarly documents, there has been a rapid global social change, which has manifested in various ways like Education and cultures (Gidley 2012; Kavanagh, Lightfoot, and Lilley 2021; Castles 2010). One of the realities of such changes, it can be said, is that women have changed. Women who have traversed the traditional/cultural boundaries of domesticity and have found their way into the public spaces, which had been the preserve of men.

As Paul Kamukama would say, “the influence and power of a modern African woman has stealthily found its way from shanty village kitchens into air-conditioned boardrooms” (Kamukama 2013).

Education and the teacher have been identified as the agents of this social change (Bourn 2016; Brennan 2008; Chisholm 2004; Foster 2013). Formal education as carrier wagon of empowering forces like globalization, monetary economy, emancipation and affirmative actions has given women social pedigrees and eligibility to hold public offices/duties. Women are now in national politics, while many are in other professions as teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers, and lecturers, to mention a few. Women are key movers and shakers in the private sector as entrepreneurs and Chief executive officers (CEOs). These professional careers have inevitably put women outside the realms of domesticity as housewives because of the paramount commitments associated with the services they are required to offer to society. These positions are also protected by the local and international policy documents that safeguard the rights of women. Despite this social mobility, women still value marriages because of its human and social values. It is scholarly established that marriage balances human emotional, social and psychological needs, and validate human desires for love and companionship. It is a means through which humanity contributes to society through the production of children and the function of the family as the basic unit of society. The emotional and social values also extend to spiritual and intellectual functions, which balance the human and spiritual equilibria (Kaufman and Goldscheider 2007; Golestanibakht 2017).

This study has employed the concept of private and public spaces, which presents the idea of gendered spaces. Gendered spaces denote an expression used to theorize gender relations and compartmentalisation of roles and expectations. Within these spaces gender roles are maintained and reproduced. Culturally constructed, the private space is a women's sphere of operation, while the public space as the sphere for men. Gendered spaces carry double meanings i.e., physical spaces and theoretical (spatial spaces). In the context of this study, the use of private and public space as terms shall encompass both the physical and theoretical (spatial) meanings. In the physical

sense, private, also called domestic sphere, women especially wives are expected to be home, while the public space is the physical space for men like cities, towns and other public areas. Spatially, women are expected to think, behave, act and conduct themselves with modesty and avoid excesses which society disprove. They are expected to be motherly, submissive, servants and belong to their husbands, while men occupy the sphere of aggressiveness, fierceness, assertiveness and owners of women. The boundaries of the gendered spaces are regulated by the cultural constructs of honor and shame (Ohlsson 2013, 31). The gendered spaces, are therefore what society deems honor, natural and even godly; and deviations mean shame, unnatural and ungodly. Within these frameworks, therefore, a goodwife within many patriarchal African societies is one who is conscious of her domestic sphere and dwells within the boundaries. A bad wife, in that matter, is one who is out of the private (domestic) realm. In this thesis, I have used the concepts of spaces in general terms to refer to both the physical and spatial.

This idea of domesticity of women seems to have been concretized through the European encounters with Africa. Mary Balogh wrote a classic novel titled the *Ideal Wife*. The novel is about love and marriage in the regency era. The main character in the novel is Miles Ripley who is described as a wealthy, handsome man who is admired by women because of his wealth and status. Miles is tired of women who love him because of his wealth and therefore, he goes ahead to describe the type of woman he wants for a wife. According to Miles, his ideal wife is one who is quiet, plain, submissive and undemanding. Miles marries Abigail who was his relative. Unfortunately, Miles realizes that he had married a woman who was totally the opposite of his expectations, Abigail was talkative, comic, not plain looking, and she had a lot of opinions. Besides, Abigail had a mysterious past which could become a threat to the happiness of their

marriage. Nevertheless, regardless of Abigail's personality Miles accepted to love her the way she was as his wife (Balogh, 1991).

The presence of women in the public space presents a challenge in their socio-cultural and religious expectations as wives and mothers. The socio-cultural and religious expectations about women is that they have to be in the private space, and the public space is the domain of their male counterparts. Importantly, gender spaces refer to the woman in the contemporary setting as antithetical to the customary perceptions and inherently struggles to score as a good wife as per the socio-cultural and religious expectations. In the African traditional society, a good wife is defined in terms of domesticity as a home keeper, mother, farm worker, cook and entertainer to the visitors. Viewed in these terms, the woman in the public spaces today is labelled as "unmarriageable," "unhusbandable," "jezebel," and many other traditional lingos. Such women have had to struggle to keep with the public expectations as well as family responsibilities, to the end result of broken marriages, homes, single parenthood and its associated consequences (Kamukama 2013). It has been opined in some circles that women need to start conversations to scale up their voices, visibility and values in marriages (Olaore and Agwu 2021). These conversations have to be made with men or the patriarchy as the entire paradigm. For these conversations to be successful, there has to be a dialogue to produce a consensus; this consensus should be the agreed position which shall work as a framework to regulate marriage relationships in the contemporary society. It is this consensual framework which this study may call an ideological space or position agreeable to both wives and husbands.

This study contextually examines the concept of עֵשֶׂת חַיִּיל (eshet khayil) which is the Hebrew Bible term used for the ideal wife in Proverbs 31:10-31 in the contemporary society. The

contemporary society is a melting pot of conflicting ideologies. This study interrogates and problematizes the patriarchal renditions and appropriation of Proverbs 31:10-31 in the context of these conflicting ideologies. Using the case study of Uganda, the study engages a creative reading of the text. It is not risky to say that the ideological landscape today fuels confusion and conflicts in many social relationships, like marriages. It is a landscape made up of African traditional ideologies, Christian (and Bible) ideologies, and modern global ideologies that is based on rights and emancipation movements. All these ideologies are active and constitute frameworks within which questions related to marriage and gender relationships are addressed. Faced with this reality, the confusion and conflict animate themselves in forms of marriage disagreements, conflicts, violence, desertions, separations and divorces, with either side of the gender emotionally and physically harmed and blaming the other as the cause. The woman is often on the spotlight as questions of value are asked whether she was a good wife or not.

The central question in this study is who is a good wife or *בְּיָדָהּ יִשְׁמָר* today? Or asked differently, what should be the qualities of an ideal or good wife today? This is not the first time or occasion this question is being asked. It must have been asked before in the past, and it isn't wrong to assume that it is the basis upon which the sage, the writer of Proverbs 31:10-31, is premising his canonical articulations. Although the study mentions women in the public space, this research focuses on women in the political arena.

## **1.2. Background to the Study**

In this section, an effort is made to highlight foundational issues that are relevant to the topic under study. Bias is drawn to the ideological landscape, which informs the contemporary question of who an ideal wife is in the gender transactions and relationships of society. It is important to note

that, although the study draws examples and illustrations from histories, it does not historicize women and power struggles, and therefore avoids historical and narrative approaches on women and women struggles. For instance, although women emancipation is a key concept in this study, the study does not dwell on the historical evolution of the concept, but relishes on the ideas in the emancipation movement. Similarly, Histories on women and power in Africa are well presented in various scholarships (Ogbomo 2005, Amoah-Boampong and Agyeiwaa 2021, Musisi 2021, Nwokora 2021), and the current study shall selectively use certain information from these histories for contextual purposes only. This background section of the thesis, therefore entails information on the contemporary religio-cultural environment, contextual reality of women emancipation ideals, and legal and legislative contexts as foundation backgrounds that inform the current study.

### **1.2.1. Religio-Cultural Environment**

It is an established position that the majority of contemporary Sub-Saharan African religious and cultural environments is the product of European colonialism and Pre-colonial African cultures (Ocheni and Nwankwo 2012, Igboke, Paul, and Obiora 2021). It has been widely written that the invasion of missionary Christianity and colonialism energized African patriarchy and masculine fundamentalism, which robbed women of power in the political activities of their societies. Both colonialism and Christianity represented and promoted male authority over women. Colonialism came with violence, political exclusion, economic exploitation, sexual exploitation, control of culture and divide and rule, which were patterned differently for men and for women (Moane 1999; Thornton 2015; Agbaje 2021; Chuku 2018; Mama 2013; Miotto 2023). Historical evidence avers that European penetration into African societies during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century pushed women to the margins of society in terms of politics and economics. It was against this marginalisation that some women staged resistance riots against the colonial system. The case in point is the Aba women's

riot of 1929 in Nigeria against the colonial misogynistic attitude, in which warrant chiefs had been instituted by the British under indirect colonial rule, without including women. Women demanded that the colonial officers consult them in the administration of their society (Enyioko 2021; Uchendu and Okonkwo 2021; Abah 2019). In Kenya, Kikuyu women rioted against the British government in 1922. This followed Harry Thuku's concern to challenge the colonial government against subjecting women and girls to forced labor accompanied with beating and sexual harassment. On the arrest of Harry, Kikuyu women under the leadership of Mary Nyanjuri staged a riot for the release of Harry. Although most of them lost their lives in the riot, their demand resulted into the release of Harry. Their efforts became a landmark in the struggle against colonial domination in Kenya (Wanjiru 1999).

Colonialism and Christianity greatly transformed Sub-Saharan Africa—Uganda inclusive. In the language of Musa Dube, the region which was penetrated and inseminated by European ideologies (Dube 2012) in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century became transformed genetically to the end result that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a hybrid society. The 21st-centuryfrican society is the product of European encounters. It is a society shaped and modelled on the European systems and trajectories which adopted Africanity as flavors of autonomy and independence. The African society is a hybrid society; this hybridity constitutes ideological frameworks which inform gender relationships. The idea that colonialism connived with African patriarchy to produce an energised hybrid figure of patriarchy is not a misnomer. The invigorated patriarchy is the ideology which continues to disadvantage women (Ngcobo 2024). The Christian church in Africa is an offspring of this patriarchy. It is a living example in discriminating women in positions of leadership, while many still read and interpret the Bible in misogynistic ways.

This study names the contemporary hybrid society as the afrobiblical or Afro-Christian ideological space. Within this ideological space, Christian and biblical ideas have fused with African traditional beliefs to form frameworks within which attitudes and perceptions are formed. In gender terms, it is the ideological space in which male authority is reified as public and divinely political, while women's authority is perceived as inherently private and domestic. Consequently, men are to be privileged as politicians and leaders in society, while women are to be positioned in the domestic sphere as homemakers and wives to facilitate and make men comfortable in the public space.

This study further opines that, alongside the Afro-Christian or afrobiblical space are other ideologies introduced through postmodern discourses like women's emancipation. Although a dedicated section on emancipation is articulated below, it is not hasty to state that emancipation stands for empowerment and liberation of women in that matter (Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen Jr 2009; Boltanski 2011). Described as process, strategy and myriad efforts by which women are striving to liberate themselves from the authority and control of men and traditional power structures, as well as to secure equal rights and remove gender discrimination (Chen and Tanaka 2014), women emancipation movement and its ideologies cause anxiety in a male dominated Afro-Christian ideological spaces. The conflict of ideologies has resulted into several psychological, physical and social disturbances which scholarship should not ignore. In all these disturbances, the family, which should be the basic unit of society is the most affected. Among other issues, emancipation brings with it clash of values as alluded to in several journalistic and academic writings (Wasswa 1999; Walugagga 2024; Marion 2018; Ambler, Jones, and O'Sullivan 2021).

### **1.2.2. Women Emancipation**

Women emancipation is a global phenomenon. Many scholarly writings point to the reality that women struggles and eventual realization of women visibility in the public space and access to power has been gradual, even in the political and socio-economic contexts of Western countries (Krishnan 2018, Mandal 2018, Taylor and Taylor 1988, Evans 2012). World wars and industrialization became agents of emancipations in Europe and America as economic conditions that required labor at various levels of production became acute. While men were fighting in the World War I and II, women were recruited to manage industries and many service sectors (Grayzel 2013, Braybon 2012, Summerfield 2013). This created a consciousness of women's potential in the public life, away from the domestic sphere, challenging the patriarchal ideological narrative which had hitherto privileged men (Ouditt 2020, McEuen 2016). With industrialization, the economic fortunes for women increased in societies where industrialization had become the economic backbone. The salaried incomes and other economic gains raised the socioeconomic status and independence of women. This created a social change as women became less dependent on men for provisions, created a decline in the birth rates and changes in marriage patterns, and increased divorce rates (Palmowski 2016). The socio-economic emancipation was followed by political equality. For instance, In the USA, women were enfranchised in 1920, Women were enfranchised to the equal level with in the UK in 1928, with Switzerland being the last European country to give women the vote in 1971 (Palmowski 2016).

The end of the World War II, it can be said, created a new intellectual space in which the worth of women was not only appreciated but also visible. With the creation of the United Nations, the question of women became part of the agenda. The first Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was held in New York in February 1947, under the UN's Division for the Advancement of

Women (DAW). The commission's focus was on setting standards for ending all forms of discrimination against women (Women 2020). The UN adopted the resolutions of the commission in 1967. Later on, the commission put in place the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 (Women 2020). The ideals of the commission and the UN became internationally binding and all countries that were signatories to the UN charter were to uphold the UN resolutions on women liberation. Despite the gains, this new intellectual space must have posed a great challenge to patriarchy as empowered women exercised autonomy, which questioned the power structures in a home as husbands failed to live with empowered wives.

By the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, many African countries (South of the Sahara), Uganda inclusive, had embraced women emancipation ideas. Many African countries have taken significant strides in implementing legal changes that promote gender equality. These reforms have created a more enabling legal environment framework for women to participate in the socio-economy and political ramifications of their societies, unlocking their potential to contribute to the overall socio-economic development (Tavares and Benetatos 2023). Accordingly, empowering women is of great benefit to society since women make a bigger percentage in society. In countries like Uganda, women constitute 51% of the total population (Madoi 2024, UBOS 2024). The same is the trend in other countries like Kenya (O'Neill 2024a, KNBS 2022) and South Africa (O'Neill 2024b). In general terms, women outnumber men in terms of population in Sub-Saharan Africa as of 2024. The internet database is awash with information from individual countries' statistics bodies attesting the position. This is further affirmed by the World Bank statistics on Sub Saharan African (WB 2024). It is paramount, therefore that the region's governments and international bodies should ensure equipping women with knowledge and skills that shall improve on the socio-economic status of the society. In resonance with the famous saying that *Educate a woman educate*

*a nation*, women empowerment not only impacts on the individual woman but through her role as a mother and wife, she has the potential to transform her household to produce better citizens.

Paul Mutume observes that women emancipation movement and its achievements have brought both fortunes and predicaments for women in sub-Saharan Africa (Mutume 2017). An African woman in this geopolitical and social space is enticed with the tantalising promises of emancipation and at the same time lashed with the misfortunes of embracing new roles associated with emancipation by the religio-cultural institutions of society.

Today, society is embodied with conflicting ideologies of African nature and foreign especially emancipation doctrines. The result of the friction is increasing cases of domestic violence and its resultant broken homes and emotional stress. An empowered wife is a source of insecurity to patriarchy. A report from African Health Organization indicates that “when a woman enters paid work, a husband may try to preserve his authority by resorting to violence against his wife” (Brown 2021). In addition, working class women stand a risk of losing their marriages mainly because of two reasons: they have stepped out of the private space, and therefore deemed uncontrollable, and because they are not in charge and control of their marital homes performing traditional roles to the fullest. In an earlier study done by Paul Kamukama, for instance, one of the men revealed that before his wife got a job, she was a good wife: “Norah was a sweet wife who stayed at home looking after our children. She helped me get over the stress by boiling for me bathing water and preparing my favorite meal. However, Norah’s attitude changed when she got a job. She hired a housemaid who took over her responsibilities as a wife”. On top of that the man lamented that his wife no longer respects him since she feels richer (Kamukama 2013). The women on the other

hand blame men for not carrying out their responsibilities of providing for the family, yet they still expect their wives to continue with the traditional roles even after work.

Although empowerment and emancipation movement excited women because of the prospects with which it comes, there is still a lot to be done in order to make sense of and fully materialize this noble agenda. A society shaped by male dominance will take time to appreciate and accept that a woman can offer more than just being a house wife. Besides, the cultural and social norms that justify abuse against women have not only ended in homes but also stretched to work places. For instance, cases of sexual assault are at large at contemporary work places, where it has become difficult for most women to secure and maintain the job without offering sex to male bosses. Several accounts and testimonies of sexual exploitations of women have been reported on the continent by men in positions of authority (Neo 2023; Gulland 2021; Ampofo 2001; Masvawure and Sandfort 2014; Mensah 2020). Such evils against women have been shaped by society where women are viewed as sexual objects for men's pleasure and domination. This kind of society has conditioned some women to think that they can advance in society by offering their bodies for sexual indulgence to men. Cynthia Aber observes how some women will do all it takes to secure a job promotion and will make suggestive moves towards their bosses. She adds that, it is known that rising through the ranks of any job requires patience, commitment and hard work. But for some, getting to the higher echelons of a job involves shortcuts by way of sleeping with the managers (Aber 2014). This mindset accounts for numerous cases of indecent dressing exhibited by women in work places and other vices. Borrowing from the contemporary Luganda slogan "*okwetega*" which literally means positioning oneself seductively, many male employers/bosses have fallen prey of such temptations from some women. Sexual subjectivity becomes

transactional, and many women have weaponized their bodies transactionally to attain their demands (Duby et al. 2021; Saungweme, Ngang, and Towl 2024; Bjarnegård et al. 2024).

It has been argued that women are often challenged by society whenever they venture into career paths that are more male oriented; they are challenged to prove their capability. Historically, society has perceived women to be less competitive and effective in comparison to their male counterparts (Armstrong et al. 2012). Such societal stereotypes and misconceptions have left many women with potential in mediocre positions often as deputies, vices and assistants to their male counterparts. This type of construct has relegated women's roles in the domestic sphere as homemakers and child bearer, while their male counterparts as the runners and managers in the wider societies and spheres of politics and commerce (Kirai and Kobia 2012). In light of the contemporary women liberation movements, it is urgently critical for the African society to cultivate a more positive attitude towards the place/role of women as equal players in the growth and sustainable development of their communities as much as the men.

Women's visibility in the African public spaces has gained greater momentum in recent decades. Women in Sub-Saharan Africa are making significant strides, and have ably demonstrated that their talents and potentials are beyond the kitchen and child production as traditionally assumed. Unlike the social construct that women are less competent and competitive than men, women today have challenged this notion by demonstrating high levels of leadership and management abilities. A good number of women have found their way to legislative assemblies, where they are part of the decision-making body of the nations. It has been observed that "African women have proved not only to be potential players in the various spheres including politics, arts, academia and entrepreneurship but hands on game changers as well" (Thebe 2023, 46). On the African continent,

we read about female figures who have held high political ranks for instance Johnson Sirleaf the first female president in Africa whose leadership positively impacted Liberia as a state. Another one is Joyce Banda the first female president of Malawi who is renowned for her remarkable effort in fighting for women's rights and empowerment and other achievements. The most recent is Samia Suluhu Hassan the current president of Tanzania. The republic of Rwanda is acclaimed to be the leading country in the world with more women in political leadership and representation. Women constitute 61.3% of parliamentarians, while 37.4 in the senate (UN-Women 2024). This numerical presence has been followed by significant performances in various political and economic sectors transforming Rwanda as one of the fastest growing economy with cleanest cities in the region (Randell 2015).

In the Ugandan context, women have assumed high ranking political offices like Speakership, Vice president, Prime Minister and many others handling ministerial positions. It has been however noted that women's numerical presence in public spaces is not an indication of ideological shift or ideological emancipation of African masculinity, but a response to the proponents of critical mass doctrine. Critical mass proponents advocate for affirmative action through explicit quota systems that create and reserve special seats and spots for women in electoral positions, with the hope that numerical strength of women in national politics as female Members of Parliament and local councils will enhance women's rights due to their shared gender (Nneamaka 2009). Inevitably, numerical strength of women not only improves visibility but also numbers matter on issues of women which require voting and support. The critical mass doctrine may have however yielded to the desires of its proponents in terms of the quantitative representation of women, but it leaves a lot to be desired in the qualitative aspects of equality. This challenge is not just localized to Uganda or African but it has been discussed even in the contexts of mature democracies. Rangita de Silva

de Alwis examines how “representative critical mass in the political, business, and public leadership spheres can lead to critical acts” (de Silva de Alwis 2023, 3). She argues that since its inception 25 years ago in the Beijing Convention, the critical mass doctrine has not achieved full gender equality for women. Building on this, she further explains that although critical mass is not gender parity, it can lead towards gender parity and equality (de Silva de Alwis 2023). To make sense of critical acts in de Silva de Alwis’s works, the numerical strength of women in the political space is not a reflection of gender equality and parity. There is need for an ideological shift that can propel actions and behaviors which that enhance gender equality.

For purposes of illustration, there are numerous examples from the African continent that can illuminate the challenges of critical mass theory. But a case of Rwanda may suffice: Rwanda has a glittering picture of female politicians in parliament and other political representations, but these do not reflect the popular society. Rwanda is predominately patriarchal and family leadership is male, and to many, empowerment associated with political positions stops at the front door and does not enter into marital homes; the powerful women of Rwanda play good wives at home by performing the traditional expectations of a wife (Warner 2016). A good Rwandan woman in Kagame’s regime, therefore, is patriot in serving her country through public work and career but a submissive wife in the service of her husband at home. A home in this case is another form of government where successful service maybe a ticket to the public government service.

Emancipation is generally an ideological challenge in many African societies. Albeit the positive contributions of women emancipation and empowerment, there is some degree of dissatisfaction in the agenda to emancipate women in the African context. Most societies view emancipation as a movement which is anti-african and anti-christian and it has come to distort the African and

Christian values (Mutume 2017) in a bid to achieve “western equality for women” (Ballard-Reisch, Turner, and Sarratea 2001: 66). Given the fact that most of the emancipation agendas are not in tandem with the African tradition norms and the Christian teachings, has ensued into a clash and conflict between the two ideological environments. The pro-emancipation movements regard the African traditional and Christian values as unfair and oppressive to women which they need to be liberated from, the African traditional and Christian ideals also see the former as foreign, immoral, valueless, unafrican and ungodly.

On the other hand, the concept of emancipation has not properly been synthesized and understood in most of our African societies, it is still abstract and foreign to our context that even the recipients themselves do not know how to appropriate it. Most of the activists have copied and passed the package as it is in the western world not minding about the cultural differences between the two contexts. This type of approach has resulted to resistance to emancipation ideals in most African societies because of the assumption that emancipation has come to change the natural and normative order of the African society (Kulayigye 2024).

Emancipated women have taken advantage of the rights and freedoms to abandon certain duties and responsibilities as wives in the guise of empowerment. This has brought disharmony in marriages. The education and economic employment has given women a sense of independence which has turned many of them unmarriageable according to the religio-cultural standards of a good wife. This, as observed by Mburu has resulted into domestic violence and eventually marriage separations and divorces among several couples today (Mburu 2020). The marriage challenges encountered have not only disorganized the structure of the African family but has bred social vices and behaviors among emancipated women. Amidst other factors, marriage stresses have

prompted some women in the modern setting to resort to looking for companionship and sexual pleasure from fellow women with the thought that a woman can understand a fellow woman's needs better than a man. This cancer has encroached on African families largely due to loneliness among women in the modern setting (Uzoeshi and Harcourt 2020).

Besides, the emancipation agenda has focused more on the women leaving behind men who are to stay with these women as wives. This has created problems in families as men are not benefiting from emancipation and empowerment of women apart from knowing that their wives work, the men do not see the value of their work. Women have kept the financial benefits to themselves in the name of *sente yekikazi* literally meaning the 'lady's money'. Most men hardly know how much their wives earn and how the money is spent yet they still expect the husband to meet all the financial obligations of the home. This issue of women keeping their finances secret has attracted a lot of attention from the community for instance on a media show called Reality Check, Arinaitwe Evas a life coach therapist hinted on the issue of *sente yekikazi* and how it has affected family relations. According to her, many women have got money and invested in secret projects without the knowledge of their spouses, she notes that several of them have constructed houses and even made their husbands secretly tenants. Arinaitwe argued that women in this wake of empowerment, are still holding to the old mentality of men being the sole providers in the family and looking at their money as theirs alone. She calls upon women to share their earnings with their husbands and drop the old mindset of leaving all the financial obligations to men, she discourages women from the *sente yekikazi* mindset because times have changed. (Mwine 2024). It will be of great benefit to the family if both men and women cease being static in the old traditional mindsets and embrace the new roles and responsibilities in accordance to the changing times.

It is paramount to know that emancipation and its agendas is a new reality that African societies need to contend with. From the above we see that although emancipation has been embraced, it is still facing opposition from the locals due to its foreign nature. This therefore calls for a paradigm shift were the notion of emancipation is brought in a way that makes sense to the local community, this calls for a contextual redefining and a home-grown script of emancipation. Some African societies have tried to contextualize women emancipation and empowerment. Sylvia Bawa makes an observation that as African women fight for emancipation, they have to be conscious of their society and not be culturally insensitive. She notes that the Ghana women used the global documents to channel their demands for women's rights but also mindful about their cultural setting.

Another strategy these women employed was involving the cultural leaders through dialogue and negotiations in order for them to accommodate women's rights within cultural traditions (Bawa 2012). Involving the cultural leaders is helpful in this struggle because this group holds influence and power in the society. This is the group responsible for shaping beliefs, values, norms and attitudes bringing them in perspective therefore means that they help through their influence to persuade community members to embrace the empowerment agenda. Besides, Winnifred Bedigen from the context of South Sudan also identifies the need to indigenize empowerment of women since the western feminist who plan and implement empowerment programs may not clearly understand the plight of local women. She identified the need for a contextual interpretation and implementation of women empowerment programs rather not imposing a foreign pre-determined document which is out of context. This indigenized empowerment of women as noted by Bedigen is not an individual responsibility but rather the concern of the father, brother, husband and the

patriarchal community in general. This women empowerment should further be informed by proverbs, myths, beliefs and knowledge values of the community (Bedigen 2022).

The efforts to have contextualized women emancipation paradigm has been embraced not only in the African context but also in other cultures like the Arab world. Rabia Naguib writing from the Islamic ideological context problematizes and challenges the western women emancipation and empowerment model as she argues that western concept of women empowerment is not applicable in their Arab context. She calls for a contextualization of the western model to suit the worldview of the local community. According to Naguib, the western paradigm is accused of giving women titles and positions but yet contextually women do not have the real authority and power. Naguib from her context rejected the top-bottom approach in implementing emancipation agendas but rather advocated for an indigenous approach which involves the local community. Khoiru Umam brings to light that Islam as a religion is pro-women empowerment, the Quran advocates for women empowerment and that this is the empowerment that makes sense to the Arab context (Umam 2022; Naguib 2024).

The Ugandan pro-women activists ought to see the need for a contextualized approach in the demand for women emancipation, they should benchmark from societies like Ghana which are a step ahead in the move towards women emancipation. This study calls for female legislators and other women activities to go slow with the emancipation agenda if they are to achieve the target. They should drop the combative and militant approach and adopt a more polite method like having conversations and negotiations with the Afro-Christian group who are the custodians of African culture and religion. There is need to contextualize the global documents and state legislations on women emancipation like the recent proposed marriage Bill before applying them. This calls for a

bottom-top approach where the cultural leaders and the local community are consulted and are in agreement before implementing the model. This study advocates for a home grown emancipation paradigm that is in tandem with the Afro-Christian and postmodern ideals on women emancipation, putting in consideration the cultural differences. This model should be appreciated by both women and the patriarchal community at large, where not only women but also men become beneficiaries of women emancipation and empowerment goals.

### **1.3. Legal and Legislative Context of Women's Rights**

The ideological dilemma of the contemporary African societies is worsened by the fact that women issues are protected by both local and international policy documents and protocols. The African contemporary environment is so paradoxical in the way that it offers contradicting ideologies in the gender relations between women and men—specifically wives and husbands. This paradox has been well illustrated in the works of Deborah S. Ballard-Reisch, Paaige K. Turner and Marcia Sarratea that African legislative bodies pass some of the most progressive legislations regarding gender equality at the same time advocating the return to African traditional values, which continue to subject women to patriarchal authority (Ballard-Reisch, Turner, and Sarratea 2001).

Admittedly, women struggles in Africa have snowballed in various shapes and shades of legislative nature. These legislations are in the global context of the International Human Rights and other United Nations frameworks on women like Women's strategic plan, 2022–2025, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA), among others. These documents stipulate important policy and human rights issues, which concern women globally. In all the stipulations of the UN

resolutions and protocols on women, central is the idea that rights of women as humans have to be protected, and criminal is any action that discriminate women on the basis of gender.

The global resolutions have formed the basis of Women in Africa to put in place legal frameworks and documents through the umbrella bodies like the African Union and local parliaments voicing their struggles. One of the legal frameworks worth a mention in this work is The African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women (2003), also called the Maputo protocol produced by the African Union, and is probably the first legal instrument of regional stature that comes into force on the continent specifically addressing women issues. The document, in its preliminary pages evokes the authority of other international instruments that advocate against discrimination against women, and center women issues as a human right issue. The protocol defines "Discrimination against women" as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction or any differential treatment based on sex and whose objectives or effects compromise or destroy the recognition, enjoyment or the exercise by women, regardless of their marital status, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all spheres of life" (African Union 2003, 3-4). What is catchy in this definition is the objectification of a woman in the phrase "regardless of their marital status:" This significantly allude to the fact that marriage, perceived in the specific context of this study, is an institution which may impede women from enjoying or exercise of women's rights to the fullest.

Contextually, the protocol is cognizant of the cultural landscape which has normative values for women in marriage; and how married women should be in respect to their involvements in the public spaces. Conversely, and auxiliary to this study, marriage is also a qualifier or disqualifying feat in many African societies. As shall be seen later, the success of a woman's public activities is qualified by how she manages her marital home. Women who are not married or with divorce

backgrounds are culturally despised as failures. Against this reality, the AU protocol advocates against discrimination of women on the basis of their marital status. Article 6 specifically addresses marriage. Of interest and contextual to the African values, the protocol defines marriage in a heterosexual sense as man and woman. Thus, in the marriage between men and women, the protocol advocates for equality between the husband and wife. Monogamy is the ideal marriage, although acknowledging the existence of polygamous marriages. The spirit of the protocol in article 6 is to empower women in marriage to have rights and voice in determining the affairs of a home—on the equal basis with the husbands.

The protocol guarantees the married woman to Right to Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process (article 9); and right to education and training (Article 12). Politics and education are very vital avenues by which women have broken away from the realm of domesticity. Politics is no-longer the domain of patriarchy. Women's political participation at various levels has bolstered the advancement of gender issues with the view of empowering women and girls. The equal access to education is equally empowering to women as it is to men. It is important to note that, these resolutions are emerging from a cultural context which is discriminative and oppressive against women. The discrimination, it can be argued stems from the ideological bedrock upon which the African society and cultures are premised.

It is not hasty to state that, the advocacy of the protocols has caused relational disequilibrium between men and women—as husbands and wives and has resulted into marriage breakages. In many of these societies, the African customary systems and religious authorities especially the Bible stand monolithically to defend the patriarchy as the divine and natural order, and vilify the contemporary rights movements as sinful. This reality worsens the ideological paradox, and

therefore calls for academic responses to questions like who is an ideal wife in the context of empowerment? I argue in this study that, the bible should be read creatively and contextually, in conversation with policy instruments to generate a grounded theological mindset for the contemporary contexts.

It is interesting to note that, at its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Maputo protocol went through evaluative discoveries in Nairobi, Kenya. It was discovered that, despite the twenty years of existence of the protocol, the situation of women in African is still appalling, as women are vulnerable to challenges caused by social, economic, cultural and political marginalization, gender-based violence and discrimination against women, terrorism, conflict, and fundamentalism (Mohamed, Mbengue, and Apollos 2023). Although at this occasion, the member states resolved to make Africa better under the working slogan called Agenda2063, with seven aspirations, the sluggish progression may point to inaccuracies in the implementation strategies.

The protocol in all its articles call for the member states to include in their national constitutions relevant provisions that localize the implementation of the protocols. As shall be illustrated later in the context of Uganda, there are mainly two tactical mistakes made by the proponents of women empowerment: firstly, the stipulations remain on paper and abstract in nature—serving as academic and legal materials. Issues of women rights are largely in local national constitutions, and are not reachable or readable by the local people—including women themselves. Most of these documents ought to be translated into local languages in simple terms in order to be understood. Secondly, the proponents of empowerment impose their agenda upon the local people, which creates resistance. There is need for strategies to negotiate access into the patriarchal mindset in

order to create a consciousness for women writes. As indicated below, the attempt to introduce the domestic relations bill in Uganda has suffered rejection by the Ugandan patriarchal structure.

Among other things, the Agenda2063 envisions a non-sexist continent by the year 2063; to end violence against women and girls, ensure improved access to and control of financial, institutional and land resources; and ensure good civil and political participation and representations. Furthermore, by 2063, Africa shall be an environment where girls and boys can reach their full potential, and where men and women contribute equally to the development of their societies; an environment of gender equality in all spheres of life; an environment without any forms of violence and discriminations against women and girls (Mohamed, Mbengue, and Apollos 2023).

Although at a slow pace, several countries have adopted the stipulations of the Maputo protocol into their local policy and legal documents. It is energizing that the Maputo protocol is always cited in cases involving human rights issues that pertain women and girls in many judicial rulings and decision (Clack and Kimaili 2023, Masore 2021, Mbaku 2023, Addadzi-Koom 2020). Uganda, as one of the member states of the African Union affirmed the commitment to align women empowerment initiatives in vision 2040 (Balyejjusa 2015, Rwendeire 2012), and hopefully, there shall be committed efforts in strengthening measures towards the realization of the Agenda2063.

It has been realized however that, the ideals of the Maputo protocol and other similar instrumental frameworks have suffered, and more to suffer because of the African patriarchal mindsets (Bond 2021, Geng 2019, Waruru 2020). This is the mindset which is heavily controlled by the Afro-Christian ideologies, which positions male dominance over women. Within this socialization, efforts towards women advancement send shivers to the patriarchal spine. The women's movement is creating a different caliber of a woman who does not measure up to the qualifiers of an ideal

wife in the patriarchal paradigm. As demonstrated above in the case of Rwanda, the gender equality doctrines in majority of Africa seem to work at official face value levels, but intrinsically authority belongs to men, more so at the local society and family levels. This creates fundamental difficulties in achieving empowerment goals at the family level. Although majority of the people and custodians of patriarchy are in local villages and townships, many are in positions of authority including national leadership.

It is not classified information that the Domestic Relations Bill for the Republic of Uganda has stalled (Malinga and Ford 2010). The bill defined a domestic relationship as a family relationship, a relationship akin to a family relationship, and it was aimed at reforming and consolidating “the law relating to marriage, separation and divorce; to provide for the types of recognized marriages, marital rights and duties, grounds for breakdown of marriage, rights of parties on dissolution of marriage, and for other connected purposes” (The-Domestic-Relations-Bill 2003, 3). One of the controversial elements of the Bill was the issue of women’s rights to property and sexual decisions. In Part ix, under matrimonial rights, the bill stated in part that “Spouses are entitled to equal rights to consortium in marriage; and “a spouse may deny the other spouse the right to sexual intercourse on reasonable grounds.” The reasonable grounds stated include: poor health, after childbirth, after surgery, during medical treatment or observation, or due to fear that engaging in sex may cause physical or psychological harm (The-Domestic-Relations-Bill 2003, 27). The bill went ahead to criminalized marital rape (nonconsensual sexual intercourse) and spelled out the punishment for marital rape which includes imprisonment and cash fines (The-Domestic-Relations-Bill 2003). Salient in the bill is the attempt to safeguard the rights of women in a marriage setting. Issues of marital properties become prominent with about 25 mentions.

Property, especially land, and the sexual body of a woman are two of the most emotionally dangerous resources which patriarchy is more sensitive about. The proposed Bill was depriving men of their control over these resources, and it is not surprising that its failure was not only informed by the popular wide patriarchal society but also supported by the very society organizations like cultural leaders and predominantly patriarchal mindsets. For instance, one cultural leader from Teso sub-region, at the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda conference held in 2012 expressed his views in opposition to the Domestic Relations Bill. He said: “Passing the Domestic relations Bill in its current form tantamount to devaluing the Ugandan cultural values. As cultural leaders we don’t agree with the proposed equal sharing of property amongst two partners in case of divorce on grounds that they have been staying together as the Bill suggests” (ChimpReporter 2012). The Bill was further opposed by the religious community which regarded it as foreign, unafican and ungodly (Ross 2010).

Credit goes to the relentless women in the Ugandan parliament. The Domestic Relations Bill was rebranded as the Divorce and Marriage Bill 2013. This equally suffered significant criticism not only by from the local people across Uganda, but also the male members of the Ugandan parliament. The Lango sub-region, through their cultural leader rejected the Bill, and urged the Members of parliament to consult cultural institutions on such matters. To the Lango authorities, the proposed bill would bring confusion in families among men and women. To the cultural leaders, the bill meant that government and parliament in that matter was inciting women against men (Onyango 2013).

Residents of Kinoni Subcounty in Nyabushozi in Kiruhura district castigated the Members of Parliament for wasting time on debating the Bill instead of concentrating of issues of national

importance like corruption. To them, the bill was anti-Christian and anti-African and has no value in their community. The residents who turned up in large numbers at a consultative meeting called for the area Member of Parliament Col. Fred Mwesigye made their views known (Ssendendo 2013). In Buganda, the Bill was rejected by the people of Kayunga District, who expressed fears that it contravened the doctrines of Christianity and undermines the Buganda culture. What angered the Baganda people in the Bill most, reports *New Vision* was the issues of marital rape. To the Baganda people who gathered at Kayunga taxi-park question their Member of Parliament Amos Lugolobi, why they wasted time discussing irrelevant laws in Parliament. The residents requested government and parliament to forget about the bill and concentrate on issues of poverty alleviation and corruption (Jjuuko 2013). In the same way, the Christian leadership also condemned the Bill, claiming that it was against the teachings of the church. To the church authorities, the bill is being championed by the people who try to compromise the essentials of the Christian faith (Sekanjako 2013). The Bill was defeated, but resurrected in 2022 as the Marriage Bill 2022.

Sadly, the Marriage Bill 2022 may have dropped divorce in its title but is embodied with clauses which still make patriarchal institutions anxious, for instance cases of marital rape. Mr. Christopher Tsubira, who also work as Secretary for Fathers' Union of Busoga Diocese categorically calls the new Bill "deplorable and a very unfortunate mindset for women to gang up against men in a social and divine institution of marriage, for which men are the fountain of honor in spite of being largely implicated as the culprits" (Tsubira 2023). Among other loopholes identified in the new Bill, is that it is not balanced and seeks to oppress men: what does the bill provide for women who deny their husbands sex indefinitely? What is the jail penalty or heavy fines for women outside marriage, a phenomenon that has sparked off DNA tests for almost every born child? Is the Bill taking care

of uncountable husbands being insulted by their wives? Are some of the questions rhetorically asked Mr. Tusubira to him, the bill is unbalanced and its aim is to incarcerate men as women take over ownership of their properties (Tusubira 2023). In other circles, the new Bill is characterized as “demonization of indigenous African cultures ... the deliberate trivialization of African cultures” (Owaraga 2023).

But it should be noted that, the ideals of empowerment as stipulated in proposals like Domestic Relations Bill, Marriage and Divorce Bill and policy documents like Maputo protocols should revise their approach and *modus operandi* at least if they are to succeed in Africa. Their adaptability solely depends on how they engage with African cultural realities which govern gender relationships. For instance, while they advocate for empowering women, the advocates are not conscious of the reality that they are in some way disempowering the men and challenging African power structures. Why the marriage and divorce bill 2013 is seen by the locals as a wastage of time and irrelevant is because it asks the patriarchal power structure to drop its privileges, which among other things control over resources and female gender sexual body. It was made clear by the Kayunga locals that the idea of criminalizing marital rape was unafrikan because in Africa, husbands have right of access to sex with their wives, as long as there are “no reasonable causes” why they should not. The whole notion of empowerment and rights therefore is seen as foreign, because it is imposed upon the people.

There is need to engage in conversations and negotiations at the grassroots with the patriarchal structures before legislations and gender rules are imposed. The bottom-up approach with the very institutions which impede full realization of equality should be engaged, as the top-bottom legislative protocols also take shape. The home and family are the basic unit of society, which

should not be ignored. Men, especially husbands to the women should not be ignored in African emancipation drive. There is need to engage communities on the subject of gender rights as a matter of development. It has to be borne in mind that the husband is bonded to the woman first by love, which is deeply organic and emotional, and secondly the cultural and spiritual institutions which dictate terms that are different from the terms of equality and empowerment. The heart of the African patriarchal sensations needs to be smoothed through collaborative approaches and reassurances to men, that the emancipation of women and wives in that matter is not a selfish agenda promoted by women who want to robe men of their privileges, but a matter of human quality and development, which is necessitated by the social changes that have swept the world.

It is from this background that the current study finds expression to advocate for the conversations between the African authorities and the ideals of empowerment and emancipation towards a harmonious position between the varying ideologies. This harmonious position can constitute a grounded theological and epistemological framework within which meaningful domestic relations can be harnessed.

To reiterate, the primary focus of this thesis is marriage in the context of conflicting ideologies. Using Proverbs 31:10-31, the study problematizes the notion of ideal wife in the contemporary society. The upsurge of family conflicts, violence and marriage breakdown is a menace for the future African society. In view of the conflicting values and ideologies and consequences to the family and marriage, the study advocates for another ideological space which espouses the common good from the Afro-Christian space and women emancipation ideologies. The Ugandan pro-women activists ought to see the need for a contextualized approach in the demand for women emancipation, they should benchmark from societies like Ghana which are a step ahead in the

move towards women emancipation. This study calls for female legislators and other women activists to go slow with the emancipation agenda if they are to achieve the target. They should drop the combative and militant approach and adopt a more polite method like having conversations and negotiations with the Afro-Christian diehards who are the custodians of African culture and religion. There is need to contextualize the global documents and state legislations on women emancipation like the recent proposed marriage Bill before applying them. This calls for a bottom-top approach where the cultural leaders and the local community are consulted and are in agreement before implementing the model.

Lessons from the Domestic Relations Bill 2003 revealed that the many cultural and religious leaders never even wanted any debate about it. It is my kind opinion that the bill should not have been drafted in the first place before consultations are made. On the other hand, the consultations should have come first, and the views attained consultations inform the bill drafts. Time and resources need to be invested in a research model that methodologically negotiates access to the local communities, engage in focus group discussions and consultations to generate ideas relevant for legislative activities of making bills and laws that affect people's cultural sensitivities. Such approaches will rise awareness on women issues as well as generate local solutions and opinions in making policies.

Suffice to say that, the negotiation is not to be done only with the local society, but also male legislators who are the products of the patriarchal orientation. This approach has been effective in legislating against cultural injustices like FGMs in places like Kenya and Sudan (Green 2012). In legislating against FGM in Kenya, Linah Jebii Kilimo was a Member of Parliament from one of the notorious Kalenjin communities. She narrated to the Guardian newspaper that: To achieve

delicate goals, campaigners must work to understand the priorities of the individuals whose influence they seek. She explained that the first interest group they got to their side were the male members of parliament, who constituted a task force in the campaign against FGM. The second category was the local people, who eventually constituted and rallied a demonstration against FGM in Kalengin villages. The eventual enactment of the law and criminalization of the FGM by the Kenyan parliament enjoyed great support among the Kalenjins, both women and men (Topping 2014).

This study advocates for a home-grown emancipation paradigm that is in tandem with the Afro-Christian and postmodern ideals on women emancipation, putting in consideration the cultural differences. This model should be appreciated by both women and the patriarchal community at large, where not only women but also men become beneficiaries of women emancipation and empowerment goals.

#### **1.4. Research problem**

The Bible text of Proverbs 31:10-31, among other things, spells out what should be the qualities of an ideal wife. The text has been used as a yardstick for a good wife in many Christian settings in Africa like weddings and counseling (Jansen 2020). Situating the Hebrew Proverbs 31:10-31 in its ancient Near Eastern context; together with its vernacular translations in various African languages reveals the patriarchal emphasis as various patriarchal cultures convey their desires about an ideal wife. In the wake of women emancipation and related ideologies of rights and equality, appropriation of the text inevitably conflicts with the women empowerment program. Unfortunately, marriages in Africa are experiencing challenges that result from conflicting ideological values, and there is acute need for theological resources and discourses that cherishes

and harmonize the ideological diversities across the gender divide.<sup>1</sup> Marriages have suffered mainly because of the misunderstandings between the man and woman—misunderstandings which in most cases emerge from differences in ideological perception of issues.<sup>2</sup> Owing to the centrality of the Bible in Africa, more so as a liberation tool, there is need for a creative reading of Proverbs 31:10-31 with the view of understanding the Hebrew concept *לְיָדָיִן* in its cultural context. It is therefore imperative to ascertain how the concept *לְיָדָיִן* can contextually be understood through the African hermeneutical lens, and how the contextual knowledge and values can generate new epistemological values relevant to the Ugandan perception of a good wife. The readership and theological ideas thereafter should ensue as a *tete-a-tete* in search for a contextually relevant perception and understanding of an ideal wife and marriage relationship today.

## **1.5. Objectives of the Study and Research Questions**

### **1.5.1. General Research objective**

The main objective of the study is to offer a contextual African Bible interpretation of *לְיָדָיִן* Proverbs 31:10-31 in the Ugandan context.

### **1.5.2. Specific Objectives**

1. To analyze the concept of *לְיָדָיִן* from the cultural context of Proverbs 31:10-31.
2. To explore the African contextual Bible interpretation of *לְיָדָיִן* in Uganda.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the word gender divide here intentionally because, marriage perceived in heterosexual terms is primarily a relationship between the man (male) and woman (female).

<sup>2</sup> The conflicting ideological context has created a situation similar to the imaginary idea that men and women come from different planets. Gray (1992) metaphorically presents that Women are from Venus and men are from Mars to mean that men and women come from different planets hence making the two different from each other. According to Gray, women and men emerging from different planets justifies the differences that exist between the two genders in terms of personality, communication style and emotional needs. He describes men as direct, solution-oriented, less emotional, need independence, space, appreciation whereas women are indirect, emotional, and empathetic, seek connection, validation, emotional support, and reassurance during conflicts. Gray contends that these differences are so profound that men and women often struggle to communicate effectively, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts in relations.

3. To establish ways in which the contextual interpretation of *לִּדְתֹשֶׁבֶת* can inform the contemporary understanding of an ideal wife in Uganda.

### **1.5.3. Research questions**

To achieve the above objectives, the study used the following research questions:

1. What does *לִּדְתֹשֶׁבֶת* mean in the context of Proverbs 31:10-31?
2. What is the African contextual Bible interpretation of *לִּדְתֹשֶׁבֶת* in Uganda?
3. In which ways can the contextual interpretation of *לִּדְתֹשֶׁבֶת* inform the contemporary understanding of an ideal wife in Uganda?

## **1.6. Scope of the Study**

### **1.6.1. Geographical Scope**

Important to state is that: geographical scope refers to the geographical area or region that the study focuses on. It defines the boundaries within which data is collected (Andogah et al., 2008). It is the place where the study is being carried out. However, the demand for the demarcation of geographical place as scope within which the study is to take place entirely depends on the subject and topic of study (Andogah et al., 2012). The current topic of study entails a hermeneutical analysis of the abstract concept of *לִּדְתֹשֶׁבֶת* within the theoretical frameworks of post colonialism and postmodernism. In this analysis, the ideological spaces (rather than geographical or spatial places) are mapped, within which shared dominant knowledge values, dominant cultures, and religious beliefs are analyzed. A survey of similar studies done elsewhere reveals no interested focus on the geographical scope per se (Jansen, 2020; Kebaneilwe, 2012; Masenya, 2004; Nyarko-

Mensah, 2023), but ideological scope which encompasses various epistemological frameworks within which the concept of  $\text{בְּיָדָאָהֳרָה}$  is analyzed and applied.

Furthermore, the study also involved different categories of participants, who included female Members of Parliament, the mothers' union and fathers' union, and members of the wider community. The female Members of Parliament operate from the same legislative space, within same African patriarchal ideological space, although from diverse ethno-geographical origins. The same applies to the membership in the mothers' union and fathers' unions, who share same theological worldview regardless of their geographical spaces.

The use of the word Uganda` in the topic is not to denote a place of study, but a space conceptualized in ideological terms as a multilayered ideological space which traverse intra and international boundaries. In selecting the members of the community, although the bias was on Christians, effort was made to include diverse regional backgrounds drawn from the four administrative regions of Uganda that is to East, West, North and Central; and educational levels. This was aimed at giving the study a national representation and diverse knowledge on the topic. Although it was not possible to recruit participants from all the 56 ethnic tribes and cultures, the information from the selected sample of participants indicated common cultural perceptions societies have about wives.

### **1.6.2. Content Scope**

The current study examines the Biblical Hebrew concept of  $\text{בְּיָדָאָהֳרָה}$  through textual and contextual analysis and how it is appropriated to the modern understand of an ideal wife. The study builds on the ideological frameworks of the African traditional beliefs and values, Bible/Christian, and the postmodern worldviews of women emancipation and empowerment as the contextual

environments which inform social relations. Although the study does not historicize the contextual realities like women emancipation, by only drawing theoretical facets in broaching issues in contemporary marriage relations, in some incidences selective historical accounts are used for purposes of illustration and giving the study a contextual background. Besides, the research looks in depth the two ideological spaces of Afro-Christian and Postmodern.

### **1.6.3. Time Scope**

This study was not situated in any time frame. The research is hermeneutical as the notion of *בְּיָדֵי אִשָּׁה* was creatively interpreted and applied to the modern understanding of an ideal wife. Important to note is that culture just like Bible interpretation which are fundamental to the study are timeless as they transverse time and space. This is not only peculiar to this research but other hermeneutical studies of the similar nature like Mmapula (2012), Masenya (1997), Jansen (2020), Nyarko (2023) and many others do not specify the time scope.

### **1.7. Significance of the study**

The study is carried out under the theoretical frameworks of Postcolonial African Bible interpretation which focuses on empowering the disadvantaged groups like women through challenging patriarchal systems that have fueled gender inequality. This study therefore joins other scholars in the field in the struggle against women marginalization and oppression embedded in the African traditional cultural, and religious systems (Christianity/Bible). This is achieved through a creative reading of Proverbs 31:10-31.

The study's emphasis was on the understanding of an ideal wife in the contemporary Ugandan era, and my focus was on the female parliamentarians who are married. Choosing this category of participants was strategic in the way that the findings of the study shall be of importance in

informing some of their legislations about their continued struggle for women's rights in marriages.

With the Bible being an important tool of reference in African marriages especially the text of Proverbs 31:10-31, the church and family units can benefit from this study during counseling and guidance. They will read and interpret the text using the new framework generated in the study to understand an ideal wife today. Besides, the general public can also derive an understanding of who an ideal wife is since it is a contemporary issue in marriages today. This is aimed at enhancing a harmonious existence in family and marriages today.

### **1.8. Justification of the study**

This study brings to perceptible the contextual interpretation of the concept of *ḥayil* in the contemporary Ugandan setting. Owing to the fact that the African society today is influenced by many worldviews which include the African cultural, Christian, and postmodern, the society has become a melting pot of ideological frameworks for interpreting social and gender relations especially in the context of marriages. In these differing ideologies, the question about who an ideal wife is remains controversial. The ideal wife in Proverbs 31:10 is associated with the concept of *ḥayil*. The concept presents fluidity in its appropriation especially due to the unstable meaning of the word *ḥayil*. Whereas in many Bible translations (both foreign and local languages) *ḥayil* is presented in a patronizing way that portray the patriarchal interests, a creative engagement of other meanings of *ḥayil* presents and speaks the image and voice of empowerment relevant to women's liberation discourse. This study therefore aims at reinterpreting and integrating the notion of *ḥayil* in the interactions between the two salient ideologies of Afro-Christian and

postmodern with the aim of finding a theological mid ground from which an ideal wife may be understood today.

Furthermore, this study uses the frameworks of postcolonial African feminist bible hermeneutics, with its methodological tools of contextual Bible interpretation. There are some scholarly works written from these perspectives already, on the biblical text under study especially on the concept of ideal wife. Nevertheless, there has not been any focus, so far known, on reading and interpreting Proverbs 31: 10-31 to address conflicts of ideological and theological nature that characterize and manifest in the contemporary African marriages. This study therefore, takes the trajectory of contextual bible study, reading the bible with the men and women with the aim of generating their understanding of who an ideal wife is.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This section entails a review of related writings made through other scholarly perspectives. The section is divided in various sub-sections that include theoretical frameworks, historical information, and scholarly works on the text of Proverb 31:10-31 on the topical theme of gender relations.

### **2.2. Theoretical framework**

In this section, I presented the theoretical underpinnings and frameworks that guided the study. The major theories used in this thesis are postcolonial theory, postmodernism and constructivist theory as explained further below.

#### **2.2.1. Postcolonial theory**

Postcolonial theory is not a new subject. There is a plethora of scholarly write-ups about postcolonial theory, which cannot be exhaustively discussed in this research book. However, I will give a few ideas from various scholars as a way of grounding its focus and arguments. Postcolonial theory is a literary approach which critiques classical literatures with an aim of decolonizing them. This theory emerged from former British colonies of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Australia. The ex-colonies have used this paradigm to write about their social, cultural, political and historical encounters with colonialism though from different colonial experiences (Nayar 2008). Postcolonial criticism has been applied in various fields of art, music, film and literature to navigate the cultural, political and historical boundaries of the original architects to

make sense to the new readers. In this study however, the postcolonial theory shall apply in the interrogation of the Bible text of Proverbs 31:10-31 as a classical literature.

According to Kuloba Wabyanga, postcolonial theory arises from the fact that much of the world today is a world of inequality. This inequality permeates several socio-economic strata, and affects the gender identities in which a particular gender is constructed in unequal terms from the other. The female gender in this regard is socially marginalized as inferior to the male gender, and the dominant male dictate socio-cultural norms to govern and control the female gender (Wabyanga 2011). This is a context in which Robert Young (2003), in his understanding post colonialism, “calls for the transformational activism for a politics dedicated to the removal of marginalization from the...gendered hierarchies that operate at every level of social and cultural relations” (Young 2020, 114). To this understanding, Musa Dube adds, postcolonial theory “does not seek to dwell on the crimes of the past and their continuation but seeks transformation for liberation” (Dube 2000, 51) Post colonialism in this case emerges as a mouthpiece for the silenced voices of the marginalized. Post colonialism therefore, as Dube maintains, “...is a committed search and struggle for decolonization and liberation of the oppressed.” Suffice to say that the colonization and marginalization does not affect only individual persons, but deeply and significantly affect socio-cultural and political institutions.

In relation to my study, it is almost common sensical that institutions like marriages and family are under attack. The attack is not directly by wars of conquest but by an influx and conflicts of ideas and opinions resulting from the clash of the neoliberal and Afro-Christian worldviews as it will be illustrated in the subsequent chapters. Post colonialism in this case calls for a transformative ethic—an ethic that seeks to create a harmonious space for the future of African marriages and

families. To achieve this, the study is anchored on Postcolonial African Bible Hermeneutics, which is a branch of postcolonial Bible interpretation.

### **2.2.2. Postcolonial Bible Interpretation**

Postcolonial Bible interpretation is a branch of postcolonial theory that deals with the Bible as a cultural product in time and space. It is a critical approach that interrogates the Bible, first as a Euro-Jewish cultural text and colonial text and how its relevance can be applicable to contemporary space and time (Rukundwa 2008, Werner 2024). In view of this, the current study is situated in the postcolonial bible interpretation, which interrogates Proverbs 31:10-31 from the cultural environments of the ancient near East and its colonial appropriations and how it can be relevant in the contemporary postcolonial space and time when many African marriages are experiencing challenges.

Musa W. Dube has argued that the arrival of the Bible in the hands of the European brought imperial subjugation, which converted black Africans' spaces and minds into white European constructs. That colonialism involved a complex network of molding African minds and space according to and for the material benefits of the West (Dube 2000). Postcolonial biblical criticism situates colonial constructs at the center of the Bible and biblical interpretation. In the case of this study, it focuses on the whole issue of domination and control as central forces in defining both the biblical narrative of Proverbs 31:10-31 in biblical interpretation and contemporary power structures (Sugirtharajah 2006), which continue to wreck havoc in many African heterogenous marriages. It attempts not only to dismantle colonizing structures, institutions, ideologies, and philosophies and emancipate the colonized and oppressed, but also problematizes the continued

forms of colonialism that are disguised in form as rights and identities, which affect core human values.

Postcolonial Bible interpretation falls under the major branch of liberation theology, which manifest in forms like contextual bible interpretation, vernacular hermeneutics, cultural exegesis, cultural interpretation and intercultural interpretation (Moore 2010). Postcolonial biblical criticism is a multifaceted literary analytical paradigm whose major focus is liberation through creative readership of the Bible texts. Furthermore, as Wabyanga contents, postcolonial Bible interpretation should focus on liberation and empowerment, cultural identity, ethnic, racial and national pride and freedom of thought, expression and association for the marginalized (Wabyanga 2011). As a liberation theology, it extends to offer a holistic critic of the whole paradigm of values of epistemological nature, which tend to espouse the western contemporary ideas against other societal values. In view of my study, postcolonial bible interpretation comes in perspective while engaging in the creative reading of the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 with the aim of dismantling the endocentric ideals which subject women to realms of domesticity and subjectivity.

### **2.2.3. Postcolonial African Bible Interpretation/ Hermeneutics**

African Bible interpretation stems from postcolonial biblical interpretation. This approach narrows from just a general postcolonial Bible hermeneutics to a specific contextual setting. Postcolonial African Biblical interpretation therefore focuses on the readership of the Bible using the African context. In this, the Bible does not only become the tool for reading and critiquing the contextual African realities, but the African values also speak authoritatively into the dominant values of the Bible and influences its interpretation, and against western domination which comes in different

disguised forms. This creates a symbiotic triangular correlation between the Bible, the African contextual knowledge values and the burgeoning influence of the West.

Dube observes that, “the African biblical Hermeneutics sessions were a product of an earlier bigger group on ‘The Bible in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America’ which ran during the 1990s to the early 2005. Gradually the group had mobilized more scholars from these various regions. It also became clear that the group straddled too many worlds hence, when its lifespan came to an end, various groups were formed to continue to investigate independently biblical interpretation in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America” (Dube 1997, 6). Therefore, under the championship of African biblical scholars like Dora Mubwayesango, Justine Ukpong, Musa W. Dube, and Gerald O. West, the postcolonial African Biblical hermeneutics was founded.

This Bible approach was needed for Africans because as Lazare S Rukundwa remarks, “the delivery of biblical interpretation developed in a foreign context cannot effectively respond to the socio-economic, political and religious challenges of another social setting”. He adds that “these foreign hermeneutics are incapable of explaining the harsh realities of inequality, oppression and exploitation that are often experienced in tricontinental countries” (Rakundwa 2008, 344). This hence, calls for contextualization of the Bible in order to suit the Africans and appropriately address their problems.

Gerald West writes that, “White colonial missionaries opened and read the Bible; the indigenous people brought their own questions to the Bible and engaged it in their own terms, from the beginning”. He adds that “ordinary Africans have at a deeper level negotiated and transacted with the Bible and partially appropriated the Bible, by relativizing it, resisting it, and modifying it with uncanny creativity (West 1996, 7). Basing on West’s assertion, the Africans with the help of

literacy and vernacular translations were at liberty to read the Bible for themselves, interpreted it and applied it to their context. This became an eye opener for them to resist and fight against colonial oppression using relevant texts that advocate for liberation. My current study on Proverbs 31:10-31 in the context of African marriages is part of the continuous struggles for liberation and Africanization of the Bible. As an African readership, the study revitalizes marriage institution in the contemporary wake of conflicting ideological spaces. Besides, this approach will be realized in the contextual bible study where the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 will be used to speak to the current issue of who an ideal wife is just as the contemporary African antecedents will speak to the Bible text.

#### **2.2.4. Postcolonial African feminist Biblical interpretation**

I will relate this approach in my readership of the text of Proverbs 31:10-31, reading from an African woman's perspective. Postcolonial theory has taken other forms in the struggle for liberation: feminist theology which is aimed at fighting against gender-based issues, not only brought by the colonialists and the Bible, but as also promoted by the African traditional cultures. This movement particularly focuses on the oppression of women. It uses the Bible as a resource in the struggle against the subordination of women in contemporary society and church life. I will read the Bible from an African feminist perspective with the view that the "Bible was written in and emerged from patriarchal cultures" (Masenya 1997). This implies that the Bible is gender biased since women's experiences are not equally represented. Wabyanga on the same note asserts that, "Feminist Bible interpretation therefore comes in as a resistance discourse against the androcentric hermeneutics that overshadows the empowering role of the Bible in liberating women as the oppressed and marginalized people in society. It looks at patriarchy as a complex social system of the male domination structured by racism, sexism, classism and colonialism". He adds

that “those traditional patriarchal cultures and religious beliefs that are a barrier to women advancement in domains of leadership, property rights, access to education and economic independence are the main targets of feminist Bible hermeneutics” (Wabyanga 2011).

Some feminist like Daly have gone an extra mile to disregard scripture because they feel it justifies male domination over women. Daly for instance, argues that “The Bible is thoroughly sexist and therefore should be discarded by women and men who would claim their full humanity” (LaCelle-Peterson 2008, 8). This therefore calls for a new readership and interpretation of scripture that challenges male dominance over women. Mary Nyagondwe on the other hand, argues that “Although feminists have long aimed to fight gender inequality, they have stirred controversy due to a failure to accommodate diverse cultural, historical, and racial differences” (Nyangweso 2018). For this reason, I will read the Bible text from an African woman’s context with the aim of voicing the women’s views about the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 and their sociocultural antecedents.

### **2.2.5. African Feminism/Womanism**

The study draws relevance from African feminism. Also called African womanism, African feminist theory is a branch of postcolonial theory brings to the forefront the role of African women as mothers and “leaders in the struggle to regain, reconstruct, and create a cultural integrity that espouses... principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, order, and so forth” (Dove 1998, 516). Away from the global feminist movement, African feminism gained momentum in the 1990s though has traces from the 1970s. Proponents of these theory include African women scholars like Clenora Hudson-Weems, Ifi Amadiume, Mary E Modupe, Anna Julia Cooper, Amina Mama, Ayesha Imama, Theo Sowa among others. The latter period experienced a growing number of African feminist scholars on the continent; their major interest was to

demarcate boundaries between the western feminist doctrines and African feminism. They wanted to demonstrate that African feminism was not a replicate of the western feminism but rather anti-western (Mekgwe 2006, Ahikire 2014). Giving it the name African feminism therefore was aimed at differentiating it from feminism in the west and elsewhere. Peculiar about African feminism is that it focuses on the contexts and realities of the black women and women of color which were not included in the western feminist agenda. Among other characteristics of African womanism/feminism is that the movement is family centered, and the family is valued as the future of Africa. In effect, scholars like Rosemary Chikafa Chipiro has studied African womanism alongside afro-futurism in theorizing gender and the place of black womanhood in the African futures discourse (Chikafa-Chipiro 2019). African feminism/womanism espouses the male-female unity in churning the ideal future for the African family.

African feminism comes as an independent movement from the global feminism which is associated with the white women and paying less attention to the black and women of color. In other words this feminism did not venture in the challenges black women faced like racism, colonialism, and capitalism, economic and socio-cultural issues among others. Instead, their white counter parts were guilty of discriminating the black women basing on race, class and gender (Arndt, 2000). For the black women's problems to be recognized, they had to form their own feminism—African feminism which is a safe space for African women to express their issues and look for solutions. Another term used as an alternative for African feminism is the term womanism which most African women activists prefer in trying to avoid the feminist term since it was more of the west (Mekgwe 2006, Buchi 1987). For emphasis, African feminism/womanism as opposed to western feminism, is pro-men, family centered and community oriented. African feminism does not see men as enemies or opponents but rather co-partners in the struggle for liberation against

colonialism, racism, and western hegemony in which they all find themselves (Boyce and Graves, 1986). In the struggle for women's rights and empowerment, African feminism is aware of the place of culture and patriarchy and treads carefully in order to maintain harmony and contextual relevance (Du Toit 203).

My study takes an African feminist/womanist trajectory when it comes to the reconstruction of a home grown and grounded emancipation and women empowerment paradigm, a framework which promotes and preserves the values of marriage and family. Within this framework, women activists ought to wisely negotiate the cultural terrain and should be willingly to work with the men in the fight for women empowerment just as reflected in the case of Ghana as attested to by Sylvia Bawa (Bawa 2012). It is through this cultural mindfulness that the family law proposals which have overly appeared before the Ugandan parliament shall suit the context hence standing chance of being passed by parliament.

### **2.3. Cultural Hermeneutics**

This is another paradigm I will employ to understand and interpret the African traditional understanding of an ideal wife. Cultural hermeneutics enabled African women understand why they are treated the way they are treated by men and it will help give a basis for liberation. Kanyoro Musimbi (2002) argues that "there is no way for African women to write theology about their lives as postcolonial subjects except to use some form of cultural hermeneutics, or analysis and interpretation of how culture conditions people's understanding of reality at a particular time and location" (Kanyoro 2002, 9). For African women's struggle for liberation and rights to be meaningful, they have to first understand and appreciate their culture. By doing so, they will be able to discern the good values to uphold and the bad to fight against. Although the African cultural

systems are male dominated and oppressive to woman, they on the other hand consider women; like Musimbi, culture is a two-edged sword that gives women their identity, integrity.

In my current study, this approach will be helpful while interrogating the different cultural perspectives of an ideal wife. It will give insight on how the various African traditional cultures construct their understanding of a good wife as it shall be demonstrated in chapter 4 and 5.

#### **2.4. Postmodern theory**

The postmodern theory will give me a basis to explore the contemporary African worldviews which subscribe to postmodern ideals of gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment. Postmodernism emerged from the west in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to challenge modern philosophies, with its founders like Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Jean Francois. Postmodernism has been understood in many ways for instance, as a period of time succeeding modernism. It is also a term used to mean a way of thinking which is more common in the west (Danwanzam & Saleh 2019). In this study though, I will limit the term to mean a way of thinking.

Postmodernism approach has been employed in a number of fields like art, education, law, literature, psychology, history and theology. This is an approach which was aimed at dismantling western culture and to expose the dominant western institutions and mythologies which were exploitative (Elaati 2012). Postmodernism as a theory rejects concepts of rationality, objectivity, and universal truth as it instead fronts diversity of human experience and multiplicity of perspectives. It is characterized with more of subjectivism and attributes cultural norms to the ideologies of elites, it challenges the importance of history with the view that historical realities are not true (Patton 2001).

Postmodern theory has been used by feminists to approach gender, sexuality and their struggle for liberation in general. With the assumption that postmodernism and feminism complement each other, postmodern ideals have been used by feminists to challenge male dominance and hierarchies in society (Hekman 2001). It is from this background that my study will relish on the postmodern ideals to problematize and challenge the patriarchal frameworks in the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 and the African cultural systems that bind women to realms of domesticity and subjectivity. It is from this approach that my study makes sense of the different legal women's rights documents and the emancipation frameworks.

Fredric Jameson in his book "*Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism* (1991), takes time to elaborate on the theory of postmodernism in comparison with modernism. Jameson asserts that postmodernism is a cultural system which is characterized with capitalism. It is a collection of various cultures to form one product. Postmodernism comes with economic and social transformation in society some of these changes are witnessed in culture, fashion, architecture, media, film, literature, philosophy, and economics (Jameson 1991, 2). Postmodernism he observes focuses on economic forecasts, marketing studies, culture critiques, new therapies, reviews of art, permissiveness and religious revivals. Jameson accuses postmodernism for being depthless with no proper cultural and historical grounding, which he terms as historical deafness. Jameson feels postmodernism has lost history and culture which according to him forms what he calls a "waning of affect". It instead depends on creation of artificial simulated environments that replace reality. Postmodernism focuses on consumer culture which is a characteristic feature of capitalism. Jameson in his critique on postmodernism, advocates for new frameworks from which individuals can understand the changes in society brought by postmodernism and capitalism. He prefers going back to the utopian values then adhere to the late capitalist ideologies which have distorted society.

Kizito Michael George in his article titled “*methodological authoritarianism to epistemic realism: multidisciplinary research paradigms and the post-modern turn*” (2024), brings a comparison between modernism and postmodernism. Postmodernism as he asserts challenges the concept of objectivism, universalism and meta-narratives, it is subjective instead unlike modernism. He observes that reality in postmodernism is not scientific but rather fluid, specific and contextual in nature. According to Kizito, there are commonalities between postmodernism and post-colonialism as they all challenge the aspects of racism, colonialism and sexism which were advanced by modernism. Modernism as Kizito posits justified colonialism as a way of modernizing the primitive societies. Modernism advances for universal truth, objectivism and empiricism, postmodernism on the other hand is against this notion and it is more subjective. In postmodernism, truth is constructed from people’s own experiences and contexts therefore there is nothing like universal truth. Besides, modernism is more bent on patriarchy as male had authority over female (Kizito 2024, 2725). Postmodernism therefore wages a war against racial and gender discrimination by discouraging the division of people along racial lines (white or black) and gender (male or female).

Kizito goes ahead to problematize some of the research methodologies which come from modernism as being insensitive to gender aspects, some of these research methodologies are accused of being pro-masculine for instance positivism. This has resulted into gender and feminist criticism of methodologies in order to bring out the views of the women, they advance for pro-women methodologies like feminist deconstruction, emancipatory criticism, focus group discussions. Another weakness identified with these modern methodologies like positivism is that it is scientific and objective and also ignores the peculiar nature of the researcher’s contexts and experiences. In addition, there is no single interpretation of truth and none is superior to the other (Kizito 2024,

2724). Kizito therefore points to the changes that postmodernism comes with in the areas of knowledge, truth and methodology for example subjectivity of reality, liberation against any form of oppression, and a shift to research methods which are inclusive.

## **2.5. Constructivist grounded theory**

The constructivist grounded theory is applicable to my study at the point of reconstructing the new understanding of an ideal wife ensuing from the dialogue between the two ideological environments of Afro-christian and postmodern. To begin with, constructivist grounded theory is part of the constructivist theory, a methodology employed in qualitative research to understand how people create meaning from their interaction with others and the environment (Mogashoa 2014). Constructivist grounded theory gives people liberty to generate new knowledge rather than absorb what is already in existence. It is aimed at enabling researchers generate and explore themes from collected data through carrying out interviews and observations. In the interviews, participants are called to be actively engaged through use of open ended questions and reflective interviews to allow them express their perspectives Charmaz (2017). This approach involves engaging with the participants in order to understand their values, beliefs, and experiences which through after analysis will become a basis for the research. Their ideas as observed by Dovetail Editorial Team (2023) can inform policy making, education and other aspects of society. In my study, the constructive grounded theory enabled me synthesis the acquired data in order to create a nuanced understanding and frameworks through which an ideal wife is understood in the present Ugandan setting.

Suffice to not that the two theories of postcolonial and postmodern present a point of intersection as they both share origins and goals of enhancing change. Postcolonial and postmodern theories emerged as a revolution against dominant powers and existing ideologies, they aspire to change

the colonial and modern framework. For instance postcolonial theory wages war against imperial ideologies imposed by dominant colonial powers as postmodernism battles with dismantling patriarchal domination, traditions, opinions and values that inform peoples' mindset (Khalifa, 2022). Their major concern therefore, is to review and refashion the structures of the past to suit the present. However, postcolonial theory is more concerned with political, it responds back to the colonizers through re-reading literatures written by the colonizers and re-writing their own. Postcolonial theory is about the colonized regaining their culture and identity, and also giving a voice to the marginalized. Postmodernism on the other hand is more of aesthetic, it looks at how politics can be made enjoyable and interesting to the people. Postmodernism opposes the cultural traditions and systems which are dominate in general (Luburic & Muzdeka 2016).

In this study therefore, postcolonial and postmodernism are both forces of change. Postcolonial theory in this thesis grants the frameworks from which the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 is read and interpreted that is to say using the paradigm of postcolonial African Bible interpretation, as well as hermeneutically interrogating dominant patriarchal culture with its dominant obsession with power and dominion over women. Closely related, the postmodern theory shall enrich the study with the frameworks for understanding the contemporary doctrines of women's rights, emancipation and empowerment which influence family and marriage relations in the present Ugandan society. The cultural hermeneutics paradigm will enable me interrogate the cultural perspectives of an ideal wife in the Ugandan setting with reference to Buganda and Bugisu cultures. On the other hand, the study, using the frameworks of the constructivist grounded theory proposes new epistemological values or understandings of an ideal wife in the contemporary society. In other words, the study hinges on the analytical paradigms to generate new knowledge or understandings about an ideal wife in the contemporary setting.

## 2.6. Ideological Context and Criticism

The definitions and descriptions of ideology are as diverse as ideologies themselves. But significant in this study is the definition by Maurice Cranston that ideology is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it (Cranston 2024). As a systematic package of ideas, ideology is often taken to be the truth, against which value judgements are made and as the standard of measure. Ideology permeates all the strata of human life in forms of culture, religion, philosophy, politics and power. It contributes vehemently to people's ways of reasoning and decision making in a given setting. According to David Clines, these "ideas serve the interest of a particular group especially a dominant group, and ideas that are wrongly passed over as natural, obvious or commonsensical." He adds that "ideologies can be communal, inherited or acquired from other people" (Clines 1995). It is the means by which human societies are controlled in a cohesive network that constitutes ethics, moral dos and don'ts, right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable; and in most cases divine order vis-à-vis ungodly. These ideological beliefs and ideas constitute the psycho-social mechanisms by which people behave and relate to others. Ideology in other words is a mindset. It is important to stress that ideology is not necessarily bad. Ideology is good in many ways. One of the essential values of ideology is unity and harmony or consensus (Lucy 2000, Martin 2015, 2002) in a particular human society.

Sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda in particular is a melting pot of ideologies. These ideologies are indigenous as cultures and religions, hybrid as African Christian/religious thoughts, and foreign as feminism and women emancipation doctrines and philosophies. Given the many ideologies, there is ideological confusion, as there are varying view-points from which reality is perceived. This reality calls for a kind of ideological criticism, which will not only explore the reality of ideological quandary, but more so explains conflicting ideologies with a view of generating a *tete-e-tete* in the

search for ideological harmony or consensus for an African society, home in particular in all aspects. This does not down play the importance of plurality and divulgence of views and opinions but to problematize an ideological plurality which results into anarchy of psychological and sociological nature in society, a plurality that differentiates relationships and affects the quality of human life.

## **2.7. Mapping the Ideologies**

In dealing with the ideological problems of contemporary Uganda, the study came up with what is termed as two major ideological spaces namely; Afro-Christian and postmodern ideologies of emancipation. These ideological environments are embodied with a set of beliefs and ideas, which are claimed to be normative, civility, natural and godly. These ideas not only inform mindsets but polarize relations and discourses which significantly affect human relations and interactions. Furthermore, it is important to note that, contemporary Africa is the product of colonialism.

### **2.7.1. The African cultural and contemporary ideologies**

Culture is broader than ideology. It refers to the aggregated ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that are handed down from generation to generation. It is the way of life of an entire society. Culture includes all sorts of ethics, manners, art, music, language, expressions, dress, religions, rituals and doctrines. Ideology, as a set of ideas can be part of a culture. The ideological tenets are interwoven in the cultural disposition of a community and manifest in various forms and expressions. It is not surprising that Sociologists like Marcion would define ideology as “cultural beliefs that justify particular social arrangements, including patterns of inequality" (Macionis 2010, 257). It is not a new idea that in many African cultures, there are ideas which are oppressive to a section of people in society, which liberation movements including

African postcolonial Bible hermeneutics aims at dismantling (Adefolake 2016, Gatwiri and McLaren 2016, Emedo 2024, Muse 2024).

The first encounter between African cultures and external ideologies in recent histories is the encounter with European colonialism. The encounter with European missionary activities in particular was brutal as many African ways, cultures, practices, ideas were condemned. The new religion which promised imperatives of salvation and eternity however dialogued with a number of African realities and generated ideological consensus. The Bible which missionaries used was translated into local languages. The Bible embodied significant cultural and ideological similarities with the African realities. The harmony between the missionary Christianity, the Bible and African cultures, it can be argued gave birth to a new ideological context called *Afro-Christian* or Afro-biblical. Some of the common points between the missionary worldviews and African cultures are patriarchy (which dictates gender roles) and a spirituality of an unending life which is premised on the fear for God, authority, moral uprightness, where morality is redefined within the new ideological order. There were aggregated ideas in the African culture which differentiated a good wife from an undesirable woman, the marriage material from the unmarriageable woman (Akujobi 2011, Ogbodo and Onuoha 2022, Tembo and Maganga 2021, Salter and Adams 2012, Adhunga 2014, Dolan 2001).

### **2.7.2. Afro-Christian ideological Environment**

Also called afro-biblical ideological space, it is a term coined in contemporary days by scholars in African Christianity to refer to a hybrid kind of spirituality and mindset born from the fusion between African cultures and spirituality and European colonial experience. Colonialism in Africa took shape in a number of ways. Besides the political occupation which changed and informs the

current political landscape, there was cultural and religious colonialism. The agent of the latter was the missionary (Alston 1984, Ehusani 1991, Oosthuizen 1979). Whereas this elaborate scholarship on the term Afro-Christian has mainly referred to the religious evolution, the current study employs the term to denote the way people think. For instance, Africans of today don't view reality cosmologically in terms of African traditional beliefs but in terms of Christian and Biblical cosmology. Divine characters like Biblical God and Jesus compound dominate religious landscape.

Kuloba Wabyanga in different works has constructed an afro-Christian concept as hybrid ideological framework, which results from the fusion of colonial and missionary ideas with African cultural realities. Wabyanga explains much of sub-Saharan Africa is a hybrid society, living in an ideologically and culturally hybridized environment; whose values, ideals and attitudes were transformed due to interaction between the precolonial Africa cultures with colonial and Christian experiences. An African of this region is not a mimic-man or a "black skin/white masks" personality as Fanon would put it, but one to whom this hybrid context is his/her culture and ideology" (Wabyanga 2016, 10-11). Wabyanga asserts that this hybrid ideological framework influences value judgements, and it is the basis upon which an African would challenge certain things as ungodly and unafican. In relation to the current study, this ideological framework defines what a good wife is supposed to be: one who submits to the male authority (patriarchy) as dictated by both the African cultural and the Biblical teachings.

Within this environment, the Bible has become an African book. The Bible gained root in Africa and it was accepted and used as an African book. As the Africans interacted with the Bible, it became part of their daily reference and used as a tool for value judgment. The Bible bonded with African traditional cultural systems so well forming an Afro-biblical ordinance where some

African cultural beliefs were seen as divinely sanctioned. The religious vocabularies is transformed to include Biblical characters like God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; Jesus Christ etc. In this environment female characters like Sarah, Ruth are models of good women and wives, while Delilah, Jezebel, Michal and Athalia are the models of bad women and wives.

Some African values and ideas are seen as divinely sanctioned in the Bible. Although at some point Africans were disappointed with missionary activities after discovering their ill motives, Christianity remained as part of the African package. This is witnessed from the African Independent Churches which though separated from the mainstream, still uphold Christian beliefs. These were sandwiched with their own African values and beliefs giving it an Afro-Christian outlook. This is further manifested in the Pentecostal Churches and other New Religious Movements which try to combine the African antecedents and the Bible to make Christianity meaningful in their given contexts.

Needless to say, the Bible/Christianity concretized the already existing patriarchy in African traditional societies as male hegemony was at its center. Amunga and Ochieng (2018), in this regard argue that “patriarchy, it would seem is deeply rooted in the Bible. This to a significant extent may be because Christianity was founded in the Jewish culture which is highly patriarchal” they continue to note that “it is men who were forming the rules and women had to abide just like in any other patriarchal society” (2018, p. 16). In this space just like the previous, women’s voices are silenced as men dictate. Bible texts like Ephesians 5: 22-23, 1 Cor 14: 34 and others have amplified subordination of women in this ideological space. A woman in this Afro-Christian setting is expected to exhibit humility, submissiveness, and with no right to speak in public so as to be credited as a woman of noble character.

### **2.7.3. Postmodern Ideological Environment**

This is an environment influenced much by globalization characterized by liberalism and intellectualism. This ideological space question dominant narratives, cultural beliefs, power structures, ideologies and knowledge values. In a postmodern society, there is a widespread diversity and progressivism of beliefs, ideas, and values without much hinge on historical realities. This is a society, where globalization, the media, and consumerism are the hallmarks and play a key role in dissemination of values and perspectives. Contextually, this is an environment in which African values are challenged by even African themselves. Women emancipation doctrines are the talk of every political and social intellectual gathering. Traditional gender roles are a matter of controversy. Gender equality is idealized as the way to go.

The social, political and economic structures are to be deconstructed and reconstructed to promote women emancipation and empowerment. Women are empowered through formal education, legislations, rights, equal access to resources, amongst others. Governments have taken measures to enforce the doctrine in various ways like Affirmative Action policies which aim at increasing the representation of women in public spheres like Education, politics, and other fields. International governing bodies like the UN and AU etc. are at the center of championing and enforcing women emancipation drives (Awan, Nisar, and Chaudry 2021, Chakraborty 2024, UNION 2008). The employment sector has endeavored to ensure gender balance at all levels, women have been absorbed to work alongside men in various capacities and positions of headship. In Africa, we have witnessed women in politics assuming higher positions of power for instance, Samia Suluhu Hassan as the president of Tanzania, Jessica Alupo the Vice president of Uganda and others like Robinah Nabbanja as prime minister and Anita Among as speaker of the 11<sup>th</sup>

parliament. This is an environment which has witnessed exponential expansion of women population in public offices. Women, as wives are no longer the reserve of the domestic arena.

#### **2.7.4. Ideological conflicts**

Referring to Maurice Cranston's definition that ideology desires to explain the world and to change it, Africa is now startled with two conflicting ideologies that seek to explain gender roles and each wanting to change the other. The Afro-Christian ideology is the familiar and dominant ideology which in to many people is the culture, natural and divine order which in David Cline's language is the obvious and commonsensical way of life. It is what defines the essence and identity of many Africans at least in Uganda. Gender relations in this environment are perceived from this cultural mindset. However, the postmodern context advocates for a different gender paradigm which alters what the dominant ideology has hitherto held as natural and divine order. A woman in the postmodern ideological space is the opposite of the other.

The advocates of emancipation question the knowledge values of the Afro-Christian space and other normative social constructs. While the stake holders of Afro-Christian environment who evaluate a woman on the basis of their values would find her valueless, foreign, unnatural, unafrikan, ungodly, immoral and unhusbandable, in the postmodern frameworks such a woman is valued as an embodied of emancipation, freedom and empowerment. The responsive approach of emancipation through legislations advocacy and resistance at family levels has resulted into a clash of relationships. The victim of this clash is the African home with severe impacts on the lives of women, men and children. The emancipation movement has been criticized for using approaches which make the order in Afro-Christian environment anxious. In response, the Afro-Christian ideological environment become defensive under the guise of protecting the natural and godly

order. Emancipation and empowerment drives are suspiciously seen as aiming at emasculating men and robbing men of their positions and privileges and thus reversing the natural and godly order. This study advocates for an ideological harmony which incorporates values from both African Christian environment and postmodern ideas to generate a third ideological space for viewing and conceptualizing an ideal wife. In the same way, African cultures transacted with European values to produce the contemporary African Christian ideology. This study envisages an ideological mindset which is the offspring of the contemporary ideologies.

#### **2.7.5. Colonialism and African Ideological Quandary**

This study is premised on the idea that the colonial interaction with Africa constructed a unique African identity, and it is from within this identity that value judgments are made. To reiterate, colonialism created a society that promoted hegemonic masculinity, by energizing African patriarchy (Thebe 2023, 44). Furthermore, colonialism either introduced or canonized gendered spheres of operation between men and women of the Victorian era. In Europe, especially Great Britain, and America, there was ideological divide between the public sphere (viewed as a masculine domain concerned with paid work and national politics), and the private sphere (viewed as a female domain concerned with home and family) (Digby 1992). The social boundaries created evolved what came to be called the cult of domesticity for women, and the dialectics of an ideal wife. These social constructs must have informed the attitudes with which scriptures like Proverbs 31:10-31 were read and interpreted (Stevens 2010). In marriage, wives belonged to their husbands. A woman's actions were under the husband's direction. Everything a woman had, ranging from property and her body belonged to the man. The husband controlled her sexual body, and whatever it produced including sex, children and domestic labor. The role of the woman was obeying her husband, producing heirs, running the house hold (Rahaman 2023). This view, it can be said

resonated if not reinforced the African traditional conceptualization in terms of child production, farm labor and hospitality, which sanctioned wives to stay home.

This scenario therefore, left women with no say in the religious, political, and socioeconomic affairs. Colonialism, among other things brought to Africa the Victorian image of a woman as a symbol of modest and decent woman. She is the woman who should stay in the private domain and leave the real world to the men. Her public appearance and participation should be warranted by her husband (Chengu 2015, Adeney 1987, McDonnell 2018). It is further argued that, colonialism altered African communities and their social values and norms. This alteration, cast women aside and gave them inferior positions in society, and demarcated their sphere in the realm of domesticity. That colonialism established the notion that women were subordinate to males and that men should hold all positions of power and authority (Oyewumi 1998, Howard 1985). Colonial administrative structure eroded powers of queen mothers and other royal women in kingdoms like Buganda (Wabyanga 2011) as the traditional female political figures were not necessary for the imperial politics of the colonizers.

Augmented with the Christian and bible teachings, the imageries of untamed Eve who is eventually blamed for the fall of Adam (man), and the uncontrolled powers of Jezebel who is blamed for the evils of King Ahab of biblical Israel were unfavorable for women in the political space. The colonialized Adams and Ahabs were politically and religiously mandated to put women under a cage of political control. Allowing women in public spaces was to risk temptations of breaking the divine and colonial rules and being viewed as weak. It turned out that caging women was a symbol of effective occupation of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century European colonialism. It is during this period that the notion of private and public spheres is well demarcated.

This notwithstanding, there is need to emphasize that it is not colonialism that introduced patriarchy in colonial Africa. African societies were largely patriarchal, but the patriarchy in pre-colonial Africa seemed to be unique and different from the European in as far as according women political and social authority was concerned. Limited if any scholarship has demonstrated that the European patriarchy was carried on the wings of capitalism and competition for resources and power to control resources.

Fusing with the African mode of patriarchy, the European patriarchy gave birth to an energized hybridized form of patriarchy which distances women in order to control resources. This hybridized form of patriarchy is what characterizes the contemporary socio-political landscape. This landscape as constructed by colonialism is the ideology and ideological space with a set of ideas which inform value formations. This is the environment in which African women and men find themselves today. The modern woman becomes a victim of double occupation of the colonizer and her own brother (See Musingafi and Hungwe 2023). The agenda of emancipation of women is to deconstruct such patriarchal power structures in order to accord women equal access to resources.

Right from the colonial times, the field of politics has been a difficult terrain for women (Twongyeirwe and Tusasirwe 2021). According to Musa Dube, “women in colonized Africa not only suffer the yoke of colonial oppression but also endure the burden of two patriarchal systems imposed on them” (Dube 2001, 138). The construct of colonial education was that of disempowering women. Girls’ education curriculum was majorly designed in a way that prepares them to be future wives and mothers for instance, they aimed at impacting in them skills like cookery, laundry work and domestic economics and general home management, while men were

trained as clerks and administrators of the colonial empire (Wabyanga 2011, 93). Men were meant to work in offices and take up leadership positions. This gap obviously incapacitated women in a way that they could not compete favorably with men at any levels. Leadership wise, women were seen as incapable, without potential not even to head a family.

Despite the huddles and prevailing socio-cultural norms hindering women, women's visibility in the public sphere is promising. They have found their way out of shanty village kitchens into air-conditioned boardrooms serving in various capacities locally and internationally. Like in other careers, politics is one of the areas women are navigating right from the grass root to national levels. Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have deliberately made constitutions which favour women participation in politics at all levels, through affirmative action plans. In Kenya for instance, there has been a commendable numerical increase in women representation in various organs of political governance like county assemblies and parliament, thanks to the 2010 constitution. The same glee appears in other countries like Rwanda and Tanzania.

In Uganda, the turn in women political involvement started in 1986, following the National Resistance Movement power takeover. The regime change was followed by the 1995 constitution, which among other enabling factors stipulates the affirmative action agenda for women. Affirmative action created and reserved new public space exclusively for women (Goetz 2002). Pioneers in the history of women in national politics are names like late Cecilia Ogwal, Mary Okwa, Maria Mutagamba, Specioza Wandira Kazibwe and Juliet Rainer Kafire. These brought women in the limelight by exposing their political abilities. It is no doubt that during president Museveni's regime, women have managed to ascend to high-ranking political positions like Vice

president, Speaker, Prime minister and many more heading other government ministries, as evident in the 11<sup>th</sup> parliament.

However much as women have found their way into the public domain, they still remain wives in African homes. Her political success is dependent on their marital status. It is very rare for people to trust single a woman and vote her as their representative or trust a divorced woman. Simon Mburu writing from the Kenyan context asserts that “the ability to stay in marriage is socially equated with the ability to maintain a political office, regardless of the holder’s capacity. This means that a woman’s marital status is put way ahead of her qualification” (Mburu 2020). Writing on Gladys Shollei a Kenyan female politician, it is observed that her failure in marriage became a thorn in her political career. One John Mayieku, made a comment that “she (Gladys) was no longer fit to lead after failing to salvage her marriage. If she can’t nurture a family, how can she be a leader?” The same mockery is witnessed when Doreen Nyanjura the deputy Mayor of Kampala expressed her interest to contest for presidency in the next elections. One person as captured by Vanessa Offiong in CNN alluded that “first get married then contest on the presidential seat, because you can’t rule people who are married. What would you be advising them?” (Offiong 2023).

One would wonder why women’s political careers are judged based on their ability to be in or /sustain a marriage, yet there are potential single women who can do well in politics regardless of their marital status like the Nyanjura’s’. Their present marital state has become a point of ridicule and reproach whenever they rise their heads. Rhoda Kalema one of the prominent politicians of the days made an observation in an interview that “if one wants to become a leader, she should take enough trouble to see that she gets properly married to a man who will allow her to perform

the functions of wifehood, motherhood, and at the same time perform the functions of a parliament” (Tamale 1997, 47). Rhoda attaches the woman’s success in politics to a good marriage life, it is as if one who is unmarried cannot prosper in politics.

Women politicians have been blamed for wrecking their own marriages due to their failure to balance and exercise power appropriately. Interviewed by Mburu, Lenjou reveals that “some marriages breakdown due to incompatibility and power imbalances that surface after a woman attains a political post. There are women who lose respect for their husbands once they assume a higher, a powerful status, the men in their lives cease to be powerful and worth submitting to” (Mburu 2020). This is the genesis of marital issues when the woman brings her political status in the home, men will respond to this by getting violent, others resort to alcoholism and having extra marital affairs so as to sooth their ego. Therefore, to navigate through the new reality, both the husband and wife have to forge a proper way where the man accepts to calm his ego as the woman also tames her pride and excitement if the marriage is to survive.

Cecila Ogwal made an observation that “the politics of a woman politician should be firmly rooted in healthy family life, otherwise her political life will ruin her family. So I think we need to look at our family life much more seriously than politics and give more time to our husbands and children than politics. A woman will excel in politics if she knows how to balance her time between these two” (Tamale 1999a, 57). This clearly indicates that marriage in African countries presents a catch-22 situation for the female politicians. While absence of marriage is damning, being in marriage while in politics is more damning because she has to balance both public and domestic interests.

## **2.8. Bible and Christianity at the Centre of Women Marginalization**

### **General overview**

The context of this study is Biblical and theological studies. This necessitates an interaction with how scholarship has problematized religious authorities in the questions related to gender and power in Africa. Seipati L. Ngcobo has observed that the missionary church colluded with the state to rip women off power and privileges in the public spaces (Ngcobo 2024). Christianity which should have been at the center of empowering and liberating is sanctioning women to inferior status. So, the argument can go. We should however not forget that Christianity and the church are headed and populated by people with interests—so was the church at the epoch of colonialism and the church today. Christianity as a religion has been used in various ways to advance selfish interests. The Bible was interpreted to promote inhuman atrocities like slavery (Zauzmer 2019, Noll 1998), colonialism (Crouch and Stökl 2013, Njoroge 1999, Andraos et al. 2018); apartheid (Gräper 2019, Naude 2001, Vosloo 2015) and genocide in Rwanda (Karegeye et al. 2011, Horner 2014). In the same way, the same church and the Bible have turned the scripts against inhuman activities like slavery, colonialism, racism, and apartheid (see Edwards 2013, Madeira and Correia 2019, Yunusxanovich 2024, Timmerman 2023). It serves to argue that Christianity and the Bible have the power to oppress and liberate depending on the prevailing interests.

The current study situates the plight of women in contemporary African marriages at the center of the church and the Bible. Marriages which are solemnized by the churches are perceived holy and sacramental. Sermons are read from the Bible, and the Bible is used to constantly remind women of virtues and traits of good wifhood as stipulated in the Bible. It serves to argue that marital problems of contemporary Christian marriages are the result of expired Bible exegesis and hermeneutics, which still subject women to inferior status. In the context of modernity and rights,

a befitting hermeneutic need to be adopted with empowering properties towards a theology that informs and liberates women from misogynistic societal attitudes.

The African cultural norms have been reinforced and energized by the colonial biblical readings of texts like Proverbs 31:10-31. Among other things, the gist of this Bible text is the idea of a good wife—the good wife. The text spells out the expectations in a noble wife as shall be discussed later. Biblical stories like Proverbs have often been read during church weddings and couple counselling sessions to reinforce the African narrative of a good wife. Such texts include Proverbs 14:1, and 31:10-31. Many case studies are drawn from Bible characters like Abraham and Sarah as models of good marriage relationships. In many of these appropriations, men are the subjects of social order, whose public image is defined by the wife who is in the domestic realm. In all these readings, the man’s social aura of respectability is dependent on the activities of his wife at home. There is no corresponding details on the status of the wife that is connected to the behaviors of the man whether at home or in public.

It is evident that the influence of the Bible in Sub-Saharan Africa is rich as the Bible became an African book (Dube 2000). In some circles, the bible narratives are mistakenly perceived as the heavenly ordinance. In many ways the Bible has mingled with African cultural beliefs, to produce a hybrid ideological space—Afro-Biblical space. Modernity and its tantalizing worldviews of human rights and emancipation has also created another environment. Each of these ideologies prescribe “normative” expectations of a good marriage relationship—specifically how women should behave in a marriage setting in order to create a harmonious family. This in turn ushers us to the third ideological space which an African family today finds itself. This space is not clearly demarcated hence putting women in a dilemma of either going with the new trend or adhering to

the traditional ideals. Inevitably, this confusion has fueled conflicts and problems of all sorts like domestic violence, single parenthood, separation and divorces in marriages. There is need for a creative Bible reading that espouses the third ideological space in order to create harmony for an African woman to live happily, productively and actively in her locale. This third ideological space is a synthesis of not only the 1st and 2nd ideological spaces, but a product of careful hermeneutics of the Bible in conversation with other prevailing policy documents like national constitution and international policy papers, and prevailing socio-economic dynamics and realities that have swept continents through globalization, education, equal political and social participations and representations, among other. I affirm the position that –women like men need the social forums and boardroom activities in order to attain sustainable development. Continued emphasis on traditional rules that sanction women to realms of domesticity and men’s properties is unfair and hostile to women.

### **2.8.1. Place of women in the Bible**

The place of women in the Bible has received wider scholarly attention for decades. But in this work, I will limit my reviews to two broadly focused studies because of their specialized attention on women, culture, power and ideology in Africa. These are Kuloba Wabyanga and Florence U. Echeta. Kuloba Wabyanga in 2011 came up with a fascinating analysis of four female political figures in the Old Testament namely; Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah. Reading about these characters, there is no doubt that they were women of great influence who engaged fiercely in societal issues. Kuloba acknowledges that “...they are political characters that stand for unconformity, radical activism, dissension, equality and self-reification to lead their people as their male counter parts”. Their bravery however didn’t bring them honor but rather made them objects of ridicule. The Bible writer portrays them as notorious women who are out of their lane and hence

bound to God's judgement. According to Kuloba, "these female politicians were corned, arrested, charged, beheaded and fragmented..." he notes that "certainly, no one would tell from the Hebrew Bible that those women were people of significant political and leadership profiles but merely as wicked in the history of humanity".

Borrowing from the above, it is observed in common discourses and Church sermons that these characters are always used in contrast of a noble good woman/wife wives and women are urged not to follow their footsteps. Some of their names have been theorized and demonized for instance, an aggressive woman is seen as being possessed by the '*Jezebelian spirit*'. But where these women that bad, did they deserve such depiction! As Kuloba asserts "Their remains in the Hebrew Bible are positioned to ideologically kill off their political significance and portray them as evil women who destabilize the natural order".

Conversely, Kuloba takes a different trajectory in his readership of these women figures. Using the postcolonial theory, he challenges the traditional readership and depiction of these Bible characters which is not far from our African perception of women in the public especially in politics. He notes that "the similarities between the androcentric cultural worldview of the Bible and the African cultures have fostered a negative attitude against women's influence in national politics (Wabyanga 2011).

Meanwhile Kuloba is battling with violence against women in politics in the Old Testament with special reference to Uganda and Kenya, this study shall add an element of marriage, not only as a key element in women's day to day activities, be narrowed to women in the Ugandan Parliament with the aim of exposing the ideological challenges of values which not only characterize society, but part of the socio-cultural terrains such women have to navigate. Interestingly, the characters

studies by Kuloba are models of defiant women who have challenged men throughout history; and they constitute theological rhetoric which all women who desire to be virtuous should avoid to emulate.

Florence U. Echeta is another African female theologian who in her write-up “Inclusive feminine Biblical Hermeneutics as necessary condition for social development in Africa”, identifies the need of a creative reading of the Bible in a way that recognizes the role of women. According to her observation, the bible is shaped by patriarchal ideologies and tends to favor men over women, “now since power and authority reside in the hands of men, scriptural interpretations usually tilt towards men’s interest and women become victims of misinterpretation and misrepresentation”. Echeta claims societal misconception of women was hugely caused by patriarchal bias which influenced biblical interpretation of women roles. The Bible according to Echeta does not present inequality between men and women but the interpreters of the Bible have. She notes that “men have hitherto dominated biblical interpretations and as such have explained the bible to suite their selfish and patriarchal bias”. It is so absurd that women themselves have blindly been bound to accept and normalize male dominance and further pass on to their children. On the bright side however, women in the recent times are beginning to challenge the patriarchal cords which have for long hindered their participation in decision making and national development (Echeta 2018).

The Bible can be used as a liberating tool in ensuring women assume their positions in all societal dimensions. This can only be realized if the tool is creatively interpreted without any biases just like Nadar (2006) asserts “since the Bible plays such a pivotal role in the lives of women in Africa, it is imperative that we break with these traditional modes of oppressive reading by engaging critical ways of reading the biblical text”. Echeta feels that using feminine biblical hermeneutics

would impact our society greatly on the positive side because when women are fully involved in biblical criticism the imbalance caused by men biases would fizzle out gradually and would realize their interpretive skills and potentials fully (Echeta 2018).

### **2.8.2. Scholarly works on Proverbs 31:10-31 in the African context**

There are a number of scholarly works done on the text, which I find relevant to relate to the current study. Before dealing with specific focuses and outcomes of various studies, I will begin with methodological interactions as employed by other scholars:

### **2.8.3. Related Methodological Discussions**

This section interrogates how other students who have written on the text of Proverbs 31: 10-31 have navigated the methodological terrain. I interacted with selected PhD dissertations from different universities focusing on the text. The purpose of doing this was to enable me operate within the methodological niche of this particular academic field. Discussed below are the methodological approaches employed by the following writers in their interaction with the text of Proverbs 31:10-31.

To begin with, Mmapula whose interest is to re-image the woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 through her translation of the term  $\text{לְאִשָּׁה־גִבּוֹרָה}$  to mean the woman of courage. Her preference of “woman of courage” as she argues depicts the real value and portrayal of the woman of Proverbs 31 whose role is not just of a mother and house wife as other translations denote but rather an all-round woman who has traversed the domestic limits to the business arena. In dealing with the text, Mmapula employs the socio-rhetorical womanist approach to interpret the Bible text. She combines two methods that is to say the socio-rhetorical approach and womanist approach.

According to Mmapula, her choice of these is because the socio-rhetorical gives a multidimensional and multidisciplinary to texts (Mmapula 2012, 27).

The socio-rhetorical approach as she contends was developed by Vernon K. Robbin in 1975 to help understand the social and cultural issues behind the text and the persuasion employed by the author of the text. This method puts both the production and reception of the text into consideration in the interpretative process. Mmapula uses the socio-rhetorical approach in her analysis of the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 following the five textures as advanced by Robbins. These include; inner texture, inter texture, social and cultural textual, ideological texture, and sacred texture (2012:39-50).

She divides her study basing on the above textures which make up chapters in the book. On the other hand, the womanist theory was chosen because of its focus on the contextual reading of the texts that brings to light the ideological stand points of both the writer and the reader. She uses this method to analyze the text in the context of multiple oppression basing on race, sex, and class that black women go through. The womanist approach accordingly reflects the experiences of the black woman and it is from this point of view that Mmapula reads the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 from her own perspective and social location as a black woman (Mmapula 2012, 34).

In sum, Mmapula finds it suitable to use the two methods of socio-rhetorical and womanist in combination because they both bring out the ideological backgrounds of the writer and the interpreter of the text. They also integrate the reader's ideological context in the interpretation resulting into a detailed, rich and well-informed interpretation of the text.

Mansenya (1996), also writes on the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 from the South African context. Methodologically, Masenya employed four approaches in her interaction with the text that is to say, the Bosadi (womanhood) approach which she developed from Ukopong's enculturation hermeneutics. Like the latter, the Bosadi hermeneutics puts in consideration the socio-cultural context of the readers of the text and their Christian faith. It also works closely with other women liberation approaches from the country. The second approach is the reception criticism which acknowledges the position of both the sender and recipient. From the readership of the text, one can reconstruct a new text (Masenya 1996, 15). Her focus is on the readers who are the African women whose context and experiences shape the readership of the text.

The third method applied is the socio-critical hermeneutics which is an approach to texts with the aim exposing their role as instruments of power, domination or social manipulation. Under this umbrella, she names two methods of feminist hermeneutics and the Habermasian theory of communicative action which comes in to address the gaps in the reception criticism where the reader tends to read everything they want into the text. The reader dose not respect the integrity of the text. This theory therefore comes in to help the reader to approach the text with objectively and to also accept elements which may not be in in line with their interests. In her usage of this method, she takes the Bible to be both a tool of oppression but also liberation of women (1996, 21). The fourth method she uses is the historical-criticism which is an approach that analyses and interprets textual references in terms of the historical background of the text. Masenya finds this method appropriate in reconstructing the socio-political context of the text and of the Northern Sotho women of South Africa.

Jansen (2018), in her interaction with Proverbs 31:10-31 finds it methodologically relevant to render the text in its literary form through structural analysis and formal analysis. Jansen identifies the literary form as proverbs, riddles, poetic form, questions and dialogues. These literary forms make a basis for the analysis of Proverbs 31:10-31. Another approach she employs is studying written academic literature on the topic which enabled her to identify the areas covered and also find relevance for own study (Jansen 2018, 12). Jansen also applies the exegetical approach to study the text in depth. The exegetical method gave attention to the historical, literary, and theological analysis of Proverbs 31:10-31. Under this method, Jansen named two important exegetical approaches which she applied, which are synchronic approach which looks at the text as it is presented in the Bible today without reference to its prehistory. The second one is diachronic approach which looks at the origin and evolution of a text (2018, 14). Jansen asserts that the two above approaches were used in combination to come up with a balanced interpretation of the text which digs the history of the text and also allows it to speak to the modern women.

Nyarko Mensh is a more recent PhD scholar (University of Pretoria) on the Proverbs 31:10-31. He looked at Proverbs 31:10-31 from the Ghanaian and Akan womanist perspectives. He uses two approaches in his interaction with the text namely the inculturation models of inculturation and liberation hermeneutics, and womanist and feminist approach. In these two methods, explanation of the biblical text is shaped by the African background, perspectives and experiences (Nyarko 2023). In his study, the background of the Akan women of Ghana influenced the readership of the text. He used the inculturation method to analyze the socio-cultural context of the text in relation to that of the Akan women in order to bring out their voices. Nyarko employs the womanist and feminist approaches to analyze both the Bible text and the Akan women contexts on the issue of

inequalities between men and women. He uses the Bible passage to critique the existing inequality in reference to the industrious woman of Proverbs 31:10-31.

The above African scholars have used different methodological frameworks. The choice of the methodology is determined by the questions being investigated. It is evident clear that the methodological landscapes may be unique and diverse and may call for creativity and flexibility. Although the current study is looking at the same text of Proverbs 31:10-31, its contexts and focus differs hence demanding for differences and modification in the methodological paradigms. The current study for instance, brings to attention a contemporary issue on conflicts in marriage and family. In lay terms, it focuses on questions related to causes of marriage instabilities and questions related to how marriages in Africa can be stabilized. Therefore, it endeavors to reconstruct an ideal wife in the modern setting through a creative reading of *בְּיָמֵי חַיֵּיהָ* of Proverbs 31:10-31. To achieve the objectives, the current study employed different methodological approaches like Contextual Bible Study, textual analysis, and documentary analysis and hermeneutics within the theoretical outlook of constructivism, in reconstructing an ideal wife would be in the contemporary African society. What further brings a striking difference is that the researches of the above scholars do not involve any form of field interaction with participants, they rely majorly on secondary data.

On the other hand, it is observed that in all the above writings not different from my current study, there is a blend to various liberative hermeneutical approaches which are used to interrogate the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 and the related contexts where the text is being applied. These include African womanist/African feminist approach, inculturation hermeneutics, and African feminist Bible interpretation among others.

#### 2.8.4. Related scholarly views on proverbs 31:10-31

Joel Kamsen Tihitshak Biwul examined Proverbs 31:10-31 from the perspectives of Miship women in Nigeria. In his textual analysis, he examined the Hebrew construct of  $\text{בְּיָדָהּ} \text{וְעָמְלָהּ}$  and further explained the force and meaning of the word  $\text{בְּיָדָהּ}$ . Although he gives various meanings to  $\text{בְּיָדָהּ}$ , his preferred meaning is “strength,” and virtuous. To him, strength is used in non-military sense as an attribute of industriousness of the woman or wife and well as moral character, while virtuous depicts female tenderness. The writer draws a picture of a female person with ability, strength and moral uprightness. Related to the Miship woman, the writer contents that  $\text{בְּיָדָהּ} \text{וְעָמְלָהּ}$  denoted a woman who wields physical strength to work especially on farmland and home and at the same time has good moral and character dispositions. He calls his Miship audience to draw from what he calls, “fountain of experience and lifestyle of the biblical model as epitome of womanhood, wifehood and motherhood who would transform the city of man into the city of God” (Biwul 2013, 288). Among other virtues, the good character or morals envisaged by Biwul is respect. Relating it to the Miship concept of *lokot* (respect, obedience) and *shinyon* (to accord respect), the Miship woman is called upon to be respectful not only to her husband as an epitome of authority, but also his relatives especially the mother and father in-law. Interestingly, she has to content with her husband’s authority, and she should not mistake “generic anthropological principle of “sameness” to usurp her husband’s positional authority, claiming equality of the same, or demean his personality in any way, even if she is considered as the bread-winner for the family” (Biwul 2013, 289). Stretching the concept of *lokot* further, Biwul desires to enlighten Miship wives, to be careful to serve and support their but not to rival them, and not exercise authority over their men. Biwul underscores the industriousness of an African woman and loathes against laziness,

especially among the Miship community. As an industrious woman, the Miship wife gives birth to children, trains them for family life, works tirelessly prepares food and maintains good and healthy neighborliness. These chores, in the words of Biwul “are the true expression and reflection of the industrious spirit of cultured Miship woman...The spirit of her hard work reveals very clearly that, like the virtuous woman and wife of worth in Prov 31:10-31, it could be said that the well-cultured Miship woman, is not a pampered lady cared for by servants but instead engages in her own acts of labor and industry” (Biwul 2013, 292).

Biwul’s approach and analysis is problematic. In the first place, it serves to objectify women and reinforce patriarchal hegemony, with men as beneficiaries of women’s respect. Biwul does not seem to appreciate that respect begets respect. A respected wife would respect the husband in return. The mindset of Biwul is inclined to be so androcentric that he believes in the dichotomy of spheres for women and for men, more so in his arbitrary applications of the meanings of ḥ!ḥ especially that when used in the contest of women, it refers to industriousness and morals especially in the family sense, while to men it denoted attributes of service to the wider society like military. The current challenges this notion of dichotomous co-existence of genders. In the context of emancipation and legislative instruments, it is bizarre to assume an environment where women shall be called upon to uphold to traditional gender roles, which Biwul anticipates of the Miship wives.

Chitando (2004), reads the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 in the context of HIV/AIDS from the context of Zimbabwe. He observes that the effects of the virus are more salient among the disadvantaged groups like the children, orphans, disabled and women. Chitando points to how patriarchy has been a catalyst in the spread of HIV/AIDS among married women since they have no powers to

negotiate safer sexual practices with their spouses. According to him, religion and culture through their doctrine of women submission have given men powers over the women's sexuality. That women have to bear with their men's promiscuity as men go around with multiple sexual partners, which in turn exposes women in marriage to HIV/AIDS. He also notes that the poor socio-economic state of some of the families pushes women to cross borders trading, which makes them vulnerable to sexual abuse like rape, yet also back home the men take advantage of the women's absence to indulge with other sexual partners and in the end, their women become victims.

According to Chitando, the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 has been used by preachers to put women in a subversive state where they have to strive to be good wives who do not challenge their men; the good wife who is supposed to be ignorant and passive in sex. This mindset has made women in this context to accept sexual advances from their men regardless of their sexual misconduct. Chitando calls for a rereading of the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 to empower women in the context of HIV/AIDS. He suggests that since the poem praises the woman as something of great value, then men should base on this to appreciate and protect their women. This can be done through engaging in safer sex practices which will keep the women safe from HIV/AIDS for instance, men should refrain from having multiple sexual partners or use condoms in order to safeguard their women. Chitando calls upon women to question traditional mindsets that to be a good wife, one has to be docile and sacrifice their own life. He urges women to challenge bad practices like corruption and demand for accountability and that the women church groups should come up to empower women in the context of HIV/AIDS. Chitando thinks that it is only when women are recognized and treated as human beings with their rights and privileges like the men that the notion of a good wife can be realized.

As Chitando's focus is on how Proverbs 31:10-31 can be reread to empower women in the context of HIV/AIDS in the context of Zimbabwe, the current study takes a different trajectory in the readership of the text. The study employs the text in the understanding of an ideal wife in the contemporary Ugandan context. It interrogates the ways through which the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 can be creatively read to enhance harmony in family and marriage relations in the context of ideological quandary in the perception of an ideal wife.

Mmapula (2012), is another writer who interrogates and problematizes the different English renditions of the word  $\text{לִיָּדָה־וְעֵצָה}$  in Proverbs 31:10-31. Mmapula finds challenges with translation of the word to mean "good wife, virtuous wife, and excellent wife, capable wife among others. To her these translations are understated or don't bring out the exact portrayal and value of the woman of Proverbs 31. She argues that these renditions are influenced by patriarchy which restrict a woman to traditional gender roles and limit her to the internal roles of a wife and mother. Mmapula further opines that the translations above are aimed at the subordination of women. In her view Mmapula prefers to translate  $\text{לִיָּדָה־וְעֵצָה}$  as "courageous woman" which forms the major basis of her write-up. In this, she opines that the woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 traverses the portrayal of just being a mother and wife but rather a trader, business woman, a wise and thoughtful woman whose courage is at the same footing with the men.

In her argument, Mmapula feels the woman of Proverbs 31 is doing more of manly things therefore she should be given an appropriate portrait that brings out her endeavors and which make her equal to men, and that is "courageous woman". Through a textual and intertextual analysis, the writer goes on to illustrate the courage of the woman of Proverbs 31 and compares her with Ruth and other women in the Bible who exhibited courage in their endeavors. Mmapula's focus therefore is

to offer an appropriate rendition of the woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 with the aim of enhancing harmony with male counterparts.

Different from this study is that the concept of  $\text{בְּיָדָהּ יִשְׁרָף$  is interrogated to enhance a new ideological understanding of an ideal wife in today's Ugandan context. As Mmapula battles with the right portrayal of the woman of Proverbs 31, the current study focuses on how the pericope can creatively be interpreted to cultivate harmony between husband-and-wife relations. This is achieved through lexical and textual analysis of  $\text{בְּיָדָהּ יִשְׁרָף}$  and also through engaging in contextual Bible study with individual participants.

Silaen, et al (2024), write about the qualities of a virtuous wife in Proverbs 31:10-31 alongside the role of the husbands and family. They contend with the text that finding a good wife is difficult, that it is not all about being attractive. Silaen and others look at the wife as a helper and gift from God to her husband, therefore a valuable wife is one who makes money to support the husband. In turn the husband will support her career since she is supporting the family financially. This is to also reduce the burden on the husband hence giving him a peace of mind, they observe. They point to the need for husband and wife being trustworthy to each other as one of the virtues which builds and keeps household. They also opine that a virtuous wife is one who strives to serve God, her family and neighbors, she is one who exhibits strength, ability, efficiency in work, and has wealth. She makes money to support her husband and sacrifices for the husband.

Moreover, the writers call upon husbands and wives to work together so as to increase the family income. That the husband should abstain from bad deeds in order to live peacefully with his wife. Silean et al regard the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 as a model which women should emulate in the various roles in the family and society, as she is dedicated to her family, diligent in her work, and

deeply rooted in her faith. They conclude by bringing in the law of cause and effect in the Bible and how it plays in the context of the woman of Proverbs 31. According to them this virtuous wife's actions are the ones which yield the good results like wealth, blessings, peace, and happiness.

Although the above study advocates for women's involvement in financial support of the family, which the current study partly advances, their major emphasis is bent on the wife's contribution to support the husband so that he is at peace. They describe the wife as a helper of the husband which the current study questions as it calls for gender equality between couples if they are to stay and progress together. It is not risky to posit that Silean et al take a literary interpretation of the text and still carry on the patriarchal ideals embedded within the text. The current study on the other hand problematizes patriarchal ideals in the text which subject the woman to realms of domesticity and subordination. This is done through a creative reading of the text using the frameworks of postcolonial African Bible interpretation to generate a nuanced understanding *לְיָמֵי חַיֵּיהֶן* in today's context.

Madipoane Masenya looks at the text from a South African context. According to her, though the Bible emerged from patriarchal cultures, and contains elements oppressive to women, it also has liberative elements. Masenya in her thesis reads the text from the perspective of the liberation of African women who is a victim of racism and sexism in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. Her major aim therefore is to see how the text can empower and enable these women to rediscover their self-image (Masenya 2004).

Unlike Masenya whose emphasis is bent on how the text can be read with the aim of liberating women, this study shall take the text further. To begin with, indirectly though, considerations for

liberating men from patriarchal tentacles in order to live with liberated women is desirable. But more directly, my focus shall go beyond liberation to seeing how this liberated woman can comfortably live in her marital home; a home with a nuanced understanding and perception of an ideal wife. The study is aimed at realizing a nexus between the Afro-biblical values and modernity in this wave of emancipation and women's rights.

Ilze Jansen is another interesting analyst of the text. In her write-up, Jansen points out that the text was and is still being used to judge women and their conduct, not only personally but also professionally. Like Masenya, Jansen focuses on rendering the text more accessible to its readers and to involve the readers with in the context in which the pericope came to life.

In her work, Jansen compares the experiential world of the modern woman and that of the woman in Proverbs 31: 10-31. She clearly contends that the role of a modern woman differs from the role of the woman in Proverbs. To her, the woman in proverbs 31 does not truly exist but rather the wisdom literature reflects her as an ideal paradigmatic figure. According to her, some Christian women today try to mimic the qualities of the woman in Proverbs and at some point, they might feel that they cannot meet such high standards (Jansen 2020). Similarly, Lisa Allen-McLaurin finds the virtuousness in the woman of Proverbs 31:10:31 unattainable, and oppressive in all aspects. She proposes a different paradigm which is liberative and empowers women than what she calls "one-dimensional worker bee, never engaged in rest, recreation, or relationship building" woman (Allen-McLaurin 2023, 1). Allen-McLaurin situates her analysis of the text away from the traditional paradigm of marriage, which gives opportunity to examine key imperatives that can redefine virtuousness (Allen-McLaurin 2023).

The current study shall advance the text by not only looking at the relationship between a modern woman and the woman of Proverbs but rather, go further to expound on what could be the reasons why scholars like Jansen think the proverbial woman is just a figment of the mind. In this study, efforts are made to expose the ideological challenges which compound the contemporary society to the extent that mimicking the proverbial wife is merely theatrical than attainable. The current study further attempts to redefine what ideality is in the present ideological landscape.

Medard Ruyendo in an article titled a poem in praise of a virtuous wife of Proverbs 31 argues that, women like their male counter parts can be key players in contributing to the development and wellbeing of the family and nation at large. He uses the virtuous woman of Proverbs as a paradigm for his argument as he points to her industriousness and hard work being vital for the wellbeing of the family. He points out how a family is a basis for development in society and the nation at large and therefore, all members should be active players in order to attain development. Ruyendo further argues that African Christian women whether educated or not, working class or peasant farmer, living in the city or in the village should emulate the Proverbial woman and should not copy ideologies foreign to her socio-cultural and religious upbringing (Ruyendo 2018).

Ruyendo's focus is on how the text of Proverbs 31 can influence socio-economic development by women being actively involved in work, his argument is that women in the present African setting should borrow a leaf from the Proverb woman and they should not divert from their traditional and religious upbringing. Unlike Ruyendo who looks at the text from the economic point of view and operates from the Afro-Christian ideological space, the current study shall engage a creative reading to challenge patriarchal renditions of the text and the African traditional

cultural systems which conflict with the postmodern ideologies when it comes to the concept of a noble wife.

The poetic narrative of Proverbs 31:10-31 when read in conversation with the African cultural systems, shares the ideology of a noble woman. In both contexts, a woman is expected to behave and perform certain duties for her to be regarded a noble wife. There are peculiar qualities and behaviors—that are expected of her by society. In both African and Bible societies, the husband takes the credit on behalf of a hard working/noble woman. The position of a woman in these contexts is reduced to that of servant woman. Her efforts are ascribed to the master that is, she works hard but it is the man who is appreciated. This then brings up questions like what is ideality, and who decides what is ideal or not? Nobility in both contexts is informed by patriarchy which permeates both settings. As long as the woman satisfies the man's needs, respects his ideas and makes him comfortable, then she is a noble wife. Such ideologies are salient in patriarchal societies where women are subordinates of men. This scenario has left many educated women unmarried as, on one hand these women detest marriage while on the other hand, the men fear marrying educated and liberated women because these women question and challenge male hegemony, that makes potential husbands anxious and insecure. Scholarly write-ups abound on the increasing cases of singleness on the African continent.

A creative reading of Proverbs 31:10-31 is not only relevant for women, but also men in any African setting. How can the text be read to bridge and enhance consistency in all the three ideological spaces? This is very important for not only women emancipation but as well to emancipate men from the archaic understanding of a noble wife? In achieving this, it is important to reaffirm the original biblical teaching and belief that, the Eve, the wife was created as a helper

to Adam; Man and woman are both created in the image of God—and therefore equal players in the ramification of dynamics of life.

# CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter entails strategies through which the study has interacted with different resources to capture information relevant to the topic under investigation. The relevant sections in this chapter are: research philosophy, research design, research methods and research tools.

### 3.2. Research Philosophy

The study is premised on a constructivist epistemology paradigm. Some the proponents of this paradigm include Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey Ernst Von Glasersfeld. They advance an argument that knowledge is a human construct which is informed by an individual experiences, social interactions and cultural contexts. Through this paradigm the biblical, cultural and contemporary knowledge values are examined on how gender relations are maintained and reproduced in the patriarchal contexts of the Bible and Africa—especially Uganda; and how the constructs influence the conceptualization of an ideal wife. Through a contextualized methodological paradigm, the study advocates for a constructivist epistemological paradigm which espouses the dynamic needs of society, within which wives are to be viewed and appreciated in relation to the prevailing contexts. In doing so, the study challenges the traditional knowledge values, which are based on culture and religions, which still hold women in the realms of domesticity. This is not to undermine the value of religion and culture, but to advance that for both to continue being relevant, they should not be oppressive but supportive and empowering to all humans. To achieve this, a liberative contextual bible interpretation and critical approaches to ideological landscape in the contemporary society is relevant.

### **3.3. Research Design and Approach**

The study is qualitative in nature. It takes an advocacy-based research design. In advocating for critical advocacy research, Carolyn M. Shields has argued that educational researchers and leaders, should evolve research approaches which address injustices in the contemporary world of wealth and disparities (Shields 2016). According to Shields, research that fails to take account of these realities “holds little promise for addressing wrongs and making a difference in social, cultural, political or economic outcomes of individuals or societies” (Shields 2016, 53). To her, advocacy research is “both rigorous and activist, that has potential to inform both policy and practice and at the same time to empower” (Shields 2016, 53). She further observes about the moral responsibility and courage it takes to challenge the normative positions which perpetuate injustices. Given its mandate to advocate for a transformative change, advocacy-based research has been the preferred research design and approach in topics related to women and feminist movements (Neitz 2014, Norsworthy, Abrams, and Lindlau 2013), anti-racism movements like Black Lives Matter (Odom 2021, Lowenthal and Gold 2021, Ho 2024) and other fields that seek to liberate and empower like Contextual African Bible Hermeneutics (Dada 2010, West 2014, Speckman 2016) and other liberation theologies (Welch 2017, McLaren and Jandrić 2017).

The current study is designed to advocate for change in the domestic relations between husbands and wives. This change is at two critical levels: Firstly, change from the traditional view of the wife, which is based on cultural and religious paradigms that subject women to excess of patriarchal power structures; and secondly, change from the contemporary perception of women emancipation and empowerment in ways that enable male members of society to appreciate the benefits emancipation. Advocacy-based research is aimed at influencing policy decisions and public opinion (Janke et al 2018 and Edwards 2024). Important to note is that advocacy-based

research calls for collaboration between the researcher and the affected individuals or community in coming up with the new epistemologies which will form the basis of positive transformation and social change. Therefore, the current study is designed to put to question the African traditional and Christian religious norms that have perpetuated marginalization and oppression of women/wives. The study advocates for a paradigm shift in the appropriation of an ideal wife today, and proposes a new understanding which projects an ideal wife as the woman with different qualities that befit the ideologically changing society. Furthermore, it advocates for a shift from the mentality that hold ideals of women emancipation as solely for women. Husbands should be the partakers in the benefits of empowered women as the country pushes for domestic legislations like the Marriage Bill. The researcher collaborated with the community through the Contextual Bible Study which enlisted views that were used to build the new knowledge and framework through which an ideal wife is perceived. For the above, the design of this study calls for peculiar appropriation of the vocabularies, which include the sensational (or emotive) and argumentative statements which characterize the work. As Ahmad (2017) contends, something is sensational when it provokes excitement and interest.

As already indicated, this study is informed by the constructivist epistemological research philosophy. In the hermeneutical examination of Proverbs 31:10-31, which centered and problematized the Hebrew concept of  $\text{בְּיָדָאָהֳרָתָא}$ , and interactions from the contextual Bible Study, new epistemological frameworks and values were generated, which became the anchor upon which arguments in this study are made. Textual and contextual information from the Biblical and African societal contexts were analyzed and applied to generate conversations on the concept of an ideal wife.

### **3.4. Location of the Study and Target population**

#### **3.4.1. Location**

The field of study was zoned from the four administrative regions of Uganda namely: Western, Central, Eastern and Northern Uganda. Careful attention was given to the cultural variations within the regions to ensure equity in national representations. In mapping these participants, there is an assumption of sameness in terms of core cultural values, against the reality that each culture within the administrative zone may have its uniqueness. At large, attention is given to the patriarchal cultural orientation which is a common denominator in all cultures in Uganda. In fact, as the study progressed, key illustrations were drawn from the Buganda and Bugisu cultures to augment my arguments. It is not a misguided idea to assume sameness in patriarchal orientations between the Baganda people, for example, with other communities in the region like Basoga, Banyoro and Bagwere to mention but a few.

#### **3.4.2. Target population**

The study targeted three categories of people:

##### **1. Female politicians**

The female politicians chosen are women who have either served or serving at higher political offices as Members of Parliament. Bias is towards the women who are Christians, because of the manner in which the Bible was engaged in the contextual study. This group is very cardinal in the study because issues that affect women in contemporary marriages affect them too. Married women in politics, especially those serving at national levels as Members of Parliament and ministers face a double burden of serving their constituencies as well as their homes. In most cases, failed marriages for such women become disqualifying factors in their political careers. Besides, female politicians have been at the center of legislations aimed at streamlining women rights in

many African homes, as well as leveling the environment for the free and fair political activism for women. In all these legislative endeavors the ideas of female members of parliament have experienced resistance and rejection by not only the wider society but their male political counterparts too. Some of these female members of parliament are either renowned women activists or closely work with women activist organizations.

## **2. Leadership of the Mothers' and Fathers' Union of Uganda**

This category of participants is a group of Christians constituted by mainly the Anglican Church members to support stability of families through adherence to the biblical teachings. In the Ugandan context, the objective of the Unions as stated on the mother's union website is to strengthen and preserve marriage and family life, by upholding biblical teaching on the nature and sanctity of marriage and promote its wide understanding (<https://allsaintskampala.org/mothersunion/>). The Fathers' union is another interesting group which collaborates with the Mothers' Union. With its held belief of promoting Christ Centered families, as fathers and leaders of nations (<https://www.mothersunion.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/uganda>), the Union aims at (together with the Mothers' union) maintaining traditional family roles, which are presumed to be biblically based. In this idealized family, the father assumes the leadership roles of not only the family but society at large, while the mother is to ensure wifely duties which include proper upbringing of children and submissiveness to the leadership of the husband. This target population is important because of the Christian values they hold about marriages. Of interest was to establish how participants in this category perceive the contextual realities associated with women movements which pose challenges to the stability of traditional Christian family values. Some of the members in this group have been out rightly opposed to some legislative proposes initiated by women activists and female politicians.

Although the study has used mothers' union and fathers' unions, who largely belong to the Anglican Christian groups, the knowledge of religiosity and Christianity is similar in other Christian denominations like Catholicism, Pentecostals and Seventh Day Adventists. The theological worldviews on marriage and family of the focus group can be used as *pars pro toto* (proto type) for the others. In fact, other participants in the study like members of parliament and members of the community had their diverse Christian denomination identities.

### **3. Members of the general public including members of the academia**

The members of the public recruited to participate in the study were males by gender, above the age of 35 years. This category included local people, ranging from those with basic education to higher University degrees. This category are ordinary citizens, not actively involved in national politics (although may have had political ideas and opinions). They included boda-boda riders, local traders, civil servants that included teachers and University academic staff. The objective of recruiting this category into the study was to gain insights into the general overview of societal perspectives on family relations between wives and husbands from diverse ethnic and education backgrounds.

## **3.5. Sample size and Sampling techniques**

### **3.5.1. Sample Size**

According to Amin (2005), a sample is a portion of the population whose results in a research study can be generalized to the entire population. The study was constituted by a total of **28** (twenty eight) participants. Among these where **8** (eight) female politicians carefully drawn from the four regions of East, North, Central, and West. Each region had at least two participants. As stated earlier, I am aware of the differences in ethnic tribes within regions, but in the thinking of

this study, the difference are consumed by the common patriarchy cultural traits, which seem to characterize all the ethnic groups. The Members of the mother's union were **5** (five) purposively selected across regions to participate in the study. The same was the case with the memberships of the Fathers' Union who were **5** (five) in number. These were members from the leadership levels of the unions at provincial levels. From the general members of the public only **10** (ten) male members purposively drawn from various ethnic backgrounds were recruited. Among these were three high profile members of the academic community serving as professors in public universities. The choice of this category of academic staff was to have a glimpse of how educational attainment levels can influence attitudes and perceptions on gender relations between husbands and wives.

### **3.5.2. Sampling Techniques**

By sampling techniques, we mean a range of methods that enabled the researcher to reduce the amount of data needed to manageable size (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2003). It is concerned with the processes of deliberate selection of informants in data collection in order to make it manageable, practical, fast, cost effective and accurate. The sample population was carefully chosen in order to ensure fair presentation so that the research findings could be generalized to the entire population (Aluma 2022). This study is anchored on two sampling methods namely:

**Purposive sampling:** Purposive sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique which enables researchers to have samples of varieties that have adequate information. This technique was deemed appropriate because it involves selecting samples on basis of interest, gender, political experiences and marital experience (See Kombo and Tromp 2006). This is the sampling method in recruiting female politicians. Female politicians were purposively sampled on basis of their political experiences, marital experiences and socio-cultural experiences. The study

purposefully selected female politicians who are currently serving in parliament or have served in parliament before. Besides, the study purposively sampled the Mothers' and Fathers' Union specifically drawing from the leaders. The male members of the wider community were purposively recruited as participants on the basis of their ethnic identity and academic background.

In the same way, purposive sampling was used in recruiting participants from the members of the mothers' and father's union.

**Snowball sampling:** also referred to as chain-referral is a non-probability sampling method used in qualitative research where existing participants help in identifying other potential research participants from their social networks and connections. In the context of this study, I employed this sampling technique to gain access to members of the general public with the objective of gaining insights to diverse cultural perceptions on the idea of an ideal wife. The participants in this case were referred to me by the original key informants from the categories of female members of parliament and mothers and fathers' unions. Although the study makes mention of different occupations of the members of the general public, the bottom line was choosing members who are opinion leaders in their locales. In my engagements with these referrals, a total number of 10 participants were recruited at least two from each administrative regions of East, West, North and Central. On engaging the sampling technique, at the accrual of the participants, additional participation was deemed not necessary since the study seemed to have hit the saturation point, at which participants' responses and information became similar and repetitive leading to no new information. Moreover, the research goals of mapping the African cultural ideological views on wives had already been met.

## **3.6. Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

### **3.6.1. Data Collection Methods**

The study entails both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was collected through employing methods like face-to-face interviews, virtual interviews and contextual Bible study. The secondary data was obtained from analyzing different written and recorded materials in relation to the study, this also called document analysis. The initial idea in this study was to use Focus Group Discussion, because the study is largely based on Contextual Bible Study. However, the FGD became ineffective because of the nature of the purported participants. For purposes of clarity, it would be helpful to explain what CBS stands for before explaining the methods used further.

#### **3.6.1.1. Contextual Bible Study**

This is a method the study employed to generate information from participants. According to Gerald West, “Contextual bible study is a form of liberation hermeneutics that emerged in South Africa in the 1980’s. It involves socially engaged biblical scholars and ordinary readers of the bible who collaborate in the interpretive process” (West 2014). Contextual bible study is concerned with what a given biblical text or theme has to say in the critique of a particular issue in the society or in the church’s life, or what lessons may be drawn from a biblical text or theme for a particular context. Oxley writes that community is the beginning and goal of Contextual bible study, that is to say the community is the fabric and context of the bible study. In the current study, Proverbs 31:10-31 was read and interpreted from the context of the Ugandan community. The objective is to examine how the biblical ideal wife can be conceptualized or interpreted by the Ugandan society. Oxley further observes that contextual bible study facilitates a critical structured and systemic analysis of all aspects of life; specifically, it critically analyses the self, society, and the biblical

text, using a range of structured and systematic questions. Contextual biblical study constructs a critical dialogue between a critical reading of life and a critical reading of the bible” (Oxley 2017). The search for dialogue is the crust of this study. The study situates the biblical ideal of an ideal wife in the mid of conflicting ideologies in an attempt to find harmony between the conflicting ideological realities.

The Ujamaa resource manual, stipulates some steps which should be involved in doing a Contextual bible study, these steps are:

1. Identifying the problem in the local community Contextual bible study begins with the reality of the local community, the issues or themes that a particular local community is struggling or dealing with. In this study the local problem identified is who is an ideal wife in the contemporary ideologically conflicting society?
2. Discerning the biblical text is the next step. Identifying the biblical text which is the problem or speaks to the problem is essential. In our study, the text identified is Proverbs 31:10-31. Although there are many text on the theme of marriage, the choice of this text is because it elaborates not only in its vagueness of the concept of  $\text{כִּלְיָתָיִם}$  but details what the ideal wife should do or be. The views presented may offer relevant hermeneutical incites in addressing the problem identified above.
3. Formulating questions is the third step, these questions analyzing and linking text and context. Contextual bible study is based on asking questions about our context and about the biblical text. Here questions are formulated according to the contextual reality which will help to engage the biblical text. The questions which study asks are questions of value. In view of Proverbs 31:10-31, who is a good wife today? What does Proverbs actually say?

In which ways can Proverbs be read to enhance the contemporary marriage relationships?  
How should we read Proverbs in the contemporary ideological landscape?

4. Articulating and owning, that is to say owning the contextual bible study outcomes. The outcome of the contextual bible study has a life of its own (making the Bible study our own); once the questions have been designed, the contextual bible study now has a life of its own. The power of the contextual bible study process is that it allows participants to articulate and own their own interpretation of a particular text in relation to their context. The views of the participants are analyzed and adopted in the proposed theological and theoretical frameworks for articulating marriage relationships.

Gerald West's model of contextual Bible study, involves the Focus Group Discussions at community level. In the current study, different participants had different time schedules and a clash of priorities which made FGD difficult. Therefore, as the researcher, I read the text with individual participants other than in FGD. As stated above, FGD would not be possible because of the nature of the participants. The Bible text of Proverbs 31:10-31 was read at individual levels, the researcher read the text with the specific individual person and asked for the respondent's view about the text. To ensure uniformity, the researcher ensured the use of the same Bible version (NIV) to all participants and ensured to ask similar questions. The discussion guide previously meant for FGD was customized as interview guide to suit the individualized focus.

### **3.6.1.2. The Interviews**

Interviews were conducted at individual levels with the participants, and they helped to mitigate the challenges of the Ujamaa model of CBS and also accommodated avenues for engaging other relevant questions which were outside the CBS. Furthermore, interview interactions with individual participants helped to create a free interaction zone—under the protection of

anonymity than a focus group discussion. Individual respondent shared their personal information without fear of public opinion/judgement from other members in the group. There were mainly two types of interviews I used in this study. That is face to face interviews and virtual or telephone interviews.

#### **3.6.1.2.1. Face to Face Interviews**

Also called an in-person interview, the face-to-face interview, is effective in soliciting information in projects that can be considered to be very sensitive (Dialsingh 2008). One of its great advantages is that it establishes rapport between the interviewee and interviewer which nuance the study experience. With a healthy rapport generated from the study interactions, the interviewee is at ease to share even what would be the most sensitive—but relevant information (Horsfall et al. 2021). In the interviews, I interacted with some members of the mothers' and fathers' union, and members of the community especially three university academic staff. This method of data collection was suitable for this category of participants because some of the participants were easily accessible, and the method is interactive and enabled the researcher to engage the participants in physical conversations, while at the same time observing other expressions and physical body language of the participants on topic issues. Also important to note was the reality of participants privileging me with their personal life experiences in marriage, which the study found useful. In this method, I formulated a semi-structured interview guide containing a list of questions. During the interactions, the participants' views were being recorded using an electronic voice recorder. This was effective in enabling the flow of the conversations without interruption of the need to write down important points from the discussion. As a limitation to this method and tools used, some participants were not easy to access mainly because of their busy schedules and protocols. For instance, it was not possible to reach each purposively selected Member of Parliament to engage

in face to face interview interactions. To mitigate, this limitation, alternative forms of approaches were used as seen below. Furthermore, I found it that some participants were too wordy in their responses, especially in a study which was time bound. At some point, the conversations would stray away from the questions asked, yet as a researcher optimistic for more information, I would fail to determine when to interrupt the participants for fear of missing potentially new information that would ensue from the interactions. As a way forward, I ensured flexibility in my interview guiding questions because some of the questions emerged from the interview interactions. In some incidences, participants wanted to express some views in their local languages, which were not easy for me to decipher the meaning. Some of the non-verbal expressions and body language could not be taken for granted in terms of meaning, as in fact some participants made facial expression especially when asked about the relationships between wives and husbands or on matters about wives being in the public space.

#### **3.6.1.2.2. Virtual and Telephone Interviews**

Virtual interviews, also called online, electronic interviews or E-interviews, are defined as the use of internet-based technology to enable real-time, in-depth conversations between research participants and an interviewer (Akyirem et al. 2023). One of the merits of this research method is limiting physical contacts with the participants especially in the wake of pandemics like Covid-19 (Keen, Lomeli-Rodriguez, and Joffe 2022), and mitigating other challenges associated with geographical obstacles and distances which involve travelling to meet interview participants (Carter et al. 2021, Sah, Singh, and Sah 2020). Telephone interview is a research method where the researcher reaches the participants over the telephone (Carr and Worth 2001, Drabble et al. 2016, Block and Erskine 2012).

Virtual and telephone interview method was a suitable alternative to face-to-face interviews especially for the members of Parliament that were not possible to reach out to physically. In deploying this method as the researcher, I used my smart mobile phone. I first purposively gathered the phone contacts of relevant participants. This was either from interpersonal connections or from the internet data base containing information about female parliamentarians. I then first called each selected potential participants to request for audience, and appointment to participate in the study. This method was useful because some participants individually reached out to me as the researcher at their convenience. I further downloaded, installed and registered to social media communication applications like WhatsApp, google meet and zoom, which were therefore used to supplement the phones at different intervals depending on the participant's choice. This was so because, some participants voluntarily chose to call me by any of the tools mentioned. WhatsApp, google meet and zoom were widely used because of the televised view components embedded in them. Participants especially politician preferred video-view interactions with the researcher, apparently for their own safety. The interview proceedings and conversation were automatically recorded on my smart mobile phone and later downloaded on the laptop computer. The limitations of this method were largely technological, as in some cases conversations were interrupted by poor internet connectivity. Where internet would completely fail, I would use direct phone calls using subsidized phone call bundles from both MTN and Airtel networks.

### **3.6.1.3. Document analysis**

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents (printed and electronic) to generate data, which is examined, interpreted in order to generate meaning and relevance to the study problem (Bowen 2009, Owen 2014, Armstrong 2021). The researcher read and reviewed both written and recorded materials relevant to the study. The acquired information

informed the content of this research in various ways like literature review, raw data that contributed to various analytical section of the study and reference materials. The documents analyzed included books, articles, research theses and dissertation, newspapers, bulletins and magazines. Some of the valuable documents are writings of prominent postcolonial African Biblical and feminist scholars like Mercy Amba, Masenye Madipona, Robert Kuloba-Wabyanga, Musa Dube, to mention a few. Newspapers, tabloids, magazine and bulletins were essential resources in as far as capturing the day-to-day family, marriage and life trends. This also involved analyzing digital materials like recorded news, recorded court proceedings, blogs, You-tube video clips, etc. and audio recordings. The documents entail day to day life experiences of the contemporary society, which also include marriage and family issues. In these recorded news, blogs, and channels among other issues view and read news about family and life of prominent politicians like Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, Cecilia Ogwal, Miria Matembe etc. Besides, some of the audio clips contain the aspirations of the society in relation to marriages. For instance music clips and folklores.

Some of the audio and video recordings took an ethnographic approach specifically netnography. Netnography is a type of media research aimed at understanding socio-cultural phenomenon conveyed through digital communication content. In this study approach, data originates in and manifest through the digital traces of naturally occurring social cultural phenomenon preserved in contemporary communication networks. Netnography brings the field behind the screen before the researcher (Kozinets 2002, Bowler Jr 2010, Kozinets 2019, Kaoukaou 2021). Some of the folklores like *Nfunda n'OMubi* (Luganda), various proverbs and sayings and songs like *Mukasi Ukatya* by Elukana Wanzala (Lumasaba), and many others are analyzed ethnographically to unearth the cultural frameworks of the environments they represent.

### **3.6.2. Research instruments**

The study employed the following research tools to collect data from participants: Interview guide; the researcher structured some open-ended questions ensuing from the Bible text. The questions helped to capture respondent's view on a good wife.

Secondly, the Bible; this was another tool used to get information from the informants. The Bible was read with an individual and then listened to their views about the text.

The mobile phone gadgets, internet and computer, which were used in e-interviews. The researcher also used a recorder with the informant's consent to capture all the information from them since time did not allow to me to write every details.

### **3.7. Data presentation and analysis**

Data presentation and analysis is qualitative in nature. In here, I presented and analyzed data thematically, using thematic discourse analysis (TDA). From interactions with the participants, the researcher generated themes and subthemes from the data collected. Secondly, I also used constructivist approach in data presentation. Also known as constructivist grounded theory, constructivist approach involves a research method that focuses on generating new ideas or theories through inductive analysis of the data gathered than from pre-existing theoretical frameworks. This is the realm of Bible hermeneutics which informs grounded theology involving inductive analysis of the Bible Contextual realities to generate a theological framework referred to in this as the third ideological space.

### **3.8. Limitations of the study (findings)**

The study faced a challenge of accessing some participants given their busy schedules, which made physical meetings difficult. The nature of the study required interacting and interfacing with female politicians especially members of parliament. This category of participants come from different parts of the country and others are too busy with legislative and cabinet executive roles. The study mitigated this challenge through methodological innovations which involved use of social media like WhatsApp, google meet and zoom meetings. Telephone interviews which involved use of mobile phones played a great role in accessing the participants at their points of convenience. The challenge of virtual access is that it limited my interactions with the participants. The researcher was not able to observe other aspects of the responses like emotions and body language, which are important in researches of qualitative nature.

This study was carried out within the theoretical framework of African Bible hermeneutics (ABH). This approach is a branch of Postcolonial theory that seeks to read and interpret the Bible using African contextual realities as discussed in detail in the theoretical framework section in chapter II. Unlike in other parts of Africa like South Africa and West Africa, ABH is still at infant stages in this region. This generated two problems namely; lack of written materials and resources on the subject which is necessary for referencing purposes and secondly, the researcher found it burdensome explaining the study methodology of ABH all the time to her participants. The problem of limited materials was mitigated by relying on materials which are written from elsewhere, the relevance of these materials is that the problems faced by women are generally the same across the continent that is to say, patriarchal domination.

### **3.9 Researcher's Positionality**

This study is being carried out by a female, unmarried and Ugandan woman. I originate from the Bagisu tribe from Eastern Uganda. I am passionate about my cultural background, but also against cultural stereotypes which undermine women's efforts. I am a member of the Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT), which has greatly influenced my worldviews on critical social constructs like patriarchy. My models and mentors are scholars like Musa Dube, Masenya Madipoane, and Johanna Stierbert. Although efforts have been made to make this thesis conform with academic objectivity as possible, this position and background undeniably may influence some perspectives presented in this study.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

This research study was granted permission and monitored by the department of Religious Studies and Philosophy of Kyambogo University which ensured a high degree of ethical standards in carrying out the research. Under the authority and guidance of the University, I was given a letter granting me permission to collect data and introducing me to the selected participants. The letter was presented to various respondents, and in organizations like the Mothers' Union, a consent letter was issued from the president of the union permitting me to carry out research. The copy of the letter is attached as appendix.

The researcher after contacting the selected participants and explaining to them what the study is all about and the part they are to play, she asked for their consent. Majority of the participants accepted to be part of the study while the few who did not agree were left out.

There was a high level of confidentiality exercised in the research, firstly as the study was a one on one interaction with the participants rather than a focus group discussion, this atmosphere made participants to freely share their experiences in on the topic of study. Besides, participants who were not comfortable with their names being mentioned in the study, initials were used to represent their views.

The researcher has acknowledged and cited all the sources referred to in the study using the APA citation and referencing style.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Concept Of **לְיָדָהּ** In the Cultural Context of Proverbs 31:10-31

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter responds to the first objective of the study, which seeks to analyze the concept of **לְיָדָהּ** in the cultural context of Proverbs 31:10-31. The cultural context of Proverbs 31:10-31, in this study is constructed to not only refer to the ancient Near Eastern context of the Hebrew Bible, but also include the African cultural contexts in which the text is preserved in vernacular translations. The vernacular translations, it has been argued are a reflection of the translator's ideological interests in relation to the questions of an ideal wife. The vernacular Bible translation, as Samson Kamau Gitau would probably assert, metaphorically speak with clarity and authority the voice of God in the cultural language of the audience (Gitau 1989). In dealing with the African cultural contexts, focus shall be limited to how the concept of **לְיָדָהּ** is translated in sampled vernacular Bibles, followed by a brief commentary; and a detailed section that focuses on cultural analysis and conceptualization of an ideal wife, using the examples from two Ugandan contexts of Buganda and Bugisu.

To achieve the first objective under this chapter, it was important to explain the general view of women in ancient Near East, before delving in the Bible text under study. The socio-cultural construct of the woman in the view of the ancient world significantly informed the societies' expectation of the wife. The Bible comes from a social-cultural setting which greatly shapes and informs its ideologies. In this way, it is paramount to not only look at Israel alone but also consider the neighboring societies (like Egypt, Canaan, Sumeria, Mesopotamia and Greece) as they not only

form a basis for Israel's theology but also share many similarities (Rodríguez 2001). The Bible literature thus, it has been argued reflects many aspects of the larger culture identifiable across the ancient Near East, and can be used to a certain degree to recover aspects of the ancient cognitive environment that may help us understand the Israelite perspective a little better (Walton 2018).

#### **4.2.1. Women in Ancient Near East (ANE)**

It cannot be denied that most of the ancient Near Eastern cultures Israel inclusive ascribed to patriarchal systems, the male were on the top of the ladder and women came second (Chavalas 2014). There were however traces of women who held positions of influence in society by the virtue of their birth for instance, the royal women and those with special talents. Some societies like Babylon and Assyria have traces of women being in influential positions of their society (Chavalas 2014). Scholarship has further revealed that political leadership was gradually eroded from women, and men claimed legitimacy as rulers, while women were relocated to the realms and spheres in the domesticity (Wabyanga 2014, Chavalas 2014).

Women in ancient Israel were viewed as secondary to men, more less men's property which is a common feature in patriarchal societies. This is vivid in the last commandment where there is a thin line between a wife and other property that belonged to the man Exodus 20: 17. Ancient Israel as seen in the Bible was a society which the position of the male was elevated compared to that of their female counter parts. The Bible writings are male oriented and the female voices are silent on most occasions. Although the woman had a contribution to give to society, her efforts were ascribed to her husband who is given credit on her behalf. Looking at the proverbial woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 her endeavors where all to the glory of her husband "Her husband has full

confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good not harm all the days of her life” (verse 11-12).

However much the woman accumulated wealth, it did not belong to her but rather to her husband. Plutarch asserts that “married couples have one purse under the husband’s control even if the wealth comes from the wife” (Cohick 2009). In the Jewish society, a woman who was wealthy was seen as a challenge to the male ego and she was thought to be unrulier and not submissive to the husband. Ben Sira a Jewish scribe expresses a fear for a wealthy wife, he writes that “a good wife brings social respectability, while a wife with too much wealth puts the scribe’s honor in jeopardy. He adds that even as a bold wife dishonor so too a wife with more money than her husband shames him” (Sir 25: 21-23). Ben Sira on the contrary strongly discourages men from depending on the woman’s wealth because it will bring him shame. Therefore, for a wealthy woman to maintain her social status as a good wife, she has to give ownership of her riches to the husband.

In the Babylonian culture, a woman was more of a commodity when it came to marriage, she was bought by the man and hence giving him ownership of her like any other possession he had. Stol notes that “the wife became an economic asset herself. She became the object in a process of exchange which amounts to a commercial transaction. Marrying a woman in the ancient world was equality to buying any property like land, sheep, slave etc.” (Stol 2016, 128-129). Bradley, in the same regard adds that “in case the bride was considered to be purchased by the groom by the payment of a bride price, she was then considered to be his property to be disposed of at will (Bradley 2003). In this context, marriage was compulsory for all women and it’s from this that they got their full identity and importance in society. Stol observes that “in the Near East, then and

now, the most important event ever to happen to a girl was entering into bond of marriage. Marriage was seen as a life changing event for every woman. It was the destiny of women to marry and bear children” (Stol 2016, 60). The importance of marriage to a woman is further expressed in the Akkadian proverbs like “a house without an owner is like a woman without a husband; my field is like a woman without a husband because it lacks a cultivator” (Chavalas 2014, 82). This implies that the only hope of the woman was getting married as it was to her social benefit. Being unmarried in such a society was viewed as a curse or bad omen to the woman and her family.

Women in the ancient Near Eastern cultures did not have independent lives but all through they were under the strict custody of the male, they are legal minors subject to male control. For instance, “before marriage a woman was subject to her father; in his absences, to an older brother; and after marriage to her husband (Van de Mieroop 2015, 50). Stol attests that “in the Babylonian patriarchal society a woman was transferred from the authority of one man to that of another, from that of her father to that of her husband” (Stol 2016, 127). This was the same with the Israel society where women were seen as secondary and subjected under male dominance. Women addressed their husbands as *baal*—master or Lord (King and Stager 2001). The usage of the term master by the wife in reference is somewhat an acknowledgment of her position in the family as secondary or more of a servant whose role is to serve the *baal*—husband.

Before marriage a young woman was expected to keep herself for only the man she would get married to. The aspect of chastity of girls in these ancient Near Eastern societies was a collective effort of the family especially the males ensured that their girls observe this virtue. However this not the case with the men, no one bothered whether the man was chaste or not. A woman’s sexuality was controlled through enforcement of virginity values (Matthews, Levinson, and

Frymer-Kensky 1998). Emphasis on virginity was a means of ensuring chastity of women, which was an indicator of the social worth of the family and the men in it. The honor of the family is at stake, for real men have the strength and cunning to protect and control their women (Matthews, Levinson, and Frymer-Kensky 1998). It was shameful and a reproach to the family if the groom found out on the first day of intercourse that the bride wasn't a virgin and he had a right to nullify the marriage. In Genesis 34, Jacob's daughter Dinah brought shame to the family after engaging in premarital sex, Dinah's brothers attacked Shechem and though he pleaded with them to pay and marry their sister, they did not listen because this act had ruined the social image of the family. Although Shechem was willing to take Dinah, she had already lost her pride of getting married as a virgin.

Besides social pride and honor, the virgin woman fetched the family much bride-price for instance "in Nuzi the price of a woman on her first marriage was forty shekels and on her second after her husband had died was ten shekels. In Egypt was ten shekels for a virgin and five shekels for a divorced woman" maintains Stol. The Greek also had high expectations and demands for virginity of girls before marriage, they advocated for absolute chastity for girls until marriage. Hesiod in his poem advises men to marry virgin girls and he equates virginity to nobility, he quotes that "marry a virgin so she can be taught good ways. For a man acquires nothing better than the good wife" (Stallings 2015, 5). A woman who kept her virginity until marriage was respectable and dignified in the family and society at large. In Babylon, a woman came out to testify to the public that her man has taken her as a virgin "my husband has taken me for his wife as a virgin" (Stol 2016, 13), which meant that she had entered marriage when she was pure and honorable. Emphasis was put on virginity because they believed that a woman who got married while still a virgin would maintain chaste behavior even in marriage.

Fidelity was an important accept among the marrieds, but it was more of an obligation to the women. In most of the ancient Near eastern cultures, the married woman was seen as a possession of the husband and she lived under his strict surveillance. Unlike the men, married women had no freedom to associate with other men outside. For this reason, they were not allowed to move out of the domestic sphere freely to avoid any form of temptation. Coupled with this was the practice of veiling to avoid the risk of being admired by other men in case they went to the public. According to Chrabieh, the veil served as a way of protecting a father or husband's interest in his daughter or wife. The alluring face of a married or marriageable woman could not tempt men from beneath a veil (Chrabieh 2013). Veiling while in public was a necessity for the married women and failure to do that attracted punishment because absence of a veil was a denotation of an immoral woman. Prostitutes and slave women on the contrary were forbidden from veiling because they were not legally bound to anyone sexually therefore any man could access them.

As earlier noted, adultery in these settings was highly prohibited majorly on the side of the woman. The Old Testament law for instance, considers adultery as a very big offense against morality. Mendelsohn asserts that "adultery was a crime when committed by the betrothed girl and married woman but not when committed by the husband. A woman who committed adultery in her paramour's house was put to death" (Mendelsohn 1948, 33). However, among the Assyrian and Babylonian, the crime of adultery was blamed on both the woman and the one she committed it with, both parties faced a penalty of being thrown in the river to drown. Mendelsohn notes that's "the man's guilt in this case, as in all cases involving adultery is based upon his trespass of the husband's property" (Mendelsohn 1948, 33). A man committing adultery with another man's wife was seen as encroachment on his property since the woman is under the husband's ownership. In the same way, "according to the Romans, the decree mandated that a husband divorce his wife and

prosecute her if he suspected her of adultery” (Cohick 2009, 72). The act of adultery in these ancient Near Eastern societies costed more on the woman as she faced public ridicule, it put her at the verge of losing her dignity, marriage and worse still her life.

#### **4.2.2. Good wife in Ancient Near East**

This section aims at situating the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 in its socio-cultural context. It entails information about the construct of an ideal wife in Israel and other ancient Near Eastern cultures. In this, we consider some ancient societies neighboring Israel like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Assyria and Greece-Roman to mention but a few. This is paramount for the study because Israel did not exist as an independent society but was interconnected with the surrounding societies which greatly shape much of its theology and ideology.

The roles of women in most ancient societies were mostly confined in the private sphere; much of her work was in the home as a mother and wife. This task called for her devotion and effort to see that she balances between motherhood and wifehood. In Roman and Greek societies for example, the woman’s character and social reputation were based on the management of her household. Her roles were majorly centered on family care and responsibilities like how to maintain a stable and health home (Cohick 2009). She was the reason to blame for any of her family member’s mischiefs in society, including the sins of her husband (see. Mendelsohn 1948). The mothers’ role stretched from Child bearing to proper upbringing of children, in case the child was wayward the blame was always put on her (Proverbs 10:1).

A hardworking woman in this context was the one described as a good wife. Hard work took forms of labour on the farm, and home keeping. Marten Stol describes the qualities of a good wife in ancient Near East as “the house where is beer, it is her stand; the house where the cooking pot is,

her jug is there; the house where there is food, she is the great cook;” in contrast to a degenerate woman who “cannot card wool, she cannot spin with the spindle, her hand is no good for working” (Stol 2016, 324). In other words, she is a direct opposite of the hardworking woman who works tirelessly to ensure that her family does not lack just like the Proverb woman.

In the works of Ben Sira (26: 14-15), a good woman in the Jewish context must be modest, submissive, charming and silent. He goes ahead to quote that “a gift from the Lord is a silent wife, and nothing is so precious as her self-discipline. Charm upon charm is a wife with a sense of shame, and nothing is more valuable than her bound-up mouth”. The silence of a woman is described as part of beauty and a virtue men would look out for, it was a sign of respect and submissiveness to the husband. This was contrasted with the talkative and outgoing woman who Ben Sira describes as defiant as she seems to challenge the supremacy of the husband, and relates her bold speech and stare to promiscuity. He further stated that, “Happy the husband of a good wife, twice lengthened are his days; A worthy wife brings joy to her husband, peaceful and full is his life...” to denote that the life of a man depends on the type of wife he married (see. Di Lella 1995).

In the Greek context, Hesiod a Greek poet calls upon men to look out for good wives who will bring peace and happiness to them. He quotes that “the man who finds a good wife spends his life with bad competing against good, while the man who gets an awful wife lives with unrelenting pain in the heart and spirit and is ill without a cure” (Rexine 1969, 5, Stallings 2015). A bad wife brought agony to the husband which could shorten his life as noted by Hesiod. According to Greco-Roman societies, a wife was to exhibit modesty, chastity and industry, importance was ascribed right from her beauty to her contribution in the family. Men boasted about such wives and praised

them in the public “after wine had flowed freely, the men began to brag about their wives’ chaste deportment” (Cohick 2009, 70). A virtuous wife in this context was one who possessed a sense of duty, fidelity, and steadfastness to her family, husband, the state and the gods—more so the gods of her husband. According to the Greek context, a good wife was expected to be knowledgeable in philosophy to enable her execute her duties well and make informed decisions when it came to family matters. Eschewing fancy clothes and remaining silent in public reveals her noble character. In bed chamber, she should show her affection and modesty in lovemaking. She must accept her husband’s extramarital sexual activities with good grace and not let such behavior push her toward divorce (Cohick 2009). She was expected to be patient and intelligent so as to manage her husband’s excesses without exposing them to the public.

### **4.3. אִשֶׁת־חַיִל in text and context of the Bible and Africa**

This section focuses on the concept of אִשֶׁת־חַיִל (*Eshet Khayil*), the proverbial character associated with the good wife. The section takes a textual and contextual examination of the concept in view of the Bible, the ancient Near East, and African context—examining how the text has been interpreted and translated in randomly sampled African languages.

#### **4.3.1. Lexical Analysis of אִשֶׁת־חַיִל (*Eshet Khayil*)**

אִשֶׁת־חַיִל (*Eshet Khayil*) is a compound word formed from two different words: אִשֶׁת (*Eshet*) is a noun in construct, whose absolute form is אִשָּׁה (*Isha*). אִשָּׁה in the Hebrew Bible appears 775 times. It is the word used in general terms for a woman (see. Genesis 2:22, 3:15, Exodus 3:22, Deuteronomy 21:11, 1 Samuel 1:26, etc.), but in specific cases for a wife (see Genesis 2:24, 12:19, Leviticus 18:11, Numbers 5:14, Proverbs 19:14, etc.).

כַּיִל (*Khayil*) has several meanings in the Hebrew Bible, and it appears 245 times. The lexicon entry renders this word as both noun and verb. As a verb, it connotes firmness and strength. As a noun, it connotes special skills, power, strength, efficiency, wealth, army among others. Although this word is in most cases translated in adjectival sense to describe the woman אִשָּׁה, it often appears in the Hebrew Bible as a noun, which modifies the prefixed noun a construct. This is why אִשָּׁה becomes אִשָּׁת־כַּיִל (*Eshet*) as also in other incidences like Genesis 47:6, Exodus 18:21, Judges 18:2 etc. The Septuagint (LXX) employs the word ἀνδρείαν (*andreyan*), from the root **avndrei/oj** (*andreyos*), which conveys the sense of manliness or strength.

כַּיִל (*Khayil*) when used in the context men (אֲנָשִׁים-כַּיִל) denotes people with physical strength, which could be for labour (אֲנָשִׁים-כַּיִל לְעֵבֶרֶתָהּ (1 Chronicles 26:8)) or men with military or warrior skills (2 Samuel 24:9; 2 Kings 2:16; Nehemiah 11:6, Psalms 76:6). In Exodus 14:28, the water killed all Pharaoh's army (וַיִּמָּוֶת כָּל־עֲרֹבַת־מִצְרָיִם) See also Judges 3:29, 1 Samuel 2:4, 18:17, 31:12, and 2 Samuel 22:40, 1 Chronicles 20:1, Jeremiah 37:10, Ezra 8:22 among many others. In some texts especially poetic texts כַּיִל (*Khayil*) is associated with wealth and strength in terms of social influence (see. Isaiah 8:4, Job 20:15, Psalms 62:10, Zecharia 14:14).

The construct אִשָּׁת־כַּיִל (*Eshet Khayil*) therefore presents an image of a woman and wife who demonstrates power, strength, special skills and wealth. As the sage has asked, is such a woman there? Examining how this construct is deployed in other Bible settings may be instructive. In Ruth 3:11, describes Ruth, who presents herself submissively to Boaz as אִשָּׁת־כַּיִל. The reason why

Boaz described her so is because Ruth presented herself to him according to the protocols of the ancient Near East. Ruth had lost her husband in Moab. She followed Naomi, her mother-in-law to Israel with the intention of marrying one of the kins men of her late husband. With the help of Naomi, the mother-in-Law, Boaz, an elderly man was identified as the potential suitor, and Ruth is guided on how to present herself before Boaz. The sexual subjectivity with which Ruth presents herself earned her praise from Boaz “you have shown your kindness to be better by not going after young men, whether poor or rich...you are <sup>ל</sup>אִשְׁתֵּי־חַיִל.” However, in correspondence with 1 Chronicles 26:8 where the is used in relation to men at work <sup>ל</sup>אִשְׁתֵּי־חַיִל לְעֹבְדֵי הַבַּיִת, it may be prudent to attribute Boaz’s remarks to earlier activities of Ruth when she first appeared to Boaz as the strange woman gleaning his corn field for survival (Ruth 2:1-18). In this regard, Ruth had appeared to Boaz as an industrious woman, with the right attitude towards work. Her second appearance to Boaz in the mid of the night to offer herself sexually to Boaz, because he was the kinsman of her late husband, is received with praise and blessings as a benevolent gesture that earned her the title <sup>ל</sup>אִשְׁתֵּי־חַיִל. For emphasis, Ruth presents herself before Boaz because he is a kinsman to her dead husband. It seems she had choices for young men, but she chooses to follow the cultural norms and Levirate Laws of the day in order to produce children for her late husband (Deuteronomy 25:5) (Weisberg 2004, Mendelsohn 1948, Kilchör 2022, Suzie Park 2015). In Proverbs 12:4, <sup>ל</sup>אִשְׁתֵּי־חַיִל is described as the crown of her husband (<sup>ל</sup>אִשְׁתֵּי־חַיִל כֶּסֶהוּ כְּכִנֹּרֶת). She gives her husband fame and pride, as opposite to the woman who disgraces her husband. <sup>ל</sup>אִשְׁתֵּי־חַיִל (*Khayil*) is therefore an adjectival noun, whose appropriation highly depends on the context. The root is used in various contexts to denote physical strength, military skills, special skills, and, at least in the case of Ruth 3, it is doubly used to mean keeping the customs as well as working hard.

#### 4.3.2. אִשְׁת־נָוִל in the context of Proverbs 31:10:31

אִשְׁת־נָוִל forms the opening sentence of the corpus. In major English translations, the construct is variously rendered. For instance, in NIV it is translated as “wife of noble character”, ASV and ISV have “worthy woman,” Good News Bible has “capable wife,” while KJV has “virtuous woman” and NASB prefers “excellent wife.” The Bible text goes ahead to enumerate the attributes of אִשְׁת־נָוִל. Some of the attributes in the text include the following:

- Her husband has full confidence in her
- She brings him good, not harm,
- She is industrious and hardworking, works like a merchant ship, bringing her food from afar. Holds a profitable business.
- She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family
- She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
- She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.
- Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
- She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.
- She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.
- She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- She doesn't delight in physical beauty because charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but the fear of God.

From the above, it can be surmised that **לְיָדָאֵתְּ** is the woman of both physical, social and intellectual attributes that is devoted to hard work. She ensures that her family—husband and children have supplies needed for survival. It is not surprising that modern English translations like Amplified Bible (AMP) have rendered explanatory notes in their translation of **לְיָדָאֵתְּ** viz. “An excellent woman [one who is spiritual, capable, intelligent, and virtuous].”

#### **4.4. לְיָדָאֵתְּ in Contemporary African Language Translations of Proverbs 31:10-31**

In this subsection, the study demonstrates how **לְיָדָאֵתְּ** has been translated in African languages. The importance of this illustration is to amplify the fluidity of the Hebrew word **לְיָדָאֵתְּ** which has rendered different translations not to have uniform meanings of the adjectival noun. Furthermore, one would imagine, on the basis of the LXX (Septuagint) Greek version, which uses a more ambiguous word *ἀνδρείαν* (*andreyan*) (which means manly), that various translations would present the woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 as a figure with manly features, which is not the case. The obscurity of **לְיָדָאֵתְּ** therefore renders the African translations of **לְיָדָאֵתְּ** subjective to the particular cultural understanding of a desirable wife. Most African cultures are patriarchal; and the patriarchal ideologies are shared with the East African contexts like Uganda where this study is based. It is not hasty to state that all the translation carry the patriarchal interests in what is desired as the ideal wife. In the following subsections, a sampled of translations has been presented from Southern Africa and West Africa as discussed below:

##### **4.4.1. The Zulu and Xhosa Cultural Translations of Bibles**

Also known as the isizulu Bible, was first translated in 1893, which makes it one of the old African Language translations on the continent. In this version, **לְיָדָאֵתְּ** is translated as *umfazi*

*okhuthelayo* to literally mean a hardworking wife. *Okhuthelayo* also has a sense of being diligent. Zulu Language, also called isiZulu language is one of the official languages spoken by about 14 million people in South Africa (Andresen and Carter 2016, Aiseng 2024). The Zulu people are Bantu speaking ethnic group whose economic orientation is largely agriculture. Among other prominent aspects of Zulu traditional life is the *Hlonipha* custom of respect which defines boundaries of behavioral conduct between men and women (Rudwick and Shange 2009, Irvine and Gunner 2018, Mbele et al. 2015, Nene 2016). There is extant literature which explain the status of women especially in traditional Zulu as basically subservient to men (Hanretta 1998, Gluckmann 1935, Chiliza and Masuku 2020, Van der Vliet 2024, Emenike and Asuzu 2023).

Basically, women especially wives occupy a servant status: "...She cooks, cleans, has babies and brings them up, cultivates the land and harvests, collects firewood, brews beer, fetches water if there are no children to do so, the list is endless but generally Zulu women are content with their lot. Before serving her husband a meal, the wife enters the hut or room – usually on her knees and brings him water to wash his hands and rinse his mouth then only does she bring his food and then leaves him to enjoy his meal" (Eshowe.com 2024)

Relatedly, the Xhosa Bible, also called isiXhosa Bible was first published as a complete Bible in 1864 by the British Missionaries. It went through editions like the 1975 edition, and the current version was published by the Bible Society of South Africa in 1996. In this version of the Bible,  $\text{!}\text{N}^{\text{!}}\text{-}\text{T}\text{P}\text{J}\text{X}$  is rendered as *Omfazi Onesidima*, which literally means a woman of dignity. *Onesidima* in Xhosa language also convey a sense of being a decent person. isiXhosa language is one of the official Languages in South Africa, and it is believed to be spoken by between nine to ten million people (Van Warmelo 2024, Seethal 2023). In many aspects, the Xhosa are not different

from the Zulu in regards to the status women in society. The society is patriarchal and women play the servants roles to men (Simani 2002, Dowling 1988). Popular among the Xhosa is a ritual called *intonjana*, which was a mechanism used to prepare girls for marriage, and how to behave as wives (Gqibitole 2020). In the traditional wisdom of the Xhosa, “a good woman does not have a brain or mouth.” It is a philosophical system that encourage silence among women, especially wives (Gqibitole 2020, Israel 2018, Dowling 1988, Mtini 2001, Zingisa 2000). It is from this cultural and linguistic framework that  $\text{!}\text{N}\text{-}\text{N}\text{!}\text{N}$  is translated as Omfazi (wife) Onesidima (dignity) (a wife of dignity), where dignity is defined from the cultural frameworks of the Xhosa people (see. du Toit 2023, Ugwuanyi 2023, Mokolatsie 2023).

#### **4.4.2. The Yoruba Bible Translation**

In the Yoruba Language,  $\text{!}\text{N}\text{-}\text{N}\text{!}\text{N}$  is translated as *aya oniwa*, which literally mean honest wife. The adjective *on(-)iwa* is also used in the contexts of morality (see. Bewaji 2007). Examining the concept of morality among the Yoruba, Olatunji Oyeshile instructs that “the moral values in traditional Yoruba belief system revolve around the concept of Iwa (character)...morality is summed up in the word *iwa* which in its ordinary English translation means character” (Oyeshile 2002, 92). Oyeshile further elucidates that *iwa* denotes the ethical aspects of a person’s life “as distinguished from other areas of human endeavor such as economy and science” and generally being a person of good character (Oyeshile 2002, 92-93).

It therefore serves to state that in the Yoruba translation of  $\text{!}\text{N}\text{-}\text{N}\text{!}\text{N}$ , character and morality of the wife-woman material is at the center. Yoruba, as a cultural language is spoken by over 20 million people in Nigeria (Orie 2005). Unlike in many African cultures and traditions, extant

literature on women indicates that women in Yoruba relatively enjoyed a degree of authority and influence in the public life. The society did not limit women activities to the domestic and family life, but had a degree of allowance for women to work alongside men in public spheres, portraying the Yoruba culture as gender-neutral and gender silent (Familusi 2012, Muraina and Ajímátanraejé 2023, Olajubu 2008, Kanu, Omojola, and Bazza 2020). In this society, there were no distinct gender roles, and men and women worked in complimentary ways (Oyěwùmí 2005, Olajubu 2004). The meaning of ጌግግግግግግ is therefore rendered in moralist terms (*iwa*) than in terms of performative functions. It denotes to how a woman should behave in marriage. Before marriages, the girls went through a series of training in a process called *igbeyawo* (Salawu and Oyediran 2019, Mann 1981). In this tradition, young girls are taught the ethics of behaving when they get married. The Yoruba culture was patriarchal, and among other things men practiced polygamy. In all forms of marriages, women were socialized in a long tapestry of does and don'ts of a marriage life (Olábòdé 2015, Omotayo 2024). Among the major ethical issues among the Yoruba is the respect the wife or wives gave to their husbands, mutual respect wives had for each other and communal mothering of other wives' children, hospitality and good treatment of in-laws; and sexual faithfulness to their husbands (Omideyi 1990). Women were totally forbidden from engaging in extra-marital affairs, and adultery was highly condemned and punished. A husband had a right to punish his wife and all the men who commit adultery with her (Dada Ojo 2013, Kehinde 2014).

#### **4.4.3. The Luganda Bible Translation**

Coming back to East Africa, the Luganda language Bible translated ጌግግግግግግ as *Omukazi Omwegendereza*, which literary mean a cautious wife (woman). Luganda language is one of the popular languages in East Africa, and is believed to be spoken by at-least six million people

(Oriikiriza and Uziel 2023, Ssemuuma 2011, Nakayiza 2017). The first complete translation of the Bible to Luganda was published in 1896. The translated version had a great impact to a wider region beyond the Buganda Kingdom, to include regions of Northern Tanzania, Eastern Congo, and Western Kenya. This was for mainly two reasons: Luganda language was widely understood, because of its interrelationship with other Bantu Languages in the region. Secondly, Christianity in the region started from Buganda. The Baganda agents like Apollo Kivebulaya were used as agents in spreading the gospel in Luganda language. The first local Bible and other Christian materials used in missionary and other forms of Christianity in Uganda and beyond were in Luganda (West, Dube, and Mojola 2021, Pawlikov 2006). For so long, Luganda has remained the religious language in many Christian circles (West, Dube, and Mojola 2021).

It is an established fact that the original Luganda Bible was translated from Kiswahili language. Personalities like Mika Sematimba and Nuwa Kikwabanga had mastered Kiswahili Language and translated Bishop Steere's Kiswahili Bible into Luganda. The work of translation received momentum later with the arrival of George Pilkington in 1890, working with the collaboration of Henry Wright Duta Kitaakule, Sembera Mackay, Samwili Mukasa and Nuwa Nakiwafu and Nuwa Kikwabanga (Pawlikov 2006).

Of significance in this study is the rendition given to the corresponding Hebrew phrase  $\text{מְשִׁיחַ}$   $\text{אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$  as *Omukazi Omwegendereza*. It was not possible in the course of the study to access the Kiswahili version from which the 1896 Luganda version was made. However, using the contemporary Kiswahili Bible translations,  $\text{מְשִׁיחַ}$   $\text{אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$  is translated as *mke mwema*, literally meaning a good wife. *Mwema* is an adjective related to a noun *wema* in Kiswahili language. These

vocabularies, of interest to note, exist in a document called *A handbook of the Swahili language as spoken at Zanzibar* authored by Bishop Steere in 1906 (Steere 1906), published by the society for promoting Christian knowledge (London). In this document was the classic Kiswahili vocabularies which informed Bishop Steere’s Bible translation. For example, a good person is *mtu mwema* (Steere 1906, 83, 446). On the probability that verse 10 of Proverbs 31 in Bishop Steere’s Bible translation employs *mke mwema*, the Luganda translations of the same verse with *Omukazi Omwegendereza* can only be attributed to ideological cultural interpretation and application other than linguistic translation.

To the Baganda translators, *mke mwema* was interpreted and therefore rendered to *Omukazi Omwegendereza* loosely translated as a cautious wife. The concept of *Omukazi Omwegendereza* lies deeply in the Baganda ideation of a good wife. The idiom is expressed in many folk songs which praises traits of decency, hard work and hospitality. Such songs include *Omukazi Omwegendereza* (2016) by Freda Nassuna, and *Omukazi Omwegendereza* by Shephard’s Flock Secondary School 2024. In these songs, *Omukazi Omwegendereza* is one whose beauty is inner (doesn’t treasure physical beauty), her mouth speaks with wisdom, she is the pride of her husband, she builds and keeps her home, she works the garden to ensures her home has food. The Luganda Bible translation, it can be argued is the mother of other local translations like Lumasaba and Lusoga versions. For instance, the Lumasaba version 2015 translates  $\text{Ḳ}^{\text{!}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}$  as *Umukhasi Uwitsililisa*, which literally means a cautious wife. *Umukhasi Uwitsililisa* is a direct translation of *Omukazi Omwegendereza* in the Lumasaba Language.

Conclusively, from the above background, it suffices to state that the fluidity in the lexical meaning of the word  $\text{Ḳ}^{\text{!}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}$  renders translation for  $\text{Ḳ}^{\text{!}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}\text{Ḳ}^{\text{-}}$  (*Eshet Khayil*) equally fluid in almost all

languages. The fluidity of the word does not, nevertheless obscure the idea expressed, which is apparently the idea of a good wife. While in ordinary terms, a good thing would simply be qualified by an adjective  $\text{בָּיִט}$  or  $\text{בְּיָיִט}$  depending on the gender and number (for instance, good land is  $\text{הַבְּיָיִט הַטֶּבֶל}$  c.f Deuteronomy 4:21,  $\text{בְּיָיִט־שִׂיֵּץ}$  also  $\text{שִׂיֵּץ־בְּיָיִט}$  for good man c.f 2 Samuel 18:27, Psalms 112:5), the deliberate choice demonstrates that in the ancient thought, the idea of a good wife is not simply expressed in terms of mere goodness, but in terms of the aggregated values that society cherished especially values of homemaking, hard work and hospitality. This fluidity gave credence to the African translations in form of permission to interpret the classical texts in accordance to the cultural expectations of a good wife. It is not surprising therefore to find out that in communities like the Zulu that regarded women basically in terms of hard work, the construct  $\text{לִיֵּץ־תֵּשֶׁץ}$  is *umfazi okhutheloyo* (a hardworking wife), and in communities like the Yoruba which did not have gendered dichotomies of work, the construct is rendered in moralist terms as *aya oniwa* (honest or woman with morals). Each society has had the standards of who a good wife should be. These expectations are worth exploring in this study as we shall see in the next section.

#### **4.5. A Good Wife in the African cultural Perception**

This section deals with the conceptualization of a good wife in the African traditional contexts. It is informed by the field research which took forms of interactive interviews, document analysis and analysis of oral African folk stories, songs and wise sayings. For illustration purposes, the study closely examines the linguistic materials which are conveyed through folk songs, proverbs and wise sayings about women of desirable wifely potentials. However, most of the folklores and songs are hard to get from live people, hence called for methodological negotiations of ethnographical nature called netnography. To reiterate, netnography is a type of qualitative media

research, which adapts the methods of ethnography to understand social phenomenon in contemporary digital communications contexts. In this context data originates in and manifests through the digital traces of naturally occurring social-cultural phenomenon preserved in contemporary communications networks. Netnography brings the field behind the screen, before the researcher (Kozinets 2002, Bowler Jr 2010, Kozinets 2019, Kaoukaou 2021).

The reason why songs and folklores are chosen as a means of extracting the information is that the songs and folklores have stood a test of time and convey the longtime idealized values of society (Inawat 2014, Howard 2016, Ihueze 2015, Riyandari and Wohangara 2021, Adesope 2024, Obinyan and Ehimua 2024, Ekpo, Nkanta, and Effiong 2023). I took an ethnographic cultural exploration of the two tribes, namely the Bagisu (also Bamasaba) and Baganda in discussing how a good wife is perceived in general terms in African cultures.

The African cultures are as diverse as the vast African continent. There are varied beliefs and values. Although patriarchy is the most shared denominator, Africa's conceptualizations of a good wife depend on a particular society's values. Idang observes that "Africa has numerous ethnic nationalities all with varying qualities however, all African peoples share a series of dominant cultural traits which distinguish African culture from the rest of the world (Idang 2015). As Idang attests, there are many shared values and beliefs among the African cultures which cut across. Uganda, where the study is situated, is a multi-cultural setting, with common ideology associate with patriarchy. Although there are similarities, there are intercultural differences on how people conceive a good wife. For instance, while the Sebei people would circumcise their women to make them better wives, the Baganda would cherish a woman with elongated labia as the best for a wife.

While in Karamoja, a good wife is one who builds a house (Drani 2020), in many Bantu cultures like Baganda, Basoga and Bagisu, it is a taboo for a woman-wife material to climb a roof.

#### **4.5.1. Patriarchy and Masculinity Constructs**

Important to note is that, most African cultures though with some faint traces of matriarchy are predominantly patriarchal, with powers resting in the hands of men. Patriarchal ideologies controlled the way of thinking and social discourses. They determined the moral yardstick for society. The women are put in a submissive state in these cultural settings with a complicated socialized mechanisms that use the very women as agents of patriarchy.

Patriarchy's process of recruiting membership to its ranks is through processes that construct masculinity, i.e. the construct of a man. 'Masculinity' is socially produced behaviors and roles associated with being male (Srivastava 2018, Gray 2018, Hobbs 2013, Connell 2001). Each tribal society conveys its traits of masculinity through a long cultural tapestry. For instance, the culmination into manhood among the Bagisu is through the *imbalu* ritual. But before *imbalu*, boys are socialized in other cultural stereotypes to adopt behaviors and roles which are expected of a man. Studies on Bamasaba culture and masculinity construct abound (Omukunyi 2022, Omukunyi and Roman 2022, Nasawa 2023, Khanakwa 2016). In these studies, emphasis has been put on the significance of *imbalu* in constructing a Gishu man. Among other expectations of a circumcised man is to marry a wife. The circumcised male organ is instrumentalized as the means for conquering and subduing a female gender— symbolically graduating into manhood, and practically marrying and performing sexual roles. The circumcised male has to behave like a man, in accordance to the Bagisu construct and conceptualization of masculinity. The circumcised man

has to behave like his fore fathers, hence the common not of *sieta omwana afane baba-we* loosely translated as ‘circumcise the boy so that he looks like his father (s).’

The Baganda people, like many others ethnic tribes, are very patriarchal, although they subscribe to the absolute male authority of the King (Ssabaasajja Kabaka). The construct of maleness in Buganda at a family and society level takes socialization processes which train boys to become men over girls. Traits of mastery, responsibility and reproduction are imparted in individuals to conform to the social expectations of masculinity in Buganda customs (Kiyimba 2005, Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2001). It is important to note however that, unlike the Bagisu there is fluidity in the social constructs of masculinities and femininities among the Baganda. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza has demonstrated this by illustrating that there are circumstances among the Baganda that “Not all males are men and neither are all females women,” arguing that gender boundaries among the Baganda have been porous over time. That within the royal palace, all men are under the male authority of the King, and there are some women who have socially presumed masculine traits and titles (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2009, 367).

The Muganda man, among other things is expected to marry a woman, have children and rise a family. The primary goal for every wife in a home was to care for family and make her husband happy by meeting his demands. Since family management was her major role, girls grew up being nurtured and prepared for marriage and family. Girls were trained in domestic chores like cleanness, cooking especially the traditional/staple delicacies, and how to sexually satisfy her husband. This in some societies like Buganda created the office of the ‘*senga*’ literally translated as *aunt* whose role was to help in preparing girls in the line of marriage and family life by equipping them with the necessary skills and values. In these societies, the desire of every culturally nurtured

girl and woman is to get married. Marriage was a measure of success and blessings, while *marriagelessness* was, and is still viewed as a curse and failure by many cultures (Baloyi 2022, Kitur and Murumba 2022, Baloyi 2010, Ochuagu 2023). Women who were not married were disparaged in society. According to John Mbiti (1991), “unmarried woman has no significance in African traditional society. She has nothing to contribute to society”. In line with Ebila’s argument, an African tradition woman realized her relevance only when she is married because that is her destiny.

In the Buganda context, these group of women who are not in a family marriage life are branded names like *nakyeyombekede* which literally connotes an unmarried woman who has built a house for herself. This description is derogative in the sense that women in this category are believed to be failures in marriage and seen as wayward in society. Mercy Oduyoye in this accord contends that, “a free woman conjures up negative images and she is an affront to society, she spells disaster particularly when she manages her affairs very well” (Oduyoye 1994). A woman who was independent in this context was being looked at with a lot of suspicions as a ‘marriage breaker’ and prostitute. It was therefore, seen as honorable for a woman to get married as this was the only avenue for her to be accorded respect in society. The challenge of becoming a good wife is therefore taunting as societies have become diverse and culturally infiltrated with different ideologies. While many women want to be married, the cultural and ideological expectations of a wife in an African context seems unwelcoming. The situation becomes more paradoxical as the search for the ideal wives continue, marriages take place, and marriages suffer and break.

In the African tradition, finding a good marriage partner, most especially a good wife was every man’s desire. The search involved the parents and at times the community, which sought for

special qualities in a marriage partner that would ensure stability and durability of the marriage and family. A good woman in the traditional African setting is viewed in the context of marriage and family life. According to Florence Ebila, “a proper woman in the African tradition has always been imagined within the context of the family; she is expected to accept marriage and have children because marriage is assumed to be the end goal for most African women” (Ebila 2015). In the traditional sense, not every female gender can be a wife. There were special qualities which are put in consideration in determining the qualifications of a wife materials. Using the case of two tribes, the qualities of a goodwife from Bugisu and Buganda is explained. The two tribes cannot be presumed as the representative of all African tribes, but just to highlight the African cultural perspectives on the notion of a good wife.

Traditionally and culturally, like in all African patriarchal communities, marriage among the Bamasaba and Baganda is either monogamous or polygamous. Both settings formed the frameworks within which the worth of a woman as wife was assessed and (dis)qualified. Women either married into polygamous settings or married while conscious of the possibility of sharing husbands with other wives. The cultural socialization trained girls and women for this harsh reality, especially on matters of behavioral and emotional control in the face of marital rivalry. Besides, because of the extended family relationships, marriage was a community affair rather than nucleated. Relatives like aunties, uncles, brothers, sisters etc. had a credible influence in marriage relationships. In most cases, their influence obscured the affection and love husbands had for their wives. As the result, relatives would cause marriages to collapse. To an extent, wives spent much of their time and efforts trying to please their in-laws for example through acts of hospitality with or without the knowledge and will of their spouses.

The woman, in many African societies is expected to be the object of man's pleasure. This is the rationale behind all control measures exerted on the woman's body like Female Genital Mutilations—to tame women's sexuality. In proverbs of the Baganda people, the expression that *emese nebwekejja ettya, esigala ya kappa* (however fat the rat shall become, it remains food for the cat) signifies that. In compensation, man is to pay bride price or dowry to the woman's family in appreciation for the enjoyment he gains from the woman.

#### **4.5.2. The Good wife among the Bamasaba and Baganda**

The Bamasaba people, also called Bagisu call Mt. Elgon (Mt. Masaba) regions, home. This study treats Bamasaba as a cultural group rather constituted by the Bagisu of Eastern Uganda and the Bukusu of Western Kenya. It is important to overlook the national boundaries which unwisely separated the Bamasaba, in order to tap into the cultural and linguistic richness which is shared across the colonial borders. Cumulatively, Bamasaba totals to almost 3.2 million people, as of 2014 and 2019 population census of Uganda and Kenya respectively.

The Bamasaba are the cultural environment where I was bred, nurtured and grew. This cultural society forms a very important site for study and analysis in this section partly because of the fondness with the cultural materials and experiences but also in gratitude to the mothers and wives who formed my experiences. This is not to say that the thesis is being written from the researcher's personal perspectives (see. Thomson 2016, Bainbridge et al. 2021), but that the familiar cultural position enacts an epistemological lens for reflecting on the complex life of my mothers, aunts and grandmothers in the cultural set-up, the endurance of heavy labor amidst the harsh social and economic realities, and articulates the plight of a contemporary woman who doubles as wife and public figure.

The Baganda, from Buganda regions of Central Uganda constitute the largest ethnic tribes in Uganda, totaling to almost 11 million people as per the 2024 population census. At the inception of European influence, colonialism and missionary activities in East Africa, Buganda served as the entry point to the rest of Uganda. The Buganda agents were used as the means of expanding Western civilization, which also served as an opportunity for Buganda to exert its cultural imperialism to the rest of Uganda (Roberts 1962, Stonehouse 2012, Reid 2009). Apart from the Luganda Language, Buganda society and culture has a rich tapestry of cultural socializations, which include the making of a perfect gendered society and a good wife. These cultural materials have been exported to other cultures like the Basogo, Baruli, Bagisu, Bagwere among others as good traits for good wifehood, as an example. For instance, among the Baganda, good wifehood is demonstrated through behavioral dispositions in society—especially in presence of men. A good woman and potential wife should exercise modest, decency and submissive qualities like kneeling while greeting, speaking politely with a humble intonation and expression; and she does not demonstrative aggressiveness, and other behaviors which are associated with manly traits. These features have been imported by other tribes as named above.

#### **4.5.2.1. The Folklores, Songs and Proverbs**

Both Bamasaba and Baganda cultures have a rich tapestry of folklores, songs and proverbs about marriage and what society desired of a good wife. The virtues in a good wife were basically fertility, labour, hospitality and care for the husband. The cultural philosophy instructed that man married a woman for a reason. The married wife was qualified as good or bad depending on how she measured up on the cultural checklist. This checklist is well preserved in Luganda in a folk song called *Nfunda n'Omubi*, which has been replicated by contemporary artists like Joanita

Kawalya of Afrigo band, and amplified by others like Philly Lutaya in *Naalikwagadde* replied by Dr. Bitone. The song goes as follows:

***Nfunda N’Omubi by Afrigo Band (Luganda Song)***

<b>Lugnada</b>	<b>English</b>
<i>Wololo wololo eeh, Wololo wololo eeh, Wololo wololo</i>	Attention attention...
<b><i>Nfunda n’Omubi nga’zala, nga’lima, nga’yaniriza nabagenyi (chorus)</i></b> <i>Nemele nafumba eeh, nekakyayi nafumba eeh, nabaana bo nabika...chorus</i>	I would rather be with an ugly one (wife) who can give birth, dig and welcomes visitors..., When she can cook food, prepare tea, and takes care of children...
<i>Segomba nze segomba eeh, abeyita bebeyi eeh, ne maange nga tamufeko... chorus</i>	I don’t admire the high class who will not even take of my mother...
<i>Owolugambo simuliko eeh, byasanga byayogera eeh, nebyokubaliga nabikowa...chorus</i>	I don’t want a gossiper for she speaks anything, and I am tired of unfaithfulness...
<i>Tankyina simukyina eeh, kyayagala kyengamba eeh, nesente oyo yazikuma...chorus</i>	She does not trick me and I don’t trick her, whatever she wants I comply and even she is the one in custody of the money...

***Translated by the researcher (2024).***

The artist in the above piece expounds on the qualities an ideal wife in the African traditional home should possess. The song points out three important virtues which are emphatically repeated in each stanza that is to say; hard work, child production, and hospitality. In other words, a good wife from the Buganda context should exhibit these aspects.

Marriages were meant for child production, as a means of expanding families and societies (Dyer 2007, Familusi 2012). Fatherhood was highly valued and respected as the man’s contribution to society building (Lesejane 2006). Therefore, the essence of a wife was to give her husband children

and family. In the context of polygamy, there was a race for child production by the women, where the more the children the woman produced especially boys, the more prestigious she becomes in society. Child bearing was the virtue held across tribes. Childlessness in a family was majorly blamed on the woman. Baren women were socially discriminated as worthless in some circumstances (Bennett 1965, Doyle 2016, 2013, Kudesia et al. 2018, Rhiannon 2013). Among the Bamasaba, the proverb that *Umukhasi umukumba inyungu eyerundukh* (a barren woman is a leaking pot) signify that barren women waste resources. They cannot hold water. This thinking is partly related to the belief that conception occurs after a certain amount of a man's seminal fluid has accumulated in the woman's womb. But for a barren woman, all the fluids escape through the leaking points. Such sentiments are preserved in proverbs like *Umukumba litili* (a barren woman is a bottomless pit) or related, an infertile woman gets a lot of visitors. She can't get enough to be filled (pregnant). Women are expected to produce children, more so boys as a way of replenishing society with candidates for masculinity orientations and patriarchy.

The stigma of infertility is worsened by scornful relatives especially in-laws. As demonstrated by one media account of Namubiru below, the plight of a childless woman in socially and psychologically tormenting:

“I tried my best to keep my marriage. I loved my husband and in-laws. I welcomed them in the house and prepared for them the best meals I could in the home. One day, my sister-in-law, came to me and told me that even if I do marvelous things, they shall never see them unless I give them a baby” (Agiresaasi 2012).

As noted, Namubiru's nightmares comes from her in-laws. All her acts of host hospitality could not yield any benevolent attitude or results because she doesn't give birth. However, in some circumstances, the barrenness of a woman was not the reason to end marriages, as long as she

demonstrated other virtues. To compensate for her barrenness, she either allowed the husband to marry another woman of his choice or found one for him from among her female relatives. In a Bukusu song called *Umukhasi umukumba* sung in 1980s by Wasike Wamusungu in praise of a barren woman, the artist in a story form tells his audience that among the Bamasaba, a barren woman was an asset. Her barrenness is compensated through her hard work especially on the farm and general home atmosphere which would make the husband and in-laws comfortable. She knew how to look after and care for her husband (Wasike-Wamusungu 1978).

From the Luganda folk song above, the next attribute of a good woman is the labor, more so the farm labour related to production of farm produce for food and commerce. In praise of a hardworking woman, Baganda proverbs like *Omukazi omulima azaala mmere; omunafu azaala muddo* (The hardworking woman brings forth food; the lazy one, weed); and *Omukazi agumira ku nkumbi* (A woman stands by the hoe) cherishes virtues of hard work and condemns laziness. Other proverbs against laziness include: *Omukazi omunafu alayira enkuba okutonnya* (a lazy woman resents the falling rain). A lazy woman brought shame to her family especially her mother. From childhood, traits of hard work are imparted in children. This included performing house chores, working the farmland, cooking, harvesting and general management of the food resources in the family. A well-fed family which was made of husband, children and extended family members validated the essence and presence of an African wife among both the Baganda and Bamasaba people. The extended family members may be relatives of her husband like in-laws and their children, or the children of the co-wives.

Hospitality was a noble expectation of the African wife as indicated in the folklore. Hospitality went beyond feeding family relatives to welcoming visitors in a home with or without the

knowledge of the husband. Far away relatives who visit involuntarily without appointments were welcomed and entertained with not only food and drinks but also with the receptive attitude displayed through smiles, humor and engaging the visitors in conversations. Wives were the agents of African hospitality because they were presumed to be at home all the time, while the husbands are away. Visitors were a cherished fit in an African homestead, and the treatment of visitors was associated with divine blessings. Visitors were associated with good fortunes, hence the Lumasaba proverb that *umujeni zikhabi* (the visitor brings good luck/ blessings); *Bikele byomujeni kamalesi*, i.e. the footfalls of a visitor are like medicine; they heal the sick.

Visitors were expected at any moment in a home. The wife was expected to be always ready for visitors. In this way, she would enjoy the ambience of a home by sweeping and ordering things within her home. Children were assigned responsibilities of sweeping the compound and the house. Feeding visitors was the climax of the hospitality. In Luganda language, *Oluganda Kulya* means friendship/relations or kinship lies in eating. This is corresponded by the Lumasaba saying that *lisanyu lyo mujeni lili munda* i.e. the joy of the visitor is in his/her stomach (c.f Don't look at a visitor's face but at his stomach). Interestingly, although the acts of hospitality validated the woman in the marriage, the glory of her hospitality went to her husband. It was prestigious for a man to receive praises for marrying a good wife.

As earlier stated, marriages in traditional Africa were largely polygamous. The wife in a polygamous setting is supposed to play all roles expected of a married woman. Her value is validated through the display of virtues of a good wife that is labor, child production and hospitality. Polygamy was considered normal, although intrinsically, it was used as a means of addressing social issues as well as gaps in marriage. These social issues and gaps were various,

that included social recognition and respect (due to many wives and children produced), socio-political cohesive especially in relation to consolidating political alliances (the king would marry many wives from different places as a means of strengthening political ties); excessive sexual desire by the man, which the single wife could not sustain or long sicknesses and childlessness of the first wife.

The presence of a woman in polygamous marriage is further validated by the moral behaviors in form of relationships she would have with other wives and other wives' children. Accordingly, a good wife in a polygamous marriage is not supposed to show uncontrollable jealousy. Rivalry was treated as normal, hence the proverbs like *Mukazi muggya kabugo kakadde; tekabulamu nsekere* (A co-wife is an old backcloth; it is never free of lice), and *Mukazi muggya nsingo ya munya; tebulako keeringiriza* (a co-wife is a lizard's neck; it always has reason to turn). In some cases, a senior wife exercised a degree of authority over other subsequent wives, who in return accorded her respect. The senior wife was supposed to welcome her co-wife and treat her humanly. During child birth, the senior wife would act as a midwife in delivering the baby. She would even breast feed the new baby in case the new mother has complications with breastfeeding. Jealousy women are reproved through songs. In a song sung by Iddi Masaba and Nanyunza Banda in 1990s named *Kyawangoyo*, the artists present a case of a young woman who marries into a polygamous home, but she becomes overwhelmed with jealousy and refuses to perform her wifely responsibilities, which included working farmlands and producing food, cooking and looking after children of her co- wife. She returns to her parents' home. Her behaviors are reproved in the song by her family as unbecoming and irresponsible ([https://youtu.be/5kFuPPPYrcs?si=WlCJTDa\\_UokhnMNe](https://youtu.be/5kFuPPPYrcs?si=WlCJTDa_UokhnMNe)) (Masaba 1995). In a related song sung by Kisache Wa mwasame in Lumasaba, the artists condemn

a jealousy woman who is driven to use charms which eventually killed the husband (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-Gu9ncoiQU>) (Kisache-Wa-Mwasame 1980).

Generally, the idea of a good-wife was a complex reality which was perceived from a broader ideological sense. The goodness was not validated by the husband but by the wider society. It suggests that women had to suppress their feelings and dislikes in the interest of gaining validation by society. Underlying this validation was the socio-cultural construct of shame. A woman among the Baganda and Bamasaba was to refrain from any actions that would cause shame to her and her family. For example, she had to work extremely hard on farms and at home to produce food so that she doesn't dishonor or embarrass her mother. She has to be hospitable to the visitors, and also treat her co-wives well to demonstrate that she was brought up well by her parents. Dropping out of marriage by a woman caused shame to her family and had several social consequences. Among the Bamasaba for example, the woman who divorces from her marriage, would cause the inconvenience of her family repaying back the dowry given to her parents at marriage. The ideal wife therefore become a person who endured all tribulations of marriage. She restrains herself from all provocation which may cause social disharmony in a home. She was the woman who feared and respected the authority of the husband, so much that she dared to protect the husband's image in society even amidst various forms of abuse, hence the proverb, *e byomunju, tebitotolwa* to mean in-house matters are not shared to the outsiders (see. Nakimbugwe 2023). The married woman had to be very cautious of the things which make her marriage status last. Proverbially rendered in Luganda '*Siiwemuke' y'afa n'omwami* ('I fear dishonour', keeps husband for good), the wife endured many issues in order to keep her marriage. She was conscious and cautious of actions which may end her marriage, and refrained from them. Connecting this to the previous chapter and the analysis in the next chapter, gives us a glimpse of the philosophy behind the

Biblical translation of Proverbs 31:10 as *omukazi omwegendereza* (a cautious wife). The simple English meaning of cautious is a person who is careful to avoid potential problems or dangers.

It is important to emphasize that the modern society is over layered with African traditional ideological values and expectations. Patriarchy still influences the gender relationships even in marriage relationships (Mudau and Obadire 2017, Phiri and Nadar 2009, Ndi 2021, Bowan 2013). Ideas of a good wife are still perceived in traditional terms which subject wives under the authority of their husbands. The wife is expected to behave and perform certain duties and roles as per the traditional scripts. Ideologies of empowerment are considered to be foreign and the cause of conflicts in marriage relationships. In the Lumasaba song sung by Elkanah Wanzala in early 2000s, titled *Umukasi Ukatya* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPIoqbl04fo>) (Wanzala 2004) the artists lament about the wife who doesn't respect her husband.

***Umukasi Ukatya by Elkanah Wanzala (Lumasaba Song).***

<b>Lumasaba</b>	<b>English</b>
<i>Masaba Masaba leka ebabulile</i>	My people Bamasaba, let me tell you
<i>Umujelema wange gumoyo habe gwe mugena ne kitu kyanywako ki dwela leka ibabulile</i>	I loved my wife so much, however, one thing put me off
<i>Inoma aloma jelema inoma aloma</i>	I talk, she talks back
<i>Iti nikukuba naye ati nase nikukuba</i>	I will beat you; she says I will beat you too
<i>Iti nikwita naye ati nase nikwita</i>	I will kill you; she says I will also kill you.
<i>Iti nikuwona naye ati nase nikuwona</i>	I will chase you away, she says I will chase you too
<i>Iti itewo kika balebe kikase umakasi</i>	If I want to call for the clansmen to talk to her, she
<i>Nayeye wa loma nase inanga bowange</i>	<i>Nayeye wa loma nase inanga bowange</i>
<i>Mazima jelema kina mazima ukatya umuseza</i>	For sure which wife is this who does not fear the husband?
<i>Ulilaa</i>	Oh hear!
<i>Bamasaba imbale leka ibabulile</i>	Bamasaba in Mbale let me tell you
<i>Jelema wange gumoyo habe gwe mu gana</i>	I loved my wife with all my heart

<i>Kitu kyawyuwa kidwela byakola byoki</i>	But I don't like the things she does
<i>Injenda ajenda</i>	When I move, she moves
<i>Ingobola kilo nayeye a gobola kilo</i>	I come back at night, she comes back at night
<i>Iti imutebako mukyatu wama loyana</i> <i>Nayeye wateba nawewe wama loyana</i>	And when I ask my wife where she's from, she also asks where I am coming from
<i>Iti nikutema naye ati nikutema</i> <i>Iti nikwita nayeye ati nikwita</i>	I will cut you, and she says, I will cut you too I will kill you; she says, I will also kill you
<i>Iti nikuwona nayeye ati nikuwona</i> <i>Ingwata indabada nayeye agwata indababa</i>	I will chase you; she also says I will chase you I put on a trouser, she also puts on a trouser
	I will chase you; she also says I will chase you I put on a trouser, she also puts on a trouser
<i>Kujenda kunzila balanga bati baseza</i>	When we move together, people think we are all men

***Translated by the researcher (2024)***

The song is a lament. The artist intentionally addresses his lament to the community—the Bamasaba who are his people. Apparently, he is not only informing the community, but expects his audience (the community) to make judgement about his wife, which are contrary to the customs. Apparently, the wife doesn't behave in accordance to the cultural expectations, hence the question: which kind of wife is this one? The crimes of this woman are many. In the first stanza, the artist complains that: When I talk, she also talks; if I threaten to beat her, she also threatens to beat me; if I threaten to kill her, she also threatens to kill me. If I threaten to chase her away, she says she will chase me too; if I want to call for the clansmen to talk to her, she says I will also call my people. Which kind of wife is this? He asks. The wife is a character who has crossed gender boundaries. She exercised free will and freedoms of expression and movement and claims equal status with her husband. She does not stay at home to keep the home and welcome visitors. Although children are not mentioned in the song, the woman is being portrayed as being unmotherly in as far as she does not stay home to look after her children. The woman in this song is undeniably the antithesis of the good wife figure.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter is a contextual reading of the Bible text with local readers. It responds to the second objective of the study, which seeks to explore the African contextual Bible interpretation of ጥላቻ ግብር in Uganda. The local readers of the Bible in this case are categorized as follows: Female politicians, Members of the Mothers' Unions of Uganda, Ordinary citizens who also include members of the academic community. The researcher found that semi-structured interviews offered participants the opportunity for further input and explanation of specific experiences related to marriages and family lives in the contemporary society. The text of Proverbs 31:10-31 was read with individual participants, after which discussion questions were asked in relation to the individuals' perceptions of the text and their lived experiences in contemporary African setting. All conversations were audio-recorded, and transcribed. The chapter is informed by the responses from the field interactions with the research participants. The findings presented are discussed alongside relevant academic documents. The documents are analyzed to augment the views generated from the field. Some participants expressed discomfort in having their names mentioned in this study directly. As such, their views are identified under codes like FP1, FP2 to mean female politician 1 or female politician 2 etc.; ACD1, ACD2 to mean academician 1, 2 etc.; and informant 1, informant 2 etc. Analysis of the transcribed data was conducted using a Thematic Content Analysis and Discourse Critical Analysis. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data (Anderson 2007). TCA is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset (Braun and Clarke 2012). Once the data had been collected the researchers familiarized with the data through

a series of readings and re-readings, and coded the data according to the themes. The Discourse Critical Analysis (DCA) entails studying written or spoken language in relation to its social context. Its specific focus is on the discursive reproduction of power and control and the resistance against such power domination (Van Dijk 2015). The findings are thematically presented below. But before this is done, it was important to devote attention to the ideological dualism which compound the contemporary society, which informed the contrasting readership, attitudes and interpretation of the text. This is achieved through mapping up ideological spaces of *Afro-Christian* mindsets of the participants vis-a-vis the modern emancipation ideological mindsets. The term *Afro-Christian* is used carefully in this study, to denote a cultural or ideological inclination. It has nothing to do with a religious discrimination of people who are not Christians like the Muslims and members of other religions. As has been explained earlier, it is the environment which resulted from the fusion of European colonialism (with their ideas) with the African socio-cultural realities to form a hybrid. It is therefore the hybrid environment. It is already noted how colonial intercourse with African realities led to the birth of invigorated or energized patriarchal structures in Africa. Patriarchy was canonized as both African and biblical and therefore godly. In this environment, marriage (specifically heterosexual marriage) and family are very important institutions, as they validate natural and divine human roles and duties. Inevitably, the woman is an indispensable party in achieving the marriage and family values. Of specific importance in this section are the characteristics of women in this ideological space, who eventually become wives.

## **5.2. Women in the Afro-Christian ideological environment**

To begin with, Afro-Christian environment maintains its status-quo through gender socialization processes, which deeply influence how women perceive themselves, and how they consider their place in society. Gender socialization has been defined as the “process by which individuals

develop, refine, define and learn to perform gender roles through internalizing gender norms and roles as they interact with social institutions like family and social networks (Hoominfar 2019, Carter 2014, John et al. 2017). In this environment, families especially mothers are strongly encouraged to bring up their children especially daughters in a proper way. The propriety in the girl's upbringing is based on the ideological desire that they should behave in appropriate ways as per the demands of the ideology—culture and religion. The girl child, who is a potential wife, should reflect the norms and values which society approves as good manners—the manners of the wife materials (Brody and Hall 2010, Cunningham 2005). It is probably on this premise that some cultures don't emphasize physical beauty in a woman, but cultural values like hard work, fertility, and hospitality in women. In the contemporary society which is characterized by the mass media, gender socialization programs are done through social media and radio and television avenues in various ways. There are ethnic specific programs which convey specialized gender socialization ideas in native languages and other means like drama and plays.

Socialization programs reach a wider part of the population especially rural areas where majority of the people live. Cultural transmission of gender values is also done through cultural foundations like the *ekisaakaate* in Buganda (Ekisaakaate 2009), and through informal and non-formal modes of instruction in homes like family elders like aunts, grandparents and other elderly people (Hellemann and Sipungu 2024, Ellingson and Sotirin 2010, Mafumbate 2019). Majority of the women in this ideological space are rural based, with modest levels of education, with largely traditional skills and engaged in largely subsistence modes of production.

The woman in this ideological context is largely a blend of African culture and religious beliefs of Christianity or Islam. Women belong to tribes and religious groupings especially the church. Belonging to a cultural tribe inevitably dictates that she behaves in accordance to the cultural

dictates of her tribe in terms of actions and speech. Most cultures in Uganda are interrelated and can be safely grouped according to the ethnic regions as the Acholi, Lango, Buganda, Bugisu, Ankole-Kigezi, Teso, Karamoja and West Nile, with the common denominators as Christianity or Islam and patriarchy. She is ideologically a hybridized woman, and takes her hybridity as her identity. Conformity to the culture and Christian or Islamic authorities is presumed to be virtuous. It is important to stress further that in both religions and culture, the male gender is deified as the God or ancestors, who still exercise authority over the living, and determines the destinies of life. The men in society are by large the custodians of the authorities as religious leaders and elders. Women in this context are therefore expected to exercise strict discipline in obedience to both natural and divine authority as embodied in culture and religion, or else risk condemnation. In this ideological space, women defend their cultures and religion from any kind of ideological pollution and interpretations which are suspiciously foreign. For instance, while interacting with the mothers' union members, they defended the Bible as the word of God. Most women read the Bible as the book of devotion and source of inspiration, claiming that through the Bible God speaks to them.

The male figure in this ideological construct is viewed as the figure of authority. It is not surprising that in this environment, women who become mothers value boy over girl babies. One of the participants who related her experience of marriage troubles narrated how she got stressed when she consecutively gave birth to only girls. She emphasized her Christian faith how she prayed the prayer of Hannah in the Bible and God remembered her with boys as her 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> children. It has already been discussed in the previous chapters that male children are the means by which patriarchy recruits membership and perpetuates itself through a process called masculinity constructs. Women in this context uphold the authority of their husband as both cultural and

religious virtue. Ideally, husbands are addressed and treated with respect and dignity. Women are expected to conduct themselves in ways that honor and respect their husbands in both private and public spaces.

Traditional gender roles are upheld in the Afro-Christian ideology. These roles are diverse but can be summed up as childbirth and nursing, hard work, hospitality and domesticity. Women assume the secondary status in relation to their husbands in a home. Biblical texts which enforce male superiority are also used to qualify the status-quo. In an ideal home, no man is expected to be found performing roles which are normatively associated with women like peeling food, washing utensils or sweeping the compound when the woman is around (Informant5 2024, Karungi 2024, Mutonyi 2023, Nambozo 2023). Men are associated with exploits in the public domain. However, out of necessity, women are allowed to cross the gender boundaries to perform duties in the public for instance leadership duties. This is only done under caution, because it is viewed as a privilege. She has to remember her primary space in the domestic arena or risk being stopped by her husband.

### **5.3. Women in the modern emancipation ideological environment**

The woman in the contemporary postmodern ideological space is a complex character. She is not oblivious of the traditional afro-Christian ideological realities, but she asks with challenging questions the traditional paradigm of gender relationships. She rides on the wings of international doctrines like the declaration of the emancipation of women which call for equality between men and women, and advocate for social, economic and political empowerment of women. Accordingly, the cultural and religious institutions which have hitherto discriminated women from achieving social, economic and political validations should be either removed or modified in ways that respect and accommodated the female gender.

Women in this ideological space are educated and exposed to knowledge values from other international contexts. They have read policy documents on equality of women, and value equality as a human right, which women as humans should enjoy. Some of the women have travelled internationally or even lived in developed countries where they have observed lives of empowered women in the Western countries. They have attended conferences and seminars on issues of women empowerment, and driven by the passionate desire to implement ideas that can liberate their fellow women from cultural oppression.

To women in this environment, religion, culture and traditions are not authority. To them, authority is in the instruments of power like the national constitution, international laws and law enforcement units like the police and judicial courts. This being the case, they push for the laws that would protect the interests of women through legislations. It is not surprising that most of the laws which are aimed at protecting women interests are initiated and pushed by women in many legislative bodies.

Majority of the women in this context are people with specialized skills like doctors, lawyers, professors, and engineers to mention but a few. They are the women with financial abilities and maintain a degree of economic independence. Many are active in public sector as politicians with high political portfolios as Members of Parliament, cabinet ministers, security officers etc. with clearly terms of services, and exert authority in the chains of command. This category of women are the champions of the contemporary capitalistic economy which is skills based and globally interconnected. Women in this category run business and contribute heavily to national building as employers and tax payers (Kengaju 2015, Mousumi and Chompa 2022, Khan 2018, Adendorff, Keown, and Amansure 2020).

#### **5.4. Ideological conflicts**

The problem of the contemporary society is the clash of ideologies and the resultant confusion which characterize African homes. The Afro-Christian ideology perceives the modern emancipation ideology as foreign, elitist, unafican and ungodly, aimed at disorganizing the African social order; while the later views the former as backward and oppressive to women. Despite the fact that, emancipation actually has better ideas that can cause significant social economic transformations and improvement of life, the problem lies in its implementation which takes a militaristic conquest approach against the patriarchal society. The women's empowerment movement can make great strides if negotiations are made with the afro-christian ideological environment. The foreignness, unaficaness and ungodliness of African emancipation is partly because the legislative drives championed by women are, besides being foreign funded, don't respect and don't consult or negotiate with the grassroot structures for consensus before they are presented for legislative protocols. This approach is also called for by scholars who argue that advocates must advance a type of specific relativism (Bawa 2012). Sylvia Bawa, using the context of Ghana investigated how women in Ghana have navigated the cultural and political terrain to achieve women's empowerment agenda (Bawa 2012).

The ideologies arise in defining who a good wife is and should be. It is not only in Uganda that an empowered woman is feared as a marriage character (Rocca et al. 2009, Nazier and Ramadan 2017, Schuler et al. 2017). Empowerment drives championed by women are seen as a ploy by women to robe men of their properties. As indicated earlier, some of the testimonies against the marriage and divorce bill 2013 was that the government is attempting to incite women against men. In the Ugandan contexts, some of the ideals that women want to introduce to their African contexts are copied without proper contextualization processes or at least consultations with the

dominant ideological society. Their ideas are therefore often rejected because they are perceived as foreign, unafican and unchristian.

Certain clauses for instance in proposed laws like domestic relations bill, marriage and divorce bill and currently the marriage bill are opposed even by the real women they claim to protect, because they conflict with contextual realities. For instance, in Uganda, constituencies opposed to the clauses of marital rape in the domestic relations bill, marriage and divorce bill and currently marriage bill, claiming that traditionally, it is normative for an African to play hide and seek games in sexual matters even in the marriage contexts. That the African concept of romance is that a woman has to be chased after even if she is actually in the same love bed with her husband, as a sign of showing love and desire for her. Furthermore, women use sex in Africa as a communicative means of showing pleasure or displeasure. That if husbands are to interpret their wives' behaviors as refusal and any sexual advance as rape which is punishable by law, African marriages will collapse (Informant4 2023).

## **5.5. Theme 1. Text and African Cultural Context**

### **5.5.1. Cultural correspondence between Proverbs and African Cultures**

A section of participants appreciated the text and pointed out its relevancy to the contemporary settings. In most many cases, participants read and interpreted the text from their own cultural contexts. One respondent from Western Uganda said: “this text is a reflection of a Munyankole woman. You see that the wife is the one in charge of the home.”

One of the prominent politicians from Bakonzo culture in Kasese district alluded that: “A Mukonjo woman is expected to respect her husband, wakes up early to take care of the children and her husband. She goes to the garden, ensures that the house has food, and ensures the children are well

behaved, she is a replicate of the Proverbs woman.” Yet another one from Teso culture in Kumi district stated: “a good wife of Proverbs 31 is not different from the Ateso culture. The Proverbs woman is what my culture expects the woman to be for instance, hardworking by all standards because when they marry you, they expect this family to gain value from you that is why bride price is paid because you are bringing value to this new family you are getting married to.” In addition, another informant “the African woman and the Bible noble woman are similar because they do same duties. A woman sleeps when she has put everything in place and makes sure all the activities of the next day are planned.”

Another respondent in general terms the Proverb woman is the role model for wives:

*“she is the role model whom every married woman should emulate.... This is what a woman should be in a marriage and family relationship... [she] is an ideal woman; she is an example of what a good wife should be.” This woman possesses virtues of hard work, industriousness, generosity, submissive and respectful .... [and] it would be the pride of every man to get [such] a woman because when a man goes out to look for a wife, this is what he has in mind... a woman who falls short of those characters is not a marriage material. What is written in the Bible is exactly what characterizes an ideal wife even in our African setting. This woman is the strength of her husband, she is the pillar of her children, and she does not lack food in her house” (Kizza 2023).*

It is surprising to note that the participants who hold these views are mature woman who are in active members of society with political profiles. It is not clear to estimate how much of their current political activism has influenced their inclinations to culture vis-à-vis contemporary female activism, which challenge the patriarchal dominated ideologies in society.

It was revealed from the findings that, Proverbs 31:10-31 is one of the widely used texts in Churches and other family related bodies like mothers’ unions especially in matters related to

marriage counselling for pre-weddings and family disputes. The text is also used as the theme for the Mothers' Union, and constitutes a core theological teaching in the organization.

Nambozo Agnes, 58 years of age and member of the Mothers' Union shared her experience about people's reactions on the text. She observed that the contemporary society is against this text, and whenever we read this text especially in marital counselling, people attack us that this text subjects' women to oppression. But those who have adhered to it have been successful in their marriages." Nambozo's lived experience in the church's usage of the text clearly demonstrate the ideological challenge which this study attempts to address, and the need for the ideological space which suits contemporary marriages. Nambozo's observations is not in isolation of other findings as shall be seen below.

### **5.5.2. Contemporary Culture in Disharmony with Proverbs 31:10-31**

The text is largely criticized as oppressive to women. It is largely directed to women/wives as one of the participants pointed out that "in this text they are only focusing on the woman, I don't see where they are also talking to the man and now however much the man is complicated the woman has to respect following this text if they want to stay peacefully." This is supported by another informant who commented that "I don't see the man doing anything, he sits like a king and waits for the woman to provide. Even in our homes, women do more work than men" (Informant1 2023). This text as observed puts women/wives at edge in the center while the man is just an observer.

A youthful female Member of Parliament from Western Uganda noted that in Proverbs, the standards are so high for an African wife to be in the contemporary socio-political and economic spaces. "Where is the time to be the woman of Proverbs? If the woman observes what is in Proverbs to the dot, will she remain human? She needs a supportive husband for her to also enjoy

life but otherwise, this Bible verse puts a woman in a critical situation.” She continues to note that many men take advantage of women, they may abuse her, step on her, mistreat her, despise because they think you are a thing to just be trampled upon. Let people not abuse the Bible text and make it seem like God was giving men power to abuse women or to leave every work to the women” (FP2 2023). On the same note another respondent commented that “one of the challenges is wear and tear because in trying to be this good woman doing everything but a woman is not a machine that does not get tired. Women need to rest; you cannot do everything like the Proverb 31 woman” (ACD2 2024). Participants, further creatively read and interpreted the text to be antithetical to African cultures. Accordingly, the roles ascribed to the noble wife of Proverbs 31 are roles supposed to be played by the African men as husbands. One Professor stated that: “a husband is the head of the family and there is no way a woman will come to take over like the woman of Proverbs. In my culture it is very hard for a woman to get her money to buy land for the family” (Rugyendo 2023). Another respondent added:

“When a woman tries to do all these duties like in the text, she will be seen as one who is over dominating and taking up the role of the man in the home. What the text is talking about is what actually should be done by an African man not the woman” (Informant3 2024). Another challenge pointed out by most of the participants is that some men today don’t want their wives to go out and work because of insecurity and trust issues, they would rather stay at home. Secondly, if the woman has worked and got some money the husband will take it away from her. Men tend to leave their roles to the women when they know they are earning some money.

## **5.6 Theme 2: Marriages in African Contemporary Contexts**

Under this theme, we consider what society attributes for a goodwife and the challenges women face in attempting to be good wives. According to various participants, the concept of marriage to day is a difficult one. Participants from the Christian Unions think that whereas marriage is a lived life, many young people today have unrealistic fantasies about marriage. To some young women, in the opinion of some participants, marriage is the ceremony in form of colorful church weddings or illustrious cultural marriage ceremonies which are often characterized by merry making (Informant7 2024, Informant5 2024, Nambozo 2023, Wabwire 2024).

Marriage is a life, which is characterized by highs and lows, joys and sorrows and general life challenges. That the rampant divorces and separations which characterize contemporary marriages are due to failure by the marrieds to understand marriage, materialism and unrealistic expectations, and other social factors. That marriage calls for endurance and focus on the noble good of family, society and nation at large. Whereas it is the wish of every woman to get married, problems in marriage affect women more adversely than they do to their male counterparts. If a woman divorces, she is more likely not to remarry due to social stigma and religious taboos, unlike the men. Besides, the burden of parenting children rests heavily on woman (Wabwire 2024, Informant6 2024). Against these realities, very many women would like to save their marriages, but face uphill difficulties and challenges in the contemporary environment. Some of the challenges which affect women in marriages today are characteristic of cultures. Whereas many participants were articulate about marriages and its challenges to day, interestingly no respondent mentioned the ideological trends in the contemporary society which is responsible for varying perceptions of gender relationships in marriage. Moreover, the blame on many marriage failures seemed to be on the women, and exonerating men.

### 5.6.1. Women domesticity vs Male authority

Women domesticity, also called the Culture of Domesticity or Cult of Domesticity is a value system which emphasize that femininity and womanhood belong to the home or domestic arena (Milnor 2012, Matchar 2013, Edwards 2024). The woman is the light of the home, is engrained in African ideologies. Africans use Proverbs and sayings to emphasize this idea. For instance, the Luganda proverb that, *Amaka omutali muchaala galinga ekisibo omutali nte* (a home without a woman is like a barn without cattle); West African proverb that *a home without a woman is like a pan without yam*; and the Kikuyu proverb that *the man may be the head of the home, but the wife is the heart* serve to amplify the point. The domesticity of women in a home is to ensure hospitality, mothering of children and offering comfort for their husbands. It is also a mechanism that ensures control over women's sexuality by their husband.

Domesticity of women, more so wives in many African traditional cultures has subjected women to backyard activities. i.e. their role is more of home keeping and less if any time in the public space. As a wife her primary roles are in the domestic arena, in which she is to ensure the ambience of the home, care for the husband, children and other extended family members. She is to work hard especially on farms to ensure food supplies in her marital home. The irony in the matter is that both the woman and the home belong to the man, which brings to perspective a sense of slavery where the master, not only owns the farm but also all other factors of production. Some views from various participants explain the situation better:

“A Mukonjo woman is expected to respect her husband, wakes up early to take care of the children and her husband. She goes to the garden, ensures that the house has food, and ensures the children are well behaved, she is

a replicate of the Proverbs woman. Although it's the woman bearing most burdens, everything in the home belongs to the man for instance, crops in the garden like matooke, coffee which he can sell and get money. A woman can carry matooke to the market as the husband follows and after selling, she hands over the money to him. He is the one to determine where the money goes" (Kizza 2023).

Hon Monica Amoding observed that "I believe that most of the time a successful man is built by a woman, a successful family is built by a woman and so the success of the family largely depends on the woman." She goes on that "my culture expects the woman to be hardworking by all standards because when they marry you, they expect this family to gain value from you that is why bride price is paid. You should be this woman whose presence can be felt in this home. The woman takes full responsibility of the household. They show you the gardens where to get food and your role is to make sure people have meals in that home" (Amoding 2023). In another context, Hon. Elizabeth Beikiriize Karungi informs that "a traditional Mukiga woman has to respect her husband because he picked her from her father's home and brought her to his home. Secondly, as a woman among the Bakiga, you have to work hard to ensure that your house has food just as reflected in the Bible text. The woman should make sure that she has gardens, businesses even if the husband is rich. If things do not go well you have to keep the family going" (Karungi 2024).

Secondly, a good wife is expected to be hardworking, as she also yields to the mastery of her husband. Her hard work should be in contribution to the wellbeing of her marital home. Some of the women from the Mothers' Union and political arena shared their experiences as wives. For instance, Barbrah Mugisha informs that: "A good wife is hard working and fends for the home, for

example in my Ankole culture a woman must have her banana garden. When I was getting married, I was told by my mother that as I go for marriage, one thing I should know is that omukazi ayiya. A woman does not fold her hands, she advised me as a woman to have a vegetable garden so that even if the man has no money, we shall not lack sauce” (Mugisha 2023). Furthermore, Edidah Mujinya asserts that “Me as a member of Mother’s union, a wife and mother I see that it’s the wife to make the home from my own experience. The husband might be supportive and the overall person in charge of the home, but the woman does more than that. I think it’s natural how women are being raised to be in charge of their homes” (Mujinya 2024).

Hon. Rose Mutonyi in the same way acknowledged that “a good wife is one who provides for her family, whether the man is working or not the woman ensures that there is food in the house that is why they plant cassava, potatoes for food security. In villages especially, most men go drinking leaving all the burdens on the women for instance on market days, you see so many women in markets looking for clothes for the children and necessities for the family”. She adds that “during campaigns when you call people and give them 2000 shillings, the man will say the day is sorted in terms of drinking whereas the woman will go and buy salt” (Mutonyi 2023). Just like most of the participants have observed, it is the responsibility of the woman to build and sustain the marriage and family. This is in line with the Afro-biblical saying that a wise woman makes her home but a foolish one breaks her home with her own hands.

### **5.6.2. Women in public spaces vs. Male authority**

In this sub-theme, a goodwife can be in the public space as long as she still upholds the authority of her husband. This reality portrays a shift from the previous one where a good wife has to be in the domestic arena at all times. It is partly the product of women emancipation doctrine which has

opened the public space for women. In the works of Judith M. Gerson and Kathy Peiss, the subject of boundaries and permeability has been well discussed. Accordingly, gender relations are governed by certain boundaries mark, which define exclusions and inclusions. There are rules and regulations, which guide and regulate traffic between the gender boundaries, with instructions on which boundaries may be traversed, and under what conditions or circumstances (Gerson and Peiss 1985). For African women who have crossed these boundaries of domesticity, and entered the public arena, they are expected to do so within their cultural assignments as homemakers, mothers and wives (Wabyanga 2011). In other words, they have to navigate the gender boundaries with caution, consciously of their society and cultural expectations as wives or risk failure in marriage.

Under modern socio-political dispensations, many women have come out to the public space to work. Many women hold public offices as civil servants and politicians. There are so many more in the private sector either as self-employed or working for private firms. Despite these developments, married women navigate the public spaces conscious of their domestic and the authority of their male counterparts. In the first place, they are to constantly be conscious of their roles as wives, mothers and home makers. The African and religious cultural spaces demand that she has not to forget her domestic roles, she should have a firm leg in the family affairs of her home or else risk the reproach of a lost or failed marriage. Hon. Amoding contends that “the times have changed, to put food on the table you have to be employed somewhere so you have to leave home very early, and come back late and very tired, but you still have to ensure that your children have eaten, your husband is well dressed. Otherwise, by the time you leave politics, you will not find a home and family” (Amoding 2023). In the same way, Hon. Rose Mutonyi affirmed that “Even though a woman is in parliament do not think that the husband will come in to do house chores on her behalf, she has to come back and begin from where she left. Though you have a

maid, she will not do all the duties, so it is overwhelming for the women in parliament. I heard a story of a woman losing her husband to a house help because she used to delegate everything to the maid”. She goes on to give a scenario of the husband to Margaret Thatcher, the former prime minister of Britain who said that he has no problem with his wife’s busy schedules of national importance. I am happy she prepares my breakfast. “Imagine the prime minister has to wake up and first prepare for the husband before she goes for work, who are you not to do the same? To Thatcher it did not matter whether Margaret holds the highest rank in the nation, to him she was his wife who was not exempted from her wifely duties” (Mutonyi 2023).

Edidah Mujinya, the Mothers’ Union member shared a story about Hon. Miria Matembe, who served as Member of Parliament for Mbarara between 2001 and 2006. Mujinya informs that Matembe once told a group of women that whenever she came back from work (parliament), she did not enter her home using the front door, but rather the rear door. This gave her access to inspect the kitchen, and get an account of the domestic realm before entering her house. It was also an opportunity for her to ensure that meals are prepared in the desired demeanor before being served for dinner to her husband. After that she would proceed to the sitting room, where her husband would be met” (Mujinya 2024). Entering using the back door for Hon. Matembe was a sign that regardless of the prestigious position she held in the Parliament, at home she remained a wife who is aware of her duties in the home. The same has been said by and about Late Cecilia Ogwal, the former woman Member of Parliament for Dokolo, Lango sub region. Though efforts to reach Hon. Ogwal were futile by the time of this study, recorded testimonies made by herself reveal that she was the politician who managed to balance her marriage, family and politics successfully.

In 2014, Cecilia Ogwal in a televised interview informed the NTV reporter Jinko Francis about her devoted and constant role in advising young women who join politics. He advises that “you can challenge a man, but to touch his ego! When you try in your political career to rival your husband, then you are in trouble. Don’t try to show the man that you are now more powerful than him... I always advise young women to leave their politics at the gate when they return home as wives and mothers.” (<https://youtu.be/1PNyuiICoo4?si=AcAL9mObAT97tDCp>) In a different story, Cecilia Ogwal demonstrated her discomfort when her husband would call her “you are my baby.” She said “where I disagree with him is to continue reminding me that I am his baby. I have always reminded him that I am not his baby, I am his girlfriend and his wife. As long as he continues looking at me as his baby, it means that he continues to look at me in terms of giving me milk and toys. I just want him to treat me like a lover would treat a partner, a friend and wife.” ([https://www.tiktok.com/@mabletwegumyezake/video/7164747415436791045?is\\_from\\_webapp=1&sender\\_device=pc&web\\_id=7348659518438114822](https://www.tiktok.com/@mabletwegumyezake/video/7164747415436791045?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7348659518438114822)).

In the same interview, Lamek Ogwal, husband to Cecilia seemed to qualify his wife’s testimony that: “.... If she goes to parliament, she is a parliamentarian as long as she comes back home and plays the role of the wife and the mother in the house, which she has done very consistently and competently. We have never had any violence in the house.” (<https://youtu.be/1PNyuiICoo4?si=AcAL9mObAT97tDCp>). Of interest to this study is the revelation made by Lamek Ogwal that he forbade his wife from accepting “ministerial appointments from President Museveni. If you accept a ministerial position, you stay there. Don’t come back to my house.” Later, on a different occasion, Mr. Lamek Ogwal said of Cecilia Ogwal that ‘she never entertained a spirit of disobedience. That is why I call her a great wife and very obedient. She cracked a joke in parliament as she told the speaker to close the meeting because she

needs to go home and feed her husband, Mr. Smart, because he eats at 7 o'clock. She was a great wife..." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ReAxZzVmIPI>).

To many Ugandans including politicians, Cecilia Ogwal has been the model of success as wife and politician. Many female parliamentarians who encountered Cecilia Ogwal describe her locally as mama, a title given to a woman of high social esteem and respect. She is praised for counselling many female parliamentarians on issues of politics and family life. For instance, Winnie Kiiza in a televised interview said:

"...she played a part in my life as a young leader. She gave me counsel on how to carry myself around parliament. She took me through balancing work and family, and when I was having my wedding in 2009, mama talked to me and told me words of wisdom, saying: 'Winnie, you should know that you are a leader but your marriage is very important. Leave your politics at the gate, go and be the mother to your children and wife to your husband. When you are out to do politics, pick your politics from the gate.' Basically, she was telling me that as the leader, you have to balance between your work and family and do it consistently... To us in the women's movement, mama is a role model to all of us especially the women upcoming leaders...in her was the leader and the mother. She blended politics with Christianity..."

([www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1bsqgtAeJA&list=RDCMUCq8Mm75TLHC6Nchi8ltZ1KA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1bsqgtAeJA&list=RDCMUCq8Mm75TLHC6Nchi8ltZ1KA)).

It was also revealed that some men are not at ease seeing their wives being involved in the public. Men feel insecure when they have a woman who is out going, and so often this insecurity may

result into violence, desertion and eventually marriage breakdown. This scenario was illustrated with the experiences of Dr. Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, whose marriage with Engineer Charles Kazibwe miserably ended on accounts of domestic violence (FP3 2023). Indeed, before the 28-year-old marriage hit a dead end, the Kazibwe's are described to have been "a happy couple, very exemplary couple" with the Engineer supportive of his wife's political career. The trouble started, in 1996, when she became the vice president, and the demands and stresses of the public office started to wear down their relationship. Specioza, it can be argued never had time to play the good wife at her home, which provoked hostilities and other forms of abuses from Mr. Kazibwe. The physical and emotional violence afflicted to Specioza stem from the cultural mindset that visualize beating of women as a disciplinary measure. In addition to what I stated in chapter one on violence against working women by their spouses, the practice seems to be salient in many African cultures as well illustrated by Takyi, B. K., & Mann, J. (2006). In fact, according to the 2023 police report, there were 10,792 cases of domestic violence involving wife beating in Uganda (<https://www.wfd.org/commentary/understanding-gender-based-violence-uganda-it-more-just-physical-abuse>).

As the result, Specioza filed for divorce. The marriage was dissolved formerly in court in favor of Specioza Wandira Kazibwe's petition, in which she pointed out that she suffered physical and emotional violence inflicted on her by Mr. Kazibwe. Mr. Kazibwe in his response agreed to physically beating his wife twice because she came home late, and had no time to play her domestic duties as wife and mother. Mr. Kazibwe was also guilty of extra marital relationships mentioned had also married (Nsambu 2005).

The story of Specioza Kazibwe is the story of a successful politician, but a bad wife, failed marriage and eventually a failed political career. Corresponding with the story of Cecilia Ogwal, the latter's it can be argued served politically but with caution, and conscious of the domestic affairs in her home. Ogwal was cautious of the egoistic characters of the patriarchal system. In the works of Sylvia Tamale, Cecilia Ogwal had made an assertion that our families should be the first priority and then politics. She further emphasizes the importance of family support in a woman's political career and hence urges women in politics to know how well to balance family and politics (Tamale 1999a). This statement clearly explains why Cecilia thrived in her political career up to the time of her demise compared to Specioza Wandira Kazibwe.

Not far from the above, and for purposes of illustration, Mburu writing from a Kenyan context interviewed Lenjou who in her opinion thinks some marriages break due to failure to balance between politics and family. According to her, some women who have climbed political ladders seem to lose respect for their husbands and feel too powerful to submit to them. This type of attitude from women has forced men to respond aggressively/violent in order for them to reclaim their positions as head in the marriage (Mburu 2020).

It is vivid that some women when they enter politics which gives them a sense of independence, they cease to listen to their husbands. This is attested to by one of the women politician Rosette Ikote who in an interview with Tamale revealed that her entry into politics gave her green light to act independently from her husband unlike before. According to Rosette, acting this way means minding about yourself first "now without thinking twice about it, I tell him look I am tired, I am not going to make it night", not because I'm being stubborn but you know as a person you have to got think of yourself too". Rosette on the other hand was able to identify the danger of behaving

in such a way, she thinks it's what has led to the broken marriages of some of her colleagues (Tamale 1999a). In Tamale's view, this kind of independence has costed many female politicians their marriages as their spouses lose trust in them. This is vivid from Rosette's assertion that she felt independent from her husband when she entered politics.

Relating the same scenario to Maathai Wangari a highly educated and renowned politician in Kenya, there is a lot of resonance. Maathai suffered criticism from her own husband who accused her of being "too strong minded for a woman and too hard to control". This drastically affected their marriage as Mr. Mwangi went on to file for a divorce which left Maathai wondering where she went wrong:

I searched my soul constantly for reasons that Mwangi had decided to leave me. I thought I had done everything: humbled myself, helped with his public role, served him, and loved him. I had tried to be a good mother, a good politician's wife, a good African woman, and a successful university teacher. Is it that those were too many roles for one to excel in? Where did I go wrong?" (Maathai 2006).

Mr. Mwangi went ahead to accuse Maathai of adultery and given the gravity of such an offence from our African cultural context, Maathai could not escape a divorce from her husband although it was against her wish: "I was not ready for a divorce and had hoped for reconciliation. I wanted a family and didn't want another husband. But Mwangi did not share my feelings" she exclaimed (Maathai 2006). The worst was when he demanded that Maathai should stop using his name.

Tamale has demonstrated that, African men despise the idea of a man getting home before his wife. Apparently, a woman is supposed to be home earlier to prepare for the arrival of her husband (Tamale 1999b). To arrive home later than the husband is to break the traffic rules which allowed her to traverse into the public space. In street interviews by New Vision, one Francis Angasa made an observation that he has no problem his wife being in politics as long as she fulfills her wifely and motherly duties of bringing up children well and also taking care of the home chores like washing, cooking and entertaining him. To Angasa, public participation should exclude any activities that interfere with the wife's domestic roles, which include delays in returning home (New Vision March 19, 1996, 15). Indeed, as noted by Stuhlhofer, women's political positions mean less compared to their roles as wives and mothers (Stuhlhofer, 2022).

It cannot go unmentioned that men in the contemporary Afro-Christian society despite their socio-economic statuses, expect certain attributes in what they would call an ideal wife. From the 10 male participants in this study, it is not surprising that even the elite like the three professors would together with the common people demand for the traditional gender roles in a woman like submissiveness and domesticity if the woman is to qualify to be an ideal wife. One of the professors categorically stated: an ideal wife should be understanding and accept me the way I am. I cannot stand a woman who does not have time for or who is not sensitive to the family needs a woman is supposed to provide (ACD1 2024). Whereas the senior academic expects his wife to be understanding and submissive, enlisting a contrary response from him if his wife would expect them same from him was not possible as the question just triggered a hysterical laughter. The laughter, to me was interpreted in a number of ways: either what I said seemed humorous and not serious or nonsensical as per the world views on women in the professor's sociological and cultural perspectives.

Another professor did not hide his attitude against emancipation and empowered women. According to him, an ideal wife has to be submissive and home based. In his own words “I want to come back home find a well prepared meal, a cleaned seating room, a neat environment and I want a real woman and not papers.” He further shared his experience with an emancipated woman in this way. As an academician working in a university, I fell in love with a PhD hold woman but all the time she was busy with her academic activities.” He further gave a mention of his friends that they are suffering with loneliness because they are married to emancipated women because their wives are never home and never readily present to give them support. Furthermore, this respondent revealed that he never advised any of his relatives or friends to marry emancipated women. That emancipated women are difficult to manage because they are self-sufficient and lack customary values that is why most of them are single mothers though with money and papers (ACD 2).

Other responses from common people were similar to the above. One of the participants was prompted to remind me of Bobi Wine’s song called *Adam ne Kawa* which he gladly song for me. When I searched the song later after the interview, it was revealed that the popstar Bobi Wine talks about a submissive wife. To Bobi Wine, no matter how educated or positioned a wife is, she should submit to her and meet customary obligations of the wife. To Wine unequal status between men and women is divinely ordained, as it was in the garden “that is what it is and what shall be.” Bobi Wine’s music is stemming from the deep rooted African and Christian religious and cultural values. Being quoted by the respondent in the study as an authority signifies the power of rhetoric conveyed through music as a wagon of ideology.

The above scenarios are a clear illustration that among many Africans educated or not, men seem to have similar expectations of what a good wife should be. Men would expect service, power and authority over their wives; and the concept of equality in terms of power and authority is deemed as rivalry and results into conflicts. Suffice to say that this is because of what is ideologically perceived as the natural order as postulated by Bobi Wine and anything which seems contrary causes the so-called natural disequilibrium. It is not risky to state that the modern Afro-Christian environment draws a lot in similarity with the African traditional society as explained in the previous chapter. Bobi Wine's song also indicates that the contemporary society tapes a lot from the Bible stories in defining its world views. The affinities between the African traditional cultures and Bible cultures justify the ideological perceptions of the ideals of a wife in the contemporary Afro-Christian settings as biblical and godly.

## **5.7. Conclusion**

This chapter, the contextual reading of Proverbs 31:10-31 aimed at exploring the reader's interpretation and conceptualization of a good wife in relation to the readers' contemporary context. In their interaction with the text, it was revealed from the readers' perspectives that there is an ideological correlation between the Bible and the contemporary African contexts about women, more so wives. In both cases, a good wife is valued in terms of aggregated values she offers to her husband's home in terms of labour, hospitality and child production. Besides, the man is at the center and the beneficiary in the benevolence and tribulations of the wife. A good wife is constructed as one who has the stamina to endure all the hardships associated with physical labour, male patronage, domesticity and even violence. In all these, the wife is cautiously and consciously negotiating for acceptance, love and approval not only from her husband but the society at large.

The contextual readership also revealed a section of readers who oppose the textual portrait of a good wife. These readers think the stakes are too dehumanizingly high to bear. It is also revealed that, some counselor who use the text of Proverbs in marriage counselling face reproval from their female clients as biased against women. This reality actually reveals the conflicts within society, where a section of readers approves the text and the other reject the text. This is actually the center of the problem in this study as shall be discussed in the next chapter.

The chapter reveals that, in the context of emancipation, women, especially wives still have to negotiate with the patriarchal system which govern homes for access to public life and activism. The call for “not to mix politics and family” by Late Cecilia Ogwal is actually the call not to mix the public with the domestic. This means that an African wife has to live in two different skins. The public has to be left at the gate as she steps into the home arena where domestic attire is to be worn. The old English idiom, “the man’s home is his castle,” finds expression in the contemporary African home, where men exercise their masculinities. Among other attributes of masculinity is to be man over the woman in a home. In this home castle, man has rules, boundaries and expectations from his wife. These rules are culturally grounded, and passed over through socialization processes of society. Women in marriage who are cautious about these rules and live by them are the good wives. It is not surprising therefore, that political characters like Cecilia Ogwal and Miria Matembe are the models of good wives, in as far as they would return home early, ensure their husbands and children are eaten, and don’t challenge their husbands’ ego in the castle. The contrast is Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, who in the turn of events lost her values of good wife, when she would return home late and lost control of the domestic arena because of political life. In the next chapter, it shall be demonstrated that both cases are a problem and result from patriarchal patronage. That the

situation calls for a new ideological paradigm which empowers both men and women with mutual understanding and inclination for a harmonious home to prevail.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1. Summary

The core objective of this study was the examination of the concept of *לְיָדָיִךְ* which can functionally mean an ideal wife in Proverbs 31:10-31 in relation to the Ugandan context. The study further problematized the contemporary ideological environment of *Afro-Christianity* and postmodern ideal of women emancipation in which modern families and marriages find themselves. The two ideological spaces each define parameters within which an ideal woman can be validated. While *Afro-Christian* ideology promotes traditional roles and power identities in a home, the emancipation ideas of postmodern ideological environment challenge the traditional gender roles and identities as oppressive against women hence attacks Afro-Christian values as oppressive. On the other hand, the *Afro-Christian* ideology defends its self as cultural, natural and godly and views postmodern as foreign, unnatural valueless, immoral and ungodly.

The climax of the ideological conflicts manifests itself in gender relationships between husbands and wives. Using the case study of female politicians involved in parliamentary politics in Uganda, the study interrogated the ideological conflicts and argued for a dialogue between the *Afro-Christian* environment and postmodern ideals to generate a home grown and grounded ideological frameworks to govern marital relationships. Women emancipation ideals as enshrined in the local and international agreements like Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goal and the Maputo protocol may not be realized in time unless the grassroot structures of Afro-Christian ideologies are part of the formulation and implementation strategies. Many stipulations from these

policy documents need to be customized and contextualized to evolve a working model, which speaks in the language of the people.

It was demonstrated that *Afro-Christian* environment is the ideological mind which characterizes the largest percentage of the country basically because it is the environment within which many Ugandans have grown. This is the ideological environment which informs the gender responses between women and men, value judgement, psycho-social dispositions and world views. It is the environment within which they were born and grown and live in, to them, this is their culture, their ways of life, the natural and spiritual order. It was demonstrated from the study that most of the demands of women emancipation ideas are in contrast to what society thinks as culture and orderliness. Women activism is seen as an agency of foreign influence with hidden agenda. Admittedly, some of the ideas of women emancipation movements are very abstract and the advocates find difficulties with imposing them on Africans without customizing them.

This study advocates that women liberation movements should take a bottom-up course and consultatively work with the *Afro-Christian* environment to come up with acceptable and mutual stand points before legislations are made. This serves to underscore the observations made by some of the local people across the country in response to Marriage and Divorce bill (2013) that the members of parliament wasted their time and their tax money producing what the locals regarded as bogus, unnatural and ungodly law proposals. In other words, on matters related to the family legislators need to involve the *Afro-Christian* stake holders especially the cultural and religious institutions and the local people as well. This interestingly is the demand of some local authorities. For instance, some of the clan leaders from Lango sub region expressed their dissatisfaction with the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2013 because they were not consulted (Onyango 2013). For

example, as hinted earlier in chapter one about the legal and legislative framework of the study one of the contentious issues in the Marriage and Divorce Bill was marital rape. All African tribes in Uganda rejected this idea that incriminated men for making sexual advances to their wives in ways that may be deemed as force. Interactions with some of the participants in this study, informed that to many Africans sex is equated to food and often referred to in dietary terms. A well cooked meal it was reported is crowned with sex in a marriage setting. A man who refuses the woman's food is in effect refusing her sexually and eating her food is also accepting her sexually. A woman's body is in many cultures viewed as something consumable by the man sexually. Among the Baganda a woman's sexually organs are referred to symbolically as *entamu, esowani, ebakuli* etc. it is also enshrined in African proverbs and imaginations that a wife's body belongs to the man hence proverbs like *emese newegeja etya ya mese*, the aggressiveness of a penis does not destroy the vagina and a broken bed is a sign of happy marriage. Regardless of whether the broken was as a result of violence, reporting a case of marital rape by a woman is viewed as totally unrealistic in the African setting where a woman is meant to be receptive to her husband's sexual advances. To many participants who commented on this matter, some of the issues which women activists attempted to advance in Africa are totally unrealistic. Some participants revealed that this is not however to condone possible bad practices by men who may abuse their wives sexually.

The text of Proverbs 31:10-31 was examined using two methods, which were: textual analysis, which took forms of lexical examination of the concept of  $\text{לְדָבָרִים} \text{וְשִׁבְרֵי}$ . In this case, the text was premised in its textual contexts, lexically examined and the social cultural contexts of the ancient near east, which served as the context for analysis. The lexical examination of relevant concepts generated ideas of epistemological nature to support the core arguments in this work. The second

was the contextual Bible study. This took forms of reading the text with the participants to generate theological insights related to the problem. The contextual study was premised on African religious-cultural and contemporary postmodern underpinnings on the notion of a good wife. It was therefore necessary to examine the traditional conceptualizations of a good wife and the postmodern views about the text. The views from the contextual Bible study were augmented by other scholarly views from document analysis and ethnographic examination of African proverbial sayings, folklores and music about wives. The findings in these areas demonstrated that by and large the *Afro-Christian* ideological context has structures which demarcate boundaries and duties for women visa-a-vi men. The female figure of a person is an ambiguous one in this context. First of all, she is secondary to men but at the same time indispensable as an object of male sexual indulgence and exploitation. Secondly, and on the other side, she is a commodified person for wealth generation right from her parents (as source of bride price) and to her husband as a factor of production.

In chapter 4, the textual analysis revealed that the concept of  $\text{לְיָדָיִם וְעֵלְיָדָיִם}$  is very fluid and problematic in its grammatical form. As discussed, the concept is a noun in construct that is to say a compound noun and not adjectivized in the original Hebrew Bible. The combination of  $\text{יָדָיִם}$  (woman) and  $\text{לְיָדָיִם}$  present a linguistic and translation problem.  $\text{לְיָדָיִם}$  as a noun is personified to mean many things that include strength, wealth, special skills, military, industriousness and efficiency. It is not risky therefore to confidently argue that the contemporary English Bible translations of  $\text{לְיָדָיִם וְעֵלְיָדָיִם}$  like virtuous wife (KJV), wife of noble character (NIV) and others are either in error or culturally influenced to convey the cultural desires or images of the translator's ideology about an ideal wife  $\text{לְיָדָיִם וְעֵלְיָדָיִם}$ . In this translations  $\text{לְיָדָיִם}$  is translated as an adjective to describe the  $\text{יָדָיִם}$ .

The situation is worsened in the African vernacular bible translations. In the African vernacular bibles, it is demonstrated that  $\text{לְיָמֵי אִשָּׁה}$  is translated basing on the aggregated ideas and expectations of a good wife from the perspectives of the translator. In other words, the vernacular bibles embody the views and aspirations of their cultural environments. For example in communities that emphasized the essence of wives in terms of labour  $\text{לְיָמֵי אִשָּׁה}$  is translated to emphasize hard work and productivity. For example, the Zulu version renders  $\text{לְיָמֵי אִשָּׁה}$  as *Omfazi okhuthelayo* implying a diligently hard-working woman. But in communities that emphasized morality like the Xhosa of South Africa and Yoruba of West Africa, they have *omfazi onesidema* and *aya oniwa* respectively to emphasis morals. In the Luganda language translation *omukazi omwegendereza* signifies caution, which among other things demands for respect and code of conduct in gender relations.

The contextual study revealed a discrepancy in participants' response to the text. Majority of the responds from the political arena read the text and upheld that it is a reflection of their cultural environment. Many praised the proverbial woman as the character who represents women in their locations as ideal wives because they are very hard working and industriousness. This picture may point to a number of issues: on the surface, it may indicate that the female politicians are the reflection of the *Afro-Christian* ideological environment, which uphold the toil of the woman as normative. But deeply, the participants accepted the text as a reflection of the contributions of an African wife in a home. It is difficult to imagine that the female political participants would promote or support actions which sanction women to oppression. The female politicians in this case praised the work ethic of the proverbial wife, as the reflection of their own local realities.

Other participants however, rejected the text as oppressive. That the text dictates ideas of the past on women of today. They argued that the demands on a woman in the text are unattainable today. These women advised that the Bible texts should not be used or abused by the dominant males to oppress women. To these participants Proverbs 31:10-31 is conceptualized as a tool of oppression. To them, the bible does not in an equal measure stipulate the qualities of an ideal husband, but objectify women in beastly terms as a man's slave. Women are also human who need time to rest just like men.

Participants from the mothers' and fathers' union of Uganda had a unique response to the text in the contextual bible study. To them Proverbs 31:10-31 is relevant in defining the essence of a wife in a home more so today. Some members of the mothers' union intimated that they have used the text in counseling sessions to educate women marriage values. But to their dismay many women in marriage have showed a dislike about the text. To this category, the text under study is very relevant in contemporary marriages where wives assume that once in marriage it is the men who have to maintain them. That many marriages especially of young couples are suffering because they lack relational ethics especially the ethics of hard work, patience and home building. That many women parasitically depend on men and loath work.

Furthermore, issues of morals, conflict management and emotional maturity were raised by the mothers and fathers' union participants in the contextual bible study. Focusing on women, some participants preferred the Luganda translation of Proverbs which talk of *omukazi omwegendereza*, and emphasized that many wives in contemporary homes are very careless; they carelessly speak and carelessly handle family resources, carelessly treat or bring up children and often react emotionally even at the slightest provocation. *Omukazi omwegendereza* is one who is cautious of

the impact her actions or words would have especially to her husband. She should not just open her mouth and speak. He emphasized his point with the Luganda saying that: *Wakili ogula ettaka lyebakayanila naye si kuwasa omukazi ayomba* to mean, one would rather buy a piece of land which has wrangles than marrying a nagging wife. Men have no peace at home because of careless mouthing and undignified treatment, yet there is no legislation to protect them. That it is this carelessness that breeds infidelities in men. The fathers and mothers' union participants highlighted absurdities in contemporary marriage relationships and called emphatically for reverting to the Bible and Christian norms and values if modern African marriages are to survive. This emphasis to go back to religion demonstrates an absence of an ethic or ideology, within which contemporary marriage relationships can be understood. They castigated the contemporary legislative movements as a ploy aimed at disempowering men, robbing them of properties and killing African marriages and homes, yet homes are the epicenter of African values.

The members of the wider society presented differing opinions on the text and theme of an ideal wife. Some emphasized the importance of traditional gender roles as a means of balancing relationships in a home. That the proverbial wife is the kind of wife every man should desire for a wife, she is hard working and she builds the family: "I would even pay hundred cows for her dowry if my son married such a woman," "If there is a family that produces girls of this breed, it would be a very rich family because every man looking for a wife would begin from there," such a woman must be landing from Mars but not among the *bayaye* of these days." Such are some of the statements made by the members of society on the text during the contextual study. Such testimonies not only prove what was earlier said about the ambiguous picture of a woman as a source of wealth, but adds to the debate that society values women who work.

Among the members of the academic community, there was a thinking that the text was mistakenly written because to them the attributes of  $\text{לִּי־נְתִיבֵי־אֵלֶיךָ}$  are the traditional roles of husbands. That it is only men who can do the many things that are expected of a woman in Proverbs 31:10-31. Using the context of the Bakiga and Bagisu, two academics seemed to agree that in the contextual reality, it is only men who can do the exploits of  $\text{לִּי־נְתִיבֵי־אֵלֶיךָ}$ . One of them, the expert of cultural anthropology rightly stated that among the Bamasaba women would not leave home to go hunting or commercial exploits. It is the man. Women are supposed to be the home makers and keepers. It is the man who dresses the family, brings food and meat for the wife to cook for him and other members in the family. A man who is fed and dressed by the wife is not man enough, this why if a woman today happens to contribute significantly to family welfare she would complain with statements like “I have become a man in this house.”

Examining the views from the contextual bible study, presents a very interesting picture which is adopted in this study as the framework for advocating for a new ideological paradigm. The contextual bible study revealed mainly four outputs namely:

1. It praised the proverbial wife as a hard-working woman who is a reflection of an ideal wife in an African home. From the testimonies in chapter 5, she is the Mukonzo woman who “wakes up early to take care of the children and her husband, who goes to the garden, ensures that the house has food, and ensures the children are well behaved,” she is the hardworking Mukiga woman who ensures that her family has food; she is the good Mugisu woman “who plants cassava and potatoes etc. to ensure food security for her family.
2. The ideal wife in Proverbs 31:10-31 is what society needs today because she demonstrates proper work ethics. Views from the mothers and fathers’ unions emphasized the work and

moral ethics in the home. In other words, a good wife-husband relationship to this category of participants should be governed by proper code of ethics for work and mutual respect and interrelationship.

3. The woman of Proverbs behaves like a man. The things attributed to her are things which are attributed to men in the African traditional contexts. This position was maintained by the academicians who think that in real terms, the attributes on the wife of proverbs 31:10-31 are the attributes of a man in African contexts. Interestingly, the Septuagint (LXX) version of the Bible translated the Hebrew word  $\text{בְּרָא}^{\text{א}}$  in similar terms: It used the word *andreyan* ( $\text{ἀνδρείαν}$ ), which is an adjective from the root *andreyos* ( $\text{ἀνδρεῖος}$ ), which means man (male), to describe *gunayika* ( $\text{γυναῖκα}$ ), which means woman. The construct *gunayika andreyan* ( $\text{γυναῖκα ἀνδρείαν}$ ) conveys the idea of a manly woman.
4. The demands on a woman in Proverbs are too much to bear, she is a human being who needs to rest but not a slave. From the testimonies, there was a section of participants who think the Bible is a tool of oppression that objectify women to serfdom. That the proverbial wife is a work-bee character, who has no time to rest. It is discriminatory because it does not stipulate the qualities of an ideal husband.

In both contextual bible study and lexical examination of  $\text{בְּרָא}^{\text{א}}$  we are faced with the feature of the woman who is hard working, she is like a man in both the text and contextual bible study. In other words, from the two methodologies of engaging the text, there is no difference between the man and the woman in terms of the work. The dilemma of this woman are the two ideologies: while the *Afro-Christian* ideological environment appreciates this woman who is hard working and man-like, it demands that the woman should behave like a woman, according to the behavioral codes it has put in place. She should be in the domestic arena, be home, be available for sexual

satisfaction of her husband at all times, welcome visitors and produce children. On the other hand, the postmodern emancipation ideals demand that this woman should be equal to the man, since she can work like the man. She should behave like a man as she works like a man. She should be away from domesticity and work in the public sphere. She should negotiate sex with her husband, child production has to be planned and home responsibilities should be shared since she is never home to welcome visitors and nurse children. The postmodern ideology advocates for the deconstruction of gender boundaries which have hitherto prevented woman from performing certain roles, while the *Afro-Christian* ideology thinks to be a woman or a man is the politics of gender boundaries. It has to be borne in mind that, in the contemporary world women should be listened to by the *Afro-Christian* environment, because women today perform tasks which were in the past the preserve of men. Metaphorically, women are working in manly ways. Husbands, and the entire structure of patriarchy need therefore to accept the changes and begin working like women in domestic spheres in order to balance the relational equilibrium. That is to say, husband can cook food and nurse children as wives are in the public spheres or relaxing after a tiring work experiences.

From the above four positions, there is need for an ethics which govern men and women in marriage. By accepting the text as a reflection of their society, the female politicians are not necessarily supporting forms of oppression which women in their society go through but proudly stand with the women as a figure in the home whose contribution is recognized and appreciated by the Bible. On the other hand, rejecting the text as oppressive to women by a section of female politicians is not an indication of defiance to marriages but that women roles in society has changed and ideal wife cannot be merely measured or defined in terms of manual labour and worker bee

character. It is an indication that the contemporary reader views herself as humans who has needs for leisure in order to rejuvenate her energy and enhance her productivity.

The views from the fathers' and mothers' union are premised on the quest for ethics in a home. Their views problematize the construct of the woman today, who under the guise of empowerment abuse marital responsibilities by assuming a marital identity which is abstract and unrealistic in the contemporary African home. The views from society are views that praise hard work and morals as ethics, but also as a form of hard work which demands that the wife works like a man. The practicality of a hard working woman working like a man but behaving like a woman may not be attainable as observed by the members of the academic community and women liberation ideologies. Furthermore, the problem of the contemporary environment is that some women want to navigate the dual lanes of emancipation and at the same time the lane of *Afro-Christian* environment. In resource making, some women claim equality in making money and resource, but the money and resources made are for themselves, not to be shared in the marital home. Women in this case want to keep the benefits of emancipation to themselves selfishly, and at the same time want to share into or even grab the privileges of the *Afro-Christian* ideological demarcations. For emancipation to be realized, men have to not only understand it but should be part of it and also enjoy its benefits.

As noted earlier, man and woman live in a changing society and indeed the society has changed. There are structural changes of social, economic, political and demographic nature. Colonialism, money economy, education, industrialization, urbanization, pandemics and mass media have changed societies and it is hard to imagine a society which is a photo copy of the biblical environment of pre-colonial Africa in existence today. The contemporary changes also affect and

inform modes of life and production. Both men and women are victims and culprits of change and therefore should adopt to new modes of life, survival and production. For instance, increased population and rapid urbanization in many places has resulted into shortage of land for farming. In societies which emphasize diligence in farm work like digging as a measure of an ideal wife, women now struggle to find land. As such, they need creative skills and adopt new forms of survival like seeking for employment or engaging in small scale businesses. In the absence of land for farming, it is difficult to envisage producing many children especially sons who not only require feeding, treatment and education but also land for inheritance. The land pressure and resultant poverty has affected women's hospitality credentials, they can no longer entertain many visitors especially in-laws with provisions and services when they struggle to feed their own mouths and mouths of their children. Therefore, the traditional phrase *ofunde n'Omubi nga zala nga lima nga a yaniliza bagenyi* may no longer hold.

The educational levels for women have gone reasonably high at least in Uganda. Women have gained skills and knowledge which have to be tapped by society and the world at large. Many women are in specialized skilled areas like medicine, engineering, law, security, education and administration. The demands of their careers require that these women work outside homes and in equal terms with men. In some specialized areas like health and security women have to work in shifts including night shifts way from home. Many women have also joined politics and serve their country in various capacities. Politics by its nature is a public centered activity, it deals with matters of the state (Modebadze 2010) not the home although the home is the basic unit of the state. Many women under modern democratic dispensations are in higher echelons of power as members of parliament, cabinet ministers and so on. These roles call for diligent service and commitment and

inevitably deprive the *Afro-Christian* environment of the domestic roles and duties of these women as wives, mothers, farmworkers, home makers and home keepers.

From the findings of the textual analysis of  $\text{כֹּל־דָּבָר־וְעָשָׂה}$  and the positions of contextual bible study mentioned above, bible translations and interpretations need to redefine a modern wife away from the traditional mindset of domesticity. Rightly placed by the academic members above, the model of the wife in proverbs is outgoing as the man, she has to leave home early; she may return home late or the following day depending on the work schedules. The manly nature of the woman at work in the changed environment calls for a paradigm shift in many ways. The concept of  $\text{כֹּל־דָּבָר}$  which may mean many things like resourcefulness, wealth, skills, talent etc. calls women to do jobs/roles that were hitherto done by men. The husbands have to accept these realities if marriages are to be meaningful and peaceful. This construction clearly speaks the language of equality, where equality between women and men “means visibility, autonomy, responsibility and equal participation of women and men in all spheres of public and private life” (Terzi- Barbarosie, 2013).

Bringing Specioza Kazibwe in perspective and many other women who have suffered in silence, to come home late because of the demands of the office of the country’s vice president, should not enlist a violent reception by Kazibwe the husband, but a glee of love and appreciation, garnished with a warm hug and a massage on the shoulders. The woman from the stresses of the public office should find peace and comfort, acceptance and appreciation in the place she calls home, other than violence and demonization for not fulfilling the customary roles.

There are so many *Cecilia Ogwals* in Uganda today who have devised modes of navigating relational dynamics with their husbands. These are women who keep politics way from the home in order to live peacefully with their husbands. These are women who fear challenging their

husband's ego, who have had to give their husbands 'smart' nick names, who have refused higher political responsibilities like ministerial appointments and taken on modest political responsibilities as ordinary members of parliament in order to keep their marriages. The problem affecting these women lies with their husbands who are predominantly citizens of the *Afro-Christian* space. These men were not prepared to have their wives in the public as politicians and it is unrealistic to assume that they can suddenly change to see their wives in their respective political identities without a proper ideological orientation. It is the opinion of this study that had there been a proper ideological orientation, the *Charles Kazibwes* would treat the *Specioza Kazibwes* with dignity and probably the *Cecilia Ogwals* would have accepted more challenging roles like ministerial appointments.

The study found Sylvia Tamale's work "*when hens begin to crow*" very instrumental. Tamale brings into perspective how the hens have objected to what can be called the cultural and natural, and can crow as, with and among the cocks. From her view, women's presence in the public space, specifically politics has been received with misogynistic attitudes from the *Afro-Christian ideological* mindset. These attitudes ensue from the reality that women have crossed traditional gender boundaries into what has been traditionally known as the male reserve. Hens crowing is a metaphorical expression to mean the idea that women are behaving like men by engaging in aspects which were hitherto the reserve of men like public politics. We don't always find cocks crowing something of intellectual matter, because we think it is natural for cocks to crow anyway. In other words, if the cock doesn't crow, it becomes a matter of concern. But scientifically, cock crowing signifies a number of things: it is a way of communicating to the world the news about the new day. The cock sounds the wake-up call. He is the one endowed with knowledge and skills about cosmic timing, and communicates to the surrounding. Crowing is a political feat in the

leadership of chickens. By crowing the cock asserts himself as the dominant leader over the domestic birds. Crowing is territorial, and it signifies that the cock is demarcating boundaries (Adnan 2023, Leonard and Horn 1995). The act of hens crowing was seen as unnatural. It is a reversal of natural order and can signify a bad omen. As Tamale notes, these crowing hens should be slaughtered in order to restore natural equilibrium, and before they cause disaster to society.

In the new ideological space, this study advocates that hens' crowing should be regarded as normal and acceptable. Hens, as also cocks should communicate the cosmic knowledge and truth without threatening violence and demarcating boundaries, but working in collaboration with the cocks. The hens may crow with and like cocks or even better than cocks as long as the crowing is of benefit to society. The women in the third ideological space have the mandate to speak, debate and work with men as equal parties. It is no longer the *Afro-Christian* politics of women do not have to the right to speak in public. Another interesting scholarly write-up that speaks to this study is Kuloba Wabyanga's *berated politicians*. Wabyanga finds it problematic with how the biblical society has negatively branded and berated women leaders for performing political activities. He further extrapolates how the Bible has influenced the contemporary attitudes on women in public spaces especially politics. As Wabyanga postulated, what biblical characters like Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah were doing was not bad as portrayed by the author but their only fault was rising their heads in the public, men's domain and exercising influence over men. Not far from Tamale, women in the public space are still berated due to the patriarchal ideological frameworks from which their presence in the public sphere is viewed as gender mismatch.

The new ideological space therefore endeavors to create an environment where women especially politicians are not berated. It advocates for an ethic within which women presence in the public

sphere is as legitimate as how men's presence in the domestic arena should be legitimate. It is an ideological environment where *Charles Kazibwes* does not find any validation to slap the Vice presidents. An environment where *Cecial Ogwals* would take up ministerial positions while *Lamek Ogwals* would enter the kitchen and prepare food than waiting for the *Cecilians* to cut meetings and come to cook for them. It is an environment where women will return to their marital homes from work, laden with groceries from the supermarkets without the *ka sente ke kikazi* mentality, and the husbands will praise them for the support they render to the family. As Daniela Terzi-Barbarosie puts it, equality requires accepting and capitalizing, on the complementarity of women and men, as well as on the various roles they play in the society (Terzi- Barbarosie, 2013), this study advocates for the complementary roles of women and men as wives and husbands in family building, where children who are the future citizenry and leaders are being raised. This complementarity is a development issue at least as stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which talk about poverty alleviation (SDG1), alleviation of hunger (SDG2), good health and wellbeing (SDG3), quality Education for the children (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5) among others.

## **6.2. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The need for the mind-change about women in Africa has overly been emphasized. This thesis however urges for an ideological framework which will constitute the psycho-social mechanisms by which women generally and wives specifically are viewed by their male counterparts. It is not enough to talk and view women from the prisms of equality in society, when that equality is not being felt in homes. When politics and public image is being left at the gates. Many women are still viewed in customary terms by their spouses and in-laws, and many women are struggling to live up to the expectations of public work and the cultural norms of the wife (where they are also

daughters in law and sister in-law and the mother to all, due to the extended family tapestry). Marriage to many such women is being a bed of horrendous experiences, and a burden. But ironically, they are culturally expected to endure the experiences in order to prove their stamina and resilience as wives.

It is argued that the ideological framework should emerge from the negotiation between the Afro-Christian ideology and the postmodern ideologies of women empowerment, if marriage is to be meaningful for all the parties involved. The contemporary militant approach by many women activists through controversial legislations have yielded not results. The men (and women) in the Afro-Christian space have often rejected these legislations as foreign, unnatural, ungodly and unafrika because the architects want to impose them to the African cultural populations. Such legislations and other activisms are viewed as entailing a bad agenda for the African home and African marriage: “they are instigating women against men,” “they are aimed at breaking the African family values,” “they are aimed at promoting homosexuality” etc. are some of arguments advanced against contemporary women rights activities. The new ideological framework should emanate from the contemporary conflicting ideologies of *Afro-Christian* ideology and postmodern ideologies of woman emancipation.

Women activities have to negotiate with the grassroot structures in the *Afro-Christian* environment to develop a framework that espouse the structural changes. The custodians of the *Afro-Christian* environment need to understand and be part of the emancipation and not just be commanded by the international community to implement emancipation agenda. Besides, men, especially husbands need to be beneficiaries of the empowerment of women but not losers. This calls for the local, preferably a grounded African model of emancipation than a script which is foreign

influenced and foreign crafted. It has to be noted that opposition to contemporary legislation proposals like Domestic Relations Bill (2003), Marriage and Divorce Bill (2013) and Marriage Bill (2022) is not only from men but also from women (Mulondo, Odyek, and Natukunda 2013). These are the custodians of culture and the significant voice in *Afro-Christian* environment. These are women and mothers who are nervously anxious about the kind of wives which their sons are to marry. They either cry for their sons or mourn their daughters who are viewed as deviants from the norms, an embarrassment, valueless and disorderly and have failed to get married because of their worldviews.

In the *tete-a-tete* critical are questions between *Afro-Christian* environment and postmodernism. Who is a good wife? Are the demands and desires in the qualities of a good wife realistic given the contemporary structural changes? What would emancipation mean in the contemporary setting and what are its values? Are the changed roles of women as wives improving the quality of life, are probably some of the questions that will enhance a meaningful conversation between the *Afro-Christian* and postmodern ideological environments. For the *tete-a-tete* to be achieved, the patriarchal orientations should as a matter of necessitate drop the doctrine of domesticity as the quality of ideal wifeness, that is to say, drop the wife-at-home (*omukyala ewaka, muke nyumbani*) mentality and embrace the woman in the public work ethic of the working woman (*omukyala akola*). The new ethic would demand that men have to learn and accept that their wives are partners not servants. The partnership mentality would therefore require that men develop skills in the domestic arena like nursing children, cooking and doing house work and regard these activities as noble, while wives are still at work or tired from work. In a reformed home, men's participation in domestic work will be a quantum leap in the socialization processes where male children are nurtured and groomed to behave like their fathers. This will bond the family and marriage together.

In this case the man will work like a man and act like a woman. Similarly women in the new ideology must learn to embrace the ethic of transparency and respect to their male counterparts. One of the bad practices of women in the public is the concealment of the benefits of their public work especially finances and continue to expect that their husbands should meet the family costs by virtue of being men. To these women thought they claim equality the man shoulders the biggest responsibility in the family while their earnings as women are for personal growth and indulgence.

The *sente ze kikazi* mentality should be dropped and embrace an ethic of mutual support. Men, it was lamented by some participants do not realize the values of emancipation apart from seeing their wives changing hair styles, changing handbags and the color of their nails daily. Moreover, the empowered women are criticized for having relational problems with their husbands in terms of emotional and even physical abuse. In a bid to demonstrate empowerment, women it was reported go to the excesses of assuming power in homes, which inevitably bruise their husbands' ego and the resultant family feuds. Utterances and other actions which belittle men in the Afro-Christian spaces are obviously disrespectful and viewed in customary terms as signs of a bad wife. In this study, it is emphasized that women should have power in their marriages, but this power need to be negotiated and attained through the holistic mind change in what can be called a third ideological mindset.

The cultural and religious community are paramount in the realization of ideological negotiation. Suffice to note that cultures are dynamic and not static and the contemporary religio-cultural environment needs to change in order to view the imperatives of women liberation than unintelligibly keeping and maintaining beliefs and traditions which are not in tandem with the contextual reality. There should be new ways of reading scripture in ways that empower and inspire

change as well as sustain peace and stability without oppressing other members involved. The bible emphasizes principles of equality for example Galatian 3:28-29 *there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, slave or master* and in Genesis 1:28, God created them *male and female*. These are the messages relevant for the contemporary society if religion and culture are to be respected and remain meaningful.

Ideology can be part of the culture as already noted. Introducing emancipation ideas into African cultures is significant in ways that will stop cultural portrayal of women in inferior terms. The home-grown ideologies can be propagated through many ways like mass media, and education. Singling out education as an example the educational institutions should reform not only the curriculum content but also methodologies of teaching and assessing. Education has always been the agent of social change. One of the challenges of today's education is fragmentation of content where gender issues are presented in auxiliary or minor terms. There is too much emphasis on sciences over humanities despite the fact that values and attitudes cannot change from laboratories. In this regard, this study personally and passionately protest against demeaning utterances by male politicians and leaders who think women issues in university education is a waste of time when many homes are suffering due to lack of knowledge about women issues, as many women also don't understand men.

In the new ideological space, the concept of *לְיָדָיִם* begs for a meaningful contextual reconstructions and translations. From the lexical discussions and the contextual Bible study, *לְיָדָיִם* as an ideal wife in the contemporary society is that woman who is hardworking. She is the woman who has specialized skills which she puts in use by virtue of her training. She is the professor, the lecturer, the medical personal, the lawyer, the engineer, the military officer, the

police woman, the politician, the teacher etc. She is the woman who has wealth and money earned from her skills, and contributes to the family welfare. She is an intellectual woman, a family builder, the modern woman who works alongside men to build not only homes but the nation. She is the states woman, an influential woman, the politician and the leader. Paradoxically, Proverbs 31:10 asks: the ideal wife, where can she be found? This thesis has an answer to this question that the ideal wives are in the society we live in today, amongst us. They are the skilled women of our generation, which the patriarchal mindset should learn to live with.

Conclusively, there is need for fresh insights in the decoding, interpretation and translation of  $\text{נִרְאֵת־תְּשׁוּבָה}$  of Proverbs 31:10-31; the insights that espouse a readership that is in tandem with the modern environment that is characterized by socio-economic and political changes. These changes have transformed the contemporary woman. The woman of today lives in a capitalist monetary economy. She is empowered, educated, skilled, employable and emancipated, thanks to globalization. Yet, and unfortunately, she is feared as unmarriageable and not wife material because she does not by large subscribe to or measure up to the traditional norms of an ideal wife. She is blamed for acting and behaving like a man in a home—not acting and behaving like the woman as known in the normative sense of the *Afro-Christian* space, the reasons why her marriage has broken. The Bible, read from the postcolonial perspective, and specifically within African perspectives should be brought to discussion with the contemporary realities to save an African marriage.

### **6.2.1 The ideal wife in the contemporary Ugandan context**

The decolonized readership of the Bible brings insights that advocate for a refreshed ideological framework within which traditional perceptions of an ideal wife (which conflict with the

contemporary reality) are broken, and the new ideas of an ideal wife are espoused. Within this ideological framework, the study concludes that Proverbs 31:10-31 brings out the true picture of the woman of today as an ideal wife:

- She is industrious and hardworking, she earns money, she buys land, she brings food and other necessities like clothes for the family. The wives today are bringing on table food from their earnings.
- Besides, relating to the professional careers they are in, women today are industrious and hardworking. They are skilled, and some women are holding profitable businesses which make homes economically affluent.
- Due to the office demands, the woman in the new space gets up so early to prepare for work and also ensure everything is in place before she leaves home.
- She contributes to the family growth and development through assets and property acquisition. Women have bought land from their earnings, they have traversed the traditional odds that women do not own land.
- She directly or indirectly support the needy in her locale. For example some of the female politicians through their offices have sponsored children in schools, bought ambulances and other initiatives to support the local community.
- She brings respect and glory to husband and family at large. It is obvious that a man with such a wife is respected in society as honorable X's husband and he shares in her political glory.
- The wife in this third ideological environment is intellectually sound by the virtue of her profession, she commands respect from the private and the public domain as well. The only token a husband can give to such a wife is to praise her, recognize and appreciate her efforts

and contributions, give her love and affection and create an ambient environment at home for her to come back and relax from the stresses of the public space.

In summary, a woman cannot achieve all the above when she is confined in the domestic arena. She has to assume the “manly” mantle of the public space. It is not wrong to sum up that the *tete-a-tete* has mapped out virtues of presence in the public space, skills as attained through education, hard work and industriousness as key denominators. Therefore, the concept of an ideal wife today among others should be premised on these virtues. Functionally, an ideal wife is a woman who is educated, involved in formal employment or private sector, in the public space (physically and virtually) and brings the fruits of her industriousness to the marital home. She is a partner and not a dependent to her husband.

### **6.3. Future Research Gaps**

The researcher recommends a study about the ideal husband to correspond or complement the current study. As Biwul noted, an ideal husband makes an ideal wife. It has been established that most family problems which result to divorces are caused by husbands (Ali et al., 2022; Nelli et al., 2023). Many cultural socialization processes are focused on building masculinity traits, which are out paced by the changing society. There is no effort in linking them to family and relations with women, especially empowered women. An empowered woman in term is misconceived to be masculine in thoughts and character, and therefore less-womanly and unhusbandable (Diallo & Voia, 2016; Egwurube, 2016; Lemke, 2003; Sethuraman et al., 2006). This has resulted into various forms of abuses directed against wives by the husbands, as a mechanism for forcing women to the culturally approved codes of wifhood. Ironically, empowerment has created a masculine woman who is dwells and thrives in the public space and favorably compete for opportunities,

earns money, runs projects, opinion leader in a home and can run a home. On the other hand, the currents have created a masculinity which is envious of women's progresses. In a marriage setting, an ideal husband should demonstrate traits that support the wife as a key player in all aspects of development.

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## Research Participants

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix I: List of Interview participants**

1. Ainomugisha Gilbert, Fathers' Union
2. Amoding Monicah (Hon) Eastern Uganda
3. Andrew David Omona (Prof) Uganda Christian University
4. Atibuni Esau (CM) West Nile
5. Esabu Elizabeth, Mothers Union
6. Grace Freedom (Hon) Northern Uganda
7. Juliet Wabwire , Mothers Union
8. Kahesi Johnson, Fathers' Union
9. Karungi Elizabeth (Hon) Western Uganda
10. Khainza Justine (Hon) Eastern Uganda
11. Khamalwa Watsuna (Prof) Makerere/Kyambogo
12. Kiiza Winfred (Hon) Western Uganda
13. Kisambira Enock (CM) Eastern Uganda
14. Kusasira Peace (Hon) Central Uganda
15. Makoba Ronald (CM) Eastern
16. Medard Ruggyendo (Prof) Kabale University
17. Mugisha Barbrah Mothers' Union
18. Mujinya Edidah, Mothers' Union
19. Musingo Michael Peter, Fathers' Union
20. Mutonyi Rose (Hon) Eastern Uganda
21. Mwesigwe Samuel, Fathers' Union

22. Najjuma Sarah (Hon) Central Uganda
23. Nambozo Agnes, Mothers Union
24. Nandira Joseph, Fathers' Union
25. Odong Martin (CM) Northern Uganda
26. Okello Patrick (CM) Northern Uganda
27. Tamale Simon Peter (CM) Central Uganda
28. Tayebwa Innocent (CM) Western Uganda

## **Appendix II: Contextual Study Guide and Interview Guide.**

### **A). Contextual Bible study Questions**

After reading the Bible text with the individual respondent, the following question guided the interview interactions:

1. Who is the character mentioned in the text of Proverbs 31:10-31?
2. What are the features of the good wife according to the text?
3. How does this text relate to the African understanding of a good wife according to your local setting?
4. How does this text relate to the Christian ideas of a good wife in your religious setting?
5. As an African woman/man, who is a legislator/mothers' union member/fathers' union member, is this text still relevant in contemporary marriages?
6. Which roles should a woman play in order to qualify as a good wife?
7. As an African woman/man, who is a legislator/mothers' union member/fathers' union member, are traditional gender roles in marriage today still relevant?
8. What would you consider as the major challenges women face in their attempts to be good wives?

NB. Other questions shall ensue from the conversations that shall unfold with the respondents.

## **B). Interview Guide**

1. Who is an ideal wife/husband today? What are the qualities of an ideal wife or husband?
2. What constitutes a happy marriage relationship to day?
3. What would you consider to be the major cause of marriage breakups today?
4. What should/can be done to ensure harmonious existence between wives and husbands in this wake of conflicting ideologies?