

**Keeping Our Heritage: Identity and Culture Preservation by Urban
Refugees in Uganda**

A Case Study of Somali Refugees in Kisenyi Slum, Kampala

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In the words of the great hymn, I say: To God be the Glory, great things He hath done!

List of Abbreviations

BRYCS	Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Union
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Abstract

Since the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia in the late 1980s, Somalis have taken refuge in countries across Europe, America and Africa. This research focuses on the Somali refugees in Africa, particularly on those living in Uganda. Like many African countries, Somalia's survival and heritage are strongly rooted in the family unit. However, with the civil war, several interruptions to this family harmony have occurred over time. The research therefore argues that the refugee phenomenon has certainly had an impact on the Somali family culture. Hence, the aim of this research is to examine how the Somali refugees (have attempted to) preserve their identity and family culture while away from home, while trying to adapt to the culture of the host nation at the same time. The study examines refugees living in Kampala City, a metropolitan setting with various cultures, cognizant of the fact that each household's family culture may have its own uniqueness. Nevertheless, all family culture is shaped by the general cultural context and does not just exist in the vacuum or isolation, much as it is also true that all culture is largely influenced by family culture as the smallest unit of any social organisation. This explains why family culture in this dissertation is discussed under the parasol of culture in general putting into perspective the social, economic and political factors. The research also acknowledges that Somalis who are inherently Muslim are trying to adapt to Uganda which is predominantly Christian. It too problematizes the fact that Somalia has more than one family culture with major distinctions between those from the north and south Somalia, much as Uganda has over 54 family cultures and languages based on the various tribes which directly inform culture. These variances contribute greatly in assessing how the Somalis have been able to preserve their culture. Consequently, this study further assesses potential risks and threats to the Somali culture and identity for as long as many Somalis continue to live as displaced

peoples in Uganda. It should be noted that this research bears in mind that cultural integration for the Somalis is inevitable as they cannot completely escape the natural force to be assimilated in the Ugandan identity and culture as a survival mechanism. Rather, the research is interested in the argument that total loss of culture and identity would be dangerous for the Somalis in the long run. This argument is against the background that Somalis are naturally a nomadic people who are unlikely to settle in one country for good. Moreover, as refugees, the ultimate goal by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees is voluntary repatriate back to Somalia in the long run. Basing on this factor, the research is concerned about the future of Somali identity and culture in the event of total acculturation while in Uganda, hence the reason for assessing culture and identity preservation.

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Chapter One: General Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This research seeks to explore how Somali refugees in Uganda have preserved their identity and culture in the face of pressure to adjust to the dictates of the host community environment. It will explore the challenges faced by this group as they aspire to keep their culture undiluted and preserve their identity. While the researcher appreciates the fact that it is not possible for two cultures to live together without any form of cultural integration, the focus of this research is on core aspects of the Somali culture which makes them who they are. The dissertation has five chapters. Chapter one is a general introduction background to the study; statement of the problem; objectives of the study; research questions; significance and justification of the study; definition of key terms; hypothesis; scope of the study and the conceptual framework. Chapter two is the literature review which analyses: 1) the impact of refugee circumstances on family 2) why it is necessary to preserve Somali Culture and identity. Chapter three deals with the research methodology employed. Chapter four which is the main chapter is presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings. It gives a brief background of the traditional Somali family structure before the civil war and analyses how the Somali refugees in Uganda have preserved their culture and identity. Chapter five is the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

1.1 Background of the study

Article I a(2) of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as someone who

“... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having

a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”.

This definition is further broadened to fit the unique context of Africa by Article I (2) of 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa which provides that:

...the term refugee shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

Mushemeza (2007:16) writes that while refugees share several characteristics with other immigrants, they are unique because their movements are ‘involuntary and their status is defined by the provisions of international refugee law and other related humanitarian laws’. Mushemeza’s submission serves to further elaborate on the status of refugees which largely inform international policies on how they are treated by host nations. The background on the status of refugees is necessary in examining the need for refugees to preserve their culture and identity.

When it comes to addressing the refugee challenge, a lot of focus is placed on durable solutions. According to UNHCR (2012), for most refugees, voluntary repatriation is the preferred durable solution and the other next best alternative being local integration or resettlement in a third host country. As the specific time of a refugee’s return to home country is never certain, it is important that they adjust to the dictates of the host country if they are to fit within the host

community. Such adjustment usually includes picking the culture of the host country. Bosswick and Heckman (2006) point out that immigrants can only claim rights and assume positions in their new society if they acquire the core competencies of that culture and society. In this respect, integration refers to an individual's cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change: this is termed as cultural integration or cultural acculturation. While they go on to say cultural integration does not mean giving up one's culture, they fall short of showing how refugees can preserve their culture and at the same time adapt to the expectations of the host nation. This is an area which this research seeks to explore.

Dušan et.al (2012:59) in their research on Serbian refugees observe: "migrations and, generally, all important demographic movements drastically change the social and cultural composition of populations (societies) and thus force us to re-examine the meaning and value of cultural identity and cultural diversity." Furthermore, they note that although the interviewees declared themselves as Serbs when asked about their cultural and ethnic origin and identity, the analysis indicates that the war and exile contributed greatly to the strengthening of ethnic identity which had not been as prominent before. Somalis in Uganda are a close knit community; could this be as a result of war and exile, just as was the case with the Serbs or has this always been their nature?

Bhugra (2004:133) observes:

When individuals migrate from one nation state or culture to another, be it temporary or permanent residence or for economic, political or educational purposes, there is every likelihood that aspects of that individual's cultural and ethnic identity will change. The degree of alteration will be determined by a number of factors – individual, kinship and societal. The changes may be transient, semi-permanent or permanent; some individuals may not undergo any changes in identity at all.

These observations raise the question as to how refugees and immigrants (can possibly) manage to preserve their identity and culture while in the host nation. As Heitritter (1999) notes, it is a very big challenge for refugees to maintain their cultural strength amidst the natural pressure to integrate in the host community. She observes that “uprooted and transplanted refugee families are significantly challenged in their efforts to remain strong families within vastly different cultural environments”. In this regard, Berry (2001) argues that refugees will experience less stress in settling in the host communities if there is a similarity between the two cultures, when they interact extensively with host community and when they are ready to integrate the features of the two cultures. This raises the question of how one can integrate the two cultures without losing or watering down their own culture, especially where the two cultures are very different as is the case with the Somali refugees in Kisenyi and the host community.

Therefore the fundamental question is; Is it really important for Somali refugees to keep their identity? I argue that it is! Refugee status is not supposed to be a permanent condition. If refugees are to return home, as it is hoped, then they should not turn out to be strangers in their own land. This would be the scenario if they stripped off their identity and cultural practices and adapted those of the host country without conscious reservation. How, therefore, are Somali refugees in Uganda able to interact with the host community and (may be) pick up new cultural practices without losing their own culture and identity?

1.2 Problem Statement

While it is not possible to establish exactly when a refugee would return home, what is clear is that voluntary repatriation is the most preferred durable solution (ibid, UNHCR). Returning to one’s home country after years as a refugee may come with a lot of challenges among which is readjusting to fit into the community they have for long been away from. This calls for the

preservation of the cultures of the refugees if they are to fit into their homes once they return. While in a host nation, refugees tend to adapt some of the cultures of the local community so as to fit in the community and take advantage of available opportunities. However, this comes with the risk of watering down the cultural practices of the refugees. How then do Somali refugees manage to adjust to the host community and still be able to preserve their culture and identity which are at the core of their ability to fit back into their communities once repatriated? This research attempts to respond to this question.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Major Objective

The main objective of the study is to investigate how Somali refugees in Kisenyi area of Kampala manage to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i) To examine major cultural differences that exist between the Somali refugees and the host community.
- ii) To assess how the Somalis adjust to fit within the host community.
- iii) To investigate how the Somalis manage to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community.
- iv) To appreciate the social support systems that are available to enable Somali refugees preserve their culture in Uganda.

1.4 Research questions / hypothesis

- i) What major cultural differences exist between the Somali refugees and the host community in Kisenyi?
- ii) How do the Somalis adjust to fit within the host community?

- iii) How do the Somalis manage to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community?
- iv) What social support systems are available to enable Somali refugees preserve their culture?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study encompasses four main areas; the major cultural differences that exist between the Somali refugees and the host community; how the Somalis adjust to fit within the host community; how the Somalis manage to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community; and the social support systems that are available to enable Somali refugees preserve their culture in Uganda.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is important because in the wake of frequent wars which lead to refugee situations, it is necessary to study how refugees are preserving their culture and identity while at the same time trying to adjust to the dictates of the host community. It is hoped that this study will add to the existing knowledge on the subject of refugees and cultural preservation.

1.7 Justification of the Study

Somalis form a significant number of refugees in Uganda for instance compared to those from South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Gianluca (2014) observes that, ‘There is a growing number Somali migrants in Uganda, where a Somali community has existed since colonial times.’ He attributes this to pressure on Somali refugees in Kenya and a more favourable legal framework in Uganda. Citing records from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), he states that in March 2014, a record 41,515 registered Somali refugees were in Uganda. This figure is up from 27,143 Somali refugees registered in by December 2012. This figure, according to the same report from OPM makes Somalis the third

largest group of refugees in Uganda after Congolese and South Sudanese. Such a situation calls for an understanding of how this significant minority group is fitting within the host community without totally being assimilated. This comes on the backdrop of the hope that they will one day return to their country of origin, Somalia

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

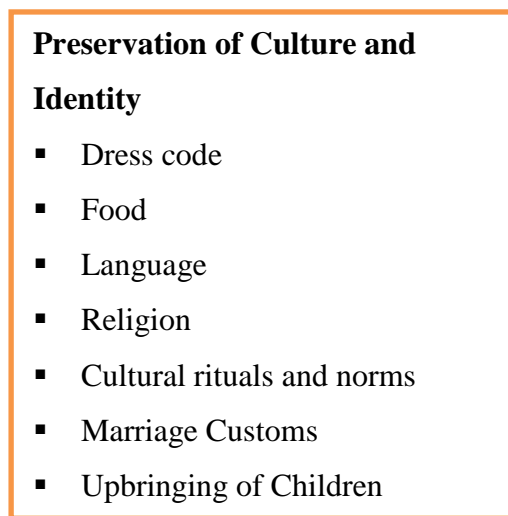
The key terms are; Refugee, Culture and Identity.

- i) **Refugee:** Article Ia(2) of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as someone who “... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”.
- ii) **Culture:** Can be defined as a way of life of a people. It has also been said that a people without culture and identity are a dead people.
- iii) **Identity:** Refers to specific well known elements or characteristics or aspects of life which make an individual or a group of people unique from others. I add that identity is how one is known to other people and/or how one wants to be known by other people.

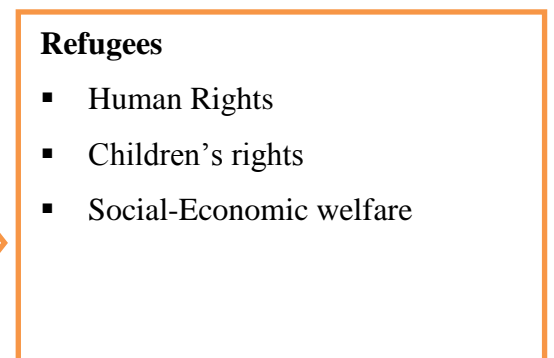
1.9 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework explains the connection between and among concepts that help to understand how refugees preserve culture and identity while at the same time trying to adapt to the culture of the host community.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES



DEPENDENT VARIABLES



INTERVENING VARIABLES

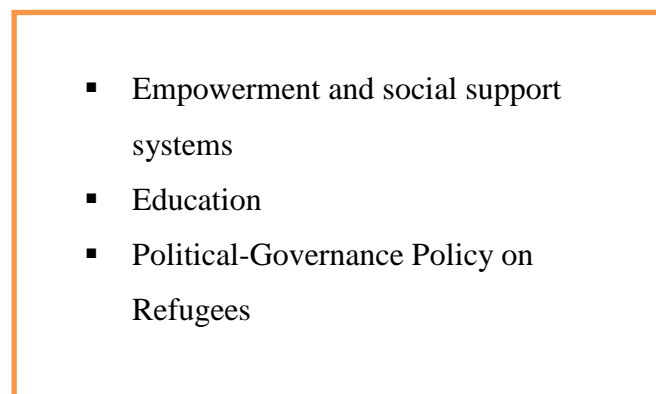


Figure 1: The interlink between refugees and preservation of culture and identity

In view of the conceptual framework above, preservation of culture and identity is concerned with aspects relating to Dress code, Food, Language, Marriage Customs, Family relationships,

Cultural Rituals and norms (child birth, child naming, greeting, burial), Upbringing of Children and Religion. All these aspects are interdependent and altogether form what is known as culture and identity. The dependent variables include human and children's rights and socio-economic welfare of the refugees. These suffice to show that culture and identity must be viewed under the parasol of human rights and the general wellbeing accorded by the refugee act and supported by the host community. Lastly the intervening variables here constitute of the empowerment and social support systems, education and the political-Governance policies of a country which primary underline the guiding principles and course of action for refugees in a given country. In all, the interdependent variables, dependent variables and intervening variables must have a clear interlink for the conceptual framework to be meaningful.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: The theory of identity and culture preservation while adapting to another culture

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on what has been written about the study topic. The literature reviewed is therefore in line with the objectives and research questions of the study. It should be noted that the available literature on this topic is mostly about (Somali) refugees from the USA, Australia and parts of Europe. This posed a challenge for the research because there was not much African-Ugandan experiences to draw from for better and more context sensitive arguments. The theoretical framework for the literature review revolves around the impact of ‘refugeeism’ on Somalis and the significance of preserving culture and identity.

2.1 The Impact of refugee circumstances on Somali culture and identity in Uganda

This section discusses how the civil war impacted the Somali culture as a way of laying foundation for the consequent discussions. According to Bradbury and Healy (2010:10), the Somali conflict ‘mutated from a civil war in the 1980s, through state collapse, clan factionalism and “warlordism” in the 1990s, to a globalized ideological conflict in the first [and second] decade of the new millennium’. Bradbury and Healy further write that significantly, Somalia, especially in the second decade of the new millennium has become a face of terror by being a constant target of terrorists, as well as an ardent ‘ambassador’ of terror mainly because of its Islamic culture. They argue that the mutations in the nature of the war have not only made it difficult for Somalia to build peace, but have also significantly led to enormous internal and external displacements. Today, Somali refugees can be found in far and near more peaceful countries in Europe America and Africa, particularly in Uganda.

This research is interested in how the externally displaced Somalis could be suffering from an identity and cultural crisis following the war. The research examines the efforts made by the

Somalis to preserve this culture by upholding its values in an extra-ordinary situation in the time scope of over twenty years since the first major migration of Somalis following the start of the civil war.

Bradbury and Healy (2010), further point out that Somalia experienced a clan war and famine from 1991-92, a period Somalis described as ‘burbur’ (catastrophe). This period is known to have been torn apart by clan-based warfare and factions when they plundered the remnants of the state and fought to control urban and rural assets. In only four months of fighting in Mogadishu from December 1991 to March 1992, an estimated 2 million people were internally displaced, 25,000 were killed, while 1.5 fled the country.

From such history, therefore, it is possible that there are Somali refugees who have lived in Uganda for twenty four years, much as there are those who moved in the 2000s. In whichever case, the question is whether they have managed to preserve their family culture and how. Basing on the said history, it is imperative to note that cultural and identity harmony got serious interruptions even before Somalis fled their country to Uganda. While discussing views by respondents in chapter four, I purposefully mention the length of stay of each interviewee to satisfy this curiosity.

The article, ‘The Impact of War on the Family’ whose principle researcher is Cabdi (2002), points out three angles from which to assess how the Somali war has impacted on culture and identity; the socio-economic effect; the changing values, roles and relationships within the family; and the social support systems for the post-war family [in Uganda]. I too, consider these as important aspects in understanding change and continuity in the culture and identity of Somali refugees in Uganda ideologically, physically and emotionally. It should also be noted

that there was/is more than one culture and identity in Somalia much as there are over 54 tribes in Uganda each with its own unique culture and identity, although some may be closely related, a situation which makes adapting to and preserving of Somali heritage even more complex in a Ugandan setting as the refugees in Kisenyi, an urban setting, are faced with pressure from different local cultures. The most outstanding common factor is that Somalia and Uganda are both patrilineal and patriarchal communities where descent is traced through the male line.

2.2 Why Preserve Culture and Identity?

Culture has generally been defined as a way of life of a people. It has also been argued that a people without culture and identity are a dead people. This means that culture and identity are indeed important aspects of life. In respect to family, culture entails several aspects (independent variables) of which the core ones addressed by this research are; language, food, dress code, child upbringing, marriage customs, cultural rituals, religion and to some extent the art culture in regards to music, dance and drama, even though this research consciously ignores the art culture since it is a topic wide enough to be handled in an entire thesis. On the other hand, identity generally refers to specific well known elements or characteristics or aspects of life which make an individual or a group of people unique from others. I add that identity is how one is known to other people and/or how one wants to be known by other people. Therefore in view of the topic at hand, culture and identity are significant aspects because they are a total sum of how people live and how they are known to others.

Tumusiime (2013) argues that through human history, culture has always been a major source of inspiration. He alludes to the importance of knowing the past in order to shape the present as a way of strengthening and making culture relevant. To support his submission, he quotes an Igbo proverb from Nigeria from Chinua Achebe's novel *There was a country*.

‘A man who does not know where the rain began to beat him cannot say where he dried his body.’ (2013: 175)

Holmes (1989: 6-7) while talking about the need to preserve Somali culture similarly writes,

We all need tangible reminders of the people we have known, the places where we have travelled, the experiences that we have had, in order to remember who we are. ... Any student of Somali Culture knows that the strongest tradition of Somali Culture is the oral tradition, with poetry at the apex. The use of oral history as a means of collecting and preserving the past and present can certainly serve as a method to begin the process... Somali is rich in music, folktales, proverbs, dress, dance... to name a few. The question remains, who will maintain the cultural continuity of Somalia and preserve its legacy for generations to come?

In essence, Tumusiime, Holmes and other people who have argued in this line mean to emphasise that without culture and identity, people may lack a proper sense of direction because they neither have basis nor inspiration to define themselves. That culture is not just in the present, but is clearly drawn from the past and even projected into the future; therefore the past ways of life shape the present much as the present inspires the future, all interdependence in equal measures. In the end, if people lack ‘definition’ in the form of traditions, customs, characteristics and distinctiveness, such people end up discarding and disregarding themselves as they adopt other people’s practices and norms of life, hence forgetting what is truly theirs. In view of these perspectives, Somalis refugees, just like any human beings need to preserve their culture and identity for several reasons as Mushemeza (2007) raises;

- i) It is a way of redressing the injustice brought upon them by the civil war which forced them to flee.
- ii) It is a means of achieving 'natural' empowerment by being an authority in matters that concern them socially.
- iii) It helps them to keep in touch with family relations who are fellow refugees and those at home.
- iv) To live is a fundamental human right and life gains more meaning when people are allowed to be [culture].
- v) In case there is a chance for them to return home, it will be easier for them to fit back into their indigenous societies.

All the five reasons advanced by Mushemeza are not only important but indeed vital because I think that each human being spends all the life trying to be 'something' 'someone' or 'somebody.' I think that this aspiration is principally driven by the desire to achieve some sort of satisfaction as an individual and to eventually acquire acceptance from a group which particularly shares in those values. In the same vein, even when interacting with an individual or a group with different values, one always aspires to be perceived in a certain way. Therefore, when Mushemeza specifically notes that 'to live is a fundamental human right and life gains more meaning when people are allowed to be,' he precisely conveys a concern not only for refugees but for all human beings. Up to this point, Tumusiime, Mushemeza and Holmes have separately put forth strong arguments which when put together come out as a unison rationale for Somali refugees to preserve their culture and identity despite the automatic pressure to fit within the Ugandan setting.

Moreover, as noted earlier on, in looking at the importance of cultural preservation among refugees, it is important to note that the most preferred durable solution is voluntary repatriation. It is hoped that at one time or another, the refugees will return to their home country. Preserving their culture and identity to fit in once back home is therefore an essential need for Somali refugees.

2.3 The Traditional and Post Independence Somali Family Culture

The background about traditional Somali family is important in enabling an understanding of the Somali an authentic family and its role. Focus is put on the post independence family roles since Somalia, like any other African country had its family structure seriously affected by colonialism, the coming of new media and education. Family is a core and could even be classified as an umbrella that shapes culture and identity. Its structure and family relationships of the past and present contribute greatly towards determining what values people carry on and why. Family also shapes social relations which form a society defied by certain characteristics that translate into culture and identity. In essence, all the aspects of interest as mentioned above in the first paragraph of 2.2 ideally stem from the family and cannot be exclusively detached from it. For instance, language, food and dress code habits are mostly cultivated and propagated from the family in a home setting. Ancestors and parents are believed to play a great role in this cultivation and propagation. Similarly, descendants and children are expected to consult and learn from parents and to foster what they learn unto their own children and the forth coming generations. These reasons explain the Somali Family Culture has been given special attention in the literature review.

Somali social organization is generally described as a segmentary lineage system where an individual belongs simultaneously to several echelons of a hierarchical kinship structure: the ‘diya-paying group’, ‘primary lineage’,

‘clan’ and ‘clan family’ (Lewis, 1994). Kinship thus assigns every Somali an identity, which in turn defines relationships with other members of society, rights and obligations, and even personal security (UNICEF, 1998: As read in Cabdi: 2002)

Cabdi goes on to say that the clan-family is the largest unit – often so large that it has little meaning to the individual. Clan and sub-clan groupings, often linked to a geographic area, are typically of greater relevance to political and social dynamics. For the individual, however, the most important level of social organization in Somalia beyond the family is the “diya-paying group,” which is characterized by a common ancestry (*abtirsiinyo*) and may vary in size from several hundreds of members to several thousands.

By being refugees, hence living in a different geographical area and political system, it is clear that there is already an interruption in the relevance of the Somali family. Both the clan and sub-clan groupings have been affected which makes it difficult for kinship to assign an individual a family role. This directly means that the chain of role and value in family is broken. The diya –paying group is another important aspect of the Somali family. This group is a council of male elders who convene meetings to discuss how to maintain law and order in family, divorce, conflict, peace building, and maintaining order. It is the jurisdiction of the divorce and inheritance and compensation. Cabdi also mentions that the nuclear family unit – *qoys* – is the basic unit of pastoral production and the primary building block of Somali society. Later on while discussing the findings in chapter four, the role of the elders and the nuclear family will be handled in greater detail.

		-Except for school readiness, the child’s formal education is the teacher’s entire responsibility
8	Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Observing the five pillars of Islam: the Islamic Creed, the five daily prayers, fasting during Ramadhan, Charitable giving, pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime -As-salam Alaykum (peace be upon you) -Observing Religious holidays 1) Eindh Adha -animal sacrifice 2)Eid Al-Fitr -marks end of Ramadhan 3)Somali National Day –July 1st every year

Table 1: Somali norms

The norms listed above are in line with the arguments raised by Bhugra that, “At an individual level in terms of behaviour, six domains have been identified which can be linked with acculturation. These include language, religion, entertainment, food and shopping habits. Other areas, which may be more difficult to identify and measure, include cognitive styles, behaviour patterns and attitudes.” (Bhugra:134).

This research looks in depth at the norms put forward by both Bhugra and the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsibilities. However, in carrying out the study, the research attempted to look beyond the areas listed above and where it was thought necessary, the findings are captured in the report.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed the methodology employed in the research showing the justification of the choice of method used. The chapter also looks at the research design, area of study, study population, sampling procedures and techniques, data collection methods and quality control. It further deals with data management and processing, data analysis, validity and reliability during the study and measurement of variables, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Design

As Cooper (2012) argues no research is strictly quantitative or qualitative. However, in this study, the researcher used majorly a qualitative approach. The research was based on a case study module. As Payne and Payne (2004:32) argue, case studies are ideal for research with little funding and they further argue that, “It is the limited scale, and manageability, of the case study that is often the real reason that it is chosen as an approach”. Another scholar Rowley (2002:17) says,

Case study research is also good for contemporary events when the relevant behaviour cannot be manipulated. Typically case study research uses a variety of evidence from different sources, such as documents, artefacts, interviews and observation, and this goes beyond the range of sources of evidence that might be available in historical study

The arguments above fit so well within the circumstances of the researcher and for this reason, a case study was chosen as the most ideal research design

3.2 Area of Study

The study was conducted in Kisenyi a suburb of Kampala City in Kampala district. This area was chosen because it has the highest concentration of urban Somali refugees in Kampala. This ensured that the researcher had the opportunity to get first hand views from the target population. Furthermore, being a majorly slum and low cost housing areas with mixture of cultures, it proved to be the best site for the study.

3.3 Study population

A population, according to (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999), is a complete set of individuals, cases or objects sharing some common characteristics from which a study sample is taken for the purpose of data collection. The study population in this study is the Somali community resident in Kisenyi, Kampala district. The researcher chose this group of refugees because they are one of the largest groups of refugees in the country. According to UNHCR (2016) Monthly Refugee Statistics, there a total of 36,510 registered Somali refugees in Uganda as of February 2016. This makes the third largest group after Congolese and South Sudanese. McSheffrey (2014) reports that there approximately 18,000 Somali refugees in Kisenyi. Meaning that about a half of the Somali refugee population is in this study area. If the researcher was to get adequate experience and data on the subject, this was the ideal place.

3.4 Sampling Procedures

The study used the non-random sampling techniques which included purposive sampling and snow-ball sampling techniques. These non-random sampling techniques were chosen because of their suitability for the small study population like the one involved in this research

3.4.1 Sample Size

The total sample size was 28 respondents. These were drawn from different age groups with varying length of stay in Uganda. The researcher was also sensitive to sex with 8 of the respondents being female and 21 male. Much as the researcher would have liked to interview more females, it was challenging as culturally Somali women are hesitant to interact with male strangers.

In choosing the respondents, the following aspects were considered; gender, age, level of education, and the length of stay of each of the refugees in Uganda. In order to understand the gender of the respondents, the researcher recorded their gender and below is the results that were recorded in figure 4.1.

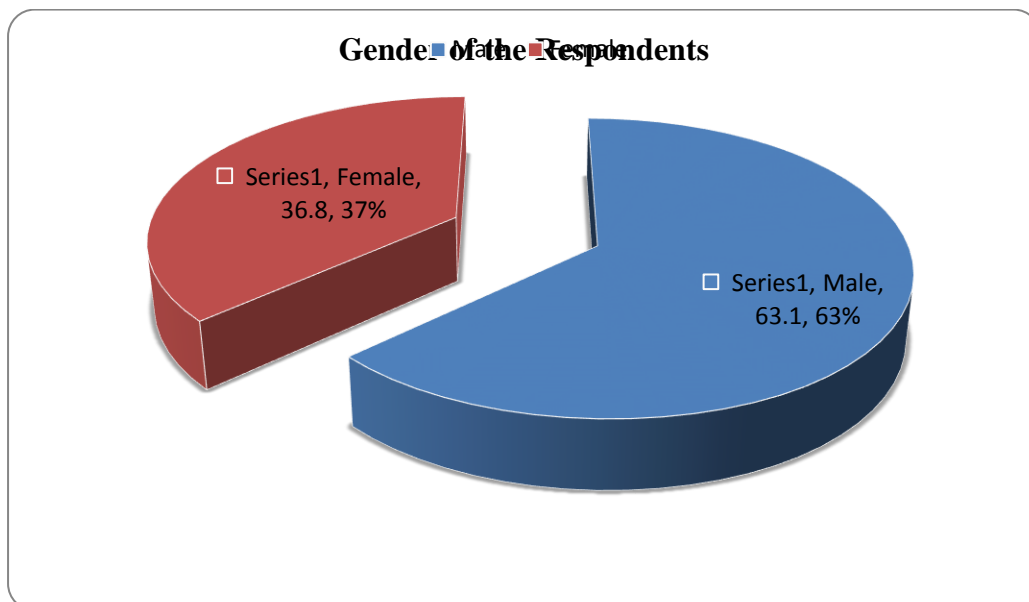


Figure 2: Gender of the respondents

From figure the figure above, it is indicated that the study was conducted mainly from the male respondents who constituted 63%. Females on the other hand, were represented by 37% of the respondents. This directly reveals that no matter the percentage of males and females who participated in the study and given the fact that both males and females participated in the study, the research was gender sensitive. Much as the researcher has hoped to have a balance between the genders, it was rather difficult to get female Somali respondents as culturally, Somali women are not expected to be in the company of male strangers unless they are with close relatives.

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

The study used a purposive sampling technique to get respondents from among the community. The snowball technique was utilized because the target population is close knit and is often hesitant to interact with strangers. The researcher therefore had to use a method which could provide a network of respondents.

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

3.5.1 Data Collection Methods

The researcher primarily used interviews to carry out the study. Kothari (2004) list numerous advantages of the interview method but most notably says, “Interviewer by his own skill can overcome the resistance, if any, of the respondents; the interview method can be made to yield an almost perfect sample of the general population”. Somali refugees live in closely knit communities and are at time suspicious of anyone gathering information from them. However, with interviews, the researcher skilfully engaged them and as such managed to gather enough data. Furthermore, this method was chosen because there was a language barrier between the researcher and the respondents as to most Somali refugees in Uganda English is not a common

language. However, with a mix of Kiswahili and basic English, the researcher was able to carry out the interviews. Interviews was the most ideal method as this enabled the researcher to get firsthand information about how the Somalis are preserving their cultures as well as how they are adapting to the demands of the host community. This methodology also enabled the researcher to gather primary data on the challenges of preserving culture in a foreign land. It was also ideal because it gave the researcher an opportunity to observe the respondents within their local environment.

In addition to interviews, the researcher also used Library research as a method of data collection. This included both physical and online libraries. The libraries proved vital in providing information for purposes of comparison with the researcher's findings.

3.5.3 Interviews

An interview is a form of conversation whereby the interviewer mainly asks the questions and the interviewee answers them in terms of the announced theme or topic of the study (Kvale & Steinar, 2008). The researcher used Interview guides which are sets of short questions which guided the study interviewing processes. The guides were semi-structured and open-ended

3.5.3 Library Research

The researcher also did library research through analyzing purposively selected primary documents that are available about the topic. This literature includes book publications, articles and special group accounts such as NGO, USAID, UN reportages. This methodology enabled me to understand the philosophies 'culture', 'identity' and 'preservation' in view of refugees.

3.6 Quality Control Method

Validity and reliability are the ways by which a researcher measures the quality of a study in terms of their credibility, truthfulness and generalizability. Validity is the level of truthfulness

or credibility of the research data collection instruments or tools; whereas reliability is the measure of consistency of the data collection instruments used in the study (Sarantakos, 1998).

3.6.1 Validity and Reliability

The researcher ensured the credibility of the used data collection instruments through the following means:

- 1) Pre-testing or piloting the data collection instruments; discussed with peers and colleagues, and sought expert advice and opinions of the project supervisor.
- 2) The researcher also sought the expert opinion of the project supervisor to improve on the quality of the research.

3.7 Data Management and Processing

The collected data was organized, processed and analysed by examining, checking, edited the raw data by examining and checking it for accuracy, completeness, suitability and usability. Data was coded by representing categories and values of variables so that responses are converted to forms suitable for analysis; and data was made more manageable by grouping similar responses. In processing the field data, the researcher examined the raw data, presented or recorded the data by transcribing and tabulating it. All this was done basing on the objectives of the study.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to the manipulation of the collected field data in order to determine inherent themes, facts or meanings within them (Sidhu, 2001). In qualitative research, data analysis refers to the processes of segmenting and reassembling of data (Boeije, 2010). In this research, the data was analysed descriptively; following the study objectives.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

The researcher adhered strictly to the ethical principle of voluntary consent as expounded by Neuman (2007) who argues that a person's participation in a research must be voluntary and a participant must not be lied to by the researcher unless it is the only means by which to get information for legitimate a purpose. The researcher introduced himself to each of the participants and explained to them the purpose of the research. Each respondent was assured of confidentiality if they chose to participate in the research. For participants whose names and / or positions appear in the report, it was done with their consent.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of the study was a small sample space. The nature of the target study population is that they are a knit community and tend to be suspicious of outsiders. As a result, some people were approach but showed unwillingness to participate in the research. In addition, some of the participants were not willing to offer details relating to specific questions. This was overcome by having respondents of varying age groups from both sexes and also varying length of stay in Uganda so as to compare their responses.

Time and resource limitations also were a factor. The researcher however, managed to make do with what was available and also conduct the interviews within a few visits.

There is also very limited literature on Somali refugees in Uganda, especially in relation to their culture and interaction with the host community. As a result, the researcher relied on the little available and supplemented it with literature from the US and Europe.

Chapter Four: Preservation of Identity and Culture; Presentation, Analysis and

Discussion of Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents findings of the study which was conducted by responding to the four objectives and research questions. That is to say; the major cultural differences that exist between the Somali refugees and the host community; how the Somalis have adjusted to fit within the host community; how the Somalis have managed to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community; and the social support systems that are available to enable Somali refugees preserve their culture and identity in Uganda. The questions are answered concurrently and simultaneously during the discussion.

4.1 How Somali refugees have preserved their identity and culture in Uganda

This section discusses respondents' views on selected aspects of culture and identity. It draws on the table 1 (2.3) in chapter two to discuss the changes in view of what Somalis view as the norms. During the interviews, it was revealed that many Somalis live in Kisenyi, a Kampala suburb and slum area. It should be noted that Kisenyi was not necessarily a gazetted area for them. They however, settled here for a number of pull factors, including proximity to other Somalis who settled here first. Notable among the people who were interviewed are; Sofia Mire Jimale, the head of Somali Women's Group in Uganda. She is 65 years old and has lived in Uganda for 9 years. The other is Abdallah Mohammed, an Interpreter with the Office of the Prime Minister, Department of Refugees, who has lived in Uganda for 8 years. Yasser Ahmed Dahir is a 68 year old man has lived in Uganda for a period of 12 years. The other is Muna Hassan Hirsh, a 26 year old who has lived here for 7 years.

I also conducted a group interview with three male Somalis; Mohammed Amin a 25 year old who has lived in Uganda for 12 years., Mohammed Sugaal a 32 year old who has also lived in Uganda for 12 years and Abdallah Issa 29 year old who has lived in Uganda for the past 24 years on 10th May 2016. This Group Interview was selected because the members speak fluent English even though they have lived here for varying periods. Particularly, Mohammed Sugaal is a unique case because when he first came to Uganda at the age of twenty; his father had sent him to study Business the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) with much hope that he could also learn English since he argued that it was good for someone to know two languages. Having completed his degree, he got the urge and inspiration to save his family which drove him into going back to Somalia to bring his family except his father. This is an act he talks about with pride and probably considers it as a big achievement on his part.

Even by examining each of the independent variables in a pluralistic manner, it should be noted that this research is cognizant of the fact that each family is unique with household specific cultural practices which are also greatly influenced by the generation. In many cases, depending on the nature of one's family, the research questions were adjusted to attract appropriate responses. (See annex one for the interview questions).

4.1.1. Dress code

The respondents said that the normal dress code has been maintained to a large extent. Mohammed Abdallah however noted that a challenge is being posed by some schools where the female learners are not allowed to cover their heads such as Eagles Nest High School where he studied from, Old Kampala Secondary School and Mengo Senior Secondary School where he has relatives (Interview: May 6 2016, Kisenyi). When asked about why the Somali girls must study in schools which do not enforce their religious practices, Mohammed Sugaal responded that they may remain in such schools because the schools are accessible or because

the family does not mind much about the effect. Abdullah Issa supported Sugaal's argument by pointing out that especially families which have been here for so long or even children born here tend to be more liberal when it comes to dressing. (Group Interview: May 10 2016, Mengo)

Even though he was the youngest respondent, Muna Hassa Hirsh spoke with so much conviction that the strong Islamic tradition has helped maintain the dress code (Interview: May 6 2016, Kisenyi). On the other hand, as the leader of the women, Sofia Mire Jimale regretted that mothers have noted that the younger girls in Uganda are sometimes tempted not to use veils due to influence from the local friends. She said that they may leave home with veils and remove them once out of sight of the Somali Community. She quickly added however, that in such cases, should any Somali who knows them meet them, they will be reminded to always dress appropriately and their parents will be informed too. Parents will then reprimand and or keep advising them on their appearance as Muslim girls. She also revealed that sometimes Somali boys tend to be rough on such 'rebellious' girls (Interview: April 14 2016, Kisenyi).

Cultures that have strong roots in the Qur'an especially Muslims are known to be extremely strict on the physical appearance of females even more than males. It is not surprising that when asked about dress code, all respondents easily talked about how women should dress. Muslim females have also been brought up to be submissive and adherent to the Arabic culture that it is unlikely that they would rebel. No wonder, there are hardly cease of defaulters. However, as Jimale noted that they younger girls are tempted to defy this culture, this is an expected trend in my view. Somalis back home live in closed societies with close ties to clans and under the watch of elders. The case here is however different since the refugees are living in an open society and the family ties may not be that strong. The younger children have an opportunity to see locals, who still appear 'normal' even without veiling and wearing long

skirts. As children, they may explore out of curiosity how it feels to dress this way, or they may simply feel that it is not really necessary to veil throughout because of the influence of a diluted society. Alternatively, they may lose interest in Islamic norms for lack of hope that they may ever return to Somalia.

It was noted that the men's dressing is not different from what is in Uganda. Even then, Mohammed Amin noted that the young men now are a bit fashion sensitive and tend to adopt what is trendy. For example, they now wear tight fitting jeans. In such cases, they turn out to be trend setters when they go back to Somalia

The most influencing factor for change of dress code however I think is the fact that the world is fast changing with modernity, technology and social media taking a toll on all kinds of behaviour. This could partly explain why some Somalis have become less strict about the dress code as quoted above in the interview by Sugaal. In any case, in the post-modern world, Somalis are not the only ones complaining about the change of cultural attitude by the younger generation. Currently, both Christian and Muslim parents in Uganda are crying out loud about 'lost morals' of their Children. Consequently, a ministry of Ethics and Integrity now under the watch of a Catholic Reverend Father Simon Lokodo was instituted in Uganda. In view of this trend, it appears that cultures and especially dress code will continue to be diluted especially in countries such as Uganda where there is liberty of religion as opposed to for instance the Arab countries where the mono religion of Islam dictates what women, men and children wear at any one point.

4.1.2 Food

All respondents put forth that even though Uganda has variety of food, it is still a big challenge for Somalis to adjust to much of the local diet. Particularly, Somalis are accustomed to camel meat which is not the case for Uganda. A camel meat butcher was established in Kisenyi where

one kilogram is sold at 14,000/= They regretted that this is way expensive for instance compared to beef which is sold at 10,000/= per kilogram on average. Mohammed Amin quickly exclaimed that the owner of that butcher makes a lot of money as there is high demand for the camel meat. Moreover, with the high demand, one needs to book in advance as meat is usually finished by 7:00 am on daily basis. Lamb is another Somali delicacy even though the respondents said it can be hardly found in Kisenyi. Abdallah Mohammed regretted saying ‘You see, back home, we are pastoralists, each family owns camels (geel) and sheep (ido) unlike here where we are unable to farm but have to buy all kinds of food’ (Interview: May 6 2016, Kampala) . As such, some Somalis have been forced to resort to beef and goat meat which are readily available and cost effective. However, Somalis have mostly maintained their diet of Spaghetti. Since Uganda is not predominantly muslim, it is certainly difficult for Somalis to enjoy exclusively ‘Islamic delicacies.’ Luckily, because of the Muslim community in Uganda, ‘Halal’ meat products are largely available for Somalis to consume.

As a researcher, I find it significant that someone was able to set up butchery in Kisenyi which deals exclusively in carmel meat. In this way, Somalis are actually fighting for the survival of their traditional diet even while in a host nation. The same can be said of other businesses. In Kisenyi for example, it is not uncommon to find restaurants which are run by Somalis and serve Somali local delicacies. On the face of it, this may seem like any other person trying to eke out a living by engaging in trade. Indeed the trader may as well look at it that way. A deeper analysis in fact shows show that the business is actually helping to promote and preserve the Somali culture rather than as means of economic survival.

It was also noted that Somalis like tea so much and they are accustomed to serving it outdoors and drinking it in union while chatting away about all sorts of things. Abdallah Issa observed that this is a very big contrast with Uganda where meals are usually served indoors. He

concluded that Ugandans are reserved in their food serving and eating culture as it is a rare thing to find a Ugandan family eating in the open as Somalis would do (Group Interview, *ibid*). Hirsh expressed concern about the costly nature of food items in Uganda. He worried that many Somali refugees are struggling to survive since many of them do not have jobs, while others simply have petty jobs which only pay little while others entirely depend on family members and relatives. He observed that this situation may make some Somalis desperate as they try to survive in a harsh economy. Hirsh's submission helps to illuminate how life in Uganda is generally becoming costly, and even made worse by the deteriorating economy in the country. His concern does not only apply to (Somali) refugees but also to Ugandans in general for almost about the last five years, and yet there are no signs that the situation will get any better.

4.1.3 Language

Somalis speak four major languages; Italian because they were colonized by Italy; Arabic because it is the language used in the Qur'an; Swahili because it is spoken at the coast of Kenya and Tanzania, both countries with which Somalia has relationships; English because of the British influence; and Somali which is the indigenous Somalian language. However, of all these, the most commonly used language are Arabic and Somali. It should be noted that the local Somali language has variations as Sugaal revealed thus;

Somalis have dialects and it is very easy to identify where one comes from by their dialects. But that is not a hindrance to our relations. Even my mother speaks a different dialect from we her children. Sometimes when we speak we may use words which she cannot understand.” (Group Interview, *ibid*)

However, generally, Somalis are more concerned about Somali language and Arabic. Even if there are Sunni Muslims in Uganda who may know Arabic, they do not use it in daily life. All the respondents observed that language (Somali and Arabic) is facing the biggest throw back

in preserving Somali culture and identity. Jimale said ‘It is challenging for children to have accurate Somali grammar. This is majorly because many leave for school early and return very late while others are in boarding school.’ Unluckily, Ugandan schools use English which Somalis need to go through school. The Somali community decided to establish Qur’an schools to help teach the language and Islam. One such school is Tawhid Madrasa in Kisenyi. Generally, children are sent to Qur’an schools in their homes of residence.

Yasser Ahmed Dahir who has lived in Uganda for the longest period among the respondents observed with regret that because of local influence, the Somali language has been diluted. ‘Language is one aspect of life must be in daily use in order for it to be meaningful and have value’ he argued (Interview: May 19 2016, Kampala). It is hence understandable that Somalis are concerned about their language since the frequency and extent of its use in Uganda is clearly affected. Moreover, even though English is Uganda’s official language, the common man, especially the one in Kisenyi hardly uses it or even speaks a dialect which is only similar to it since Kisenyi is identified with less educated people. It becomes even more complex because there are over fifty languages in Uganda. Dahir noted that some Somalis have had to forcefully (or by default) learn some Luganda expressions in order to run their daily trade. For Somalis to acquaint themselves with Luganda or any other Ugandan language is rather expected than shocking. After all, even non-Baganda Ugandans have had to acquaint themselves with it in order to run certain businesses in Kampala.

In an article, ‘In danger of losing the Somali language: becoming Minnesotan,’ Andy Wilhide interviewed Abdisalam Adam, a 38 year old first generation American immigrant about the issue of language. Adam is quoted to have said,

Our children who are born here or who are growing up here, are they going to be able to keep this language and continue speaking it? Or are they going

to lose it and assimilate it into the mainstream and forget about Somalian? That was the language they spoke or their parents spoke. Right now, I am worried that when it comes to the Somali language, we seem to be losing it, and we have not done much about preserving it...It does not hurt and it is very beneficial for one to learn another language. So speaking Somali and keeping Somali makes you even more valuable and more of an asset in a global world. If you speak Somali, may be one day you may become U.S ambassador to Somalia a long as you speak both languages and you know both systems. (Wilhide, 2004:2)

Adam, in his submission suggests that Somalis or refugees for that matter should not forsake their language but should instead foster it while learning other languages from host communities. I consider his submission really strong as the approach he proposes can indeed help refugees to keep their identity while also adapting to another environment. This approach also helps refugees to become more confident and indeed relevant in the host communities and back home. This view is also expressed by Bosswick and Heckman (2006) through their observation as captured in the background to this study (1.1) that since it is never clear as to when the refugees will return to their country, it is good for them to learn the culture of the host community which in turn helps them to assume useful positions as much as claim their rights.

The concern over language loss is no different in Uganda. In a Group Interview, Sugaal, one of the participants, observed that,

Somalis born in Uganda are less fluent in the language. This sometimes determines who they relate with. It is part of the reason why many tend to associate more with those who were born here like them or those who have lived here much longer. Somalis have dialects and it is very easy to identify

where one comes from by their dialects. But that is not a hindrance to our relations. Even my mother speaks a different dialect from us. Sometimes when we speak we may use words which she cannot understand. But Somalis who have lived here long sometimes fear to speak with other people. It is like they speak a strange dialect which they are not proud of.

(Group Interview, *ibid*).

Sugaal adds that sometimes Somali young men born here or who have lived here for so long may find challenges in even dating Somali girls for fear of being laughed at because of their poor language.

A key feature of Somali language which is under threat is the extensive use of poetry and storytelling. Adan (2010) points out that; “Somalia has been described as a “nation of poets”. The most famous Somali poet was Seyyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan who was dubbed “mad mullah” by the British colonial administration in the late 1900s. Poetry and prose play great roles in Somali daily life even in this era of globalization where it is used as a means of communication”. This is however, under threat among Somalis in Uganda. In a Group Interview, when asked about the significance of poetry one of the respondents remarked that, “In Uganda now, the elders are not many who have stories. We also don’t visit each other. We just meet in places like we have met here. No one has time for stories”. He concluded with a cynical laugh. (Group interview, *ibid*). The laugh and the respondent’s tone showed me that they are almost resigned to the fact that their language is being eroded.

The gradual disappearance of poetry and storytelling is another threat to the existence of the Somali language among refugees in Uganda. According to the Regional Bilingual Educational Network at New York University (2012), it was not until 1972 that a writing and spelling system was introduced into the Somali language. I find this very significant because earlier

than that, the only form of record keeping was through poetry and storytelling which ensured that information was passed on from one person to another and one generation to another. Of course it is not possible that all Somalis immediately started writing and abandoned the oral tradition. However, as pointed in the group interview mentioned above, the oral tradition is fast being forgotten by the younger generation of Somalis in Uganda.

To further remedy the problem of losing language, Somalis in Uganda insist on using only Somali at home. Dahir also revealed that sometimes, children are sent back to Somalia so that they can live with relatives and master the language. As a researcher, I feel this is just for the time being. The situation may be worse in future when the children now in school become parents themselves. Moreover it still remains a viable solution only in the meantime as its sustainability is questionable. Worse still, when these children return to Somalia, they are referred to as ‘Jews’ by the natives to mean that they are foreigners. This attitude alone may affect the intention of the action in the long run.

4.1.4 Marriage customs

Generally, marriage is arranged as it is initiated by either parents of the boy or girl. In circumstances where an individual makes a choice, the family carefully scrutinizes that choice until they are satisfied fully, otherwise such a marriage cannot be blessed. It is normally preferred that one marries a close family member like a first cousin or at least a clans mate. But it is not prohibited to marry from another clan especially if it is a respected family.

Jimale narrated, ‘Once a bride is identified, the groom’s relatives visit the bride’s family with a present – “soriyo”. Then a date for “nika” will be set when the couple will get married following an Islamic rite. In Somalia soriyo is usually about \$200. In Uganda “soriyo” is 2 million shillings which makes it expensive in Uganda and as a result, marriage may be delayed as the groom’s family struggles to raise funds. Families often support a groom who cannot

raise the amount.' There is normally a seven day feast. The meals are taken care of by the groom. The bride then remains indoors for six days and comes out on the seventh to receive more gifts from her suitor and jewellery and clothes from especially female friends and relatives. Because households are generally unfavourable in Kisenyi, only a small feast is done at home, while the rest is taken to the Mosque for communal celebration with the support of the religious leaders and the community. Ideally, this event would be completed from home.

When asked why close relatives are encouraged, Sugaal responded that it is good because it keeps the marriage strong. They believe that one cannot easily separate because both families will easily intervene when there is a problem. Abdallah added that if for instance one married his mother's niece, his mother would be knowing both the bride and groom and so would know how to guide them. Even though most of these marriages are arranged, sometimes a boy can object to an arranged marriage. Sugaal put forth,

“But it is not common to reject a girl chosen for you because if you do, your father will have to look for another husband for that girl from your close relatives. For example, when I rejected a girl chosen by my mother, my brother had to marry her.”

Regarding what would happen if no other husband is identified Abdallah quickly replied saying,

“that is terrible. It is a shame because the moment your father or mother approaches a family for their daughter, the whole village will know. So if you don't get for her a man, it's a shame and the whole village will dislike you. No one will allow you to marry their daughter. We have never witnessed such a scenario but we know that this is what would happen”

(Group Interview, *ibid*)

It was pointed out in the group interview that even though it is normally preferred that one marries a close family member like a first cousin or at least a clan-mate, it is not prohibited to marry from another clan especially if it is a respected family. Asked why close relatives are encouraged, Sugaal responds: “it is good because it keeps the marriage strong. You cannot easily separate because both families will easily intervene when there is a problem”. Abdallah adds: If you marry your mum’s niece, she will know both of you well and will always guide you.”

There is however, a growing tendency among Somalis in Uganda to choose their own brides as opposed to arranged marriages. In the group interview the participants observed that in Uganda arranged marriages are now not very common as many families are separated. But still some families arrange for brides to be brought in from Somalia. But more young men now prefer to identify their own brides and often the family will approve. One of the participants in the group interview observed that Somali marriages in Uganda are less expensive because in Somalia families ask for high bride price. “A family says, our family is used to so much so you cannot give us less. You cannot take our girl cheaply. But in Uganda most men identify their own brides. If the girl loves you, he will negotiate for you bride price. So arranged marriages are more expensive.” (Group Interview, *ibid*).

When asked about intermarriages, Mohamed sternly responded, ‘That cannot happen.’ Generally, Somalis like to marry among themselves such that cases of intermarriage are very rare or even unheard of. Jimale narrated that in 2002 she witnessed a case of a Somali girl who eloped with a Ugandan Christian man who took her to his village. She added that the community believed this to be a case of witchcraft because the girl initially hated this man so much. He was a blacksmith in Kisenyi near the girl’s home. The marriage did not end well as they separated after two years. The man eventually followed up the girl and murdered her.

Jimale also told of another scenario in 2014, when an Eritrean man married a Somali man. Luckily both were Muslim and had met as students at Kampala International University (KIU). Their parents blessed the marriage. From these two scenarios, it seems as though even being Muslim is not just enough to marry or get married to a Somali. Of course it is even worse when one is not a Muslim. I think that Somalis are still so much conservative because they have not opened up to the local community. However, the two cases pointed out above, show that with time, there may be more cases of intermarriages. This is a view shared by Looker (2014) in an article which appeared in hiiraan.com an online newspaper with a special focus on Somalia article

From the outset there appears to be a reluctance from the Somali community to fully embrace mixed marriage as normal. This may stem from a range of factors, such as concerns of cultural and religious traditions being watered down and even lost. On speaking to a Somali man aged 24 from Birmingham who has lived in the UK for most of his life said, “I am free to choose whoever I want to marry, marriage is a huge thing. For myself though I like to feel that I am preserving my culture through speaking Somali for example and passing this onto my children.” (internet source: hiiraan.com)

This is however, still a very sensitive issue. In response to the above article, a reader, Jake Abdallah posted the following response on the web page, “.... The idea that mix- race marriage should be something to be celebrated or encouraged when all data and statistic show otherwise (higher rate for divorce, confused kids,, higher rate of isolation etc.) also makes me question the reason for the author to write this propaganda piece....”

The above reaction if taken together with the case of a failed marriage between a Somali and a Uganda man pointed out above by Jimale, shows that many Somalis believe that mixed marriages cannot be sustained. However, it is clear that a number of the younger generation

are ready to try it out. I believe with time, more cases of mixed marriages will inevitably appear between Somalis and the host community. This will majorly stem from the fact that the younger generation will be more flexible due to influence and wider interaction with the host community. This view is shared by the group of young Somalis whom I engaged in a Group Interview. Unlike Sofia who pointed out just one case of intermarriage, the group mentioned quite a few cases. However, they were quick to point out that in all such cases, at least the marriage was between Muslims. One of the participants, Amin says “ In 2013 my uncle who is about 60 married a Ugandan girl” he quickly adds “but she’s a Muslim. They now have two kids.” Asked what the family response was he says “They were not happy at first but they are now used to it. My uncle says Ugandan women appreciate even when you give them little, not like Somali women.”

Abdallah adds that there is another case of an older man who is married to a Ugandan woman. In this case the man has another wife back home but sometimes both families are here and they live happily. Asked why it seems as though it is the older men marrying Ugandans, Amin replies: “The old men don’t care what people say. They do their things even if you talk.” Sugaal adds with a cheeky laugh, “Young men also fear parents and elders but the old men are the elders”.

The group observed that in all cases that they have seen, the marriages are to Muslim girls. The Qur’an does not prohibit marrying from different tribes but encourages marrying fellow Muslim. They have not seen a case of a Somali girl marrying a non-Somali. Amin noted that another factor responsible for cross-cultural marriages may, surprisingly have to do with language. He said, “Some Young Somalis born here are not fluent in Somali but know very good Luganda so they fear to talk to Somali girls because they think they may be laughed at.

As a result, they may end up dating Ugandan girls. Generally, Somalis born here are more liberal.” (Group Interview , *ibid*).

One can see that the Somalis have tried so much to stick to the Islamic teachings relating to marriage. However, there is an evident dilution of the marriage practices if taken from the cultural as opposed to religious perspective. More and more families are becoming tolerant to cross-cultural marriages and more young Somalis in Uganda, for different reasons, prefer to choose their own spouses as opposed to arranged marriages. This is not helped by the fact that even elders in Uganda can now be seen taking on new wives from within the host community. It remains to be seen how much the marriage practices will survive in the face of continued pressure from the community around.

Problematic marriages are normally sorted by the intervention of parents and elders. If a man has a problem with the woman, he tells her mother who will then counsel the woman. If the problem is with the man, the man will also be counseled. If the elders like the woman, they can even tell the man that “you cannot send the woman away, if you want, you can marry another woman, but this woman will remain here with us” said Dahir. (Interview, *Ibid*)

4.1.5 Family relationships

One thing that cuts across is that they are a close-knit unit –nuclear family-extended family-clan. Even those who are not here try to stay in touch through social media such as Facebook, including those who are abroad such as in the USA sometimes rent maybe paid by that kind of person. There is strong support in terms of sharing foodstuffs, sharing accommodation (renting a big house). Because of this practice Dahir revealed that local people think that Somalis have a lot of money, yet the reality is that families just try to be supportive of each other. Dahir further observed that Ugandan children are more respectful towards elders compared to Somali children even though they are brought up under strict Islamic values.

In Somalia they live only within their clans unlike the situation in Uganda where circumstances dictate that they live with non-clan mates. Most respondents said, although they have Ugandan friends, they have not or rarely visited their homes and neither do Somali homes receive Ugandan visitors. All respondents revealed that conflicts in Somali community are quite common. When asked about the common causes of conflict, the respondents said that in Somalia it is just an issue of superiority complex. One clan feels it is more important and wealthier than the other and at a larger level it is due to power struggles. The other common causes of conflict are disagreement on business matters. ‘You see Somalis don’t write contracts. We just talk and agree. So when we disagree later, it becomes a big problem’ narrated Sugaal. Asked if they have any particular case they can point out, Sugaal mentioned a case in 2014 where an employee who had worked in another Somali’s company for so long was sacked and he demanded to be compensated although they had no contract.

As revealed by both Sugaal and Amin, Somalis don’t like courts of law, therefore cases are usually settled by elders. There is also a problem since there are few elders who should ideally be settling the conflicts. Moreover, elders and people who have lived in Uganda for too long tend to prefer civil courts. For example, in the case of the employer and employee, the two men went to elders of a family which has lived here for decades and were advised to get for you two ‘good lawyers’ and you go to court. But they refused and still went to an elder who ruled that the employee had to be compensated a given sum of money. And the case was settled.” Can an elders’s ruling be rejected? “No one disobeys an elder.” Sugaal emphasised, ‘Even if our parents are far away, just one short phone call is enough to make you change your plan. You don’t argue with an elder.’ (Group Interview, *ibid*)

Amin quickly explained however saying;

‘In some cases, because elders are not many, we settle our differences like the elders would do. For example, last week one of us started a fight when we were playing football. We later sat like elders would do and he apologized. We also fined him – he had to buy water for every player during the next training day. We also banned him for two matches.’”

To support all the above submissions, Dahir who is regarded as an elder said that in Uganda, they try to minimize such conflicts which stem from differences in clans for fear of the Ugandan law since they do not want to go to police for fighting. He however noted that lately, some such cases tend to crop up among children in Kisenyi. Once that happens, parents come in to address the situation and advise the children. Conflicts are usually handled and resolved by elders. In very rare cases do the parties reject the position of the elders and have to resort to police to settle their differences.

As a result of having lived here for a considerable amount of time Sugaal observed that some Somalis have now become very reserved and even spend a lot of time watching television or on their phones yet in Somalis, people chat a lot. He further observed that when relatives meet, some of them remark as such: ‘You man, you have changed a lot. Uganda has changed you.’ This can also be seen through how the greeting culture has changed for instance from the traditional ‘Nabad mayirtaa? (Is there peace?) to a simple ‘hullo’ or ‘hi.’

It was also noted that the main form of entertainment in Somalia is visiting relatives. During such visits, children spend time playing. This is usually on Fridays. On such days, elders also tell children many stories and poems. Children always return to their homes with new stories. However, since there are not many elders in Uganda, there are even less visits and even less stories.

4.1.6 Cultural Rituals and Norms

4.1.6.1 Naming of children

Normally child naming is a community affair. The whole house hold gets involved in deciding what name to give the child. One respondent narrated with amazement how one time they had to pick lots to determine who would give a name to his brother's son. Here, sometimes parents automatically give names to their children since they do not have full families as would be the case in Somalia. They however, maintain the Somali practice of giving three names with the first name being the given name, the middle name being the baby's father's name and the last name being the grand father's name. In other words, the middle and the last name come automatically. This method of name, in my opinion, helps to maintain the identity and trace the lineage of a person. So much as there may be cases where in Kisenyi where parents alone give names, the culture of name order is still well maintained. For instance, every first born male is called 'Mohammed' and this norm has been maintained.

4.1.6.2 Death and burial

Somalis being Muslims, burial is strictly as per the Islamic prescription. It is easy in Uganda because Ugandan Muslims are predominantly of the Suuni sect, as are the Somali Muslims. The dead within Kampala are buried at Kololo Muslim cemetery. However, one respondent observed that unlike in Somalia, there are no families here which have clan or family burial grounds. Death, just like most other aspects of Somali culture, is a communal affair. If a person dies, the community will come together and offer support, including financial, to the bereaved family to ensure that the deceased is given a befitting send off.

4.1.7 Upbringing of Children

In traditional Somali society, extended families helped in child upbringing and children were taught at an early age to regard elders. Respect for elder is therefore a value to pass on to children. Jad Tameen Yasin a 34 year old respondent expressed worry that future generations of Somali refugee parents will unfortunately not experience the sense of belonging and togetherness since they will not grow up in a genuinely concerned homely environment. He said:

I have lived here for close to nine years with my brother's family. I appreciate the effort by him and his wife to bring up children with good values. But deep down I know that this cannot be achieved because the context does not favour it. I have seen my brother tell his seven year old daughter to respect older people time and again. One time his daughter asked him 'why?' (Interview, 13 February 2016, Kampala).

During the interview, the 'why' was followed by a cynical laughter. It could be interpreted as an exclamation about the 'disrespect' that could be seen through the little girl's question. It could also be interpreted an expression of the girl's lack of understanding for a constant reminder of elders whose significance she seems not to notice. In my view, Yasin is right to argue that the context is not right for a child to understand the importance of extended family and elders. A context is an experience and not just a theoretical issue. I think that this is a major setback for Somali parents who are trying to enforce Somali values to children living in a completely different setting.

Regarding the discipline and cultural protection, children are expected to follow Somali culture even though they are lately copying habits like drinking from the community around. In such cases, parents and elders come in to discipline the offender. Children who fail to conform are usually sent back to live with relatives in Somalia. This is the decision of the elders council

and the parent will always support it. In such cases, transport back to Somalia is usually raised by the community.. Children are generally brought up under strict Muslim schools where Qur'an schools are preferred until about the age of 7 years. As a research, I feel the option to send back children to Somalia may at times not be very ideal in circumstances where the security situation back home makes it very risky. When I raised this with Jamale, she said "Somalia is still home. People stay there. And children also fear to go Somalia so they will behave well. This is another complex scenario when children have to be sent back to Somalia to be taught certain values and then return to Uganda. Is it effective? Do children appreciate its essence? Is it sustainable? Can children transfer what they learn from a closed setting in Somalia, to an open society, moreover a slum in Kisenyi? How much time do they need to unlearn what they have learnt from Kisenyi in a short period of time spent in Somalia? Can cultural learning happen in such fragments?

4.1.8 Religion

The respondents said that they have easily managed to maintain their religion because there are Suuni Muslims in Uganda who ardently practice all the religious rituals including celebrating Islamic holidays. Mosques are common and very accessible. They said that sharing community with non- Muslims has so far not had serious effects on them. The Somalis who live in Kisenyi are advantaged because it is in close proximity to Old Kampala Mosque and other mosques within cosmopolitan Kampala where they can easily commune for prayers. The Somali community in Kisenyi have gone ahead to raise funds and put up a community mosque. As a researcher, I think that this is another aspect which will certainly be affected with time especially considering the fact that there is a generation of children born here particularly in Kisenyi which is a mixture of both Christians and Muslims. This is not helped by the fact that most children go to inter denominational schools.

During the group interview, Mohammed Amin reported that for the time he has lived in Uganda, he knows of one case where a Somali converted to Christianity. It was said that the man had a disagreement with his family which prompted him to totally cut off communication with family and even change his religion. The reason for the disagreement was not known to Amin (Group Interview , ibid). Considering that Somalis are known to be staunch Islam believers, it is indeed shocking that a Somali, and moreover a man could contemplate converting to Christianity. Since the cause of the disagreement in this case is unknown, one can only speculate that it was so serious. As mentioned earlier that culture largely stems from family upbringing, this scenario suffices to explain that detachment from family could as well mean detaching oneself from other cultural norms such as religion. I would like to think that this man also changed his eating habits and certainly the dress code. Probably, he will never return to Somalia as it is seen that he cut off communication totally with his family.

I would like to think that it would be equally shocking to learn that a Ugandan Muslim, especially a man has converted from Islam to Christianity. It is as well a rare occurrence which would attract more interest and publicity as compared to a Christian converting to Islam. Through history and socio-cultural knowledge, Muslims are known to be extremely attached to their belief that it is almost impossible for them to have second thoughts about their religion. However, in the 21st century where modernity is gruesomely taking shape, I have learnt from media reports that women Muslims easily convert especially when they decide to get married to Christian men and not the reverse. This has been shown on wedding and introduction programmes on television where couples decide to televise their marriage ceremonies. All in all, religion still remains the strongest factor which the Somali refugees have managed to preserve about their culture and identity.

4.2 Empowerment and Social support systems for Somali immigrants in Uganda

4.2.1 Social support systems in Uganda

Horst (2006) suggests three types of connections which are important forms of social support to immigrants; material assistance, information exchanges and migration processes (Horst, 2006: 1). This section seeks to examine how the government of Uganda and other bodies support refugees. It asks the following questions; what are the livelihood opportunities available? Can Somalis easily access well paying jobs –work permits? Are there Government arrangements for Somalis to engage in social-cultural engagements and dialogues? This section also hinges more on Cabdi's (2002) argument mentioned earlier where he proposes four angles from which to view the empowerment notion; the socio-economic aspect; the changing values, roles and relationships within the family; and the social support systems for the post-war family [in Uganda]. The following systems have been selected for discussion under this section; education, cultural (artistic) engagements and leadership structures. These will help to examine the extent of the social support system in Uganda.

The Ugandan Refugee Act (2006) is acclaimed for being very supportive of refugees in four major aspects as provided for in the act as such: Reunion of Families of Recognised Refugees; Rights of Refugees in Uganda; Right to a travel document; Rights of refugee children; Naturalization of refugees. All the four provisos allow refugees to live as normal human beings without restrictions which would otherwise infringe on the rights and freedoms of both adults and children. With such provisions, a refugee still has the liberty to live as a liberated human being except for the fact that he or she would be away from the better known home setting.

This act has been regarded as being better than that of Kenya because it for instance allows them to work freely for instance compared to Kenya where until recently they could only live

in camps. In Uganda they are settled in gazetted refugee settlements like Nakivale where they are allocated pieces of land and are free to engage in agriculture and trade. For those who opt for “self resettlement”, they are free to live in any part of the country. This is the case with the Somali refugees who opted to settle within Kampala. Just like Ugandans, refugee children are protected by the Children’s Act. For most cases, refugees enjoy the same privileges as Ugandans do. These include access to the justice system, education and equal employment opportunities within the law. Here is a table illustrating the Uganda Refugee Act and its provisions to refugees such as the Somalis;

Section	Provision
Section 27	<p>Reunion of Families of recognised Refugees</p> <p>This provides that a recognised refugee may apply to the Refugee Eligibility Committee for permission for a member of his or her family to enter and reside in Uganda for purposes of reunion.</p>
Section 29	<p>Rights of Refugees in Uganda</p> <p>This section grants refugee rights which are for most part the same as those enjoyed by citizens e.g right to practice their profession if they are qualified, right to employment, access to same education as Ugandans receive, access to courts of law and legal assistance where applicable under the laws of Uganda, etc.</p>

Section 31	Right to a travel document This provides that a refugee will be granted a travel document for purpose of travel outside Uganda.
Section 32	Rights of refugee children Grants same rights as enjoyed by Uganda children. They too are protected by the Uganda Children's Act.
Section 45	Naturalization of refugees This section provides that refugees can acquire citizenship through naturalization

Table 2: The Uganda Refugee Act (2006)

During the group interview, Mohammed Sugaal said with fondness;

...it is easier to live in Uganda than in Kenya. In Uganda no one even asks you for your identity card. We move very freely. Last evening [May 9th 2016] we travelled from West Nile without even a road block. If you don't cause trouble in Uganda, no one will bother you. But Kenya...Oooh! Every police man stops you if you look like a Somali.

The other two discussants quickly agreed with him and it was vivid on their faces that they would rather live in Uganda than anywhere else especially in Kenya for that matter. I observed that there was a sigh of relief in their voices when they talked about Uganda while there was a moment of tension at the prospect of living in Kenya. When asked whether they have lived in Kenya before to be able to draw such a conclusion, they all said that they have heard stories from fellow Somalis, they have relatives there, but mostly, they travel to Kenya once in a while to shop items for their businesses. At least each one of them has been to Kenya more than four times.

However, Abdallah Issa noted with regret that there is a bit of change in Uganda now. This is about the change of attitude from some Ugandans towards the Somalis. He recounted that while many Ugandans were generally not bothered about Somalis in 2004, because of terrorism attacks in the recent about seven years, Uganda Police is now more conscious and routinely stops Somalis anywhere at any time. ‘If you have lost your identification or even left it home sometimes policemen ask for money otherwise they take you in [prison]. It has now become a money making venture by the Uganda Police’ said Abdallah (group interview, *ibid*).

Generally, the three discussants agreed that their worst experiences always happen at the border posts such as Uganda-Kenya in Busia district in Eastern Uganda. They recounted that a Somali will always be pulled aside even when one has the right papers. At this point Amin interjected “Even if you have an American passport but you Somali, you will be pulled aside at the airport or border.” Sugaal quickly supported this submission by adding in an emphatic tone, ‘Somalis are the only people in the world who don’t need passports because everyone knows you by your look. And even if you have a passport, you will be called aside and all people you travelled with will go freely’ (Group Interview, *ibid*). At this point, they all laughed sarcastically.

A careful consideration of these three men’s travel experiences coupled with the sarcastic laughter, help to illuminate the fact that Somalis are now conscious of who they are especially in the wake of constant terror attacks across the globe. Even though I did not ask them their thoughts about the claim that Somalis are serious agents of terror attacks including suicide bombing, it seemed obvious to me that they are aware that some Somalis are indeed engaged in these acts but also that it is not fair for all of them to be considered terror agents wherever they go. Their fear is clear and understandable. While I am also guilty of generalization about Somalis subscription to terrorism, I am aware that it is not just until any one individual has

been proven guilty. This I think is the attitude that many Ugandans and people worldwide could be having towards the Somalis, hence the reason for Somalis to worry.

In view of Section (45) of The Refugee Act (2006) which provides that refugees can be naturalized as citizens by virtue of having lived in Uganda, the group interview unearthed revelations which showed that indeed some Somalis have become so much a part of the Ugandan community that they have made observations to prove this. When asked about what they do not like about the Ugandan culture, Abdallah pondered just a little before he said, “The way thieves are treated here. Why should they be beaten badly like that? It is so terrible to punish like that. Take him to police.” In Somalia, it is easier to just shoot you without first punishing [torturing] you.”

Sugaal on the other hand said that he hates the fact that in Uganda people tend to ignore others. “When I was at the university, I went to an administrator’s office and he just kept busy on his computer (imitates) without even looking up. So I ask, if I may take a seat. He answers with a groan ‘huuh’. I then explain my case while he kept typing. When he looked up he told me to return another day yet I had lined up for long to meet him.’ He added, ‘A Somali cannot do that! As soon as you come in I will welcome you and listen to you. If I cannot sort your problem, I will tell you there and then without telling you to come back. In Uganda even one can be done in five minutes by checking records in a computer, you will be asked to come back another day.’

Amin points out with passion in a very emphatic tone as he said, “I hate the practice of charging us highly. One day I went to Owino to buy football boots. The person I found there bought the boots at 80,000/= but when it was my turn, the shop keeper told me 150,000/=. When I insisted to buy it at the same price, he told me to leave his shop.” Abdallah add “Even houses. If you

are a Somali, you will be charged very high rent. But why do they do that?” He asked with disgust.

They also mused about the practice of Baganda before the Kabaka, something they find so interesting as it elevates a mere human being into a supernatural being, saying that such is unheard of in Somalia. The discussants also pointed out what they like about the Ugandan culture including that Ugandans are not big spenders; they are very patient; they patiently line up for a long time to get a service, a practice Somalis would not stand; they are very hardworking as opposed to Somalis who may not be very hard working but know how to find ‘their way and get things easily done’ and are creative.’ Such examples therefore suffice to show that the Uganda Refugee Act gives foreigners and refugees so much liberty to become a part of the host community, a thing which is good for the refugees social growth and which enables them to remain active participants in their daily life.

4.2.2 Social Leadership structures

Every Somali clan has a head who is respected. He is called Amir and the position is hereditary. They also have elders called Odaya (The Council of Elders). To be considered an elder one has to be 60 years and above. In the event that a conflict breaks out, the elders solve cases and advise the community accordingly. There is however, a problem as some clans have few elders in Uganda, but this is remedied by the all elders working together regardless of their clans. All the respondents argued that the Odaya is strong influence such that elders can come from all over Kampala to Kisenyi for an elders meeting. Elders pass sentences which are never contested. These are in form of cash or real compensation to repair the caused damage. It is only when parties fail to listen to the elders that they involve the police. But this is very rare. The significance of this institution was well discussed by the participants in the Group Interview. When asked how Somalis settle their conflicts, Sugaal, said:

“Somali’s don’t like courts of law so our cases are usually settled by elders. There is however a problem here. We don’t have many elders and also people who have been here for too long tend to prefer civil courts. For example, there was a case where two Somalis disagreed over a business matter, the two men went to elders of a family which has lived here for decades and do you know what one elder told them? ‘Oh so you have a serious case! We shall get for you two good lawyers and you go to court’.

The whole group burst out laughing. This laughter showed me that they all found it ridiculous that an elder should refer them to court instead of settling the issue. Asked if the two men went to court, he replies strongly, “No. they went to the elders. One elder ruled that the guilty party had to compensate the other with a huge sum of money. And the case was settled.” Asked what would happen if the elders’ ruling was rejected Abdallah says “No one disobeys an elder.” Sugaal adds, “Even if our parents are far away, just one short phone call is enough to make you change your plan. You don’t argue with an elder.”

In order to address the shortage of Somali elders in Uganda, Amin recounted “In some cases, because elders are not many, we settle our differences like the elders would do. For example, last week one of us started a fight when we were playing football. We later sat like elders would do and he apologized. We also fined him – he had to buy water for every player during the next training day. We also banned him for two matches” (Group Interview, *ibid*).

It is no doubt that the Elders’ Council is such a key pillar in preserving the Somali Culture. Many of the respondents showed that they cannot do anything contrary to the will and advice of elders. The fear of the wrath of elders is therefore a key ingredient in ensuring that younger generation conforms to the expectations of the Somali community

In order to address the shortage of Somali elders in Uganda, Amin says “In some cases, because elders are not many, we settle our differences like the elders would do. For example, last week one of us started a fight when we were playing football. We later sat like elders would do and he apologized. We also fined him – he had to buy water for every player during the next training day. We also banned him for two matches” (Group Interview, *ibid*). It is no doubt that the Elders’ Council is such a key pillar in preserving the Somali Culture. Many of the respondents showed that they cannot do anything contrary to the will and advice of elders. The fear of the wrath of elders is therefore a key ingredient in ensuring that younger generation conforms to the expectations of the Somali community.

4.2.2.1 The Women’s group and its leadership

In Somalia, there are no Women’s groups and women are normally not leaders. In Uganda however, a women’s group was started because of the prevalence of various problems and so the need to help each other. Many women have no jobs or business but need money, some are widows. This group receives small contributions from members. The money collected is used to help the less privileged like orphans or when someone needs medical help, or in case of death or child birth.

4.2.2.2 Support from the community

Members of the community in Kisenyi usually collected money into a fund to support those in need. The elders decide who should receive the support. Such support may include scholarships and even clothing. (There is no name to the fund.)

4.3. Education

The cost of education in Uganda is much lower than that of Somalia and even Kenya where many other Somalis are living as refugees. So Somalis who come here to study find it cheaper.

“My father sent me to study Business at IUIU because it is cheaper ... He could have sent me to Egypt or even Sudan ...” said Mohammed Sugaal during the group interview. In fact, Uganda currently has a high inflow of foreign students from all over East Africa including Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, The Sudan and South Sudan who are studying here as ordinary people but not as refugees. For instance, Kampala International University located in Kansanga, a Kampala suburb is known to be home to international students from all the mentioned countries and even beyond. This scenario could help to support Sugaal’s submission.

Education, especially for children and youths is important because it helps immigrants to mingle with host children, thereby being able to learn childhood and youth hood cultures, to associate, make friends and even take part in host communal activities. This is one way of easing the adaptation process for immigrants anywhere. Omar (2005:4) writes, ‘Education is crucial for restoring a sense of normalcy and social and emotional healing. It is also an essential component for refugee youths’ rehabilitation, hope, restoration and proper integration into their new countries.’ Ideally, it is from a school setting that any child learns more about culture, language, understands the values and norms of that group of people. This in turn also helps migrant children to stabilize hence contributing to the stability of a migrant family.

Somalis observed that the Ugandan education system is similar to the Ugandan except for the language. They regretted that it is hard to learn good Somali because some children spend time in Boarding schools. Hirsh who went to St. Lawrence and Eagles Nest said Somalis are generally not discriminated against but are referred to as Al shabab, which has since turned into a joke. Parents are also concerned that some schools do not give corporal punishment which he thinks is a problem on the discipline of their children.

For University, they have preferences especially Kampala International University, International University of East Africa and Cavendish University. These universities are

viewed as flexible and within their reach. They have Somali student Unions. There are scholarships for Somali Students by prominent Somali businessmen such as the proprietors of Gateway Bus Company, Mandela Auto Spares –car spare parts and Cafe Javas.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This is the final chapter for this dissertation. It gives a summary of the findings, draws conclusions and makes possible recommendations for subsequent research in view of the foregoing discussions. These aspects are mostly drawn from the qualitative research methods which were used to analyse how Somali refugees have managed to preserve their culture and identity while at the same time trying to adapt to the dictates of the host community in the specific context of Kisenyi, Kampala. The summary, conclusion and recommendations are also made considering the dependent variables raised by the research question. The research objectives form the basis for this chapter. This chapter is also based on Cabdi (2002), as earlier on captured in the literature review (2.1) where he suggests three angles from which to assess how the Somali war has impacted on culture and identity; the socio-economic effect; the changing values, roles and relationships within the family; and the social support systems post-conflict families [in Uganda].

5.1 Summary of Findings

Basing on the research objectives, the following are the findings of this research;

- i) The major cultural differences that exist between the Somali refugees and the host community;**

The research has found that the major cultural differences that exists between the Somali refugees and the host community of Uganda are; variance in language While Somalis use Arabic and Somali, in Kisenyi, the predominant Ugandan language is Luganda as well as English and a bit of Kiswahili. The other difference is in staple foods. While Somalis eat mainly spaghetti or other wheat meals and carmel meat, common Ugandan foods are matoke, posho and beef. It is a big challenge for the Somalis to find their delicacies in Uganda. Another major difference is in terms of clothing. This is especially so for Somali women who are expected to be dressed in clothes that cover feet, arms and heads for as opposed to free style dress code in Uganda with the exception of the minority section of Sunni Muslims in Uganda who dress similarly. As for men, there is not much difference with the Ugandans

ii) How Somalis are adjusting to fit within the host community;

The research has found that Somali refugees in Kisenyi, Kampala are adjusting to fit within the host community mainly by changing attitude from eating only camel meat to eating goat meat and beef, by trying to learn Luganda and English which is the main language spoken by the local Kisenyi dwellers. They have also adjusted from celebrating marriage feasts from homes into mosques and by burying the dead in cemeteries as opposed to home –clan burial grounds since they are unable to transport dead bodies to Somalia, a practice also not encouraged by Islam.

iii) How Somalis have managed to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community;

The research has found that Somali refugees in Kisenyi area of Kampala have managed to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community to a large extent. This is seen through their effort to maintain their dress code, language, food, marriage customs, cultural rituals and norms especially naming of children and burial of the dead, bringing of children and religion. In order to preserve their culture they have learnt to send young children back to Somalia to learn certain aspects of culture which they cannot learn while in the host community. It has been found that language is the aspect which is facing the biggest setback in as far as preserving culture and identity by the Somalis is concerned. This is a challenge which they are trying to fight by setting up their own Madararas to teach their children not only religion, but also language and culture.

iv) The social support systems that are available to enable Somali refugees preserve their culture in Uganda;

The research has also found that social support systems are largely available to enable Somali refugees preserve their culture in Uganda. These include the Uganda Refugee Act (2006), the social leadership structures for Somali in general but also for special groups such as children and women. The other system available is the favourable Ugandan education system which is run in English, a language known and in fact used by a considerable section of the Somali population. Particularly, the research has found that Uganda has a friendly Refugee Act which for instance allows Somali refugees to acquire work permits and work, allows them to travel and host family, to travel outside the country, to freely mingle with the host community and it generally recognizes refugees thereby allowing them their human and children's rights. This is in comparison to Kenya which for instance does not allow such freedoms to refugees but instead limits them to refugee camps, a reason why Kenya is known to have one of the biggest refugee camps worldwide.

5.2 Conclusions

This research concludes that:

- i) Somali refugees in Kisenyi area of Kampala have managed to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community to a big extent regarding dress code, naming of children, marriage customs, religion and family relationships and to a small extent regarding food, language, burial rites and upbringing of children.
- ii) The major cultural difference that exist between the Somali refugees and the host community of Uganda are; variance in language (Somali/Arabic/Italian vs Luganda), different staple foods (Camel meat vs goat meat and beef), clothes that cover feet, arms and heads for females as opposed to free style dress code except for the minority section of Sunni Muslims in Uganda.
- iii) Somali refugees in Kisenyi are adjusting to fit within the host community mainly by changing attitude about food, language, upbringing of children marriage and burial customs.
- iv) That social support systems are available to enable Somali refugees preserve culture in Uganda. These include the Uganda Refugee Act (2006) which is under the direct charge of the Office of the Prime Minister in the Department of Refugees; the social leadership structures for Somali in their general but also for special groups such as children and women and the favourable education system.

- v) Somalis have faced and continue to face challenges especially in regards to language and food cultures; and the inevitable impact of technology and modernity.
- vi) The fact that Somalis have largely been able to preserve their culture in the face of pressure to adjust to the dictates of the host community, is not unique to the Somali community in Uganda. Lambo (2012:7) in a research conducted among Somalis in Kenya observed;

As one walks in and around Eastleigh, it is impossible not to notice that

Somalis in the neighbourhood have managed to preserve their Somali identity both individually and collectively. For example, Somali seemed to be the dominant language on the street and in shops; the style of dress, particular among women was distinctly Somali; and the cafes, hotels and restaurants served Somali food.

Lambo's findings in Eastleigh is not so much different from the situation in Kisenyi. Here too, the researcher could see a distinct "Somali environment" in almost all aspects of life. Just like Lambo's findings in Nairobi, this research found that the unity among Somalis which ensures that they live within the same neighbourhood has greatly contributed to the preservation of Somali Culture in Kisenyi. The Somalis have been able to create an environment where they can freely practice and live their culture.

This strength is further helped by the pride Somalis generally have in being who they are (Somali). Moreover, even Somalis who have lived in Uganda for long or AND those who were born here still identify themselves as Somalis. For example, one of the participants in the Group Interview, a 29 year old young man Abdallah Issa who has lived in Uganda since he was four years, proudly said he was a Somali even when he has lived most of his life in Uganda. He said

with a wide heroic smile, “I even have the Uganda National Identity Card and a voter’s card but I am still a Somali. It is like being a black in America. Your passport may make you an American but you still came from Africa and you are still black” (Group Interview , May 10 2016).

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the above summaries and conclusions, the research makes the following recommendations;

While Somali refugees in Kisenyi area of Kampala have to a large extent managed to preserve their culture and identity, the host community (Government of Uganda) should be even more supportive by educating the locals (Ugandans) about the need to recognize, appreciate and treat Somali refugees more humanly by including them in local projects and orienting them into the local language. Schools can for instance be sensitized about the need to accept Somali female children and youths to veil as part of their dress code.

In terms of investments, this research recommends that the Government of Uganda encourages investors to invest in food items for Somali refugees such as rearing camels and producing camel meat which can then be supplied at a more friendly cost in comparison to the current price. Better yet, incentives should be given to encourage Somalis themselves to invest in this area as a means of sustainable livelihood.

The Office of the Prime Minister dedicates more effort to orient Somali refugees into local lifestyles especially language, household managements and local cuisines to help them adjust to these largely available cuisines. This would in return help the Somalis to reduce the pressure of purchasing costly Somali delicacies since many of them do not have well established jobs for stable income. In addition, this will help the refugees fit better into the host community.

The Government of Uganda encourages fellow governments such as that of Kenya to adjust its Refugee Act to allow more friendly terms such as freedom of movement, work and naturalization within the local community as opposed to being confined into camps for externally displaced peoples generally do not allow refugees to progress socially and economically.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This research has discovered that examining how Somali refugees are preserving culture and identity is not only an important academic endeavour, but also a significant eye opener for social policy on International Relations and Diplomacy regarding refugees by different nations. For instance, this research has revealed that there is very little local content by local researchers on the subject of refugees in Uganda and specifically on Somali refugees. This even explains why most of the literature used in this dissertation is based on Somali refugees in the United States of America and Europe to a small extent. Hence there is need for further local research to be conducted by local people in order to accumulate knowledge on the subject. This research also observes that it is very important for nations to recognize refugees and to give them just treatment since they are victims of circumstances beyond their control. The comparatively better life accorded to refugees in Uganda explains why many Somali refugees leave Kenya to settle in Uganda. The research makes the following suggestions regarding further research on the conceptual framework of preservation of culture and identity of refugees not only in Uganda, but East Africa, Africa and even beyond;

To further study aspects of Somali special groups such as children, youths, men and women by assessing their needs and aspirations as refugees. This is especially so because each of these interest groups may have unique attributes and needs;

To investigate why and how Somali refugees mainly settled in Kisenyi, a notorious Kampala City suburb and the impact of this occurrence on both the locals and the refugees themselves.

To make a comparative investigation of refugee lives in camps as opposed to living with local people as is the case with urban refugees. The investigation should also be broadened to compare refugee Camps and Refugee Settlements - this thesis would for instance compare Kenya (camps) and Uganda (settlements).

To further study how other refugees such as those from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo are preserving their culture and identity compared in comparison to the Somalis.

Finally, to further assess the attitudes of the host community (Uganda) towards different nationalities of refugees. That is to say; Rwandese, Eritreans, the Sudanese, Burundi, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalis, and any other.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

- i) What are the major cultural differences that exist between the Somali refugees and the host community?
- ii) How do the Somalis adjust to fit within the host community?
- iii) How do the Somalis manage to preserve their culture in the face of pressure from the host community?
- iv) What social support systems are available to enable Somali refugees preserve their culture?
- v) What are the significant highlights about the Somali language?
- vi) How convenient is it for you to access mosques?
- vii) How do they relate with Ugandan Muslims?
- viii) Where do you buy camel meat from?
- ix) Do you ever return home to Somalia? How often? Why?
- x) What aspects of the Ugandan culture do you like or dislike?
- xi) What has been the easiest Ugandan culture for you to adapt to?
- xii) What do you do about problematic marriages such as those tending towards separation or divorce?
- xiii) Do you know of any underage Somali marriages in Uganda?

N.B; Questions i, ii, iii and iv were also asked in view of the following specific elements depending on the reception by the respondent.

1. Dress code
2. Food

3. Language
4. Marriage customs
5. Family relationships
6. Cultural Rituals and Norms
7. Upbringing of Children
8. Religion

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