

**AN ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS TO WITCHCRAFT  
AS A COMMON PRACTICE IN MUKONO CENTRAL DIVISION**

**A RESEARCH THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS OF A MASTER'S DEGREE IN HUMAN RIGHTS**



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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and to all those people fighting for the human right to life by denouncing harmful witchcraft practices and upholding what is right in the eyes of God and society.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>APPROVAL .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Background of the Study .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1.1 Individual perceptions of Africans to witchcraft practices .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1.2 Individual perceptions to witchcraft practices in Uganda.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 Statement of the Problem .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.3 Objectives of the Study .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.3.1 Major Objective.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.3.2 Specific Objectives.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.4 Research Questions .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.5 Scope of the Study .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.5.1 Conceptual Scope.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.5.2 Geographical Scope .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.5.3 Time Scope .....</b>	<b>13</b>

1.6 Significance of the Study.....	14
1.7 Justification of the Study .....	14
1.8 Definition of Key Terms.....	15
1.9 Conceptual Framework .....	16
1.10 Conclusion.....	17
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.0 Introduction .....	18
2.1 The notion of witchcraft practices throughout time and space.....	18
2.1.1 The types of witchcraft and modern witchcraft .....	22
2.2 The perception of witchcraft practices vis-a-vis the right to life in traditional societies..	25
2.3 The perception of witchcraft practices vis-à-vis the right to human life in contemporary times .....	28
2.4 The effectiveness of existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices in Uganda.....	38
2.5 Conclusion.....	42
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>43</b>
3.0 Introduction .....	43
3.1 Research Approach .....	43
3.2 Area of Study .....	44
3.3 Study Population .....	44
3.4 Sampling.....	44
3.4.2 Sampling Techniques .....	44
3.5 Data Collection .....	45
3.5.1 Questionnaire .....	45

3.5.2 Focus group discussions .....	45
3.5.3 Document Analysis .....	46
3.6 Quality Control Measures .....	46
3.7 Data management and processing .....	47
3.8 Data Analysis .....	47
3.9 Ethical Considerations .....	47
3.10 Limitations of the Study.....	48
3.11 Conclusion.....	48
CHAPTER 4.....	49
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS.....	49
4.0 Introduction .....	49
4.1 Respondents' demographic information .....	49
4.1.1 Age of respondents.....	49
4.1.2 Gender of the respondents .....	49
4.1.3 Respondents' educational level.....	49
4.1.4 Respondents' marital status .....	50
4.1.5 Respondents' sources of income .....	50
4.2 Assessment of individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice by the people .....	50
4.2.1 Source of knowledge on witchcraft practices.....	50
4.2.2 Reasons for practising witchcraft .....	51
4.2.3 Concern about witchcraft practices.....	51
4.2.4 Gender more open to the practice of witchcraft.....	52
4.3 Increased awareness leads to a decline in the practice of witchcraft .....	53
4.4 Age group open to the practice of witchcraft.....	54

4.5	Recommending the practice of witchcraft to friends and family.....	54
4.6	People’s belief in witchcraft practices affecting the observation of the human right to life .....	55
4.6.1	The practice of witchcraft vis-a-vis the moral, social and economic wellbeing of people .....	55
4.7	The practice of witchcraft threatening the right to life.....	56
4.8	The practice of witchcraft as a gross human rights abuse .....	57
4.9	The right of people practising witchcraft to use human beings as sacrifice .....	57
4.10	People’s perceptions on witchcraft featuring prominently in the local media .....	57
4.11	The effectiveness of existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices in Uganda.....	58
4.12	The active role of religious leaders in changing people’s perceptions on witchcraft practices .....	59
4.13	The active role of cultural leaders in changing people’s perceptions on witchcraft practices .....	59
4.14	The active role of political leaders in changing people’s perceptions on witchcraft practices .....	60
4.15	Focus group discussion .....	60
4.16	Understanding of the term witchcraft.....	61
4.17	Why do people practise witchcraft? .....	61
4.18	The advantages and disadvantages of practising witchcraft.....	62
4.20	Controlling and regulating witchcraft practices through the laws of Uganda.....	63
4.22	Concluding remarks.....	64
	CHAPTER 5 .....	65
	DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	65
5.0	Introduction .....	65
5.1	Discussion .....	65
5.1.1	Individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice.....	65

5.1.2 People’s belief in witchcraft practices affects the observation of the human right to life.....	66
5.1.3 The effectiveness of existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices in Uganda..	67
5.2 Conclusion.....	69
5.3 Recommendations .....	70
APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM .....	72
APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE .....	73
APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE .....	76
APPENDIX V: PROPOSED WORKPLAN.....	77
REFERENCES.....	78



## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBC	-	British Broadcasting Corporation
CM	-	Conventional Medicine
CRC	-	Convention on Rights of the Child
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCDR	-	International Treaty on Civil and Political Rights
ICCPR	-	International Treaty on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	-	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
TBI	-	Traumatic Brain Injury
THETA	-	Traditional Healers and Modern Practitioners Together Against AIDS
TM	-	Traditional Medicine
UDHR	-	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WHO	-	World Health Organization

## ABSTRACT

This research study is an assessment of individual perceptions to witchcraft practices as a common practice in Mukono Central Division. This study was prompted by the rising rate of human sacrifice associated with witchcraft practices and this is threatening the inherent right to human life among Ugandans. The general objective of this study is to assess individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice in Mukono Central Division. The research questions that guided the study are - how do the people of Mukono Central Division perceive witchcraft practices? To what extent does belief in witchcraft practices violate the observation of the right to life in Mukono Central Division? What laws are in place to ensure observance of the right to life by the people of Mukono Central Division?

This study is based on the notion that witchcraft practices is not a new field, therefore the sources of literature are both ancient and modern. Indeed, a qualitative research approach was used involving a semi-structured questionnaire, a focus group discussion guide and document analysis as data collection tools. A total of 55 respondents filled out the questionnaire while 8 respondents were available for the focus group discussion bringing the total number of respondents to 63. The qualitative data from the questionnaires was coded and summarized to enable the researcher identify emerging themes which were presented in percentages and tables. In the case of focus group discussions, discussants' responses were presented in verbatim.

Findings from this study reveal that 52 out of 55 respondents are aware of witchcraft practices as well as all 8 focus group discussants. Multiple sources of information like the media such as televisions (33percent) and newspapers (18percent) were cited. Four focus group discussants came to know about witchcraft practices from attending Church while the other four from reading newspapers. Twenty percent of respondents mentioned personal beliefs as the most outstanding reason for people to practise witchcraft while all 8 focus group discussants mentioned that people are convinced that witchdoctors can communicate with the other medium and the results are immediate. Whereas if they pray to God whom they have never seen with their naked eyes, they take long to receive communication back from God. Twenty percent of respondents believe that both men and women should be concerned about by the practice followed by religious and cultural leaders at 18 percent. Forty nine percent believe men and women are actively engaged in this practice disputing the notion that it is mostly women who are engaged in the practice. A total of sixty nine percent would not recommend the practice to friends and family. Witchcraft practices have not increased the moral, social and economic wellbeing of the people as mentioned by 64% of respondents. 85% of those who filled out the questionnaire, pointed out that human sacrifice is a gross human rights abuse. In the data, 51 percent of questionnaire respondents supported the view that witchcraft practices should feature prominently in the media. A total of 44 respondents out of 55 (80 percent) decried the ineffectiveness of the laws of Uganda to countercheck on the practice. In conclusion, the study recommends several strategies should be introduced to regulate witchcraft practices and curb the escalating rate of human sacrifice. There should be concerted efforts to promote the positive side of witchcraft and sensitize communities on the negative side of the practice; close collaboration between religious, cultural and political leaders should be strengthened; the significance of the legislative and judicial arms of Government in working with local communities to find appropriate solutions and punishments for those who sacrifice human beings should be emphasized.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions and justification of the study; the scope of the study and significance of the study as well as the conceptual framework and finally defines the key terms before a chapter summary is given.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Some individuals may argue that it is cultural beliefs that shape individual perceptions. Essentially, Geertz (1973:89) views culture as a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life. For Swartz (2002: 6), culture is “a set of guidelines (both implicit and explicit) which individuals inherit as members of a particular society, and which tells them how to view the world, how to experience it emotionally, and how to behave in it in relation to other people, to supernatural forces or gods, and to the natural environment.”

In this regard and while referring to the African culture, Mbiti (1989) writes about an ‘African’, and the fact that there is an intimate relationship between the living and the living dead. When in a room alone, in a thick forest, in the dark, a cave or a mountain, a typical African will consciously or sub-consciously believe that though physically alone, he or she is connected with the spiritual world of the living dead (Mbiti, 1989). The nature of such perceptions is definitely passed on from generation to generation. Ocitti (1994, p. 14) writes that, “every society has a culture, which is transmitted from generation to generation”. At birth, an individual begins to learn from parents and society thereby believing and acting without question. As people grow and relate to each other they are taught by the elderly to pass what they learn to another person. Therefore witchcraft practices are cultural so are individual perceptions towards them. Individual perceptions are shaped in a certain way by the society an individual lives in. In some societies, people develop desires and expectations and most often than not, many people desire a good life

and often want to honor their position in the hierarchy of God's creation. This brings in the notion of rituals and practices; and in the case of the African culture, the aspect of witchcraft cannot be overlooked as this practice is promoted and encouraged as one way of sustaining a good life. Rituals may involve offering of sacrifices and the term sacrifice is derived from a Latin word *sacrificium* that means the act of offering the life of an animal, a person or some object to God or the gods in order to appease or atone for one's wrong doing and thereafter seek favour or for worship (Guralnik, 1986: 1252). The acceptability of the sacrifice depends on suitability of the items that are sacrificed. A sacrifice at times implies killing though there are also bloodless sacrifices based on, for example, food items like cereals and beverages. Certainly, in the history of human kind around the world, there have been sacrifices offered for various reasons mostly involving more of blood than food items and in some cases both blood and food items are demanded for. However, throughout history, occult killings involving human sacrifice in order to honor the position of individuals have been the notable form of sacrifice.

Outside of the African continent, Holmes (1974:40-43) has stated that the existence of beliefs and practices of witchcraft and sorcery were witnessed in Britain a thousand years after the birth of Christ. The perception of British authorities led to the condemnation of these practices and persons who were accused of it were dismissed as social misfits. It is clear that as with all witchcraft practices, sacrifices involve either blood or food items. However, in this regard, the condemning of these practices in Britain might have been because blood was being used and human blood was no exception.

Still on rituals and practices, it is believed that the Aztecs of the Mesoamerican religion in Central America had elements of human sacrifice in connection with a large number of religious festivals that were held according to patterns of the Aztec calendar (Clendinnen, 1995). According to Rives (1995), human sacrifice also existed among pagans and Christians. He goes on to write that it is in Western Europe that one finds this idea of ritual murder and it has a long history. The French Anthropologist Rene Girard notes that in "many rituals the sacrificial act assumes two opposing aspects, appearing at times as a sacred obligation to be neglected at grave peril, at other times as a sort of criminal activity entailing perils of equal gravity" (Girard and Grimes, 1996:240). What Girard notes here is worth reflecting, because any sacrificial act, indeed, seems to have a sacred dimension which should not be ignored, yet on the other hand it appears to be a criminal act (as cited by Bukuluki and Mpyangu, 2014).

Historically as Schultz (2010) writes about the Romans, there is mention of ritual murders during the period 509-44 BCE. Furthermore, there is evidence that human sacrifice took place in antiquity in societies, including some in what is now Britain, bordering the Roman and Greek Empires, whose members sacrificed only animals and birds. Rituals including it have been described by outside observers (La Fontaine, 2011). He continues to write about ritual murder in which he cites that

at the end of the twentieth century people across the world asserted their belief in rituals that included the sacrifice of children as offerings to the devil. In the United States, Britain, Europe, Australia and New Zealand accusations were made. The rituals were said to include a modern sin, that of the sexual abuse of children, but in other respects they resembled the accusations made across early modern Europe and included allegations of human sacrifice and cannibalism (La Fontaine, 2011).

In the Americas, it has been recently discovered that in the Moche culture of Peru which had remained an enigma for so long, human sacrifice was done to appease the gods. They ritually slaughtered war captives (Vergano, 2013). In the end, the perception of sacrifices are cultural so are the practices embedded there in. The discussion in the next section centres on the African context.

### **1.1.1 Individual perceptions of Africans to witchcraft practices**

In the African context, the practice of witchcraft is associated with magic and occult arts. Majority of African people believe that the practice of witchcraft is a way of life and should be respected. Shorter (1985:95) defines witchcraft as a kind of penumbra of human wickedness, an inborn preternatural power to harm and kill, enjoyed for its own sake. Austen (1993:271) discusses African witchcraft idiom as a discourse of history and power and defines witchcraft as the use of supernatural powers by one person to damage others. Virtually all existing work at least in rural Africa indicates that witchcraft efficacy is held to be a direct function of the intimacy between witch and victim. Indeed, the essence of witchcraft and sorcery is the causing of harm to persons or property by invisible means (Hayes, 1995:339-340). It is often discussed that throughout the African continent discourses on sorcery or witchcraft are intertwined, often in quite surprising ways, with modern changes (Geschiere and Roitman, 1997:2). The assumption has been that, "...the individual is not a physical being, but a spiritual and divine individual, who lives with other human beings..." (Donker, 1997:8). It has been documented that African witchcraft is a personal act of one individual using supernatural powers to harm another. This action is not random but is a

strategy used within particular sets of social relations and contexts of interaction (Lyons, 1998:344-362). Wehmeier and Ashby (2000:1371) define witchcraft as “the use of magic powers, especially evil ones.”

Suffice to say, anthropologists and social historians have approached the topics of witchcraft and sorcery in different ways. Kapferer (2003), states that the belief in the influence of witchcraft is geographically diverse and that the belief therein is found in Africa, Asia, South-Pacific and the Caribbean. A distinction can be made between witchcraft as the expression of malign power in a person’s body and sorcery as the use of magical craft or knowledge to harm or benefit others. Especially what is seen as witchcraft is often seen as a consuming force. The witch eats the life power of the victim (Stewart and Strathern, 2004:1).

Witchcraft is a term so commonly used in Africa but what does it mean? People especially in Africa perceive witchcraft as a part of life indeed as Ashforth (2005) while writing in the context of South Africa and Soweto in particular reveals that witchcraft ... is a commonplace feature of life in Soweto as it is in Africa more generally. He further continues to assert that no one can understand life in Africa without understanding witchcraft and the related aspects of spiritual insecurity. Also, that witchcraft in the everyday life of Africa is enormously difficult to fathom Ashforth (2005: xiii). Furthermore, in discussing the dilemma with the local perception of causes of illnesses in central Africa, Sabuni (2007) mentions that, the perception of witchcraft is strong as a cause of illness amongst the Bira of Mobala and the Nande of Mukulia of Democratic Republic of Congo.

This is not something new as it has been documented by the World Health Organization that 80 percent of African populations attend traditional healers for health reasons (World Health Organization, 2002). In discussing profiles and outcome of this traditional approach to treatment of mental illnesses, Abbo (2011) reveals that, “witchcraft was mentioned among the causes of mental illness among the respondents in Jinja and Iganga districts in the Busoga region of Eastern Uganda”.

In Africa, holding solid superstitious beliefs and practicing them in the face of contradictory evidence is not uncommon. Superstitious beliefs in Africa are held almost by everyone one may come across. Even the elite to some extent are incarcerated in these beliefs. In discussing Africa and superstition BrouKouame, the Vice-president of the ASR (Alphabetization and Health in Rural Areas) NGO mentioned that “at the beginning of the 21st century, though

science has managed to explain, rationally, phenomena that, for a long time, were considered to belong to the metaphysical domain, Africa still remains to certain beliefs that have acted like psychic poison on many Africans”. The continued practice of this vice has often resulted into massive violations of human rights particularly the right to life that contravenes the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights and other human rights instruments. Human beings are still being hunted down, mutilated, murdered or sacrificed for ritual purposes across the region.

It is believed that in Africa, there are six main categories of traditional healers namely: herbalists, bonesetters, diviners, faith healers, spiritualists, and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs). Herbalists treat using herbs and also sell herbal preparations, while spiritualists use spiritual means to diagnose and health their patients. Faith healers are traditional health practitioner with strong religious faith. They evoke the power of the invisible to heal and solve problems. They are of any religious sect and use either the Bible or Quran in their healing activities community (Bukuluki and Mpyangu, 2014). Furthermore, belief in mysterious power is found throughout Africa. Indeed it is part and parcel of African traditional religion. It is a power that is real, distinct from hypnotism, conjuring tricks, obvious cheating, manipulation of hidden means of communication or the result of psychological conditions. There is no African society which does not hold belief in mystical power of one type or another (Nyabwari and Kagema, 2014).

Therefore, the value attached to sacrifices in the Bible or the Quran might be the same as in traditional African societies – the reasons though varied were intended for the same outcome of appeasing God or the gods or seeking blessings of any kind. There is a strong belief in the mystical power of the unknown be it God Almighty or the African traditional gods as was the case in traditional African societies. The next section discusses individual perceptions to witchcraft practices in Uganda.

### **1.1.2 Individual perceptions to witchcraft practices in Uganda**

In Uganda, witchcraft practices are regulated through the Witchcraft Act of 1964, which appears to be outdated as it only stipulates penalties against intended acts of harm (Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1964). There is currently no law governing the operation of traditional healers or witchdoctors. Yet again, it is necessary to assert that in Uganda like other places in Africa and globally where witchcraft is practised, there are traditional witchdoctors who also act as traditional healers and spiritual medium. Then there are traditional birth attendants who deal with all issues maternal and infant. It has been revealed that assessing the exact number of

traditional healers in Uganda and their utilization is challenging, as some healers are not registered and some of their clients visit them at night or clandestinely. It has been estimated that there is at least one traditional healer for every village and four out of five Ugandans visit traditional healers, particularly in rural areas

(THETA, 2001). However, ... according to the 2008 Uganda Police Crime Report, the murder of children for ritual purposes rose by over eight hundred percent (800%) over a year. ... Also Studies by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (2009) have revealed that close to 3,000 children disappear from their homes annually in Uganda. The plight for the majority of these children is never known or documented but there is a strong suspicion among child protection activists that many of the children reported as disappearance cases are eventually sacrificed. The recent wave of ritual murders involving children as sacrifice has prompted Ugandan Parliamentarians to debate and plead with the government to enact a law regulating the activities and practices of traditional healers and herbalists. In this debate, they noted that there is no institutionalized framework for governing traditional healers (Ranny, 2009; Kamara, 2012) and this poses a threat to the inherent right to life, good health, longevity and productivity. It is also believed that most of the cases are actually not reported to the Police and as such the exact magnitude of the problem remains in question (Bienvenu, 2011). Furthermore, Fellows (2013)'s study involving the youth in Uganda representing every district in the country, confirmed they had heard of a child being sacrificed in their community. Also that body parts are taken from victims while they are still alive. Indeed, child body parts are especially prized in rituals because people believe mixing their blood with herbs makes a strong concoction that can cure diseases and appease local spirits. Genitalia are especially prized... (Onyulo, 2017).

There are a number of organizations register and represent traditional healers, though some traditional healers prefer not to be registered for various reasons, such as fear of taxation, etc. Recently, the Inspector General of Police of Uganda directed all traditional healers in the country to surrender their licenses for fresh registration, advising them to have one president of their association as opposed to the many at present (Kirunda, 2009). Many Ugandans are noted to consult traditional healers at the same time as they receive care from the modern health care system (Abbo, 2010). This point is not new as Morrison and Thornton (1999) as well as by Karim et al. (2004) while referring to other cultures revealed that "when it comes to mental illness though, culture is often equated with religious beliefs and this appears to be the most important determinant



of one's perception of mental illness. Religion advocates witchcraft and spirit possession which are thought to influence the behaviour of a person so as to resemble that of a mentally ill individual.

Nsereko (2011) in a study on the 'stakeholder's perceptions of help-seeking behavior among people with mental health problems in Uganda' revealed that

...the belief in traditional healing was noted to be so strong, that even when traditional healers realize they will not be of help and send patients to health facilities, the patients do not go but instead try other traditional healers only accepting the health facility as a better alternative much later. Seeking help from traditional healers as the first option was reported to apply to other illnesses as well; though very much pronounced with mental illness... (Nsereko et al., 2011)

It should be noted that for most Africans who believe so much in traditional medicine over western medicine, their imagination is influenced by a negative side filled with mystical power that can eat away at their health and souls thus making them victims. There are cases where people believe that they have been attacked by evil spirits causing them misfortune and making their lives uncomfortable. They believe that practitioners of these mystical powers are witches, wizards, sorcerers, evil magicians, or people with an evil eye, employing their power for antisocial and harmful activities (Nyabwari and Kagema, 2014)

This strong belief in the supernatural and also a tendency of individuals to resort strongly to traditional medicine shows a pattern that certain individuals construct when they equate illnesses especially mental illness to being bewitched. There are individuals who believe strongly in traditional healing. Evans-Pritchard (1976:227) earlier defined such medicine to mean any object in which mystical power is supposed to reside and which is used in magic rites; and that they are mainly of vegetable nature. It is no doubt that traditional medicine still enjoys an important place in Uganda and other developing countries. A number of authors have stated that 80 percent of the population in developing countries has its health care needs met through the traditional medicine sector (World Health Organization, 1978; 2002); Luoga et al. 2000; Ventevogel, 1996 cited in Bukuluki, 2006). In more recent times, the World Health Organization (WHO) has indeed acknowledged the significance of traditional medicine (TM) as either the mainstay of health care delivery or serving to complement to it. In some countries, traditional medicine or non-conventional medicine may be termed complementary medicine (CM) World Health Organization (2013).

The aspect of witchcraft practices in traditional medicine cannot be overlooked. Traditional medicine is believed to play a significant role in exorcizing evil spirits and promote healing especially if the dark side of witchcraft is involved. Sometimes, for traditional healing to be successful, sacrifice of either humans or animals is involved. Indeed, the term sacrifice as used in this African religious theology has been contested as not appropriate to be used in the context of murder and mutilation. The aspect of sacrifice has gained momentum in recent times because children are involved. Children's body parts are being taken in the belief that they will benefit an individual, family or community. There has been consensus however, that historically, there has been human and child sacrifice in the African and Ugandan cultural mythology, but child and/or human sacrifice as an actual practice is now a new phenomena, not recognized and accepted in indigenous or traditional religious theology and practice. Suffice to say, child or human sacrifice was perceived to be alien to the prevailing beliefs and practices associated with sacrifice as they are conceptualized and articulated through the indigenous religious and healing cultures in Uganda by healers and the community (Bukuluki and Mpyangu, 2014).

### **1.1.3 The right to life**

In the previous sections above, the discussion has been mainly on witchcraft practices however, in this section, an attempt is made to discuss the theme the right to life. Issues of the right to human life stand out in any society primarily in terms of moral, political, religious and socio-cultural spheres. In order to have a civil society, respect of human life is paramount. The right to life is an unalienable gift that should not be misused. No one has the right to end human life. Human life should not be interfered with in such a way that it ends pre-maturely and that is why there are laws and protocols intended to safeguard this inherent right of life. Indeed, a right to life is something to be cherished as an essential human right around which other individual rights of food, clean water, shelter, education and protection hinge. At a global scale, it is recognized that "all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and interrelated.

Bonnell (1951:201) in his discussion on the sanctity of human life mentioned that "Christianity has never ceased to emphasize the sanctity of human life and the value of the individual, even the humblest and lowliest, including the afflicted in mind and body". The gift of life is a pre-condition for other rights. Frankena (1975:32), carefully examined a variety of positions about respect for life: "absolute" (all life-shortening acts are morally wrong) and

“qualified” forms (some life-shortening acts might be permissible, “direct” and “indirect” forms of respect for life for its own sake or for life as a condition for other good (1975 p 34), religious and moral foundations of the doctrine (p 31), “intrinsic” (valuable in and from itself) and “related” (valued by another, e.g. God) (p 40), “comprehensive” (all forms of life) and “non-comprehensive” (only human life) forms with regard to the extension, and so on.

Before examining sanctity-of-life versus quality-of-life with regard to end-of-life decision-making issues, it is necessary to understand how far the idea of sanctity-of-life is actually correctly determined to mean absolute inviolability of physical human life.

Suffice to say, the sanctity of human life comes with crafting of rights to endorse human life. Brockett (1978) proposed a hierarchy of rights with the right to life topping them all which he defines as ‘freedom from murder’. This right fits into what he calls physiological rights, which also include the right to be free from severe malnutrition, the right to food, water, and air, which life requires. Then he discusses safety rights – protection from physical or psychic injury, which includes freedom from torture as well as the right to basic health care – come next, while the last range of protected rights are “gratifications such as love, esteem, and self-actualization Brockett believes that the physiological rights must be met before any other rights can be amply protected. He goes on to write that, “the instrumental nature of security does set it apart from the other two dimensions and the other sets of needs ... its inclusion is redundant since its instrumental relation to the other needs means that it is already taken into account by those needs...”

Vincent (1986) while discussing human rights and international relations defined the right to life as the right to sustenance and security and argued that it must always be protected first. He noted, though, that this is not necessarily always recognized. He continues to write that,

...it is true that basic needs doctrine has a programmatic appeal that is not obvious in the lists of human rights. The idea of a hierarchy of basic needs, from physiological to psychological, with each level in the hierarchy requiring to be met before progress to the next level, seems to provide the starting-place for a detailed development strategy: first provide food and water, then security, and so on... If the right to life becomes the need for food, then a society has some notion of what is to be done... (Vincent, 1986:87)

The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis” (United Nations, 1993). The promoting of human rights comes with its implicit ranking which is a common theme (Turner, 1995; Teraya, 2001). In most nations around the world, the taking of a person else’s life is tantamount to either

manslaughter or murder and it is punishable gravely by the criminal laws or penal codes of that particular country. The killing of a human being does not carry the same weight as other crimes like violation of property, discrimination, and/or harassment of individuals. Ending an individual life is a grave crime that carries the maximum penalty. In the Christian theology, human life is given a special ranking and it is forbidden even in the Ten Commandments. Christians believe that humans are created in the image of God. This means that there has to be utmost respect for this gift of human life. In equal measure, the Quran advocates that “if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind” (5:32). In the Jewish tradition, it is stated that “He who saves one soul, it is as if he has saved the entire world” (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 4:8 [37a]). Jews are commanded to violate the Sabbath and even the holiest of Jewish holidays, Atonement Day, if this is required to save a life. The Catholic Church extends this right to the unborn and the Church is vehemently against abortion in women even if it is for medical reasons.

Kant (1997, 27:372) speaks about “life” that “has been entrusted” to man and that suicide would “...violate the sacred trust assigned to him...” But when quarreling with the Stoic’s defense of suicide, Kant underlines that he disagrees not because physical life were valuable in itself. For Kant, the reason is that physical life is a necessary condition for a human moral subject to conduct a moral life (1997, 27:371). In St. Paul’s reference to the body as “a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God” (1 Corinthians 6:19) Kant could have found support for calling bodily life a “sanctuary”, although he does not explicitly refer to that biblical text. In the Bible, man is adjured to become holy, in imitation of God in whose image he is formed. ‘Be holy, for I your Lord God am holy’ (Leviticus 19:2). The common Christian understanding of this; is, that because God is holy, therefore Man, created in His image, is also holy. The Jewish understanding is different.

The predominance of the right to life is well renowned in the following comments on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): “The right to life, liberty and personal security, recognized in Article 3, sets the base for all following political rights and civil liberties, including freedom from slavery, torture and arbitrary arrest, as well as the rights to a fair trial, free speech and free movement and privacy” (United Nations, 1998).

Still in the international community, the right to life is strongly supported. For example, in 2003, high-level delegates from each country of the European Union produced the European

Union Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Charter places human dignity first, followed by the right to life and freedom from the death penalty, and the integrity of the person, which concerns the ethical boundaries of science.

“...Article 1 [of the German Basic Law] is the Basic Law's crown. The concept of human dignity is this crown's jewel: an interest so precious that the state must affirmatively protect and foster its inviolability. This uniquely important status is evident from human dignity's prominence in the constitution, the early Federal Republic's pressing need to repudiate the Third Reich, the many judicial and scholarly exegeses of Article 1, and human dignity's unique claim to absolute protection...” (Smith, 2003:533)

Furthermore, according to the German Basic Law, all basic rights, including the right to life, have to be balanced with other basic rights with the sole exception of the right to human dignity - the right to be free of torture is thus placed above the right to life (Klein, 2008). Indeed, the right to human life triumphs all other rights as ably asserted in all regional and International charters and declarations governing communities and nations in the different regions of the world. Even in cases of murder, the ultimate punishment is handed down to the offenders. This is to say, no amount of deed or sacrifice entails the taking of human life. Human life is sacred and has a special status that has to be respected by individuals in societies regardless of race, religion, ethnic background, educational background and social standing. On the other hand, it is not often easy to protect human life especially during wars more so civil wars that involve ethnic cleansing or genocide that have been reported in the different regions of the world. These kinds of atrocities pose a challenge to the international community's abilities (Power, 2002) to promote and protect the right to life especially of the innocent mainly women and children. Life especially human is ranked higher than animal and plant life. Human beings have laws that protect them from torture, dismembering and starvation. Unfortunately once humans are caught in these situations of torture, starvation and dismembering, it is heartening and a lot of sympathy and empathy is extended to the victims and ways are found to try and mitigate these kinds of undesirable outcomes. Once a person is dead, all other rights of food, clean water, shelter, security, education disappear. A dead person cannot stake a claim to other rights. Therefore, it is imperative that life is protected and preserved. Indeed the right to life remains the top most basic requirement of humanity that should not be violated or undermined. The protocols and treaties as produced and defended at regional and international conventions stamp out any threat to life and seek to defend and protect that fundamental right.

The dominant right to life means that people need and want to feel secure. This security is not for their lives but extends to their property. They require protection from harm or malicious damage. People want to be able to enjoy life without fear of being kidnapped and in some cases killed. Society should be able to protect people especially the vulnerable from acts of violence and malice especially in cases where children and albinos are attacked for body parts as has been the case in Uganda. Once a people feel secure in their homes, businesses, communities, public spaces and gatherings, then life especially human can thrive. Also risks associated with environmental disasters pose a threat to human life and existence. Extreme weather conditions such as floods, drought, desertification, and hurricanes threaten the very existence of life and it calls for concern to protect the vulnerable. Humanity is doing everything possible to defend life on earth. This is believed to be of fundamental importance in order to preserve the human race. Holiness, an attribute of God, is not to be identified automatically in those created in His image. Man's holiness, then, is not so much a state as an achievement (Weingarten, 2004 ). Although life is indeed the gift of God, it is not merely a biological gift, and morally neutral (Weingarten, 2007:333). Sanctity of life does not simply refer to a value of biological existence, but to a spiritual and virtue-ethical way of how to use one's own physical existence (Baranzke, 2012). The discussion on the sanctity of life should be accompanied by the quality of that same life.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

There is no concrete data to ascertain the exact number of individuals who are regarded as witchdoctors and the nature of their activities in the country. There is also no data to know how many Ugandans engage in witchcraft practices. However, over the years, there have been reports of human sacrifice involving children reported in print and electronic media as well as research studies. Human sacrifice has been occurring in Uganda regardless of location or social status. Although there may not be anything wrong with the cultural practice of witchcraft, this study is prompted to investigate what individuals perceive of witchcraft practices especially as linked to human sacrifice and whether there are laws governing this practice. Mukono District is among the notorious districts in Uganda where human sacrifice is performed and so it would be interesting for the study to find out what people perceive of the practice in light of the existing Constitution of Uganda as well as regional and global instruments that condemn the taking of life especially human life.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 Major Objective**

The general objective of this study is to assess individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice in Mukono Central Division.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To assess individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice by the people of Mukono Central Division.
2. To investigate how people's belief in witchcraft practices affects the observation of the human right to life in Mukono Central Division.
3. To examine the effectiveness of the existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices in Mukono Central Division.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How do the people of Mukono Central Division perceive witchcraft practices?
2. To what extent does belief in witchcraft practices violate the observation of the right to life in Mukono Central Division?
3. What laws are in place to regulate witchcraft practices in Mukono Central Division?

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This section entails the conceptual, geographical and time scopes for the study.

#### **1.5.1 Conceptual Scope**

The focus in this study is on the assessing individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice and its threat to the right to human life. The study will also examine the effectiveness of existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices in Mukono Central Division.

#### **1.5.2 Geographical Scope**

The research will be carried out in Mukono Central Division located in Mukono Municipality in central Uganda..

#### **1.5.3 Time Scope**

The research considered the period 2014 to 2017 to be able to collect information from selected respondents. It is also believed that a lot of people went missing especially children and they were presumed to be victims of ritual murders and Mukono Central Division was singled out

as famous for these ritual murders (Mukitale, 2014). It was a good opportunity to start the research inquiry guided by set objectives.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The researcher hopes that this piece of work will be a good contribution to the world of knowledge and that it will act as a point of reference for academicians in the field of social and humanistic sciences as well as other people who are interested in the subject of witchcraft practices.

The researcher intends for the study to be an eye opener for the residents of Mukono Central Division and all citizens of Uganda who will be able to read it. They will have an insight into what a section of Ugandans think about witchcraft practices and instances where human sacrifices are linked to it.

The researcher believes that the study will act as an appeal to the public to discover ways of transforming their cultural modes of identity and practice into meaningful and positive activities that promote the value and the right to life.

The researcher is of the view that the study will act as a basis for religious, cultural and political leaders especially in Mukono Central Division to stand up and eradicate the practice from among the people they lead whilst citing the disastrous outcomes of engaging in the practice. Copies of the final research report will be disseminated to various stakeholders to use as a point of reference when addressing the issue of witchcraft practices in today's Uganda. Eventually, the researcher after serious consultation with specified stakeholders may publish some of the research findings in order to reach as many readers as possible in the wider community both locally and internationally.

### **1.7 Justification of the Study**

Despite many areas in Uganda practicing witchcraft, over the years, Mukono and Kayunga civil districts have been singled out as having unsavory reputation for practising witchcraft (Ssekamanya, 2002). Many social organizations such as the Church have come up to preach against this evil practice, in particular, his Lordship Bishop Emeritus of Lugazi Catholic Diocese Mathias Ssekamanya. He rarely concludes his preaching without condemning the evil practice of witchcraft in Mukono District. He actually describes superstition as “a practice based on ignorance, fear and unscientific baseless cultural beliefs” (Ssekamanya, 2002).



The researcher chose this place because in the recent past, there has been an increased involvement of natives of the place in witchcraft practices that have often resulted into violations of human rights, particularly the evil of human ritual murders. Media reports especially electronic and print have highlighted how such social evils are affecting the inherent right to human life yet there are still so many that actually go unmentioned and are concealed by the residents, more so some of their local authorities thus breaching the law.

It is also clear that the law on witchcraft practices in Uganda is outdated and perhaps those practicing witchcraft are taking advantage of the loopholes in the existing law. They are aware that they cannot be fully punished for any criminal acts especially with life imprisonment or loss of their own lives if they cause death through offering human sacrifices involving children, albinos and adults. It is upon this premise therefore that an attempt is being made to explore individual perceptions to witchcraft practices especially in contemporary times.

## **1.8 Definition of Key Terms**

**Child sacrifice:** Harmful practice of removing a child's body parts, blood or tissue while the child is alive which often results in death. These body parts, blood or tissue are worn, buried or consumed in the belief they will benefit an individual or community.

**Witchcraft:** This is used to refer to the unreal beliefs that such things as magic have a highly spiritual power and influence on the people, the unreal or mythical notions together with the acts followed by this belief. It can be divided into four species, namely: the improper worship of God, idolatry, divination and vain observance, which include magic and occult arts.

**Human Rights:** This refers to the natural freedom every human person should freely enjoy without any hindrance for instance the right to life and the right to self-expression of opinions even about government or leadership.

**The right to life:** Is a moral principle based on the belief that a human being has to live and, in particular, should not be unjustly killed by another human being.

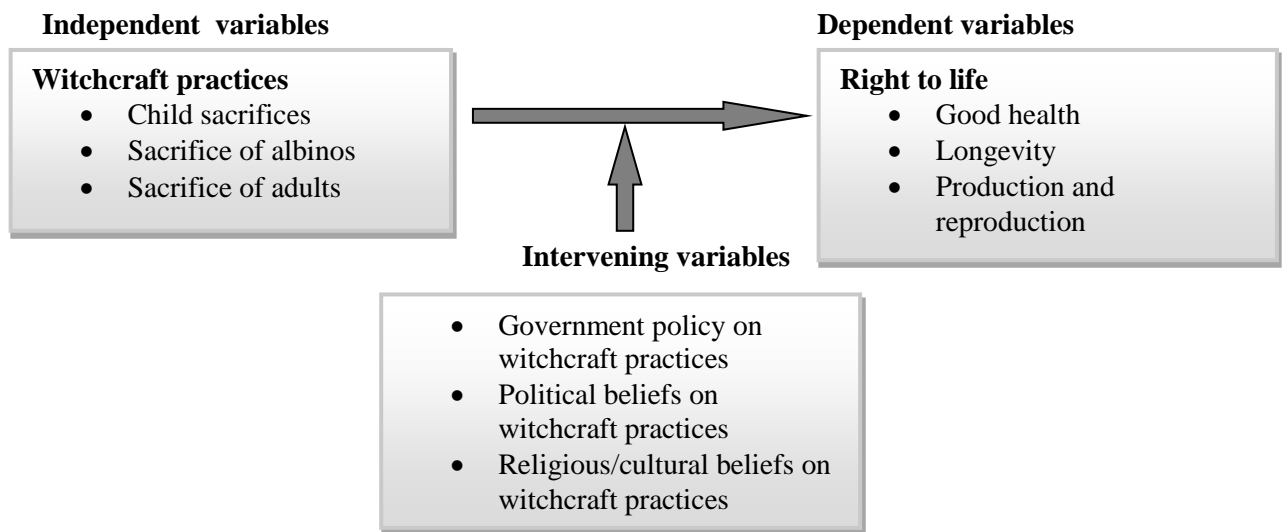
**Hindrance:** This refers to something that delays or stops progress.

**Human sacrifice:** Is the act of killing one or more human beings, usually as an offering to a deity, as part of a religious ritual.

**Divination:** This is the practice of finding out about the future by receiving signs from the spirit world.

## 1.9 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



The framework above demonstrates some of the cause and effect of practicing witchcraft. There are so many factors that can influence individual perceptions to witchcraft. There are individuals who perceive human sacrifice as gratifying not knowing that they are denying the victims of these sacrifices a right to a long life, good health and possibly a chance to be productive members of society who also can participate in extending their bloodlines through reproduction. The practice of witchcraft can be influenced by government policy, political, religious and cultural beliefs. Therefore attention has to be paid to the dependent, intervening and independent variables in this study.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

Chapter one introduced the study. In chapter two, literature pertaining to individual perceptions to witchcraft will be reviewed as well as witchcraft practices in both traditional and contemporary times. These will be discussed alongside the issue of the right to human life guided by the research objectives and conceptual framework. Chapter three presents the research methodology for the study. Chapter four will present and analyze research data. In chapter five, there will be a discussion of data as presented in chapter four, drawing of conclusions and making of recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher explores literature related to witchcraft and the right to human life and of particular importance is information that relates to the notion of witchcraft practices throughout time and space; perception of witchcraft practices vis-a-vis the right to life in traditional societies, the perception of witchcraft practices vis-à-vis the right to life in contemporary times, effectiveness of existing laws and policies in ensuring the right to life before a chapter summary is given.

#### 2.1 The notion of witchcraft practices throughout time and space

This discussion on witchcraft practices is guided by the notion that witchcraft in itself is essentially not a new phenomenon. Historically, there has been revelation of the practice among different societies of the world. The discussion is not limited to space and time as it can be considered a universal subject that is not alien to any particular society. For example, and with reference to England, it is noted that Robert Burns wrote a foreword to Halloween, in which he made reference to the following:

...tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf candles, deadlights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons and other trumpery ... cultivated the latent seeds of Poesy; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp lookout in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more skeptical in these matters than I, yet it often takes an effort of Philosophy to shake off these idle terrors... (as cited in Birkhead, 1921).

Indeed he mentions witches and idle terrors which may obviously mean that there was a strong connection between the two among many other references that he makes in the letter (as cited by Currie, 1824). Still in England, Burnside (2010) writes about the Witchcraft Act of 1735 and adds that in Europe there continues to be, as there has always been, an indigenous practice of witchcraft. The Witchcraft Act 1735 tried to eradicate belief in witchcraft. Upon enactment, it was no longer possible to be prosecuted as a witch in an English or Scottish court; instead, prosecution was only possible for *pretending* to be one.

In his work, *covert power: unmasking the world of witchcraft*, he presents Davies (1999)'s account of witchcraft in England and Wales following the Act describing how the majority of people continued to fear witches and put their faith in magic.

Larner (1981) described sorcery, for instance, as “the use of words and actions (incantation and the manipulation of objects, substances, or livestock) to generate supernatural power,” while witchcraft is the “generation of supernatural power with or without particular performances and is therefore an umbrella term.” It is further revealed that witches carried out maleficium, known in Scotland as malefice, acts of harmful magic. In the late medieval and early modern period, the gradual emergence of diabolical witchcraft, or the notion that witches were actively engaged in Devil worship, changed the nature of the crime from a basic felony to one of heresy and apostasy. The diabolical aspect of much European witchcraft has also been seen as a key distinguishing feature from understandings of witchcraft in most non-Western societies up to the present day (Levack, 1987: 2006)

In discussing witchcraft practices in ancient societies, the term sorcery is not overlooked. In fact, Ferraro and Andreatta (2014) define sorcery as “the performance of certain magical rites for the purpose of harming other people” and as such is a “mechanical, manipulative process” of magic, which could potentially be used for beneficial as well as harmful purposes, and is an acquired or learned skill. Witchcraft might also be learned but it could also be an innate skill, “the practice of an inborn, involuntary, and often unconscious capacity to cause harm to other people” – a power, in other words, inherited by the witch through birth and rarely associated with beneficent magic

Henderson while discussing the idea of witchcraft notes that the practice has been around for a long time, can be found in many cultures around the world, and has generally been understood to be a supernatural evil. The scope and nature of powers possessed by practitioners of witchcraft were widely discussed and debated throughout the era of the witch trials, though full consensus as to what exactly constituted a “typical” witch was rarely achieved. There was no single stereotype of a European witch ever fully agreed upon and, even at a local or country-specific level, variations in interpretation and understanding of what constituted a witch or witchcraft could, and did, occur. The situation has not really changed in modern times either, with regular confusion and misinformation being expressed among scholars, the media and the populace at large, over such things as witchdoctors, exorcists, Satanists or wiccans.

Fortune (1932) sees sorcery on the Dobu Island of Melanesia, as a conception of mystical power. He suggests that in a political system with no titular authority, prowess in sorcery was perceived as an important component of leadership. According to Fortune, Dobuans used sorcery 'for collecting bad debts and enforcing economic obligation, in vendetta to avenge one's own sickness or one's kinsmen's death, to wipe out serious insult' (p. 175). In discussing the theory of witchcraft beliefs among the Zande of North Central Africa, Evans-Pritchard (1937) notes that for them witchcraft also embraces a system of values which regulate human conduct. Witchcraft is ubiquitous. It plays its part in every activity of Azande life; in agricultural, fishing, and hunting pursuits; in domestic life of homesteads as well as in communal life of district and court; it is an important theme of mental life in which it forms the background of a vast panorama of oracles and magic; its influence is plainly stamped on law and morals, etiquette and religion; it is prominent in technology and language; there is no niche or corner of Zande culture into which it does not twist itself. Evans-Pritchard continued to write that witchcraft is not less anticipated than adultery. It is so intertwined with everyday happenings that it is part of a Zande's ordinary world.

Kluckhohn (1944) elaborates a psychological theory of witchcraft. He argues that among the Navaho witchcraft served as a channel for projecting emotions of guilt, desire and aggression. By investing the witch with responsibility for misfortune, Navaho absolved themselves from blame. Their forbidden desires, such as incest, also found an outlet in fantasies of witchcraft. Moreover, under stressful conditions, witches were scapegoats for hostile impulses. Through accusations of witchcraft Navaho could directly express their hostile feelings, against those to whom they would otherwise be unable to show anger. Sociologically, Marwick (1965) in writing about witchcraft practices and complicated social relations in Zambia reveals that the Cewa of Zambia are accused of using witchcraft when the matrilineage grew beyond the size that resources could sustain. As tensions over inheritance became apparent, accusations of witchcraft were not out of the question.

In the last century, Steadman (1985) while referring to the Hewa of Papua New Guinea, notes that the killing of witches was an outcome of competition for resources between different roofing and flooring parties. By executing members of other parties who posed a threat their initial interests, the witch killers were able to inculcate fear in the community and demonstrated their ability to use violence to defend their interests.

Jeffers (1996) in discussing *magic and divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, states that 'witchcraft' is a broad term, and commonly refers to 'the use of magic', whilst magic itself can be defined as 'the manipulation and coercion of hidden powers in order to act on specific events... or individuals, manipulating hidden powers in order to benefit or heal people or to cause them harm.' Jeffers' definition is included in this discussion to highlight further the universal notion that witchcraft beliefs existed and may continue to exist in the different societies around the world. Similarly, La Fontaine (1997) writes that witchcraft beliefs and accusations are far from an archaic tradition that has disappeared with the growth of "modernity and globalization. Neither does witchcraft merely belong to the postcolonial world. In many contemporary Mediterranean societies it is believed that the envy of certain persons can bring harm to objects and other people through an "'evil eye'. In Portugal mothers fix amulets around the garments of babies, and men paint the sign of the cross onto the houses of both the bride and groom before a wedding, to ward off these effects. In Brocage, France, witchcraft is invoked to explain persistent misfortunes such as alcoholism, impotence and insanity. Another example of witchcraft is the allegation that English children are sexually abused by marked and robed people in secret Satanic rituals. The Satanists are also imagined to practise bestiality, forced abortions, animal and human sacrifices, and cannibalism.

Meanwhile Geschiere (1997) underscores the famous belief amongst villagers that an occult force called *djambe* is the theory behind the success of politicians. They also suspected that the nouveaux riches transform their victims into zombies in order to exploit their labour. Local witches even worked with the mafia, in organizing worldwide zombie traffic. In Cameroon the state constantly experiments with new ways of containing witchcraft. Regional courts in Cameroon's East Province have even sentenced witches to imprisonment on the basis of testimony provided by certified diviners. Still on Africa, Ashforth (2001) narrates that in some African countries, such as South Africa, witchcraft is cloaked in silence because its victims do not want to advertise that they are, or have been, accursed. They are also afraid that speaking out will provide their perpetrators with intelligence of the steps they have taken to counteract the occult assault, thereby inviting a fresh onslaught, possibly by different means.

Kapferer (2003) suggests that beliefs and practices related to witchcraft and the occult have potency because they stand apart from everyday reason and engage the human imagination. They thrive in 'phantasmagoric spaces' such as Sri Lankan temples and sorcery shrines - that do not

represent external realities, but have their own logic. On the other hand, West (2005) notes that his Muedan informants in Mozambique were adamant that sorcery is not a metaphor for abstract things such as social predation: they insisted that sorcery is real! Furthermore, he sees the reality of sorcery as built up through language and discourse, and as experienced through verbal constructs such as threats and accusations (West, 2005). People do not speak of sorcery: they actually speak sorcery. As Muedans imagine sorcery, they experience their imaginings as real. In this conception, West insists, symbols stand for themselves and are an essential part of the world of which they speak. Sorcery is an ever-present language, discourse or sub-text to social encounters.

Likewise, Mantz (2007) while discussing the concealment and disclosure of Eastern Caribbean witchcraft mentioned that in Dominica, public discussion of witchcraft is exceptionally rare. This arises from the belief that 'public utterance of information arising about the occult give[s] occult forces their power'. This is obvious proof of the existence of the practice in this particular society. On the other hand, Cimpric while discussing contemporary practices of witchcraft in Africa, reveals that in parts of Central Africa, witchcraft discourse is said to have entered the public domain by means of the mass media ('People talk about it all the time').

### **2.1.1 The types of witchcraft and modern witchcraft**

According to Obringer (2004), witchcraft is a pagan religion. Pagan religions worship multiple deities rather than a single god. Paganism is one of the oldest religions and includes all religions that are not Christian, Muslim or Jewish, meaning Paganism includes the Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian and American Indian religions as well as all other nature-oriented religions. According to the 1998 Cambridge Fact Finder, Paganism accounts for 50 percent of all religions. She goes on to list the many types of witchcraft, many of which overlap and all of which can be defined in different ways by different people, but here are some rough guidelines for their designations:

- **African witchcraft:** There are many types of witchcraft in Africa. The Azande of central Africa believe that witchcraft causes all types of misfortune. The "gift" of witchcraft, known as *mangu*, is passed from parent to child. Those possessing *mangu* aren't even aware of it and perform magick unconsciously while they sleep.
- **Appalachian folk magic:** Those who practice witchcraft in the Appalachian mountains see good and evil as two distinct forces that are led by the Christian God and Devil,



respectively. They believe there are certain conditions that their magick cannot cure. They also believe that witches are blessed with paranormal powers and can perform powerful magick that can be used for either good or evil purposes. They look to nature for omens and portents of the future.

- **Green witchcraft:** A Green witch is very similar to a Kitchen/Cottage witch (see below) with the exception that the Green witch practices in the fields and forest in order to be closer to the Divine spirit. The Green witch makes his or her own tools from accessible materials from outdoors.
- **Hedge witchcraft:** A Hedge witch is not part of a group or coven. This witch practices magick alone and works more with the green arts, herbal cures and spells. In the early days, Hedge witches were local wise men or women who cured illnesses and gave advice. They can be of any religion and are considered traditional witches (see below).
- **Hereditary witchcraft:** Hereditary witches believe in "gifts" of the craft that are with a witch from birth, having been passed from generations before.
- **Kitchen/Cottage witchcraft:** A Kitchen witch, or Cottage witch, practices magick around the hearth and home. The home is a sacred place, and the use of herbs is used often to bring protection, prosperity and healing. Kitchen witches often follow more than one path of witchcraft.
- **Pennsylvania Dutch hexcraft** or "**Pow-wow**": When the Germans first arrived in Pennsylvania, Native Americans were there, so the term "pow-wow" to describe this practice may come from observations of Indian gatherings. Pow-wowing includes charms and incantations dating back to the Middle Ages, as well as elements borrowed from the Jewish Kabbalah and Christian Bible. Pow-wowing focuses on healing illnesses, protecting livestock, finding love or casting or removing hexes. Pow-wowers consider themselves to be Christians endowed with supernatural powers.
- **Traditional witchcraft:** Traditional witchcraft often follows science, history and the arts as its foundation. While sharing the same respect for nature as the Wiccan witch (see below), traditional witches do not worship nature nor the god or goddess of Wicca. They contact spirits that are part of an unseen spirit world during rituals. Magick is more practical than ceremonial and focuses greatly on herbs and potions. This sect of witchcraft also has

no law of harming none, but does believe in responsibility and honor. Hexes and curses, therefore, can be used in [self-defense](#) or for other types of protection.

- **Wicca:** Wicca is one of the modern Pagan religions that worships the Earth and nature, and it is only about 60 years old. It was created in the 1940s and '50s by Gerald Gardner. Gardner defined witchcraft as a positive and life-affirming religion that includes divination, herblore, magic and psychic abilities. Wiccans take an oath to do no harm with their magick.

Accordingly, Seims & Whomsley (n.d) while discussing the concept of modern witchcraft have revealed that in the last ten years, the interest in witchcraft from young people has been on the increase. This could partly be attributed to the success of the Harry Potter books and movies as well as the Twilight Saga films and also the influence of 'magical' TV shows such as Buffy, Charmed, and Bewitched; True blood; and Grimm. This has given rise to eclectic Covens of young people casting spells and performing rituals from the numerous books on the subject that are now readily available. Today Witchcraft attracts many people, and in the 1990s it was suggested by the prominent American Witch Silver Ravenwolf, that it was one of the fastest growing religions in America. Indeed, it seems to have also experienced a prolific propagation throughout the UK, Australia and Europe as indicated by its extensive presence on the internet, and the popularity of sites such as 'Witchvox' which is dedicated to uniting Witches and Pagans from all over the world

Indeed, Bolt (2007) in *Living with the Underworld* describes some of the ways in which, partly due to the Internet, witchcraft is becoming more mainstream in the West. 'Ghost-hunters, ghost-whisperers, mediums, spiritists, magicians ("black" and "white"), rocks and crystals, secret names, protective charms and talismans, guiding spirits, past lives, ancestral presences, crossings over, and the list goes on and on.... The underworld beings are undergoing a revival; they increasingly take their place below us, above us, amongst us, and all around us. In that regard, Hegarty (2017) discusses paganism and witchcraft in Australia and reveals that according to the 2016 Census results, there are 15,222 Australians who subscribe to a pagan belief system, and 6,616 practicing Wicca (witchcraft) - numbers that are slightly down from the 2011 census. "One thing that unites practitioners of witchcraft, magic, neo-paganism and the occult is a belief the air is animated with forces - the ocean, the trees - and if you can undertake certain practices and rituals, you open yourself up to be able to communicate with those forces." Contemporary Pagans generally follow

one of the ancient polytheistic religions of Rome, Greece, Egypt or the Celts. Also Taylor (2005) acknowledges in his writing about *supernatural Power Ritual and Divination in Ancient Israelite Society*, that the Bible, in common with the ancient world, recognizes there is ‘a transcendent dimension populated with a variety of immanent spiritual beings’. Certainly, central to witchcraft, then, is the projection of hidden, or covert, power. Although some practitioners find the terms ‘witchcraft’ and ‘witch’ derogatory, equally, there are those who embrace these terms. Indeed, the world of witchcraft is a complex one (Burnside, 2010).

## **2.2 The perception of witchcraft practices vis-a-vis the right to life in traditional societies**

The perception of witchcraft practices is not alien to traditional societies especially in Africa nor is the right to life. Africans relied on traditional healers who were believed to understand how to use natural and supernatural power to assist local members in the community in all aspects of daily life. Mbiti (1975) asserts that in African societies, life is closely associated with blood. So, when blood is shed in a sacrificial context, it implies that human or animal life is being given back to God who is, in fact, the ultimate source of all life. He adds that common routines like “good health, healing, protection from danger, safety in traveling or some other undertaking, security, prosperity, preservation of life, peace and various benefits for individuals” have religious connotations. Mbiti goes on to write that “for the community at large, prayer may ask for rain, peace, the cessation of epidemics and dangers to the nation, success in war or raids, the acceptance of sacrifices and offerings, and fertility for people, animals and crops” (Mbiti, 1975:55-56). In the book ‘Introduction to African Religion’, Mbiti (1977:63-66) argues that,

...in African societies sacrifice was very common and that most, involved shedding of blood of a human being or an animal.” He adds that in African societies, life is closely associated with blood. So, when blood is shed in a sacrificial context, it implies that human or animal life is being given back to God who is, in fact, the ultimate source of all life...

It is no doubt therefore, that the presence of witches and wizards was common among traditional societies. Shorter (1985:8) gives a broader description of the tasks, activities, skills and competencies of an African traditional witch doctor as follows:

...the term is used to refer to traditional diviner-doctors in pre-literate societies, particularly in Africa. Divination is a form of revelation. It goes beyond mere diagnosis, the examination of the patient and the knowledge of natural cures and remedies to include the analysis of dreams, the restoration of mental hygienic

balance and the dynamics of human and supra-human relationships. The healing performed by a traditional diviner-doctor is carried out at various levels and by various means. There may be a greater or lesser proportion of treatment of physical ailments, using herbal remedies. There may be a care and respect for the natural environment and a preoccupation with social reconciliation as a prerequisite for healing. Attention may be paid to the effects of enmity, to cursing, to witchcraft and sorcery, as well as to the intervention of ancestral spirits and non-human or supra-human agencies...

And in order to ascertain their existence, Delius (2001) mentions that there exist published and unpublished records of the Berlin Missionary Society in the Transvaal in the nineteenth century that are sufficiently rich to allow for at least a partial reconstruction of perceptions and practices with regard to witchcraft in African societies. Manala (2004) mentions that the so-called witch doctor is therefore engaged and involved in the broad task of resolving health/illness issues, as well as in predicting the future in order to bring transformation that will improve the conditions of individuals within black African communities. The traditional healer (witch doctor) also has as task and responsibility the healing of relationships that is between fellow humans, people and their ancestors, people and nature spirits, and between people and the environment. The name “witch doctor” does not therefore convey the full spectrum of the role and function of the traditional medicine man/woman-diviner.

Indeed, it is believed that the African world has been interacting between the world of the living and the dead (Masango, 2006). To demonstrate further how witchcraft was and is still ingrained in the very fabric of African life, Grinker, Lubkemann and Steiner (2010:21) refer to an earlier historical time where European seafaring travelers first set foot on the coast of Central Africa in the late fifteen century and it is reported that the local inhabitants saw them as spirits that had returned to the living from their ancestral world somewhere far off the sea. Indeed unexplainable phenomenon is always linked to witchcraft practices.

Furthermore, traditional healers were responsible for ensuring that the right to human life was upheld through rituals and sacrifices in order to appease the gods in case of unexplainable phenomena and also to facilitate the receipt of blessings during good times. In order to emphasize this point, Van Dyk (2001, pp. 60-66) discusses the need to explore further “traditional African perceptions of causes of illness (including AIDS), perceptions of sexuality, and cultural beliefs inhibiting the usage of condoms as described in terms of the influence of the macro-cosmos (the ancestors), the meso-cosmos (witches and sorcerers) and the micro-cosmos (everyday life)”. The

quote by Van Dyk can also relate to present-day as AIDS and condom use are more of topics that can be understood in these times.

On the issue of the right to life in traditional societies, it cannot be confirmed with certainty that this right was observed. It is documented that in Africa, human sacrifice was a practice largely confined to some kingdoms of West Africa, such as Asante, Benin, Dahomey, Calabar and the riverine Ibo, although disregard of human life was much more widespread (Speke cited in La Fontain, 2011:). What is more is the revelation by Evans-Pritchard (1976:33) in his ethnography among the Azande that,

...misfortunate is incipient there is sound reason for immediate identification of the Witch responsible since he can be persuaded to withdraw his with-craft before the matter takes a serious turn. In such cases where the witch cannot find or the situation persists even after the suspected Witch is found, and the intended healer realizing that the situation is beyond his or her control and not wanting to admit defeat perhaps considering how much the patient has so far spent, may then make it difficult for the client by asking for difficult objects sometimes including human parts (say: private parts)...

Also, human beings were sacrificed as offerings to gods and to the dead, particularly dead kings and other elite forebears. In the West African kingdom of Dahomey, a regular ritual of remembrance offered to dead kings, known as the Annual Customs, required the sacrifice of human victims to strengthen the dead rulers' spiritual powers and by showing the filial piety, engage them on behalf of his successor. It also demonstrated the mundane power of the ruler and the legitimacy of his position (Law, 1985), the former function being explicitly recognized by one such ruler, King Kpengla of Dahomey, who explained succinctly the need for human sacrifice to a European enquirer in the 1780s as follows: "You have seen me kill many men at the customs. This gives grandeur to my customs, far beyond the display of fine things, which I buy. This makes my enemies fear me and gives me a name in the bush" (Law, 1985:74).

It is also reported that in Dahomey when human sacrifices were made "to water the graves of the ancestors" they were as much part of their religion as other religious festivals (La Fontaine, 2011:6). The significance attached to human sacrifices added impetus in the whole process of appeasing the gods in traditional societies. In some of these traditional societies like in West Africa, the likelihood of substituting the value of the sacrifice was unthinkable especially if it is presumed that sacrifice had to be in human form. This form of sacrifice does appear as if little value was attached to the fundamental right to life and there were people in societies who decided

who lives and who dies. Those chosen for sacrifice did not have a choice in determining the nature of their fate and had to accept whatever was handed down to them. In cases where individuals served kings and queens, it was mandatory that when the king or queen died, they had to be escorted by among other things – human beings. This was the case in ancient Egypt and many other traditional societies. The socio-cultural and religious value of the sacrifice was linked to the corrective measures or atonement for wrong-doing and in other instances, it would be for seeking blessings (as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014).

Although, it is certain that human sacrifice was practised in some African societies however it is not confirmed entirely whether child and albino sacrifices were part of the required rituals as it is the case in contemporary times. On the other hand, this aspect of child sacrifice as it appears today contradicts traditional reflections upon the place of a child in an African traditional context: it was with joy that a child was (is) born, in many communities it is right from conception. As a child grew the whole village took part, and the various rites of passage, do bring people in the community together (Bukuluki and Mpyangu, 2014). It appears as if these incidences of human sacrifice especially involving children and albinos bring into question the current status of African societies and whether that which used to hold societies together say in the case of Uganda has been eroded. This erosion of values or morals within the present cultural system may have created a huge vacuum that has allowed certain unscrupulous individuals to take advantage of it for personal gratification. It is for this reason that this research study aims to assess individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice drawing on Mukono Central Division.

### **2.3 The perception of witchcraft practices vis-à-vis the right to human life in contemporary times**

Our generation today appears to have not only lost faith in God but many people have now resorted to such social evils involving superstitious practices as witchcraft, sorcery and magic among others. Superstitious practices especially in Uganda are caused and maintained by many reasons including illiteracy, greed, the need for self gratification, to mention but a few.

Superstition primarily represents the underlying inherent fear of mankind, caused by the uncertainties of this world. In a way, it is a sign of acceptance of our ignorance and limitations of our power. Ignorance coupled with the fact that there are so many Ugandans today that are so desperate in many ways and keep regularly running to traditional healers and witchdoctors seeking blessings, special favours among many other reasons so as to save their failing marriages,

businesses, trade and jobs, as well as for treatment for ailments that western medicine is not an option and of course other people go to them seeking for excellence and ability to outcompete their competitors in areas of business, academics, marital bliss, health, to mention but a few. This is true for both men and women and of recent, students and juveniles have been noted to join the trend of individuals involved in evil practices and the influence is noted to be stemming from either their family members, peers, friends while others are being self-driven out of curiosity or as already mentioned, desperation caused by loss of faith and hope.

A great deal of people carries out witchcraft or superstitious practices with strong convictions that they have the duty to carry on the family traditional practices from generation to generation, from one individual to another. It is considered a part of their culture and it is abominable to turn down such a familial responsibility. As has been earlier mentioned, in African societies, knowledge was passed on from generation to generation informally. It is normally transferred from an elder or ancestor to the next generation and such information contains practices, beliefs in the occult, magic, ritual performance, and healing aspects. One, once entrusted with such responsibilities, is not meant to break it. They in turn have to pass it on to their children or grandchildren. The cycle has to continue whether one is using the knowledge positively or negatively to impact on others. For these kinds of practitioners, it is known as family traditionalism or hereditary witchcraft and is a closely guarded practice and secret within a particular family. For such families, magic is such an integral part of their daily lives. The transfer of such powers to a family member is an old practice among cultures of the world especially those that believe in living or even deceased family members' ability to teach one of the newer generations as a way of passing on their familiar spirits to the 'student' family members.

Therefore due to socio-cultural and socio-economic factors that human beings attach to rituals and sacrifice, good health, healing, protection from danger, safety in traveling or some other undertakings, security, prosperity, preservation of life, peace and various benefits for individuals often is in the offing and they carry with them superstitious connotations. Life is closely associated with blood as Mbiti (1975) has already indicated in the previous section of this chapter. So, when blood is shed in a sacrificial context, it implies that human or animal life is being offered to the 'gods' in exchange for all the above-mentioned factors of life. But the taking of human life remains a contentious issue especially in relation to sorcery, magic, bewitching, divination and idolatry among others. Henninger and Eliade (1987:544) states that man sacrifices that which is pure, and

precious bearing in mind that sacrifice carries a connotation of sanctifying or consecrating an object. This consideration reveals further the utmost respect that a human being has for sacrificial objects especially if they involve the use of fellow humans as sacrificial objects.

In fact, it is without a doubt that across large parts of the African continent, beliefs in witchcraft have “run amuck”; the appearance of cases involving witchcraft have increased, and they illustrate one challenge many African countries face (Geschière and Cyprian, 1994:323-324). Consequently, people may decide to go to healers to find not only therapy but also the culturally bound answers to their questions arising from circumstances they cannot easily explain (Whyte, 1997). Whyte (1997) continues to stress that,

...with the importance that society attaches to the work of traditional healers; whatever they say is not questioned. This in most case leave their patients with no other way out in instances where the healer asks for the most pure sacrifice to be offered for the appeasement of the spirits. Children may therefore fall victims to such dogma as human sacrifice may be demanded by the spirits. It provides acceptable answers to people who are attempting to question misfortunes that befell them and their families...

In fact, the obsession with witchcraft in many parts of present-day Africa is not to be viewed as some sort of traditional residue nor should it be regarded lightly. On the contrary, it is especially present in the more modern spheres of society (Geschiere, 1998:811-837).

In the discussion of the dynamics of witchcraft and indigenous shrines among the Akan people of Ghana, Parish (1999:426-447), highlights their contemporary fears about witchcraft as symbolizing moral uncertainties about identity, sociability and materialism. It is rather difficult to ignore the relevance of traditional African beliefs and customs in many spheres of contemporary times. Despite, all the literature that discusses witchcraft practices in Africa, Africa is not the only place where witchcraft is rampant. In the western world, Morrison and Thornton (1999) discuss the belief in witchcraft amongst African-American individuals in the southeastern region of the United States. According to Stafford (2005), there has been a rapid increase in demonic interference as well as the number of exorcisms performed in the United States. The mentioning of the United States is interesting considering that a number of African slaves were shipped to the continent to work in the plantations. These slaves passed on their only knowledge of what they believed in to their own and from generation to generation, there have been opportunities of digging deeper to ascertain the source of their knowledge and what more is there to be known and understood about that aspect that is very much part of their African heritage.



Back to the African continent, documented evidence continues to disclose the belief in witchcraft. Stebbing (1985) while writing about the concepts of salvation amongst the African Independent Churches in Chipinge, Zimbabwe mentions that despite current levels of western education and technological advances among black Africans, the belief in witchcraft persists. Stebbing (1985:172) highlights the fact that the Shona people live amid three cultures, three worldviews, namely the traditional, the Western and the purely Christian one. However, the traditional culture and worldview seem to dominate the African view in illness or health matters. The traditional culture and worldview maintain that sickness is caused by witchcraft. There is no illness of which witchcraft is not the cause. According to Stebbing (1985:172), this traditional view is “said to be in their (Shona people’s) blood.” This is to say that among the Africans, a lot of explanations related especially to illnesses are chiefly linked to the aspect of being an African and possessing a viewpoint that only a fellow African may tend to or supposedly understand. Stebbings (1985) is not the only one to point out this aspect. Mwalwa (1999:6) while discussing the reality of witchcraft where pastors must choose between two kingdoms that are mutually exclusive mentions that witchcraft is NOT imaginary, nor unreal. It is still a strong force in Africa ...”

This assertion is unquestionably discerning and of great importance in a modern and secular situation. It should not be overlooked as irrelevant in the context of Africa because it tends to explain a lot of issues. There is a strong belief among many Africans in occult forces that deemed to exist in order to cause havoc and unsettle individuals’ lives. There are spirits that do not allow for individuals to have peaceful existence in the world. For many Africans, the charms of witch doctors are generally considered more powerful than those of herbalists (Za’li, 1999:5). In relation to this, Ejizu (2002:12) makes the following statement with regard to the measures people take to protect themselves against the actions of witches and wizards: “People protect themselves against their nefarious activities through different kinds of ritual practices including offering ritual sacrifice, making and wearing of charms and amulets.”

In discussing traditional African beliefs and customs: Implications for HIV/AIDS education and prevention in Africa, Van Dyk (2001:61) indicates the following statistics: in rural areas traditional healers indicate that seventy two percent (72%) of cases can be ascribed to witches or sorcerers; eight percent (8%) to ancestors and seventeen percent (17%) to non-mystical factors such as drunkenness and accidents. In an urban area the figures are slightly different, though essentially still indicating a strong causal link between witchcraft and illness: 45% of illnesses can

be attributed to witchcraft or sorcery; seven (7%) to ancestors and forty eight (48%) to non-mystical factors. Even though witchcraft and sorcery are rated lower than non-mystical factors as the cause of sickness and misfortune in an urban area, at forty percent<sup>45%</sup>, the figures remain relatively high.

Still on the aspect of Africans believing in witchcraft practices, Cocks & Møller (2002:387) while referring to the Xhosa people of South Africa, reveal that according to African belief systems, good health is holistic and extends to the person's social environment. Furthermore, Cocks & Møller (2002:387-397) continue to note that, “the protection of infants with medicines which repel evil spirits is a common practice. Consumer behaviours indicate that the range of medicines available is increased by indigenization of manufactured traditional medicines and cross-cultural borrowing”. Moila (2002:23) in dealing with sources of sickness among the Zulu, says: “Angered fellow humans are the sources of the sicknesses which are unto death.” These sicknesses are commonly called “*ukufaokulethweumthakathi*” (which means the sickness that is brought about or caused by the witch).

Essentially, there appears to be a personalistic belief system, which perceives misfortune and illness to be as a result of seen, but more so unseen forces such as ancestors, spirits and enemies (Tabuti et al., 2003).

However, Ekor (2003) is wary of those superstitious practices [that] are the greatest obstacles to the protection, realization of the human rights in many parts of Africa. He goes on to assert that, “even for development to be achieved, superstitious practices of witchcraft must be expunged from the African cognitive space”. This is something next impossible and despite Ekor’s suspicion, there are still more studies that are revealing the significance being attached to witchcraft practices in contemporary Africa. There are individuals who believe that witchcraft practices do play a big part in even development of communities and the country. Igwe (2004) states that in Nigeria, witchcraft is common amongst all ethnic and religious backgrounds and has a controlling impact on the thinking and perceptions of the people whose culture incorporates witchcraft as part of their culture or religion. It does not matter how illiterate or literate/ educated or uneducated/ rich or poor, there are those individuals who fall in these categories who cannot do away with the very aspect of witchcraft practices. A study by Mokhosi and Grieve (2004:301-317) while exploring the perceptions of traumatic brain injury (TBI) among a group of twenty two (22) brain-injured individuals and their caregivers

living in rural African communities reveal that, “most of the participants believed that the accidents considered in this study as well as the injuries they faced were as a result of witchcraft, ancestral anger, God's will or *thwasa*”. It should not be forgotten that much of Africa is still rural or semi-rural and this is where majority of Africa’s population resides.

To further confirm the belief in occult forces in Africa, Manala (2004) while writing about witchcraft and its impact on black African Christians notes that witchcraft, coupled with the negative impact it has on the lives of Africans, including African Christians, is quite horrendous. Christianity in Africa has to take seriously the problem of disorientation or disequilibria caused by the belief in witchcraft among the people of Africa, even those who have embraced the Christian faith.

Suffice to say, Green and Mesaki (2005) write about the pre-dominance of witchcraft in Tanzania. Rodlach (2006:7) while discussing about witches, westerners and HIV refers to a situation in Zimbabwe where Zimbabweans commonly believe that continual bad luck, serious health problems and even death are attributed to occult forces by some who had experienced such suffering. Many citizens consult witch doctors (witches) who normally pose as fortune tellers (Wasswa, 2006) and because they are never questioned, their word is final. The citizens have to dance to the whims of the witchdoctors for fear of being punished or having their projects becoming unsuccessful. It is believed that any discussion on the twin themes of magic and witchcraft is shrouded in ignorance, prejudice and falsification (Akama and Kadenyi, 2006). People assume a position and do not want to be challenged on that. They fear to attract unwanted outcomes because they feel like they are offending the gods or the medium. Most of the witchcraft practices for lack of scientific evidence rides on blind faith thus it is easy sometimes to convince certain sections of people in society that it is the best alternative for their problems or some of the challenges that they face in life.

In addition, Pfeiffer, Gimbel-Sherr and Augusto (2007:688-700) discuss the renewed interest among Africanists on witchcraft and occult activities and that seems to be on an increase with reference from Mozambique where women increasingly seek spiritual help for reproductive health problems from Pentecostal churches, whereas men disproportionately pay traditional healers to engage “occult” practices to manage misfortune related to employment. These examples highlight the importance still being placed on witchcraft practices and what individuals are prepared to do in order to improve on the quality of their lives. There is the aspect of dualism in

that religion which is either Christianity or Islam as the pre-dominant are juxtaposed with the real African religion of our forebears. It is upon such revelations that writers such as Etorobong (2007) express the view that belief in witchcraft is hindering genuine scientific thinking and research. Therefore, as long as this line of thinking is allowed to persist, Africa will not experience a genuine scientific revolution. Akama and Kadenyi (2006) observe that belief and practice of witchcraft has significantly affected social, economic, political and spiritual developments of the Africans.

In their discussion of the psychology of bewitchment, Ivey & Myers (2008:54-74) in their findings of a qualitative study based on interviews with a small sample of individuals revealed that individuals believed they had been bewitched. In their analysis, they further state that, "...those understanding their experience in this way attribute misfortune to the malicious intentions and actions of hated others, who are believed to employ supernatural means to harm their 'victims', with real symptomatic consequences..."

Essentially, when individuals ask the question "Why me?" the traditional healers provide them with answers that are rooted in their socialization processes, cultural expectations and relationships with both the living and the "living dead" (Bukuluki, 2006). This assumption is supported by Wolfgang (2004) and Schnoebelen (2009:2) while discussing witchcraft allegations, refugee protection and human rights where it is revealed that "belief in witchcraft shapes perceptions and provides an answer to 'why me?' when misfortune strikes" "Unexpected hardship or bad luck, sudden and incurable diseases, all can be accounted to the actions of evil people, to magical forces ... the diagnosis of witchcraft opens up the possibility of combating the causes of hardships"

So contemporary is the belief in witchcraft that even the re-known British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World media service publicized allegations of 'child sacrifice' as associated with ritual killings in Uganda to a wider global audience (Caplan, 2010:4-7). The spate of child sacrifices as happening in the country was such a startling revelation that confirmed how serious these acts of child sacrifice were to the wellbeing of Ugandans especially children. It revealed the less appreciation of young lives in the country by certain individuals whose choices involve amassing of and protecting of their wealth or even gaining personal gratification over preserving the sanctity of human life. It further exposed a new dimension to witchcraft practices that is attaching little value to the sacredness of human life. It is reported that rumors of child sacrifice were in the past linked to 'big' projects, such as construction. It was generally said that projects of

this nature required a sacrifice of human blood to be accomplished (MGLSD, 2010). Furthermore, it is believed that

...children are more likely to fall victims to sacrifice and mutilation compared to adults, because they are more easily lured and some people believe that that children are sacred and their body parts contain power believed to be either strengthen the effectiveness of traditional medicine or to address socio-economic misfortunes...(Fellows, 2010; 2013).

According to Bienvenu (2011),

...child sacrifice in Uganda is a really difficult issue to tackle and for many different reasons, we are facing a challenge regarding information available related to the practice, we are dealing with beliefs, there is a common condemnation of the practice but few people undertake it. In terms of social norms and change, this practice is difficult to address...

Indeed, the fundamental core of life preservation is lost and in its place is an incentive for sacrificing involving humans and more so children. The precedence of personal health and material wealth or possessions is greater than having a society whose children grow up to be productive members or even reproduce to extend their bloodlines is lost. It has often been considered that the rich always command more social acceptance than the poor. They have more to give and lose. They tend to have financial interests to protect and a lot of dependants and family members to support. They have more capacity especially financially to facilitate dealings and this strengthens further their resolve to protect their resources even if it means giving offerings. Therefore, the desire to preserve it all for themselves or their family members is greater. This is also normally reflected in both the material wealth and health (particularly human reproductive capacity) - the two always re-enforced each other (as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014). Also to safeguard their riches, some sort of insurance is required. According to Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, (2014), given that child sacrifice is done for protection against anticipated future risks and losses, formal insurance would be the best alternative. However, instead of insuring their properties and businesses through the insurance sector, the business people rely more on superstition and belief in divine protection which involves human, including child sacrifice. This cultural approach to reality poses a huge danger to the lives of innocent people.

Undeniably, witchcraft beliefs continue to play an important role in the lives of many African communities (Petrus, 2011) as people struggle to assert the importance of their lives above and beyond any other living thing. This is contrary to an earlier assertion by Law (1985) that

...the spread of Christianity in territories taken as colonies by European powers, starting with Spain and Portugal in southern America in early modern times, rendered the practice

of human sacrifice immoral and illegal in many areas where it used to be practised. Islam, spreading southwards from North Africa into Africa south of the Sahara, put an end to the practice in the north of many West African states and further colonization by the European powers in the nineteenth century has forcibly ended the practice in the southern areas...(as cited in La Fontaine, 2011:7).

Although reference is made in the Christian and Islamic literature that God or Allah requested Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). In explaining the context in which it happened, the literature does not portray that God or Allah accepted child sacrifice. The request was based on the covenant that God or Allah had made with Abraham (as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014).

Suffice to say, it cannot be affirmed in totality that witchcraft practices involving human sacrifice was completely wiped out of the African continent in contemporary times. The belief in the practice is still strong among many individuals especially in Africa although it has been stated that,

...the colonization of Africa may have suppressed human sacrifice but it allowed for the development in Europe of the myth of ritual murder in another direction. The former existence of human sacrifice in West Africa encouraged the most sinister beliefs about African culture. Events in Africa seemed to confirm these as realistic portrayals. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards there were outcrops of serial killings in different parts of Africa that local people claimed were the work of human beings who had transformed themselves into animals, usually leopards or lions. Given the belief that occurs in many parts of Africa that witches can transform themselves into wild animals for the purpose of killing and 'eating' other human beings, an anthropologist would expect that both the killing and the eating were spiritual rather than actual...(La Fontaine, 2011).

Nsereko et al. (2011:4) while discussing stakeholder's perceptions of help-seeking behaviour among people with mental health problems in Uganda revealed that, "the traditional belief system and cultural explanatory models of mental illness were noted to be very influential in the choice of where to seek help. It was highlighted that mental illness is mostly perceived to be due to witchcraft, curses and evil or ancestral spirits". Bolagi (2011) argues that in Africa it is idle to begin with the question as to whether witches exist or not; as to Africans every category of witchcraft is an urgent reality. The civilized world has largely abandoned the witchcraft mentality and the witchcraft model of explanation of phenomena. Science has explained lots of phenomena and provided us with cure to disease as well as many explanations and very often, solutions to problems that an African hitherto attributes to mystical and magical forces of 'witchcraft'; they

have been surpassed by human invention of technological devices and crafts (Igwe, 2014). Indeed, Bukuluki & Mpyangu (2014:19) do mention that, “the growing influence of the profane discourse, partly explains the sustained belief in spirits, superstition, and witchcraft alongside the dominant religions and modernity”.

Despite the existence and belief in witchcraft practices, inevitably, “everyone has a right to life, liberty and security as a person” and this is proclaimed by Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1945) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The enjoyment of life implies that a person is aware of the value which gives joy to life and how to pursue this, especially being the master of life, as a person in the milieu of community and society” (Bhengu, 1996:64). Human life is a fundamental right a person is inherently entitled to and must freely enjoy without any barriers because they are human beings (Marks, 2004).

Witchcraft on the other hand attempts to threaten this fundamental right through rituals that involve spilling of blood such as the killing of children in order to sustain good fortune, as is the case in Uganda and albinos in Tanzania and Malawi. These ritual killings maliciously snatch away the dignity, peace and security that is meant to be enjoyed by all human beings alike (Tomuschat, 2009). Although human life is considered sacred, it has not always been treated as thus. There are cases where victims’ body parts are taken for medicinal purposes sometimes leaving them alive and in agony as is the case with the albinos. However, murders for body parts are not offerings to any god or spirit but killings for gain: both the client who orders and the magician/sorcerer who prepares the ‘medicine’ profit by the death (La Fontaine, 2011). Also, in the case of Uganda, although the practice of human sacrifice is not new in the mythology around sacrifice in Africa, the practice of child mutilation and sacrifice at least in Uganda was just spoken about as a fairytale. However events that unraveled since the late 1990s shocked the country with real cases of children being mutilated and killed in the context of what is commonly referred to as child sacrifice (Bukuluki and Mpyangu, 2014). It is believed that,

...as society gradually changes, forms of wealth and the way it has been acquired and protected has changed just as the ways in which it is expressed. The forms or ways of securing this wealth has changed from religious sacrifices to more economic and business-oriented forms of physical and human protection... (as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014).

This means that individuals can go to any greater length to protect and preserve their wealth. If by any chance, they consult the traditional witchdoctors, they have to obey whatever the witchdoctors instruct of them otherwise they risk a backlash which none of them would like to experience. In the end, if the demand for human sacrifice in its purest of forms is demanded, children are the likely victims in this regard. Different body parts are requested by the traditional witchdoctors in order to perform particular rituals and it does not matter, how often the rituals have to be repeated, in the end, society will be faced with stories of missing children or children with missing body parts or even children who have been rescued from the clench of death in the hands of these unscrupulous individuals. The belief in the practice makes it the more difficult to break as it is ingrained in the culture of the people and going against one's culture is not something that happens quite often.

Consequently, it is upon this premise that this research will be investigating how people's belief in witchcraft affects the observation of the human right to life, thereby depriving the victims of good health, longevity and a chance to be productive in society as well as reproduce to continue their bloodlines. The respondents drawn from Mukono Central Division will guide the discussion on this topic of the right to life especially in these contemporary times that we live in.

## **2.4 The effectiveness of existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices in Uganda**

Witchcraft practices are deemed to be threatening the right to life in contemporary times and it is at this moment that it is important to discuss the effectiveness of any existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices and preserve, and protect the right to human life. Ritual murders especially child sacrifices have been reported as rampant in Uganda so what does this mean in terms of legislation and policy formulation. Government policy, religious and cultural beliefs may have more, little or no impact on individual perceptions to witchcraft and may encourage or deter the perpetrators of this practice in one way or another.

Suffice to say, any State is mandated to protect its citizens from vices that threaten their wellbeing and welfare. In Uganda, the 1964 Witchcraft Act prohibits acts of witchcraft that involve threatening others with death...“any person who directly or indirectly threatens another with death by witchcraft or by any other supernatural means commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for life.” The Act also prohibits acts of witchcraft “...any person who practices witchcraft or who holds himself or herself out as a witch, whether on one or more



occasions, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years...”(as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014:58).

The law in Uganda is very clear starting with the 1995 Constitution, Article 22 (1) that states that, “no person shall be deprived of life intentionally” (Republic of Uganda, 2000a). In the Uganda Penal Code Act Cap. 120, Section 188 it is an offense of murder for any person who intentionally causes the death of another person by an unlawful act. A child is as per Section 197 of the same Act deemed to be a person and therefore any person who unlawfully causes the death of a child is guilty of murder upon conviction by a capable court (Republic of Uganda, 2000b). Although States are mandated to protect the right to life of their citizens, sometimes it is not the case.

As Wicks (2012) writes “while a state government will not always be required to act to preserve human life, it is required under international human rights law to govern the state in a way compatible with the idea of dignity in human life. This is extended to all individuals in a sovereign state especially the very vulnerable – children.

There has been an enabling environment in Uganda that has influenced the country to adopt human rights instruments to safeguard the life and welfare of Ugandans. Indeed, Uganda has welcomed and adopted all those International and Regional Conventions and Protocols that emphasize the duty of any country to protect its citizens. In this regard, Uganda should be commended for efforts to defend its citizens especially children through adoption of those fundamental instruments that seek to protect children from unscrupulous individual and inhumane conditions. Uganda has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in which Article 6 (1) states that, “Parties shall recognize that every child has the inherent right to life”. It is the solemn duty of the State and communities to value human life and hold anyone who violates this right accountable for any atrocities committed. But the effectiveness of all these laws is yet to be felt as the perpetrators of witchcraft practices especially those involved in ritual killings are discovered, charged and sentenced to serve time in prison. The stiffness of any sentence handed down to the perpetrators may deter many others from committing the same atrocities to humans especially children and other vulnerable groups.

Many existing international laws and UN documents have been created to promote and to protect human life through stipulation of some very fundamental tenets embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - UDHR, (1945) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - ICESCR (1966), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child -CRC (1989). These documents have helped to establish viable legal mechanisms from which nation-states can and have implemented, supported, and assessed effective social structures necessary to provide for appropriate protection of the rights of human beings (Lee, 2013). Article 5 addresses the need to consider the significant role parental guidance can play in influencing the development of the child. The family, both the immediate and the extended community family, can and should be allowed to contribute positively to the evolving capacities of children, a condition that complements Article 6 and its stipulation that the child has an inherent right to life and to healthy development (Lee, 2013).

Still on the global scale, human rights are inherent to the entire human race and are a part of everyday life. The right to life is the most fundamental of them all for without it, all the other rights may not be realized. All human rights are undisputedly indivisible, interdependent and correlated. They all together emphasize human dignity. The main International Treaty on Civil and Political Rights - ICCPR (1966) is very specific about the right to life. It asserts in (Article 4) that, “every human being has the inherent right to life. The Law shall protect this. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his other life... ”. In the same vein, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) (Article 6, 7j) protects the right to life where it amounts to crimes “... against humanity by either direct murder or by inflicting conditions which bring about their death...” This stipulation highlights the need to recognize, beyond a loose symbolic suggestion, not only the fundamental nature of having a right to education but also the instrumental and intrinsic value of this right. By focusing on the need to develop the diverse, evolving abilities of each child, these articles stipulate the importance of promoting and protecting an educational environment that strives to balance the child’s ability with the child’s familial and cultural identity and to be directly relevant to the child’s socioeconomic circumstances.

While many countries (160 parties, as of December 10, 2012) have agreed to the principles embodied in the ICESCR (UN General Assembly, 1966), and most UN-recognized countries (193 parties, as of December 10, 2012) have agreed to the principles embodied in the CRC (UN General Assembly, 1989), the demanding nature of these stipulations has left doubt in the minds of many

about the feasibility—the actual attainability of *universal* human rights and the protection of the right to life. The need to protect the right to life as a human right rests on the notion that we live and exist in a definite moral affiliation to each other. This affiliation should guide our interactions with others in, around and outside of our circles. As humans, we need to make sure that any societal structure should be conducive to human existence and the necessary amenities are in place to foster survival and wellbeing. The CRC is believed to provide a sufficient set of guidelines to assist humanity in understanding this indivisible affiliation between one's existence and interaction in relation to others. There is need to establish reasonable limits to the scope of an individual's claim to basic rights although it is significant that these same basic rights are provided and safeguarded for the good of humanity. Humans should be considered to be right when they demand that their basic human rights are met. It is intrinsically right to ask the State to meet those rights.

Basic rights are collectively indispensable, and such global bodies as the United Nations are called on to challenge statusquos that deny individuals these rights. The international community should participate in any way to see that every individual especially children are protected and given a chance at life. Societies need to create child-friendly environments that will ensure that children are safe from harm and malicious intent. Individual countries around the world need to develop concerted efforts hoped to coordinate and improve local, regional and international efforts to protect children in order to grow them into citizens of countries and the world as they contribute to socio-economic and socio development and evolution.

Besides, the regional and international instruments meant to promote the right to life, Masango (2006) echoes that, “the great wonderful gift that God has given to people is the gift of life. We are therefore charged to manage and take care of our lives. In Africa, self management is closely related to one's world. In other words, how one lives his or her life is part of management of this gift”. Therefore, the practice of witchcraft often violates this fundamental right to life. Witchcraft has been deemed a primary symbol of evil all over the world. The perception people hold about witchcraft makes them fear, hate and wish to eliminate from society those suspected or accused of it (Nyabwari, 2014:9).

Essentially, the root causes of witchcraft practices need to be stamped out to allow for individuals to live freely without fear of losing their lives. It has argued that the practice of human and child sacrifices, just like all other forms of sacrifice, have a long history of practice among

different communities for different reasons whether logical and scientific or not(as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014). This does not mean that less value should be placed on human life and that no one's life is lesser or greater than another. There is need to cherish the gift of life and to avoid situations where life is unceremoniously taken because a certain group of people believe that their reasons far outweigh that fundamental right for anyone to live a long and productive life. It is significant that this cultural aspect of witchcraft practices are re-examined with regard to wealth acquisition and the value of human life. What statutory instruments or individuals can be entrusted with protecting individuals especially children, albinos and adults from vulnerability that will lead to them losing their lives? The aspect of human sacrifice remains a baffling issue and that is why laws that govern nations are worth looking into and in this case, the existing laws of Uganda will be examined for effectiveness in ensuring the observation of the right to human life even in lower government administrative structures such as Mukono Central Division.

Subsequently, the right to life in order to be significant requires a model of legal and institutional reforms that encourage individuals to reflect upon the nature of existing institutions and their capabilities to deliver justice in the case of human sacrifice. The challenge for Uganda in this 21st century is to engage different actors in shedding light on what witchcraft practices are and what they mean in terms of human development. It is vital that the right to life is upheld without prejudicial tendencies.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

All in all, it is worth noting that witchcraft practices are inherent to Africa and totally ingrained in human existence. These practices existed during the traditional times and do continue even during the contemporary era. There exist mixed feelings when discussing witchcraft practices as some individuals are for and against them. However the role of the State, religious and cultural institutions; and educational movements is significant to protect society from the dark side of witchcraft practices which involves ritual murders of mostly human beings.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research design, area of study, study population, sampling technique, data collection methods, data analysis, quality control procedures, ethical considerations as well as the possible limitations to the study before a chapter conclusion is provided.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The study approach was qualitative in nature and the researcher discussed individual perceptions to witchcraft practices among the people of Mukono Central Division. Furthermore, the choice of a qualitative research method was because it “is concerned with the process rather than simply the outcomes or products” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992:31). Qualitative research enables the researcher discover that the “natural and social realities are different and therefore require different kinds of method” (Gray, 2004). In qualitative research, “researchers are not limited to set questions or item responses, and qualitative methods are said to produce “rich and thick” information (Colton and Covert, 2007:11). This aspect brought out the flexibility involved in carrying out a particular research study.

The researcher went out into the field to encounter and interact with the people from whom information was required pertaining to the research questions. Qualitative research believes in the existence of multiple realities and social and cultural phenomena are experienced by individuals, and social science attempts to understand the world as experienced by individuals or groups of individuals through their shared realities (Colton and Covert, 2007:31). Also, “all research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). In other words, the researcher was convinced that “qualitative research is based on the fact that knowledge about reality can only be obtained through ‘the eyes of someone else’” (Jonker and Pennink, 2010:80) which makes the study worthwhile in an effort to discover how people perceive witchcraft practices in the light of the right to life and existing policies in the country.

### **3.2 Area of Study**

The area of study in this research is Colline Village Gulu Ward found within or at the center of Mukono Central Division. It is in this area that the headquarters and home of the former head of the local 'witch doctors', Ben Gulu (R.I.P) is found. People from other parts of the country as well as from around Mukono Central Division still visit this area in order to obtain blessings and advice or solutions for several aspects and challenges in their lives.

### **3.3 Study Population**

The initial primary target population of the study consisted of 51 males and 51 females of whom the representation was to include any adult above eighteen (18) years of age who resides in Colline Village Gulu Ward in Mukono division. The details of how these respondents were identified are outlined in section 3.4 below.

### **3.4 Sampling**

The researcher visited the Mukono District Office in order to obtain records on the number of residents of Colline Village Gulu Ward. The number of respondents to include in the research study is important chiefly because of the need to capture different mindsets on the topic of witchcraft practices and the fundamental right to human life.

#### **3.4.1 Sample size determination**

The researcher then proceeded to select a section of names, making sure to draw from any letter of alphabet. In total 102 residents were selected for the study and questionnaires were administered to them. However only 55 respondents returned the filled out questionnaires and 8 were available for a focus group discussion. In the end, 63 respondents participated in the study. Their responses inform the discussion in chapter four.

#### **3.4.2 Sampling Techniques**

The sampling techniques did not rely on only one gender; and participation in the study was acceptable regardless of age, gender, positions of responsibilities; marital status, educational level, cultural background and religion. As the researcher, the choice concerning the nature of respondents to include in the study rested entirely with them (Kothari, 2004:59).

The researcher's choice of purposive sampling worked well for this research as the subject under discussion was a sensitive one and so handpicking of participants for the study especially in the community was essential. Subsequently, as Somekh and Lewin (2005) state, "cases are

handpicked for a specific reason” (p. 219). The researcher intended to do just that in order to find answers to the set research questions.

A further justification of the choice of purposive sampling was because the researcher targeted religious leaders in the area who are believed to be quite well informed of their flocks’ superstitious practices and their effect on the observation of their right to life and other aspects of the community in this area (Kisilu and Delno, 2009).

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The researcher employed three different instruments during data collection that included questionnaires, focus group discussion and document analysis.

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

This was the main data collection instrument for the study “designed to assist in obtaining factual information as well as to assess beliefs, opinions and attitudes. The questionnaires included both close-ended and open-ended questions that enabled respondents to express their ideas exhaustively and freely (Colton and Covert, 2007:10) thus enabling the researcher to capture multiple realities of the phenomena associated with witchcraft practices in Uganda. Questions were asked in either English and in few instances, the local language of the area was used to clarify on certain questions so that everyone’s contribution was duly captured.

#### **3.5.2 Focus group discussions**

This is another method that the researcher used in order to gather more information about the research topic. An article on focus group by Freitas et al. (1998:2) indicated that “focus group research method is advisable for generating ideas for investigation or action in new fields; for generating hypotheses based on the perception of the participants; to evaluate different research situations or study populations”. In a discussion about interviewing and focus groups, Barbour & Schostak (2005:42) state that, “... the increasing use [of focus groups] by researchers is well justified as they can access group norms and provide insights into the formation of views which cannot be so readily achieved via individual interviews”.

Since the research was about assessing individual perceptions to witchcraft practices, focus group discussions enabled more participants to express their opinion as regards the matter under discussion. The sensitivity of the topic appeared unmentionable to some people and quite alright

for others who were willing to discuss openly about it in public. The researcher relied on many of the participants to willingly volunteer information that generated answers to the research questions.

### **3.5.3 Document Analysis**

The use of document analysis in this research relied on secondary data. The researcher used all written documents and published materials on individual perceptions to witchcraft. Documents that related to witchcraft and its infringement on the right to human life were of particular importance to this study. The sources of information in this case were hard copies and electronic sources as well as written and published documents. Furthermore, Sapsford and Jupp (1996:302) further highlight the significance of document review as “providing valuable data for the analysis of official definitions of what is defined as problematic, what is viewed as the explanation of the problem, and what is deemed to be the preferred solution”.

### **3.6 Quality Control Measures**

For reasons of ensuring the quality of the research study and ensuring absence of minor errors while carrying out the research, validity and reliability of data collected is important. In this case, the researcher discussed with his supervisor about the appropriate instruments to use. On this the researcher also asked some of his classmates to critique his work so as to enable him identify the best data collection instruments and questions to ask. Prior to the actual data collection process, the researcher carried out a pilot study to pre-test the research instruments so as to determine their reliability for data collection. Also, Bullock and Trombley (2000) state that, “the research results should be able to address the research questions as set out by the researcher”. A total of 10 individuals were selected randomly to pre-test the research instruments. They were all drawn from the research site. Five individuals were used in the focus group discussion and the other five were requested to fill out questionnaires. Any question that was either not clear or was causing confusion or was not answered correctly was re-phrased by the researcher in order to capture the objectives for which the study was intended. In a situation where wrong answers were given, the researcher inquired further from the respondents why it was the case. This exercise was helpful in streamlining the final questions for data collection.



### **3.7 Data management and processing**

It is the duty of the researcher to check and clean the data at the end of every fieldwork day. This will in turn also enable the researcher to check for consistency and completeness especially in the case of questionnaires. As for the focus group discussion, the researcher will check to make sure that most of the set questions have been discussed and if there is a likelihood of repetition, the questions are refined in order to answer the research questions.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The researcher coded and summarized key findings from the data to enable identification of emerging themes. Broad categories were developed to explain the ideas and views articulated by all the respondents. Their responses and opinions that materialized were jotted down and linked to the research objectives. The critical analysis of responses guided the nature of findings and their eventual interpretations. Also tables, percentages and reporting verbatim were used to further present and explain the data in chapter four. In the case of focus group discussions, the researcher used verbatim in order to represent correctly the most frequent and similar responses from the participants. Undeniably, the researcher made detailed explanations, interpretations and conclusions through a narrative report enriched with quotations drawn from key respondents and other participants. Indeed, "... the researcher's purpose is not merely to organize data but to try to identify and gain analytic insight into the dimensions and dynamics of the phenomenon being studied..." (Dyson and Genishi, 2005:81).

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical consideration is a crucial aspect of research. The researcher ensured that clearance and permission to carry out research was obtained from the university authorities. The researcher fully explained in advance the nature of the research to all participants and sought their consent to participate without coercion. Therefore, the researcher decided what position to adopt on informed consent. Piper and Simons (2005) do mention the importance of confidentiality and anonymity during research especially when collecting data. Also, the researcher maintained confidentiality as according Kisilu and Delno (2009), it is necessary at all times. It is vital for instance, not to disclose respondents' identity without first seeking their consent. In the ensuing discussion in chapter four the researcher used pseudonyms in reference to some participants so as to safeguard their identity. Essentially, the researcher became responsible for the research work and

contributions to the whole study. The researcher accepted individual responsibility for the conduct of the research and, as far as foreseeable, the consequences of the research.

### **3.10 Limitations of the Study**

The researcher anticipated encountering a couple of problems in this research study. The first reason was that most of the respondents targeted for the research had rather little time for the researcher especially when he was conducting a focus group discussion. This meant that the researcher could not easily exhaust all the questions that were intended for discussion.

Secondly, since there is generally a low reading and writing culture among many of the respondents that the researcher interacted with, some respondents although they preferred to fill out the questionnaires, they did not fill them out completely. When they were pressed for answers, they just simply mentioned that they did not have time and asked for more time in order to fill out the rest of the questions. Even after being given enough time, they still had not attempted to complete the questions. There were instances where some respondents claimed to have misplaced their copies and wanted to be given a new copy each time. All these hindered the proper collection of enough data.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The discussion in this chapter has highlighted the suitability of the chosen methodology. The choice of the sampling technique and research instruments makes presentation of Chapter four possible leading to a discussion of research findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

The study is an assessment of individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice in Mukono Central Division. This chapter therefore presents the study findings based on a set of analyzed variables guided by the research objectives.

#### **4.1 Respondents' demographic information**

In this section, respondents' age, gender, educational levels, marital status and sources of income are discussed.

##### **4.1.1 Age of respondents**

In collecting data, the researcher relied on respondents from the age of 18 and above. In the study, fifty-five (55) respondents were used of which seven (7) respondents (13percent) were between the ages of eighteen (18) and nineteen (19) years; twenty-six (26) respondents (46percent) fell in the age bracket 20-29 years; nine (9) respondents (16percent) were between 30-39; six (6) respondents (11percent) were between 40- 49 and five (5) respondents (10percent) were 50 and above. Two (2) respondents (4percent) did not indicate their age.

##### **4.1.2 Gender of the respondents**

The discussion was open to both men and women and in the study thirty (30) respondents were male and twenty-four (24) were female. One respondent did not indicate their gender.

##### **4.1.3 Respondents' educational level**

The educational levels of the respondents were as follows: Fifteen (15) respondents (27percent) held certificates; Twelve (12) respondents (22percent) were diploma holders; fifteen (15) respondents (27percent) had Bachelor's degrees while two (2) respondents (4percent) were Master degree holders. There were three (3) respondents (5percent) with no qualification and lastly eight (8) respondents (15percent) did not mention their level of education achievement.

#### **4.1.4 Respondents' marital status**

The respondents were requested to state their marital status and it was revealed that twenty-nine (29) respondents were single while twenty-two (22) were married. Three respondents were divorced or separated while one respondent did not indicate their marital status.

#### **4.1.5 Respondents' sources of income**

Respondents' sources of income were diverse – seven (7) were teachers; another seven (7) were businessmen and women while six (6) respondents were farmers. For the other respondents, four (4) were students, one of each were a lawyer, house broker, Chief Executive Officer, driver, engineering intern, shopkeeper, doctor, preacher, witchdoctor. Two (2) respondents were recorded in each of this category of builders, unemployed, footballers and accountants. However there are four (13) respondents who did not indicate their source of income. In the focus group discussion, the 8 respondents were not requested to state their sources of income.

### **4.2 Assessment of individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice by the people**

This section addresses the first research objective by assessing individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice among the respondents. Among the respondents who filled out the questionnaire, fifty two (52) had knowledge of the practice of witchcraft while two (3) did not know about it. In the focus group discussion all the eight (8) respondents were aware of the practice.

#### **4.2.1 Source of knowledge on witchcraft practices**

The respondents who filled out the questionnaire indicated that they knew about the practice from watching television and these were eighteen (18) respondents (33percent) followed by ten (10) respondents (18percent) who mentioned that they came to know of the practice from newspapers. Ten (10) respondents (18percent) learnt it from a friend while another seven (7) respondents (13percent) heard about it from Church. Five (5) respondents (9percent) knew about it from listening to the radio. One (1) respondent (2percent) came to know about it from family members while one (1) respondent (2percent) heard about it from a colleague at work. Three (3) respondents (5percent) did not answer the question. In the focus group discussion, four (4) respondents heard about the practice from Church, over the radio and reading newspapers while four (4) respondents came to know more about the practice from watching the television.

#### 4.2.2 Reasons for practising witchcraft

These reasons are shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Reasons for practising witchcraft**

Reasons for practicing witchcraft	Number of respondents	Percentages
Personal beliefs	11	20
Family beliefs	9	16
Social norms	5	9
Desire for riches	8	15
Search for a better lifestyle	9	16
Personal vendetta	2	4
Marital and family problems	5	9
Curiosity	1	2
Sickness	4	7
No response	1	2
Total	55	100

It is clear from the above table that twenty (20) percent strongly believed that people practised witchcraft out of personal beliefs. Sixteen (16) percent thought that people practiced witchcraft because of family beliefs while another sixteen (16) percent thought that people were in search of a better lifestyle when they practiced witchcraft. In the focus group discussion, five (5) respondents thought that people practise out of the desire for riches. Three (3) respondents thought it was because people had marital and family problems and also because for women, they were jealous of others especially if they want to keep their male partners.

#### 4.2.3 Concern about witchcraft practices

**Table 2: Category concerned about witchcraft practices**

Category that should be concerned	Number of respondents	Percentages
Men only	2	4
Women only	7	13
Married couples only	2	4
Men and women	11	20
Parents	8	14
Youth	2	4
Religious and cultural leaders	10	18
I don't know	10	18
No response	3	5
Total	55	100

In table 2, eleven (11) respondents (20percent) were of the view that men and women should be concerned about the practice. Ten (10) respondents (18percent) thought of religious and cultural leaders while another ten (10) respondents (18 percent) did not know which category should be concerned about the practice. In the focus group discussion, many of the respondents thought religious and cultural leaders should be concerned about the practice followed by the Government, Judiciary system as well as law enforcement officers.

Still in table 2, the eleven (11) (20 percent) who believed that men and women should be concerned about the practice defended their response as follows: *They are both capable of the practice; both are heavily involved in the practice and the desire to become rich fast drives them to the practice. Another response that was echoed by the respondents included some having family problems which they believe they can solve through the practice*

As to why a particular group should be concerned about the practice of witchcraft, these were the responses with particular reference to religious and cultural leaders, the 10 respondents (18percent) explained their responses by stating that: *They [religious and cultural leaders] have the capacity to tell people about the dangers of this practice which is against the Bible. The practice means people don't believe in God. Others are of the view that they are better placed to fight against the practice and ensure peace among people in the community.*

#### **4.2.4 Gender more open to the practice of witchcraft**

In this discussion, twenty seven (27) respondents (49percent) were of the view that both men and women are open to the practice while fourteen (14) respondents (25percent) were of the view that it was only women as compared to three (3) respondents (6percent) who thought it was men. Eleven (11) respondents (20percent) did not know which gender was open to the practice of witchcraft.

For the twenty seven (27) respondents (49percent), it is because *they want to succeed and they believe this can be done through the practice; majority are women but also men as they have similar issues related to poverty, relationships, family & search for riches; and it does not matter who is who as witchcraft appeals to both sexes.*

For the fourteen (14) (25percent) of respondents, it is because: *Women are interested in being loved by the men essentially they are ever searching for husbands; They also have a strong*

*desire for riches and to strengthen their marriages; and they are easily lured into the practice once they have a problem, they do not want to think of other options. Also, women are easily lured into the practice and in turn also involve their men. In a deeper sense, the sample population had more men than women. It is likely that majority of men think that it is women who indulge in witchcraft practices more than men. It could also be as result of educational levels where men more than women can be educated or literate and may not have the time to participate in witchcraft tendencies. The answers could also be influenced by the nature of the age group vis-à-vis their level of education.*

#### **4.3 Increased awareness leads to a decline in the practice of witchcraft**

In this question, thirty (30) respondents (54percent) answered ‘Yes’ and thirteen (13) respondents (24percent) answered ‘No’ while twelve (12) respondents (22percent) ticked the ‘I don’t know’ option. In support of their answers, the fifty four (54) percent of respondents mentioned such reasons as: *Through religious sermons, education & seminars the decline of the practice can take place because more & more people will stop believing in the empty promises of this practice and will feel less threatened; also once someone is exposed, their involvement in the practice reduces. The other reasons also included the fact that some people practice witchcraft because they are ignorant of the outcomes; women spend a lot of time in this practice instead of engaging in meaningful work; once someone is exposed, their involvement in the practice reduces ... People will be exposed and they will stop taking money to the shrines and bewitching others out of revenge; God is the creator and is against the practice so it will lead to a decline as well as other related vices like theft*

For the thirteen (13) respondents (24 percent) who answered ‘No’, it was because of the following: *The more people hear about witchcraft, the more interested they become even if their religious faith is strong; people who are into witchcraft seem to benefit from the practice materially and those who practise it are proud of it and sometimes are born into such families where the practice is strong.*

For the 12 respondents (22percent) who ticked the ‘I don’t know’ option, they had this to share: *That it is on the increase even dogs are being used; it has been in existence for a very long time; and there is no one to sensitize people about the practice.*

When a correlation is made between advocating for increased awareness to witchcraft practices and educational levels; it is clear that the literate and educated members of the sample population are of the view that the more people know about the practice, the less they will indulge in it.

#### **4.4 Age group open to the practice of witchcraft**

In the study, thirty eight (38) respondents (69percent) stated that, it was mostly adults while five (5) respondents (9percent) were of the view that it was young people. Twelve (12) respondents (22percent) did not know which age group was open to the practice. For the sixty nine (69) percent, it was because: *People trust elders/adults than they would young people and adults assume they have more problems that can be solved by the practice. More adults than children tend to visit the shrines. More reasons include the fact that they tend to be concerned about their history and rituals hence the belief in the practice; and that they have different experiences and have often undergone hardships unlike the young ones;*

In the case of the five (9percent) of respondents, it is because: *Most of these want to get rich fast without working hard and they are easy to convince. Meanwhile for the twenty two (22) percent of the respondents, they believe that: People have different reasons for getting involved in the practice so anyone can be lured into the practice; As a child, I was told of the practice in different areas of the country but I really don't believe in it; and Sometimes in the news it is reported that people participate without specifying who exactly.*

#### **4.5 Recommending the practice of witchcraft to friends and family**

Thirty eight (38) respondents (69percent) would not recommend the practice to friends and family as compared to six (6) respondents (11 percent). Four (4) respondents (7percent) were not sure whether or not they could do it and seven (7) respondents (13percent) did not answer the question. In the focus group discussion, all eight (8) respondents stated that they would not recommend the practice to friends and family.

For the 38 respondents (69percent), it is because *it is against God's commandments, it is dangerous and can sometimes lead to death, bring misfortune and bad luck to the family; It also involves bloodshed and it is an evil practice that should not be associated with. Indeed it is not a good way for one to get riches; It is an evil practice; and I don't wish to be associated with this practice let alone recommend someone to practise it.*



For the 6 respondents (11 percent), their views were that *it can assist a friend and it is one way of acquiring wealth and also treating illnesses because some diseases can't be cured by western medicine. Also what stood out was the fact that there mention of 'I have personally benefitted from the practice and so would encourage others to give it a try'*.

In the case of the 4 respondents (7percent), who were not sure, one person stated that, “they *had not recognized its importance*. Such answers as this one point to other characteristics of the sample population like age, gender, source of income and level of education that have to be put into consideration. Among the sample population, they seem to believe that there are other ways other than witchcraft to survive or earn a living. In discussing the first research objective, it is clear that people are aware of witchcraft practices however many of them do not wish to promote it because of its associated outcomes that include death and misfortune.

#### **4.6 People’s belief in witchcraft practices affecting the observation of the human right to life**

This section addresses the second research objective by investigating people’s belief in witchcraft practices as affecting the observation of the human right to life. A number of questions were asked and responses are shared in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

##### **4.6.1The practice of witchcraft vis-a-vis the moral, social and economic wellbeing of people**

Respondents were asked if the practice of witchcraft had improved people’s moral, social and economic wellbeing. Ten (10) respondents (18 percent) stated ‘Yes’ while thirty five (35) respondents (64percent) stated ‘No’. Seven (7) respondents (13percent) ticked the ‘I don't know option and three (3) respondents (5percent) did not attempt the question.

For the 18 percent of the respondents who agreed that the practice had increased people’s moral, social and economic wellbeing, they argued that, *the more people turn to witchcraft, the beneficial it is for them; many of those involved in the practices are wealthy and also people are morally upright*.

Meanwhile for the 64 percent of respondents, some of their answers included the following: *People are forced to do things like killing hence they end up being cursed by the world and have no place to hide and they also do not believe in God; Instead of people earning profitably, they engage in these empty rewards; and witchdoctors make people powerless and pretend to give them riches and how can someone poor become so rich; It is a sign of backwardness in these modern*

*times; People are spending money looking for healing; some are practising it out of jealousy and it is causing enmity. It has done more bad than good; It has brought about more misunderstandings among people than harmony; It has instead worsened people's morals because people have become heartless.*

For the 7 respondents (13percent) who ticked the 'I don't know', it was because of reasons such as: *I have never tried it; I mind my own business and I don't care what people really do; Some people have gained from the practice while others have not; I stay with people who practise Catholicism so I have less interested in witchcraft.*

#### **4.7 The practice of witchcraft threatening the right to life**

Among the respondents, forty five (45) respondents (82percent) agreed that indeed witchcraft has led to an increase in human sacrifice compared to five (5) respondents (9percent) who disagreed and three (3) respondents (5percent) who did not know whether the practice had or not led to an increase in human sacrifice. Two (2) respondents (4 percent) did not answer the question.

The eighty two percent (82%) attributed it to *witch doctors forcing people to kill e.g. their parents in order to acquire wealth hence increasing human sacrifice; and that more and more people are being kidnapped to be slaughtered so that some people can get rich and acquire more wealth; More so the more people are convinced that the practice works, the more likely to kill even their own children ... hence the increase in the cases of child sacrifices; Also, witchdoctors use demons which demand for blood hence the need to kill humans; and the rate at which human life is lost to the practice is alarming just because of the need for self gratification.*

In the case of the 11 percent of respondents who answered 'No' to the question, it is because they believe that *not all witchdoctors demand human life in exchange for whatever a person is seeking and that the witch doctors demand for animals more often than human life. The other repeated response was although I have not seen anyone being sacrificed, I have heard of it.*

#### **4.8 The practice of witchcraft as a gross human rights abuse**

Forty seven (47) respondents (85percent) believed that the practice was a gross human rights abuse; two (2) respondents (4 percent) and another two (2) (4 percent) said ‘No’ and ‘I don't know’ respectively. Four (4) respondents (7percent) did not answer the question. In order to justify their choice of answer, the following was revealed:

*The eighty five percent (85%) of respondents asserted that everyone has a right to live and so killing people means turning against the Creator/God who does not want human sacrifice. Indeed only God has the right to take away human life so people should not be sacrificed simply because someone is looking to become rich. It denies the victim the right to life as given by the creator; it is a threat to life as it diminishes the population numbers. It also brings about tension among people. Most people use their friends for sacrifices;*

#### **4.9 The right of people practising witchcraft to use human beings as sacrifice**

As to whether people practising witchcraft have the right to sacrifice human life, two (2) respondents (4 percent) said ‘Yes’ while forty eight (48) respondents (85 percent) indicated ‘No’. One (1) respondent (2 percent) ticked the “I don’t know’ option while four (4) respondents (9 percent) did not attempt the question.

The reasons given by the 4 percent include a Biblical one that states that, *in the Bible God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son as a test of his faith and that it is the only way they can offer to the gods.* Whilst for the eighty five (85) percent of respondents, their reasons included the following: *It would be alright if they were sacrificing animals but not humans even God cannot reward them positively. Also in traditional times, ancestors used animals and so why should it be that humans are being used now. It is also illegal and is against the Constitution of Uganda. Human life is a treasure and taking it is committing murder thus breaking the 4th Commandment in the Bible of "Thy shall not kill".*

#### **4.10 People’s perceptions on witchcraft featuring prominently in the local media**

Twenty eight (28) respondents (51percent) answered ‘Yes’ while nine (9) respondents (16percent) answered ‘No’. Eight (8) respondents (15percent) ticked the ‘I don't know’ option. Ten (10) respondents (18percent) did not attempt the question. For the 51 percent of respondents, their answers included the following: *It is significant to understand witchcraft the same way Christianity, Islam & others are understood; The more people discuss openly about it, the more*

*likely that they will have a positive mentality that will reduce the occurrence of sacrificing human beings. Also the attention will be shifted to solely thinking about the practice as there is need to shame those who practise it;*

In the case of the sixteen (16) percent of respondents who answered ‘No’, it was because they believed that *the more people discuss this practice in the media, the more the practice will reduce; essentially, some people misinterpret what witchcraft is. Indeed it is a type of religion where people run for answers just like any other religion. There is no need to highlight the issue, people will not listen; People are too silent about the practice and don't want to talk about discouraging others;*

As for the other fifteen (15) percent of the respondents who ticked, the ‘I don’t know’ option, this was because they stated that *it is practised silently and should not be encouraged.*

Indeed witchcraft practices especially the sacrifice of children is noted as a grave infringement on the right to life thus denying the victims a chance to enjoy good health, live long lives, be productive and also reproduce in order to extend their clans.

#### **4.11 The effectiveness of existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices in Uganda**

This section examines the third objective of this study by examining the effectiveness of existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices.

Respondents were asked about the effectiveness of existing laws with regard to this particular aspect, five (5) respondents (9percent) answered ‘Yes’ and forty four (44) respondents (80percent) answered ‘No’. One (1) respondent (2percent) ticked the ‘I don’t know’ option while 5 respondents (9percent) did not attempt the question.

For the nine (9percent) of respondents, they believe that *they have tried to punish those who have been involved in the practice but it has had little effect.* For the eighty (80) percent of respondents who answered ‘No’, it is because they believe that *there are no strong laws in the country to stamp out the practice hence those who practise it are arrested when they break the law and then released eventually thus returning to the same practice. They also state that it is an individual right to practise witchcraft even some lawmakers are known to indulge in the practice.*

*The arrested criminals believed to be practising witchdoctors are often released and they tend to resort to the same thing over and over again.*

#### **4.12 The active role of religious leaders in changing people's perceptions on witchcraft practices**

A total of forty-five (45) respondents (82percent) agreed that religious leaders should play an active role as compared to three (3) respondents (5percent) who answered 'No' and one (1) respondent (2percent) who did not know. There were six (6) respondents (11percent) who did not attempt to answer the question.

The most outstanding responses by the forty five (45) respondents (82percent) include the notion that *it is the work of religious leaders to change people's perceptions and to preach about the existence of God; if they keep condemning the practice, people will change their views about it since no good comes out of it. They should just join hands with the witchdoctors; the word of God is strong and it can change people's minds about the practice; it is a cultural practice and these leaders know how to address the problem; many people are believers in the Christian and Islamic faiths so the leaders should take this opportunity to talk about the dangers of witchcraft.*

For the 5 percent of respondents who indicated 'No', their reason was that *some of the religious leaders are involved in the practice.*

#### **4.13 The active role of cultural leaders in changing people's perceptions on witchcraft practices**

Forty (40) respondents (73percent) answered 'Yes' to the question on the active role of cultural leaders while six (6) respondents (11percent) answered 'No'. Three (3) respondents (5percent) ticked the 'I don't know' option while six (6) other respondents (11percent) never answered the question.

The most outstanding response given by the 73 percent of respondents included the belief that *cultural leaders know better about the practice ... many of them head witchcraft practices in their clans and families; and are respected therefore, people can listen to them especially in the local communities as they have the ability to sensitize people on the good and bad sides of the practice. They can tell the public the good and bad sides of witchcraft; witchcraft is not a bad practice but it becomes bad when people misuse its benefits. Also, cultural leaders can highlight this aspect; people respect these leaders so they have the ability to condemn the negative aspect of the practice.*

For the 11 percent of respondents who ticked ‘No’; they reasoned that *cultural leaders are the same ones who believe that the practice is real and encourage others to practise it ... because they are not only the heads of the practice; they are essentially there to implement the laws of the witchdoctors.*

#### **4.14 The active role of political leaders in changing people’s perceptions on witchcraft practices**

A total of thirty-five (35) respondents (64percent) answered ‘Yes’ to the question about political leaders taking an active role while seven (7) respondents (13percent) answered ‘No’. Five (5) respondents (9percent) ticked the ‘I don’t know’ option while eight (8) respondents (14percent) did not answer the question. For the 64 percent of respondents, they believe that *they can organise to arrest some of the witch doctors as they make people lazy and they don't want to contribute to their communities; by creating more income generation opportunities for people so that they are not lured into the practice for want of riches; it would be for the wellbeing of the people they claim to be leading; they can influence a Bill in Parliament that can ban witchcraft practices in the District; people can listen to them as they are influential in the country.*

In the case of the 13 percent of respondents who answered ‘No’, it is because they believe that *political leaders are not concerned; they are only after politics & money and are not concerned about other issues. Witchdoctors are some of their voters so they do not want to offend them by speaking out against them. Also, they should just assist the witchdoctors to do their work and understand that God is one although beliefs differ;*

In discussing the third research objective of this study, it is clear that the role of any government policy, religious and cultural beliefs in promoting or banning witchcraft practices from affecting the right to life is not easy.

#### **4.15 Focus group discussion**

The focus group discussion had eight (8) respondents whose responses were guided by 6 questions influenced by the three research objectives.

#### **4.16 Understanding of the term witchcraft**

Respondents understood witchcraft *as medicine that is administered in secrecy and it carries with it strict instructions or conditions that a person has to adhere to. It is also a practice that was used by our ancestors in the African Traditional Societies before the coming of the Europeans. Witchcraft in the traditional societies was used for the treatment of various ailments. In today's society, there are individuals who claim to have inherited the practice and skill from their ancestors that they now use to earn a living. However, whether they are genuine or not, those who call themselves witchdoctors have decided to combine different traditions and approaches from different parts so exploit people's naivety as they seek their services. Witchcraft was a practice used to treat people in traditional societies but nowadays, it is used to harm people. It is now identified with bewitching individuals rather than treating them. It is more about sacrificing human life for the good of a few who are interested in self-gratification. It is a practice that treats certain individuals when they are sick and western medicine has failed to cure them. All in all there are different understandings of what witchcraft is although now this practice is now seen as threatening the sanctity of humanity as well as the solemn right to human life.*

#### **4.17 Why do people practise witchcraft?**

Respondents noted that *people are convinced that witchdoctors can communicate with the other medium and the results are immediate. Whereas if they pray to God whom they have never seen with their naked eyes, they take long to receive communication back from God. Witchdoctors have in turn discovered that people are after receiving immediate response for their problems therefore, they use logic to convince them to believe in the practice. Indeed, people are easily lured into the practice and once they are convinced that certain witchdoctors can fulfill their desires, they strongly follow their instructions. Also, witchcraft practices thrive on beliefs and once people are convinced that it is surest way to power, wealth, good health and wellbeing then they will visit the shrines and seek the services of the witchdoctors.*

#### **4.18 The advantages and disadvantages of practising witchcraft**

Respondents outlined some of the advantages of witchcraft practices as: *if an individual has been sick for a long time and gets cured by the witchdoctor, then they tell the whole world about the witchdoctor's magic; and also for those who want to get rich fast, if they visit the shrine to consult the witchdoctor and later on follow the instructions as provided by the witchdoctor to acquire wealth which wealth once acquired quickly then they will consider that as an advantage.*

On the notable disadvantages of the practice, respondents agreed that *witchdoctors instill blind faith and fear in people so that they believe in what they can do including having the ability to heal the sick from terminal illnesses such as cancer, HIV, etc; People waste a lot of time and resources in the practice, which sometimes does not yield fruitful results; ignorance is what pushes many people into the practice; young people are easily lured into the practice thinking of becoming rich fast without labouring so much and witchcraft practices do not have sophisticated equipment to detect and diagnose diseases such as cancer.*

#### **4.19 Protecting the right to life from witchcraft practices**

Respondents were of the view that there should be *mass sensitization of people both the young and old right from the grassroots level; training of witchcraft practitioners and setting the minimum standards for practice; the need to emphasize the fact that all people should know about their ancestry and respect the value of human life. Elders need to instill in children a positive mindset with values. There is need to identify individuals to assisting in ending the practice such as teachers, parents, religious leaders, the President of Uganda, doctors, officers of the law, agencies and organizations as well as the media. People should be encouraged to develop empathy for one another such that they do unto others what they want done to them. Explore different avenues for empowering individuals socio-economically; revise the Witchcraft Act to include penalty for taking a life is also death. Notwithstanding, cultural leaders such as the Kabaka of Buganda should call upon his subjects to refrain from the practice of witchcraft and condemn any acts that devalue human life. It is believed that the Kabaka is never challenged or disobeyed.*



#### **4.20 Controlling and regulating witchcraft practices through the laws of Uganda**

Controlling and regulating witchcraft practices is one effective way of curbing vices that stem from the practice. The respondents overwhelmingly supported the notion that *there is need to register all practicing witchdoctors so that a database is created with each and everyone's expertise; practicing licenses need to be issued, as is the case in the medical field and renewable annually; witchdoctors should pay taxes especially at the District and if one defaults, they should be imprisoned on top of paying a hefty fine; The laws of Uganda need to be strengthened so that they deal harshly with offenders especially in the cases of human sacrifice; constant re-assessment of knowledge and skills needs to be conducted as well as refresher trainings; Standards for the profession have to be set so that if one falls below what is expected, he/she is penalized.*

#### **4.21 The influence of religious beliefs in controlling witchcraft practices**

In discussing this aspect, respondents mentioned that *Christianity does not support witchcraft practices. It is stated in the Bible that the God we serve is a jealous God and so you cannot be practising witchcraft and at the same time praying to God. You have to choose a side to be on. However, that is not to say that there are no religions that support the practice of witchcraft. There are some religious leaders who have shrines in their places of worship. Therefore, religious leaders have the power to sensitize people on the correct path that follows the 10 commandments and to lead by example so that it is easy for their flock to follow them.*

On the part of religions, it is documented that sacrificing evolved and spread with the development of various religious practices (Narasimha, 1998). The paradox still remains that traditional healing and illness explanations, and beliefs in spirits have continued to thrive alongside Christianity and modernity (Bukuluki & Mpyangu 2014). Some people may pretend to denounce witchcraft practices while in public but in the private sphere, they continue to strongly support the practice. Earlier K'Amolo (2003) mentioned that, witchcraft is prevalent among many Christians in Africa, who have been characterized as 'holding the Bible by day, seeking oracles by night'. This brings in another point revealed by Burnside (2010) that Concern has been expressed by scholars at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) that, by dismissing witchcraft as superstition, the church has not been pastorally effective in responding to those caught up in witchcraft practices, driving them further into the arms of witchdoctors.

## **4.22 Concluding remarks**

This chapter has presented the data from the study drawn from questionnaires and a focus group discussion. The discussion and responses as discussed were guided by the research objectives and conceptual framework. The next chapter draws on from this to discuss, conclude and make recommendations.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This research study has assessed individual perceptions to witchcraft practices as a common practice in Mukono Central Division. In this chapter, discussion of the study findings will be carried out and conclusions drawn. Recommendations will be suggested based on the research objectives that can promote a peaceful co-existence between witchcraft practices and the right to life.

#### 5.1 Discussion

The discussion is about individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice, people's belief in witchcraft as affecting the observation of the human right to life and the effectiveness of the existing laws and policies in ensuring the observation of the right to life.

##### 5.1.1 Individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice

This study reveals that respondents have a high knowledge of witchcraft practices (see chapter 4.2). Respondents have one or multiple sources of information on witchcraft practices (see chapter 4.2.1). This implies that they are aware that the practice exists in their community and there are several reasons as to why people engage in the practice. This revelation supports the concept presented in chapter 1.1.1 that African people are aware of the existence of witchcraft as a way of life for some people (Ashforth, 2005). However, the most outstanding reason was associated with the desire for riches (see chapter 4.2.2). It also supports the earlier notion that witchcraft practices is not a new subject but has been around for ages (see chapter 2.1 in particular the writings of Burns, 1785; the Witchcraft Act of 1735 in England; Davies, 1999; La Fontaine, 1997; Geschiere, 1997; Ashforth, 2001; Delius, 2001; Masango, 2006; Grinker *et al.*, 2010). On assessing individual perceptions on witchcraft, majority of the respondents were aware of who should be concerned about the practice and religious and cultural leaders (see chapter 4.2.3) were overwhelmingly singled out as a category that should be concerned about the practice. On which gender seemed more open to the practice, it was difficult to state whether it was mostly men or women. However, both men and women were deemed to be involved in the practice (see chapter 4.2.4). This is contrary to what Geschiere (1998) writes in reference to witchcraft practices as being present in the more modern spheres of society as well as Bolt (2007) who mentioned

witchcraft practices as becoming mainstream especially in the west where it had been outlawed in previous centuries. As to whether increased awareness of the practice would lead to its decline, majority of the respondents thought so while others were not sure about it (see chapter 4.3) to the point that they would not recommend the practice to friends and family because It is dangerous and can sometimes lead to death and also it brings misfortune and bad luck to the family (see chapter 4.5).

### **5.1.2 People's belief in witchcraft practices affects the observation of the human right to life**

In this section, the key issues revolve around respondents' belief that the practice of witchcraft has not increased the moral, social and economic wellbeing of individuals (see chapter 4.6) in fact it has increased the need for human sacrifice thus threatening the right to life (see chapters 1.2.1 and 4.7 respectively). This revelation supports Mbiti (1977)'s writing on how life in African societies is closely linked to blood. Reference is also made to the same by Whyte (1997) of the need for the sacrifice to be pure and thus children are more likely to follow victim of such a notion. On the issue of economic well-being, it is believed that "the sacrificial items are goods of great economic exchange in the sense that they bring economic returns to those involved in the transaction. The processes that may lead to the acquisition and at times sacrificing of child may be coated in economic motives both on the side of traditional healers or their agents and those seeking favours" (as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014).

Indeed, respondents believe that the increase in human sacrifice especially child sacrifices is a gross human rights abuse as life is sacred and that those who partake of it do not have the right to use human beings as sacrifice. The right to take a life is a reserve of God as the Creator and the only Supreme Being who gives life and at the same time takes away human life (see chapters 4.8 and 4.9 respectively). Masango (2006) asserts that "Africans are connected to God as much as creation is part of God". On the other hand, in Chapter 2.2, it has been revealed that it cannot be confirmed that the right to life in traditional African societies was observed. Therefore, taking of human life through sacrifices to the gods as performed by witchdoctors may not be a new phenomenon. It has escalated in recent times with the uptake of child and albino sacrifices (Uganda Police Crime Report 2008; ANPPCAN, 2009; Fellows, 2013 and Onyulo, 2017). Overall, the respondents in the study believed that people's perceptions on witchcraft should feature prominently in the media (see chapter 4.10) so that many people can come to know about the practice leading to its decline. It is also presumed that with the spotlight being put on the

positive and negative aspects of witchcraft practices may be many people may consider seeking out the positive aspects rather than the negative ones. Sometimes, the treachery and fraud by traditional healers is also shrouded in economic incentives though strongly attached to people's cultures and value systems. Many people believe in supernatural powers (as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014) and once the witch doctors or traditional healers notice that of their clients, they may use in a negative way whereby they force their clients to commit such wrongs as kidnapping and sacrificing innocent lives. Indeed innocent children and persons die amidst the fraud system set in place by the traditional healers to trap their clients (as cited in Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki, 2014).

### **5.1.3 The effectiveness of existing laws in regulating witchcraft practices in Uganda**

There are statutory instruments as discussed in (Chapter 2.4) that stress the right to life and the need to protect that right to life even from practices such as witchcraft. In Uganda, the 1964 Witchcraft Act prohibits acts of witchcraft that involve threatening others with death...“any person who directly or indirectly threatens another with death by witchcraft or by any other supernatural means commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for life.” The Ugandan 1995 Constitution, Article 22 (1) that states that, “no person shall be deprived of life intentionally” (Republic of Uganda, 2000a). Also in ratifying such Conventions as the one on the Rights of the Child in which Article 6 (1) states that, “Parties shall recognize that every child has the inherent right to life”, the country has good intentions of protecting their citizens and also to conform to international statutory instruments to further strengthen its resolve to preserve the right to human life. The main International Treaty on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is very specific about the right to life. It asserts in (Article 4) that, “every human being has the inherent right to life. The Law shall protect this. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his/ [her] life... ”. Despite its vivid commitment to protect its citizens and to promote the right to life, the effectiveness of the existing laws in the country pertaining to ensuring the right to life for all people was assessed. This study found out that the laws were not quite effective in protecting the right to life. In fact some of those who practise witchcraft have been known to sacrifice human life but they were never severely punished (see chapter 4.11). In the absence of effective laws and policies, respondents were asked if religious, cultural and political leaders could play active roles in changing people's perceptions on witchcraft practices. Majority of the respondents overwhelmingly supported the notion because for religious leaders, people do actually listen to them when they preach. A lot of people do respect

their religious leaders and seek counsel from them when they are faced with dilemmas in their lives. They wield a considerable amount of influence on their flocks and it would be very difficult for an individual not to listen to their religious leader. In the case of cultural leaders, it was stated that they can sensitize communities on the good and bad side of witchcraft and also restrain some of those witchdoctors who are spoiling the practice. A case in point was given of the King (*Kabaka*) of Buganda. He is believed to be an authority that is never questioned. No one would dare go against the word of the *Kabaka*. If the *Kabaka* urged his subjects to vigilantly denounce witchcraft practices especially involving human sacrifice, they would listen and they would even look out for any wrong doers and have them punished. In the case of political leaders, it was assumed that they are elected representatives of the people who could play a big role in enacting laws that would clamp down on those dubious individuals who resort to human sacrifice (see chapters 4.12; 4.13 and 4.14) accordingly. Political leaders represent their constituencies especially in Parliament so if they put their deliberations together to enact laws that protect human life and severely punish those who take it away, then the laws would be effective. It would also serve as a warning sign to those that commit the crime of taking human life that once discovered; they face the death penalty for example. Sen recommends that, "...one of the characteristics of human agency is the ability to scrutinize and re-examine our values and priorities in light of fresh information and new understanding. The process of institutional reform depends on such scrutiny and critique..." (Sen and Anand, 1996). Therefore, for action to be undertaken to tackle the aspect of human sacrifice, effective leadership and laws in Uganda should be able to duly impact positively on society in that it is clearly known that protection and preservation of human life is a paramount right that everyone ought to enjoy and this right should not be cut short by dubious intentions harboured by some individuals. Indeed, having rights is only effectual in providing an acceptable standard of living for individuals in society if those individuals have the ability to use that right for their own benefit and that of others. Consequently, to call for a local, regional and global implementation of the right to life, there has to be a steadfast dedication to ensuring that individual human rights especially vulnerable groups like children and albinos are protected in order for them to stand a chance at a life and a future. This calls for an in-depth analysis of the laws and norms that guide society with regard to human life. Also, there is need to develop and appreciate more affluent measures that safeguard the right to life. Indeed, like in all States around the world, the commitment to protecting the right to life should be real and solid and not only

remain on paper. Resources (politically, socio-economically and socio-culturally) need to be allocated to ensuring firmer and functional solutions that will defend the right to life of children and other vulnerable groups that are the target of human sacrifice.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion this study has revealed that majority of respondents have different perceptions of witchcraft practices. Their knowledge levels of witchcraft practices are drawn from different information sources. In the study, there are no specific individuals who conform to the practice and regardless of gender, age, sources of incomes or socio-economic standing, anyone can engage in this practice for different reasons. Awareness of the practice also meant that very few individuals would actually recommend people they know to try it out. The role of the media in shedding a spotlight on the practice is a welcome opportunity since the laws in the Uganda have been noted to be ineffective in totally curbing the dark side of the practice. Also, the active role of religious, cultural and political leaders is deemed instrumental in increasing awareness about the practice. This in turn would protect innocent people from losing their lives thus upholding the right to life. Individuals in societies especially children and albinos would then stand a great chance of living a good long life and be productive members of society without worrying about the evil that can befall them. It is also important that society re-evaluates the cultural meaning of life and wealth there by drawing on the fundamental values of life especially human life. Life especially human life is sacred and it deserves to be protected or preserved. The study underscores the importance of preserving life as a God given gift therefore there should be effort by leaders and community members to raise awareness about the dark side of witchcraft practices and to let people know that witchcraft practices as they were understood in the traditional times is not the same in today's world. The notion of witchcraft has taken a different connotation and there are those individuals who believe they deserve much more than others and in order to achieve what they want, others have to pay the price for that. In most cases, the highest price of human life has been paid. This is against what God intended for humanity and it should be emphasized that to take a human life should remain solely the reserve of the Almighty God.

### 5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the study objectives and findings.

1. In assessing the individual perceptions to witchcraft as a common practice by the people of Mukono Central Division, it is clear that the practice of witchcraft is not a new phenomenon as it was practised by our ancestors in the African traditional societies and passed on over generations. The value that was attached to witchcraft then is different from the one today. Therefore, concerted efforts are required to promote the positive side of witchcraft and sensitize communities on the negative side of the practice. It is without a doubt a sensitive topic to discuss because most of the dealings are performed silently.
2. Also with regard to the first research objective, it is therefore significant that other studies be carried out in the same area in order to compare information on the practice as practised by different individuals from the different regions of the country.
3. In investigating how people's belief in witchcraft affects the observation of the human right to life in the area, it is clear that the threat to the human right to life is true and children and albinos are the most notable segment of our society that are vulnerable to malicious intentions of individuals wishing to benefit more from witchcraft practices. Therefore, there is need for close collaboration between religious, cultural and political leaders. There is need to hold dialogues in communities involving all leaders (religious, cultural, political and opinion) and create a network entrusted with protecting the community and offering ways to avoid being victims of such sacrifices and unscrupulous individuals. The more outspoken they are of the negative side of the practice, the more people will listen and perhaps revert from the practice thereby giving people especially children and albinos a right to enjoy good health, longevity and become productive members of society as well as have a chance to continue their bloodlines.
4. Education awareness seminars need to be organized to raise awareness about human rights especially the rights of vulnerable groups such as children, albinos and many others. Once community members understand that sacrificing of human life does not necessarily led to wealth then the trend of thought about using human sacrifice will be brought into question and everyone will be vigilant to stand for what is right in a bid to stamp out this evil practice. In turn this vigilance may give birth to positive thinking and change in society.



5. While examining the effectiveness of the existing laws and policies in ensuring the observation of the right to life in Mukono Central Division, the study revealed that the laws in Uganda are not effective enough to punish the offenders who engage in human sacrifice. It is there important for the legislative and judicial arms of Government to work with local communities to find appropriate solutions and punishments for those who sacrifice human beings.
6. The driving force behind child and albino sacrifices has had a lot to do with economic wealth either in the form of preserving that which has been acquired or people seeking to escape poverty. Indeed nowadays there are different ways that people can escape poverty or grow their wealth. Financial institutions have come up with approaches to guide people into wealth creation. Besides gainful employment, savings or investment clubs can assist people acquire more resources to better their lives. It is important that positive approaches related to wealth creation are promoted so that shortcuts to get rich quick schemes are avoided that lead people to carry out desperate measures involving sacrifices of human beings.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM

### UGANDA MARTYRS UNIVERSITY

#### AN ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS TO WITCHCRAFT AS A COMMON PRACTICE IN MUKONO CENTRAL DIVISION

##### *Consent Form for Participants*

I have read the Information Sheet for Participants for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Information Sheet.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet form.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

### UGANDA MARTYRS UNIVERSITY

Dear respondent, my name is **Simon Peter KYEYA**, a student pursuing a Master's degree in Human rights at Uganda Martyrs University. I am doing a study on the assessment of individual perceptions of witchcraft as a common practice in Mukono Central Division and I will greatly appreciate if you can take a few minutes to answer the questions in this study. Thank you.

#### Section A: Bio data (Please indicate your response by ticking)

1. Age .....
2. Gender    Male .....Female .....
3. What is your highest completed education level?  
Certificate .....          Diploma .....Bachelor .....          Masters .....
- Other (please specify).....
4. What is your marital status?  
Married .....    Single .....    Widowed .....          Divorced/Separated.....
5. What do you do for a living? .....
6. For how long? .....

#### Section B: Assessment of individual perceptions of witchcraft as a common practice in Mukono Central Division (Please indicate your response by ticking and explain)

7. Do you know about the practice of witchcraft in Mukono Central Division?  
Yes .....          No .....
8. Where did you learn about this witchcraft practice in Mukono Central Division?  
Newspaper .....    Radio .....    Television .....          Church .....
- A friend .....          A colleague at work .....          Family members .....
9. Which of these do you think are the major reasons why people practice witchcraft in Mukono Central Division?  
Personal beliefs .....    Family beliefs .....    Social norms .....    Curiosity .....
- Desire for riches .....    Search for a better lifestyle .....    Personal vendetta .....
- Marital & family problems .....    Sickness .....

**10.** Who should be concerned about the practice of witchcraft?

Men only ..... Women only ..... Married couples only .....

Men & women ..... Parents ..... Youth .....

Religious/ cultural leaders ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer  
.....

**11.** In your opinion, which gender is more open to the practice of witchcraft in Mukono Central Division?

Men only ..... Women only ..... Both men & women .....

I don't know .....

Please explain your answer  
.....

**12.** Do you think that increased awareness about the practice of witchcraft in Mukono Central Division will lead to its decline?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer  
.....

**13.** In your opinion, which age group is more open to the practice of witchcraft in Mukono Central Division?

Young people only ..... Adults only ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer  
.....

**14.** Would you recommend the practice of witchcraft to your partner, family or friends?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer  
.....

**15.** Do you think that the practice of witchcraft has improved people's moral, social, and economic wellbeing?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer  
.....

**16.** Do you think that the practice of witchcraft has increased human sacrifice threatening the right to life?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer  
.....

**17.** Do you think that the issue of human sacrifice is a gross human rights abuse?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer  
.....

**18.** Do you think it is right for people practising witchcraft to use human beings as sacrifice?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer

.....

.....  
**19.** Do you think people's perceptions towards witchcraft should feature prominently in the local media?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer

.....

**20.** Do you think the laws of Uganda are effective in curbing down the practice of witchcraft?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer

.....

...  
**21.** Do you think that religious leaders should take an active role in changing people's perceptions on witchcraft?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer

.....

**22.** Do you think that cultural leaders should take an active role in changing people's perceptions on witchcraft?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer

.....

**23.** Do you think that political leaders should take an active role in changing people's perceptions on witchcraft?

Yes ..... No ..... I don't know .....

Please explain your answer

.....

**Thank you for your input, and your time.**

### **APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

1. What is your understanding of the term witchcraft?
2. Why do you think people practise witchcraft?
3. What some of the advantages and disadvantages of witchcraft?
4. How can we protect the right to life from witchcraft practices?
5. Where in the laws of Uganda can the practice of witchcraft be controlled and regulated?
6. What influence has your religious belief had on the control of witchcraft?

**APPENDIX V: PROPOSED WORKPLAN**

No.	Activity	2015			2016											Person responsible
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	
1	Identifying a topic and writing a proposal															Researcher/Supervisor
2	Literature review															Researcher
3	Identifying a research site and asking for permission to research															Researcher
4	Developing a data collection tool															Researcher
5	Piloting the data collection tool															Researcher
6	Identifying the sample size															Researcher
7	Seeking consent from respondents															Researcher
8	Data collection, presentation, analysis and discussion															Researcher
9	Final dissertation write up															Researcher

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