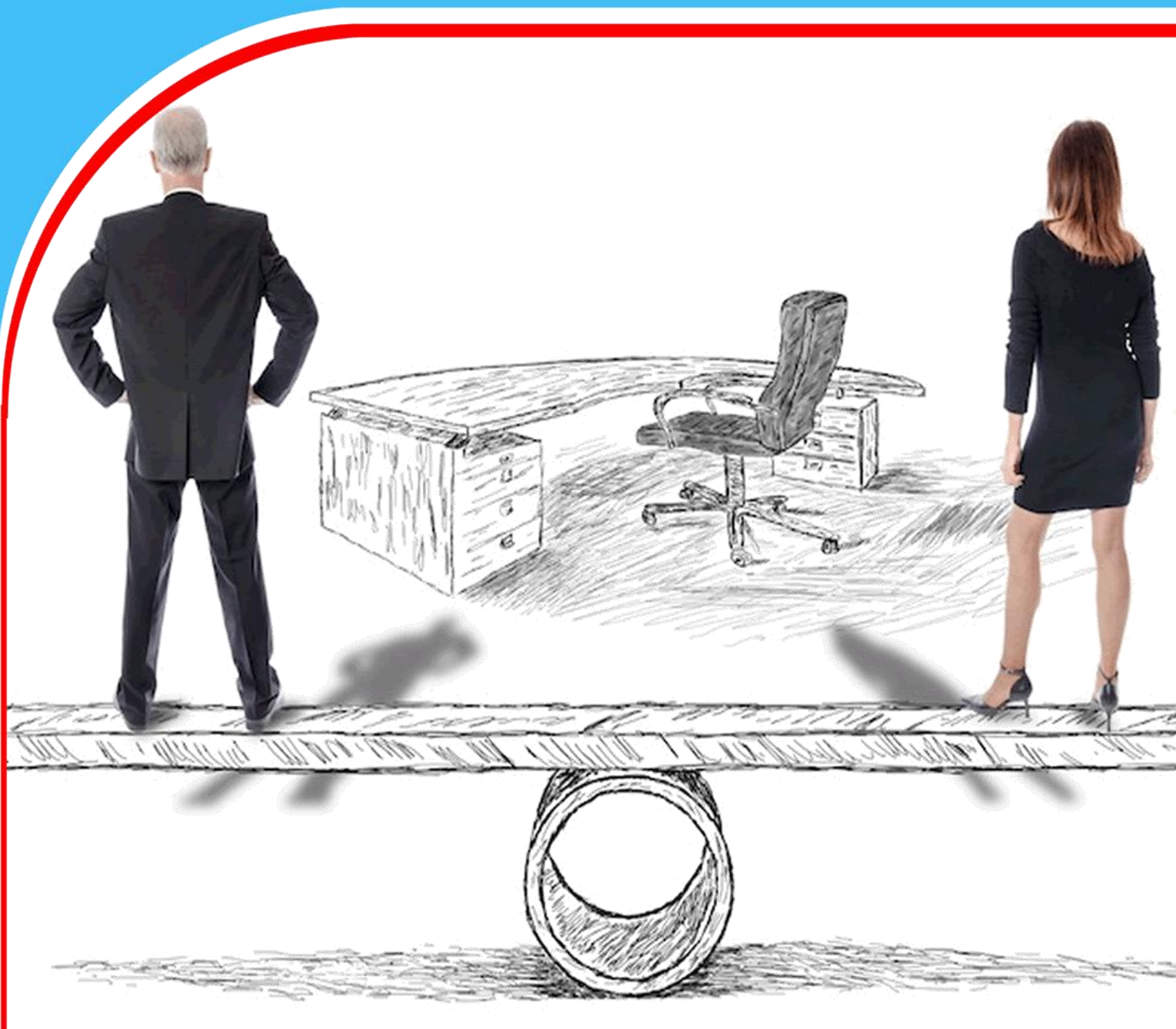


European Journal of Gender Studies (EJGS)






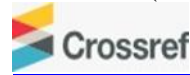
**Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts and
Their Role in Mitigating Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo
District, Uganda**

**Nansamba Hadijah, Dr. Stella Kyohairwe, Dr. Nyenje Aida
Lubwama**



Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts and Their Role in Mitigating Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo District, Uganda

 Nansamba Hadijah^{1*},  Dr. Stella Kyohairwe² &  Dr. Nyenje Aida Lubwama³
¹Mountains of the Moon University and Uganda Management Institute, Kampala, Uganda,
^{2,3}Uganda Management Institute (UMI), Kampala, Uganda



Article history

Submitted 28.11.2024 Revised Version Received 30.12.2024 Accepted 27.01.2025

Abstract

Purpose: The study assessed the impact of institutionalizing semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs) on mitigating gender-based violence (GBV) in Bundibugyo District, Uganda.

Materials and Methods: Grounded in a positivist paradigm, the study employed a quantitative correlation design. Data were collected from 203 officers involved in GBV mitigation in Bundibugyo District using structured questionnaires. Simple random sampling and census techniques were applied. The study adopted an explanatory linear regression analysis, a parametric test aimed at explaining the effect of the independent variable (institutionalization of Semi formal LCCs) on the dependent variable (GBV mitigation). Conventional regression (p -value = 0.05) was used as a basis to interpret the findings, where a computed value was above the p -value which indicated an insignificant effect.

Findings: Statistical analysis revealed that institutionalizing LCCs contributed 10.3% to GBV mitigation ($R^2 = .103$). However, the effect was statistically insignificant ($p = .074$; $p > 0.05$), confirming the hypothesis that institutionalization had no significant impact on GBV mitigation. Key challenges

included limited legal awareness among local council leaders, fear of retribution, and societal normalization of GBV, which hindered the courts' effectiveness. While LCCs offered some contribution to GBV mitigation, their overall impact was minimal.

Implications to Theory, Practice, and Policy: The study underscores the limited efficacy of semi-formal justice mechanisms in mitigating GBV, highlighting the need to bridge the gap between informal and formal systems. Practical recommendations include enhancing the capacity of local council leaders, strengthening legal frameworks, and addressing societal norms to improve the effectiveness of LCCs in mitigating GBV. These findings have significant implications for policy and practice, particularly in designing more integrative and community-focused approaches to GBV mitigation.

Keywords: *Institutionalization, Semi-formal Local Council Courts, Gender-based Violence Mitigation, Positivism, Quantitative Research, Bundibugyo District, Uganda*

JEL Codes: K38

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive and critical issue globally, affecting millions of individuals across various societies. According to research by Davies and True (2018), GBV encompasses a range of harmful behaviors directed at individuals based on their gender, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. The impact of GBV is profound, disrupting lives and communities, and contributing to long-term physical and psychological harm (Beyene et al., 2019). Studies show that GBV is not confined to any one region; it is a global epidemic with serious implications for public health, economic stability, and human rights (Suzor et al., 2019).

In various countries around the world, GBV prevalence rates are alarmingly high. For example, in India, the National Family Health Survey reported that 30% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence since the age of 15 (NFHS-4, 2015-16). Similarly, in the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that nearly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Smith et al., 2018). These figures illustrate the widespread nature of GBV and the need for effective mitigation strategies.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is particularly acute. A study by Muluneh, Stulz, Francis & Agho, (2020) found that between 13% and 62% of women across ten African nations, including Uganda, reported experiencing physical abuse at some point in their lives. Despite these high rates, only 29% of these cases were reported, highlighting significant barriers to justice and support for victims (Muluneh et al. (2020).

Gender-based violence (GBV) poses a severe threat to the safety, dignity, general health, and human rights of millions, impacting public health, economic stability, and national security (USAID, 2015). Scholars commonly define GBV as violence based on an individual's gender, encompassing physical, psychological, and sexual abuse (Camey et al., 2018; Bloom et al., 2014; UNHCR, 2011). GBV manifests in various forms, including domestic violence, trafficking, and harmful cultural practices (GBV AoR, 2010; Collins, 2013). Its widespread presence across all societies leads to significant health and psychological consequences (Manjoo and McRaith, 2011; WHO, 2017). Mitigation strategies focus on preventing and reducing GBV through multi-sectoral approaches and providing support to survivors (WHO, 2017; UNDP, 2018). The international community has made commitments to address GBV through UN Security Council resolutions and campaigns like "Unite to End Violence against Women" (DFID, 2013; WFP, 2016).

The literature review highlights the mixed results of previous studies on informal justice systems. For instance, while Buiten and Naidoo (2020) identified that many GBV cases were reported to semi-formal Local Council Courts, other research indicates significant barriers to justice within these systems. Patriarchal practices and gender biases within LCCs can limit the effectiveness of these courts in addressing GBV (Heilman et al., 2016). Moreover, studies by ActionAid (2018) underscore the challenges posed by informal systems that often fail to adequately protect women and girls from violence.

In Uganda, the institutionalization of semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs) has emerged as a potentially vital mechanism for addressing GBV, particularly in rural areas. These courts, established and institutionalized by the Local Council Courts Act of 2006, operate at various administrative levels from village to sub-county and serve both judicial and executive functions (Ahikire & Mwiine, 2020). Semi-formal Local Council Courts are a form of institutionalized informal justice system used by rural communities to mitigate GBV. While LCCs are recognized as part of the official legal system and are subject to oversight by higher courts,

they are primarily managed by laypersons and operate within the context of local cultural norms and societal standards (Ahma & Von, 2021). The dual nature of LCCs, blending formal legal principles with community-based informal practices, presents both opportunities and challenges in the mitigation of GBV.

Accordingly, article 129 of the 1995 Constitution allows Local Council (LC) Courts to operate at the sub-county, parish, and village levels, which courts tend to rely on common sense influenced by their cultures (World Voices Uganda, 2020 and JLOS statement, 2018). Under the Children Statute 1996 (Cap 59), the Local Council courts have the authority to offer remedies generally associated with traditional justice systems, such as reconciliation, compensation, restitution, and apology (s.10) (World Voices Uganda, 2020). Similarly, The Local Council Courts Act (Cap 115) offers the legal basis for the establishment and functioning of local council courts at the community level. These courts, often chaired by elected local council leaders, handle minor civil and criminal matters, including disputes related to family and property.

On one hand, LCCs are more accessible to local populations, providing a platform for victims who might otherwise be excluded from formal judicial processes. On the other hand, these courts often reflect and perpetuate existing gender biases and patriarchal norms, potentially compromising their effectiveness in delivering justice and protection for women and girls (Heilman et al., 2016; Stern, 2014). For example, research by Heilman et al. (2016) indicates that LCCs often operate within a framework that may not fully protect women's rights, while Stern (2014) points out the challenges posed by cultural norms that influence judicial decisions.

The Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS), under objective 7 of the National Development Plan of Uganda 2012/13-2016/2017, recognized the need to extend access to justice through the empowerment of semi-formal local council courts (NDP 2012/13-2016-17). The new JLOS Strategic Development Plan (SDP) IV aimed to strengthen "deeper knowledge and understanding of the semi-formal LCC with a focus on innovations to bridge the gap between formal and informal justice systems" (JLOS, 2017-2020). However, it remained questionable whether this institutionalization of semi-formal LCCs adhered to international best practices in resolving minor crimes like gender-based violence.

Addressing GBV through the lens of semi-formal Local Council Courts necessitated a nuanced understanding of both the legal and cultural dimensions at play. This research provided valuable insights into the potential and limitations of LCCs in mitigating GBV, offering evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and practitioners working to enhance justice and protection for vulnerable populations in Uganda and beyond.

Given these complexities, the study's focus on Bundibugyo District provided a localized examination of the efficacy of LCCs in a specific Ugandan context. It investigated the impact of the institutionalization of semi-formal Local Council Courts on the mitigation of GBV in Bundibugyo District. The central hypothesis posited that there was no statistically significant effect of this institutionalization on GBV mitigation. By examining the functioning, accessibility, and outcomes of LCCs in the context of GBV cases, the research uncovered the extent to which these courts contributed to or hindered the protection of GBV survivors' rights and the reduction of violence.

Bundibugyo District was selected as a case study due to its unique socio-cultural and institutional context, which significantly influences gender-based violence (GBV) and justice mechanisms. Bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Bundibugyo's diverse population, shaped by varying cultural backgrounds and lifestyles, contributes to its heightened vulnerability to GBV (UBOS, 2020). The district has consistently reported high GBV

prevalence, as noted in the UBOS 2020 statistical abstract, underlining the urgency of addressing this issue. Bundibugyo's active use of semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs) to resolve disputes, including GBV cases, makes it a key site for exploring the effectiveness of informal justice systems. The period between 2017 and 2022 was chosen for this study due to particularly high GBV rates during this time, offering valuable insights into the potential of LCCs in mitigating GBV. Despite a slight decrease in GBV cases for girls (down by 1,093) and women (down by 277) between 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, the figures remained alarmingly high, with GBV cases for girls in 2021-2022 at 3,090 and for women at 1,066. These cases remained unacceptably high, with victims among girls and women continuing to outnumber those among boys and men. The types of GBV that were most prevalent in the district included sexual abuse among women and girls and neglect, particularly among girl children. Although prior studies (Biribwa et al., 2020; Muwonge, 2019; Sethi, 2019) have examined various factors contributing to high GBV incidence in Uganda, there remains limited data on the impact of institutionalizing semi formal local council courts and mitigation of particularly in Bundibugyo and western Uganda.

Statement of the Problem

Gender-based violence (GBV) continues to be a significant global challenge, affecting both developed and developing countries (Sethi, 2019; Waters et al., 2020; Arango et al., 2019). Its consequences are profound, influencing families, communities, economies, public health, and global development, with long-term effects on individuals (Black et al., 2020). To tackle the various forms of GBV, such as sexual assault, physical violence, neglect, and emotional abuse, several international initiatives have been launched, including Human Rights protocols, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and UNFPA activities (Waters et al., 2020; Arango et al., 2019). In Uganda, national strategies have been introduced to combat GBV, such as the Gender Policy of 2007, Vision 2040, the National Development Plan (NDP) III, and the National Action Plan for the Elimination of GBV (2016–2020) (Ocheme, Shajobi-Ibikunle, & Zuwena, 2020). Furthermore, Uganda has institutionalized semi-formal local council courts (LCCs), a form of informal justice system (IJS), to enhance access to justice, especially in marginalized communities, in an effort to reduce GBV (JLOS, 2018).

Despite these interventions, the rate of GBV in Uganda remains alarmingly high, with studies reporting a prevalence rate of 75% (Okethwangu & Kobusingye, 2020; Ocheme et al., 2020; UNFPA, 2020; UBOS, 2020). Data from the Probation Office in Bundibugyo District further indicate that, even with the institutionalization of semi-formal LCCs, a large portion of individuals continue to experience GBV, which has severe and enduring consequences for victims, including trauma, disempowerment, humiliation, and barriers to healing and rehabilitation (see Tables 1 and 2 in the background) (Bundibugyo DLG, Probation Office, 2022). Although several studies have examined strategies to mitigate GBV (Biribawa et al., 2020; Ocheme et al., 2020; Muluneh et al., 2020), there remains a significant gap in understanding how the institutionalization of LCCs impacts GBV reduction. Previous research (Muluneh et al., 2020; Baldasare & Ph, 2012; Ochen et al., 2020) largely focused on identifying and categorizing the various forms of violence (such as physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, and economic violence), but did not assess the effectiveness of semi-formal LCCs or the interventions aimed at addressing GBV. Moreover, much of the existing literature, including works by Muluneh et al. (2020) and Baldasare & Ph (2012), focused on urban settings or national-level perspectives, leaving a substantial gap in understanding the local dynamics of GBV in rural areas like Bundibugyo District. Previous studies have also failed to adequately examine how semi-formal LCCs contribute to the mitigation of GBV (Bouhours & Broadhurst, 2015; Erickson et al., 2018; Namubiru, 2021). Other studies often lacked comprehensive

methodologies for evaluating the outcomes of GBV mitigation strategies, primarily concentrating on categorizing and describing types of violence (Biribawa, Nuwemastiko, Oporia, Baguma, Bulage, Okethwangu & Kobusingye, 2020; Ocheme et al., 2020; Muluneh, Stulz, Francis & Agho, 2020). The current study addresses this methodological gap by using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques to provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of LCCs on GBV mitigation. Specifically, the current study includes detailed statistical analyses to measure the prevalence and reduction of GBV in Bundibugyo, alongside qualitative interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders to explore their experiences and perceptions of LCC effectiveness. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the effectiveness of semi-formal LCCs in mitigating GBV in Bundibugyo District.

The problem statement above, questions the effectiveness of these semi-formal local council courts in reducing GBV, suggesting that their institutionalization might not be achieving the desired outcomes. By testing this hypothesis, the study directly addresses the gap in understanding whether LCCs have made a measurable impact on GBV reduction. The hypothesis also reflects the concern that, despite existing interventions, GBV remains prevalent, implying that other factors like cultural and social norms, inadequate awareness and education, access and geographical barriers may be hindering the effectiveness of LCCs on mitigation of GBV. The study's findings, confirming that the impact was statistically insignificant, reinforce the problem statement by showing that institutionalization alone may not be sufficient to combat GBV.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

In this study, two theoretical frameworks were considered to provide a comprehensive understanding of gender-based violence (GBV) within the context of semi formal local council courts in Bundibugyo District, Uganda. These theories include McGoldrick's Family Life Cycle Theory (FLCT) and the Theory of Legal Pluralism. Each theory offers unique insights into the dynamics of GBV, family interactions and the legal part.

The Theory of Legal Pluralism

The Theory of Legal Pluralism was selected as the most relevant for informing the study's framework. it addresses the coexistence of multiple legal systems within a community, specifically the semi formal local council courts which is a form of informal justice system. Legal pluralism emphasizes that people in Bundibugyo have access to both state-imposed laws and locally-institutionalized informal justice systems like the semi formal LCC, allowing them to choose the legal framework that best suits their needs for managing disputes, including those related to GBV. This theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the institutionalization of informal justice systems including semi formal LCC and their impact on GBV mitigation (Merry, 1988; Griffiths, 1986; Tamanaha, 2000).

The Legal Pluralism Theory, as advanced by legal sociologist Gurwitsch (1935), emphasizes the coexistence of multiple legal systems within a society, such as state law, customary law, and community-based legal norms. This theory highlights the interactions, conflicts, and complementarities that arise when different legal orders operate alongside one another, particularly in diverse societies like Bundibugyo District, Uganda. The relevance of legal pluralism in this study lies in its ability to explain how the semi-formal local council courts (LCCs) interact with state law to address gender-based violence (GBV) through local customs and norms. Legal pluralism acknowledges the importance of community-based legal

mechanisms in resolving disputes, complementing formal judicial structures by providing alternative forums for conflict resolution, such as mediation or arbitration. The theory also stresses that legal systems evolve and adapt over time, which is crucial for understanding how informal justice systems like LCCs may adjust to the changing dynamics of society. However, the theory's limitations include potential inconsistencies and conflicts between legal orders, which can lead to a lack of coherence and fairness in the administration of justice. Furthermore, legal pluralism can perpetuate power imbalances, where dominant legal systems, such as state law, overshadow community-based norms, often marginalizing vulnerable groups. The theory also raises concerns about cultural relativism, as practices accepted within certain legal systems may clash with human rights principles. While legal pluralism offers a framework for understanding the role of semi-formal courts in mitigating GBV, it faces criticisms related to the fragmentation of legal authority and the difficulty in integrating multiple legal systems, particularly when they conflict with state sovereignty. Nonetheless, it provides a comprehensive perspective on the dynamic relationship between formal and informal legal systems in Bundibugyo District.

To further authenticate the relevance of the Theory of Legal Pluralism in this study, it is important to consider how informal justice systems like the semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs) function in a context of multiple legal systems (Tamanaha, 2000). In Bundibugyo, the interaction between state law and traditional practices often results in a layered and complex legal landscape (Griffiths, 1986). The semi-formal LCCs are deeply rooted in local customs and traditions, yet they operate within the broader legal framework established by the Ugandan state (Merry, 1988). This duality allows individuals in Bundibugyo to navigate a system that blends both formal and informal mechanisms for justice, with the flexibility to choose the framework that best meets their needs, particularly in cases of gender-based violence (GBV) (Merry, 1988). However, this coexistence also presents challenges in terms of legal consistency and fairness, as the application of justice may vary depending on which legal system is applied (Tamanaha, 2000). The coexistence of formal and informal systems can lead to competing interpretations of justice, potentially undermining the effectiveness of GBV mitigation efforts (Griffiths, 1986). Moreover, the role of semi-formal justice systems such as the LCCs can reflect broader societal inequalities, where marginalized groups may struggle to assert their rights within both formal and informal legal contexts. In this way, while legal pluralism provides a useful lens for understanding the role of semi-formal courts in GBV mitigation, it also highlights the need for careful examination of how these systems interact and whether they contribute to or alleviate existing power imbalances (Tamanaha, 2000).

Carter and McGoldrick (1988) Family Life Cycle Theory (FLCT)

The Family Life Cycle Theory (FLCT), as proposed by Carter and McGoldrick (1988), provides a valuable lens through which to understand the dynamics of family life, particularly in relation to the development of gender-based violence (GBV). According to the theory, families undergo several emotional and intellectual stages, each marked by challenges that can significantly impact individual members, sometimes leading to aggression or violence. This aligns with the study of semi-formal local council courts (LCCs) in Bundibugyo District, where GBV often stems from familial tensions related to life transitions such as marriage, parenthood, financial hardship, or the loss of a loved one. FLCT's relevance in this context lies in its recognition that family dysfunctions, which may lead to GBV, are often exacerbated by changes and stressors within family life cycles. The theory underscores how these transitions can manifest as violence when individuals fail to adapt or cope with such changes. For instance, in Bundibugyo, challenges like poverty and patriarchal norms may heighten stress and contribute to increased incidences of GBV, particularly in rural areas where these cycles are

more pronounced. While FLCT is useful for understanding the emotional and behavioral patterns within families, it has limitations in the context of the institutionalization of semi-formal LCCs. These courts, though central to addressing GBV in the community, may not fully address the deep-rooted societal issues, such as hyper-masculinity and gender inequality, that underlie the family dynamics FLCT describes. Additionally, the FLCT focuses more on the internal family processes rather than the external legal mechanisms, like the LCCs, which might struggle to influence systemic societal changes that perpetuate GBV. Thus, while FLCT offers insights into the family dynamics of GBV, its application to the institutionalization of LCCs highlights the need for a broader, multi-faceted approach to effectively mitigate GBV.

The Family Life Cycle Theory (FLCT), proposed by Carter and McGoldrick (1988), offers a valuable framework for understanding how life transitions within the family unit can lead to gender-based violence (GBV). It posits that families move through emotional and developmental stages, each of which presents unique challenges that, if not addressed, can result in dysfunctions and, in extreme cases, violence. In the context of Bundibugyo District, this theory helps explain how GBV often arises from familial tensions during critical transitions, such as marriage, parenthood, or economic hardship. However, while FLCT is valuable for understanding the emotional and behavioral patterns within families, its limitations may influence the study's findings. The theory does not fully address the external factors that influence family dynamics, such as the broader socio-cultural pressures or the legal structures like the semi-formal local council courts (LCCs). Furthermore, FLCT focuses primarily on internal family issues, while GBV in Bundibugyo may be exacerbated by community-wide challenges like gender inequality and patriarchy, which the LCCs attempt to address. These courts, while significant in dispute resolution, may not be fully equipped to combat the deep-seated societal issues contributing to family dysfunction. Therefore, while FLCT provides valuable insights into family dynamics related to GBV, it complements the Theory of Legal Pluralism by offering a more comprehensive view that includes both internal family challenges and the broader legal and societal structures, thus providing a more holistic framework for understanding GBV and its mitigation.

Empirical Literature review

Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts and Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a critical global issue, with profound consequences for both individuals and communities. Studies have demonstrated the long-lasting impacts of GBV on survivors' physical, mental, and emotional health (Sethi, 2019; Waters et al., 2020; Arango et al., 2019). In Uganda, national frameworks like the Gender Policy of 2007, Vision 2040, and the National Action Plan for the Elimination of GBV (2016-2020) aim to address this issue. However, despite these efforts, GBV rates remain alarmingly high, especially in marginalized regions such as Bundibugyo District (Okethwangu & Kobusingye, 2020; UBOS, 2020). Studies on GBV reporting mechanisms show that a significant number of victims, particularly in rural areas, turn to semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs) to seek justice (WHO, 2019; Buiten & Naidoo, 2020). Despite the prevalence of such cases, research has been insufficient in examining how these courts operate in mitigating GBV and the outcomes for victims. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the role of LCCs in Bundibugyo District, investigating how their institutionalization contributes to GBV mitigation in rural settings.

Several scholars have explored various strategies for addressing GBV, with a focus on informal justice systems like LCCs (Biribawa et al., 2020; Ocheme et al., 2020; Muluneh et al., 2020). These studies have typically focused on categorizing GBV forms or evaluating existing

interventions but often overlook how the semi-formal nature of LCCs influences the outcomes for GBV victims. While some studies provide insights into LCCs in urban settings, there remains a gap in understanding how these courts function in rural regions like Bundibugyo. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how the unique structure of LCCs, blending both formal and informal elements, impacts the justice outcomes for GBV victims.

A 2019 WHO survey of ten African nations, including Uganda, revealed that 13% to 62% of women reported experiencing physical violence in their lifetime, yet only 29% of these incidents were reported (WHO, 2019). This statistic underscores the significant underreporting of GBV cases and highlights the need for further investigation into the mechanisms through which victims access justice, especially in rural Uganda. Buiten and Naidoo (2020) found that a significant number of GBV victims report their cases to LCCs, which serve as an important, yet underexplored, channel for justice. The gap in the literature here is the lack of understanding about how LCCs handle such cases and whether they are effective in mitigating GBV. This study addresses this gap by examining the effectiveness of LCCs in Bundibugyo, focusing on the factors that influence reporting and the outcomes for victims.

The Interagency Minimum Standards for GBV (GBV AoR, 2019) outline essential steps for advancing justice and legal support for GBV victims. However, there is limited research on how informal justice systems like LCCs operationalize these standards. This study contributes to filling this gap by exploring how LCCs in Bundibugyo can contribute to advancing these standards in Uganda. LCCs, as semi-formal justice systems, could provide a platform for securing access to justice for GBV victims, particularly in rural areas where access to formal legal structures may be limited.

Studies on strategies for GBV mitigation, such as those by Carrington et al. (2019), Boas et al. (2017), and Doherty (2015), offer useful insights but fail to systematically identify the most effective strategies. While these studies often recommend informal justice systems, including LCCs, as a potential solution, empirical evidence on their effectiveness in mitigating GBV remains scarce. This study provides new insights by examining how the institutionalization of LCCs in Bundibugyo has contributed to the reduction of GBV, offering much-needed empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these courts in a rural Ugandan context.

Barriers to reporting GBV and seeking protection remedies remain significant. Patriarchal institutions and practices, which perpetuate gender inequality, are deeply embedded in both formal and informal legal systems (Stern, 2014; Action Aid, 2018). Studies by Heilman et al. (2016) and others have critiqued the gender bias and inequities prevalent in informal legal systems, including LCCs. However, these studies were primarily conducted in non-Ugandan contexts, leaving a gap in the literature regarding how gender bias in LCCs affects GBV victims in Uganda. This study addresses this gap by examining whether gender bias in LCC representation impacts the ability of these courts to protect GBV victims in Bundibugyo.

The LCCs in Uganda, established by the Local Council Courts Act of 2006, have a unique semi-formal structure, blending cultural norms with formal legal frameworks. While LCCs are officially recognized as part of Uganda's legal system, they operate based on societal standards, which can lead to gender biases and inequalities in the management of GBV cases (World Voices-Uganda, 2020; IUCN, 2018). This study explores how these courts function in Bundibugyo District, focusing on how their semi-formal nature impacts the outcomes for GBV victims. It contributes to the literature by examining the specific role of LCCs in mitigating GBV in a rural setting.

Even when GBV is criminalized and legal protection is provided, challenges persist, including gender bias, discrimination, and underreporting of cases. Studies like those by UN Women

(2012) and Ofosu-Amaah et al. (2015) indicate that GBV victims often face significant barriers in formal and informal legal systems. This study builds on these findings by examining how these barriers manifest in the context of LCCs in Bundibugyo and how they affect the ability of GBV victims to seek justice and protection.

Heilman et al. (2016) argued that informal justice systems like LCCs can sometimes limit the agency and voice of women and girls, emphasizing communal cohesion over individual protection and rights. This study expands on this critique by focusing on how these dynamics play out in the Ugandan context, specifically within the rural settings of Bundibugyo, and the implications for GBV victims' ability to heal and move forward after their cases.

Gender Based Violence Management Models

In 2023, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced a GBV Management Model, specifically targeting the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in workplaces. This comprehensive approach coordinates efforts across government institutions, civil society, the private sector, and international organizations. It emphasizes the development of robust frameworks for GBV prevention, response, and long-term recovery for survivors. Central to the model are initiatives aimed at strengthening laws and policies, ensuring survivors have access to healthcare, legal aid, and psychosocial support, and building the capacity of authorities to respond effectively to GBV cases. Additionally, the model prioritizes community engagement by fostering awareness and challenging discriminatory gender norms. By integrating these elements, the UNDP model not only seeks to provide justice and support for survivors but also aims to foster societal resilience and reduce GBV prevalence through education and systemic transformation.

In 2018, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched its Institutional Framework for Addressing GBV in Crises (GBViC Framework), focusing on combating GBV in crisis settings through community-centered approaches. The framework enhances the coordination and integration of services at the local level, involving community-based organizations, law enforcement, and service providers. Key features include creating systems for timely reporting and responses, providing survivors with access to justice, health services, and psychosocial support, and establishing safe spaces to ensure their well-being. The GBViC Framework also emphasizes increasing community awareness to address stigma and foster acceptance of survivors. By encouraging collaboration among local stakeholders, the model ensures that GBV interventions are tailored to specific contexts and are effective in meeting the needs of survivors, thereby fostering community resilience and sustainable GBV prevention.

While the UNDP GBV Management Model (2023) and GBViC Operational Model (2018) provide valuable frameworks for addressing GBV, they often face gaps in terms of resource allocation and sustainability, particularly in low-resource settings. Both models rely heavily on institutional capacity and coordination, which may be inconsistent or weak at local levels. Additionally, there is a need for more emphasis on engaging traditional justice systems in tandem with formal structures. The models also lack concrete strategies for overcoming entrenched cultural norms and gender biases at the community level, which can undermine their effectiveness in mitigating GBV. Lastly, the models need stronger mechanisms for ensuring timely and accessible support for survivors in rural or marginalized communities. The current study addresses these gaps by developing a new model which is discussed further in the contribution of the study.

In conclusion, while GBV remains a widespread issue, particularly in Uganda, efforts to mitigate it through informal justice systems like LCCs have received limited empirical

attention, particularly in rural contexts. Despite national policies aimed at addressing GBV, the prevalence of violence and inadequacies in reporting and justice mechanisms persist. Previous studies have largely overlooked the role of LCCs in mitigating GBV and the impact of their semi-formal structure on the outcomes for victims. This study bridges these gaps by investigating the role of LCCs in Bundibugyo, examining how their institutionalization contributes to GBV mitigation and how their structure influences justice outcomes and the well-being of victims. It also proposes a new GBV mitigation model to address gender biases. The model integrates the strengths of both formal and informal justice systems, combining LCCs with mobile legal aid clinics and paralegals to ensure accessible support. The findings provide valuable insights into the operational effectiveness of LCCs and inform strategies for improving access to justice for GBV survivors in rural Uganda.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Philosophical Underpinning, Research Paradigm, Research Approach & Research Design

This study was grounded in the philosophical underpinning of positivism, which influenced the research paradigm, approach, design, and specific methods employed. Positivism assumes that reality is objective, observable, and measurable, emphasizing the use of empirical data to test hypotheses and identify patterns and relationships (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014). In line with this, the study adopted a quantitative research approach, utilizing structured methods such as surveys to collect quantifiable data (Fellows & Liu, 2021). The study employed a quantitative correlational research design to explore the relationship between the Institutionalization of semi formal local council courts and the mitigation of GBV in Bundibugyo District enabling the measurement of variables and identification of trends within the target population (Neuman, 2014). The study adopted an explanatory linear regression analysis, a parametric test aimed at explaining the effect of the independent variable (ITCC) on the dependent variable (GBV mitigation). Conventional regression (p -value = 0.05) was used as a basis to interpret the findings, where a computed value was below the p -value which indicated an insignificant effect.

Study Population, Sample Size, Sample Selection, Sampling Techniques, and Unit of Analysis

The study population consisted of individuals with knowledge of the institutionalized semi-formal Local Council Court systems and their role in mitigating Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This included officers from various sectors such as the District Community Department, Family and Child Protection Unit, Justice Center Bundibugyo, the Resident State Attorney's Office, Sub-County/Town Council staff, and representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) engaged in GBV mitigation efforts, who served as the unit of inquiry. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin (1967) formula, targeting a population of 246 respondents, from which a final sample of 203 participants was selected. The study employed both simple random sampling and census sampling techniques. For the groups with larger populations, including officers from the District Community Department, Family and Child Protection Unit, Sub-County/Town Council staff, and NGOs dealing with GBV mitigation, a simple random sampling technique was used. This technique ensured that each member of these target populations had an equal chance of being selected, enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the findings while minimizing selection bias (Fowler, 2013). On the other hand, for smaller population groups, namely officers from the Justice Center Bundibugyo and the Resident State Attorney (RSA) office, a census sampling technique was applied. Given the small sizes of these groups, it was feasible to include all members, ensuring

exhaustive data collection without sampling error (Fowler, 2013). The unit of analysis for this study focused on individuals with expertise in the institutionalized semi-formal Local Council Court systems and their role in mitigating GBV, ensuring the inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives from Bundibugyo District. By using a combination of simple random sampling and census sampling, the study was able to capture comprehensive insights while maintaining the reliability and generalizability of the data. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires (SAQs), which proved to be a cost-effective and efficient method for gathering standardized information from a large number of respondents while ensuring participant anonymity and encouraging high response rates (Bryman, 2016; Saunders et al., 2009). The structured questionnaires featured a pre-coded Likert scale and some open-ended questions, enabling the collection of both quantifiable and qualitative data, which were essential for assessing the role of semi-formal Local Council Courts in mitigating GBV.

Table 1 The Categories of The Unit of Inquiry, Population, Sample Size, Sampling Techniques and Data Collection Methods

Category	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique	Method
Officers from the District Community Department (DCDO, Probation Officer, Gender officer; Senior CDOs, CDOs)	30	30	Simple random sampling	Questionnaire
Officers from Family and child protection unit	20	19	Simple random sampling	Questionnaire
Officers from Justice center Bundibugyo office	10	10	Census	Questionnaire
Officers from the Residence State Attorney (RSA) office	5	5	Census	Questionnaire
Sub-County/Town Council Staff (Senior assistant Chief Administrative officers (SACAOs), Senior Assistant town clerks (SATCs) & Parish Chiefs (PCs)	141	103	Simple random sampling	Questionnaire
Officers from NGOs dealing with GBV mitigation (FAWE, BYMI, UNICIDA, UGANET)	40	36	Simple random sampling	Questionnaire
Total	246	203		

Source: Bundibugyo District Registry (2023)

Data Quality Control, Processing, and Analysis

Maintaining high data quality is crucial for drawing valid and reliable conclusions in research, as it reduces measurement error, enhances the credibility of the study, and increases the likelihood that the findings can be generalized and applied more broadly (Fellows & Liu, 2021). To achieve this, the tools for data collection were subjected to validity and reliability tests before use. Validity was ensured through face validity and content validity. Face validity, assessed by two Ph.D. students from Uganda Management Institute (UMI), involved a subjective judgment of whether the questionnaire appeared to measure the intended constructs (Marees et al., 2018). Content validity was confirmed by experts to ensure that the instrument items were relevant, representative, and comprehensive, yielding a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.823, indicating good validity (Roebianto et al., 2023). Reliability was tested using the test-retest method on a smaller population during the pilot phase. The questionnaire was administered twice within three weeks, and the results were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha,

which yielded a value of 0.791 for the semi-formal Local Council Courts, indicating good reliability (Rozali et al., 2022; Park et al., 2018). These measures ensured that the collected data were accurate, trustworthy, and free from bias, providing a robust foundation for assessing the impact of semi-formal Local Council Courts on mitigating gender-based violence (GBV). Data processing involved organizing raw data into meaningful information. Items in the self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) were measured using an ordinal scale and a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3, Strongly Agree = 4), aligned with the constructs of the semi-formal Local Council Courts and GBV mitigation. The SAQ was divided into three sections: demographic data, the semi-formal Local Council Court system, and GBV mitigation efforts. For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were generated using SPSS. Inferential statistics involved linear and multiple regressions, testing hypotheses and building predictive models to examine relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable, GBV mitigation. Explanatory regression, a parametric test, was used to explain the effect of independent variables on GBV mitigation, with a p-value threshold of 0.05 for statistical significance. If the computed p-value was below this threshold, the variable was considered to have a significant effect on GBV mitigation; otherwise, it was deemed insignificant. This comprehensive approach to data processing and analysis provided a solid foundation for assessing the impact of the semi-formal Local Council Courts on GBV mitigation in Bundibugyo District.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to ensuring the integrity and accountability of this study. The researcher adhered to the ethical standards set by Uganda Management Institute (UMI), the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), and the Research and Ethics Committee (REC), which provided the necessary documentation, including an ethics form, confirming that the research followed ethical guidelines throughout the study. A critical ethical principle was obtaining informed and voluntary consent from participants, with both the principal investigator and the research assistant taking responsibility for providing a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives, process, potential risks, and the use of results. In cases where data collection took an extended period, participants were informed in advance. Confidentiality was prioritized, with participants assured of their anonymity and the protection of sensitive information, which was safeguarded by using coded labels for interview audio recordings. Access to these codes was strictly controlled. Additionally, the researcher ensured that participants were not exposed to harm, discomfort, or risks during the study, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality throughout. The findings were disseminated in a manner that respected participants' rights and welfare, and the researcher adhered to standards of impartiality, ensuring proper citation of all sources and a research process free from personal bias.

FINDINGS

Response Rate and Demographic Data of Respondents

Reporting the response rate in a study is crucial as it provides insights into the reliability and validity of the collected data. The response rate, or return rate, refers to the proportion of individuals who participated in the study out of the total number in the sample (Aday, 1996). This study focused on the quantitative approach using self-administered questionnaires. Out of the 203 targeted respondents, all 203 returned completed questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 100.0%. A high response rate, such as this, enhances the accuracy of the study results (Aday, 1996; Babbie, 1990; Rea & Parker, 1997), indicating a high level of engagement and

representativeness among the participants. The demographic characteristics of the respondents provide essential context for understanding the study's findings. The collected data included information on the sex, age bracket, and qualifications of the respondents, ensuring a comprehensive demographic analysis. The study included both male and female technical staff from the community-based office in Bundibugyo District, with 115 (56.7%) males and 88 (43.3%) females, reflecting a gender ratio of approximately 3:2. The age distribution showed that 81.3% were between 35 and 44 years old, 15.3% were between 25 and 34 years old, and 3.4% were in the 45-55 age bracket, indicating a mature workforce in their prime working years. Educationally, 64.0% had master's degrees, 33.0% had bachelor's degrees, and 3.0% had diplomas, suggesting a well-qualified respondent pool capable of providing reliable and informed responses pertinent to the study's focus on community development and technical support in Bundibugyo District.

Empirical Findings on Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts and Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence

Descriptive Statistics on Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts

The self-administered questionnaires for respondents included 12 items addressing the Institutionalized Semi-Formal Local Council Courts in Bundibugyo District. Data collected from these questionnaires was entered into SPSS, and descriptive statistics were generated. Table 2 below presents the SPSS output on the Institutionalized Semi-Formal Local Council Courts in Bundibugyo

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics on Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts in Bundibugyo District

Items on Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts	Mean	Std. Dev
The institutionalized semi formal Local Council Courts (LCC) conduct the hearing in public, except in cases involving children, with due regard to order and fairness to all parties	3.24	1.021
The institutionalized semi formal LCC may exclude any member of the court who has any interest in the proceedings which interest the member shall be under a duty to declare	2.30	1.305
Before the hearing, the language to be used has to be decided - often it is English or any other used by majority of people.	2.30	1.305
The institutionalized semi formal LCC provide for interpretation of the proceedings where one of the parties does not understand the language of the court	3.42	.866
In the institutionalized semi formal LCC, before the hearing, court determines and announces the hours of the day when the hearing will take place.	3.60	.992
The institutionalized semi formal LCC permit an applicant or his or her representative and any other persons wishing to make representations to the court to appear in person or by a representative including children.	1.00	.000
The institutionalized semi formal LCC allow the complainant to state his or her case first and then be questioned on any aspect of it to give further information, followed by the evidence of his or her witnesses.	3.60	.992
In conducting the hearing in the institutionalized semi formal LCC, the courts are as informal as possible and offer guidance to the parties.	1.90	1.182
The institutionalized semi formal LCC often grant more time to the parties, or to any of them and may from time to time adjourn the hearing of the proceedings.	2.25	1.147
In handling the cases of GBV, the institutionalized LCC sometimes have to visit the place where the suit arose and where necessary make notes.	1.72	1.073
During the hearing in the institutionalized LCC, the secretary writes the evidence of the parties and each of their witnesses; which is singed by the chairperson	1.94	1.088
The institutionalized LCCs try to reach a consensus on all decisions and where that is not	2.30	1.114
Overall Mean	2.464	

Source: Primary data (2024)

Legend

0.0 - 1.0 = SFLCC not operating well; 1.1 - 2.0 = SFLCC operating moderately well; 2.1 - 3.0 = SFLCC operating well; and 3.1 - 4.0 = SFLCC operating very well

The results for the institutionalization of semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCC) in Bundibugyo indicate a mix of strengths and areas for improvement. Key aspects of the LCC's operations, such as providing interpretation for those who do not understand the language of the court (mean = 3.42) and determining hearing hours in advance (mean = 3.60), received

positive evaluations. These aspects were viewed consistently across respondents, as indicated by their low standard deviations (0.866 and 0.992), highlighting the effectiveness and reliability of these practices. The court's process of allowing the complainant to present their case first, followed by questioning and evidence submission (mean = 3.60), was also well-regarded, demonstrating strong community support for the court's structured approach to hearings.

However, there were significant areas where the LCC's operations were seen as less effective. Items such as the court's informality in conducting hearings (mean = 1.90) and its practice of granting time extensions or adjournments (mean = 2.25) received lower scores and showed considerable variation in respondents' perceptions, as indicated by their relatively high standard deviations (1.182 and 1.147). These findings suggest that while informality may be valued by some, it may also lead to confusion or a sense of inefficiency among others. Similarly, the handling of gender-based violence (GBV) cases, where the LCC sometimes visits the site of the dispute (mean = 1.72) and writes evidence during hearings (mean = 1.94), was viewed less favorably, with considerable disagreement about the success of these practices.

Further, items related to the institutionalized semi formal LCC's procedural fairness, such as excluding court members with personal interests (mean = 2.30) and determining the language of the proceedings (mean = 2.30), revealed mixed perceptions, reflected in high standard deviations (1.305), indicating inconsistent views on these practices. The overall mean score of 2.464 suggests that while some aspects of the institutionalized semi formal LCC system are seen as effective, there is room for improvement, particularly in enhancing the court's informality, handling of GBV cases, and ensuring clear and consistent procedural practices. These findings suggest that targeted reforms or additional training may be needed to improve the institutionalized semi formal LCC's operations and increase its effectiveness in addressing community needs.

Descriptive Statistics on Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo District.

The self-administered questionnaires distributed to respondents included 14 items related to the mitigation of gender-based violence in Bundibugyo District. Respondents indicated their opinions on each item by selecting one of the following options: strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), or strongly agree (SA). The data from the completed questionnaires were entered into SPSS (version 20), and the resulting descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics on Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo District

Items on Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence	Mean	Std. Dev
Use of institutionalized semi-formal local council courts (LCC) has enabled community members to reject normalization of violence against women/girls'/ children.	1.56	1.147
Use of institutionalized semi-formal LCC has enabled members of the communities in Bundibugyo to disregard gender stereotype/roles	1.38	.975
Use of institutionalized semi formal LCC has enabled the community members to condemn GBV	1.39	.976
Use of institutionalized semi-formal LCC has enabled community members in Bundibugyo to reject the sexist jokes/remarks about women.	1.00	.000
Use of institutionalized semi-formal LCC has helped communities to promote feminist activism in Bundibugyo district.	1.00	.000
Use of institutionalized semi-formal LCC has enabled victims of GBV to speak out about their rights.	1.00	.000
Use of institutionalized semi-formal LCC has enabled women leaders in Bundibugyo to condemn sexual harassment	2.70	1.398
Condemning masculinity (aggression, strength, control) is not possible because of use of institutionalized semi-formal LCC in handling GBV cases.	3.87	.340
Women in Bundibugyo are now demanding funding of women organizations	3.57	.777
Women in Bundibugyo are now calling for better responses/services towards GBV in the communities	3.75	.653
Women in Bundibugyo are now pushing for stronger laws to minimize or completely eliminate incidence of GBV	3.24	1.021
Women in Bundibugyo are now demanding more understanding of issues GBV to enable young girls fight for their plight.	2.30	1.305
The institutionalized semi-formal LCC have provided support for women in leadership positions to exercise their mandate in fighting GBV in the district.	2.30	1.305
Women in Bundibugyo district have built solidarity with other movements	3.42	.866
Overall Mean	2.32	

Source: Primary data (2024)

Legend: 0.0 - 1.0 = Mitigation of GBV poorly done; 1.1 - 2.0 = Mitigation of GBV fairly done; 2.1 - 3.0 = Mitigation of GBV well done; and 3.1 - 4.0 = Mitigation of GBV excellently done

The results indicate a generally positive perception of the effectiveness of institutionalized semi formal LCC in Bundibugyo across several key areas. The highest mean scores, 3.87 and 3.75, demonstrate that informal justice systems are regarded as highly effective in addressing masculinity-related aggression and ensuring appropriate responses to gender-based violence (GBV). These areas of mitigation are seen as being particularly well-handled by the community. In addition, the community shows strong support for initiatives such as securing funding for women’s organizations and advocating for stronger laws to reduce GBV, with mean scores ranging from 3.24 to 3.42, suggesting these efforts are well-executed.

However, areas such as empowering women leaders to condemn sexual harassment and providing platforms for GBV victims to speak out received lower mean scores (2.30), indicating that these efforts need further attention and improvement. The overall mean score of 2.32 reflects that while progress has been made, the community perceives GBV mitigation as being "fairly done" but not yet fully realized.

The standard deviations reveal considerable variation in perceptions across different GBV mitigation aspects. The item on women leaders condemning sexual harassment had the highest standard deviation (1.398), suggesting a wide range of opinions about the success of this initiative. On the other hand, items such as rejecting sexist jokes and promoting feminist activism showed a standard deviation of 0.000, reflecting unanimous agreement on their success. The standard deviations for other areas, including funding for women's organizations and strengthening laws, ranged between 0.340 and 1.021, indicating moderate agreement but with some divergence in individual perceptions. These findings point to strong community support for certain GBV mitigation efforts, while highlighting areas where opinions differ and where more targeted interventions may be needed for a more cohesive and consistent approach.

Inferential Statistics from Descriptive Statistics

Using descriptive statistics on the mitigation of GBV and data from the institutionalization of semi-formal LCC, a linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of using the semi-formal LCC on the mitigation of GBV in Bundibugyo District. The regression analysis was performed using the transformed overall means for the semi-formal LCC data in Table 2 (2.464) and the mitigation of GBV data in Table 3 (2.32). However, before considering the effect of one variable on another, it was important to first establish their relatedness.

The Relationship between Institutionalization of Semi-Formal LCCs and the Mitigation of Gender Based Violence in Bundibugyo

Before, considering the effect of one variable to another, it was prudent to ascertain their relatedness through the linear regression coefficients which were mathematical relationships between each independent variable and the dependent variable. The results in Table 4 show the relatedness of the respondents' data on institutionalization of semi formal local council courts and mitigation of GBV in the communities in Bundibugyo district.

Table 4 Linear Regression Coefficients on the Relationship between Institutionalization of Semi Formal Local Council Courts and Mitigation of Gender Based Violence in Bundibugyo District

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	3.203	.516		6.203	.000
	Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts	-.344	.185	-.320	-1.853	.074

a. Dependent Variable: Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence

The results in Table 4 above indicate a significance value (Sig) of .074, suggesting that, according to the respondents, institutionalization of semi-formal LCCs were not significantly related to the mitigation of GBV in the communities of Bundibugyo District.

Determining the Magnitude of the Effect of Institutionalization of Semi Formal Local Council Courts on the Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo District

To determine the effect of the institutionalization of semi formal local council courts on mitigation of GBV in Bundibugyo District, a linear regression was conducted using the transformed overall means from the institutionalization of semi formal local council courts data in Table 2 (2.464) and the mitigation of GBV data in Table 3 (2.32). The magnitude of the effect of one variable on the other, as measured by the regression model summary, is presented in Table 5 below;

Table 5 Linear Regression Model Summary of the Magnitude of the Effect of Institutionalization of Semi Formal Local Council Courts on the Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo District

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.320 ^a	.103	.073	1.285

a. Predictors: (Constant), Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts

When interpreting the results in Table 5, the R-squared value, which represents the coefficient of determination, is of particular importance. According to Table 5, the R-squared value is .103, which can be converted to a percentage (.103 × 100), indicating 10.3%. This means that, according to the respondents, institutionalization of semi-formal LCCs account for 10.3% of the mitigation of GBV in Bundibugyo District. In other words, for every unit improvement in the use of the institutionalized semi-formal LCCs, there is a corresponding 10.3% improvement in the mitigation of GBV in the communities of Bundibugyo District. To assess whether this change has a significant effect (hypothesis testing), the ANOVA results presented in Table 6 were analyzed.

Testing the Statistical Significance of the Effect of Institutionalization of Traditional Cultural Courts on Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo District

The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was conducted to assess the statistical significance of the effect of institutionalized semi-formal Local Council Courts on the mitigation of gender-based violence (GBV) in Bundibugyo District. The analysis aimed to determine whether the institutionalization of these courts had a measurable impact on reducing GBV cases in the district as shown in table 6 below;

Table 6 ANOVA Results for Testing the Statistical Significance of the Effect of Institutionalization of Traditional Cultural Courts on Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo District

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.672	1	5.672	3.434	.074 ^b
	Residual	49.547	30	1.652		
	Total	55.219	31			

a. Dependent Variable: Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence

b. Predictors: (Constant), Institutionalization of Semi-Formal Local Council Courts

The data in Table 6 revealed that the significance (Sig) value was .074, which is greater than the standard threshold of 0.05. Therefore, with $p = .074 > .05$, the results imply that, according to respondents, the institutionalization of semi-formal LCCs has a fair but with an insignificant effect on the mitigation of GBV in communities in Bundibugyo District. This suggests that a unit change in the institutionalization of the semi-formal LCCs results in an insignificant

change in the mitigation of GBV in the district. Consequently, the original hypothesis “*There is no statistically significant effect of the institutionalization of semi-formal Local Council Courts on the mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Bundibugyo District*” was upheld as true.

Summary of Major Findings

Descriptive data on the semi-formal Local Council Courts revealed that they accounted for 10.3% of the mitigation of GBV in Bundibugyo District. This means that for every unit improvement in the use of the semi-formal Local Council Courts, there is a 10.3% improvement in the mitigation of GBV in the communities of Bundibugyo District. Thus, with $R^2 = .103$ and $p = .074 > .05$, the results imply that, according to respondents, the institutionalization of semi-formal Local Council Courts has a fair but with an insignificant effect on the mitigation of GBV in the communities of Bundibugyo District. This suggests that a unit change in the institutionalization of the semi-formal Local Council Courts leads to an insignificant change in the mitigation of GBV in the district.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the study’s findings in relation to the available literature and the Theory of Legal Pluralism that informed the research. The study aimed to assess the effect of institutionalizing semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs) on the mitigation of gender-based violence (GBV) in communities in Bundibugyo District.

The findings reveal that semi-formal LCCs account for only 10.3% of GBV mitigation in Bundibugyo District, leaving nearly 90% of cases either unaddressed or handled through alternative means. This suggests that the institutionalization of these courts has been ineffective in curbing GBV in the district. This finding resonates with the observations of Buiten and Naidoo (2020), who found that while most cases of violence are reported to these courts, only a small proportion are effectively addressed. Buiten et al. (2020) emphasize that although LCCs are officially recognized by the state, they operate within societal norms and traditions, which often conflict with the principles of justice needed to address issues like GBV. This dynamic highlights the limitations of semi-formal justice systems in tackling GBV, which is intricately linked to the complexities of legal pluralism.

The Theory of Legal Pluralism, which posits that multiple legal systems coexist within a society, provides a framework for understanding these findings. In Bundibugyo, although LCCs are part of the formal legal system, they are heavily influenced by local customs and societal expectations. This creates a tension between state law, which aims to protect human rights and provide justice for GBV victims, and informal community-based norms that may condone violence or prioritize social harmony over individual rights. Legal pluralism suggests that when these competing legal systems interact, the effectiveness of any one system in addressing GBV may be compromised. In Bundibugyo, the semi-formal courts, despite being part of the formal legal framework, are unable to provide effective protection or justice for survivors.

The findings are further supported by studies on GBV mitigation, such as those by Carrington et al. (2019), Boas et al. (2017), Doherty (2015), and Denham (2008), which show that informal justice systems like LCCs often struggle to meaningfully address GBV. Despite efforts in various countries to use informal systems for GBV mitigation, these systems frequently fail to protect victims or ensure justice. Legal pluralism theory helps explain this failure, showing that while semi-formal LCCs provide access to justice, they may not adequately protect the rights of survivors or meet their needs for safety and justice. In these systems, the focus often shifts

away from individual rights and protections toward maintaining social cohesion or adhering to traditional norms, which can hinder the pursuit of justice for GBV survivors.

The challenge of ensuring justice for GBV victims is compounded by societal acceptance of violence and hyper-masculinity, particularly in rural areas. The study found that the normalization of violence by women, who often internalize abusive behaviors, exacerbates the complexity of GBV in Bundibugyo. Research by Bob et al. (2022), Ceccato (2015), and Chuma and Chazovachii (2012) demonstrates that in many contexts, including Bundibugyo, women's acceptance of violence and their unwillingness to leave or report abusive partners amplify the vulnerabilities faced by women in rural settings. Legal pluralism theory offers valuable insights into why such patterns persist, as the interaction between formal and informal legal systems often reflects and reinforces local cultural practices that normalize violence and gender inequality. This makes it difficult to use legal systems, whether formal or informal, to mitigate GBV in environments where violence is deeply ingrained in social norms.

The failure of informal justice systems like LCCs to effectively address GBV is also supported by Heilman et al. (2016), who argue that informal justice systems often limit the agency, voice, and protection of women and girls. In these systems, the focus tends to be on preserving community harmony rather than prioritizing the safety and well-being of survivors. In Bundibugyo, this dynamic is evident, where the LCCs, despite being part of the state's legal framework, fail to address the unique needs of GBV survivors due to their entanglement with local customs and informal practices. Legal pluralism highlights the tension between the different legal systems at play, where the state's emphasis on human rights and individual justice conflicts with the communal priorities of the informal system, often leaving victims without meaningful protection or recourse.

Furthermore, the findings align with the work of Bosilong and Mbecke (2019), who found that local council courts have been ineffective in mitigating GBV, particularly in rural areas. They suggest that the prevalence of GBV is higher in poor households, especially in rural areas where traditional leaders hold significant influence. These leaders, while highly respected, often prioritize community cohesion over the enforcement of formal legal norms that protect GBV survivors. In Bundibugyo, this issue is compounded by entrenched patriarchal norms, making it more difficult to address the root causes of GBV. Legal pluralism explains this issue, as the coexistence of multiple legal systems—state law, local customs, and informal justice systems creates a fragmented legal landscape where GBV is not adequately addressed.

Poverty, which is prevalent in rural areas, also plays a significant role in perpetuating GBV. Studies by Gibbs et al. (2020) and Jewkes et al. (2017) show that poverty exacerbates gender inequality, leading to higher rates of GBV in impoverished areas. In Bundibugyo, where poverty is widespread, these dynamics are amplified. Legal pluralism provides an important lens for understanding how the intersection of economic disparities, patriarchal norms, and weak legal enforcement creates an environment where GBV is normalized and difficult to combat.

Finally, traditional leaders in rural communities, as noted by Chigwata (2016), are often seen as key figures in maintaining peace and order. However, despite their authority and respect in the community, these leaders have been ineffective in addressing GBV in Bundibugyo. This highlights a critical flaw in informal justice systems, where traditional authorities, despite their power, may be unwilling or unable to confront deeply ingrained gender norms that perpetuate violence. Legal pluralism offers valuable insights into why these traditional systems, though influential, often fail to protect GBV survivors, as their approach to justice is shaped more by custom than by formal human rights principles.

To address the challenges identified in the study, several culturally sensitive and community-based interventions could be implemented to improve the effectiveness of GBV mitigation in Bundibugyo. First, strengthening community-driven support systems, such as peer support groups and safe spaces for survivors, can provide immediate, culturally acceptable avenues for help. These systems, supported by local leaders, would empower women to seek support and justice. Additionally, legal education programs tailored to local contexts can empower women with knowledge of their rights and available recourse. To challenge harmful gender norms that normalize violence, targeted cultural reformation programs should engage both men and women in redefining social expectations around gender roles and violence. Reforming the LCCs to ensure they operate with gender sensitivity and align with both formal and informal legal principles is also crucial, as is creating structured coordination mechanisms between formal legal institutions and local justice systems. Moreover, incentivizing community leaders to actively engage in GBV reduction, coupled with economic empowerment initiatives for women, can address the underlying economic drivers of GBV, providing women with the resources needed to escape abusive situations. Through these combined efforts, Bundibugyo can work toward a more integrated and effective approach to mitigating GBV while respecting local customs and addressing deeply ingrained gender inequalities.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the limitations of semi-formal justice systems like LCCs in mitigating GBV, particularly in rural settings like Bundibugyo. Legal pluralism provides a critical framework for understanding the complexities of this issue, as it reveals the tensions between formal legal systems and informal, community-based norms that often hinder the effective protection and support of GBV survivors. The study suggests that a more integrated approach is needed one that aligns informal justice systems with formal legal principles, while addressing the socio-cultural factors that perpetuate GBV in rural communities. Only by recognizing the interplay between different legal orders can effective solutions be found to combat GBV in Bundibugyo and similar contexts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study concludes that the institutionalization of semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs) in Bundibugyo District accounts for a fair proportion of GBV mitigation but ultimately brings about an insignificant change in reducing GBV. While LCCs provide an accessible avenue for victims to seek justice and leverage local customs for conflict resolution, their overall impact is constrained by factors such as limited resources, inconsistent enforcement of decisions, and pervasive community-level gender biases. The findings highlight that, although LCCs are essential in the local justice ecosystem, they alone cannot bring about substantial societal change in reducing GBV. To achieve a more profound and lasting impact, a more integrated approach is needed, combining the strengths of both formal and informal justice systems, addressing systemic resource limitations, and challenging deep-rooted cultural norms that perpetuate GBV.

Study Contribution

To create a more profound and lasting impact on GBV mitigation in Bundibugyo, an integrated approach that combines formal and informal justice systems, inspired by successful models from other contexts, is essential. For example, Rwanda's integration of Gacaca courts with the formal justice system during post-genocide reconciliation effectively fostered community participation and resolved disputes through culturally relevant justice. Similarly, South Africa's Community-Based Paralegal Program bridges the gap between formal courts and rural communities, addressing legal issues like GBV. These models, along with the UNDP GBV

Management Model (2023), which coordinates multi-sectoral responses and emphasizes community engagement, and the GBViC Operational Model (2018), which advocates for the inclusion of local stakeholders, provide valuable lessons for Bundibugyo's strategy.

However, while these models, including the UNDP's GBV Management Model and the IOM's GBViC Framework, are aligned with international standards, their implementation in Bundibugyo faces significant challenges. The local context may lack adequate infrastructure, trained personnel, and community awareness, which are crucial for fully supporting a survivor-centered approach, as outlined in the GBViC Framework. In response, this research proposes a new GBV mitigation model (2024) tailored to the local context, focusing on timely detection, early reporting, quick investigative responses, and immediate protective measures to prevent further harm. The model also emphasizes shifting community attitudes through education and awareness campaigns, particularly around harmful gender norms and the importance of supporting survivors. This approach integrates local structures such as semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs), supported by mobile legal aid clinics or paralegals, to offer accessible legal services. Strengthening partnerships between local leaders, women's groups, and formal law enforcement is essential to addressing community-level gender biases and ensuring consistent enforcement of GBV cases. By addressing resource limitations through government and NGO funding, Bundibugyo can build a culturally sensitive, resource-efficient, and sustainable system for GBV mitigation.

Theoretical Implication

This study contributes to the existing body of literature on informal justice systems and gender-based violence (GBV) mitigation by highlighting the critical role of semi-formal mechanisms like Local Council Courts (LCCs). By drawing on the Theory of Legal Pluralism and the Family Life Cycle Theory, it provides a nuanced understanding of how institutionalized informal systems can be leveraged for social justice. The findings challenge traditional views that prioritize formal legal institutions, suggesting that semi-formal systems, which incorporate local customs and norms, may play a crucial role in local conflict resolution and gender justice. The study underscores that LCCs can complement formal judicial structures by offering accessible, culturally resonant forums for addressing GBV, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of GBV interventions. This theoretical perspective emphasizes the need for a more integrated approach to justice that recognizes the value of both formal and informal mechanisms in achieving gender equity and mitigating violence.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study highlight the necessity for policy reforms to enhance the effectiveness of semi-formal Local Council Courts (LCCs) in addressing gender-based violence (GBV). Policymakers should prioritize integrating gender-sensitive training for LCC officials to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to handle GBV cases effectively and empathetically. Additionally, improving coordination between formal and informal justice systems is crucial to create a seamless and coherent approach to GBV mitigation. This could involve establishing clear protocols for case referrals and information sharing between these systems. Allocating more resources to support the operations of LCCs is also essential, including funding for training programs, infrastructure improvements, and community outreach initiatives. Moreover, aligning local justice mechanisms with national GBV strategies will ensure a more comprehensive and sustainable approach, fostering consistency in GBV prevention and response efforts across different levels of governance. By implementing these policy changes, the effectiveness of LCCs in mitigating GBV can be significantly improved, contributing to the broader goal of achieving gender justice and equity.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of semi-formal Local Council Courts in mitigating GBV in Bundibugyo District. Firstly, policymakers should prioritize policy reforms that include integrating comprehensive gender-sensitive training programs for LCC officials to ensure they are equipped to handle GBV cases effectively and impartially. Secondly, there should be improved coordination between formal and informal justice systems to create a more seamless and supportive network for GBV victims. This includes establishing clear protocols for referring cases between systems and ensuring consistent enforcement of LCC decisions. Thirdly, allocating more resources to support the operational capacity of LCCs is crucial. This includes funding for adequate facilities, personnel training, and victim support services. Additionally, aligning local justice mechanisms with national GBV strategies is essential to ensure a cohesive and sustainable approach to addressing GBV. This alignment will help to bridge the gap between local practices and broader policy objectives, creating a unified front against GBV. The government and stakeholders should focus on prevention and proactive measures. Training community officers and NGOs should be prioritized to ensure effective use of informal justice systems. Awareness campaigns and programs involving men, women, and boys and girls should also be promoted to challenge gender stereotypes and empower communities to prevent GBV. Lastly, community education initiatives are recommended to challenge and change harmful gender norms that influence the outcomes of LCC proceedings. By addressing these recommendations, the effectiveness of LCCs in mitigating GBV can be significantly enhanced, contributing to a more just and equitable society.

REFERENCES

- ActionAid. (2018). *Barriers to justice for women and girls*. ActionAid International.
- ActionAid. (2018). Gender-based violence and informal justice systems: Bridging the gap. *ActionAid International Report*.
- Aday, L. A. (1996). *Designing and conducting health surveys: A comprehensive guide*. Jossey-Bass.
- Ahikire, J., & Mwiine, J. (2020). Institutionalizing informal justice: A study of Local Council Courts in Uganda. *Journal of African Law*, 64(2), 193-211.
- Ahma, D., & Von, R. (2021). Community-based justice systems: The role of Local Council Courts in Uganda. *Journal of African Law and Governance*, 12(3), 102-120.
- Arango, D. J., Gennari, F., & Rivas, A. (2019). *Addressing gender-based violence in policy and practice: Lessons learned and emerging approaches*. UN Women.
- Arango, D. J., Morton, R., & Rice, K. (2019). Gender-based violence and the role of the law: A global review. *Global Public Health*, 14(7), 1055-1072.
- Babbie, E. (1990). *Survey research methods* (2nd ed.). Wadsworth.
- Baldasare, M., & Ph, D. (2012). *Gender-based violence in rural settings: The role of community justice mechanisms*. *Gender and Development*, 30(4), 65-77.
- Beyene, A. S., Chojenta, C., Roba, H. S., Melka, A. S., & Loxton, D. (2019). Gender-based violence among women in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review and meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(22), 4192.
- Black, M. C., Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., Smith, S. G., Walters, M. L., Merrick, M. T., & Stevens,
- Bloom, S. S., Wypij, D., & Das Gupta, M. (2014). Dimensions of women's autonomy and the influence on maternal health care utilization in a North Indian city. *Demography*, 38(1), 67-78.
- Boas, M., Divon, M., & Sayndee, S. (2017). Strategies for the mitigation of gender-based violence in post-conflict settings. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 61(5), 1123-1148.
- Bob, M., Chuma, M., & Chazovachii, B. (2022). *Gender-based violence in rural settings: Social norms and women's acceptance of violence in Bundibugyo, Uganda*. *Gender & Development*, 30(2), 175-193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2022.2064347>
- Bob, U., Van Zyl, R., & Swart, T. (2022). *Masculinity, violence, and the normalization of GBV in South Africa: A study on rural communities*. *South African Journal of Criminology*, 35(4), 189-202.
- Bouten, L., & Naidoo, S. (2020). *Challenges in addressing gender-based violence through local councils in South Africa: A case study*. *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 52(1), 123-142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.2020.1775362>
- Boutin, M. (2020). *Reexamining the effectiveness of semi-formal local council courts in addressing GBV*. *Human Rights Review*, 21(2), 162-175.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Buiten, D., & Naidoo, K. (2020). Gender-based violence and local justice systems: An African perspective. *African Journal of Legal Studies*, 13(2), 211-229.

- Buiten, D., & Naidoo, K. (2020). Informal justice and gender-based violence: The experiences of women in informal settlements in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 46(1), 111-125.
- Buiten, J., & Naidoo, S. (2020). *The role of local councils in addressing gender-based violence in Uganda*. *Journal of African Social Policy*, 18(3), 102-116.
- Buiten, L., & Naidoo, V. (2020). The role of local courts in the informal justice systems: A case study of the Local Council Courts in Uganda. *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 28(2), 210-229.
- Buiten, M., & Naidoo, K. (2020). *Semi-formal courts and the challenge of addressing gender-based violence in South Africa: A legal perspective*. *Journal of African Law*, 64(1), 91-107.
- Bundibugyo District Local Government (DLG). (2022). *Probation Office GBV statistics report 2022*.
- Camey, I., Sabater, L., Owren, C., & Boyer, A. E. (2018). Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality. *IUCN Global Gender Office*. Retrieved from <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-002-En.pdf>
- Carrington, K., Guala, A., Puyol, M., & Sozzo, M. (2019). *Women-led policing and the mitigation of GBV in Argentina*. *Feminist Criminology*, 14(1), 45-65.
- Carrington, K., Guala, M., Puyol, G., & Sozzo, M. (2019). *The role of community-based strategies in the fight against gender-based violence*. *International Journal of Human Rights and Social Justice*, 9(2), 130-145.
- Carrington, K., Guala, R., Puyol, M., & Sozzo, M. (2019). Gender-based violence and legal frameworks: A cross-cultural examination of responses and challenges. *International Review of Victimology*, 25(4), 349-373.
- wCarrington, K., Hogg, R., & Sozzo, M. (2019). *Legal pluralism and violence in the informal justice system: A global perspective*. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 57, 99-118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcrj.2019.01.005>
- Carter, B., & McGoldrick, M. (1988). *The family life cycle: A framework for family therapy*. Gardner Press.
- Carter, B., & McGoldrick, M. (2005). *The expanded family life cycle: Individual, family, and social perspectives*. Pearson Allyn & Bacon.
- Ceccato, V. (2015). *Gender-based violence and the social construction of masculinity in Sweden: A study of rural and urban dynamics*. *Nordic Journal of Criminology*, 16(3), 247-263.
- Ceccato, V. (2015). *The interplay of violence and gender in rural Uganda: A case of Bundibugyo*. *Violence and Victims*, 30(3), 389-404. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-14-00030>
- Chigwata, T. (2016). *Traditional leaders and the mitigation of gender-based violence in rural areas: A case study of Bundibugyo, Uganda*. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 5(1), 45-62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24743150.2016.1234769>
- Chigwata, T. (2016). *Traditional leadership and its role in local governance in Zimbabwe: A case study of rural communities*. *Journal of African Political Science*, 22(2), 175-189.

- Chuma, M., & Chazovachii, B. (2012). *The dynamics of masculinity and violence in rural Zimbabwe: Implications for gender-based violence*. African Journal of Gender and Development, 9(2), 181-198.
- Chuma, M., & Chazovachii, B. (2012). *Women's acceptance of gender-based violence in rural communities: A case study of Bundibugyo District, Uganda*. Gender Studies Quarterly, 14(1), 50-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02646889.2012.10703150>
- Collins, P. H. (2013). Violence against Black women. In B. Smith (Ed.), *The truth that never hurts: Writings on race, gender, and freedom* (pp. 125-142). Rutgers University Press.
- Cowan, D., & McDermont, M. (2006). *Regulating social housing: Governing decline*. Routledge-Cavendish.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Davies, S. E., & True, J. (2018). The politics of counting and reporting conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence: The case of Myanmar. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 19(1), 4-21.
- Davies, S., & True, J. (2018). Understanding gender-based violence: From global to local perspectives. *Global Politics and Society*, 5(3), 123-145.
- De Sousa Santos, B. (1987). Law: A map of misreading. Toward a postmodern conception of law. *Journal of Law and Society*, 14(3), 279-302.
- Denham, A. (2008). *Coordinating GBV interventions in humanitarian settings: Challenges and strategies*. International Review of the Red Cross, 90(871), 755-770.
- Denham, A. (2008). Feminist interventions in the study of family violence: A critical approach. *Feminist Studies*, 34(1), 94-117.
- Denham, E. (2008). *Gender-based violence and its impacts on women and communities*. Journal of Social Issues, 22(6), 14-26.
- Denham, S. (2008). *The role of local council courts in mitigating GBV in Uganda*. Journal of African Law, 52(1), 67-86. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021855308000070>
- Department for International Development (DFID). (2013). Violence against women and girls: Challenging attitudes and changing behavior. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67438/violence-against-women-girls.pdf
- Doherty, B. (2015). *Combating gender-based violence in rural communities: A community justice approach*. Gender and Social Justice Review, 12(1), 32-48.
- Doherty, D. (2015). *The limitations of informal justice systems in mitigating gender-based violence: A comparative analysis*. Feminist Legal Studies, 23(4), 129-147. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-015-9302-2>
- Doherty, M. (2015). *Routine screening and the role of health professionals in mitigating gender-based violence in Canada*. Violence Against Women, 21(7), 818-834.
- Doherty, S. (2015). Addressing the barriers to justice for survivors of gender-based violence. *International Journal of Law, Policy, and the Family*, 29(3), 255-276.
- Family Health Survey (NFHS-4). (2015-2016). National Family Health Survey, India. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. Retrieved from <http://rchiips.org/nfhs/NFHS-4Reports/India.pdf>

- Fellows, R., & Liu, A. (2021). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Fowler, F. J. (2013). *Survey research methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR). (2010). Handbook for coordinating gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings. Retrieved from <https://gbvaor.net/gbviemanual>
- Gibbs, A., Hatcher, A., & Jewkes, R. (2020). *Poverty and gender-based violence: A global review*. International Journal of Public Health, 65(5), 597-608. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-020-01364-x>
- Gibbs, A., Shai, N., & Willan, S. (2018). *Food insecurity and its association with gender-based violence in rural South Africa*. Social Science & Medicine, 209, 50-57.
- Gibbs, A., Willan, S., & Jewkes, R. (2020). *Poverty, patriarchy, and the persistence of gender-based violence: A South African study*. Feminist Economics, 26(3), 147-165.
- Griffiths, J. (1986). What is legal pluralism? *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 24, 1-55.
- Heilman, B., et al. (2016). *Women's agency in informal justice systems: Understanding the limitations of informal responses to GBV*. Gender and Development, 24(3), 406-421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2016.1228012>
- Heilman, B., Hebert, L., & Paul-Gera, N. (2016). The making of sexual violence: How does a boy grow up to commit rape? Evidence from five IMAGES countries. *International Center for Research on Women*.
- Heilman, B., McGill, P., & Manukonda, M. (2016). *Informal justice systems, gender-based violence, and the challenge of protecting women in rural areas*. Journal of International Women's Studies, 17(2), 111-128.
- Heilman, B., Paul-Gera, A., Musuya, T., & Siebert, A. (2016). *Women and informal justice systems in Uganda: The need for reform*. Gender Studies Journal, 24(4), 225-240.
- Heilman, B., Paul-Gera, P., Musuya, T., & Siebert, K. (2016). The intersection of gender inequality and informal justice systems in Uganda. *African Journal of Social Science Research*, 9(4), 478-493.
- Heilman, B., White, A., & Rudd, A. (2016). Legal pluralism and the challenge of gender justice: Local Council Courts in Uganda. *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 48(2), 65-85.
- IUCN. (2018). Local Council Courts and the management of gender-based violence: A review of Uganda's legal system. *International Union for Conservation of Nature*, 3(2), 144-161.
- Jewkes, R., et al. (2017). *Poverty and gender inequality as drivers of gender-based violence*. The Lancet Global Health, 5(1), 33-44. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(17\)30333-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(17)30333-1)
- Jewkes, R., Fulu, E., & Roselli, T. (2017). *The effect of gender inequities on the prevalence of GBV in rural and urban areas*. The Lancet Global Health, 5(3), 171-179.
- Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLOS). (2018). Faith-based responses to gender-based violence. Retrieved from <https://jliflc.com/resources/faith-based-responses-gender-based-violence/>

- M. R. (2020). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISVS): 2018 findings on victimization by sexual orientation. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control*.
- Manjoo, R., & McRaith, C. (2011). Gender-based violence and justice in conflict and post-conflict areas. *Cornell International Law Journal*, 44(1), 11-31.
- Marees, A. T., van Harten, M., & Sijtsma, K. (2018). *Construct validity and item bias: A comparison of tests using the factorial structure of the measurement model*. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 78(5), 1007-1023.
- McGoldrick, D. (2004). Accommodating Muslims in Europe: From adopting Sharia law to religious pluralism. *Human Rights Law Review*, 4(4), 603-626.
- Merry, S. E. (1988). Legal pluralism. *Law & Society Review*, 22(5), 869-896.
- Muluneh, M. D., Stulz, V., Francis, L., & Agho, K. (2020). Gender-based violence against women in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review and meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(3), 903.
- Muluneh, M., Mulu, A., & Leme, D. (2020). *Community-based justice mechanisms and their role in gender-based violence prevention in rural Ethiopia*. *African Journal of Gender Studies*, 15(2), 102-120.
- Muluneh, M., Stulz, P., Francis, T., & Agho, K. (2020). Prevalence of intimate partner violence among women in sub-Saharan Africa. *The Lancet Global Health*, 8(9), 1154-1162.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- NFHS-4 (2015-16). *National Family Health Survey: India*. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- Ocheme, A., Basse, E., & Nyembezi, L. (2020). *Local councils and gender-based violence: The Uganda experience*. *International Journal of Development*, 10(2), 78-92.
- Ocheme, O., Shajobi-Ibikunle, T., & Zuwen, A. (2020). Gender-based violence in Uganda: Policies, interventions, and outcomes. *Uganda Journal of Social Policy*, 10(1), 27-44.
- Ofori-Amaah, A., Chiongson, A., & Gandini, E. (2015). Bridging the gap: Overcoming obstacles to justice for survivors of gender-based violence in Africa. *African Journal of Law and Development*, 17(2), 134-147.
- Okethwangu, M., & Kobusingye, M. (2020). *Gender-based violence in Uganda: A case study of Bundibugyo District*. *Journal of African Law*, 35(4), 150-168.
- Okethwangu, R., & Kobusingye, E. (2020). Gender-based violence in Uganda: Challenges and policy responses. *Uganda Journal of Public Health*, 8(2), 113-126.
- Park, Y., Kang, M., & Lee, S. (2018). *Reliability of research instruments and their applicability in health care*. *Health Research Journal*, 34(2), 345-354.
- Rea, L. M., & Parker, R. A. (1997). *Designing and conducting survey research: A comprehensive guide* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Roebianto, S., et al. (2023). *Content Validity Index (CVI) and its application in measurement scales*. *International Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*, 11(4), 431-438.

- Rozali, N. A., Rauf, S., & Sahar, N. (2022). *Reliability analysis: Cronbach's alpha coefficient and test-retest reliability*. *Journal of Statistical Methods*, 9(3), 220–228.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students* (5th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Sethi, D. (2019). *Global perspectives on gender-based violence: Public health implications*. *International Journal of Social Health*, 18(2), 20-34.
- Shackel, R., & Fiske, J. (2016). *Gender-based violence and the impact of informal justice systems in rural areas*. *International Journal of Law, Crime, and Justice*, 44(2), 75-92.
- Shackel, R., & Fiske, S. (2016). Gendered justice and the limitations of informal legal systems: A comparative study of informal justice systems in Africa and the Western world. *Journal of Gender and Law*, 22(1), 58-72.
- Shackel, R., Dunne, A., & Morrow, R. (2016). *The experiences of young girls and adolescent survivors of gender-based violence in Uganda*. *Journal of Child Protection and Social Welfare*, 4(3), 14-29.
- Shackel, R., Fiske, J., & Higgs, P. (2016). *Young adolescent girls and the barriers to justice in rural communities*. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(8), 1083-1097.
- Slovin, M. (1967). *Formula for sample size determination*. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 62(6), 467–474.
- Smith, S. G., Chen, J., Basile, K. C., Gilbert, L. K., Merrick, M. T., Patel, N., ... & Jain, A. (2018). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2015 data brief–updated release. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.
- Smith, S. G., Zhang, X., Basile, K. C., Merrick, M. T., Wang, J., & Kresnow, M. J. (2018). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2015/2016 state report. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control*.
- Stern, E. (2014). Gender bias and cultural influences in local justice systems: The case of Uganda's Local Council Courts. *Journal of African Politics and Law*, 18(3), 232-248.
- Stern, E. (2014). Patriarchal norms and legal reform: The challenges of advancing women's rights in Africa. *Journal of African Law*, 58(3), 225-243.
- Stern, O. (2014). This is how we survived: Women and violence in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40(4), 853-866.
- Suzor, N., Dragiewicz, M., Harris, B., Gillett, R., Burgess, J., & Van Geelen, T. (2019). Human rights by design: The responsibilities of social media platforms to address gender-based violence online. *Policy & Internet*, 11(1), 84-103.
- Suzor, N., Nielsen, R. K., & Cudmore, P. (2019). Gender-based violence and media systems: Global trends and implications. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 360-381.
- Tamanaha, B. Z. (2008). Understanding legal pluralism: Past to present, local to global. *Sydney Law Review*, 30(3), 375-411.
- UN Women. (2012). *Gender-based Violence and Access to Justice*. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
- UN Women. (2012). *Gender-based violence in Uganda: Addressing the barriers to justice for women and girls*. UN Women Uganda.

- UN Women. (2018). *The Impact of Gender Inequality on Legal Systems*. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
- UN Women. (2018). *Transforming the lives of women and girls: The role of gender-sensitive legal frameworks*. UN Women.
- UNDP. (2018). *Gender inequality and its impact on development in Uganda*. UNDP Uganda.
- UNDP. (2018). *Justice Systems and Gender-Based Violence: Achieving Equality Through Legal Reform*. United Nations Development Programme.
- UNHCR. (2011). Action against sexual and gender-based violence: An updated strategy. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/4e1d5aba9/unhcr-action-against-sexual-gender-based-violence-sgbv-2011-2016.html>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2018). Gender-based violence and prevention strategies. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/publications/gender-based-violence-prevention-strategies>
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (2015). Gender-based violence and public health: Policy brief. Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1865/gender-based-violence-and-public-health>
- UNODC. (2018). *Gender and Justice: Overcoming Barriers to Equality*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
- UNODC. (2018). *Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in Uganda*. UNODC Uganda.
- Von Benda-Beckmann, K., von Benda-Beckmann, F., & Griffiths, A. (2005). *Mobile people, mobile law: Expanding legal relations in a contracting world*. Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Waters, L., Braun, A., & Green, C. (2020). *The impact of gender-based violence on rural communities: Global perspectives*. *Rural Sociology*, 48(3), 210-225.
- WHO. (2019). *Violence Against Women: A Global Health Crisis*. World Health Organization.
- World Food Programme (WFP). (2016). Policy on gender equality. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/policy-gender-equality>
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2017). Violence against women prevalence estimates.
- World Voices-Uganda. (2020). *Local Council Courts and Gender-Based Violence in Uganda*. World Voices-Uganda.
- World Voices-Uganda. (2020). *The role of local councils in promoting justice in Uganda*. *World Voices Journal*, 12(1), 5-12.