

**CULTURAL BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL WORK CHILD PROTECTION  
INTERVENTIONS: A CASE OF BANYOLE TRIBE IN BUTALEJA DISTRICT**

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the cultural barriers to effective social work child protection interventions among the Banyole in Butaleja district. It was a qualitative study and used interviews, focus group discussions to obtain data from the 32 respondents.

Among the study's important findings were cultural practices that favored child welfare, which included possession of knowledge about child protection/rights, a service access system through kinship, and the existence of an elderly judicial system for child abuse. Some prohibitive norms emerged, and these included respect for patriarchal structures that restrict children's opportunities and foster harmful practices such as early marriage, involvement of children in clan spiritual performance like unavoidable traditional worshipping, and helping child right abusers to hide when authorities like police look for them. Suggested solutions for the conflicting norms with social work in child protection included training social workers about local cultures, raising awareness on child rights and protection, and involving respected community figures in child protection initiatives.

Conclusively, effective social work practice with children in among the Banyole is sometimes hindered by the non-material/intrinsic culture which take the shape of spiritual possession (ghost worshipping) especially girls and patriarchal structure with authorities for decision making that restrict children opportunities and foster harmful practices such as child labour, early marriage although there were positive norms that social workers can utilize to improve the welfare of children including use of elderly judicial system for child abuse.

The recommended involvement of duly respected traditional leaders and elders should be crucial to allow social workers and Non-Governmental Organizations to influence public opinion and norms positively. Thus, they would provide the necessary leadership toward changing harmful norms and, in turn, allow the community to appreciate values and beliefs from a social work perspective and framework, towards positive change.

## DECLARATION

I, Mugaba Muhamad Muhamud hereby declare that this is my original work, is not plagiarized and has not been submitted to any other institution for any award.

Mugaba Muhamad Muhamud

Signature:



..... Date: 28/8/2025-----

## APPROVAL

This is to certify that this research titled “Cultural barriers to effective social work child protection interventions: A case of Banyole tribe in Butaleja district” has been done under my supervision and is now ready for submission.

Mr. Fredrick Mukhwana

Signature:



Date: ...29<sup>th</sup> August 2025...

Supervisor

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## ACRONYMS

AU	- African Union
FGC	- Female Genital Circumcision
FGD	- Focus Group Discussion
IFSW	- International Federation of Social Workers
IKS	- Indigenous Knowledge System
NASW	- National Association of Social Workers
UN	- United Nations
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	- United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	- United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	- United States Agency for International Development



## CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

How to raise children and how to train them during their childhood are controversial topics throughout the world. Anyone who opens any of the leading and trusted website or newspaper in Uganda will find a series of news items related to violent child-rearing practices, and the parenting behaviors in the news range from scolding and beating children to using needles to pinch children or cigarettes to burn them.

*One Father at one time said, "I am tired of seeing you on my compound, go and marry after all you have culturally grown. The Mother replied: "I cannot allow my children to marry now, they are still young and I still want them to study so I need help from you officer" (Internship experience).*

Such discussions and debates triggered my thinking and research interest in finding out whether there are cultural norms that incapacitate social work practices, what they are and how they incapacitate it? The study's contextual, theoretical, and conceptual perspectives, problem statement, objectives, and the implication of its logical structure are all provided in this section.

### 1.1 Study Background

The plight of children, and the task to protect them against abuse of various forms remains a concern for many worldwide. Social Work like many other stakeholders has interested itself with child protection in families and the greater community. The safety of children especially against abuse remains rampant today such that it is challenging to determine how safe children can actually be (Munro, 2011). When employing the numerous Social Work interventions to mitigate on child abuse in communities, it has also become common to find that there are challenges ranging from among others lack of professionalism and incorrect information (Taylor, 2013).

Johnson (2013) discovered that cultural norms and interventions with children who are at risk mean that social work specialists are still needed to help children in Uganda even when there are a variety of legislative regulations in place.

The prevalent sociocultural and religious backgrounds have had a significant impact on one's approach to, and understanding of childhood and child rearing. They have greatly influenced social

workers' responsibilities in promoting and protect children's happiness as well as how nations and cultures approach children (Dixon & Melbourne (2015). Cultural norms have an impact on how individuals bring up their children and define childhood, and this helps social workers in their efforts to protect children. But when abusive methods like harsh verbal or corporal penalties are tolerated in another culture, some children continue to be susceptible, undermining the efforts of social workers (Killion, 2017).

For children who are in threat of abuse or neglect as well as those who are dealing with challenging circumstances outside their ability, social workers are indispensable (Lilleston et al., 2017). People facing general challenges like discrimination, poverty, addiction, destitution, and generational series of shocks frequently get valuations, resource consultations, case plan creation, and referrals, foster care resources, adoption, and advocacy (IFSW, 2014).

Social workers manage child abuse situations in homes, daycare centers and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) dealing with rights of children in regions, and ministries (Kendrick, 2013) Child safety is a top focus for social workers, and they do this by fortifying systems and, above all, improving situation management practices. Child safety is still a difficult undertaking since a significant number of minors' experience or are in danger of experiencing violence, and there is a limited chance that they will get justifiable help (USAID, 2020).

In Uganda, different cultural groups have cultural practices which infringe on the rights of children. Among the Langi for example a knife, stone, or piece of glass is used to remove the middle tooth as it symbolizes proof of identity. It is used to show a person's kinship with a divine or ancestral group, to indicate a particular position or rank in society, or to mark a child's transition into adulthood, including Feminine Genital Disfigurement (UNICEF, 2013).

Cultural responsiveness is often influenced by how well practitioners apply native and innovative notions, techniques, and methods (Luwangula et al., 2017) It emphasizes how crucial cultural competency is for practitioners to help children in a good way. The significance of cultural consciousness among child practitioners has lately remained decorated, despite the fact that knowing how cultural standards function is characteristic during practice and improves child practitioners' abilities in valuations and choices in child safety cases. (Blunt, 2007)

People working with children typically develop child protection and operate within society's established standards and beliefs rather than focusing only on their specialized skills (Keddell,

2023). While undertaking social work intended for the protection of children, it is important that the practitioners uphold good cultural conceptions and appreciate that in seeking cultural fitness, they risk conflicting with individual principles.

Male parents are considered the most respected and listened to among many societies in Africa; female parents come second to male children. The masculine milieu in which practitioners operate molds their methods for interacting with children and greatly influences their decision to step in and protect a child against danger (Tembo & Oltedal, 2015). This is so because, if the male parent, for example, refuses, it could be difficult to implement an agreement reached by practitioners, which results in a significant conflict between society and social workers.

It is crucial to recognize that different cultural understandings of social work intervention can be detrimental to their success while dealing with minors, much as they are cognizant of indigenous beliefs and standards (UN Report, 2022). In this regard, the research investigates whether any cultural standards that the Bunyole society may have clashed with the successful social work treatments for child safety.

Bunyole, located in Eastern Uganda, is a culturally rich community where traditional norms deeply influence social structures, child-rearing practices, and communal welfare. The Banyole people uphold customs such as naming ceremonies, placenta burial, and collective caregiving, which serve as informal mechanisms for child protection. These practices are rooted in spiritual beliefs and communal responsibility, reinforcing a child's identity and safeguarding them from perceived harm. For instance, the burial of the placenta is believed to shield the child from witchcraft, while naming rituals integrate the child into the social fabric of the clan (Whyte, 1997; Save the Children, 2015).

Social work practices in Bunyole must navigate a complex terrain where Western models of child protection often clash with indigenous values. Formal interventions—such as legal reporting of abuse or advocacy for gender equality—may be perceived as disruptive to family harmony or disrespectful to elders. This tension has led to the emergence of social work, which emphasizes cultural responsiveness, communal welfare, and mutual respect. Scholars like Twikirize and Wamara argue that effective social work in Uganda must incorporate indigenous knowledge systems and local philosophies such as Ubuntu, which prioritize relational ethics and collective action over individualism (Wamara et al., 2023; Luwangula et al., 2017).

Interventions in Bunyole have increasingly focused on integrating traditional structures with formal child protection mechanisms. These include the formation of village-level child protection committees, community sensitization campaigns, and partnerships with NGOs like World Vision and A Little Bit of Hope. Such efforts aim to raise awareness about harmful practices like early marriage and corporal punishment while leveraging the authority of cultural leaders to promote behavioral change. Community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs), rooted in kinship care and elder mediation, have proven effective in aligning social work goals with local norms (Horn et al., 2013; MoGLSD & UNICEF, 2020).

Ultimately, the success of social work in Bunyole depends on its ability to harmonize formal principles with indigenous values. This requires cultural humility, ongoing dialogue, and co-creation of solutions that respect both the rights of children and the integrity of community traditions. As Gray and Coates (2010) emphasize, social work is not merely about adapting Western models that is it is about reimagining practice from within the cultural context itself.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Social workers frequently navigate cluster of norms far removed from their own, prompting them to wrestle with the pivotal dilemma during the child practicing: “When is something merely unique—and when is distinct a miss?” (Donaldson, 1996). These tensions escalate when cultural expectations obstruct an ethical intervention, particularly in cases involving children. Globally, social workers are positioned as tools for reconciliation, yet they often result in discord across cultural boundaries (Healy, 2007). The cultural relativities make universal child protection policies difficult to implement without risking community alienation or misunderstanding.

In the Ugandan context - and more sharply within the Bunyole ethnic community - these tensions are not theoretical but lived realities. Deeply ingrained traditions such as initiation rites, child labor, rigid gender roles, and clan-based justice systems often supersede formal child protection frameworks. For instance, over 39.5% of Ugandan children aged 5–17 are engaged in child labor, predominantly in agriculture (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). In the Busoga sub-region, which encompasses Bunyole, 84% of children report experiencing abuse, including corporal punishment, sexual exploitation, and neglect (Uganda Police Annual Crime Report, 2024).

Approximately 35% of children in Butaleja district have experienced some form of abuse, with

physical abuse accounting for 20%, emotional abuse for 10%, sexual abuse for 5%, and neglect for 15% (Senda, 2024). These statistics highlight the widespread nature of the problem and the urgent need for tailored interventions to address the wellbeing of children in the community. These figures signal the magnitude of the issue - not just in scope but in depth. Social workers are not simply delivering services; they are negotiating ethical minefields where culture and protection collide.

Without culturally adaptive frameworks, efforts toward child safety risk stagnation, resistance, or re-traumatization. Consequently, this study investigated which traditions currently prevalent in Bunyole interfere with the goals of an efficient social worker's effort toward child protection, while illuminating the ethical, cultural, and professional implications of intervention. The research intends to propose culturally respectful strategies that empower children without disrupting the integrity of community norms.

### **1.3 General objective of the study**

The overall objective of the study was to investigate cultural norms in Bunyole that conflict with social work intervention in child protection.

#### **1.3.1 Specific Objectives of the study**

The specific objectives of the study were

- i. To identify the cultural norms in Bunyole that promote child protection and are aligned with social work principles.
- ii. To examine the cultural norms in Bunyole that challenge the implementation of social work interventions for child protection.
- iii. To explore the culturally sensitive social work interventions that can be designed to enhance child protection practice in this area.

### **1.4 Research questions**

The research questions included.

- i) Which cultural norms in Bunyole currently promote child protection that are aligned with social work principles?
- ii) Which cultural norms in Bunyole present challenges the implementation of social work interventions for child protection?
- iii) What culturally sensitive social work strategies can be designed to enhance child protection

practices in this area?

## **1.5 Scope of the study**

This section is broken into Geographical, content, and time scope

### **1.5.1 Geographic Scope**

Butaleja area was the site of the research. Bunyole ethnic controls 80%. The indigenous groups of Bagwere, Bagisu, Japadhola, Itesoits, and Basoga are additionally prominent. In Butaleja one of the poorest areas of Uganda, the exploitation of children is a big problem due to illicit marriages between minors (46%), the majority of them are girls who stop schooling (UNFPA2019). 5,264 adolescent girls were sexually abused during 2019 and 2020, Child abuse and employment are combined (Butaleja district statistics 2022). This area is home to the majority of indigenous herbal practitioners, has the worst living conditions, and with the least educational attainment, and is mostly inhabited by peasants.

### **1.5.2 Content scope**

The research focused on investigating which traditions currently prevalent in Bunyole interfere with the goals of an efficient social worker effort to secure the safety of children. Specifically, the study concentrated on Determining which customs in the Bunyole currently promote child protection, investigating customs in society that run counter to the way social work is currently practiced to promote child protection, and investigating possible solutions to these disputes to support social workers in promoting protection for children.

### **1.5.2 Time scope**

This research looked at the 2019–2022 timeframe. This was because there has been a rise in teenage births, child marriages, and exploitation of children in recent years. Growing rates of impoverishment, low educational attainment, and traditions and beliefs around the protection of children's lives are often the causes of this (UNICEF, 2022).

## **1.6 Justification of the study**

Social workers are often called upon to handle cases affecting minors. Beddoe noted that their efforts have had not much to no results owing to cultural issues (Beddoe & Fouche, 2022). This investigation will highlight the importance of investigating if the community's present customs interfere with or facilitate efficient social work engagement in child protection to build dual praxis

for minors. Approximately 35% of children in Butaleja district have experienced some form of abuse, with physical abuse accounting for 20%, emotional abuse for 10%, sexual abuse for 5%, and neglect for 15% (Senda, 2024). These statistics highlight the widespread nature of the problem and the urgent need for tailored interventions to address the wellbeing of children in the community.

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

To students studying social work: This research contributes to the body of expertise held by the social work profession regarding the well-being of minors and will provide future scholars with fresh information regarding the relationship between social work for children's welfare and cultural standards.

Social work students, especially those studying child development, may require it for effective use and to dispel misconceptions among practitioners and local customs in their attempts to foster child safety.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents literature based on previous studies, conducted by numerous scholars and relate to the cultural norms that promote child protection and are aligned with social work principles, the cultural norms that conflict with social work intervention in child protection, and exploration of what can be done to address these conflicts to promote child protection by social workers in these communities.

#### **2.1 The general cultural norms which support child safety**

Although there are many common professional goals, actual practices may vary because the setting and subject matter of our work depend on the people, places, entities, and societies in which we operate. Comprehending the cultural and sub-cultural norms of our clients is crucial for implementing efficient social work practices with minors. The body of research indicates that certain cultural norms support protecting infants.

The customary naming ritual for a child is conducted shortly after delivery. These mark the start of the family's duties to look out for and protect the child as well as the child's assimilation into the wider, supportive family unit. Consequently, name practices uphold a child's right to know and be cared for by their caretakers and family. They also back the child's entitlement to a name. The rites of entrance and naming help minors feel knowledgeable and like part of a community. Initiation rituals, that mark the transition from infancy into adulthood, strengthen children's sensation of affiliation to a broader society (Save the Children 2015).

They also include a substantial instructional section that offers guidance on foraging in the specific location. The naming ceremony is an extremely important event. It is a response to the associated difficulties in acknowledging the person and integrating him into the community, which acknowledges him in return (Urbatsch, 2014). By publicly identifying the baby's exceptional traits with a linguistic marker that is meaningful to the community, several aspects of the birth celebration, like naming the child, seek to define the particular attributes of the new arrival. A person's name can indicate not only their family history and place of origin, but also the same ambivalences that underpin all relationships, shape ideals, and characterize society as a whole.

Minors largely depend on their extended families for both mental and monetary help (Save the Children, 2015). A range of behavioral rights and desires are met when people from the wide household take a role in the care of the minors. In addition, they have rights and necessities concerning their schooling material requirements such as clothing, meals, medical attention, and psycho-social concerns. A safe and nurturing extended family can help a bereaved youngster develop a feeling of identity and belonging, claims (Urbatsch, 2014).

People with shared ancestry, pasts, standards, and views form clans. This comfortable warmth provides confidence (Urbatsch, 2014). A household that is broken up by strife or that suffers from problems like drinking, abuse at home, severe destitution, or a lack of guiding principles can also be a cause of stress for the bereaved child. Therefore, a dysfunctional family structure could make it harder to cope and promote illicit conduct.

Apart from bestowing dominance upon males, the other obligations on fathers include providing cultural and financial help to guarantee the security and comfort of their offspring. Beneficial medical results in children, including adaptability, decreased rates of smoking, alcoholism, and illicit drug use, postponed sexual activity, low rates of teen pregnancy, and exposure to HIV, are enhanced by caring parenting and guidance from parents (Rabe, 2007; Richter et al., 2011).

Via simulation and activities, Save the Children (2007) tracks the growth of children of all ages. In customary societies, elders supervise toddlers as they play games, tell narratives, and pretend to be characters. This promotes learning and development in the early years. Care for children centered in the vicinity. In the past, it has been a communal and collective responsibility to provide for and child protection. It is the responsibility of every person in the community to keep an eye on all minors, ensuring that they are not neglected, that they have food, clothing, and protection, and that they behave nicely and show kindness among themselves and the people around them.

With practical engaging, storytelling, and classic activities, children can convey individuality, express their opinions, and share their knowledge. Meetings often occur in a safe and supportive setting where children can talk openly about subjects that may have been forbidden with their families or relatives as well as with one other. As stated by Smith (2017), conventional games for children are disappearing, and if educators find methods to use them, they enrich existing ones to transmit new skills.

In the contemporary study environment where materials are restricted customary games for children

have played a significant role in fostering knowledge, culture, ancient heritage, and the acquisition of infant talents. Since conventional games for children incorporate expertise in talents, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) represent knowledge (Hedges et al., 2011; Riojas-Cortez, 2001). Much as indigenous knowledge is not frequently recorded, people in the society may employ it to tackle issues and transmit it down from one era to the next (Mapira & Mazambara, 2013; Maunganidze, 2016). Madondo's 2021 study found that allowing youngsters to play traditional kid games with their pals promoted socialization and the development of shared responsibility.

Horn et al. (2013) underscore the value of community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) in Uganda, demonstrating that traditional parenting roles and informal community networks serve as natural safeguards. These mechanisms are evident in Bunyole through kinship care, communal responsibility, and elders' involvement in resolving domestic conflicts. Such customs align with local norms that prioritize collective wellbeing, and they often function parallel to formal systems.

Additionally, Kiprono (2023) highlights the influence of traditional parenting norms on child protection in Ugandan communities. His findings reveal that cultural rituals, storytelling, and initiations often instill moral codes that protect children from harm. These customs embed child protection within daily life, making them both sustainable and culturally acceptable. The literature therefore supports the idea that existing practices can complement modern social work if appropriately leveraged.

A mapping report by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) and UNICEF (2020) offers broader context by documenting Uganda's national child protection landscape. The report identifies strengths in traditional systems—such as clan structures, customary courts, and religious affiliations—that play proactive roles in safeguarding children. Bunyole's customs are mirrored in this national reflection, reinforcing the legitimacy of informal mechanisms as viable entry points for social workers.

## **2.2 Cultural norms that conflict with social work intervention in securing child safety**

This part emphasizes many societal norms that render it difficult for social workers to deal with children's issues professionally. Among these norms are the following: Every civilization and society has ingrained traditions that serve as a reflection of the beliefs and values held by its

constituents. Some are advantageous to every individual, but others are detrimental to a specific team, especially women and children (UNICEF, 2006). Throughout the planet, there are a lot of detrimental conventional habits. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2015) declares that due to their consequences on female health, minor or forced unions and female circumcision conflict with professional values and require to be rectified.

A portion of these rituals of initiation entail unlawful conduct, especially those that call for forced marital slavery.

Almost two million girls are in danger each year because of the over 130 million women and girls who have previously received the therapy worldwide (Population Reference Bureau, 2001). Slack (1988) asserts that the tradition predates both Islam and Christianity by more than 2,500 years. Even though the location and cultural origins of infibulation are unknown, the most extreme form of surgery has been connected to ancient Egypt through the study of Egyptian mummies (Slack, 1988). Although the origins of the method are unknown, the fact that it is used in communities across several cultures and geographical regions indicates that it was developed independently by multiple groups.

Professional social work organizations in the US and overseas vehemently reject FGC. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) restated its position adopted at the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, which recognized "genital mutilation" as a discriminatory practice has a catastrophic impact on women's lives" (IFSW, 1999). The profession supports these agreements and accords that state that individual liberties supersede social norms that infringe on human rights.

The privilege of families who see their children as assets and believe they possess the authority to choose and enforce any kind of regulation they see appropriate is extended by the use of physical force. According to this perspective, parenting techniques are immaterial and should not affect how children are disciplined (Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006).

After emigrating to the US, parents from other cultures may find that their approaches to child discipline diverge with American views, which are increasingly in favor of using positive reinforcement. It is common for other culturally focused parents to be ignorant about the legal requirements for disciplining children in the United States. This could lead to more reports to child protective services. Giles-Sims & Lockhart (2005) argue that practitioners shouldn't assume that

every member of a community has the same perspective on child discipline because socioeconomic status and the use of corporal punishment vary even across different ethnic groups”.

Faith and culture. Due to social conventions and gender stereotypes, girls typically marry. Marriage for children is frequently triggered by cultural and faith-based reasons (African Union, 2015). Young weddings grown and continue to develop as a result of local pursuits like "Ukuthwala," "Wrestling," "Telefa," and "Trokosi" (Jongizulu, 2012; Haaland, 2017; Nahamya, 2017). 'Wrestling' is being noticed as a cultural norm that selects which girls are to become chosen as future brides and results in the trapping and enslavement of girls, leading to early marriage; additionally, 'Telefa' is commonly practiced mostly in Ethiopia, where a male surreptitiously abducts and assaults a girl under the age of 13 old to get pregnant her and contend parentage of a newborn.

With the Trokosi ritual, which is followed in countries like Ghana, Benin, and Togo, a virgin girl is transported to a shrine as penitence for an actual or suspected crime committed by a male family member (AU, 2015; Howusu, 2015). It is believed that these young women are the brides of the gods (Howusu, 2015). The custom known as Ukuthwala, which pushes the girl into an arranged marriage against her choice, is widely practiced in South Africa (Jongizulu, 2012). Findings from the analysis indicate that KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape provinces are the main sites of 'Ukuthwala' practice (Wadesango, Rembe & Chabaya, 2011). Because members of the community feel that giving in to the practice of girl marriage is acceptable, circumstances occur where nothing is done when a girl is abducted for marriage.

Juvenile failure may result in long-lasting impacts on a person's well-being, including age-related doubt and the transmission of risk to the next generation (UNDP, 2014). Girls who marry young run the danger of becoming pregnant and having children later in life, which perpetuates the cycle of destitution and ignorance.

“Children depend on loving adults to provide for their physical needs as well as their needs for safety, affection, and a sense of community, nevertheless, those adults often influence them and treat them in ways that may have long-term emotional and psychological consequences (Becket, 2007)”.

Social workers educate girls about their freedoms in the hopes that they will be able to triumph over systemic barriers to female parity and long-term social transformation, that could begin a positive cycle that results in decades of well-being. This relates to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of

the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which aims to advance gender parity and the independence of women and girls (UN, 2015).

Gray (2003) critiques Western-centric models of social work that often overlook indigenous values and practices. In contexts like Bunyole, customs such as child marriage, corporal punishment, and gendered decision-making conflict with contemporary child protection principles. Gray's work invites social workers to re-evaluate their frameworks and incorporate culturally sensitive approaches that recognize, but also question, harmful traditions.

Walakira et al. (2014) delve into the lived experiences of Ugandan children navigating child protection services. Their research reveals a disconnect between cultural expectations and institutional responses, particularly when children fear judgment or isolation. Practices deemed protective by elders—such as secrecy around abuse—may actually undermine children's rights. This empirical gap illustrates the tension social workers must navigate when dealing with deep-rooted customs.

Yiga (2023), in the Uganda chapter of the Oxford Handbook of Child Protection Systems, explores how societal norms around child labor, trafficking, and marriage present systemic challenges. These customs, though culturally endorsed, hinder formal interventions. Yiga calls for a reconceptualization of protection systems—one that balances local realities with global standards. His analysis is vital for understanding why certain cultural practices resist integration into social work models.

### **2.3 Possible solutions to the disputes relating to social workers and child protection**

Despite the fact that many people consider children to be society's ultimate gift (Al-Adawi 2006), steps must be taken to raise understanding of child safety. Reaching out to all levels of society should be the main goal of such an endeavor. There was less emphasis on preventing abuse in educational programs. Training should make it clear to the general public that abusing children is an offense that has to be disclosed as performing so is required by law. By judging the victims, it may be imperative that officials reveal the extent and nature of protection available to the community. Taxonomic procedures are needed to categorize the safety of children in a manner that is appropriate for the culture. It is challenging to recognize abuse and determine its degree because there are no widely agreed criteria for neglect or assault of children, making it challenging to protect children's rights

(Al-Saadoon, 2021) effectively. If there is a lack of agreement among cultures over the basic issue of what defines child abuse and neglect, awareness, and training programs will fall short of expectations. According to Al-Saadoon (2021), law enforcement officials would have significant challenges if they were to adopt universal standards of child abuse without accounting for sociocultural factors. For example, if a culture views hitting a child as "abuse" when it comes to control, then most households will fall under this category.

Performing social work in a way that acknowledges, upholds, and promotes the importance of people, communities, and families, and maintains the worth of all under cultural competency (National Association of Social Workers, 2015). The word "competence" refers to the wider idea that a practitioner ought to have a particular set of abilities, principles, and understanding. The NASW Code of Ethics states in Standard 1.05 (b) that therapists are expected to be knowledgeable about the cultures of patients and capable of offering solutions that are considerate of the variations between individuals and cultural groupings.

The Codification of Cultural Competence serves as the foundation for Standard 3 of the NASW's (2015) Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice. It states that social workers should be knowledgeable about the origins, customs, values, family structures, and imaginative representations of various cultural aspects, including race and ethnicity, social standing, arrival and refugee status, tribal groups, religion and spirituality, gender identity or orientation, or expression, gender identity, and faith and spirituality.

Cultural Delicacy: Understanding the cultural influences on conduct is a prerequisite shared by both empathy and cultural awareness. The term "sensitivity" appears in Standard 1.05(b), which was previously cited. Others might argue that being culturally sensitive calls for more than just awareness; it also calls for a deeper understanding and the ability to incorporate this understanding into one's actions. Culturally sensitive social workers are those who are not only aware of differences but also show tolerance and acceptance for them. They do not consider differences to be good or bad. They try to comprehend cultural variations from an emic standpoint.

Cultural humility holds that practitioners ought not to think about their roles as experts in the cultures of others, but instead as participants. Social modesty necessitates reflection and self-knowledge, just like empathy and consciousness. Social workers need to understand the way someone's background affects their dialect, beliefs, values, and other aspects to prevent assuming

anything about them (National Association of Social Workers, 2015). Examples of sensitivity to culture include being aware of social indicators and responding to them properly. When performing bio psychosocial examinations, social workers are attuned to cultural diversity. Additionally, social workers tailor their actions to the client's cultural background. Cultural responsiveness, like other cultural approaches, counsels' social workers to treat clients in their context.

Social workers who combine cultural humility and competency are aware of the diversity of cultural experiences among their clients. A social worker can approach a client as the expert in the supportive relationship if they are acquainted with the client's culture. By developing self-worth, observing cultural differences and similarities, and making sure that their assessments and interventions take into account the cultural strengths and needs of the people they are assisting, social workers can integrate cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness. Social workers and clients collaborate as partners to provide aid. Social workers work very hard to support their clients in reaching their objectives, particularly those that are culturally acceptable.

Bobadilla (2024) proposes culturally responsive interventions that embrace intersectionality in child protection. Her chapter emphasizes listening to community voices and adapting social work tools to reflect local beliefs. This approach is especially relevant in Bunyole, where successful protection strategies must align with traditions and respect social hierarchies. Balogun et al. (2025) build on this by developing inclusive models that prioritize cultural humility. Their study shows that community-led initiatives, facilitated by trained social workers, yield better outcomes in child welfare. These frameworks encourage co-creation of solutions between professionals and locals—a method particularly effective in regions with strong traditional governance.

Finally, Osborn and Karandikar (2023) present a practice-based perspective, where reflective learning and lived experience drive culturally competent interventions. Their study validates the importance of immersion and empathy in social work, suggesting that professionals should not only understand cultural contexts but actively engage with them. This is especially pertinent in Bunyole, where relational knowledge can unlock meaningful, ethical protection strategies

## **2.4 Theoretical Review**

### **2.4.1 Cultural Competence Theory**

Cultural Competence Theory provides a foundational lens for understanding how social work practice can be adapted to diverse cultural contexts. Rooted in the principles outlined by the National

Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2015), the theory emphasizes the need for practitioners to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills that enable them to work effectively across cultural boundaries. It advocates for a shift from cultural awareness to cultural humility—recognizing that communities are the experts of their own lived realities (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998; NASW, 2015).

In the context of child protection, cultural competence is not merely about acknowledging cultural differences but about integrating culturally grounded practices into intervention strategies. This is particularly relevant in the Banyole community, where traditional norms such as communal parenting, naming ceremonies, and elder mentorship play a significant role in safeguarding children. These practices reflect indigenous systems of care that align with the protective goals of social work, even if they are not formally codified in policy (Luwangula et al., 2017; Save the Children, 2015). The theory supports the idea that culturally competent social workers must engage with communities in ways that respect local customs while promoting child rights. For example, the study found that rituals surrounding childbirth and naming serve as protective mechanisms, reinforcing a child's identity and social belonging. Cultural Competence Theory helps frame these practices not as obstacles but as assets—tools that can be leveraged to strengthen child protection efforts (Blunt, 2007; Osborn & Karandikar, 2023).

However, the theory also demands critical engagement with cultural norms that may conflict with professional ethics. It encourages practitioners to navigate these tensions through dialogue, education, and advocacy, rather than imposing external standards. This approach aligns with the NASW Code of Ethics, which calls for respect for cultural diversity while upholding the dignity and worth of every individual (NASW, 2018). In this way, Cultural Competence Theory provides a flexible yet principled framework for balancing respect for tradition with the imperative to protect vulnerable children. It challenges practitioners to move beyond passive tolerance toward active engagement with cultural realities—recognizing that effective child protection requires both contextual sensitivity and ethical clarity.

Ultimately, the theory reinforces the study's call for culturally responsive social work—one that builds on community strengths, challenges harmful practices, and fosters collaboration between formal systems and indigenous knowledge. It positions social workers not just as service providers but as cultural mediators and agents of change (Ronald Luwangula et al., 2017; Twikirize, 2014)

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used in investigating cultural barriers to effective child protection interventions among the Banyole. It presents the research design, area of study, sources of information, population and sampling techniques, definition of variables, procedures for data collection, instruments employed, quality and error control mechanisms, ethical considerations, and methodological constraints.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted an exploratory qualitative research design. Exploratory research is particularly useful when investigating phenomena that are not well understood or documented, allowing for the generation of new insights (Hunter, McCallum, & Howes, 2018). It provided a comprehensive summary of events and experiences in everyday terms, making it suitable for capturing the lived realities of communities (Ayton, 2023). The qualitative paradigm was chosen because it enables researchers to answer “how” and “why” questions, which are central to understanding cultural dynamics and social work interventions (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). This approach is especially appropriate when the goal is to interpret social meanings and contextual influences rather than quantify variables (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study adopts an interpretivist paradigm, recognizing that meaning is socially constructed. This design was chosen to explore under-documented cultural phenomena and describe lived experiences.

### **3.2 Area of Study**

The research was conducted in Butaleja District, Eastern Uganda, where the Banyole ethnic group predominantly resides. This area was selected due to its rich cultural heritage and the persistence of traditional practices that influence child-rearing and protection. The district also presents a compelling context for inquiry because of its documented child protection challenges and active engagement by NGOs and social workers. Approximately 35% of children in Butaleja district have experienced some form of abuse, with physical abuse accounting for 20%, emotional abuse for 10%, sexual abuse for 5%, and neglect for 15% (Senda, 2024). These statistics highlight the widespread nature of the problem and the urgent need for tailored interventions to address the wellbeing of children in the community.

### **3.3 Sources of Information**

Primary data was collected from individuals directly involved in child welfare, including cultural leaders, social workers, NGO staff, parents, caretakers, and youths. This diversity of sources ensured triangulation and enriched the data with multiple perspectives. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015), qualitative research benefits from engaging participants who are closest to the phenomenon under study, as they provide nuanced and contextually grounded insights. The inclusion of both institutional and community voices aligns with best practices in participatory and culturally responsive research (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022).

### **3.4 Population and Sampling Techniques**

The study targeted individuals with experiential knowledge of child protection and cultural practices. A purposive sampling technique was employed, which is widely recognized in qualitative research for its ability to identify information-rich cases (Patton, 2015; Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). This method allows researchers to select participants based on their relevance to the research objectives rather than randomization, which is more suited to quantitative studies. The final sample size was 32, comprising 5 social workers, 3 cultural leaders, 1 probation officer, 5 NGO staff, 6 youths, and 12 caretakers/parents, selected by saturation. This sample size was justified based on the principle of thematic saturation, where data collection continues until no new themes emerge (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). Because the study focused on social work, the study studied 10 professional social workers who are also involved in children issues in Bunyole. These social workers were working with different NGOs in the community. They included included the 3 social workers (staff) from little bit of Hope, 3 social workers (staff) from world vision, and the 5 social workers hailing from the community.

### **3.5 Variables Definitions and Measurements**

Three core variables were examined: cultural norms, social work interventions, and child protection outcomes. Cultural norms were defined as shared beliefs and practices that shape childhood experiences, discipline, and gender roles. Social work interventions included formal and informal strategies such as counseling, legal advocacy, and community mobilization. Child protection outcomes were assessed through indicators like abuse prevention, empowerment, and service access. These variables were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method praised for its flexibility and ability to uncover patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Naeem et al., 2023). Thematic analysis is suitable for studies aiming to interpret meaning and context rather than test hypotheses (Castleberry

& Nolen, 2018).

### **3.6 Procedure for Data Collection**

Data collection involved face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. Interviews targeted key informants such as cultural leaders and NGO staff, while FGDs were conducted with parents and youths to explore household-level beliefs. This approach was justified because it fosters rapport, accommodates linguistic diversity, and allows participants to express themselves freely (Ayton, 2023). Semi-structured formats were used to balance consistency with flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into culturally sensitive topics (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

### **3.7 Data Collection Instruments**

Structured interview guides and FGD protocols were developed and pre-tested in a neighboring community to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness. Pretesting is a recommended practice in qualitative research to identify ambiguities and improve instrument reliability (Hilton, 2015). The tools were designed to elicit open-ended responses, allowing for rich narrative data and the emergence of unexpected themes—an essential feature of exploratory research (Hunter et al., 2018).

### **3.8 Quality/Error Control**

To enhance data credibility, several error control measures were implemented. These included instrument pretesting, real-time review of responses, audio recording (with consent), and verbatim transcription. Ethical safeguards such as confidentiality and voluntary participation were strictly upheld. These practices align with recommendations by Pietilä et al. (2019), who emphasize the importance of rigor and transparency in qualitative research. Member validation and triangulation were also employed to ensure trustworthiness and reduce bias (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022).

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from the Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw. Informed consent was secured, and data confidentiality was maintained throughout. Ethical considerations are particularly critical in qualitative research due to its relational and emergent nature (Bellalem et al., 2023). The researcher prioritized participant's well-being over research outcomes, especially when dealing with vulnerable populations (Mack et al., 2005).

### **3.10 Methodological Constraints**

Despite its strengths, the study faced several methodological constraints. Time limitations affected the depth of engagement with some respondents. Language barriers required translation, which may have influenced meaning. Sensitive topics such as sexual abuse led to occasional reluctance in disclosure, and social desirability bias may have shaped responses. These challenges are common in qualitative fieldwork and are acknowledged in literature as part of the complexity of naturalistic inquiry (Rothenberg-Elder, 2023; Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). Mitigation strategies included building rapport, using culturally competent interpreters, and triangulating data sources to enhance validity.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **DATA ANALYSIS PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyzes the research findings drawn from interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Butaleja District. It builds upon the methodology outlined in Chapter Three by interpreting narratives shared by cultural leaders, social workers, NGO staff, youths, parents, and the probation officer. The results are organized thematically to reflect the key cultural barriers influencing child protection practices among the Banyole. Before delving into thematic patterns, a brief profile of participants is provided to situate the perspectives from which the findings emerged.

#### **4.1 Characteristics of participants**

A total of 32 individuals contributed to the study, representing a diverse cross-section of stakeholders in child protection across Butaleja District. These included four practicing social workers (two males, two females), aged between 28 and 42, working with district and NGO programs, who responded through key informant interviews that explored their professional challenges and frontline experiences. Four cultural leaders (all males), aged 50 to 75 and serving as custodians of Banyole traditions in Bunyole East and West, participated through conversational interviews conducted in Lunyole and Lugwere, which allowed for culturally respectful exploration of traditional beliefs and child-rearing norms. The probation officer, female, aged 37, contributed via a structured interview at the district offices, offering critical insight into legal and procedural barriers to child protection. Five NGO staff (three males, two females), aged 29 to 45, affiliated with organizations such as World Vision and A Little Bit of Hope, were engaged through semi-structured interviews that reflected programmatic interventions and community outreach efforts. Six youths aged 16 to 22, consisting of both students and young parents, participated in focus group discussions held in community centers, where they shared lived experiences, perceptions of safety, and peer pressures.

Finally, twelve parents or caretakers (eight females, four males), aged 35 to 68, from various sub-counties across Butaleja, responded through localized focus groups organized in village settings, providing valuable perspectives on family dynamics, disciplinary practices, and cultural expectations. This composition ensured methodological diversity and thematic richness. By blending professional interviews with grassroots dialogues, the study captured a triangulated

understanding of how cultural values and institutional roles converge—or collide—in shaping child protection realities among the Banyole.

## **4.2 Presentations and interpretation of study findings in relation to research questions**

### **4.2.1 Which customs in Bunyole currently promote child protection?**

During the interview and focus group discussion, respondents were asked about their knowledge about child abuse and child protection. The responses indicated reasonable knowledge on the subject of child abuse. The study found out the cultural leaders, social workers and parents are knowledgeable on child protection. One of the respondents emphasized that child protection was a practice intended to keep child away from harm;

*“Child protection means that we as the elders and the community are preventing and responding to cases of violence that happen against children in our communities: This we do by paying attention to concerns like physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as harmful practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation...”*

The key informants observed that child protection was being concerned with the fate of the child against manner of violence with the most common being sexual violence among the girl child. Another cultural leader added that child protection was a way of supporting children, this leader stated that;

*“I think child protection means supporting children who a vulnerable in several different ways. These children need special attention, especially those with disabilities, orphans, and street children.”*

The study revealed that engaging families and communities is essential for effective child protection. Community-based approaches where everyone is responsible to the child can help identify and address risks, support families in crisis, and create a protective environment for children. This is perhaps the most accurate view of child protection.

From focus group discussion with the parents and key informant interviews with social workers, it was revealed that child protection meant ensuring the child have access to basic social services, and community involvement.

A mother during the focus group discussions stated that;

*“Child protection sometimes includes issues to do with ensuring access to services:*

*Ensuring that children and their families can access basic and also essential services such as health, education, justice, and social welfare. We often encourage people in the communities to report violations and support positive parenting practices”*

The study thereafter sought to find out the various cultural norms among the Banyole, that are aligned with social work efforts towards child protection. They revealed community support systems among Banyole are strong. The collective responsibility for child-rearing provides a safety net for children, ensuring they are well cared for and protected. This network can help monitor and protect children from harm. This is confirmed by an expression of one of the cultural leaders during the during the study said;

*“For the Banyole, like other tribal groups in Uganda, cultural and traditional rituals play a crucial role in shaping community identity and social cohesion for children. Significant events such as naming ceremonies and rites associated with marriage and childbirth are deeply embedded in their cultural practices. For instance, specific customs surrounding childbirth include burying the placenta to prevent it from being used for malevolent purposes, while the mother remains secluded until the umbilical cord falls off, with its remnants kept as protective talismans for the child.”*

Respondents during the key informant interviews explained that protection of the child’s placenta was common practice among the Banyole. they remarked that;

*“After a child is born, we traditionally have it that the placenta was removed from a newborn Banyole infant and buried so that it would not be a source of bad luck. The underlying belief is that a witch or other evildoer can use a newborn kid’s placenta to cause damage, bewitch the infant to death, or prevent the mother from regaining consciousness or reproducing in the future.”*

A mother during the focus group discussions explained why they tended to limit the mother to the house for almost a fortnight to allow the umbilical cord dry. She stated that;

*“Sometimes the mother is not allowed to leave the house with her newborn until the umbilical cord has detached from the baby’s navel. The mother of a newborn baby was expected to carefully store the remnants of the umbilical cord in a sacred location, and she was expected to do so for as many of her children as she bore; this was because the cords were thought to act as antidotes in the event that anything bad befell*

*any of her children.”*

Another elder narrated;

*"In considering the marriage question, when a Munyole girl is of an age, the parents would ask whom she would like to marry. After the girl has introduced her prospective husband to the parents, the couple and relatives will negotiate the terms for the bride's financial expenses. They are looking forward to a feast and celebration on the day from when the girl is free to go for her marriage. Should the father have died, it shall be the paternal uncle (that is, father's brother) to take the girl in marriage. As for the old woman, she would rather go with her children."*

*"Concerning death, the Banyole will observe three days of mourning for a man. During those three days, a person does not take a shower; after the three days, there would be a road rite called ahasanja, after which the showers would commence, and everybody would return to their normal lives. For her, dawn would be counted after four days and in another four days, a woman is not allowed to bathe until the whole process is completed. This was intended to give safety, place the belongings, and obtain the protection of the unborn child from the dead."*

In the above research, it is elucidated that there is discipline when it comes to child-control among the Banyole in Uganda. This is done by applying all sorts of advice and methods to instill a sense of order and respect in society. Furthermore, folklore and taboos served as social disciplinants for people, especially the children, while the elders were responsible for seeing to it that the social codes were observed. They also preserved all efforts to prove that nothing limited their work by cultural norms and practices which sought to protect children. Naming ceremonies and various other festivals surrounding the birth day are important in history, and they serve in uniting people and giving them an identity. Actually, they further pledge the community to defend the welfare of their children. The concept is at once supportive and obstructive. The researcher learned that Banyole people have a plethora of cultural practices that focus on child protection

As the cultural peoples recognize, the following activities have been mentioned by cultural leaders as acting toward child protection. These mainly focused on concern towards the child and his or her

safety. What the research has revealed is that the Banyole community did name children in order to protect them: one of the leaders explained that;

*"There is a special ceremony where close relatives and friends come and name the child a few days after a child is born. Most of them are named after their grandparents."*

*"Senior members of society usually occupy powerful roles which enable them to promote beneficial practices while eliminating damaging ones. Social work strategies can incorporate existing cultural practices which focus on child care and protection."*

The Banyole cultural customs commonly include child adaptation and foster care to ensure child protection. Such mutual aid and support were found to be cultural tenets within the Banyole community. The researches have termed these practices cultural instruments for individual empowerment and broader social justice initiatives. Such cultural frameworks have to be used by the social workers in addressing abuses, neglect, and exploitation of children. The research done within the Banyole community has shown a very complicated interplay between time-tested customs and contemporary factors that affect child protection measures.

Burial of the placenta and naming ceremonies are traditional rites believed to protect the children spiritually and, as per the traditional view, link the child to the community. The elder thus confirms through his research that cultural rituals play an important role in child well-being across varying contexts. The modernized world is weakening traditional norms which, according to elders, will leave children vulnerable to the absence of such customs.

Even though Uganda has put in place strong legal frameworks offering protection to children, through acts such as the Children Act, the implementation level has not been satisfactory, leaving the ground fertile for more harmful traditions to thrive. Social workers provide an important interface between traditional practices and modern child protection systems to ensure community participation in the protection of children. Modernization has introduced significant threats to child protection which calls for a strategy able to preserve good beneficial practices of tradition while changing bad ones.

#### **4.2.2 Which are some of the cultural norms that challenge social work interventions for child protection?**

Additionally, it was found that, while cultural traditions supported the social work child protection efforts, there were traditions that stood in direct opposition to these efforts. One of the mothers in the focus group discussions stated that the gender roles in some parts of Bunyole worked against the social work of child protection. The statement she made was as follows:

*"Sensitive gender roles are one of the cultural factors that stand in the way of child protection. It is still not common to have meaningful discussions about sexuality because of the existing taboos –this is known to prevent for example the victims of sexual abuse from disclosing their experiences. Reporting child abuse can be seen as bringing shame to the family especially if it concerns sexual abuse. This stigma can prevent victims and witnesses from speaking up in case of abuse".*

The Probation officer during the interviews stated that there are biased and very stringent gender roles in their culture that inhibit effective social work interventions in child protection:

*"The gender roles have seen better days, but we are still locked down by stringent cultural practices that largely favour men at the expenses of women. These rigid gender roles limit opportunities for girls in basically everything: education, participation in community activities. Thus, it hampers their development and protection, but also counteracts with the work of social work."*

The same leader added the following;

*"Among most of our communities especially in rural and remote places there is a strong attachment to taboos and superstitions. Certain taboos and superstitions can prevent children from accessing necessary healthcare or support. For example, some sicknesses or conditions might be attributed to witchcraft, leading to stigmatization and neglect. Such have frustrated social work efforts."*

A social worker explained during key informant interviews that another norm that blocked social work and child protection concerns is the strong attachment of the parents and children with the religion. She elaborated further, saying:

*"As much as we want certain vices to end, there is the influence of religious and such beliefs. Most of the religions, if not some of them have teachings that emphasize forgiveness and*

*reconciliation over reporting abuse to authorities- which frustrates child protection in communities."*

From key informant interviews done with cultural leaders, the study learnt that Banyole- a very patriarchal society- is sometimes at loggerheads with their efforts to protect children from abuse. The leaders affirmed that fathers always have the last word on issues concerning their children. He further added that;

*"Our society is a father headed one - therefore, cultural norms are deeply entrenched in our (Fathers) beliefs have significantly influenced attitudes toward children, particularly girls, placing them in vulnerable positions. Norms such as the prioritization/Valuing of male children over female children, the acceptance of early marriage, and the belief that women should be submissive to men often perpetuate gender-based violence and limit the community's ability to protect children. These harmful practices not only undermine the rights and well-being of girls but also hinder efforts to create a safe environment for all children within the community."*

One elder mentioned how some practices do not protect children at all. Cultural values are extremely important in shaping the principles surrounding child abuse and child intervention measures in that particular community. For example, some community members accept certain disciplinary practices like corporal punishment, while in other contexts, especially those influenced by global and Western perspectives, these practices may be viewed as abusive towards children. This difference calls for a more refined understanding of cultural norms in terms of child protection and intervention methods. Some practices in Butaleja, according to a parent in the focus group discussions, encourage deliberate silence around and stigma against issues of child abuse-namely, the tendency to consider girls in the Menstrual period as dirty.

These practices discourage dialogues on abuse, engendering a culture of silence and shame; for example, such social ordering may insist that families consider preserving their reputation rather than concerns over allegations of abuse, discouraging victims from speaking out in fear of rejection or ridicule. Such cultural expectations render talking about abuse in public almost sin-like and would further alienate any such victims, preventing them from accessing any assistance or support. Their silence perpetuates the abuse cycle, but it also becomes an obstacle during intervention and protection on the part of social workers and authorities. The family name is guarded at the expense of anything

else, she said;

*“In our local and remote community here, cultures prioritize family reputation and community standing, making the reporting of child abuse as in cases where domestic violence or sexual abuse could bring shame upon the family. This perception creates a significant barrier in addressing such issues since victims and witnesses become hesitant to speak out for fear of social stigma. Such a stigma acts against the reporting of abuse and requires that child protection workers earn the community's trust and create a culture prioritizing child welfare above family reputation.”*

The culture has been assessed to be the reason behind certain practices seen as detrimental culturally derived the culminating worthwhile to observe so as to put in place effective protective measures for example, gender stereotyping by culture in the current global setting influences how child protection measures are put in place.

*“Cultural norms related to gender can significantly affect in the way child protection programs are implemented, for instance, an individual can ask an adult to speak about sexual issues which is a kind of taboo thus with the extreme ending of oppressing the victim from disclosing abuse and asking for help. The other gender orientations like girls are supposed to sit down boys on the chair, only girls cook, kneel while greeting and boys stand can influence the way in which cases are viewed hence bias in dealing with the victims adding onto their vulnerabilities. These dynamics impose an obligation for social workers to practice gendered-based intervention in their approaches to combat and deal with child abuse affecting the community.”*

Related to those, the respondents elaborated during the informant interviews whereby the things said were about some of the culturally binding and considered collective practices that had betrayed and worked against the interest of the individuals - in this case, minor children.

*“...there are collective goals of the group- such goals will ordinarily be found in the clan and community interests-that can probably outweigh the interests of individuals and children. Once fears arise within the minds of members of the community about their beliefs, reputation, and harmony, those fears may become an obstacle to reporting actual cases of child abuse. So it becomes really very important for child protection workers to work with community leaders very closely to address those issues.”*

Creative ability with respect to the various cultures involved in child protection would be of utmost significance. Workers within this institution must now respect local cultural practices and languages. These include those who know of children's contribution to their socialization and skill acquisition. The study advanced by way of learning that there are cultural beliefs that do not favor moral social work in the interest of this agency. The cultural leaders unanimously agreed that there exist accompanying practices among the Banyole that do not favor efforts of child protection. One of them remarked that:

*"Yes, some cultural norms in Bunyole may not support child protection very well. Although those cultural norms may be treasured within the traditional domain, they sometimes oppose modern principles of child protection. Child protection activities must find a way to accommodate traditional customs."*

Irrespective of the actual definition of early marriage, the most that a wife could do in such cases was to accept it as part of her married life practice. One mother said that early marriage is part culture and it usually clashed with child protection efforts alongside community work.

*"Here, child marriage is the order of the day; in some instance, even our own culture-the very norms-have stood in favor of early marriage, which would ironically harm a child's education, health, and entire development,"*

The respondent went on to say, adding that it is gaining wrinkles but still persistent in some localities. It stood on top of social workers for a long time. Another leader said:

*"Some cultural practices, like child marriage or some initiation rites, are very dangerous to children. They are so much entangled within the community that it's difficult for social workers to argue for change without facing opposition."*

Increased internal cohesion, however, may have positive effects on the participative process to enhance individuation by protecting the external community from some of the social historical barriers that engender the matrix through which they may define and pursue their local aspirations. Some parents even said the following while in the focus groups;

*"There is lack of awareness or understanding about the negative impacts of certain cultural practices on children. Social workers usually have to do very long and extensive education programs and advocacy for changing minds and hence child protection in the local area, otherwise these efforts go to waste."*

Another such association may be the belief that economic realities restrict abusive behaviors by rural communities. Most of them assert that children should help support the home even under an oppressive climate of child labor. Depressed many economic vicissitudes and resource deficiencies have made it difficult for families to incur the expenses associated with the safety and protection of children.

Historical research really draws out ethnographic barriers to child protection that gender and taboos in the community raise. They become very stagnant so that nothing can dialogue about sexual abuse—always putting the likelihood of suffering in silence in ever-increasing measure. It is further exacerbated by patriarchal structures, valuing more the social image of the family than the health of the victim. It only remains for the subordinate customs, where males are the decision-making heads, hence limiting the choice for girls and the way in which abuse will be handled.

Taboos and superstitions further make it difficult to access healthcare and support, relating to diseases with a touch of witchcraft, which create stigma. Furthermore, rigid forms of religion can also hinder action by demanding forgiveness instead of laying charges for the ensuing abuse. Besides other forms of abuse, even here social image is prioritized over care for the victim's health.

#### **4.2.3 What can be done to address these conflicts to promote child protection by social workers in this community?**

Interviews with key informants revealed the existence of some activities related to promoting child protection and some mechanisms mitigating observed conflicts in social work and child protection. From the interviews with cultural leaders, formal systems of child protection have existed. One leader stated:

*"Yes, there are several social work interventions in Butaleja aimed at protecting children. Such programs involve local communities in identifying and addressing child protection issues through awareness-raising activities on children's rights and preventing abuse and neglect. Some interventions involve the formation of committees; these committees are established at the village level to monitor and report cases of child abuse. They closely liaise with local authorities and social workers to ensure that children are safe and their needs are met..."*

The social workers and health workers definitely work together to provide care to the children with medical treatment, counseling, and support to families in crisis, while at the same time providing

legal aid to children and families to reach the justice system and act in the best interest of the children, said an informant.

Additional input came from:

*"We, the Banyole, like many other communities in Eastern Uganda, have an informal child protection system based on cultural principles and organizational anatomy. Such systems usually incorporate the elders and other community leaders in mediating and settling child welfare affairs. Social workers have habitually been built upon these to offer care to children which goes to enhance the established child protection efforts."*

One cultural leader interviewed went on to interject:

*"As elders and cultural leaders, we have to be in respectable positions in the community and are often involved in child protection efforts. Elders have powers and authorities that can also be invoked to promote the welfare of children and address issues like child abuse and neglect in the entire community. The traditions of respecting and giving power to elders and cultural leaders serve well in the promotion of social work endeavors."*

The interviewees also noted that traditional practices – the cultural practices among the Banyole ensured acceptable behaviour among the community and children.

*"Cultural practices such as folklore and rituals are used to teach children acceptable behavior and the consequences of wrongdoing. These instill morals and engender social cohesion, which are prerequisites for child protection –social workers find these children nurtured and disciplined, thereby providing some leverage in their operations."*

They buttressed this with the correct assertion, stating:

*"For the most part, child protection services operating within the rural areas like the Banyole region exist by way of voluntary goodwill for some local community members. Hence, the community-based approach puts some pressure on the community concerning children's welfare, which thereby guarantees the sustainability of child protection services. Social workers who are dependent on social goodwill from the people of the community find their way of working a lot easier with regard to mobilization as well as sensitization. The beneficiaries of social workers' sensitization will mostly incline to the community leaders as well as the community members broadly with respect to all issues surrounding children and the obligation to protect children's rights. This therefore promotes community relations and*

*consolidates the efficacy of child protection services in rural areas."*

The answer implies that the practicing social work should practice as much as possible involving the systems and practices of the run-of-the-mill culture to bolster present systems of extrapolation from the formal culture systems.

*"For long existed continuous attempts that integrate formal national systems and traditional mechanisms to protect children. All cultural practices being merged with federal social policy and strategies would work towards the destiny of children, especially concerning abuses. It really makes the narrow gap and ensures children benefit from complete protection and support."*

One of the parents from the focus group discussions gave added value with the statement:

*"Certain cultural taboos and norms sometimes prevent dangerous practices-for example, early marriages of children and corporal punishment. These norms may be very powerful within society for discouraging child abuse and promoting good parent practice, which may be utilized by social workers for child protection service."*

Cultural norms and values give social work practice a good anchor in the process of offering child protection services through the provision of interventions that are culturally sensitive and community-centered. It is further explained that these cultural norms and values in Bunyole have a great impact on social work practice, especially in child protection: the informants are the cultural leaders in Butaleja. With the researcher, the establishment made through the findings of the interventions that worked to realize the safety of the child.

From key informant interviews, it was established that resource constraints continued to pose yet another major challenge towards the social work efforts directed towards child protection. He remarked that:

*"Resource Constraints are always insufficient. The social workers despite having bodies to fund them often a lack of adequate resources, including funding, personnel, and facilities, which hinders the ability to provide comprehensive child protection services."*

One cultural leader emphasized during the key informant interviews that social workers have huge workloads, he remarked that;

*"Social workers frequently manage large and complex caseloads, making it difficult to give*

*each case the attention it needs. This has often reduced effectiveness. Efforts to intervene in family matters can be met with resistance from the community, especially when interventions are perceived as undermining traditional authority or family autonomy."*

*"We are also aware that they lack training and support needed to enhance their role in the community." This is corroborated by the statement made by the informant, by saying that: "Social workers may not always receive the necessary training and support to handle the specific challenges they face in the Banyole community."*

The researcher understood, through key informant interviews, that social workers exhibit several strengths with which they are able to work towards the effective safeguarding of children within communities, that despite these are sometimes difficult cultural norms:

*"Social workers are trained to understand and respect cultural differences. This enables them to negotiate cultural norms sensitively while advocating for child protection. They establish very good relationships within the community, which helps them build trust and collaboration among members of the community. This is an important step towards addressing child protection issues in a culturally acceptable manner."*

As obtained from the interviews conducted with key informants, the researcher found out that social workers have various strengths that can help them safeguard children effectively in communities, even with difficult cultural norms:

*"Social workers are trained to understand and respect cultural differences. This enables them to negotiate cultural norms sensitively while advocating for child protection. They establish very good relationships within the community which help them build trust and collaboration among members of the community. This is an important step towards addressing child protection issues in a culturally acceptable manner."*

Another leader emphasized that;

*"Such social workers are competent and capable of enlightening communities about any topic inclusive of child protection."*

They are also capable of diagnosing complicated situations and creating practical solutions while preserving cultural norms and ensuring children's well-being and safety. Such key informants were able to picture how cultural leaders stressed on it by saying:

*"They are very resilient social workers who are very adaptive to emotional and physical requirements that the job challenges them with so as to maintain focus on their mission. These resilience abilities become particularly critical when it comes to barriers to changes within the community."*

*"These social workers would also be most familiar with working in a multidisciplinary team with other professionals like health care providers, teachers, and law enforcement agents; this technique would give them a huge advantage in effectively working to resolve the cases concerning child welfare in conjunction with the defending children's rights in the community."*

The need to address conflicts between cultural norms and social work practices in promoting child protection requires multi-faceted means. Ways in which this would be ensured were sought after by the study. From the cultural leaders, the researcher found that trust needed to be built to work efficiently with social workers, he stated that;

*"The first step is to establish trust and build strong partnerships with community leaders and members. Engaging with the community can play a huge role in making social workers understand much about cultural, perspectives, and finding solutions together to safeguard children while respecting cultural practices. It can also aid in not making the people confrontational..."*

One of the points from the focus group discussions involving parents was that the local authority must give increased support to social workers. One said,

*"We, the local authority here can also provide social workers with the support they need-that is, give them some supervision and resources to be able to deal with cultural conflict. But also, instruct them about recognizing and integrating cultural strengths and protective factors, which would help them improve child protection efforts-for instance, strong familial ties and community support can help reassure a safer environment for the child."*

Focus group discussions established that communities play a very significant role in settling cultural conflicts which impede child protection. The cultural leaders indicated that the community can go beyond the social workers and parents in such types of issues. One of the approaches the community - parents, cultural leaders would use is create awareness.

*"If there can be efforts to educate and create awareness on the subject of child protection,*

*these conflicts can be addressed. Communities can educate members about the rights of children and the harmful effects of certain traditional practices. Such initiatives could help shift cultural norms and reduce stigma around reporting abuse,"* one of the leaders stated.

Out of the key informant interview, one cultural leader said that,

*"It is our responsibility as leaders to confront barriers towards the welfare of the community. By including community leaders, religious figures, and other influential stakeholders, I think we could go a long way in addressing these hazards that arise from harmful cultural norms and positively influence practices. Their views and endorsement could ensure credibility and assurance in efforts aimed at child protection."*

Noted through the key informant interview, one of the social workers pointed out that having a healthy trust relationship between the NGO community and that of the local added as good for social work and child protection.

*"There is always an issue with trust. While enabling and establishing trust between child protection agencies and the community, however, we can be sure to protect the children. Trust is also vital. This can also be achieved through consistent engagement, transparency, and respecting cultural values while advocating for child safety."* she added.

Similarly, from the key informant interviews, one of them was a social worker who further highlighted the need for community support groups, which according to her would not only promote harmony but also ensure active community participation in child protection. She remarked that;

*"This is also the formation of community-support groups as a way of dealing with conflicts regarding child protection. Such groups can monitor and report cases of abuse, support affected children, and work with local authorities to ensure their protection."*

They could also help reintegrate the children who have suffered from armed conflict or exploitation. On the basis of focus group discussions and interviews with key informants, the study found that social workers can play important roles in assessing needs and investigating allegations of abuse or neglect while gathering evidence to build cases. In addition, they are responsible for providing crisis support and services to families, who usually need assistance in traversing the complex web of child welfare and legal systems. Such services usually include counseling, linking families to resources, safety planning, and others. They advocate for the rights and needs of children and families in terms of attaining appropriate services and supports.

Through interviews with the key informants, the research also sought to assimilate the role of traditional authorities or cultural leaders in the safeguarding efforts of social work at child-related areas, which were indeed one of the objectives. One cultural leader was clear that education and sensitization of the community were very important strategies. He also included that social workers and parents should participate to the fullest in empowerment and sensitization activities in creating a very child-friendly environment;

*“We can surely use our position to advocate for child protection within the community. Our very influence can help shift cultural norms and attitudes towards practices that prioritize children’s safety and well-being. We can still lead initiatives to educate the community about the importance of child protection. This can include organizing workshops, community meetings, and public talks to raise awareness about the rights of children and the negative impacts of harmful traditional practices.”*

Thus, this long-range assistance arising indirectly from various contributors into these regions is operational up to October 2023, the date currently. Two focus-group interviews were undertaken in two places wherein the parents would tell the researcher that cooperating with the social worker was indeed the most reasonable effort for protecting children.

*“Years have gone to make viable collaboration with social worker to adamantly engage him to what he has been doing in the core partnership with social workers be able to understanding the challenges and also be able to creating a conducive environment for introduction, community mobilization, and navigating cultural sensitivities while supporting their endeavors toward child protection.”*

Not far behind, therefore, come all other human-and-social channels designed to provide child protection where people really act against the child. In this line is what researchers are studying, with parents being a main part of the focus group. The parents can save really many children directly or indirectly by acting as role models. The parent can serve as that yardstick when he or she shows concern for protecting children in the behaviours they adopt, choices made, and words. This works to embolden a portion of that same community, allies in this situation, to step forward in supporting child protection initiatives. Fundraising, obtaining donations from individuals or companies, and working to leverage community resources toward programs and services for children they actually want s forwards this process.

In other words, parenting intervention imparts physical security to the children by preventing them from being exposed to danger and also effectively preventing emotional abuse and neglect. Teaching children about personal safety, setting boundaries, and identifying abuse perpetrated by others would also be extremely important. Children should be taught about safety on the internet and in real life. One important emotional support activity involves listening to a child's problems, validating his or her feelings, comforting the child, and reassuring him or her that everything will be okay, thus instilling within the child the feeling that he or she is loved and understood. The Butaleja Study on child protection interventions emphasizes the intersection between traditional and modern social work: advantages and disadvantages encountered in the Banyole community.

One of the main strengths is that there is community involvement since community members themselves are actively involved in identifying and addressing issues of child protection with the assistance of para-social workers promoting child rights. Activities such as storytelling may be inclined to promote good behaviors in contrast to traditions that include early marriage. Resource limitations, resistance of established beliefs to modern perspectives, and a lack of training for social workers have continued acting as hindrances. Solving these challenges will call for integrated approaches that respect established cultural practices while working towards contemporary language concerning child welfare, focusing on allocating more resources and striking effective partnerships among traditional leaders and social workers in the best interest of children.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter critically engages the study’s findings in relation to the research objectives. It synthesizes insights from interviews and focus group discussions with cultural leaders, social workers, youths, NGO staff, parents, and the probation officer. These field responses are triangulated with academic literature reviewed in Chapter Two to establish a comprehensive understanding of how cultural norms in Banyole communities intersect with formal child protection frameworks. The discussion reveals areas of convergence and conflict, offering scholarly justification for culturally responsive social work in indigenous contexts. Each section below is organized by objective to ensure clarity and thematic precision.

### **5.1 Cultural Norms That Promote Child Protection**

Field responses illustrated that indigenous Banyole norms such as clan-based caregiving, mentorship by elders, placenta burial rituals, and moral storytelling—function as informal child protection mechanisms deeply rooted in communal responsibility. Cultural leaders emphasized the spiritual role of placenta and umbilical cord rituals in anchoring children to ancestral protection.

One elder explained,

*“We protect those symbols—they connect our children to ancestors. Without that, the child is exposed.”*

Social workers confirmed that such traditions facilitate communal surveillance, early detection of abuse, and restorative disciplinary practices. Parents and youths highlighted the influence of elder storytelling in shaping moral character, guiding behavior, and discouraging delinquency—often bypassing formal institutions.

These findings strongly align with Twikirize (2014) and Walakira et al. (2014), who observe that traditional African child protection systems function effectively in rural contexts where formal service delivery is constrained. Gray (2003) further affirms that indigenous rituals provide psychosocial integration and communal resilience—values often absent in bureaucratic frameworks. Hence, cultural norms—when leveraged positively—can complement social work principles by embedding care within lived realities. They represent not static customs but dynamic systems of

accountability, belonging, and protection. This demands that social workers recognize these mechanisms not as alternatives, but as collaborative entry points for sustainable interventions.

## **5.2 Cultural Norms that challenge Social Work Interventions**

Despite protective elements, the study revealed that several cultural norms undermine social work goals particularly regarding gender equality, child agency, transparency, and abuse disclosure. Respondents described how sexual violence, menstrual health, and domestic abuse remain taboo subjects. Youths reported social pressure to remain silent, fearing shame and retribution.

A female respondent shared,

*“We don’t talk about those things, even when they hurt us. It brings shame to the home.”*

Social workers and the probation officer detailed cases of abuse resolved within clans, emphasizing mediation over justice. These informal settlements often dismiss child voices and rights, reflecting what Yiga (2023) identifies as moral preservation through silence. Bobadilla (2024) critiques such epistemologies, arguing that human rights-based interventions can be perceived as alien or intrusive when they clash with patriarchal or spiritual paradigms.

Parents normalized early marriage and corporal punishment, citing tradition and family legacy.

One stated,

*“I married at fifteen. My daughter will marry when her father sees she’s ready.”*

This directly contradicts protective mandates and aligns with documentation from MoGLSD & UNICEF (2020), which note persistent cultural resistance to statutory child rights enforcement.

Belief in supernatural causation also complicates care-seeking behavior. Parents reported consulting herbalists instead of social workers or counselors, attributing trauma to witchcraft. Such pluralistic worldviews are well documented by Gray (2003) and Twikirize (2014), who highlight the need for professionals to navigate cultural logics rather than dismiss them. These findings point to a critical tension: social work must operate within a paradigm of cultural humility, as urged by Osborn & Karandikar (2023), recognizing that behavioral change requires trust, negotiation, and deep contextual sensitivity not only legal mandates or professional protocols.

## **5.3 Potential Solutions for Harmonizing Social Work and Cultural Norms**

In all respondent categories, participants proposed actionable strategies to reconcile social work principles with cultural values. Recommendations included elder-led sensitization campaigns,

storytelling-based child rights education, culturally anchored parenting forums, and hybrid child protection committees embedded in clan structures. One probation officer termed this approach “grassroots surveillance,” where traditional actors monitor households and mediate early warning signs.

Youth participants favored participatory theatre, peer mentorship, and school forums, while NGO staff emphasized involving religious and clan leaders in program design to improve legitimacy. These recommendations mirror Twikirize et al. (2013), who advocate for culturally responsive paradigms built on trust, participation, and relevance. Bobadilla (2024) argues that transformation must arise from within communities—through co-creation, not imposition. The solutions proposed are consistent with best practices. The UNICEF Child-Friendly Schools framework (2020) promotes culturally adapted pedagogy, while NASW (2015) guidelines stress reflection and humility when engaging diverse communities. Field participants echoed these values, emphasizing that change is welcomed when framed respectfully and presented through familiar lenses.

The study thus established that Banyole communities are open to reform, provided interventions respect cultural identity. Indigenous actors should not be viewed as barriers, but as custodians of local wisdom, capable of guiding adaptive social work. Culturally embedded practice is not a compromise, it is a strategy for meaningful, ethical, and sustainable child protection.

#### **5.4 Discussion of findings in relation to the Cultural Competence Theory**

The findings of this study reveal a nuanced landscape of cultural norms in the Banyole community, some of which reinforce child protection, while others present significant challenges to social work intervention. This duality is best interpreted through the lens of Cultural Competence Theory, which provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how social workers can navigate cultural diversity with sensitivity, humility, and strategic engagement (NASW, 2015).

The study’s identification of protective cultural norms such as communal parenting, naming ceremonies, and elder mentorship. It demonstrates the potential for indigenous systems to complement formal child protection frameworks. These norms reflect what Cultural Competence Theory describes as cultural assets: traditions that, when acknowledged and integrated, enhance the effectiveness of social work interventions (Luwangula et al., 2017). For example, naming rituals not

only affirm a child's identity but also symbolize communal responsibility, aligning with social work principles of inclusion, dignity, and collective care.

At the same time, the study uncovered cultural norms that conflict with child protection ethics—such as early marriage, gender-based restrictions, and corporal punishment. These findings resonate with the theory's emphasis on critical cultural engagement, where practitioners must challenge harmful norms without alienating the community (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). The reluctance to report abuse due to stigma and the prioritization of family reputation over child safety illustrate the tension between cultural preservation and child rights—a tension that Cultural Competence Theory helps to navigate through respectful dialogue and advocacy. Moreover, the study found that social workers who adopt culturally sensitive approaches—engaging elders, using local idioms, and respecting traditional authority—are more successful in promoting child welfare. This supports the theory's principle of collaborative practice, where social workers act not as external enforcers but as cultural mediators, building trust and co-creating solutions with the community (Blunt, 2007; Osborn & Karandikar, 2023).

In essence, the findings validate Cultural Competence Theory as both a diagnostic and prescriptive tool. It explains why certain interventions succeed or fail in culturally diverse settings and offers a roadmap for transforming cultural challenges into opportunities for sustainable child protection. The theory reinforces the importance of contextual intelligence in social work—recognizing that effective practice must be rooted in the lived realities of the communities served.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations from the study on the present cultural norms incapacitating effective social work intervention in child protection among the Banyole.

### **6.1 Conclusions based on objectives**

#### **6.1.1 Bunyole norms promoting child protection**

Similar to any other communities, cultural expectations have something corrosive to do with the social work and child protection practices and interventions in the Bunyole community. The communities tend to be collectivist, whereby the interest of the group overrides the individual when it comes to the person's well-being. In Bunyole, the community has strong cultural norms of respecting the elders and other authorities. This same respect can be helpful to social workers as the community leaders and elders become potential water bearers for the rights of children.

Traditional child-raising in Bunyole functions basically on the premise of communal raising, in that it is not just the immediate family but also extended family members, neighbors, and even the community who help raise a child. Thus, the more people who play that role of caregivers to a child, the more the ecosystem will ensure that this child's protection is under scrutiny to ensure his or her best care. In contrast, intervention measures with regard to child-protection will take cognizance of these cultural beliefs and practices concerning health and well-being; certain rituals or practices may be aimed at warding off any harmful occurrence against a child. Such rituals go deep into the very fabric of cultural beliefs and practices entrenched within Bunyole regarding the protection of children. However, certain practices, however strange they may sound under another cultural framework, are there for the protection of children in this community. The social workers may work with these practitioners to ensure that the practices are safe for the child and for the good of the child. While respecting the cultural norms pertaining to the protection of the child, hurdles tend to sprout. Social workers need to be able to gain the trust of the community while helping their community to fight against any damaging norms while maintaining anything that is good within the culture itself.

#### **6.1.2 Banyole cultural norms that conflict with social work interventions in child protection**

Whereas various etiquettes uphold physical discipline as a heart-and-soul and effective way in

promoting discipline in the child's life, social work standards assert that physical discipline is not an option with any gains. Because of this tussle, settling for promotion of efficient methods related to positive discipline might as well pose some very pertinent challenge to the social worker. Conventional gender assignments in some societies breed girl children, leading to some questionable practices, early marriage or bias against girls in much-deliberately denying formal education to girls. Families put the reputation of their families and communities above all and do not appreciate reporting of child abuse or neglect: among the Banyole, the stigmatization further makes it difficult to respond to such types of child and misdirection placements. The stigma attached to reporting then inhibits the awareness of child abuse, thus weakening the child protection efforts. Meanwhile, hundreds of rural children are actually left with the workload in their parents' gardens or households, which in turn disrupts their education and proper development. In facing the dilemma of respecting cultural practices versus combating child abuse (including exploitation) and ensuring the children's fundamental right to education, social workers constantly find themselves split between the two.

Fears on witchcraft or the supernatural origins of illness and bad tidings may lead to ill-treatment for children labeled witches. Advocacy is at odds crossing path with issues of family privacy and autonomy in the realm of silencing external interference for intervention in abuse and neglect cases putting their work to tension with families for their acceptance and thereby accessing families and ensuring its collaborative efforts and support. Some families resist external influence and feel that foreign values are imposed upon them, making it hard for social workers to introduce new child protection practices contrary to traditional norms.

### **6.1.3 Addressing cultural conflicts to promote child protection by social workers in Bunyole community**

In resolving deeply entrenched cultural beliefs that impede the path of social work and child protection, it needs to be skillfully and painfully manipulated. A community-awareness campaign made to educate the people about the necessity of child protection and how such culture is detrimental to the entire community would be enticing. Workshops and trainings for community leaders, parents, and children are already viable to engender better awareness of child rights and protection. Enlisting influencers, elders, and duly respected leaders around whose names public opinion and practice rests is seen an effective approach. Their supporting role will dismantle those destructive traditions. The engagement of social workers is geared towards cultural integrity and sensitivity; through that, they will significantly comprehend a community's values and beliefs to work in partnership with them

productively towards changes around child protection.

Demonstration of efficacy and merits on the introduction alternatives to corporal punishment as non-violent forms of discipline in favor of gender equality, where benefits accrue to a girl through education and delaying marriage. Partner with or influence local authorities for the importation of a child protection agenda and the outlawing of harmful cultural practices to the child. Establishment of a counseling and referral service for children and families will help them deal with trauma and regain some past life. Giving children information about their rights and building their confidence to stand up when these rights are violated is a way to meet the conflict on its own terms. Not the least, the promotion of that idea will thus empower children and youth within child protection schemes, daring the cultural norms that do weigh so heavily, yet, hastily upon child protection and social work. This presents equally serious opportunities for social reform in the opposite direction. In line with the above, social workers, hand in glove with the community, will work to promote alternative good practices and constructive legal methods, thus beefing up children's position in the near future.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Both the NGOs and the government should sensitize communities about harmful cultural practices and their negative impact on child protection. Such awareness should partly include educating people on the rights of the victim so as to break the silence in the event of abuse. Workshops and training for community leaders, parents, and children should be arranged for clarity and understanding of child rights and protection. The involvement of duly respected traditional leaders and elders should be crucial to allow social workers and NGOs to affect public opinion and practices. Thus, they would provide the necessary leadership toward changing harmful norms. Culturally respectful and sensitive means will, in turn, allow the community to appreciate values and beliefs from that perspective and, along that framework, towards positive change.

## **6.3 Suggestions for further studies**

The study gave some suggestions in relation to conducting further study about:

- i. Explore community perceptions of child rights and how such perceptions impact people acting toward child protection.
- ii. Rigorously analyze the interplay of child protection policies in the national and local contexts; identify gaps, especially as these are identified in the implementation and enforcement phases; and identify the areas for reform in terms of accommodating cultural realities.

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## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1: Key informant Interview for cultural leaders. (The interview will take between 15-20 Minutes)**

**Objective one: To identify the cultural norms in Bunyole that promote child protection and are aligned with social work principles.**

1. What are the major challenges of child abuse, neglect and exploitation in your area?
2. What is your knowledge or understanding of child protection in this region?
3. Do you know any organizations working in this area promoting child well-being?
4. If yes What do they do?
5. What are the common cultural practices in among the Banyole that promote child protection?
6. How does the existing cultural norm protect children in this area?

**Objective two: To examine the cultural norms in Bunyole that conflict with social work intervention in child protection.**

7. Identify activities promoted by these NGOs that promote child protection in this area.
8. How do these activities ensure child protection?
9. Are there cultural norms that do not support child protection, what are they?
10. Comment on the ways these norms and values conflict with social work practice with children.
11. What challenges do social workers face in this community when practicing child protection?
12. What are the strengths social workers have in the community regarding child protection amidst cultural norms?
13. Are there cultural norms that do not support social work interventions, what are they?
14. Comment on the ways these norms and values conflict with social work practice?

**Objective three: To explore what can be done to address these conflicts to promote child protection by social workers in these communities.**

15. What do you think is should be done to address any conflicts between culture and social work practice in promoting child protection in your area?

16. What role does the community have in addressing these conflicts?
17. How can you describe your role as a cultural leader in helping the community? And achieve social transformation

**APPENDIX 2: Key informant Interview for Social workers and NGO Staff. (The interview willtake between15-20 Minutes)**

**Objective one: To identify the cultural norms in Bunyole that promote child protection and are aligned with social work principles.**

1. What are the common cultural practices in raising children in this community?
2. Do these promote child protection in the community, how?
3. Comment on how these norms and values support your social work practice in promoting child protection?

**Objective two: To examine the cultural norms in Bunyole that conflict with social work intervention in child protection.**

4. Are there cultural norms that do not support child protection? If so, what are they?
5. How do these factors affect your social work effort in promoting child protection?
6. What challenges do social workers face in this community when practicing child protection?
7. Why do think these cultural factors conflict with social work interventions in child protection?

**Objective three: To explore what can be done to address these conflicts to promote child protection by social workers in these communities**

8. What is there that in place to ensure that children are protected?
9. What do you think can be done to ensure that cultural norms do not conflict with social work intervention in child protection?
10. What do you think is a possible way to have a better working relationship between social work and local cultural values in promoting child protection? Break down this with specific questions

### **APPENDIX 3: Focus Group Discussion for Parents**

**Objective one: To identify the cultural norms in Bunyole that promote child protection and are aligned with social work principles.**

1. What are the common cultural practices in your community that promote children's well-being?
2. Do we have social workers who are participate in child protection? If yes, what do they do?
3. Have you noticed any situation where cultural practices support social work intervention in child protection? which practices are those?

**Objective two: To examine the cultural norms in Bunyole that conflict with social work intervention in child protection.**

4. Are there some cultural norms that conflict with child protection? If yes, what are they?
5. Are there organizations that work with social workers in promoting children's wellbeing? If yes, what are they?
6. Are there social work practices that conflict with cultural values during their interventions in child protection? If yes, what are they? How do they conflict?

**Objective three: To explore what can be done to address these conflicts to promote child protection by social workers in these communities**

7. What is there that in place to ensure that children are protected?
8. What do you think can be done to ensure that cultural norms do not conflict with social work intervention in child protection?
9. What do you think is a possible way to have a better working relationship between social work and local cultural values in promoting child protection? Break down this with specific question

## Appendix 4: Data collection introductory letter



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October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

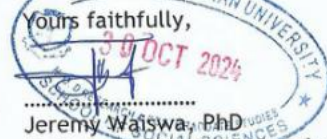
Dear Sir/Madam

Re: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR RESEARCH

This is to introduce to you MUGABA Muhamad Muhamud Registration number KS12MB1/015, a student of Uganda Christian University, pursuing Master's degree in Social work. He is expected to carry out research project in the final year under the guidance of a university supervisor in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the above-mentioned award.

Topic: "Cultural barriers to Effective Social Work Child Protection Intervention: A Case of Banyole in Butaleja District."

The purpose of this communication is to request your office to allow him collect data from your organization. Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,  


.....  
Jeremy Waiswa, PhD  
HoD, Research & Postgraduate Studies  
Tel: 0752319951  
Email: [jwaiswa@ucu.ac.ug](mailto:jwaiswa@ucu.ac.ug)

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P.O. Box 4, Mukono, Uganda (East Africa), Plot 67-173, Bishop Tucker Road, Mukono Hill, Tel: +256 (0) 31 235 0800, [www.ucu.ac.ug](http://www.ucu.ac.ug)  
[Ugandachristianuniversity](#) [@UCUniversity](#), Founded by the Province of Church of Uganda, Chartered by the Government of Uganda.

## Appendix 5: UCU Research Ethics Committee letter



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Office of the Vice Chancellor  
Research Ethics Committee UG-026



1 August, 2024

MUGABA MUHAMUD  
Uganda Christian University  
+256 776100000  
Email: [mmugaba5000@gmail.com](mailto:mmugaba5000@gmail.com)

UG-REC-026 AMMENDMENT NOTICE

To: Mugaba Muhamud, Principal Investigator

Re: UCU-REC Application titled: *Cultural Barriers to Effective Social Work Child Protection Intervention: a Case of Banyole in Butaleja District*

Application Number: UCUREC-2024-962

Version: 4.1

Type: [ ] Initial Review  
[ ] Protocol Amendment  
[ ] LETTER OF AMENDMENT (LOA)  
[ ] Continuing Review  
[ ] Material Transfer Agreement  
[ ] Other, Specify:



I am pleased to inform you that the UG-REC-026; UCUREC approved the above referenced application.

Approval of the research is for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2024, to 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2025  
This research is considered minimal risk category.

As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and additions to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence.

1 of 3

Research and Ethics

P.O. Box 4, Mukono, Uganda, Plot 67-173, Bishop Tucker Road, Mukono Hill  
Tel: +256 (0) 312 350 885 Fax: +256 (0) 4142 90 800 Email: [rec@ucu.ac.ug](mailto:rec@ucu.ac.ug) Web: [www.ucu.ac.ug](http://www.ucu.ac.ug)  
UCUREC is accredited by Uganda National Council for Science & Technology, FDA, and National Institutes for Health of the United States of America



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Office of the Vice Chancellor  
Research Ethics Committee UG-026



3. Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or other must be submitted to the REC. New information that becomes available which could change the risk: benefit ratio must be submitted promptly for REC review.
4. Only approved consent forms are to be used in the enrollment of participants. All consent forms signed by subjects and/or witnesses should be retained on file. The REC may conduct audits of all study records, and consent documentation may be part of such audits.
5. Regulations require review of an approved study not less than once per 12-month period. Therefore, a continuing review application must be submitted to the REC eight weeks prior to the above expiration date of 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2025 in order to continue the study beyond the approved period. Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study, at which point new participants may not be enrolled and currently enrolled participants must be taken off the study.
6. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence with the REC of record.
7. Your research details have been shared with the Executive secretary of Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) and you are not required to get clearance since you are a Master's Degree research. Refer to UNCST Research registration and clearance Policy and guidelines (July 2016) in Uganda section 6(e).

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by UG-REC \_026:

	Document Title	Language	Version	Version Date
1.	Protocol	English	1.0	2024-07-25
2.	Informed Consent Form	English	1.0	2024-07-25
3.	Interview Guide	English	1.0	2024-07-25
4.	Self-Administered Questionnaire (SAQ)	English	1.0	2024-07-25
5.	Focused Group Discussion guide	English	1.0	2024-07-25
6.	Observation checklist	English	1.0	2024-07-25

Signed and Stamped

Prof. Peter Waiswa,  
UCUREC Chairperson,  
[pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug](mailto:pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug)



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Research and Ethics