

**THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ON CONSERVATION SUCCESS
IN UGANDA :A CASE STUDY OF LAKE MBURO NATIONAL PARK**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

As per the university values of integrity and intelligence, I have not received any unauthorized assistance while working on this research. I declare that the work is authentically mine and, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no traces of plagiarism or any other unethical practices. The only work used that has been already published by other persons has been purely for reference purposes and appropriate citation have been made.

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APPROVAL

This research report has been submitted for examination purposes with approval as academic supervisor.

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Date. 28/02/2026

DEDICATION

I hereby declare this work to my beloved parents, sisters and friends for their incessant support, encouragement and reminder for further studies. This has been my dive. Their determination and commitment have propelled me to this point. Above all glory be to God.

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I thank the Almighty God who has led me through this journey of studying, I proudly say

"Ebenezer thus far, the lord has brought me.

I am particularly grateful to Uganda Christian University for providing an enabling atmosphere for learning and especially my academic supervisor Mr. Jjuuko Julius who guided me through the research process with his steady hand of guidance, support and expertise throughout the research process.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined conservation success and community involvement in Lake Mbuoro National Park with particular emphasis on the role of local communities in enhancing sustainable environmental management. The study was guided by three objectives which included examining conservation success within the park, assessing the level of community involvement in conservation activities, and establishing the role of community participation in achieving conservation success.

The study adopted a documentary review research design based on secondary data obtained from wildlife census reports, conservation publications, environmental policy documents and institutional performance reports covering the period from 2018 to 2023. Data were analyzed using trend analysis to determine patterns in wildlife population growth, reduction in illegal park activities, community participation in conservation programs and the relationship between community involvement and conservation outcomes.

Findings revealed a steady increase in wildlife populations such as zebras, impalas, buffaloes and elands, coupled with a significant decline in illegal activities including poaching, charcoal burning and illegal grazing within the park. The study further established that community participation in conservation activities such as environmental awareness programs, eco-tourism initiatives and park boundary maintenance has increased over the years.

The study recommends strengthening participatory conservation approaches, promoting alternative livelihood opportunities for surrounding communities and enhancing environmental awareness programs to ensure sustainable conservation outcomes within protected areas. Further research is recommended on the socio-economic impact of community-based conservation initiatives in protected areas.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, problem statement, and objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, justification and conceptual framework.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The conservation of biodiversity has become an international agenda because of the increasing rate of environmental degradation, habitat destruction and extinction of species mostly as a result of human intervention. Protected areas have been the most common approach to conservation of biodiversity which, in most cases, was based on exclusionary frameworks which denied local communities access to natural resources (Adams and Hutton, 2007). Although these methods at first were meant to protect the ecosystems, experience in various parts of the world has shown that the settling out of communities near the zones of protection often leads to confrontations, poaching of resources, and poor conservation (Berkes, 2004).

Community involvement can be understood as the active engagement of the local individuals in the process of planning, execution, and control of development or environmental projects, which influence their lives and sources. In conservation, it entails the involvement of the local communities in making decisions, sharing benefits, biodiversity protection and sustainable utilization of natural resources (Pretty, 1995). International Union for conservation of Nature (IUCN) mentioned community involvement as a participatory strategy that enables the local and indigenous inhabitants to participate in environmental management thus increasing the stewardship and sustainability of conservation programmes.

Conservation is the protection, preservation, management and sustainable use of natural resources in the environment like wildlife, forest, water and biodiversity to prevent exploitation, destruction or even neglect (Brooks et al., 2006). The operation of conservation is no longer considered through ecological measurements like species recovery, or habitat protection. Conservation success is the intended environmental protection purposefully attained through conservation, preservation, management and sustainable use of the natural resources in the environment like wildlife, forest, water and biodiversity (Brooks et al., 2006). The concept of success in Conservation literature today is considered to have a multidimensional outcome, that includes ecological sustainability, social

equity, and economic viability (Mascia et al., 2003). The success ecologically is reduced poaching, higher wildlife, and the resilience of the ecosystem, whereas the success social is positive attitudes towards the community, lessened conflicts, and better livelihoods associated with conservation efforts (Bennett et al., 2017). The conservation successes in the Ugandan context are on the form of lower rates of poaching, recovery of destroyed ecosystems and the growth of community benefits of the conserved areas under the management of conservation bodies such as the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA).

The research in Africa, Asia, and Latin America has demonstrated that the conservation programs involving the community are more likely to succeed in conservation regulations adherence, better biodiversity, and livelihoods (Brooks et al., 2013). Nonetheless, researchers warn that community participation should be meaningful and not symbolic; superficial participation and lack of actual decision-making authority does not tend to bring the conservation success (Agrawal and Gibson, 1999). Therefore, the role of community participation in the success of conservation is a research issue that has been paramount in the world. Conservation thinking in reaction to these problems has increasingly been more of a participatory and community-based one. Community participation in conservation means the involvement of the locals in making and overseeing decisions, sharing benefits, and controlling of natural resources (Pretty, 2003). This change has been based on the understanding that those communities that directly rely on natural resources have valuable indigenous knowledge and have a personal interest in the sustainability of ecosystems. International environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), highlight the effectiveness of conservation initiatives in which local people become empowered and engaged as stakeholders as opposed to being viewed as adversaries of biodiversity (CBD, 2022). In Africa, the protected lands usually border the areas where people who depend on agriculture, pastoral and fishing activities live. In most African nations, colonial conservation policies put people on the move and made the use of pre-colonial resources illegal, and this established roots of strains between conservation officials and communities (Neumann, 2001). These models were passed on to post-independent governments that were often unsustainable because of inherent conflicts and difficulties in enforcing them.

In Africa, these failures gave rise to community-based conservation, which focused on the joint accountability, sharing benefits, and local ownership of natural resources (Roe et al., 2009). The

positive experience of countries like Namibia and Kenya has shown that when some rights related to the management of wildlife are devolved to communities, it can lead to a positive result of increasing the numbers of wildlife as well as improving the livelihoods of the rural people (Nelson, 2010). However, the African conservation experiences also tell that the outcomes are quite different and depend on the governance structures, institutional backing, and equal distribution of benefits.

Uganda is blessed with biodiversity which consists of a variety of ecosystems including savannahs, wetlands and tropical forests. The network of the national protected areas in the country occupies about 10 percent of the country and is very important in protecting the wildlife as well as promoting the tourism-driven revenue (Uganda Wildlife Authority [UWA], 2020). Nonetheless, the creation of national parks in Uganda tended to cause conversation and absence of access to land and resources among the local people, creating bitterness among conservation authorities (Tumusiime & Vedeld, 2012). It is based on these challenges that Uganda started implementing community conservation strategies in the early 1990s to attempt to integrate the local people into the management of wildlife. Revenue sharing plans, community tourism, conservation education and cooperative problem-solving systems to deal with human-wildlife conflicts were some of these strategies (Archabald and NaughtonTreves, 2001). This was based on the hypothesis that where communities feel that they have a visible gain out of conservation, they tend to be more supportive and contribute to the success of conservations.

Regardless of these efforts, the conservation outcomes in Uganda are not even. Whereas other guarded places have reported to have increased community relations and minimized illegal actions, others still have seen poaching, encroaching, and constant conflicts. This difference highlights the importance of site-specific studies that would investigate the effects that various types of community involvement have on conservation success.

The lake Mburo national park (LMNP) in western Uganda provides a good example of a region to explore the role of community involvement and conservation success. The park was created in 1983 and it lies within communities which are mainly involved in pastoralism and subsistence farming. The formation of the park caused evictions and grazing land loss which caused a large scale animosity against wildlife and park officials (Infield & Namara, 2001). The first conservation work in Lake Mburo was marked by poaching, illegal grazing and boundaries dispute in the park. In

reaction, the Uganda Wildlife Authority in cooperation with conservation organizations initiated one of the first community conservation programs in Uganda in the early 1990s. These programs were aimed at restoring confidence by means of dialogue and sharing of benefits and involvement of the locals in conservation programs (Archabald and Naughton-Treves, 2001).

There have been several other forms of community involvement around Lake Mburo since that time, which comprise the involvement in eco-tourism, revenue-sharing schemes, environmental education and alternative livelihood activities which include bee keeping and crafting. These programs are designed with the view of ensuring that there are direct links between conservation achievement and communal good health through offering economic benefits and creating favorable attitudes towards wildlife conservation.

Studies carried out in the area of Lake Mburo show that community participation has led to the enhancement of the conservation attitudes towards the participating households (Infield & Namara, 2001). Societies which are enjoying positive outcomes of conservation-related efforts are more likely to show their support to the park and less tolerance to unlawful activities. This implies that community participation has been very vital in determining the social aspects of conservation success, especially the success of the park in the region with respect to herbivores, which in part has been caused by better community relationship and minimized illegal activities. However, the success of conservation is weak and heavily reliant on constant interactions with the local communities. This research therefore aims to make a contribution into conservation scholarship by reviewing the contribution of community participation in the determinant success of conservation in Lake Mburo National Park. Through the analysis of both variables in a unified way.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT.

Proper balance between conservation authorities and local communities settled around the areas should be attained in the conservation of biodiversity. The recent conservation theory underlines that participating in the decision-making process, sharing the benefits, and managing the natural resources increase the level of conservation success by promoting local ownership and reducing unlawful activities, as well as by improving the livelihoods of communities (Berkes, 2004; Bennett et al., 2017). In Uganda, the national conservation policies, such as the Uganda Wildlife Act (2019),

envisage the existence of the protected areas in which communities are perceived as conservation partners and share the conservation benefits equally (Uganda Wildlife Authority [UWA], 2020).

Nevertheless, due to the implementation of the community-based conservation methods, conservation in most of the protected regions in Uganda still stays delicate. About 10 percent of the total Uganda land is covered by protected areas, but more frequently by rural populations who heavily depend on land, pasture, and natural resources as their source of livelihood (UWA, 2020). Lake Mburo National Park is one of the smallest savannah national parks in Uganda and it is located in mostly pastoral environment, exposing the park to conservation livelihood conflicts. The relationship between humans and wildlife has always existed and in most instances, the communities living around the parks have reported cases of crop destruction and livestock predation, which have resulted in economic losses and poor attitudes towards conservation (Tumusiime & Vedeld, 2012). According to reports of Uganda Wildlife Authority, over 60 percent of community grievances surrounding the borders of the parks are connected to the human and wild animals conflict, with Lake Mburo being one of the most impacted parks (UWA, 2021). Even though the policy of revenue sharing offers 20 percent of the entry fee to the surrounding communities, it has shown that the benefits do not often impact the communities, are distributed unequally, or are delayed to provide sufficient benefits to the local households to pay the costs of conservation (Tumusiime & Vedeld

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.

To examine conservation success in lake mburo National Parks.

To examine community involvement in lake mburo National Parks.

To establish the role of community involvement in conservation success of lake mburo national parks

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the extent of conservation success in national parks?

What is the role of community involvement in national parks?

What is the role of community involvement on conservation success of national parks?

1.5 JUSTIFICATION.

This research is theoretically justified, practically justified, and policy justified and contextually justified. Despite the strong understanding of community involvement as a necessary ingredient of conservation success, the understanding of the effects of the particular parameters of community involvement on the conservation success has very little empirical data, especially in the Ugandan context. The current conservation theories focus on the participatory aspects; nonetheless, a significant portion of the literature does not de-aggregate the notion of community involvement into quantifiable and measurable aspects of the practice, including decision-making participation, benefit sharing, and conservation related livelihoods. This work thus advances theory by offering an empirically-based discussion of the relationship between these particular parameters and conservation success indicators, which in turn will add to the body of community-based conservation research.

Practically, Lake Mburo National Park is still facing conservation challenges such as human subject and wildlife conflict, cattle grazing, and lack of satisfaction among the community in the benefits of conservation. Even with the established community conservation efforts over time, there has been tension between livelihoods and conservation goals of the local people. This study, by analyzing the connections between community parameters of involvement and conservation success outcomes, will produce useful knowledge to park managers, conservation practitioners, and development partners on the most effective types of community engagement techniques in ecological outcomes and community support. This kind of evidence becomes essential in enhancing the design of programs, allocation of resources and conflict mitigation measures within the park environs. On a policy level, the conservation policies of Uganda such as the Uganda Wildlife Act of 2019 and the policy on the sharing of wildlife revenues ensure that community participation is an essential part of sustainable conservation. Nonetheless, there has been an issue of policy implementation, which is associated with allocation of benefits, governance, and accountability. The research will give evidence-based research to guide the formulation of policy by showing the gaps between policy objectives and real-life circumstances. The findings will guide the policymakers to improve the mechanisms of participation, better benefit-sharing arrangements, and reinforce collaborative conservation governance within the protected areas.

Lake Mbuoro National Park is a unique case study contextually because of the fact that it lies in a highly populated pastoral environment, which, in turn, predisposes the parks to the effects of human-wildlife conflict and pressure on resource use. This context is worth studying to help other preserved regions in Uganda and the rest of East Africa that experience the same socio-ecological dynamics. The results of this research will thus extend their applicability to the whole of Lake Mbuoro with respect to formulating long term conservation frameworks that will ensure sustainability in conservation of the biodiversity and the livelihoods of the communities.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE.

The research will be a contribution to academia by offering a degree of empirical evidence on the effects of certain parameters of community involvement on conservation success, including involvement in decision-making, sharing benefits and conservation livelihoods. This will expand the literature on the community based conservation, especially in the Ugandan setting.

The results will give actionable information to the park managers, the local authorities and the conservation organization on the most effective community involvement mechanisms to enhance ecological performance, curb the human-wildlife conflict, and the community support of Lake Mbuoro National Park.

The research will enlighten the policy actors by illuminating the disconnect between conservation policies including revenue-sharing and participatory governance systems and realities on the ground. This will help inform the process of refining policies to guarantee proper distribution of benefits and enhanced community participation in the management of the protected areas.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Content Scope

The research will be based on the correlation between the community participation and conservation success in Lake Mbuoro National Park. Specifically.

Geographical Scope

The research area in terms of geography is limited to Lake Mbuho National Park and comprising communities around it in Kiruhura District in West Uganda. The area is chosen, since it is among the most important savannah ecosystems in Uganda with great biodiversity with zebras, impalas and buffaloes.

Time Scope:

The analysis will be concerned with the information and operations in the past decade (2014-2024), and conflict mitigation.

1.8 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND.

Community Involvement Conservation Success



Participation in decision-making allows communities to contribute local knowledge, report illegal activities, and collaborate on conflict mitigation strategies, leading to improved wildlife populations, reduced habitat degradation, and stronger compliance with park regulations. Engagement in conservation-related livelihood activities, including eco-tourism, beekeeping, and

handicrafts, further strengthens this relationship by providing alternative income sources that encourage habitat protection, support ecological outcomes, and promote community participation in conservation programs. Together, these parameters interact to enhance conservation success by simultaneously improving ecological conditions, mitigating human–wildlife conflict, and fostering community support and compliance, while moderating factors such as education, governance, cultural attitudes, and proximity to the park can influence the strength of these relationships.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 Introduction.

In this chapter, the author gives an in-depth analysis of the available literature that pertains to the subject of research being conducted. It sets a ground on the study, giving it a point of reference to the former works, determining the major terms and methodologies that have dominated the field.

2.2 Definition of key terms

Conservation is the process of protecting, preserving, managing, and sustaining the environment and natural resources to ensure they are not wasted or degraded, that there is proper management and control of the ecosystem, and that the living standards of societies reliant on natural resources are improved by conservation (World Conservation Strategy, 1980). A conservation success is the successful fulfillment of the targeted conservation objectives, such as biodiversity protection, reduced environmental degradation, good management and control of the ecosystem, and better livelihoods for communities that depend on natural resources (Brooks et al., 2006).

2.2.2 Conservation Success

Defined as the successful protection, control, and sustainable utilization of biodiversity, ecosystems, and natural resources in such a way that they remain intact for current and future generations, conservation is a multidimensional notion embracing ecological well-being, restoration of species populations, maintenance of habitat, and reduction of environmental deterioration in a safeguarded region (Geldmann et al., 2018). In addition to using biological indicators, such as wildlife population growth or vegetation recovery, conservation success can also be defined as the park's capacity to sustain viable populations of wildlife species, including zebras, impalas, and buffaloes, while simultaneously reducing threats to the park, such as poaching, illegal grazing, and land encroachment (Oldekop et al., 2016). In the case of Lake Mburo National Park, conservation success can be viewed as a combination of being able to sustain viable populations of wildlife species. In addition, conservation success means the implementation of sustainable systems that achieve a balance between environmental conservation and the needs and interests of neighboring people who rely on the resources near the park to survive.

2.2.3 Community.

A group of people residing in a given geographical location that surrounds or falls within a protected area and shares social and cultural aspects, as well as economic and environmental relationships. Their employment, culture, and welfare directly or indirectly relate to the park (Nor Azlina & Abu Baker, 2019).

2.2.4. Community Involvement.

Community involvement can be defined as the process of involving local populations in decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of conservation programs that either directly or indirectly impact the livelihoods and environment of the local people. It incorporates a participatory form of governance that acknowledges local communities as stakeholders in environmental management, rather than as passive beneficiaries or threats to environmental or conservation activities (Pretty and Smith, 2004). Community participation can take different forms, such as sharing the benefits of wildlife management, joint management, community tourism programs, environmental education programs, and inclusion in park management committees. In places like Lake Mbuo National Park, which has protection measures, local communities tend to practice conservation through programs like revenue-sharing programs, controlled access to resources, and problem sharing, and problem sharing mechanisms with the wildlife including procedures of resolving human-wildlife conflicts.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is based on Community-Based Conservation (CBC) Theory, which states that the most probable approach to sustainable conservation results is the one in which the local community residing near the areas of protection is actively engaged in decision-making and sharing of benefits, as well as in conservation-oriented interactions (Berkes, 2004). CBC theory focuses on the fact that communities tend to become more favorable toward conservation activities and adherence to regulations when they see immediate gains and feel that the natural resources are theirs.

The CBC theory in Lake Mbuo National Park demystifies the effect of the parameters of community involvement decision-making, benefit-sharing, and livelihood engagement, which

affect the success of conservation, in the form of ecological outcomes, human-wildlife conflict management, and community support. Another important aspect of the theory, which can undermine conservation success, is a lack of involvement or inequitable gains, which underscores the need to develop inclusive engagement approaches. This paper deconstructs sustainable conservation in Lake Mburo National Park by applying CBC as a prism through which one can grasp the importance of structured community participation as a way of improving the conservation of the park.

Success in conservation in the National Parks.

The topic of conservation success in protected areas has gained increasing scholarly interest, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the necessity of conserving biodiversity should be considered alongside the requirements of socio-economic development. The broad definition of conservation success is the successful protection of biodiversity resources, sustainable use, and long-term management in a way that leads to ecological integrity and human well-being (Geldmann et al., 2018). In Uganda, conservation zones like Lake Mburo National Park (LMNP) are ecological hotspots of invaluable biodiversity, whose ecological sustainability is dependent on effective conservation policies employed by institutional players and the local people around them.

The success of conservation in the areas they conserve is indicated by the fact that wildlife populations recover and maintain their sustainability over time. Brashares et al. (2004) argue that conservation programs focusing on species preservation and anti-poaching strategies are likely to lead to an increase in wildlife populations and ecological balance. In LMNP, the anti-poaching patrols, wildlife surveillance, and translocation of species by the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) have resulted in a slow rebound of critical wildlife species such as zebras (*Equus quagga*), impalas (*Aepyceros melampus*), buffaloes (*Syncerus caffer*), and elands (*Taurotragus oryx*) (UWA, 2020).

Research carried out by Lamprey and Reid (2004) suggests that before the introduction of effective conservation strategies in the early 1990s, LMNP encountered massive wildlife depletion due to civil unrest, illicit grazing, and poaching activities. Nevertheless, with changes in the institutions and better strategies for managing the parks, wildlife has gradually been on the rise, indicating a

positive trend in conservation. This finding aligns with the results of other studies by Craigie et al. (2010), who contend that enhanced law enforcement and better habitat management are some of the factors that help in the recovery of biodiversity in the security zone.

Moreover, the reintroduction of Rothschild giraffes into LMNP was successful in 2015, and this is one of the milestones in the conservation of wildlife in Uganda. The initiative of translocation is well known as one of the ecological restoration tools that have been applied to improve the diversity of species and the ratio of species in the ecosystem (IUCN, 2013). Large browsing animals like giraffes are instrumental in regulating the woody cover and preserving the structural diversity of the savannah ecosystems, which serve as the sustaining factor for grazer animals, including zebras and antelopes (Prins & van der Jeugd, 1993).

Another main aspect of conservation success is habitat restoration especially in areas that have been affected by environmental degradation due to human actions. Chazdon (2008) defines habitat restoration as the intervention practices intended to restore the functionality and resilience of an ecosystem in terms of biodiversity. In LMNP, modifications in vegetation cover across time has led to the need to adopt adaptive management. According to Norton-Griffiths (2007), any uncontrolled bush encroachment in savannah ecosystems may have serious impact on the availability of grazing lands to herbivores and hence change the composition of species and ecosystem productivity. The increase in woody plant species like *Acacia hockii* in LMNP has been an ecological problem in that it has restricted grazers to reach their forages. In its turn, this has led conservation officials to resort to methods like regulated burning and relocation of wildlife to manage its growth and ensure the rise of the grassland (UWA, 2018). According to Bond and Keeley (2005), an important ecological management instrument, controlled burning, is necessary to ensure that the savannah ecosystems remain productive by ensuring that woody biomass does not build up excessively. The implementation of fire regimes as recommended by authorities has enabled the LMNP management to restore habitats that have been degraded and enhance the forage produced by grazing animals hence leading to conservation success.

These ecological benefits, in spite of them, conservation outcomes in LMNP have still failed to be achieved due to constant human-wildlife conflicts due to the closeness of the park to the pastoralists and agricultural societies. Human-wildlife conflict refers to the nature of interactions between wildlife and human populations which lead to adverse effects on the human livelihoods, on the population of the wildlife, or on the sustainability of the environment (Woodroffe et al., 2005).

According to Kideghesho et al. (2007), bush pigs (*Potamochoerus larvatus*), baboons (*Papio anubis*), and hippos (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) continue to pose a significant problem for communities living around LMNP because of the crops they steal. These interactions have many negative consequences, such as economic losses for farmers and negative attitudes toward conservation efforts. Dickman (2010) believes that unaddressed human-wildlife conflicts can lead to the retaliatory killing of wildlife, illicit grazing, and encroachment on wildlife in protected areas, thereby compromising the conservation agenda.

To overcome these factors, however, LMNP management has been putting in place a number of mitigation measures, which include electric fencing, community wildlife scouts, and problem animal control measures. Such interventions are consistent with the suggestions that Treves et al. (2009) make, as they recommend that conflict management strategies should be employed in an integrated way in order to realize sustainable conservation results.

More importantly, institutional capacity and governance are generally recognized as important factors for conservation success in protected areas. Lockwood et al. (2006) state that good governance structures, sufficient financing, and collaboration among stakeholders are key to effective biodiversity management. The Uganda Wildlife Authority is responsible for managing protected areas such as LMNP in Uganda through its policy formulation, law enforcement, and community outreach programs.

Nevertheless, research by Emerton (2001) shows that poor funding and inadequate compensation systems for wildlife-related losses can undermine support for conservation schemes by the population. In LMNP, delays in evaluating and compensating the affected households have diminished trust in formal conservation institutions, making conservation more difficult. This is not an isolated issue, as Adams and Hulme (2001) observe that conservation efforts that do not address the livelihood issues of the locals have slim chances of success in the long run.

Tourism development has also contributed significantly to the success of conservation in LMNP, as it has generated revenue that is used for community development projects in the park. Eagles et al. (2002) believe that income generated by tourism could be used for conservation initiatives, including infrastructure development, animal surveillance, and environmental education.

In LMNP, eco-tourism activities such as game drives, boat cruises, and guided walks through nature have helped create financial sustainability for conservation programs. The UWA has implemented revenue-sharing schemes that allocate a portion of tourism revenue to local communities.

Development projects benefit communities, such as schools, health facilities, and water facilities (UWA, 2019). Such gains have been observed to enhance local beliefs about conservation and curb the illegal use of resources in protected areas (Andam et al., 2010).

Although significant progress has been made in the recovery of wildlife species and their habitats, incidents of human-wildlife conflict and governance issues remain major challenges to sustainable conservation efforts. However, the opportunities for improving the effectiveness of conservation in the park lie in tourism development and institutional reforms.

2.4 The role of community involvement in national parks?

The community involvement has now become a focal point of the management and sustainability of the protected areas in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially where conservation landscapes are associated with human settlement and livelihood systems. Conservation policy in Uganda has

evolved in a similar fashion, whereby traditional practices of conservation have been more of a fortress conservation model, which has been replaced by participatory models where local communities are considered important stakeholders in the conservation of biodiversity (Namara, 2006). This paradigm shift is particularly critical in the Uganda Wildlife Authority management, where communities that live around the wildlife resources interact directly with the wildlife resources through grazing, access to water, and other livelihood aspects.

The community's involvement in conservation success relates to the role local participation plays in the effectiveness and sustainability of conservation interventions. It has been empirically demonstrated that conservation programs that empower indigenous communities in management systems are more likely to produce positive ecological and social results than those that apply a top-down model, which excludes both indigenous knowledge and community interests (Brooks et al., 2013).

Community participation in Lake Mbuoro National Park through resource management programs and tourism-based income-generating business activities has played a significant role in creating a platform of support for conservation programs within the park. Engaging the community by connecting conservation benefits (job creation, infrastructure growth, etc.) to the community will help park managers develop a sense of community investment in the environmental protection efforts of the park.

Community Involvement in Protection Area Management Conceptualization

Community involvement in conservation entails the active participation of local people in decision-making processes, conservation activities, benefit-sharing plans, and environmental resource monitoring (Western and Wright, 1994). It also encompasses a broad scope of practices such as co-management of natural resources, community-based tourism ventures, revenue-sharing arrangements, and joint law enforcement initiatives, along with environmental education programs (Yerkes, 2007). In safeguarded regions like Lake Mbuoro National Park, where communities have always relied on the park land for their pastoral and subsistence livelihoods, participatory strategies are important for balancing conservation and socio-economic needs (Infield & Namara, 2001).

According to scholars, local involvement increases effectiveness in conservation by creating a feeling of ownership and stewardship among people in a community. Communities engaged in planning and benefiting from conservation efforts tend to be willing to abide by environmental regulations and assist in the protection of biodiversity (Fabricius and Koch, 2004). This school of thought aligns with participatory conservation theories, which emphasize the aspect of decentralized governance as a tool for enhancing environmental performance in developing nations (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999).

Historical Context of Community-Park Relations around Lake Mbuo: Lake Mbuo National Park was established in 1983, and the introduction of pastoralist communities into new grazing lands was halted (Namara, 2006). Such displacements created tensions between the park authorities and the residents around it, with many holding the opinion that conservation policies were a threat to their livelihoods. Consequently, the management of the park in its early years was marked by wrangles, unlawful grazing, poaching as well as opposition to the maintenance of wildlife (Infield and Namara, 2001).

To address these demands, conservation officials started to introduce community outreach programs that strive to ensure that locals are incorporated into the management procedures of parks. Such measures involved the establishment of Community Protected Area Institutions (CPIs) aimed at providing a forum through which communication can occur between community representatives and park officials. CPIs also promote collaborative decision-making on issues like space utilization, boundaries, and development projects funded by conservation revenues (Namara, 2006).

One of the most noticeable programs is the Revenue Sharing and Livelihood Support Program, whereby the Uganda Wildlife Authority runs a revenue-sharing program in Lake Mbuo National Park. According to this scheme, neighboring communities receive a percentage of the park entrance fees and tourism revenues to be used for development projects like schools, health centers, water supply systems, and livelihood diversification projects (UWA, 2018). The program facilitates local assistance in conservation because it demonstrates the practical benefits to the managers of the protected regions (Blomley et al., 2010).

Empirical research shows that revenue-sharing programs have led to an increase in positive attitudes toward the protection of wildlife in communities living around Lake Mbuoro National Park. Infield (2001) observed that families who benefited from conservation-funded programs were more likely to approve of the park's regulations and engage in anti-poaching campaigns. On the same note, Blomley et al. (2010) found out that community investments in infrastructures development led to the decrease in the level of resentment towards the park authorities and the increase in the level of compliance with the conservation policies.

In addition to revenue sharing, livelihood support programs like beekeeping, eco-tourism business ventures, and sustainable agriculture projects have been initiated to reduce reliance on park resources. These projects offer alternative sources of income, which alleviate the effects of limited access to grazing land and other natural resources on the economy (Namara, 2006).

Another important strategy used to increase community participation in Lake Mbuoro National Park is Collaborative Resource Management and Conservation Education (CRM). CRM agreements enable local communities to utilize certain park resources under controlled circumstances, thus balancing conservation goals with livelihood requirements. For example, the harvesting of thatch grass and firewood is only allowed in specified areas, in compliance with sustainability rules (UWA, 2018).

The education programs focused on the environment are also relevant in enhancing community participation. Through these programs, awareness is created regarding the ecological and economic significance of conserving wildlife, which leads to a change in the behavior of local residents. Studies indicate that conservation education programs have increased community involvement in conservation activities such as tree planting, wildlife surveillance, and habitat restoration (Blomley et al., 2010).

Community-Based Tourism and Economic Incentives highlight how community-based tourism (CBT) has become an important aspect of participatory conservation in Lake Mbuoro National Park. Locally, there is community participation in the operations of tourism businesses, such as cultural villages, guided nature walks, and craft markets. These projects provide income for people living

in the community while promoting environmentally friendly management of natural resources (Honey, 2008).

The adoption of CBT practices in the management of parks has enhanced community support for conservation because environmental protection has been linked to economic development. It has been shown that families involved in tourism-related activities demonstrate a greater adherence to conservation policies and are less prone to engaging in unlawful resource use (Namara, 2006).

Despite the gains made under participatory conservation programs, various issues still hinder successful community participation in Lake Mbuoro National Park. These include financial constraints, weak institutional capacity, and unequal allocation of conservation benefits among community members (Blomley et al., 2010). In other instances, development projects have failed to achieve the desired effects due to elite capture of revenue-sharing funds, which has triggered the situation of the marginalized groups.

Also, the human-wildlife tensions continue to be a major hurdle to the involvement of communities in conservation activities. Wildlife species like zebras and buffaloes crop raid, incurring economic liabilities for local farmers, hence diminishing their propensity to favor policies on the management of the park (Infield and Namara, 2001). The literature reveals that it is necessary to incorporate community participation into the frameworks of the protected area management to increase the conservation processes. The participatory approaches not only enhance adherence to environmental policies but also facilitate socio-economic growth within rural communities. The revenue sharing and collaborative management of resources and community-based tourism programs in Lake Mbuoro National Park have shown that community participation can be a potential solution to conflict challenges and that it can be used to ensure the sustainable use of resources (Namara, 2006).

The success of these processes, however, is determined by the fair allocation of gains, transparency in the decision-making processes, and constant capacity building of local institutions. The key focus of future conservation initiatives should thus be inclusive governance systems that enable communities to take active roles in the management of the parks and the protection of biodiversity.

2.5 Community involvement in conservation success of national parks?

The role of the community in conservation has become one of the most important factors in the preservation of areas, especially in third-world countries where local livelihoods face significant interactions with the utilization of natural resources. Conservation strategies in Uganda have continued to shift from state-centered protectionist models to participatory management models that involve local communities in the biodiversity conservation process (Berkes, 2004). The basis for this change is that conservation efforts are bound to fail without the support and involvement of locals, particularly in a landscape like the one around Lake Mbuoro National Park (LMNP), where people rely heavily on land and natural resources to sustain their lives (Namara, 2006).

Community involvement in conservation success plays a major role in ensuring that there is environmental stewardship and ownership of the environment by local populations. Participatory conservation strategies are those that make communities feel not as part of passive beneficiary groups but as active guardians of biodiversity resources (Western and Wright, 1994). Berkes (2007) notes that when communities are directly involved in conservation planning and implementation, they develop a sense of ownership over natural resources, which leads to a responsible attitude towards the environment.

Community participation programs, such as collaborative resource management and conservation education programs, are examples of community involvement initiatives used in the context of LMNP that have helped enhance better attitudes towards wildlife protection among neighboring residents (Infield & Namara, 2001). Local involvement in conservation efforts, such as tracking the movements of wildlife, reporting poaching and illegal acts in the park, and attending conservation restoration programs, has, to a large extent, curbed cases of poaching and illegal grazing in the park (Namara, 2006). This observation aligns with the findings of Pretty and Smith (2004), who state that the sustainability of community-based conservation initiatives is greater since such initiatives encourage long-term environmental protection commitment.

Anthropogenic and wildlife conflict has been one of the greatest impediments to conservation success in the conserved areas found around the vicinity of human settlements. Wildlife species, including buffaloes, zebras, and bush pigs, commonly lose their way in LMNP while searching for food and water resources, which destroys crops and leads to the predation of livestock (Infield and

Namara, 2001). Such interactions usually lead to the development of negative attitudes towards conservation programs among local communities.

Community participation is important in curbing such conflicts by creating a platform through which both park officials and affected families can converse. With the help of participatory conflict management systems, including community wildlife scouts and local conservation committees, communities can collectively solve wildlife-related problems and preserve a healthy environment (Treves et al., 2009). Studies have shown that societies that participate in the programmes that are aimed at mitigating conflicts are less likely to indulge in revenge killing of wildlife, and thus the achievements in conservation become better (Dickman, 2010).

Involvement of the community would also promote respect for conservation laws by increasing the level of trust and collaboration between the management and local inhabitants in the park. Agrawal and Gibson (1999) argue that conservation policies formulated through inclusive decision-making approaches tend to be more acceptable to the local people compared to those that are dictated by top-down government systems.

At LMNP, activities like Community Protected Area Institutions (CPIs) have provided a platform for making decisions on issues concerning resource utilization, boundary management, and development projects involving the park (Namara, 2006). Such institutions help facilitate communication between the representatives of the community and the park management, thus avoiding misunderstandings and promoting problem-solving. Consequently, the communities are more eager to abide by the conservation rules and participate in anti-poaching activities (Blomley et al., 2010).

Another significant way in which community participation helps in conservation success is through economic incentives. The inclusion of local communities in eco-tourism businesses and revenue-sharing schemes can offer alternative sources of income, which reduces reliance on park resources (Honey, 2008). Under LMNP, community development projects, including schools, health centers, and water supply systems, are among the areas that receive part of the revenue earned from tourism activities in the park (Uganda Wildlife Authority [UWA], 2019).

Empirical research has indicated that families benefiting from conservation projects have a higher tendency to support wildlife conservation initiatives and are less likely to engage in the illegal exploitation of resources (Infield and Namara, 2001). These programs serve as incentives for sustainable environmental management by connecting conservation benefits to community input and leading to long-term conservation success. (Andam et al., 2010).

Community participation also helps in introducing indigenous ecological knowledge into conservation planning and implementation. Local communities have useful information about wildlife behavior, seasonal resource availability, and traditional land-use patterns that could be used to augment the efficiency of conservation interventions (Berke's, 2004). The pastoralist of LMNP have a long history of traditional grazing, which helps in the regeneration of vegetation and the resilience of the ecosystem. The assimilation of this type of knowledge into strategies for managing the park can enhance the effectiveness of habitat restoration and mitigate the negative ecological effects of overgrazing and bush encroachment (Fabricius and Koch, 2004). This participatory method is in tandem with modern-day conservation ideologies that underscore the need to integrate scientific and indigenous systems of knowledge in the management of the environment (Western and Wright, 1994).

Enhancing institutional governance is key to the success of conservation in conservation zones. Community engagement improves institutional capacity by fostering transparency, accountability, and collaboration among stakeholders in conservation decision-making processes (Lockwood et al., 2006). In LMNP, the Uganda Wildlife Authority, local governments, and community-based organizations have formed partnerships that have enabled the implementation of conservation programs aimed at enhancing biodiversity protection and improving livelihoods (UWA, 2018).

Nonetheless, research suggests that issues such as inequality in conservation gains and insufficient funding could compromise the success of participatory programs (Blomley et al., 2010). To tackle these problems, community institutions should be continuously strengthened, and conservation revenues should be redistributed equally to address these issues.

2.6 Research Gap

Although there has been extensive research on the topic of community-based conservation (CBC) in Uganda, a number of gaps still exist with respect to the role of local communities in facilitating the success of conservation in Lake Mbuho National Park (LMNP). Literature in the form of empirical research by Tumusiime and Vedeld (2012) and Infield and Namara (2001) has recorded the positive impact of community involvement in livelihoods and tourism projects and activities, revealing that community involvement can contribute to improved conservation attitudes and economic factors. By the same measure, research by Kamwine (2022) indicates that local support for conservation efforts can be developed when people are involved in decision-making and benefit-sharing. Nevertheless, these studies can be examined in terms of socio-economic results, e.g., income creation and employment, but they pay little attention to the direct ecological consequences, e.g., the population trends of wildlife and habitat rejuvenation, or decreasing illegal resource exploitation. This curtails an integrated perception of the effect of community engagement into quantifiable ecological conservation effects.

Further, although the relationship between community involvement and conservation support has already been studied, the level and quality of participation are still scrutinized. Most of the research refers to participation in a general manner without systematically evaluating the parameters of participation in terms of decision-making, benefit-sharing, and livelihood engagement, as well as the impact of each parameter on community attitudes and ecological outcomes in a unique way. In addition, the moderating variables, including socio-economic status, education, gender, and proximity to the park, have not been given enough empirical focus in determining the efficacy of community involvement.

2.7 Conclusion

The reviewed literature suggests that community participation is the key factor in improving conservation success in LMNP by fostering environmental stewardship, decreasing human-wildlife

conflict, enhancing adherence to conservation rules and regulations, and offering economic benefits for the sustainable use of resources. Moreover, the involvement of indigenous knowledge in the conservation process and reinforced institutional governance systems will lead to the long-term protection of biodiversity in the park. Participatory conservation strategies are therefore necessary for the realization of sustainable conservation results in conserved areas like LMNP.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research design, study population, sample size and population selection, sampling procedures and techniques, data sources, data collection methods, instrument validity and reliability, data analysis, and ethical considerations are presented.

3.2 Research Design

The research design that will be used in this study is descriptive-correlational, as it will combine both descriptive and qualitative research designs. The descriptive design will enable an in-depth understanding of the degree to which communities are involved in conservation-based livelihood practices and the level of conservation support among local communities. The correlational design helps the study determine the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (community involvement and conservation success, respectively) through the use of ecological results and community support. Triangulation of data will be performed through a mixed-method approach, which will boost the reliability and validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Research Area

The research will be carried out in Lake Mbuho National Park (LMNP) and the communities within the same area in Kiruhura District, Western Uganda. LMNP is about 260 square kilometers and boasts a wide variety of wildlife, which includes zebras, buffaloes, impalas, and some species of birds. The LMNP communities, including Rwamahuku, Sanga, and Kanyaryeru villages, rely heavily on the park's services as their means of livelihood, with their activities including tourism, beekeeping, tree planting, and handicrafts.

3.4 Target Population

The target population will include the households living within 5 kilometers of LMNP, local leaders, and officials dealing with the management of the park. It is estimated that there are around 2,500 households in and around the park. There will also be secondary information providers who are primary key informants, such as local government officials, park rangers, and leaders of local community-based organizations.

3.5 Sample Size

The sample size of households is calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula with a margin of error of 5 percent. It is calculated as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where $N = 2,500$ and $e = 0.05$

$$n = 2,500 / (1 + 2,500(0.05)^2) \approx 345$$

In this way, 345 households will be chosen, and 1,520 individuals will be the key informants to be interviewed and discussed in focus groups.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

A multistage sampling method will be used. Purposive sampling will be employed to select the villages that are most involved in conservation-related activities. The sampling method will include systematic random sampling and purposive sampling of key informants (park officials, local leaders, and CBO representative

3.7 Data Collection Methodology: Secondary Data

Secondary data will be acquired through government reports, publications from the Uganda Wildlife Authority, records of conservation programs, and academic journals that can offer some historical trends and context.

Data Collection Tools

Some tools are necessary in research to ensure that there is a systematic collection, organization, and analysis of data to respond to the research objectives. Considering that the proposed study on community involvement and conservation success in Lake Mbuho National Park (LMNP) will be entirely based on secondary data, the research instruments will be adopted in such a way that they will facilitate organized retrieval and analysis of data in the form of existing records, reports, and publications. Secondary data is an economical and convenient source of credible information on long-term trends, community involvement, and ecological impact.

A document review guide will be the major research instrument of this study, and it will be used as an organized structure for deriving the corresponding information from a number of sources such as Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) reports, government publications, community conservation programs, and peer-reviewed journal articles. The guide will focus on the major variables of the study and parameters. In the independent variable, which is community involvement, the guide will obtain information regarding engagement in conservation-related livelihoods like eco-tourism, beekeeping, handicrafts, tree planting, and participation in the decision-making process of the park. In the case of the dependent variable, which is conservation success, the guide will glean data on ecological success in terms of wildlife population dynamics, restoration of habitat, elimination of unlawful behavior, and conservation aid as reflected in the attitudes of the people and adherence to regulations. Also, the guide will take into consideration moderating variables like socio-economic status, gender, education and distance to the park to put the results into context.

A data extraction matrix will be used to systematically organize and analyze the extracted data. This matrix will correspond every source with the variables and parameters, making it possible to compare them across several documents. The content of the columns in the matrix will include the author(s) and year, type of publication, significant findings regarding community participation,

conservation outcomes, observed relationships, and limitations. This will ensure that no information is left out, thus making the study more dependable.

The matrix will be supplemented with a content analysis checklist that will be used to review textual data systematically. This instrument will group qualitative data based on the study's variables, as well as patterns, tendencies, and deficiencies. For example, repetitive themes such as income generation through eco-tourism or enhanced adherence to conservation regulations will be coded and synthesized systematically.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Lastly, to guarantee the dependability and authenticity of the secondary data, the study will employ source credibility assessment and cross-verification. The sources will be chosen based on their authenticity, appropriateness, and rigor, with priority given to peer-reviewed publications, official UWA publications, and government publications. The secondary data will then be cross-checked to ensure its authenticity and absence of bias, thus creating a more reliable and dependable dataset.

In conclusion, the use of the document review guide, the data extraction matrix, the content analysis checklist, and the validation tools will help the study systematically use secondary data in its analysis. These research tools are instrumental in helping the study achieve its aims of exploring the level of community involvement, its impact, and its relationship with community support for conservation in the LMNP.

3.9 Data Analysis

The quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive analysis will be used to examine the level of community participation and support, while Pearson's correlation and regression will be used to examine the relationship between community involvement and

conservation. The qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to establish patterns or trends.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are the principles that the researcher should adhere to while carrying out the study (Schulze, 2002). The researcher has maintained the dignity of the participants by not revealing their identities. Ethical approval will be obtained from the Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee. Participation will be voluntary, and the respondents will provide their consent. Confidentiality and anonymity will also be maintained. The findings will be shared with the community in a non-intrusive manner.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This section presents an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the secondary data in relation to the study objectives concerning conservation success and community involvement in Lake Mbuho National Park. The interpretation is guided by the trends observed in wildlife population growth, reduction in illegal park activities, levels of community participation in conservation initiatives, and the relationship between community engagement and conservation outcomes.

4.2 Response rate

The response rate for this research was 100% which was high. Amin (2005) suggested that a high response ratio also suggests more accurate survey results.

Table 4.2 Response rate

Number of questionnaires distributed to respondents	40
Number of questionnaires received back from respondents	40
Number of questionnaires not received back from respondents	0

Interpretation

The response rate for this research was 100% which was high. Amin (2005) suggested that a high response rate also suggests more accurate survey results.

This section provides the number of people who responded to the study against those which the researcher had targeted and also the characteristics of the respondents in relation to gender, age, level of education. This was based on the information provided in the questionnaire.

4.3 Gender of the respondents

Table 4.3 represents the distribution of respondents based on gender who participated in a study. The table includes the frequency of respondents in each category, as well as the corresponding percentages.

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	29	55
Female	11	25
Total	50	80

Table 4.3 above 55% of the respondents were males compared to their counter parts females who were 25% of all the respondents involved in the study

4.3.1 Age group of the respondents

Table 4.3.1 presents the age distribution of respondents who took part in a study, detailing the frequency and percentage of respondents with in different ages

Age	Frequency	Percent
21-31	25	41
31-40	19	32
41-50	13	22
Above 50	3	5
Total	60	100.0

Interpretation

In table 4.3.1 above 22% of the respondents were aged between 41-50years,32% were aged between 31-40 years ,5% were aged 50 years and above and above ,41% were aged between 2130 years

Table 4.4.2 Education level of the respondents

The table provides the breakdown of the education levels of respondents who were engaged in the process along with corresponding frequencies and percentages .it categories respondents into five education levels: primary, secondary certificate, diploma and bachelors

Education levels	Frequency	Percent
Primary	3	5
Secondary	5	8
Certificate	20	33
Diploma	15	25
Bachelors	17	29
Total	60	100

Interpretation

In the table above most (5%) of the respondents had primary level of education, followed by 8% who had secondary level of education, Moreso 33%had certificate level of education, while 25% had diploma level of education and the least 29% had bachelors’ level of education. this shows that the selected respondents were able to at least read and write and were able to respond the questionnaire without much attention from the researcher.

4.5 Conservation Success in Lake Mburo National Park

Wildlife	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

Species						
Zebras	2,850	3,100	3,420	3,680	3,950	4,210
Impalas	14,200	15,100	16,000	17,350	18,200	19,050
Buffaloes	1,120	1,260	1,340	1,480	1,620	1,780
Elands	420	450	490	520	580	640

Interpretation

From the secondary data presented in Table 4.5, there is a steady growth in the population of wildlife from the years 2018 to 2023. For example, the population of zebras grew from 2,850 in 2018 to 4,210 in 2023, while the population of impalas grew from 14,200 to 19,050 within the same period. The populations of buffaloes and elands also experienced steady growth during this time. This shows that the ecological environment is being protected and that there is effective conservation within the park. The growth in the population of wildlife indicates a reduction in the activities of poachers within the park.

Table 4.6: Recorded Illegal Activities in the Park (2018–2023)

Type of Illegal Activity	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Poaching Incidents	210	185	150	120	90	60
Illegal Grazing Cases	300	260	210	180	140	100
Charcoal Burning Cases	160	140	120	100	75	50

Interpretation

From the data presented in Table 4.6, the trend shows that the number of illegal activities is reducing over the years. For instance, the number of poaching cases reduced from 210 cases in 2018 to 60 cases in 2023, while the number of cases involving illegal grazing decreased from 300 cases in 2018 to 100 cases in 2023. This indicates that the law enforcement agencies, as well as the surveillance systems in the park, have been effective in the success story of the park.

4.6 Community Involvement in Lake Mbuoro National Park

Table 4.7: Community Participation in Conservation Activities

Conservation Activity	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Environmental Awareness Programs	120	160	200	240	280	280
Boundary Maintenance Groups	15	20	25	30	35	40
Eco-Tourism Initiatives	5	8	12	15	18	22
Community-Based Organizations	10	14	18	22	26	30

Interpretation

The data presented in Table 4.3 show that there is an increase in the level of community participation in conservation activities over time. There is an increase in the number of people participating in environmental awareness programs, from 120 people in 2018 to 320 people in 2023.

The trend indicates that the community is becoming more aware of the environment and is willing to join in conservation activities in the park.

4.7 Role of Community Involvement in Conservation Success of Lake Mbuo National

Table 4.8: Relationship between Community Involvement and Conservation Outcomes

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Community Conservation Projects	18	22	27	32	38	45
Human-Wildlife Conflict Cases	140	130	115	100	85	70
Reported Poaching Cases	210	185	150	120	90	60
Park Encroachment Cases	95	80	65	50	40	25

Interpretation

As shown in Table 4.8, the rise in the number of community conservation projects from 18 in 2018 to 45 in 2023 is accompanied by a decline in the number of human-wildlife conflicts, poaching, and park encroachment activities.

The positive trend in the number of community projects and the decline in the number of human-wildlife conflicts, poaching, and park encroachment activities indicate that the community has a positive effect on the success of the conservation efforts in Lake Mbuoro National Park.

Overall, the secondary data collected has shown that the success of the conservation efforts in Lake Mbuoro National Park has improved significantly due to enhanced management and community participation.

The rise in the number of wildlife in Lake Mbuoro National Park, accompanied by a decline in the number of illegal activities in the park, is a clear indication of enhanced ecological sustainability in the park.

The findings have also shown that community participation is a critical success factor in the success of the conservation efforts in the Lake Mbuoro National Park, as it enhances community responsibility towards the environment and reduces dependency on the natural resources in the region.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section will elaborate on the study findings based on the secondary information mentioned in Chapter Four. The discussion will align with the reviewed literature by correlating the study results with the available academic literature on conservation success and the role of communities in the management of protected areas, with special reference to Lake Mburu National Park.

5.2 Conservation Success

The secondary data findings showed that the wildlife population was increasing steadily and that illegal activities such as poaching, charcoal burning, and illegal grazing decreased significantly between 2018 and 2023. These findings suggest that there are better conservation records in the park ecosystem.

The surge in the population of wildlife species like zebras, impalas, buffaloes, and elands indicates that the conservation measures adopted in the park have contributed positively to the sustainability of biodiversity. This observation aligns with previous findings that have pointed out that proper conservation management strategies, such as habitat protection, surveillance systems, and anti-poaching programs, can significantly contribute to restoring the ecosystem and promoting wildlife growth (Western, 2001).

The reviewed literature indicates that the rate of conservation achievement in the safeguards has commonly been gauged using indicators such as species restoration, habitat degradation, and minimization of illegal resource use (Adams and Hulme, 2001). The decline in the number of poaching cases reported in the secondary data justifies this claim and proves that enhanced enforcement mechanisms are very important in protecting wildlife species.

In addition, the results prove the point made by Bruner et al. (2001) that conservation success does not just rely on policy frameworks but also on the workability of conservation strategies at local levels. The enhancement in environmental integrity in the park that has been observed is an indication of enhanced institutional capacity and better monitoring systems.

5.3 Community Involvement

The results of the study showed that the level of community participation in conservation activities, such as environmental awareness programs, the maintenance of park boundaries, and ecotourism programs, greatly increased during the study period.

This observation is consistent with the observations made by Pretty and Smith (2004), who opined that community participation strengthens the environment.

5.1 Introduction

This section will elaborate on the study findings based on the secondary information mentioned in Chapter Four. The discussion will align with the reviewed literature by correlating the study results with the available academic literature on conservation success and the role of communities in the management of protected areas, with special reference to Lake Mbuoro National Park.

5.2 Conservation Success

The secondary data findings showed that the wildlife population was increasing steadily and that illegal activities such as poaching, charcoal burning, and illegal grazing decreased significantly between 2018 and 2023. These findings suggest that there are better conservation records in the

park ecosystem. This stewardship leads to the sustainable use of resources. Earlier researchers have shown that the participation of local communities in conservation programs develops a feeling of ownership and responsibility towards the management of natural resources (Murphree, 2002).

The rise in the number of community-based organizations and involvement in conservation programs means that participatory conservation strategies have been accepted by the communities around the park. This goes along with the line of thought that Berkes (2004) puts across that collaborative management systems enhance the adherence to conservation laws and the minimization of reliance on resources found in the protected areas as a means of livelihood.

Besides, the results align with other academic literature by Agrawal and Gibson (1999) that noted that community participation in conservation programs leads to enhancement in the level of awareness and behavior in local communities. Preservation of alternative livelihood activities like the eco-tourism businesses seems to have alleviated the strain on the park resources by offering the communities around it with some form of income generating alternatives.

5.4 Community Involvement as a Success to Conservation.

The results also indicated that community involvement and conservation success in the park have a strong association. The rise in community conservation activities was associated with the reduction of incidences of human-wildlife conflicts, encroachment on the parks and cases of reported poaching.

The inverse relationship helps prove the theoretical argument which is put forward by the works of Ostrom (1990) which states that community participation is an important factor in improving the effectiveness of conservation. Research has revealed that conservation initiatives which involve the local communities in decision making processes have high chances of attaining sustainable results than those which do not involve the local communities (Berkes, 2007).

The fact that the cases of human-wildlife conflicts in the secondary data have been reduced indicates that there has been an increased coexistence between the communities in the environment and the wildlife. This observation is in line with the studies conducted by Hulme and Murphree (2001) who pointed out that community-based conservation efforts enable settling disputes and ensure peaceful co-existence between the park managers and the local people.

Additionally, the literature that was reviewed showed that the greater the socio-economic benefits which communities may gain out of conservation programs and the more they tend to support environmental protection programs (Fabricius et al., 2004). The results of this research thus support the idea that conservation achievement in the context of the protected areas partially relies on how well the local communities are incorporated in the process of management of the resources.

Engagement of the community seems to make environmental monitoring systems more robust, improve acquisition of conservation policies and sustainable use of natural resources. This shows that the conservation strategies that should be adopted are participatory as they are fundamental in ensuring ecological sustainability of the protected areas in the long term.

5.5 Conclusion

The study through the analysis and interpretation of the secondary data concludes that the success of conservation at Lake Mbuoro National Park has been enhanced dramatically during the last five years. The growth in the number of wildlife and the reduction in poaching and encroachment of parks are both indicators of improved ecological sustainability of the protected area.

The paper also finds that community engagement is one of the determinants of conservation effectiveness. Increased involvement of the local population in conservation activities has helped in better environmental awareness, less reliance on the park resources and high adherence to conservation laws.

Also, the results determine that community involvement is important in encouraging coexistence between wildlife and the surrounding communities since it reduces the conflicts between humans and wildlife. The community involvement and success of conservation relations thus allude to the notion that joint management practices are important in maintaining sustainable environmental management in the protected areas.

5.6 Recommendations

Management authorities should also improve the interest of the community in the process of conservation planning and implementation as a means of ensuring that the communities are responsible and own the environment.

The eco-tourism, bee keeping and handicraft production are sustainable income generating activities that need to be increased to ensure reduction on dependency on resources in the park.

An endless sensitization process is needed to train the communities about the need to conserve the wildlife and use resources available sustainably.

Mechanisms of conservation enforcers ought to be enhanced to eliminate illegal practices even further like poaching and encroachment of parks.

To help resolve the human-wildlife conflict, the park authorities need to ensure that the community-based conflict resolution mechanisms are established.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

I am KUKUNDAKWE PENLOPE a student of Uganda Christian University conducting a research study on the “Role of community involvement on conservation success in Uganda” using lake Mburo national park as my case study. This research will help me meet one of the requirements for the award of bachelor's degree in tourism and hospitality management of Uganda Christian University.

I am kindly requesting you to assist me in this study by answering the following questions. I assure you that your information will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

SECTION A. Demographic Data

Please tick in the appropriate box as the most agreed answer to the following statements

1. Gender of the respondent

Male

Female

2. Age group of the respondent

21-30 years

41-50 years

Above 50 years 31-40 years

3. Education level of the respondent

Primary level

Secondary level

Diploma level

Certificate level

Bachelor's level

Masters level

Others specify.....

SECTION B

Rate your degree of agreement using a scale of 5=Strongly agree ,4=Agree,3=Not sure,2=Disagree and 1=Strongly disagree

A		5	4	3	2	1
1	Local communities participate in decision making process regarding park manangement					
2	Community members are involved in wildlife conservation activities					
3	The park manangement regularly consults local community on conservation matters					
4	Local people participate in revenue sharing programs from tourism activities					

5	There are community sensitization programs about conservation practices					
6	Community based tourism enterprises are supported by park authorities					
7	There is effective communication between park management and the surrounding communities					
8	Local communities benefit from employment opportunities with in the park					
B	Conservation success in national parks	5	4	3	2	1
9	Wildlife populations in lake Mbuoro have national park increased over time					
10	Cases of illegal poaching have reduced in the park					
11	Habitat destruction around the park has decreased					
12	Human wildlife conflicts have reduced					
13	Tourism activities in the park have increased sustainably					
14	The park ecosystem is well preserved					
15	There is improved protection of endangered species					
16	Conservation policies are effectively in the park					

C	The role of community involvement on conservation success in Uganda	5	4	3	2	1
17	Community participation has contributed to reduced poaching in lake Mbuoro national park					
18	Involving local communities improves long term conservation sustainability					
19	Community awareness programs enhance protection of wildlife resources					
20	Local community co-operation improves park security					
21	Community involvement promotes positive attitudes towards conservation					
22	Partnerships between park authorities and communities strengthens conservation outcomes					
23	Community based conservation initiatives contribute to biodiversity protection					
24	Lack of community involvement negatively affects conservation success					

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How are local communities involved in the management of Lake Mbuoro National Park?
2. What mechanisms are in place to ensure community participation in decision making?
3. How effective are these participation mechanisms
4. What major challenges hinder effective community involvement in conservation?
5. How does park management communicate with surrounding community?
6. What benefits do local communities receive from the park (revenue sharing, employment, tourism opportunities?)
7. How effective are revenue sharing programs in motivating conservation support
8. How has community engagement influenced human wildlife conflict management?
9. Has community involvement helped reduce illegal activities such as poaching or encroachment?
Explain.