

ASSESSING CHILD ABUSE IN KISOJO ARCHDEACONRY, MITYANA DIOCESE

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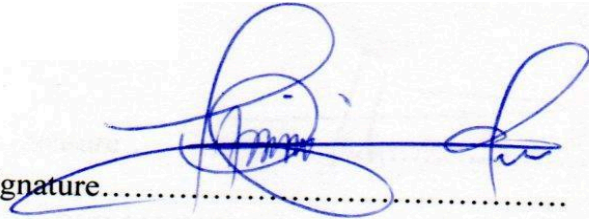


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DECLARATION

I Nabaasa Livingstone hereby declare that this dissertation has been produced out of my own effort with the guidance of my supervisor and has never been submitted to any other institution for any award.

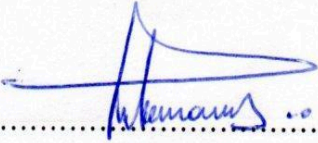
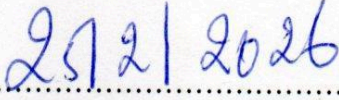
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APPROVAL

This dissertation has been supervised and approved by me and is therefore ready for submission to the School of Theology in Uganda Christian University.

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DEDICATION

With special regard, I wish to dedicate this work to my family for all the guidance, financial, spiritual and social support. May the Almighty God richly bless you.

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I would like to thank the Almighty God for the gift of life and guiding me throughout my education; it has not been easy but it was possible. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Emmanuel Mukeshimana for the tireless efforts and expertise he rendered to me during their supervision.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at assessing child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese. It specifically focused on; identifying the forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry, exploring how Christian parenting can be used to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, and examining what the strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese.

This study was conducted using an explanatory sequential design where a mixed method research approach (both quantitative and qualitative) was used. During the data gathering process, both purposive and simple random sample techniques were applied, along with questionnaires and interviews. A sample size of 100 respondents who are registered Christians of Kisojo Archdeaconry and 10 key informants who are clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese were used in the study.

The findings revealed that child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry is a significant concern, with physical punishment, emotional abuse, child labor, neglect, sexual and verbal abuse being widely acknowledged. Although Christian parenting is recognized as a vital tool in preventing abuse promoting love, patience, and discipline; it is challenged by cultural practices, ignorance of biblical principles, and poverty. The Church is viewed as a central and trusted institution capable of combating child abuse through regular sensitization, enhanced counseling services, Christian parenting teachings, and active collaboration with local authorities and civic leaders to promote child protection.

Lastly, the study recommended that the Church in Kisojo Archdeaconry actively combat child abuse through regular community sensitization, provision of counseling and pastoral care, collaboration with local authorities for effective case handling, integration of Christian parenting education into discipleship programs, and prophetic advocacy against harmful cultural norms that justify abuse. These faith-based interventions are seen as vital for transforming parenting practices and promoting child protection within the community.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The study was about assessing child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese. This section presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study and significant of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Child abuse remains a critical social concern, affecting the moral, psychological, and physical well-being of children across the globe. In many religious communities, particularly within Christian institutions, the challenge of child abuse has been widely documented, with various theological and ethical discussions attempting to address the crisis (Fleming et al., 2023). Historical evidence reveals that child abuse has been perpetuated in different forms, including physical violence, emotional neglect, and sexual exploitation, often within religious settings (Levering, 2021). The intersection of child abuse and religious institutions raises significant ethical concerns, given the role of the Church as a moral authority and guardian of vulnerable members of society (Beste, 2021). Cases of abuse in religious contexts have often been concealed, contributing to prolonged suffering among victims and fostering a culture of impunity (Marotta, 2021).

Biblically, children hold a sacred place in Christian teachings, and their welfare is emphasized throughout scripture. Jesus Christ demonstrated profound love and care for children, instructing His disciples not to hinder them from coming to Him (Matthew 19:14). Proverbs 22:6 underscores the importance of nurturing children in a righteous manner, emphasizing that a well-guided child will uphold moral principles even in adulthood. The Bible condemns all forms of oppression and injustice, warning against actions that cause harm to the innocent (Matthew 18:6). Theological teachings also highlight the responsibility of parents, guardians, and religious leaders to protect children, ensuring that they grow in a safe and supportive environment. The Church, as a moral custodian, is called to champion justice and accountability, safeguarding children from harm and advocating for their rights.

Historically, child abuse has been a persistent issue, often overlooked or normalized in many societies due to cultural and institutional structures (Macfarlane, 2021). Religious organizations have been implicated in both perpetuating and concealing cases of abuse, with reports highlighting systemic failures in addressing complaints (Schickendantz, 2024). Studies indicate that various Church institutions have struggled with allegations of child abuse, necessitating comprehensive reforms to enhance protection measures (Gracia et al., 2020). The Anglican and Catholic Churches, among others, have faced intense scrutiny regarding their handling of child abuse cases, with documented evidence showing patterns of neglect, cover-ups, and inadequate responses (Brunton & Dryer, 2021). These historical trends underscore the need for proactive interventions to combat child abuse within religious communities.

Child abuse encompasses various forms of mistreatment, including physical abuse, emotional neglect, sexual exploitation, and psychological harm (McCoy & Keen, 2022). The World Health Organization defines child abuse as any action or inaction by parents, caregivers, or institutions that result in harm, potential harm, or threat to a child's well-being (Seddighi et al., 2021). Within religious settings, child abuse manifests in multiple ways, including corporal punishment, coercive discipline, spiritual manipulation, and sexual exploitation by clergy members (McGuire & London, 2020). The consequences of child abuse are far-reaching, affecting victims' mental health, social relationships, and future prospects (Strathearn et al., 2020).

Uganda has recorded significant cases of child abuse, with various reports indicating that religious institutions are not exempt from these concerns (Sserwanja et al., 2021). In rural communities like Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, socio-economic challenges, cultural practices, and limited awareness exacerbate child abuse (Bywaters et al., 2022). Poverty, parental neglect, and weak legal enforcement mechanisms contribute to the vulnerability of children in such settings (Debowska et al., 2024). Additionally, the influence of traditional beliefs and gender norms often perpetuates harmful practices, placing children at risk of exploitation (Seddighi et al., 2021).

The response of religious institutions to child abuse has been a subject of debate, with some churches implementing reforms while others remain complicit through inaction (Natukunda et al., 2021). Effective child protection frameworks require collaboration between the Church, law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders (Aisu, 2022). Research indicates that

faith-based organizations can play a significant role in advocating for child rights, implementing policies to prevent abuse, and providing support for victims (Kpalam, 2023). In Uganda, initiatives aimed at strengthening child protection within religious institutions have been introduced, yet challenges remain in enforcement and accountability (Satinsky et al., 2021).

This study is significant in shedding light on the realities of child abuse within a religious context, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving child protection in Kisojo Archdeaconry. By examining the historical, conceptual, and contextual dimensions of child abuse, this research will contribute to existing literature and inform policy recommendations (Fleming et al., 2023). Addressing child abuse within religious settings requires a multi-faceted approach, including theological reflection, legal frameworks, and community participation (Levering, 2021). The findings of this study provided valuable recommendations for the Anglican Church in Mityana Diocese, emphasizing the need for accountability, awareness, and holistic interventions to protect children from harm (Beste, 2021).

1.2 Problem Statement

Ideally, child abuse should be nonexistent in a just and morally guided society that upholds the dignity and rights of children (Fleming et al., 2023). However, in most rural areas in Uganda like Mityana Diocese, cases of child abuse like physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect—are alarmingly prevalent (Levering, 2021). Nationally, Uganda has seen a disturbing rise in child abuse cases, with 14,230 cases reported in 2020, increasing to 17,664 in 2021, showing a worsening trend (Sserwanja et al., 2021). Specifically, physical abuse accounts for 60% of cases, while sexual abuse has escalated from 5,635 cases in 2020 to 7,150 in 2022 (Debowska et al., 2024). Emotional abuse and neglect are also rising, with 45% of children in rural areas experiencing some form of neglect (Bywaters et al., 2022).

All this could be attributed to poverty, broken family structures, cultural acceptance of corporal punishment, and limited enforcement of child protection laws (Natukunda et al., 2021). Consequently, affected children are likely to suffer from trauma, depression, poor academic performance, and increased vulnerability to exploitation (Strathearn et al., 2020). If not addressed, the long-term impact could be a generation plagued by psychological distress, crime, and social instability (Satinsky et al., 2021). Although stakeholders such as the Ugandan

government, religious institutions, and NGOs have implemented child protection laws, awareness campaigns, and rehabilitation programs, child abuse remains a persistent challenge in Kisojo Archdeaconry, necessitating further research and urgent action (Schickendantz, 2024).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the prevalence, causes, and consequences of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, and evaluate existing interventions to identify gaps for improved child protection.

1.4 Research Objectives

- i. To identify the forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry.
- ii. To explore the Christian ways of parenting to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry.
- iii. To examine the strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What are the forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry?
- ii. What are the Christian ways of parenting to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry?
- iii. What strategies can the church adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese?

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Geographical Scope

This study was conducted in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese located in Mityana district, Central Uganda. Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese was chosen as the case for this study due to reported high incidences of child abuse, limited research on the issue in the area, and the Church's significant role in child protection efforts.

1.6.2 Content Scope

The study focused on identifying the forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry, exploring the Christian way of parenting to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, and examining what the strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese

1.6.3 Time Scope

The review of the report and documents focused at a range of ten years that is 2020 to 2025. This time scope helped in capturing recent trends, emerging patterns, and the impact of recent child protection interventions in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese. This research also took a period of five months that is from February to June 2025 since it's the time stipulated by the institution for the researcher to have completed his study.

1.7 Justification of the study

The justification of the study was due to the increasing concerns over child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, where cases of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse have been reported despite efforts by religious institutions, government agencies, and child rights organizations to curb the problem (Sserwanja et al., 2021). Research indicates that child abuse negatively impacts victims' mental health, education, and overall wellbeing, with long-term consequences such as trauma, depression, and reduced economic productivity (Debowska et al., 2024). While previous studies have examined child abuse in Uganda, limited research has focused on religious institutions' role in addressing this issue, highlighting the need for a localized study in Kisojo Archdeaconry (McCoy & Keen, 2022; Kpalam, 2023). This study sought to provide evidence-based insights to inform policies, strengthen church-led interventions, and enhance collaboration with key stakeholders to protect children from abuse.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study will be instrumental in guiding church leaders on effective strategies to prevent and address child abuse within their congregations. It will also help them establish stronger child protection policies within religious settings.

The study will also be useful in providing data-driven insights to inform policies and strengthen child protection laws and interventions. It will further aid in resource allocation for combating child abuse at the local level.

Furthermore, the study will be essential in raising awareness among parents on recognizing, preventing, and reporting child abuse cases. It will also equip them with practical skills to create a safer home environment for children.

In addition, the study will be valuable in helping NGOs design targeted programs that support child abuse victims and promote child rights. It will also guide advocacy efforts aimed at influencing policy changes to protect vulnerable children.

Lastly, the study will be a significant contribution to the existing literature on child abuse, serving as a reference for future research and academic discussions. It will open avenues for further studies on child protection within faith-based communities.

1.9 Methodology

1.9.1 Research design

In this study, the researcher employed the use of explanatory sequential design, a mixed-methods approach that begins with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by qualitative data to further explain or expand on the initial findings (Toyon, 2021). This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to first establish statistical relationships or trends and then use qualitative insights to provide deeper understanding and context. By using this approach, the study ensures that numerical data alone does not limit the interpretation of findings but is enriched by participants' lived experiences and perspectives (Wipulanusat et al., 2020). The explanatory sequential design is particularly useful in this study as it enables a comprehensive analysis by first quantifying key variables and then exploring the underlying reasons or mechanisms behind the observed patterns (Maforah & Leburu-Masigo, 2018).

1.9.2 Study area

This study was conducted in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese located in Mityana district, Central Uganda. Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese was chosen as the case for this study

due to reported high incidences of child abuse, limited research on the issue in the area, and the Church's significant role in child protection efforts.

1.9.3 Study population

The study population therefore included the Christians/ members of Kisojo Archdeaconry plus the Clergy that work with Kisojo Archdeaconry. According to records of the Archdeaconry, there are a total of 1000 registered members in Kisojo Archdeaconry and these were contacted and involved in this study as the study population. The study population also included the Clergy that work with Kisojo Archdeaconry, the police and local leaders totaling to 10 and these were included in this study as the key informants.

1.9.4 Sample size

Singh, (2007) defined sample size as finite part of a statistical population whose properties are used to make estimates about a population as a whole. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) state that in order to arrive at a reasonable, reliable and valid sample size, take 10% of the accessible population if the population is large and 30% if the population is small. Based on these authorities, sample size for this study was 100 registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry which were constituted as follows; by getting 10% (1000) of total population of registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry; $(10/100 \times 1000 = 100)$. This gave a sample size of 100 registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry.

1.9.5 Sampling method

The clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese participated in the study as key informants and purposive sampling was used to select these key informants. Purposive sampling was used for this category of respondents because of their active role and knowledge about the topic under study and these individuals are expected to provide in-depth information about the topic. On the other hand, the 100 selected registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry were selected using simple random sampling given that they were big in number and using this method eased their selection.

1.9.6 Sources of data

Primary data: Primary data from the field was obtained through personal interviews and self-administered questionnaires to selected respondents in order to get their opinions. Primary data helped the researcher in collecting information for the specific purposes of their study. The researcher collected the data himself, using interviews and questionnaires.

1.9.7 Data collection methods

Questionnaire: According to Amin (2005) a survey is a self-report investigation used for gathering information about variables of interest. A survey is deemed suitable because it enables respondents to give opinions objectively without prejudice. Emotional effects such as shyness are minimized. They also have the advantage of collecting data from a big population over a short time. This was ascertained by Mchumu (2011). The questionnaires comprised close-ended items accompanied by a list of possible alternatives from which respondents were requested to select the answers that best describe their opinion about the problem of investigation and situation (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2005). A structured questionnaire containing sections as per study variables was designed to collect information on the subject. It was administered to the respondents. It had a five point Likert scale with response choices such as, (5) strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Not sure, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly Disagree. The Likert format was preferred because it gives the respondents a variety of responses for choice and the format also makes it easy to tabulate the data obtained for comparison purposes. Questionnaires were distributed to the 100 selected registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry with their consent.

Interviews: According to Ahuja (2009), an interview is a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-related information and focused by him on the content specified by the research objectives of description and explanation. The instrument of data collection here was an interview guide which refers to a set of structured questions in which answers were recorded by the interviewer herself (Ahuja 2009). It was used because it gives the research control over the line of questioning hence time saving. Interviews which were face-to-face interviews were conducted in a quiet place without noise with the key informants who are clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese and then the purpose of the interview was explained followed by addressing the terms of

confidentiality. The format of the interview which is an informal conversational interview was established where questions were asked and answers recorded by the interviewer.

1.9.8 Data analysis, presentation and interpretation

This was done through classification of respondents into categories called codes. It involved sorting, editing questionnaires and coding responses after which data was tabulated and analyzed using a computer program known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. After analyzing, the information was presented using tables, pie charts and bar graphs as well as frequencies and percentages. Thematic review was also used to analyze qualitative data.

1.9.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethics encompass the guidelines that differentiate between right and wrong conduct. They play a crucial role in delineating acceptable from unacceptable behaviors (Pietilä et al., 2020). The following ethical considerations were upheld;

To uphold privacy, the researcher ensured that all personal data gathered from participants was stored securely and only used for the purposes outlined in the research. No unauthorized individuals had access to the information, and all data was handled with strict adherence to privacy laws and regulations to prevent misuse (Chervenak & McCullough, 2021).

Regarding informed consent, the researcher provided all participants with clear, detailed information about the purpose of the study, what participation entails, and any potential risks involved. Participants were asked to sign a consent form, confirming that they fully understood the study and agreed to participate voluntarily.

For anonymity, the researcher ensured that participants' identities were not revealed in any part of the research report. Any identifying information was removed or coded in such a way that individual participants could not be traced or identified by anyone reading the final report.

To maintain confidentiality, the researcher ensured that any personal information collected was only accessible to the research team and was kept secure. Participants' responses were not disclosed to third parties, and data was used solely for research purposes in aggregated or anonymized form.

In order to avoid plagiarism, the researcher ensured that all sources of information, ideas, or data from other researchers or publications were properly credited through accurate citations and references. Any direct quotes were clearly marked and attributed to their original sources to maintain academic integrity.

Lastly, throughout the research process, the researcher maintained an ethical approach by following institutional guidelines and upholding principles of respect and fairness, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research findings.

1.9.10 Limitations of the study and the solutions undertaken

This section highlights some of the influences that the researcher encountered and was not able to control. They are the shortcomings, conditions or influences that could not be controlled by the researcher that placed restrictions on her findings and conclusions.

Time factor: The researcher was affected by time constraint since the researcher had to carry out research while doing other activities yet a limited time frame was given to submission of reports. The researcher established a system timetable schedule apportioning the available time to the different activities that had to be accomplished during this research.

Funds: The researcher encountered a problem of inadequate financial resources to cater for all the expenses that were incurred in research as an activity. The researcher tried to mobilize as more funds as possible, to meet the expenses that were incurred.

Information: The researcher also encounter a problem in gathering information since some of the respondents were not willing to give complete information. The researcher tried studying ways of collecting complete information from the available respondents to curb down the challenge of less information from the respondents.

1.10 Literature Review

1.10.1 Concept of Child Abuse

Child abuse is a multidimensional issue that encompasses physical, emotional, and sexual maltreatment, as well as neglect, which severely impacts a child's development and well-being (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Scholars argue that child abuse is often deeply rooted in cultural, social, and economic structures that perpetuate violence and control over children (Gracia et al., 2020). Moreover, abuse within religious institutions has been a significant concern, with multiple cases reported in Catholic and Anglican churches, highlighting systemic failures in safeguarding children (Fleming et al., 2023).

Various studies emphasize the long-term cognitive, psychological, and health consequences of child abuse, which include depression, anxiety, and even suicidal tendencies in adulthood (Strathearn et al., 2020). In conflict and disaster settings, children are particularly vulnerable to abuse due to the breakdown of protective structures, exposing them to greater risks (Seddighi et al., 2021). Additionally, the intersection of poverty and child abuse has been widely documented, with research indicating that children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are at a higher risk of neglect and mistreatment (Bywaters et al., 2022).

Religious institutions play a crucial role in both perpetuating and preventing child abuse, with cases of abuse reported in faith-based settings leading to calls for reforms in child protection policies (Schickendantz, 2024). In Uganda, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated child abuse cases, particularly within households, as financial and social stressors increased (Sserwanja et al., 2021). Furthermore, community responses to child abuse remain a critical area of study, with evidence suggesting that stronger legal frameworks, community engagement, and church-led interventions can mitigate abuse and support victims effectively (Kpalam, 2023).

1.10.2 Forms of child abuse

Physical abuse: Physical abuse involves the infliction of bodily harm on a child through acts such as beating, burning, or strangulation (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Scholars have argued that physical abuse is often justified by cultural norms that promote corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure (Gracia et al., 2020). Additionally, religious institutions have historically

been implicated in cases of physical abuse, particularly within Catholic and Anglican settings, where discipline was enforced through harsh physical means (Fleming et al., 2023). Furthermore, physical abuse has been linked to severe psychological distress, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and suicidal tendencies in adulthood (Strathearn et al., 2020). In conflict and disaster settings, the prevalence of physical abuse increases as societal structures break down, leaving children more vulnerable to violence from caregivers and community members (Seddighi et al., 2021).

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse encompasses any act that involves forcing or coercing a child into sexual activities, including molestation, rape, and exploitation through pornography (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Research has demonstrated that religious institutions have been complicit in covering up cases of sexual abuse, particularly within the Catholic and Anglican churches, leading to long-term trauma for victims (Macfarlane, 2021). Moreover, systematic reviews indicate that child sexual abuse is a global crisis with deep psychological consequences, including anxiety disorders, self-harm, and difficulties in forming relationships (Brunton & Dryer, 2021). Cases of clergy sexual abuse in Italy and France have shown that institutional denial and lack of accountability further exacerbate the suffering of victims (Marotta, 2021). Additionally, community responses to sexual abuse have been inconsistent, with many survivors facing stigma and rejection rather than support and justice (Beste, 2021).

Emotional abuse: Emotional abuse involves behaviors that harm a child's self-esteem, including verbal insults, humiliation, and persistent threats (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Scholars argue that emotional abuse is often overlooked despite its severe long-term effects, including increased risks of anxiety and depressive disorders (Strathearn et al., 2020). Religious teachings have sometimes contributed to emotional abuse by instilling fear and guilt in children through extreme doctrines (Levering, 2021). In Uganda, emotional abuse cases increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, as economic hardships and confinement led to heightened parental stress and aggression (Sserwanja et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies suggest that emotional abuse is strongly correlated with later-life difficulties, including low self-confidence and challenges in social interactions (McGuire & London, 2020).

Neglect: Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, education, and healthcare (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Research indicates that poverty is a significant driver of child neglect, with economically disadvantaged families struggling to meet their children's needs (Bywaters et al., 2022). Moreover, institutional neglect has been observed in religious settings where children in church-run orphanages have suffered from inadequate care and supervision (Schickendantz, 2024). In post-conflict regions such as Northern Uganda, neglect is prevalent due to the destruction of family structures, leaving children without proper guardianship (Natukunda et al., 2021). Furthermore, street children in Ugandan cities face extreme neglect, with the church playing a limited role in addressing their plight (Aisu, 2022).

1.10.3 Causes of child abuse

Poverty and economic hardship: Poverty is a significant cause of child abuse as it creates stressors that increase parental frustration and aggression (Bywaters et al., 2022). Families experiencing financial insecurity may struggle to meet basic needs, leading to neglect and other forms of abuse (Gracia et al., 2020). Additionally, economic hardship limits access to proper housing and healthcare, which exacerbates child maltreatment (Sserwanja et al., 2021). Research shows that children in low-income households are at higher risk of experiencing physical and emotional abuse due to financial strain (Debowska et al., 2024).

Parental substance abuse: Substance abuse among caregivers is strongly linked to child abuse, as it impairs judgment and increases violent tendencies (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Parents or guardians struggling with drug or alcohol addiction often exhibit erratic behavior, which may lead to neglect or physical violence against children (Fleming et al., 2023). Studies have shown that substance-abusing parents are less emotionally available and more likely to engage in abusive disciplinary practices (Levering, 2021). Furthermore, children in households with substance-abusing caregivers face increased exposure to unsafe environments, which exacerbates the risk of abuse (Beste, 2021).

Family dysfunction and domestic violence: Family dysfunction, including domestic violence, contributes significantly to child abuse as children often become direct or indirect victims of violent household dynamics (Natukunda et al., 2021). Exposure to domestic violence normalizes aggression, leading to intergenerational cycles of abuse (Schickendantz, 2024). Studies highlight

that abusive environments create psychological distress in children, increasing the likelihood of emotional and physical maltreatment (McGuire & London, 2020). Additionally, family instability due to parental separation or conflict increases children's vulnerability to neglect and abuse (Macfarlane, 2021).

Cultural and religious beliefs: Cultural and religious beliefs sometimes justify abusive practices, particularly in disciplining children (Kpalam, 2023). In some societies, corporal punishment is widely accepted as a means of instilling discipline, despite evidence showing its harmful effects (Marotta, 2021). Religious institutions have also faced scrutiny for failing to address child abuse cases effectively, thereby perpetuating harmful practices (Aisu, 2022). Furthermore, rigid cultural norms regarding obedience and hierarchy in families can create environments where child maltreatment goes unchallenged (Seddighi et al., 2021).

Parental mental health issues: Mental health disorders among caregivers significantly contribute to child abuse, as they affect parenting abilities and emotional regulation (Strathearn et al., 2020). Parents suffering from untreated mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety may struggle to provide emotional support, leading to neglect and psychological abuse (Brunton & Dryer, 2021). Research indicates that children of parents with mental health disorders are at a higher risk of experiencing inconsistent care and exposure to aggressive behaviors (Satinsky et al., 2021). Additionally, the lack of adequate mental health interventions for struggling parents exacerbates child maltreatment (Seddighi et al., 2021).

Natural disasters and armed conflicts: Child abuse often increases during natural disasters and conflicts due to heightened stress and instability (Seddighi et al., 2021). Displacement, loss of parental care, and economic hardships during crises contribute to child neglect and exploitation (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Research shows that children in conflict-affected regions face increased risks of physical and sexual abuse due to weakened protective structures (Schickendantz, 2024). Furthermore, limited access to social services during disasters exacerbates vulnerabilities, leading to higher incidences of child maltreatment (McGuire & London, 2020).

1.10.4 Strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse

Implementing comprehensive child protection policies: The Church must establish and enforce comprehensive child protection policies that outline strict guidelines on preventing and addressing child abuse (Fleming, James, Keenan, & Zollner, 2023). These policies should be rooted in transparency, accountability, and zero tolerance for abuse (Schickendantz, 2024). Moreover, leveraging international best practices on child protection can ensure that church institutions prioritize the safety of children (Marotta, 2021). The integration of these policies with legal frameworks is essential to prevent loopholes in accountability (Levering, 2021).

Training and educating clergy and congregants: Training church leaders and congregants on recognizing and responding to child abuse is crucial in fostering a protective environment (Beste, 2021). Many cases of child abuse persist due to ignorance and a lack of awareness about the signs of maltreatment (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Through structured training programs, clergy and laity can become proactive in identifying and preventing abuse (Brunton & Dryer, 2021). Additionally, regular workshops can equip church members with skills to support victims and ensure appropriate interventions (Macfarlane, 2021).

Encouraging open disclosure and reporting mechanisms: Establishing safe and confidential reporting mechanisms can encourage victims and witnesses to disclose cases of abuse (McGuire & London, 2020). Many abuse survivors remain silent due to fear of stigma and retaliation (Natukunda et al., 2021). Churches can create anonymous reporting systems and designate trained personnel to handle cases with sensitivity (Sserwanja, Kawuki, & Kim, 2021). Furthermore, partnerships with legal institutions and child welfare organizations can facilitate swift and effective action (Bywaters et al., 2022).

Providing psychological and spiritual support for survivors: Victims of child abuse often suffer from long-term psychological and emotional trauma that requires professional intervention (Strathearn et al., 2020). The Church can play a pivotal role in offering counseling services and spiritual guidance to help survivors heal (Satinsky et al., 2021). Integrating theological perspectives with evidence-based psychological support can ensure holistic healing (Seddighi, Salmani, Javadi, & Seddighi, 2021). Additionally, the Church should advocate for community

support groups where survivors can share their experiences and find solidarity (Debowska et al., 2024).

Strengthening community engagement and child welfare programs: Churches can actively participate in community-based initiatives that address child abuse through advocacy and intervention programs (Kpalam, 2023). By collaborating with government agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Church can amplify its impact in safeguarding children (Aisu, 2022). Community outreach programs, such as parenting workshops and child welfare awareness campaigns, can further prevent abuse (Gracia, Rodriguez, Martín-Fernández, & Lila, 2020). Strengthening ties with educational institutions can also provide a supportive network for vulnerable children (Seddighi et al., 2021).

Reforming church structures and leadership accountability: One of the critical steps in eradicating child abuse within the Church is ensuring leadership accountability (Schickendantz, 2024). Historical cases of abuse have often been exacerbated by cover-ups and lack of transparency in handling allegations (Marotta, 2021). Implementing independent review boards to oversee abuse cases can enhance credibility and justice (Macfarlane, 2021). Furthermore, introducing periodic audits and external evaluations of church institutions can help maintain a culture of accountability (Levering, 2021).

Promoting ethical theology and moral responsibility: The Church must emphasize ethical theology that upholds the dignity and rights of children (Fleming et al., 2023). Addressing harmful theological interpretations that justify or ignore abuse is necessary for systemic change (Beste, 2021). Clergy members should be trained in moral theology that prioritizes the protection of the vulnerable (McCoy & Keen, 2022). The integration of social justice teachings into sermons and pastoral care can further reinforce the Church's commitment to ending child abuse (Brunton & Dryer, 2021).

1.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, child abuse is a multifaceted issue that includes physical, emotional, and sexual maltreatment, as well as neglect, with profound consequences on a child's psychological and social well-being. Scholars highlight that abuse is often rooted in cultural, social, and economic

structures, with religious institutions both perpetuating and addressing the issue. Various forms of abuse physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect are linked to severe mental health disorders, developmental impairments, and long-term trauma. The church has a significant role in combating abuse through comprehensive child protection policies, training clergy and congregants, and implementing effective reporting mechanisms to support victims. This chapter therefore forms basis for the next chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

FORMS OF CHILD ABUSE PREVALENT IN KISOJO ARCHDEACONRY

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of analysis that has been done to look at the demographic characteristics and the first specific objectives of the study and in relation to the reviewed literature. The study was carried out using questionnaires with 100 registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry, and interviews with the key informants who are clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese. The findings are presented with the help of tables for purposes of clarity and interpretation on the first objective which is about the forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry.

2.1 Findings on demographic characteristics of respondents

This section presents the general background information about the respondents in relation to their gender, age and highest level of education of the registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry.

In this study, majority of the registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry are female, accounting for 63.0% of the total sample, whereas 37.0% of the respondents are male. This shows that women made up a significant portion of the registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry who participated in the study.

In terms of age distribution, the highest number of the respondents represented by 33.0% is aged 30-39 years. This is followed by those in the 18-29 years age bracket, who constituted 28.0%. Respondents aged 40–49 years formed 24.0%, while those aged 50 years and above represented the smallest group at 15.0%. These findings suggest that the majority of participants were youthful to middle-aged adults.

Regarding educational attainment, the largest group of respondents fell under the "Others" category, representing 32.0% of the sample and these included those with no formal education and those with higher qualifications like Masters and post graduate diploma. This was closely followed by those with a Bachelor's degree at 30.0%. Respondents with a Diploma accounted for

26.0%, while those holding a Certificate constituted the smallest proportion at 12.0%. These results indicate a relatively diverse educational background among the respondents, with a notable presence of individuals with higher education.

2.2 The forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry

From the interviews conducted with the Christians from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on the common forms of child abuse reported in this community and their responses were as follows;

The findings from the study reveal that various forms of child abuse are perceived to be prevalent among Christian communities in Kisojo Archdeaconry. Physical punishment emerged as a commonly accepted method of disciplining children, with many respondents explaining that corporal discipline is often viewed as a normal and culturally justified practice within households. This widespread acceptance suggests that physical punishment is rarely questioned, even when it results in harm to children, thereby reinforcing cycles of violence under the guise of discipline.

Emotional abuse was also identified as a significant concern. Respondents frequently mentioned experiences of children being subjected to constant criticism, humiliation, and harsh treatment by caregivers and authority figures. Such practices were described as deeply rooted in family and community interactions, with limited awareness of their long-term psychological impact on children. This indicates that emotional abuse is often overlooked or minimized, despite its damaging effects on children's self-worth and emotional development.

The study further revealed that child neglect remains a serious issue in Kisojo Archdeaconry. Participants highlighted situations where children lack adequate food, shelter, healthcare, and access to education. These forms of neglect were commonly linked to poverty, family instability, and limited parental capacity, suggesting that socioeconomic pressures significantly undermine caregivers' ability to meet children's basic needs.

Child labor was another form of abuse frequently mentioned by respondents. Many explained that children are often involved in income-generating activities or excessive domestic work, sometimes at the expense of schooling. This practice was largely attributed to household

economic hardship and the perception that children must contribute to family survival, even when such responsibilities expose them to exploitation and deny them their right to education and rest.

Sexual abuse of children was described as a growing and deeply troubling concern within the community. Respondents noted that although such cases are increasingly recognized, they are often surrounded by silence, fear, and stigma. Cultural taboos, fear of shame, and weak reporting mechanisms were said to discourage disclosure, leaving many cases unresolved and victims unprotected.

Verbal abuse, including shouting, insults, and the use of degrading language, was also reported as common in homes. Respondents explained that such behavior is frequently normalized as part of child upbringing, yet it contributes to emotional distress and strained parent-child relationships. This reflects a broader challenge of negative communication patterns within families.

Regarding community response, views were mixed. While some respondents believed that the Christian community attempts to address child abuse through church leaders and local structures, others felt that responses are inconsistent and sometimes inadequate. This suggests gaps in enforcement, follow-up, and coordinated child protection efforts, pointing to the need for stronger church-led advocacy and community sensitization. Some of the selected respondents reported that;

“.....Many parents believe beating a child is the only way they can learn, even when the child is clearly hurt.....” **Christian**

“.....Some cases of abuse are known, but people fear to speak out because they do not want to bring shame to their families or the church.....” **Christian**

2.3 Most common forms of child abuse reported in Kisojo Archdeaconry

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on the most common forms of child abuse reported in this community and their responses were as follows;

The key informants interviewed in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese revealed that physical abuse remains one of the most common forms of child maltreatment reported in the community. Many children are subjected to corporal punishment at home and in some informal educational settings, often justified as a form of discipline. Respondents highlighted that some parents and guardians use excessive force such as beating with sticks, slapping, and other physical means, which leave children injured and traumatized. This practice, though culturally ingrained, is widely acknowledged by local leaders and religious authorities as harmful and needing urgent attention through sensitization and alternative parenting approaches.

In addition to physical abuse, emotional and verbal abuses were frequently cited. Key informants noted that many children endure constant insults, threats, and humiliation from caregivers, often being labeled as “useless” or compared negatively to others. This emotional mistreatment affects their self-esteem and mental well-being. According to the informants, children exposed to such emotional neglect often develop withdrawn behaviors and lack confidence, which affects their academic and social development. It was observed that these forms of abuse are subtle and often go unnoticed but have long-lasting impacts on the children’s psychological health.

Another commonly reported form of abuse identified by the key informants is child neglect and child labor. Many children in the area are left unattended for long hours or are burdened with adult responsibilities, including working in gardens, fetching water over long distances, or engaging in petty trade to support household income. Some children also miss school due to domestic chores or economic hardship. These conditions, according to both the police and clergy, expose children to exploitation and deny them the right to education, play, and adequate care. The informants stressed the need for the Church and other stakeholders to collaborate in sensitizing the community and providing support to vulnerable families. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

“.....You’ll find a child of just eight years carrying firewood over long distances or being beaten for not completing house chores. It’s normalized, but it’s abuse.....” **Local Council Leader**

“.....Many parents don’t realize that constantly shouting at and demeaning a child can be just as damaging as a slap. These words break children silently.....” **Clergy**

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study discovered that abuse of children is widespread in Kisojo Archdeaconry, with the majority of children suffering various types such as physical punishment, emotional abuse, child labor, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. These abuses are normally validated by belief systems or poverty but they have long-term effects on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of children. Despite the initiatives at the community level towards addressing child abuse, the presence of harmful practices and inadequate intervention mechanisms hint at a need for a further awareness-raising and insistent sensitization, especially through religious efforts that cut across cultural norms and economic pressures.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN WAYS OF PARENTING TO PREVENT THE PREVALENCE OF CHILD ABUSE IN KISOJO ARCHDEACONRY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of analysis of the findings on the response on how Christian parenting can be used to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry. This was based on the findings from the questionnaires distributed to 100 registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry, and interviews conducted with the key informants who are clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese. The findings are presented below for purposes of clarity and interpretation.

3.1 Christian ways of parenting in Kisojo

From the interviews conducted with the Christians from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on how Christian parenting can be used to prevent prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo and their responses were as follows;

The qualitative findings indicate that Christian parenting is widely perceived as an important approach to preventing child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry. Respondents consistently emphasized that Christian teachings promote discipline grounded in love, care, and guidance rather than violence. Parenting informed by biblical values was described as encouraging patience, self-control, forgiveness, and understanding, which helps parents correct children without resorting to harsh physical punishment. Many participants noted that when parents internalize Christian teachings, they are more likely to view children as gifts from God who deserve protection and nurturing.

The study further revealed that parents who actively live out Christian principles in their daily lives are perceived to be less likely to mistreat their children. Respondents explained that faith commitment shapes attitudes and behavior, making parents more conscious of their moral responsibility toward children. Biblical teachings were frequently mentioned as helping parents appreciate the importance of nurturing, guiding, and safeguarding children's physical, emotional,

and spiritual wellbeing. Scripture was viewed as a moral reference point that discourages neglect, abuse, and humiliation of children.

In addition, regular participation in church life was highlighted as influencing positive parenting practices. Church attendance exposes parents to sermons, teachings, and fellowship that reinforce values such as compassion, respect, and responsibility. Respondents explained that interaction with fellow Christians also provides opportunities for learning from positive role models and receiving encouragement to adopt non-violent parenting methods. However, some participants observed that not all church members consistently translate church teachings into daily parenting practices, especially when cultural norms or economic pressures intervene.

The findings also show strong appreciation for Christian-based parenting programs. Respondents expressed the view that structured parenting seminars, workshops, and fellowships organized by the church can equip parents with practical skills for raising children in loving and non-abusive ways. Such programs were seen as especially important in addressing harmful cultural beliefs that justify violence as discipline. Participants noted that when parents are taught alternative methods of discipline grounded in Christian values, family environments tend to become safer and more supportive.

Lastly, the church was widely regarded as a key source of guidance and support for parents. Respondents acknowledged the church's role in offering counseling, spiritual guidance, and moral instruction on child upbringing. The church was seen as a trusted institution capable of shaping attitudes toward parenting and promoting child protection. Overall, the qualitative findings suggest that Christian parenting, when actively practiced and supported through church structures, plays a significant role in reducing the risk of child abuse and fostering healthy family environments in Kisojo Archdeaconry. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

“.....When parents truly follow Christian teachings, they learn to discipline with love and patience, not anger, and this helps children grow without fear.....” **Christian**

“.....The church has helped many parents understand that beating a child is not the only way to correct them; biblical teaching shows us better and loving ways to raise our children.....” **Christian**

3.2 Christian teachings help parents raise their children without abuse

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on how Christian teachings help parents raise their children without abuse and their responses were as follows;

Christian teachings are viewed by many key informants as a fundamental guide to nurturing children with love, patience, and understanding. The respondents emphasized that Biblical principles promote the dignity and worth of every child, encouraging parents to correct their children with gentleness rather than violence. Scriptures such as Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:4 were cited as key teachings that instruct parents to guide children in righteousness without provoking or harming them. Through sermons, Bible study sessions, and Sunday school programs, parents are continually reminded of their divine responsibility to raise children in a godly and non-abusive manner.

Additionally, Christian teachings offer a moral framework that helps parents manage anger and frustration through prayer, forgiveness, and self-control. Respondents explained that regular engagement with the Word of God encourages introspection and spiritual maturity, which positively influences parenting behavior. Teachings on love, humility, and stewardship help parents view their children as gifts from God who should be nurtured rather than punished harshly. Moreover, when parents are part of an active church community, they are more likely to receive guidance and support in addressing parenting challenges without resorting to abuse.

Furthermore, key informants highlighted that Christian teachings emphasize compassion and empathy, which shape a nurturing home environment. Respondents noted that by modeling Christ-like behavior such as kindness, patience, and grace parents are less likely to engage in emotional or verbal abuse. Churches also offer marriage and parenting workshops grounded in Christian values, which equip families with effective communication and conflict-resolution skills. Overall, the Christian faith serves not only as a spiritual anchor but also as a practical resource for promoting non-violent and supportive parenting practices. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

“.....The Bible reminds us that children are a blessing, not a burden, and this changes how parents treat them.....” **Clergy**

“.....When parents follow Christ’s example of love and patience, there is no room for abuse in the home.....” **Police Officer**

3.3 Role of the church in promoting responsible parenting in Kisojo

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on the role the church plays in promoting responsible parenting in this community and their responses were as follows;

Key informants widely agreed that the church plays a central role in promoting responsible parenting in Kisojo Archdeaconry by acting as both a spiritual guide and a community support system. Through regular preaching, Bible study sessions, and family fellowships, the church teaches Christian values such as love, respect, patience, and discipline without violence. Respondents highlighted that sermons often address parenting topics directly, encouraging parents to embrace godly ways of raising their children. These teachings, they noted, help shift cultural perceptions that might justify harsh or abusive discipline, fostering a more nurturing environment for children.

Furthermore, the church serves as a platform for counseling and mentorship for struggling parents. According to the informants, many churches offer pastoral counseling services where parents can seek advice on handling family-related issues. These sessions provide safe spaces for parents to discuss their struggles and receive both spiritual and emotional support. Churches also organize workshops and seminars on parenting, sometimes in collaboration with NGOs or community leaders, to educate caregivers on child development, communication, and non-violent discipline methods.

In addition to spiritual guidance and counseling, the church is seen as an important advocate for children’s rights and welfare. Respondents noted that the church often works with schools, police, and community leaders to raise awareness about child protection. By using its moral authority, the church can influence public attitudes and encourage collective responsibility for

preventing abuse. Informants emphasized that when the church speaks out against harmful practices and models positive family values, it strengthens the community's commitment to raising children responsibly. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

“.....The church is not just a place of worship, it's where families learn how to live in peace and raise children the right way.....” **Clergy**

“.....Our pastors constantly remind parents to love, guide, and protect their children, not to harm them in the name of discipline.....” **Local Council Leader**

3.4 Challenges that hinder the adoption of Christian-based parenting practices

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on the challenges that hinder the adoption of Christian-based parenting practices and their responses were as follows;

The key informants highlighted that one of the major challenges hindering the adoption of Christian-based parenting practices in Kisojo Archdeaconry is the deep-rooted influence of traditional cultural norms. These norms often promote authoritarian parenting and the use of corporal punishment, which contradicts Christian teachings that emphasize love, patience, and non-violence. Many parents, especially older generations, find it difficult to shift from these cultural practices to more nurturing approaches inspired by scripture. As a result, there is resistance to embracing biblical principles on parenting even within Christian households.

Another challenge identified is the lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of what Christian-based parenting truly entails. According to the respondents, some parents interpret scriptures in isolation or out of context, leading to misuse or misapplication of biblical teachings. Additionally, limited access to training programs or parenting workshops within the church leaves many parents unequipped to apply Christian principles effectively in everyday parenting. The clergy noted that while sermons occasionally touch on parenting, there is a need for more structured and continuous teaching specifically targeting Christian parenting.

Economic hardship was also mentioned as a significant barrier to adopting Christian-based parenting practices. Many parents in the community are overwhelmed by poverty, unemployment, and the stress of meeting basic family needs, which affects their emotional well-being and patience. These conditions often lead to frustration, making it difficult for parents to practice self-control or to consistently apply loving and gentle discipline. Respondents emphasized that without addressing the socio-economic pressures facing families, it is hard to fully implement Christian parenting principles. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

“.....Some parents still believe that beating a child is the only way to show authority, it’s hard to change a mindset that has been passed down for generations.....” **Police Officer**

“.....You can’t expect a hungry and stressed parent to sit down and talk calmly with a child when they are struggling just to survive.....” **Local Council Leader**

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study concludes that Christian parenting is clearly perceived to be a positive influence in combating child abuse as well. Values such as love, patience, kindness, and discipline based on compassion are believed to promote healthy and care-based parent-child relationships. The Church has contributed positively by guiding parents through preaching, counseling, and training programs. However, concerns such as cultural norms favoring rigorous discipline, inadequate information regarding Christian parenting principles, and poverty constraints remain a hindrance to full adoption of the values. Accordingly, there is a need for the Church to provide sustained support, education, and direct interventions that help parents embrace non-abusive, Christ-based parenting.

CHAPTER FOUR

STRATEGIES THE CHURCH CAN ADOPT TO END CHILD ABUSE IN KISOJO ARCHDEACONRY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of analysis of the findings on the response on the strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese. This was based on the findings from the questionnaires distributed to 100 registered Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry, and interviews conducted with the key informants who are clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese. The findings are presented below for purposes of clarity and interpretation.

4.1 Regular sensitization programs to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry

From the interviews conducted with the Christians from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese and their responses were as follows;

The findings from the study indicate that Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry strongly believe that the Church has a central role to play in ending child abuse within the community. Many respondents emphasized the need for the Church to organize regular sensitization programs focused on child rights and child protection. Such programs were viewed as essential for increasing awareness among parents, caregivers, and the wider congregation, particularly in helping community members understand what constitutes child abuse and the long-term harm it causes to children.

The study further revealed that respondents see preaching and teaching by church leaders as a powerful strategy for addressing child abuse. Participants noted that sermons and pastoral teachings can shape moral values, challenge harmful behaviors, and promote positive parenting practices grounded in Christian principles of love, care, and responsibility. This suggests that the pulpit is regarded as an influential platform through which attitudes toward child discipline and treatment can be transformed.

Counseling services within the Church were also highlighted as a critical strategy. Respondents explained that many cases of child abuse are rooted in unresolved family conflicts, stress, and emotional struggles. Strengthening counseling for both parents and children was therefore seen as an important way of providing healing, guidance, and prevention, particularly for families experiencing challenges that may lead to abusive behavior.

In addition, the findings show that Christians in Kisojo Archdeaconry value collaboration between the Church and local authorities in addressing child abuse cases. Respondents expressed the view that the Church should not work in isolation but rather partner with local leaders, probation officers, and law enforcement agencies to ensure that cases of abuse are properly handled, reported, and followed up. Such collaboration was seen as a way of enhancing accountability and protection for vulnerable children.

The introduction of training sessions on biblical parenting was also widely supported. Participants indicated that many parents lack guidance on how to discipline children in ways that align with biblical teachings and respect children's dignity. As a result, structured training within church programs was viewed as an opportunity to promote parenting approaches based on love, patience, and instruction rather than violence.

Furthermore, respondents expressed support for the establishment of child protection committees within the Church. These committees were seen as important structures for monitoring children's welfare, receiving reports of abuse, and linking affected children and families to appropriate support services. Such church-based mechanisms were perceived as a practical way of ensuring that child protection becomes an ongoing responsibility rather than a one-time intervention.

Lastly, the study revealed that Christians believe the Church should actively address harmful cultural practices that contribute to child abuse. Respondents acknowledged that some traditions and social norms can normalize violence or exploitation of children. They therefore emphasized the Church's prophetic role in challenging such practices and guiding the community toward values that uphold the dignity and rights of children. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

“.....When the Church teaches clearly about children’s rights, parents begin to reflect on how they treat their children.....” **Christian**

“.....If the Church works closely with local leaders and authorities, cases of child abuse will no longer be hidden.....” **Christian**

4.2 Counseling services aimed at reducing child abuse in this community

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on the strategies the church can implement to reduce child abuse in this community and their responses were as follows;

The key informants from Kisojo Archdeaconry, including clergy, police officers, and local leaders, highlighted several strategies that the Church can implement to reduce child abuse in the community. One widely emphasized strategy was the need for continuous community sensitization and awareness campaigns led by the Church. These campaigns would aim at educating parents, caregivers, and congregants on child rights, the dangers of abuse, and the biblical principles of love and nurturing. Informants noted that such efforts would shift the community mindset, especially in areas where harsh punishment and neglect are still culturally accepted.

In addition to awareness, key informants proposed that the Church should establish and strengthen counseling services within its programs. These services would offer emotional and spiritual support to both parents and children affected by abuse or family-related challenges. They also recommended the formation of child protection committees within local parishes composed of trained members tasked with identifying, reporting, and following up on child abuse cases. This grassroots approach was seen as an effective way to create accountability and provide early intervention where children are at risk.

Another strategy mentioned was the integration of Christian parenting teachings into sermons, fellowships, and parenting workshops. Informants believed that when Christian values such as compassion, patience, and discipline through love are consistently emphasized, parents are more likely to adopt non-violent methods of child upbringing. Some also called for collaboration

between the Church and civil authorities such as police and community leaders, to ensure reported cases are handled legally and that abusers face consequences. Such partnerships would help bridge gaps between spiritual care and legal protection. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

“.....The Church must become the voice for the voiceless. Teaching about child protection should be part of every sermon, not just a one-time message.....” **Church Elder**

“.....If every parish had a trained team to monitor and respond to abuse, many children would be saved from suffering silently.....” **Local Council Leader**

4.3 Church’s collaboration with local authorities to ensure child protection

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the clergy, police and local leaders from Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, they were asked for their views on how the church can collaborate with local authorities to ensure child protection and their responses were as follows;

The key informants across Kisojo Archdeaconry emphasized that effective child protection requires a strong partnership between the Church and local authorities. They suggested that the Church can collaborate with the police, community development officers, and local councils to create a referral and reporting system for child abuse cases. Informants noted that clergy and church leaders are often the first to be confided in when abuse occurs, so equipping them with the right knowledge and linking them directly to local authorities would improve timely interventions and legal follow-up.

Another key point raised was the importance of joint community sensitization programs. Informants recommended that the Church and local authorities conduct regular joint outreach sessions in villages, schools, and worship gatherings to educate the public on children's rights, reporting channels, and the consequences of abuse. These collaborative efforts would combine the moral authority of the Church with the legal mandate of the state, making the message more effective and widely accepted. Informants emphasized that both institutions must speak with one voice on protecting children.

Additionally, informants encouraged capacity-building workshops where local leaders, law enforcement, and clergy come together to share experiences, align their strategies, and undergo joint training on child protection protocols. They noted that such collaboration would foster trust, improve case management, and reduce duplication of efforts. By sharing responsibilities and information, both the Church and authorities would be better positioned to identify and support at-risk children and families in the community. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

“.....The Church cannot work alone in ending child abuse. We need to build bridges with the police and local leaders to make sure every child is protected.....” **Local Leader**

“.....When pastors and police speak the same language on child rights, the community listens. That’s how we create change.....” **Clergy**

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the results show a very strong support for the Church having an active role in the protection of children and prevention of child abuse. Church-led interventions such as campaigns, collaboration with local authorities, formation of child protection committees, and integration of parenting education into church programming are deemed vital. The people recognize the Church as not only a religious guide but also as a trusted institution, capable of initiating positive social reform. Through a collaborative effort that brings both moral direction and grassroots action, the Church is capable of leading the task of ensuring a safe and nurturing atmosphere for every child in Kisojo Archdeaconry.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a detailed theoretical reflection on the effectiveness of the retirement health policy in the Province of the Church of Uganda, Soroti Diocese. This theological reflection is discussed below as follows;

5.1 The *Imago Dei* and the dignity of the child

At the heart of Christian theology is the *Imago Dei* doctrine the doctrine that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). This truth does not belong to adults or the powerful, but to children as much as to any other group. It speaks to the intrinsic dignity, worth, and value of every child, irrespective of age, status, or capability. The *Imago Dei* is not attained; it is bestowed upon us by God in creation. This theology demands that children be treated by society as bearers of divine image and the objects of divine love, not as commodities of control or economic gain. To assault a child physically, emotionally, sexually, or through neglect is not only an attack on human rights but a profaning of that divine image.

When child abuse occurs, it is usually explained socially, psychologically, or legally. Theologically, however, it is a profanation of morality and of the spirit as well. It undermines the image of God in the child and ruins the holy trust placed on caregivers and societies. Abuse is sin that dishonors God by demeaning His work. In Christian ethics, to fail to respect and care for those in the image of God is to sin against God and neighbor. The child abuse must thus be viewed not only as a crisis in a community but as a theological outrage. It distorts relationships, denies love, and mocks the very nature of God, who is relational, caring, and righteous.

James E. Loder, writing in *The Transforming Moment* (1989), proposes that the human spirit, especially one formed in vulnerability, is where the Spirit of God works most powerfully. He contends that revolutionary learning and spiritual development have a tendency to burst forth in an atmosphere of trust, care, and respect for one another. Here, children are not just vulnerability but spiritual potential. By sanctifying and protecting the child, we provide the gateway for the

Spirit of God to work. Conversely, when a child is desecrated by abuse, the gateway for spiritual and emotional development is closed. The theological implication is that the protection of the child is religiously mandated which allows for divine transformation.

From the African theological view, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and other scholars highlight the spiritual and communal importance of bringing up children. According to Oduyoye (2001), African values, if equated with biblical principles, require attention and celebration of children as human treasures to the future and spiritual health of the community. However, she also cautions against cultural habits of continuing abuse, such as excessive corporal punishment or child labor, which go against the Christian principle to love and care. African theologies that affirm the child as gift from God must resist any such tradition however entrenched that denies the child's full humanity. As such, African Christian communities are encouraged to reassert and redefine parenting cultural practices in the light of *Imago Dei*.

The *Imago Dei* of children also involves a moral and pastoral duty. It obliges the Church, families, and institutions to construct a world that loves, protects, and shapes children. The Church must lead in modeling non-violent parenting, children's rights promotion, and constructing a community of love and responsibility. Theologically, to defend the dignity of a child is to honor God. This vision calls for a hearts and structures change that allows abuse. It calls the faithful to repent of complacency and to be acting agents of healing, justice, and peace. Theology is then no longer just an intellectual activity but a working ethic that enshrines the holiness of every child.

5.2 The role of the church as a redemptive community

The Church, in Christian theology, is more than a religious structure or temple it is a *koinonia*, a communion of believers bound together in the love and work of Christ. This communion is called upon to reflect the character of the Kingdom of God, where justice, compassion, and human dignity are upheld. Under the background of Kisojo Archdeaconry, where child abuse has been proven in all aspects of physical, emotional, neglect, labor, and sexual, the Church must not only play the role of being a moral institution but that of a redemptive community. Theologically, the Church is called to offer hope, healing, and restoration to the wounded, especially to children whose vulnerability necessitates additional protection.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's community theology in *Life Together* (1937) provides a promising solution to grasping the redemptive mission of the Church. According to him, Christian community has to be a setting where the suffering is neither avoided nor belittled but instead suffered together in the love of Christ. In such a society as Kisojo, where children can harm silently or behind doors, the Church is challenged to be a listening, loving body that actively takes up the oppressing burdens. The Church must be perceived in its solidarity with the oppressed and actively laboring to have safe space in which pain can be acknowledged, labored through, and healed in Christian love.

This servant calling is likewise expressed in the diaconal vocation of the Church's ministry of service. As Christ came "not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45), so the Church needs to serve the most needy. Providing counseling services, pastoral care, and spiritual counseling to child abuse victims and perpetrators is one such manifestation of this servant theology. The Church was mentioned by respondents in Kisojo Archdeaconry as one of the potential sources of counseling and emotional healing. Not only does this heal the psychological and spiritual wounds caused by abuse but it solidifies the Church as a shepherd who mends the broken and restores them to new life and restoration.

Additionally, liberation theology, particularly in the form promulgated by theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, takes the mission of the Church beyond charity to prophetic witness. Liberation theology teaches that God favors the poor and victimized, and that victimized children are among them. It also challenges the Church to confront the structures whether cultural, economic, or legal that keep perpetuating violence. Against this backdrop, the Church in Kisojo is not only called upon to bring about individual healing but also to work towards structural change: ending unjust parenting traditions, advocating for improved safeguards, and holding accountable those in charge. In this, the Church is a vehicle of liberation that brought about God's justice and compassion.

Lastly, the redemptive work of the Church must be holistic. It must include preaching against abuse from the pulpit, equipping families with biblical family templates, collaboration with local authorities and leaders, and giving shelter and justice to the abused children. This is in line with Christ God's incarnational theology of entering human suffering in a bid to offer salvation. In

like manner, the Church must enter into the suffering of abused children, the feet and hands of Christ in a broken world. The call of the Church is not only to uncover darkness but to dispel light, not only to condemn sin but to bring healing and reconciliation. As it does this, it becomes a redemptive community manifesting the compassion, justice, and redemptive love of God.

5.3 Jesus' preferential option for the child

Jesus' handling of children during His earthly ministry represents a radical reordering of social priorities. In a cultural context where children were often viewed as peripheral, if not irrelevant, to the primary agendas of society, Jesus placed them at the center of the Kingdom agenda. His words in Mark 10:14 "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" are not a sentimental gesture but a profound theological move. The action is a mirror of divine priority and inclusion, in which the vulnerable are not just included, but cherished as examples of the Kingdom. Then Jesus' acceptance of the children becomes a spiritual imperative for the Church to follow in doing the same, especially in cultures such as Kisojo where abandonment and abuse still persist.

This preferential option for children challenges the Church to action. Theologically, it is not enough to respond to child abuse as a social issue alone; it must be responded to as a theological crisis. To abuse or fail to protect a child is, in a real sense, to reject Christ Himself, who closely identified with the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40). In this sense, the Church's silence or inaction amounts to complicity. The Church is therefore compelled to be a voice of advocacy and protection, taking a cue from Jesus' practice of welcoming and blessing children. This theological stance demands that children be placed at the forefront of Christian mission and ministry not on the periphery, but at the center.

The writings of Moltmann (2001), especially *The Spirit of Life*, provide a deeper pneumatological foundation for such a view. Moltmann emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is present in weakness, pain, and at the margins of society. In this respect, children who are often in situations of powerlessness are not just objects of ministry, but subjects through which the divine is disclosed. This reframing faces the Church with the reality that its own relationship with God is linked directly to its treatment of children. Moltmann's theology renders the Church spiritually

aware of the cries of abused children, realizing that their suffering contains the latent presence of the Spirit of God, crying for justice and restoration.

Furthermore, Jesus' words and deeds suggest a radical reversal of social hierarchies. Children, who are typically last in social line, are brought to the head of the line in the Kingdom of God. Such reversal compels the Church to reorder its structures and priorities accordingly. In the Archdeaconry of Kisojo, where studies have demonstrated endemic patterns of abuse, the Church must rethink its programmes, preaching, and pastoral priorities so that children's rights and needs no longer take a back seat but become the central concern. Parenting programmes in churches, child-friendly worship, and secure reporting systems for abuse are not just practical solutions they are sacramental acts that honour the divine image in children.

In brief, Jesus' preferential option for children presents a clear theological imperative to the Church. The vulnerability of children is not a reason for their neglect, but a reason for their priority in the Church's mission. The call to "let the children come" is a call to remove all forms of hindrance abuse, neglect, silence, and oppressive tradition that would keep them from flourishing. In so doing, the Church is not merely protecting children but is living out the Kingdom ethic in its most authentic form. The challenge for the Church in Kisojo and beyond is to be earnest about this theological truth, to allow it not merely to inform its pastoral ministry but also its prophetic witness in the world.

5.4 Christian parenting and discipleship ethics

Christian parenting, viewed theologically, transcends the normal goals of obedience and discipline into the sacred calling of spiritual development. Christian parenting, at its core, is discipling the child to a relationship with God which shapes their identity, conduct, and worldview based on the life and teaching of Christ. Ephesians 6:4, in which parents are commanded to rear their children in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord," assumes an atmosphere of love, kindness, and guidance, not of fear or intimidation. This verse challenges parents to show the nature of Christ in their daily interactions with their children. It becomes clear, then, that Christian parenting cannot be founded on authoritarianism or violence, but on grace-filled formation as a reflection of God's own fatherly affection.

In *A Community of Character*, Stanley Hauerwas is adamant that Christian ethics are lived out in the life of a community centered on Christ's narrative, and this would include the family, where parents are challenged to live out virtues such as gentleness, humility, patience, and faithfulness. For Hauerwas, the family is a microcosm of the Church a community where character is not formed by domination but by example and shared life. Parenting that uses physical or emotional abuse then is not merely ethically deficient; it is antithetical to the very nature of Christian discipleship. Such abuse undermines the child's understanding of God's love and can lead to spiritual confusion, fear, or alienation from faith.

Also, Christian parenting aligns with the theologically expanded vision of the child as another pilgrim on the pilgrimage of faith. The parent is not merely a caretaker but a spiritual mentor who does the same for the child by means of instruction, example, and prayer. This discipleship model of parenting honors the dignity and agency of the child, recognizing that children, just like adults, have the Holy Spirit working in them. Under this vision, discipline is a work of redemption correction and not punishment for the sake of punishment. It requires discernment, compassion, and endurance with the long process of character development. Theologically, such parenting is part of the greater work of sanctification molding the child into the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

Moreover, by bringing up a child in Christian virtues, parents do not merely contribute to the child's prosperity but that of the wider ecclesial and society community. The child brought up in love, patience, and respect grows up to be an adult who can similarly impart those virtues on others. In the Kisojo Archdeaconry where child abuse is purported to be prevalent, this vision of Christian parenting is a revolutionary option a call for the Church to reimagine parenting not as power but as spiritual obligation. The Church must instruct, demonstrate, and empower this ethic in sermons, workshops, and pastoral care, Christian parenting emerging as an actualization of the Gospel in word and deed.

5.5 Prophetic witness against cultural harm

The majority of the cases of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry are deeply rooted in cultural practices that have gone mostly unchallenged. Practices such as wide application of corporal punishment, emotional humiliation, and economic exploitation of children through child labor

are generally valid under the disguise of "discipline" or "assuming responsibility." These norms, although culturally dominant, are polar opposites to life-promoting values of the Gospel. Although culture is essential to human identity and social cohesion, it is not perfect. Theologically speaking, all cultures are to be judged on the basis of the redemptive and liberating teaching of Christ. Since culture is a human construct, it can reflect divine wisdom and also act against justice. Thus, the Church must be a prophetic voice that can distinguish between traditions that give life and those diminishing the image of God among the vulnerable, especially children.

The prophetic tradition in the Bible and Christian theology gives intelligibility to this critical role. Just as the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, Amos, and Micah, condemned social injustices irrevocably woven into the religious and cultural life of Israel, so the Church today must condemn those cultural norms that lead to oppression and abuse. The Church can no longer remain mute or complicit in deference to cultural preservation. Instead, it must speak boldly, based in the authority of Scripture and the mandate of Christ to advocate for "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40). This is not about judgment but about calling to repentance, rebirth, and re-establishing God's justice.

African theologians such as Mbiti (1973, p.35), in celebrating the communal and interdependent nature of African societies, also caution against sentimentalization of all customary values. Mbiti acknowledges that while there is a very strong sense of belongingness and group responsibility in African culture, it is also vulnerable to abusive practices against women, children, and other dependent groups. From this perspective, the Church's double mandate is to affirm expressions of culture that enhance human dignity, and to transform those which debase it. In the Kisojo context, that means to speak out against beliefs which make beating children or withholding love as a form of punishment acceptable, and to replace these with a child theology of care, formation, and divinely given worth.

As prophetic and pastoral, the Church will have to walk with the community even while calling the community to transformation. This involves extending pastoral care and intervention to poor households that have been traumatized and become enmeshed in cycles of abuse generations forward as well as educating church members on biblical alternatives to abusive customs. Church

leaders must lead by example by integrating prophetic preaching into homilies, by public dialogue on the rights of the child, and alliance with social services to present practicable alternatives. In this way, the Church fulfills its vocation as a redemptive community, one that turns the world upside down not with criticism, but with a vision of the Kingdom in which children are secure, cherished, and allowed to develop.

5.6 The sacramental life and the holistic child

The Church's sacramental life, and especially sacraments like baptism, confirmation, and Holy Communion, offers a theological imagination that affirms children's dignity and spiritual agency. In the sacrament of baptism, for instance, the Church publicly declares that a child belongs not just to a biological family but to the larger Body of Christ. That is a declaration that is not metaphorical but one that is accompanied by a sacred obligation. When a child is baptized, the entire Church community is called to take shared responsibility for the child's spiritual growth, physical well-being, and emotional safety. The sacrament renders the Church a covenant partner with a lifelong commitment to nurture, protect, and walk with the child. The abuse or neglect of a baptized child, therefore, is a serious breach of this covenant and calls for both repentance and renewal on the part of the Church's own membership.

Rowan Williams, in *Lost Icons* (2000), strongly laments the erosion by contemporary culture of the sacredness of childhood, in which children are reduced to economic dependents, passive learners, or even commodities within power systems. Williams summons the Church to recover a deeper theological imagination one that sees children not as future adults or burdens, but as icons of God's presence in the world. In the context of Kisojo Archdeaconry, where children are constantly exposed to violence and emotional harm, this call becomes urgent. The sacramental worldview reminds the Church that every child is "holy ground," deserving of reverence and care. Any physical violence or emotional harm is not just a social injustice but also a spiritual desecration a defilement of what is dedicated to God.

Furthermore, sacramental theology's integrative character pushes the Church not only to ritual care but to action that is expressive of the ritual meaning. If baptism is new life and belonging, then the Church must ask: what are the family patterns, social structures, and communal systems that support or threaten that life? Holistic child protection cannot be an add-on to Christian

ministry it must be at the heart. The sacramental life compels churches to examine their programs, teachings, and community activities to ensure that they are promoting life in abundance (John 10:10). They include the provision of safe environments for children, spiritual and emotional nurturing, and advocacy for their rights in both the ecclesial and civil domains.

In this sacramental world, protection is an act of worship a living expression of our awe before the presence of God in the least of our brothers and sisters. The Church cannot divorce its Sunday worship from its weekday work. If children are indeed received into the Kingdom of God, as Jesus taught, then every sermon, pastoral visit, and community outreach must be permeated by an impassioned concern for their welfare. Sacraments do not merely symbolize God's grace; they initiate moral responsibility. In the life of the Church, every baptized child is both a pastoral priority and a theological fact one whose protection and integral growth must echo the nurturing, saving love of Christ Himself.

5.7 The eschatological hope and the restoration of childhood

The Christian narrative finds its culmination in an eschatological promise: a future where all brokenness is made whole, all injustices are rectified, and all creation is restored to the fullness of God's Kingdom (Revelation 21:5). This theological horizon provides profound comfort and empowerment in settings sullied by child abuse like Kisojo Archdeaconry. For children who have been wounded physically, emotionally, or spiritually the promise that "all things will be made new" is not a nebulous expectation but a profoundly personal promise that they are noticed by God and their hurt will not have the last word. The eschatological vision therefore supports the Church's testimony to healing and justice in the present, in the light of restoration yet to come, promised by God.

Here, the Church's role is not only defensive but also redemptive. Theological hope calls for action it encourages the community to be a foretaste of the Kingdom by establishing concrete means of healing. These include trauma-informed ministries that restore the emotional trauma caused by abuse, and safe spaces where children can tell their stories without shame or fear. It also entails encouraging restorative justice approaches that aim at reconciliation rather than excusing harm. Forgiveness can be part of the healing process, where safe and possible, but

never coerced or used to cover up injustice. Instead, the Church must tread carefully with survivors, providing them with space, dignity, and care as they regain their lives.

Miroslav Volf, in his book *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996), imagines a community built not on fences of terror but on outstretched arms of welcome. He insists that God's grace is the foundation for human inclusion, especially for that which society has excluded. For sexually abused children, this is liberating theology: they are not just victims; they are beloved members of a people who are a mirror of God's embrace. Volf's challenge to the Church is straightforward to create spaces of belonging where children are not tolerated and disciplined, but rather celebrated. This means building liturgies, classrooms, and fellowships where their voices are heard, their safety is ensured, and their potential is encouraged.

Ultimately, restoration of childhood is a call to the spiritual. The Church must become a sign of the Kingdom: a place where children can laugh, play, learn, ask questions, and grow without fear. Restoration is not just about recovering from abuse, but recalling the joy, creativity, and freedom God intended for every child. There is no room in the eschatological hope for violence and exploitation, but only Christ's peace, which heals wounds and opens up futures. By maintaining this hope and working towards it in the here and now, the Church testifies to the fact that God's justice extends even to the smallest and most vulnerable, and their flourishing is part of the divine plan for a new world.

5.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the theological investigation of child abuse within Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese, points to the need that the Church is a healing, prophetic, and redemptive community. Based on the realities of Imago Dei, Christian ethics, sacramental theology, and hope in the eschaton, the Church possesses both divine mission and spiritual resources to bring change in protecting the children. This reflection calls the Church not simply to condemn abuse but to be a radically loving alternative rooted in Christ's own acceptance of the little ones.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes all findings reported in Chapter 4 according to the questions of the study, draws conclusions, suggests recommendations, and also proposes some areas for further study.

6.1 Summary of findings

The qualitative and quantitative results show that the problem of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry is of considerable concern with different forms being well known. The most prevalent types of abuse are physical punishment, emotional abuse, child labor, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect of children. The respondents agreed that the abuses were present within the community. These abuses are normally well rationalized on grounds of poverty or culture, but they have negative long-term implications for children's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. These findings are corroborated by feedback from key informant interviews (clergy, police, and leaders) who indicate that physical abuse remains common in the name of discipline, emotional abuse is common through humiliation, and child neglect and child labor remain on grounds of poverty and lack of awareness. Although some people interviewed perceive the community as seriously addressing abuse, a significant percentage disagrees, calling for more sensitization of the community, Church-initiated parenting programs, and increased cooperation with the local authorities to address and prevent child abuse in all its forms.

Furthermore, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that Christian parenting is widely accepted as a primary mechanism in preventing child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry. The respondents greatly agreed that biblical instructions, living faith practically, and participating in church programs assist in imparting caring, non-abusive parenting. Christian values were noted to instill love, patience, and self-discipline in child care, with the church actively supporting parents by preaching, counseling, and workshop training. The practice of Christian-based parenthood was however constrained by cultural expectations that support corporal punishment, ignorance of biblical parenthood principles, and socio-economic challenges

that blur family life. These results suggest that despite Christian values providing a good foundation for effective parenting, their full implementation will rely on particular church interventions, continuous education, and support in order to break cultural resistance and familial poverty-related stressors.

Lastly, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that there is strong support for the Church to undertake strategic interventions to put an end to child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry. The most emphasized actions are conducting regular sensitization programs, enhancing counseling services, and collaborating with local authorities. Such activities are considered vital in stopping harmful parenting activities and encouraging abuse. Such assumptions have support from key informant interview answers, for example, those from clergy members, police officers, and local leaders, by identifying that the Church can be instrumental in terms of awareness campaigns, creating child protection committees, and incorporating Christian parenting into church activities. They also emphasized the importance of collaboration between the Church and civic leaders, specifically in the reporting of abuse cases, joint sensitization, and offering training to religious and civic leaders. Such conclusions imply that not only is the Church seen as a moral and spiritual instructor but also as a trustworthy institution capable of initiating positive change in child protection by engaging in coordinated, well-structured, and faith-based interventions.

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study discovered that abuse of children is widespread in Kisojo Archdeaconry, with the majority of children suffering various types such as physical punishment, emotional abuse, child labor, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. These abuses are normally validated by belief systems or poverty but they have long-term effects on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of children. Despite the initiatives at the community level towards addressing child abuse, the presence of harmful practices and inadequate intervention mechanisms hint at a need for a further awareness-raising and insistent sensitization, especially through religious efforts that cut across cultural norms and economic pressures.

Furthermore, the study concludes that Christian parenting is clearly perceived to be a positive influence in combating child abuse as well. Values such as love, patience, kindness, and

discipline based on compassion are believed to promote healthy and care-based parent-child relationships. The Church has contributed positively by guiding parents through preaching, counseling, and training programs. However, concerns such as cultural norms favoring rigorous discipline, inadequate information regarding Christian parenting principles, and poverty constraints remain a hindrance to full adoption of the values. Accordingly, there is a need for the Church to provide sustained support, education, and direct interventions that help parents embrace non-abusive, Christ-based parenting.

Finally, the study concludes that the results show a very strong support for the Church having an active role in the protection of children and prevention of child abuse. Church-led interventions such as campaigns, collaboration with local authorities, formation of child protection committees, and integration of parenting education into church programming are deemed vital. The people recognize the Church as not only a religious guide but also as a trusted institution, capable of initiating positive social reform. Through a collaborative effort that brings both moral direction and grassroots action, the Church is capable of leading the task of ensuring a safe and nurturing atmosphere for every child in Kisojo Archdeaconry.

6.3 Recommendations

Basing on the study findings, the following recommendations were highlighted;

The study recommends that the Church should conduct regular community sensitization initiatives. These ought to include educating guardians and parents about the rights of children, the risks of child abuse, and the Christian approach to loving and non-violent parenthood. Regular awareness campaigns in church services and community outreach activities might reorient cultural beliefs supporting abusive behavior.

The study also recommends the need for provision and development of counseling and pastoral care by the Church. Child and parent-friendly, safe, and confidential spaces in which emotional and spiritual counseling can be accessed are required. This intervention can address effectively root family causes of stress, allow healing of victims, and equip parents with improved parenting strategies.

Furthermore, the study recommends the need for collaboration between the Church and local councils. This entails collaboration with police, councils, and community development officers to ensure transparent and accessible child protection referral pathways. The collaborations would enhance reporting, follow-up, and enforcement procedures in incidents of child abuse.

In addition, the study recommends that the Church should include Christian parenting education in its discipleship. Parents must be provided with biblical values and hands-on training for parenting effectively in love and God-honoring ways in sermons, Bible studies, and workshops. They will be enabled to substitute violent discipline with such virtues as patience, empathy, and responsibility.

Lastly, the study recommends that the Church needs to stand against harmful cultural trends that sexualize child abuse and make it appear acceptable. The Church needs to lead by speaking prophecy into cultures that make violence or children's exploitation acceptable. By openly raising these issues and offering faith-based options, the Church can be at the forefront of a change in social norms disempowering child abuse.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

This study aimed at conducting an assessment of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese. Therefore more research can be conducted on the following areas;

First of all, further research should explore the long-term psychological and social impacts of child abuse on survivors within Kisojo Archdeaconry, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of existing church-led child protection programs.

Additionally, future studies could investigate the role of socio-economic factors and cultural beliefs in perpetuating abuse, and assess how multi-sectoral collaborations between religious institutions and government agencies can be strengthened to enhance child safeguarding efforts in the community.

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3. Highest level of education

- a) Certificate b) Diploma
 c) Bachelor's d) Any other, specify:.....

Guide for Completing the Questionnaire:

Please answer questions by making a tick (✓) and explain where necessary.

Section B: The forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry

Rate your degree of agreement on the forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry using a scale of 5(Strongly Agree), 4(Agree), 3(Not sure), 2(Disagree) and 1(Strongly Disagree).

s. no	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	Physical punishment is commonly used as a means of disciplining children in this community.					
2	Cases of emotional abuse, such as constant criticism and humiliation of children, are prevalent in this area.					
3	Many children in Kisojo Archdeaconry experience neglect in terms of their basic needs, such as food, shelter, and education.					
4	Child labor is a common practice among families in this community.					
5	Sexual abuse of children is a growing concern in Kisojo Archdeaconry.					
6	Verbal abuse, including shouting and use of harsh language towards children, is frequently observed in homes.					
7	The community takes cases of child abuse seriously and responds appropriately when such incidents occur.					

Suggest any other forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry other than the ones mentioned above?

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Section C: How Christian parenting can be used to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry

Rate your degree of agreement on how Christian parenting can be used to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry using a scale of 5(Strongly Agree), 4(Agree), 3(Not sure), 2(Disagree) and 1(Strongly Disagree).

s. no	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	Christian teachings encourage parents to discipline their children with love rather than violence.					
2	Parents who actively follow Christian principles are less likely to mistreat their children.					
3	Biblical teachings help parents understand the importance of nurturing and protecting their children.					
4	Regular church attendance influences positive parenting practices among Christians.					
5	Christian-based parenting programs can help reduce cases of child abuse in this community.					
6	Parents who apply biblical principles in raising their children promote a healthy and safe family environment.					
7	The church provides enough guidance and resources to parents on how to raise children in a godly and non-abusive manner.					

How else can Christian parenting be used to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry other than the ones mentioned above?

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Section D: The strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese

Rate your degree of agreement on the strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese using a scale of 5(Strongly Agree), 4(Agree), 3(Not sure), 2(Disagree) and 1(Strongly Disagree).

s. no	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	The church should organize regular sensitization programs on child rights and protection.					
2	Church leaders should actively preach against child abuse and promote positive parenting.					
3	Counseling services for both parents and children should be strengthened within the church.					
4	The church should collaborate with local authorities to address cases of child abuse in the community.					
5	Training sessions on biblical parenting should be introduced in church programs.					
6	The church should establish child protection committees to monitor and report cases of abuse.					
7	More church interventions are needed to address harmful cultural practices that contribute to child abuse.					

Suggest any other strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese other than the ones mentioned above?

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Thank you very much for your cooperation

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

For the key informants

Introduction

Dear Respondent,

I am Nabaasa Livingston, a student pursuing a Bachelor of Divinity at Uganda Christian University. I am working on a study titled “*Assessing child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese.*” Your contribution is essential to the type of data needed for this study, which is why you were chosen to take part. Your submitted information will be kept completely secret and used only for academic purposes.

Consent/Agreement

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research program; Tick appropriately

YesNo.....

Name of Participant (Optional):

Signature: Date:

Name of Researcher:

Signature: Date:

Kindly spare some few minutes to respond to the following questions.

Section A: Introduction

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What position do you hold in Kisojo Archdeaconry?
3. How long have you been working with Kisojo Archdeaconry?

Section B: The forms of child abuse prevalent in Kisojo Archdeaconry

4. What are the most common forms of child abuse reported in this community?
5. How do cultural and social norms influence child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry?
6. What challenges do you face in identifying and addressing child abuse cases?

Section C: How Christian parenting can be used to prevent the prevalence of child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry

7. How can Christian teachings help parents raise their children without abuse?
8. What role does the church play in promoting responsible parenting in this community?
9. What challenges hinder the adoption of Christian-based parenting practices?

Section D: The strategies the Church can adopt to end child abuse in Kisojo Archdeaconry, Mityana Diocese

10. What strategies can the church implement to reduce child abuse in this community?
11. How can the church collaborate with local authorities to ensure child protection?
12. What challenges does the church face in addressing child abuse, and how can they be overcome?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 3: Proposed budget for the research

S/NO	ITEM	COST(UG SHS)
1.	General transport (travelling in data collection)	100.000
2.	Meals, airtime and transport for data collection	100.000
3.	Incentives for the respondents	200,000
4.	Stationery	100,000
5.	Data for internet	50,000
6.	Binding and printing final copies	50,000
	TOTAL	600,000

Appendix 4: Time schedule for the Research

S/NO	Research Activity	Time
1.	Selection and approval	January 2025
2.	Presentation of concept note	January 2025
3.	Proposal writing	February 2025
4.	Data collection	March 2025
5.	Data analysis	April 2025
6.	Report writing	April 2025
7.	Submission of research report	May 2025