

EFFECTS OF THE BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT ON THE STABILITY OF FAMILIES IN MOSOCHO DIVISION, KISII COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the belief in witchcraft and its effects on the stability of families in Mosocho Division, Kisii County which has persisted to exist. The study was guided by Marwick (1967) Theory of Social Accusation which argues that witchcraft accusations and allegations lead to social tension and hence breaks family relationships. The study applied descriptive survey research design conducted in Mosocho Division, Kisii County. Data was collected from Mosocho Division, Kisii County which comprises of seven locations. Data from respondents was collected through questionnaires and interviews. Pretesting of the questionnaires was undertaken to establish their reliability and validity. Proportionate and purposive sampling methods were used to collect data from a sample of Kisii elders, local government administration officials (chiefs and sub-chiefs), human rights activists and youths, that included both male and female participants with a total sample size consisting of 394 respondents. The respondent's age, gender and period of residence were significant determinants. The collected data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 involving descriptive statistics for quantitative data. Qualitative data was analysed through content and thematic analysis aimed at consolidating thematic issues. The findings revealed that belief in witchcraft influences the stability of families. It is hoped that these findings through its recommendations will enable the community and local administration to come up with strategies and a platform that provide an opportunity for creating a more unified social order, based on family unity, and a more accommodating society devoid of witchcraft or its effects. address domestic violence, accompanied by the establishment of frameworks or guidelines within the church.

Keywords: Belief, Effects, Families, Stability, Witchcraft.

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1.0. Introduction

There is a wide spectrum of impacts associated with the belief in witchcraft, encompassing physical, socio-economic, psychological, and spiritual dimensions (Petrus, 2016). One of the most economically efficient outcomes arises from allegations of witchcraft, whereby individuals who are perceived as witches are typically those who are vulnerable and marginalized in society, including older women and children (Thomas, 2012). Gender and age discrimination can manifest in the form of attributing witchcraft to women (particularly old women) and children many of whom end up being murdered or banished from their communities (Nzyoki, 2023), while their male counterparts are less likely to be associated with such beliefs (Atta, 2021). The prevailing understanding, as supported by extensive depictions and documentation, is that witchcraft has historically been associated with femininity and continues to be predominantly practiced by

women (Alam, 2018). Individuals may encounter various consequences such as expulsion from their immediate social circles, forfeiture of assets, apprehension, incarceration, and acts of physical aggression (Katherine, 2011). Certain groups of individuals, such as women, children, the elderly, and individuals with albinism, exhibit heightened susceptibility to various forms of harm and exploitation (Bussien, 2011). The stigmatization of witchcraft gives rise to family conflicts and imposes a lasting designation of witch upon an individual, which can extend to future generations (Katherine, 2011).

Throughout history, belief in witchcraft has been a persistent issue throughout human societies (Wyc, 2004). The phenomenon has exerted an influence on nearly all nations and societies at various points in their historical development, and in certain regions, it continues to persist. Undoubtedly, witchcraft stands as a pervasive issue across cultures. The belief in witchcraft not only affects the

wellbeing of witches, but also the lives of those associated with them (Nzyoki, 2023) since it holds a significant role within the ethical framework of African religion and thus poses a significant challenge to human wellbeing and gives rise to substantial social problems by undermining social cohesion, community, and amicable interactions. This mentality undermines cooperation, sharing, propriety, equity, transparency and thus damages social structures that enabled Africans to live in unity as a community and family (Nzyoki, 2023). Accusations of witchcraft can lead to the deterioration of relationships, as individuals may seek to distance themselves from the perceived threat posed by their witchcraft-affiliated family member or acquaintance (Atta, 2021). In other terms, the practice of witchcraft poses a significant risk to the fundamental structure of society, the intricate balance between the realms of the living and the deceased, and the overall stability and perpetuity of the universe. Gershman (2022) notes that, the presence of ideas resembling witchcraft has led to the division of local communities into distinct networks, hence impeding cooperation between different groups. The concerns of these authors, however, were not directed to examining witchcraft vis-à-vis family stability. The present research undertaking takes this up.

Belief in witchcraft damages the social organization of communities, especially families (Bauer, 2017). The belief strains social cohesion, disrupting the social coexistence of communities. This is because in communities where traditional religious beliefs are prevalent, witchcraft is often suspected to originate from family members (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015). Immediate family members or close kin are usually the first to be accused of being responsible for problems and misfortunes. For instance when one gets sick or suffers bareness or any other misfortune, the immediate suspect is the person who might had some grievance against them which, in most cases is a family member. Such outcomes breed deep fear, suspicion and apprehension among family members, which undermine family interpersonal relationships. Richard, (2001) notes that this is one of the reasons for conflicts among family members. He further argues that the belief in witchcraft often brings to open tensions and accusations within families and society thus leading to family instability. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015), Nyabwari and Kagema (2014) argue that witchcraft has been used to plan evil and inflict harm or undermine progress, especially among family members and even alter the course of family life. Individuals who engage in the practice of witchcraft often exhibit impulsive, self-centred, and arrogant tendencies because to their limited capacity for self-restraint in resisting their desires and animosities. The maintenance of social harmony necessitates adherence to norms of ethical conduct and a willingness to be transparent in one's actions before the public. Emotions such as jealousy, anger, fury, and lust are less prone to manifest. Belief in witchcraft has been identified as a source of violence, leading to the destruction of property and harm inflicted upon individuals (Atta, 2021). In several nations across the globe, the adherence to and engagement in witchcraft-related beliefs and activities have led to severe infringements of human rights, such as physical assault, forced expulsion, mutilation, torture, and homicide. Additionally, Atta highlights that on an annual basis, individuals around the world face accusations of practicing witchcraft, resulting in severe outcomes such as fatalities. Furthermore, there are instances where individuals are subjected to mutilation and even death as a result of rites associated with witchcraft. The belief in witchcraft has been frequently associated with the manifestation of phobias (Rosemary, 2017). The presence of witchcraft encounters, allegations, and

perceptions can instil a sense of apprehension among individuals. The author observes that individuals have apprehension or perceive a lack of safety while considering travel to their country of origin, particularly during vacation periods. There exists a concern regarding the potential for malevolent intentions from neighboring individuals who may harbor envy towards the rich individuals and their respective families, so posing a threat to their well-being. The aforementioned situation poses significant ramifications for the Christianity (Samuel, 2017).

The presence of beliefs in witchcraft instigates feelings of fear and pervades communities where such ideas are prevalent. Consequently, individuals who face accusations of practicing witchcraft may opt to relocate from their residential regions in order to evade potential damage, or they may be compelled to leave their villages by the collective society (Katherine, 2011). As per the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations compels numerous individuals to escape their countries of origin and pursue asylum in foreign nations. The aforementioned concerns have a profound impact on individuals' attitudes and behaviours (Gershman, 2022). Additionally, they subject the accused to various repercussions, such as psychological distress and financial hardship resulting from the loss of possessions and assets (Katherine, 2011). Hutton (2017), the aforementioned assumption also engenders suspicion, fosters mistrust, and gives rise to allegations. Many studies on the belief of witchcraft and practices have found out that people living in communities infested with the belief in witchcraft live and treat each other with suspicion and distrust (Gershman, 2015 and Sanou, 2017). This interferes with people's confidence and commitment to one another and the overall wellbeing of the community. Individuals suspected of harbouring a belief in witchcraft and practices are dismissed as social misfits. They are usually excluded and avoided because they are pre-occupied with trying to bring down those who seem to be doing better than them. When individuals experience fear of being stigmatized as witches, their inclination to participate in antisocial or immoral conduct diminishes, thereby fostering a greater likelihood of societal adherence to a collective framework of norms and standards. Witchcraft is often connected with a range of features, including red eyes, unattractive feet, peculiar or malevolent behavior, and remarkable achievements. Even in contemporary times, a significant number of individuals continue to associate diseases with witchcraft, resulting in a detrimental erosion of confidence in modern medical practices and healthcare systems. Two instances of potentially lethal infectious disease outbreaks, namely; Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV/AIDS) and Ebola virus, have faced challenges in terms of medical care and control due to prevalent regional beliefs in witchcraft. The treatment of tuberculosis, leprosy, epilepsy, and the highly prevalent severe bacterial Buruli ulcer face similar obstacles. In regions where belief in witchcraft is widespread, addressing the challenges associated with promoting effective preventive health measures and treatments, reducing victim blaming, shunning, stigmatization, and preventing the killing of individuals necessitates comprehensive educational efforts focused on epidemiology and contemporary health knowledge (Allen, 2008).

Teklemariam (2002), empirical research indicates a correlation between the engagement in witchcraft practices and negative outcomes such as increased rates of school dropouts, indiscipline, diminished concentration during academic activities, resulting in

poor academic performance and potential health issues. The violation of a broad spectrum of human rights is a direct result of the charges made against those involved in witchcraft, as noted by Nwatu (2021). Katherine (2011), engaging in acts of aggression towards the accused is a violation of fundamental rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and security, the right to possess property, and in certain instances, the ban against torture. The intangible repercussions stemming from allegations of witchcraft, such as social and economic marginalization, might be regarded as infringements of human rights. The act of social ostracism that arises from an accusation is in violation of the protection provided by the 'International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights'. This protection safeguards individuals against arbitrary or unlawful interference with their private, family, home, or correspondence, as well as against unlawful attacks on their honor and reputation. It is not uncommon for specific individuals within a family unit to face allegations of practicing witchcraft, while others remain unaffected by such accusations. This dynamic can give rise to interpersonal strain and, ultimately, result in marital dissolution. The likelihood of divorce significantly rises when a husband alleges that his wife is engaging in witchcraft. In the year 1645, within the confines of Springfield, Massachusetts, a matrimonial union between Hugh and Mary Parsons became embroiled in a contentious situation, as both parties levied accusations of engaging in witchcraft against one another. Although Mary was acquitted of the charges of witchcraft and her son Despite Hugh's proven innocence, she was nonetheless convicted and condemned to death for the homicide of her child. The allegation of practicing witchcraft has the potential to result in the fragmentation of a family unit, so serving as a compelling exemplification of such consequences. In light of the severe mistreatment endured by individuals suspected of witchcraft, which may ultimately result in their demise, it is not uncommon for relatives and/or associates of the accused to seek refuge in secure locations to evade additional harm. The consequence of compelled relocation and displacement of families trigger significant social unrest within the impacted communities.

The dissolution of marriage can occur within families where one spouse is accused of practicing witchcraft, but the other spouse is not implicated in such allegations. The narrative of Hugh and Mary Parson, residents of Springfield, Massachusetts, United States, is a compelling account that cannot be easily disregarded (Fraden, 2008). As the news of an accusation of witchcraft against one member of the partnership becomes further known, familial tensions escalate. The negative societal perception of witchcraft in contemporary culture poses challenges for individuals in relationships where one partner identifies as a witch and the other does not. Luongo (2008), divorce is frequently the sole recourse for addressing conflicts inside a marriage. Individuals who are perceived to engage in the practice of witchcraft frequently encounter adverse treatment and social exclusion. Individuals may have feelings of isolation as a result of either being abandoned by others or voluntarily distancing themselves from social interactions (Rosemary, 2017). The study of King (2008) has the character of Ginko, an old landlady, depicted as experiencing social isolation within her community. The author suggested that her inclination towards cat ownership played a role in her experience of social isolation, as it perpetuated the perception of her as the archetypal "eccentric cat lady" - an older woman who has forsaken romantic relationships and instead devotes her time to tending to an increasing number of feline pets. In Japan, similar to other cultures, felines possess an extensive historical association with the

representation of sorcery. The presence of witchcraft beliefs in societies instills a pervasive sense of fear (Gershman, 2022). The aforementioned worries have a profound impact on individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, this phenomenon gives rise to diminished levels of trust, heightened anxiety, and a state of paranoia. These beliefs also contribute to the occurrence of witch trials, instances of violence resulting in killings, confiscation of property, conflicts associated to witchcraft, and a decline in social cohesion. The prevalence of depression, suicidal ideation, and completed suicide is frequently observed in those who self-report experiencing haunting phenomena attributed to witches.

In regions where witchcraft beliefs and practices are prevalent, individuals often tend to ascribe their shortcomings and disregard for the law to the influence of witchcraft (Atta, 2021). It appears that individuals commonly employ the phrase "it's not me, but witches influenced me" while seeking forgiveness for their transgressions. This illness has a tendency to promote the development of negative habits, as instances of deviant behavior frequently remain without consequences. This phenomenon leads to a decreased adherence to legal regulations among individuals, as they frequently manage to evade the consequences of their actions. The occurrence of poverty can be attributed to certain individuals who ascribe their lack of efficacy in fulfilling their responsibilities to the influence of witchcraft, thereby absolving themselves of any responsibility for their acts (Atta, 2021). The belief in witchcraft contributes to the exacerbation of educational challenges. Children who are suspected of witchcraft are typically subjected to confinement in various locations such as witch camps, prayer camps, traditional shrines, and other specified spaces specifically intended for the purpose of exorcism (Atta, 2021). A nation that embraces the practice of limiting the education of its youngsters may ultimately experience regret. Joyner (1992) and Asforth (2005), posit that the fundamental driving force for the practice of witchcraft is a deep-seated antipathy towards human beings. Joyner (1992), the concept of witchcraft may be defined as the utilization of an impure spiritual entity to govern, manipulate, or exert control over others. Joyner further argues that individuals tend to experience heightened fear towards entities or individuals over whom they lack any kind of influence or authority. The general populace harbors an inherent inclination to exhibit dislike towards those identified as witches, mostly due to the prevailing conviction that they actively partake in ceremonial practices intended to instill fear and distress among others. Essentially, the presence of this fear can lead to the fragmentation of families, causing other members of the community to harbor disdain towards individuals believed to possess witchcraft abilities, attributing it to the harm they cause. Consequently, the study addressed a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the phenomenon of witchcraft within the Mosoch Division and its implications for the foundational unit of society. Mbondo (2011), examined the impact of witchcraft on the church, as well as to propose appropriate strategies for Christians to employ when encountering individuals who have fallen under its influence. The involvement of individuals who engage in witchcraft poses significant challenges to the comprehension of members within the Christian community. Nevertheless, the examination of the influence of these witchcraft beliefs on familial dynamics remains unexplored within the scope of this particular study. Onyancha (2014) explored the influence of individuals' perspectives on witchcraft on their dedication to achieving sustainable agricultural outcomes over an extended period of time. Nevertheless, the author's study lacks empirical

data to support the assertion regarding the influence of witchcraft beliefs on domestic harmony. Miencha (2014), argues that the portrayal of gender-based discrimination within the context of witch persecution is deemed flawed due to its limited examination of the diverse repercussions experienced by various households affected by the witch-hunt. Omare (2015) provides a comprehensive analysis of the role played by indigenous religious beliefs in driving the persecution of individuals who are unjustly accused of practicing witchcraft. The study conducted by Omare does not deliver into the specific mechanisms through which witch accusations contribute to the weakening of various households. Thus, the researcher in this study sought to examine the influence of witchcraft beliefs on family dynamics.

2.0. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Design

As per the description presented by Mugenda and Mugenda (2012), a research design may be described as a strategic blueprint that outlines the overall structure and key components of a research project. A research design refers to a systematic approach employed in doing research, which encompasses a comprehensive plan for executing the study and analyzing the outcomes. The research topic is linked to a certain course of action. The survey research design was employed for the purpose of this inquiry. Due to the magnitude of the population under scrutiny, it was imperative to employ a survey research design for the ongoing research. In order to ascertain trends and create linkages, the research design approach employed in this study gathered a substantial volume of data (Cresswell, 2003).

2.2. Study Area

The study was Mosoch Division, which is known for its high population density in Kisii County. Central Bureau of Statistics (2009), the division had an estimated population of 43,560 individuals in 2008. The division encompasses four distinct regions, namely Bogusero in the southern direction, Nyatieko in the Northeastern direction, Township in the eastern direction, and Nyanguru in the western direction. Mosoch Division, in its whole, exhibits a topography characterized by a series of undulating hills and ridges traversing the landscape. The altitude span encompassed by this particular segment extends from 1950 meters to 1200 meters above mean sea level. Central Bureau of Statistics (2009), it can be observed that all perennial creeks within the County ultimately discharge their water into Lake Victoria. The geographical area offered a wealth of varied viewpoints regarding the matter under consideration. Mosoch Division was chosen because of many cases of witchcraft suspect cases are reported.

2.3. Target Population

A population is a complete set of elements (persons and objects) that possess some common characteristics defined by sampling criteria established by the researcher (Clark and Ivankova, 2016). Creswell (2003) defines a research population, also referred to as a "target population," as a collective of individuals possessing specific characteristics that are of significance and relevance to the particular context under investigation. Consequently, the phrase "target population" denotes the specific cohort of individuals for whom the outcomes of a study are anticipated to be relevant and applicable. In each inquiry, the population under consideration consists of the entities and individuals being examined (Orodho,

2009). The study sample consisted of individuals aged 30 to 80 years, both male and female, residing within the designated study area. The participants in the event encompassed a diverse range of individuals, including young individuals, vigilantes, human rights advocates, medicine practitioners, chiefs, assistant chiefs, and village elders hailing from the Abagusii tribe. The inclusion of these participants in the study was based on their representation of an age range that had a higher likelihood of belonging to families requiring consistent daily stability. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Cultural and Social Services, the estimated population of individuals within the specified age range residing in Kisii County is 27,630.

2.4. Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Sampling is the process of choosing a group of cases from which inferences can be drawn about the entire population (Orodho, 2009). A sample refers to a subset that is chosen to represent a broader population, with the purpose of making inferences about the total population (Kasomo, 2015). Sampling was employed as a means to conserve financial resources, reduce time expenditure, and minimize physical exertion. Additionally, this technological advancement facilitated the expeditious collection of more accurate and comprehensive data that was essential for achieving the study's objectives. Additionally, the utilization of this approach was motivated by the researcher's intention to circumvent the need for gathering data from the entire community. This is attributed to the inherent difficulty of conducting a comprehensive examination of the complete population within the scope of this study. In cases when the number of populations is relatively limited, it is commonly advised to employ a minimum sample size of 30 per cent for the purpose of conducting descriptive research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

2.5.1 Sample Size Calculation

For this study, the researcher utilized the Slovin's method as explained by Sevilla (2007) to determine the appropriate sample size. The sample size consisted of 394 respondents, identified from a target population of 27,630.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where, n= sample size required;

N = population size;

e = sampling error (± 5%)

$$n = \frac{27,630}{1+27,630 (0.05)^2}$$

= 394 respondents

2.5.2 Sampling Technique

The respondents for this study were selected from each of the seven locations within Mosoch Division using a proportional random sampling technique. A proportionate sampling method was employed to pick a sample of 394 respondents. The sample consisted of 57 individuals from Nyakoe, 55 from Bogeke, 57 from Nyatieko, 57 from Nyanguru, 57 from Township, 57 from Bogusero North, and 54 from Bogusero South. The utilization of a proportional random sample enables researchers to effectively carry out both quantitative and qualitative research by combining elements of randomization and classification (Cohen, Raudenbush & Ball, 2003). In areas where

instances of violence against individuals believed to be witches have occurred, it was of particular significance to identify respondents who may offer valuable insights. Consequently, a purposeful sampling methodology was employed. A comprehensive survey was conducted for this research, encompassing individuals from diverse backgrounds inside the village. This included the participation of chiefs, assistant chiefs, vigilantes, human rights advocates, medicine

people, village elders, youngsters, as well as male and female adults residing in the study region. This can be attributed to the fact that these respondents were geographically situated in close proximity to areas characterized by heightened anti-suspect emotions. Consequently, their counsel was regarded as trustworthy. Table 1 presents a concise overview of the respondents that were sampled for the purpose of this study.

Table 1: Sample Size

Location	Chiefs and Assistant chiefs	Medicine-persons	Village elders	Male and female adults	Vigilante and human rights activists	Totals
Nyakoe	3	2	4	45	3	57
Bogeka	3	2	4	43	3	55
Nyatieko	3	2	4	45	3	57
Nyanguru	3	2	4	45	3	57
Township	3	2	4	45	3	57
Bogusero North	3	2	4	45	3	57
Bogusero South	3	2	4	42	3	54
Total	21	14	28	310	21	394

3.0. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

3.1. Effects of the Belief in Witchcraft on Family Stability

The objective explored the effects of the belief in witchcraft on the stability of families in Mosoch Division, Kisii County. The effects of the belief in witchcraft ranged from financial, to educational, diseases causing death, mental illness, causing accidents, and to even causing bad luck. The use of charms was identified as a way of casting love spells on the affected persons and causing possession. Other effect of witchcraft identified by the participants included: madness, killings, depression, making someone go dumb, insanity and bringing people back to life. Table 2. below provides a summary of the responses on effect of lynching suspects.

Table 2: Effect of Violence on Suspected Witches on Family Stability

Effect on the family of the lynched	Effect on the community stability
Loss of loved ones, properties, relationships ruined in the community	Reduces cases of witchcraft
Family breakups and familial ties	Eliminates the practice
Psychological trauma as the family struggles to come to terms with the thought that one of them being a witch	Unpredictability, especially when innocent people are lynched
Rivalry between family and others	Division and enmity among the people
Children or other family members are looked down upon	Counter attacks leading to community instability
Communities and neighbours	Tension and fear in the

neglect the family	community
Trauma and fear, stigma, no peace with other people	Lagged development due to lack of unity
Instability and distortion of normalcy	Increase in the number of orphans
Divorce, forceful evictions, and displacement of families	Insecurity
Loss of breadwinners	It leads to forceful relocation
Fear of the lives of those left behind	Children of the victims become orphans

The effects include: loss of loved ones, loss of property, broken communal ties, and broken familial bonds were all found to have an impact on the families of lynching suspects. Relationship dissolutions and family relationships as well as trauma to the family's psyche as they try to accept the possibility that one of them is a witch were also other effects. Family vs. peer rivalry, neglect from communities and neighbours, prejudice against children and other family members, stress and anxiety, discrimination, inability to find inner calm and harmony with others, disorder and deviation from the norm, divorce, evictions, and family relocations cause upheavals often resulting to the loss of a primary breadwinner and a corresponding increase in stress and anxiety for the remaining family members.

The respondents also identified a number of effects unique to community stability; both positive and negative. They included fewer reported cases of witchcraft, the end of the practice of witchcraft, increased security, decreased when innocent people are lynched, increased division and animosity among the people, increased counterattacks, increased tension and fear in the community, slowed development as a result of lack of unity, and an increase in the number of orphans.

In Nyatieko Location, a sub-chief, Mary (10. 04.2021) commented about lynching of suspects:

“Leads to shame and minimal interaction between the family and members of the community.

Frustration in the family, and unpredictability and insecurity in the community when an innocent individual is lynched.

The families of the lynched suspects are gossiped in the community, they are hated for long without forgiveness, can't be assisted when they get problems.”

3.2. Effects of the Belief in Witchcraft on Family Stability

This section presents findings revolving around the third objective of the study which sought to explore the effects of belief in witchcraft on the stability of families. While identifying ways of addressing the effects of the belief in witchcraft, the findings of this study are indicated herein. In this study, the researcher also wanted to find out whether family instability is attributed to belief in witchcraft. The responses are indicated in Figure 1.

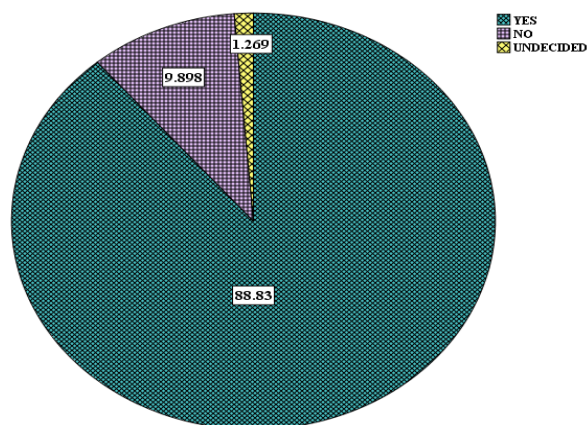


Figure 1: Effects of the Belief in Witchcraft on Family Stability

As shown in Figure 1, majority of the respondents (89%) agreed that family instability was attributed to belief in witchcraft; some respondents did not agree (10%) while a few were undecided (1%).

Figure 2, below shows the views of the respondents on the statement that the belief in witchcraft affected family stability.

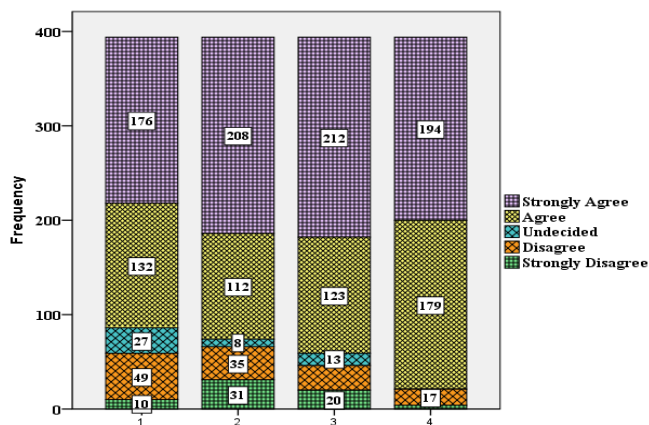


Figure 2: Respondents views on belief that witchcraft affected family stability.

The results from Figure 2 above showed that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the belief in witchcraft had

affected family stability followed by those who agreed then those who disagreed, strongly disagreed and finally those who were undecided.

The study also sought to establish whether suspected witches faced challenges in their marriages among the study participants. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of the responses as far as the effect of witchcraft on family stability is concerned.

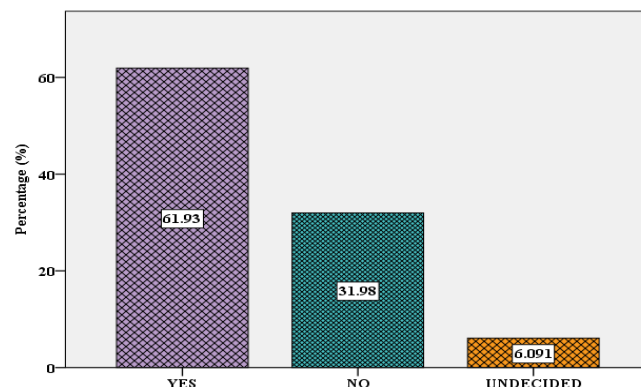


Figure 3: Suspected Witches Face Challenges in Marriage

Figure 3 above indicated the statistics from the respondents on whether or not suspected witches faced challenges in their marriages. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents representing 61.93% agreed that suspected witches faced challenges in their marriages, 31.98% of the respondents disagreed while 6.091% were undecided.

Table 3: Perception of Relationship between Witchcraft and Family Stability

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percent
Are families which practice witchcraft unstable?	Yes	359	91%
	No	35	9%
	Total	394	100%
Do you attribute the instability to witchcraft?	Yes	197	55%
	No	162	45%
	Total	359	100%

The study also established the reason behind the attribution of the instability to witchcraft activities by the members of those families. There were also those impacts that were reported on families that were victims of the witchcraft activities. Table 4 below shows a summary of the statements reported by the study participants.

Table 4: Effects of the Belief in Witchcraft on Family Stability

	On the Witch's family	On the Victim's Family
1	A man divorced his wife because he suspected her of being a witch. Also there are many stories on divorce as a result of suspected witchcraft	After killing my parents, we were unable even to attend school being orphaned at tender age.
2	There was development of certain kind of lunacy	Surrounding families live in fear of what witches may

	among some members	do to them
3	Most families affected are usually not involved in community social functions.	Most families fear to develop because of fear of witchcraft.
4	Hatred and suspicion resulting from the reputation around the community	My neighbour who was a breadwinner was bewitched leaving the burden to the mother
5	Displacement and loss of property having been chased by locals	Their daughter is not doing well in academics because she is bewitched

The study grouped the responses with themes related to divorce, development of mental health conditions, hatred and suspicion resulting from the reputation around the community, as well as displacement and loss of property having been chased by locals.

However, there were those respondents who did not believe in witchcraft. To them, witchcraft was a matter of the mindset developed from childhood. This is reflected in the following sentiment by the vigilante of Nyanguru Location who participated in an interview, Ochoki, (12.02.2021). He intimated:

“It is just a belief that is inculcated right from childhood that makes members of such families, anti-social...”

Those who believe in witchcraft will always believe that every problem encountered has an element of witchcraft about it.”

In the community or victim's family, the effects of witchcraft identified by the respondents included narrations narrated by a youth interviewee, Onyonka (13.02.2021):

After killing my parents, we were unable even to attend school having been orphaned at tender age.

Surrounding families live in fear of what witches may do to them.

Most families fear to develop because of fear of witchcraft.

My neighbour who was a breadwinner was bewitched leaving the burden to the mother.

Their daughter is not doing well in academics because she is bewitched.

4.0. Conclusion

Descriptive statistics and initial analyses of the data were reported in this chapter. The results presented included the respondents' demographic information- age, gender, and length of time spent living in Mosoch Division, Kisii County. The data from the respondents and the descriptive statistics analyses were then interpreted.

From the discussion, it can be concluded that witchcraft beliefs had weakened household bonds. This is in agreement with Dein (2009) that witchcraft leads to domestic tensions and jealousies. This is because many people in Mosoch Division, Kisii County believe in witchcraft which is manifested in various forms including: evil eyes, night running, sorcery, and wizardry.

Further, the findings agree with Gechiko (2014) study where he opines that belief in witchcraft undermines social cohesion, community and friendship. It was also shown that the accused witches were the victims of physical violence, including murder, lynching, and property destruction. Besides, the prevalence of witchcraft beliefs contributed to the breakdown of families through factors such as forced relocation, educational abandonment, hatred, suspicion and divorce. These results agree with the Social Accusation Theory which argues that allegations and accusations of witchcraft among family members leads to breakup of social ties thus leading to social tension. The results of this study showed that the prevalence of belief in witchcraft in Mosoch Division, Kisii County, has significantly weakened the stability of the family.

The study underlines that the national and county government as well as other stakeholders invest in peace initiatives that will foster peace among community members. Moreover, concerted efforts should be made to sensitize people on how to handle sensitive yet controversial issues like witchcraft. The goal of raising awareness should be to deter people from reacting emotionally and start thinking practically about how to solve their problems.

5.0. Recommendations

The study proposes establishing of a multidisciplinary organization with the purpose of offering counselling and human rights assistance to those within the community who have been impacted by incidents associated with witchcraft. This initiative aims to mitigate the distress endured by victims, their families, and the community as a whole.

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