Religious Affiliations and Political Leadership in Uganda: The Case of Iganga District

John Paul Kasujja, (Ph.D.)
Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education, Kabale University.

Huda Hassan
School of Education, Nkumba University, Uganda.

ABSTRACT: *Religion has proved to be one the informal institutions around which politics is built in Uganda. This study examined the influence of religious affiliations on political leadership in Uganda; placing emphasis on Iganga District. The study used a cross sectional research design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study used 247 respondents selected using simple random, purposive and snow ball sampling techniques. The study analysed data using Chi-square test of goodness of fit. The study discovered that religious affiliations have a significant bearing on the political leadership of Iganga District. The study recommended that, politicians should not use religion as a stepping stone for political offices by exploiting the simple majority of followers of a certain religious sect over the other. They should instead reach to the masses irrespective of their religious affiliations and once in office, they should use their mandate to serve the whole community equally rather than favouring individuals of their religious faith. The criterion for granting leadership positions should be on basis of merit and not religion.*

KEY WORDS: religion, politics, leadership, Iganga district, and Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

The study of Uganda political state development and conflicts has relied so much on ethnicity and class, and underrated the phenomenon of religion. This study argues that there is a significant relationship between religion and political leadership Ugandan politics, placing emphasis on Iganga District. Religion is one of the most informal phenomenon around which institutions in society are formed. In multicultural societies, like Uganda, this study examined the influence of religion in forming a backbone of political leadership, focusing on Iganga District.

Background

Historically, the study of conflicts in Africa has focused too narrowly on the politics of class and ethnicity, while neglecting to examine the link between the spread of religion and the evolution of modern political structures, Kempkey, (2008). Consequently, social scientists have downplayed religion by trying to demonstrate that it was apolitical or subsumed by ethnic politics. The legacy of this literature has led some scholars to conclude that religious conflicts were a new phenomenon that emerged during European imperialism in Africa that, then, resurfaced during the rise of Pan-Africanism, Lapidus, I., (1988.) By failing to examine the dynamic relationships between religion and society, this literature has failed to fully recognize religion's important role in African political history, Lahore, A.M., (2009).

Recent scholarship has shown that struggles for political power in Africa have in fact entailed the manipulation of religious symbols and beliefs of both Islam and Christianity. Actors seeking political influence have used religion to gain legitimacy. The relevance of this point for contemporary African states is important, for when "elites believe that their positions are threatened they fall back on the religious element, emphasizing religious differences in an attempt to draw sympathy from those of their original faith" Watt, M., (I974.).

In this study, Religion is conceptualized as a system of social coherence based on a common group of beliefs/attitudes concerning an object, person, unseen being or a system of thought considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine, or highest truth and the moral codes, practices, values, institutions, traditions and rituals associated with such belief or system of though, while Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership attributes such as beliefs, values ethics, character, knowledge and skills (www.allacadmemic .com/meta/p65185).

Political development can be understood as a state's movement towards a democratic system, with free and fair elections in which all citizens can participate to govern themselves, and eventually, a movement towards a more liberal democratic state, which also protects civil rights. Political development enhances the state's capacity to mobilize elections, good governance (leadership), and political party affiliation hence it means not just institutional reform but changes in attitudes and political culture (htt://dolphin.upenn.edu/-irusa/sir/irijournal/leefers.pdf).

Uganda is a multi-cultural as well as multi religious society with history of both Christian and Moslem martyrdom. Before the introduction of foreign religions, Ugandans practiced African Traditional Religion and each tribe had its own religion. Mbiti (1981), acknowledges this when he states that; "Africans are notoriously religious and each people has its own religious system with a set of belief..., One who molds or creates, one who protects, one who brings rain, one who causes famine when is angry." From Mbiti's writing, one may deduce that African Traditional religion is

for Africans, the foreign people did not find it Godly, and that every African believed in it. Ssekamwa, (1997: 12) on the other hand contends that there were men and women priests who were in charge of religious roles which were particularly practiced in homes and houses which he referred to as churches. Today in Iganga District these religions are still practiced alongside Christianity and Islam.

In 1844, Sheik Ahmed bin Ibrahim, an Arab together with his colleagues arrived at Kabaka Edward Muteesa I' Court in Banda, Kyambogo in Kampala. Although he was on a trading mission, he introduced Islam, and people in Uganda began to practice its' doctrines. In fact, Ssuuna II, the Kabaka of Buganda expressed some intermittent interest in Islam though he was not converted, (Karugire, 1980.).

A number of mosques were established, and since then, the number of Muslims in Uganda has steadily been increasing. Currently in Iganga district, Muslims are said to be the majority with 30%, the Protestants constitute 21%, the Catholics 27% Evangelicals 16% while the traditionists constitute 0.6% (District statistics, 2018). On 30th June 1877 the vanguard of the church missionary society in the names of Mackay Usher gold Smith and Rev C.T. Wilson arrived in Buganda. Two years later, they were joined by a group of the Roman Catholic white fathers. These were; Father Lourdel, and Brother Amans. They were followed by Father Barbot, Girault and Livinhac. Both the church Missionary Society which came from England and the white father, or missionaries of Africa who came from France were warmly welcomed and were settled as per the traditional custom. For example the Church Missionary Society led by Mackay was given one of the villages in Natete near Kabaka's Palace at Mengo in Kampala today, while the White Fathers led by Father Simon Lourdel were given one of the villages of Rubaga. In this retrospect both the missionary groups could easily get across to the people who were living in the Kabaka's palace, and hence taught them about Christianity which later on spread to the rest of the country. The missionaries established different centres country wide, for example in Iganga district where both the Protestant and Catholic missionaries settled. Hence they were able to preach and spread Christianity to other parts of Iganga District.

The major pre-occupation of this study is to find out how religion influences political development. Gandhi (1899) in his opinion, "Politics without religion is absolute dirt and should be shunned because such politics would be a death trap which would kill the soil. Therefore religion was as necessary to politics as a nose was to breathing". The researcher agrees with Gandhi that there is politics devoid of religion. The two cannot be separated because both of them serve the interest of humanity; however religion can turn out to be suicidal if it surpasses its intention in politics. In this study an attempt is made to show how religion influences political development in Iganga district.

Religion is a major factor in drumming the transformations of political and economic institutions currently sweeping large sectors of the globe. In Iganga district, not all religious denominations take an active role in politics. This has left many religious sects such as Seventh day Adventists, Pentecostals, African Traditional Religions, Orthodox, Jehovah witness, and Baptist Churches in a situation of limited political participation, thus minimal share of the national cake.

Currently in Iganga District, the major Political Parties that are supported by people of different religious beliefs include, Democratic Party (DP), Uganda People's Congress (UPC), National Resistance Movement (NRM), Justice, Economics, Education, Morals, African Unity (JEEMA), and Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). In Iganga district, leadership positions are classified to belong to particular religious sects. This trend has produced resistance from across section of Ugandans who feel marginalized; in the long run it causes jealousy, hatred, which transcends into wars. Thus politics of divide and rule becomes dangerous by affecting the political development of a town like Iganga. It is ironical and indeed against the rules of natural justice to see a small, section of the country's population dominating the society' politics and monopolizing political and administrative power.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN POST INDEPENDENT UGANDA

Mudoola (1993:47) ably presents a chronology of events in post independent Uganda, where religion played a decisive part in leadership. He shows how Baganda Moslems came up to advance their cause through the National Association of the Advancement of Muslims (NAAM) after losing the lost countries to Bunyoro in 1964. This goal was realized in 1971 when Idd Amin Dada captured power through a military coup and became Uganda's President in 1971 to 1979. This coup was greeted with cheers from the Catholics and the Muslim- an indication that most Ugandans, especially Baganda had not been comfortable with Obote's government leadership. Amin's government saw great oppression of non- Muslims and accelerated conversion of Ugandans to the Muslim faith between 1971 to 1979. The level of mistrust was reflected by the murder of Bishop Janan Luwum. The overthrow of Amin in April 1979, witnessed an era of Christian dominance in Uganda. Whereas Mudoola presents a valid scholarly piece of work showing how religion was used as a tool by politician to further their interests, his work remains largely general, and not specific to Iganga district. The researcher believes that religion has played a leading role in determining leadership positions; for example under the current National Resistance Movement, President Museveni has played a game of appeasement where by distribution of key government posts is done basing on religions consideration with a balanced sharing, thus the offices of the vice President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, speaker of Parliament must reflect representation from the three main religious beliefs namely the Anglicans Catholics and Moslems, although coupled with ethnic balance.

The researcher contends that there are quite many religious beliefs in Uganda that the achievement of equal representation is indeed practically impossible. Those that are not represented therefore feel marginalized and may not play an active role in the political development of the country. On the other hand, Karugire, (1988:162) contends that, throughout the political history of Uganda, different religious sects have gone into lobbying with ruling governments in an attempt to attain reasonable positions, both political, and in the civil service. Consequently political leaders have exploited this opportunity to manipulate the affected religious sects, thus resulting into an argument that political manipulation is quite evident along religious lines. Karugire therefore offers a good background to this study. The attempt to attain reasonable position both political and in the civil service basing on religious sects has a negative impact, as it tends to produce resistance from across section of Ugandans who feel marginalized, for example, in early 2000 the Tabliq Muslim sect rose up to resist the national resistance Movement Government and this climaxed in the Buseruka arrests. The above observation makes a revelation to the effect that achievement of genuine unity and tangible political development among people of different religious beliefs is an uphill task. The researcher believes that the country should settle for a non-political service based on merit system. The merit system should not be restricted to technical jobs and professionals only but should extent to be the generalized types of jobs such as local chiefs, political leaders, and religious leaders.

Gingyera, (1979:62) examines the relationship between Catholics and politics. In his study, he narrates how Catholics impacted on the politics of Uganda. He argues that the dispute concerning religion in Uganda is nor over doctrinal offices but about political jobs and scholarships. The Catholics feel aggrieved and wonder why all such posts like that of a chief, sub country chief and others are held by Protestants.

Gigyera's work only restricted to Northern Uganda, he did not consider other areas of the country. He only discusses the pre-independence period and considered only the Catholic Church. His work leaves out the issue of religion which has been a serious factor in the affairs of pre and post independent Uganda, in this case, in Iganga District. Gigyera looked at only one religious sect; the researchers contend that other religions have also their own impact on the political development especially of Iganga District. The present work has endeavored to look at the effect of religion on the political development of Iganga district. Omenka, (2003:12) has given a treating in which he exonerates Nigeria's religious bias. He argues that in eastern Nigeria, Protestants maintained a comfortable lead over their catholic counter parts in the provision of political leadership. He argues that conquering power in Nigeria was protestant. The church, which was followed by the flag was Anglican, consequently the first educated elite were protestant in religion or sympathy.

In the same vein Asghar, (2004: 16) supports the above argument. He emphasized that the politics in colonial South Asia with consolidation of the British rule became competitive. He argues that, different religious groups began to compete with each other for a share in political power positions and government jobs. Thus religion because a source of identify for political mobilization, hence a source of conflicts. He further showed that political leaders began to generate religious identities to bargain for a share in power. The South Asians stressed castes and regional identities such as Bengali, Rasputin and Pathan. He argued that communal politics was borne not on religion, but by use of religion for political ends.

However, what is common about all these scholars is that, religion is used to further political interests. The significance about these scholars is the fact that neither of them seem to effectively give attention to the effect of religion on the political development of Iganga district. The study contends that religious identities have become a powerful force in democratic politics and religious identities are a great challenge to all Ugandans, particularly in Iganga district. The study argues that, a true democratic country would ensure equal rights to all, irrespective of their religious affiliations. By this, leaders should not politicize religion at any cost, and democracy should remain a source of people's participation in decision making, and for the welfare of common masses. One must understand the difference between religion as a faith and religion as a political ideology.

Oded, (2000:163) in his treatise, he evidently shows that, during the tenure of President Daniel Arap Moi, Muslims had been more widely represented in the government of Kenya. He stressed that one of the most eminent long serving Assistant Ministers was Sharif Nasser, Member of Parliament from Mombasa Central Constituency, and chairman of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party's Mombasa branch. He emphasized that, as for the Muslim in parliament after the December 1992 parliamentary elections there were twenty four Muslim members of parliament to the twelve additional members nominated by the president and 4 of them were muslims and the number increased with the rise of Kenyan- Somali nationals in booming business and politics, Neil, C., & Tabea, S., (2019).

Oded's study concentrates on emphasizing Islam and politics in Kenya although his study provides a good background for this research, the current study deviates from this in that, the role of all religions towards achieving political development is portrayed, particularly in Iganga district.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a cross sectional survey design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Amin, (2005: 212) observes that cross sectional survey design is used when carrying those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of an event, community, region, providing data about the population. The study collected data from samples of pre-determined interests and also evaluated people's beliefs, ideas, values and perceptions about the effect of religion on the

political development of Iganga district. The study sample was determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of determining samples. The study sample was 247 out of 700 study population as Touliatos & Comption, (1988:42) and Amin, (2005:178) recommend. Using questionnaires and interview guides, the study employed simple random, purposive and snow ball sampling techniques, Onen & Yuko (2005:35) and analysis was done using a chi-square test of goodness-of-fit given below;

$$X^2 \quad = \quad \sum \frac{(fo=fe)2}{fe}$$

Where by
X^2=Chi-square
Fo= Frequency observed
Fe= Frequency expected
Σ =Sun totals.
Qualitative data collected was thematically analyzed and involved critical examination of every document and developing meaning out of it and incorporating the meaning into a theme that corresponds to the context of the study.

FINDINGS

Religion influences leadership in Iganga District
The results were in response to the study hypothesis which stated that, religion has significant influence on the leadership of Iganga District.
The null hypothesis that was tested stated that: religion has no significant influence on the leadership of Iganga District. To test this hypothesis the researcher used items the Table where respondents showed their degree of agreement or disagreement below;

Table 1: Respondents' perception about religion on leadership in Iganga District

RELIGION AND LEADERSHIP		COUNT	COL%
Political leaders prepare individuals of their religious affiliation to succeed them	Strongly agree	47	19.0%
	Agree	63	25.5%
	Disagree	91	36.8%
	Strongly disagree	46	18.6%
Total		247	100.0%
Political leaders are sensitive religiously in their practice of governance	Strongly agree	31	12.6%
	Agree	97	39.3%
	Disagree	70	28.3%
	Strongly disagree	49	19.8%
Total		247	100.0%
Leaders tend to use religion to canvass for votes	Strongly agree	58	23.5%
	Agree	114	46.2%
	Disagree	50	20.2%
	Strongly disagree	25	10.1%
Total		247	100.0%
Political leaders hate fellow politicians from religious denominations different from theirs	Strongly agree	48	19.4%
	Agree	67	27.1%
	Disagree	93	37.7%
	Strongly disagree	39	15.8%
Total		247	100.0%
Leaders appoint their religious henchmen into important posts	Strongly agree	51	20.6%
	Agree	88	35.6%
	Disagree	73	29.6%
	Strongly disagree	35	14.2%
Total		247	100.0%

Table 4.1 shows the respondents' perception on religious affiliations and leadership in Iganga District. The study employed a Chi-square test of goodness of-fit to test the hypothesis and the results are presented in table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Results of the Chi-square goodness-of-fit in relation to respondents' perception about religion on leadership.

						Chi-square values at df=12
		Count	Expected	Residual	x^2obs	x^2crt
Political leaders prepare individuals of their religious affiliation to succeed then	Strongly agree	47	61.8	-14.8	919.7	21.03
	Agree	63	61.8	-1.3		
	Disagree					
	Strongly disagree					
Total		**247**	**247**			
Political leaders are sensitive religiously in their practices of governance	Strongly agree	31	61.8	-3.8		
	Agree	97	61.8	52.3		
	Disagree	70	61.8	-52.3		
	Strongly disagree	49	61.8	-11.8		
	Strongly agree	49	61.8	-36.8		
Total			**247**	**247**		
Leaders tend to use religion to canvass for votes	Strongly agree	58	61.8	-13.8		
	Agree	114	61.8	5.8		
	Disagree	50	61.8	31.3		
	Strongly disagree	25	61.8	-22.8		
Total		**247**	**247**			
Political leaders hate fellow politicians from denominations different from theirs	Strongly agree	48	61.8	-13.8		
	Agree	67	61.8	5.3		
	Disagree	93	61.8	31.3		
	Strongly disagree	39	61.3	-22.8		
Total		**247**	**247**			
Leaders appoint their religious henchmen into important posts	Strongly agree	51	61.8	-10.8		
	Agree	88	61.8	26.3		
	Disagree	73	61.8	11.3		
	Strongly disagree	53	61.8	-126.8		
Total		**247**	**247**			

From table 4.2 above x^2obs=919.7 while x^2cr=21.03 at significance level of ɑ₎0.05 and appropriate df=12. Since x^2obs is greater than x^2cr, thus results were statistically significant. The null hypothesis was rejected implying that, religion influences leadership in Iganga district.

The hypothesis findings were also supplemented with the results of respondents from the interview guide. When the respondents were asked whether religious leaders talk about political issues to their followers, different religious leaders acknowledged as follows;
An Anglican religious leader said that;

"We do but secretly for example we tell them on who to vote, remind them to be obedient and vigilant during election time." (Interviewed in January, 2021).

While a Muslim leader acknowledged that;
"Religious leaders talk about politics especially after Ijumaa prayer. I believe they do this because politics move hand in hand with religion…." (Interviewed in October 2020).

While opinion leaders stressed that;
They do it, for example, they discriminate non fellow Muslims during political activities like District, Town council, and local council elections …" (Interviewed in November, 2020).

Similarly, the respondents were asked whether religious denominations in Iganga District mentor some political leaders to behave the way they do.
One Muslim religious leader revealed that;

"There is an element of the Born Again Christians overwhelmingly supporting NRM party candidates, something that is un usual in politics."(Interviewed in October, 2020)
On the other hand, political Party leaders in Iganga District agreed that,
"It is true that different religious denominations mentor political leaders thoroughly but secretly." (Interviewed in November, 2020).
The respondents were also asked whether political leaders have an impact they make on the position of the religious institutions. On this, the opinion leaders especially at Local Council level argued that,

"Definitely, they have an impact. They try every possible means to corrupt religious institutions into supporting them" (Interviewed in October, 2020)
Whereas Political leaders at District level revealed that,
"We do make an impact in form of fundraisings, actions, making decisions but for the good of our people. Of course we need also support from the religious fraternity in the District, because they are also citizens, thus voters." (Interviewed in November, 2020)

While Religious leaders in the District stressed that,
 "They have an impact because they use political positions to solicit for funds, for example, looking for land to construct either a mosque or a church within the district." (Interviewed in December, 2020).

The findings from both qualitative and quantitative data have shown that religion influences leadership in Iganga district. The leadership of Iganga District is quite evident of religio-politics.

DISCUSION

The findings indicated that religion significantly influences leadership; this is depicted by a strong rejection by the statistical details contained in table 4.2. The calculation of the actual relationship revealed that the x^2obs was greater than critical value (919.7>21.03). The findings are in line with Mudoola's (1993:47) study. He clearly presents a chronology of event in post independent Uganda where religion played a decisive part in leadership. He shows how the Baganda Muslims came up to advance their cause through NAAM after losing the lost countries to Bunyoro, and that this goal was realized in 1971 when Amin took over power through military coup. To many Muslims, Amin was a blessing who helped in the elevation of Islam. For, under him, Muslims enjoyed government sympathy and the differences were kept aside under the leadership of Amin's regime, who gave them a sense of belonging. The above observation certainly shows that religion influences leadership and as such, it greatly hinders political development.

The above findings are also supported by Karugire's (1988:168) study who argued, that throughout the political history of Uganda, different religious sects have gone into lobbying with ruling governments in an attempt to attain reasonable positions both political and in the traditional service. Consequently, political leaders have exploited this opportunity to manipulate the different religious sects thus politics of divide and rule, and as such hinders proper advancement of political development of Districts, like Iganga district.

In qualitative data, the respondents' views acknowledged that religion plays a major role in determining leadership of Iganga District. This is clearly portrayed by the respondents who maintained that religious leaders influenced them on whom to vote especially after prayers, and church services. The findings are supported by Gingyera's (1979) study about the relationship between Catholics and politics. He narrates how Catholicism imparts colour to Ugandan politics. He argues that the dispute concerning religion in Uganda is not over doctrinal offices but bout political jobs and scholarships.

The Catholics feel aggrieved and wonder why all such posts like that of a Chief, sub country chief and others are held by Protestants. Consequently those who are not represented feel marginalized and many not participate in the politics of Uganda, hence act as a hindrance to the political

development in Iganga district. Similarly, Omenka's (2003:12) views are in agreement with the research findings. The Protestants worth maintained a comfortable lead over their catholic counterparts in the provision of political leadership. The above observation offers justification that religion influences leadership and as such achievement of genuine unity and political development of different religious beliefs is an uphill task.

CONCLUSION

The study therefore concluded that, leadership position in Iganga District is largely determined by religion. People find it comfortable to elect leaders of their religious faith at the same time leaders appoint their religious henchmen into important political and administrative positions. Thus, Political leaders should realize that religion has its main objectives of fostering unity and harmony in society. They should therefore not use it as a stepping stone for political offices by exploiting the simple majority of followers of a certain religious sect over the other. They should instead reach to the masses irrespective of their religious affiliations and once in office, they should use their mandate to serve the whole community equally rather than favouring individuals of their religious faith. The criterion for granting leadership positions should be on basis of merit and not religion.

REFERENCE

Ali Mubarak, Lahore, (2009) Religion and Politics: Integration, Separation and Conflict. Violence and Peace challenges of religions, USA.

Amin, M.E (2005). Foundation of Statistical inference for social Sciences Kampala Makerere University Press.

Asghar, A.E (2004) Religion Identify and Democracy. Mumbai: Published in secular Perspective.

Ghandi, M (1989). Religion and Politics. New Belhi: Macgran ill Inc Press.

Gingyera, P., (1979). Issues in Pre-independent Politics in Uganda Kampala: East African Literature Bureau.

Karugire, S.R., (1980). A political History of Uganda. Nairobi, Kenya. Heinemann.

Karugire, S.R., (1988). The Roots of Instability in Uganda. Kampala: New Vision Printing Press.

Krejcie, R.V & Morgan, D.W (1970). Determining sample size for research activities educational and psychological measurements, 30,608 Sage Publications.

Kristina Kempkey (2008), The political relevance of religion in Africa. The SAIS Europe Journal.

Lapidus, I., (1988). A History of Islamic Societies. Cambridge. pp.167.

Mbiti, J.S (1989). African Religious and Philosophy (2nd ed.) Nairobi, Kenya. Heinemann.

Mudoola, D.M (1993). Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda. Kampala Fountain publishers.

Neil Carrier & Tabea Scharrer, (2019), Mobile Urbanity: Somali Presence in Urban East Africa. Berghahn Books, New York, USA.

Oded, a (2000). Islam and Politics in Kenya: Nairobi, Kenya, Heinemann.

Omenka, N.I., (2003). Christian Mission and training for political leadership in Eastern Nigeria: Lagos: Ibadan University Press.

Onen, D & Yuko, O.W (2005). A general guide to writing research proposal and report. Kisumu: Options Press.

Ssekamwa, J.C (1997). History and development of Education in Uganda Kampala: fountain Publishers.

Touliatos, J.S & Compton, N.H (1988). Research methods in human ecology/home economics. Ames: Iowa state University Press.

Watt, M., (1974), The Majesty that was Islam. London, pp.108, 120.www.allcademic .com/meta/p65185.