

INFLUENCE OF POVERTY ON FEMALE YOUTH PROSTITUTION IN UGANDA: THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG WOMEN RESIDING IN KIGONGI WARD, KABALE MUNICIPALITY.

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ABSTRACT.

Background:

The study aimed to investigate the influence of poverty on female youth prostitution in Kigongi Ward, Kabale Municipality. The study was guided by specific objectives, which include the influence of poverty on female youth prostitution, the experiences and perspectives of the female youth involved in prostitution, and the degree to which poverty influences prostitution among female youths in Kigongi Ward, Kabale Municipality.

Methodology:

This study adopted a case study research design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Using simple random and purposive sampling techniques, a total of 100 respondents were used in the study.

Results:

It was found that a majority of 30% of the respondents reported that a woman might live a simple life or earn a lot of money as a prostitute, while 20% of the respondents mentioned parental neglect and youth laziness as the factors that push female youth into prostitution. Also, (30%) of respondents mentioned that prostitution affects a community's reputation, standard of living, and property. On the degree to which poverty influences prostitution among female youths, the majority of the respondents (45%) said that poverty causes female youth prostitution in Kigongi Ward.

Conclusion:

It was concluded that poverty contributes majorly to female youth prostitution in the Kigongi ward of Kabale Municipality. And there is no supportive empowerment policy that can alleviate poverty.

Recommendation:

People from developing nations must be given legal chances to migrate, with consideration for the economic interests of both the receiving nation and the immigrants themselves.

Keywords: Poverty, Female Youth Prostitution, Kabale Municipality, Kigongi Ward.

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INTRODUCTION.

Prostitution is the act of exchanging sexual favors for money and other types of instant payment (Namey et al., 2022). It was practiced by the Greeks in ancient times and is frequently called prostitution. Greek and Roman systems as the Roman Empire grew, it was a common practice to capture foreigners as slaves, buy them as prostitutes, or even raise them specifically as such (Lenski, 2023). Additionally, prostitution cuts across social classes, from the low-class "streetwalkers" with their stereotypical drug use and brutal pimps to the high-

class brothel and escort service workers with expensive clothes and posh apartments (Easterbrook-Smith, 2022).

According to Bhat (2022) since the beginning of time, women's prostitution has been more commonly discussed than men's prostitution. It is widely believed that as it is in its present form, prostitution could not have developed before the invention of money, which could only have happened after the development of multiple trades (Arslanian, 2022). Additionally, prostitution has been seen in the behavior of bonobo chimpanzees based on access to food and presents, as well as in the behavior of penguins based on access to good stones for building nests. Edwards and Baker (2020) suggested that before

industrialization, the majority of products and services were exchanged because most people lived in rural areas. It was probably acceptable to use anything that was often used to exchange for other items to pay a prostitute for her sexual services.

The impact of poverty on female youth prostitution is a global problem with wide-ranging ramifications. The dynamics of poverty and its effects on vulnerable people, particularly young women, call for further investigation as economies continue to change (Hansen & Johansson, 2023). Understanding the intersectionality of poverty, gender, and age, which can vary greatly between locations and cultures, is an important research need (Chu, 2023). To shed light on how these factors, interact and contribute to the prostitution vulnerability of female youth, thorough cross-cultural studies are required. Additionally, current research frequently ignores the long-term effects and potential solutions that deal with poverty as a root cause in favor of the immediate causes of prostitution (Taahiru-Swallah, 2021).

In Africa, the impact of poverty on female youth prostitution is a major issue especially in Nigeria (Olofinbiyi & Singh, 2020). While numerous studies have drawn attention to the connection between poverty and young girls' engagement in prostitution (Gichuna et al., 2020; Beksinska et al., 2021; Jewkes et al., 2021), there is a research gap in exploring the precise mechanisms by which poverty results in this outcome. Research should delve more deeply into the cultural and societal elements that interact with poverty to shape the prostitution experiences of young girls. To better understand the long-term repercussions and create focused interventions that meet both their immediate needs and their prospects, longitudinal studies that follow the life trajectories of girls who become prostitution clients are also required. The vulnerability of young women to prostitution is made worse by poverty. Young women who lack access to necessities like food, shelter, and healthcare may turn to sex work as a way to make money so they may meet these demands. They frequently have few other options because of the economic despair brought on by poverty, which pushes them into the sex trade (Letlape & Dube, 2019).

Like many other regions, East Africa has the problem of female youth prostitution that is made worse by poverty (Abdella et al., 2022). The lack of information that takes into consideration the intricacies of regional and local variations in the variables of prostitution among young girls is a research gap in this area. Making effective treatments requires a more detailed understanding of these processes. While some studies discuss the role of education in preventing prostitution, there is a dearth of thorough research on the availability and quality of education for girls in areas of poverty, which limits their chances of upward mobility and increases their susceptibility to prostitution. This is due to the complicated interactions between poverty and the diverse social, cultural, and economic elements that support

female youth prostitution are not well understood. Although it is clear that poverty has a big impact, research has frequently fallen short of probing the complex reasons and pathways that push young women into this predatory industry (Wa Teresia, 2021).

The East African nation of Uganda has first-hand experience with the effects of poverty on female child prostitution. The lack of a thorough, current database on the number of girls engaging in prostitution, their ages, and the causes of their engagement is a noteworthy research gap in the Ugandan setting. These facts would be a vital building block for evidence-based policy and intervention plans. Additionally, there is a need for research that examines the particular roles played by regional governmental organizations in tackling the poverty-prostitution nexus, evaluates the success of their initiatives, and identifies areas for development. In Kabale, while it is against the law to do so, prostitutes engage in prostitution as a convenient means of making money in homes, slums, and hotels (Moufakkir, 2023). Plambech, (2022) noted prostitutes receive significant sums of money from their clients in exchange for their bodies and sexual services. It is related to Kigongi Ward in Kabale Town and is associated with unsafe abortion and the spread of gonorrhea, syphilis, and HIV/AIDS (Bossard et al., 2022). According to Bano et al. (2023) the majority of assessments of prostitution, both men and women engage in prostitution for monetary gain, either continuously as relative beginners or for a moment as professionals. Prostitution is a common choice for young women who seek to subvert restrictive gender stereotypes that limit women's sexuality to romantic relationships and prevent marriages (Onanuga, 2023).

Therefore, the long-term effects of prostitution driven by poverty on these young women are still not sufficiently investigated (Schmidt-Sane, 2022). Beyond the short-term economic gains, little is known about the long-term consequences to these people's bodily and mental health, their exposure to social stigma, and their legal difficulties. To create comprehensive interventions that address both the short-term and long-term effects, understanding these long-term repercussions is crucial. Furthermore, the global viewpoint is frequently absent from this topic's research (Kayesu et al., 2022). Although research has been done in many nations, a thorough cross-cultural examination is required to identify the similarities and differences in how poverty affects female youth prostitution in other communities. The development of more effective policies and initiatives can be influenced by this global viewpoint, which can also assist in identifying best practices to reduce the influence of poverty on female youth prostitution in Kabale Municipality, with a particular focus on the experiences of young women residing in Kigongi Ward is still lacking thus need for this study. This study will be guided by the specific objectives namely; investigating how poverty is influencing female youth prostitution, experiences and perspectives on the female youth involved in prostitution,

and determining the degree to which poverty is influencing female prostitution among the youth in Kabale Municipality Kigongi ward.

METHODOLOGY.

Page | 3 Study Area.

The attractive and profitable Kigongi Ward is located in the Kabale Municipality, in the southwest of Uganda. As it is surrounded by the green, undulating hills of the Kigezi Highlands, Kigongi Ward has breathtaking panoramic views of the lovely landscape. The ward is defined by the colorful buildings, busy marketplaces, and orderly streets of its residential and commercial districts. Kigongi Ward is a hive of activity that represents the rich culture and people it serves in addition to being a stunning natural location in the Kabale Municipality, located in the Kabale District's center in southwest Uganda.

Population Selection.

This study adopted a case study research design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Using simple random and purposive sampling techniques, a total of 100 respondents were used in the study. The 1,000 respondents, including males and females, were chosen from the people who deal in commercial sex well known as prostitution, and other people who carry out other activities in the Kigongi ward. Data collection for this study required a self-report approach due to its sensitive nature. According to the study, self-reporting encourages participants to talk openly and honestly about their experiences. Moreover, self-reporting allows participants to talk extensively on the subjects that they think are most significant. To provide the participants with some degree of influence over the interview process, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was thought to be more acceptable than either a structured or unstructured interview. One characteristic necessary for this kind of research was the conversational nature of semi-structured interviews, which can make participants feel more at ease and talk more freely about personal experiences. Self-reports have the benefit of being more informal and laid-back while still offering a structure that helps the

researcher and participants make sure the subjects of the study are covered.

The interviewer's and the interviewees' similar ages were considered as well. This worked well and contributed to the informal and laid-back nature of the interviews. Discussions regarding common interests, such as attire, music, TV shows, and entertainment venues, frequently emerged.

Study size Selection.

To calculate the sample size, the formula proposed by Israel (1992) was utilized to derive the sample size from the population.

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

Where: n= Sample size, N= Population size, 1= constant, and e= Precession level on 10%. Therefore, N= 400=constant, and e= 10%. Ten percent marginal error was varied for this t a lot of respondents due to a limited number of hotels in the study area.

$$n = \frac{1,000}{1 + 1,000 (0.1)^2} = 91$$

$$n = 91$$

Therefore, the study also considered 9 key informants which included one Kabale District Health Officer, five politicians, and 2 staff from Kabale Aids Center, Kabale District. Hence the total number of respondents was 100. On the inclusion and exclusion criteria, prostitutes were included in the study and non-prostitutes were excluded. This was made to reduce the bias about the study and come up with detailed information.

Ethics Statement.

In compliance with local law and institutional regulations, an ethical evaluation and approval were not necessary for the study involving human subjects. To take part in this study, the subjects gave their information.

RESULTS.

Table 1: The Socio-Economic and Occupation Characteristics of 100 Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Cashier	10	10
Waiter	20	20
Waitress	20	20
Cleaner	10	10
Institution/student	20	20
Boda Boda	15	15
Sex worker	05	05
Total	100	100

Source: Field data 2023.

The majority of the respondents confessed to working in Kigongi bars as cashiers, waiters/waitresses and bar cleaners. This comprised 60% of the sample that was made of sex workers (5%), institution/students (20%), and boda boda cyclists (15%) which all totaled to 100%. This implies that all respondents were mature (above 18 years) indicating that the responses were valid.

Table 2: Causes of Prostitution

Cause	Frequency	Percentage
Peer influence	20	20%
Orphanage	05	05%
Poverty	45	45%
Drug influence	05	05%
Lack of guidance	03	03%
Negligence	07	07%
Rural-urban migration	15	15%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field data 2023.

It is clearly shown that not only poverty is responsible for prostitution the researcher thought before but several other factors were not considered and yet they also contribute to prostitution These include peer influence which claimed to be 20%, and orphanage claimed 05%. The researcher thought that the majority of the girls on the streets for prostitution were there basically for money or economic reasons but it proved different.

05% was less compared to 20% of peer influence.

Negligence was never given any thought before research was carried out but after, it proved to also claim for 07%. Lack of guidance claimed 35%, drug influence 05%, and rural-urban migration claimed 15% while poverty claimed the highest position in the causes of female youth prostitution by 40% in Kigongi ward.

Table 3: Education Level of Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary level (PLE)	25	25%
UCE	40	40%
UACE	25	25%
Tertiary	10	10%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field data 2023.

The majority of respondents had completed the Uganda Certificate in Education (UCE) by 20% which is the lowest recognized certification in the Ugandan curriculum of education. 40% had completed primary seven, 40% had completed senior four, and 25% completed senior six while only 10% had completed higher institution of learning. Most female youth prostitution therefore was found at the ordinary level (UCE).

Categories of clients of sex business.

Table 4: Clients of the Sex Business.

Client title	Frequency	Percentage
Single working men	05	05%
Married men	20	20%
Students	05	05%
Trailer drivers	67	67%
Tourists	03	03%
Total	100	100%

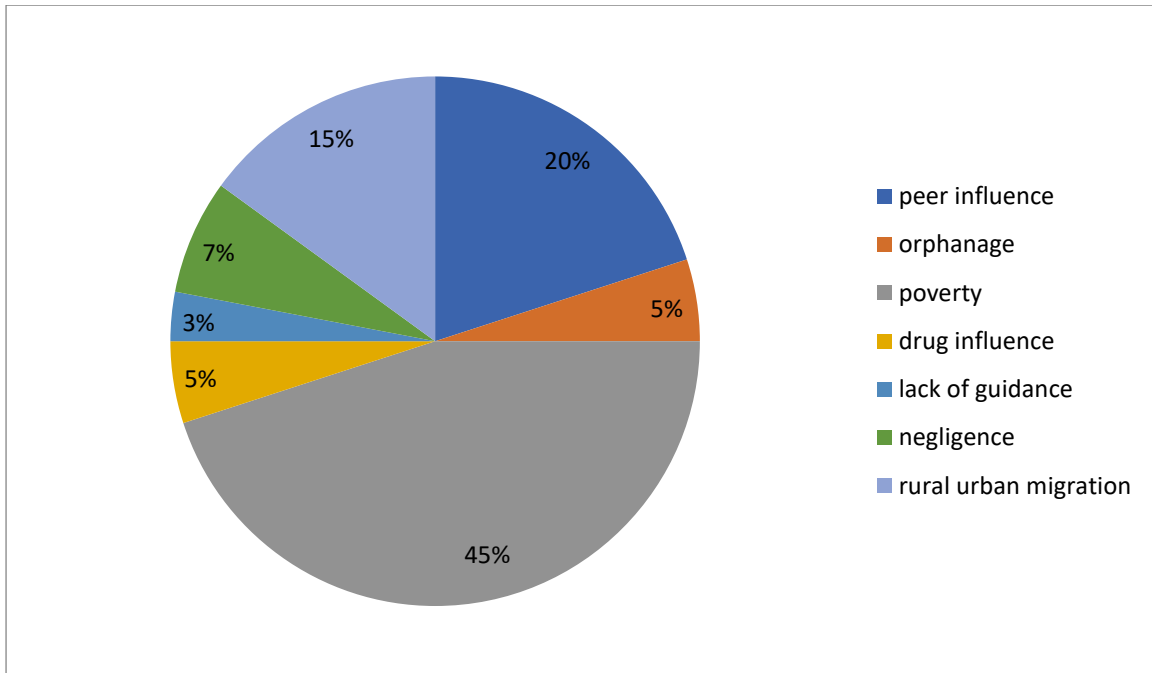
Source: Field data 2023.

According to the respondents, the researcher was informed that single working men go to look for prostitutes majorly because of two reasons; Peer influence, and drug abuse/alcoholism. It was discovered that only 05% sought prostitutes. Around 20% of married men also run to the streets to look for these sex workers

due to the following reasons that respondents informed the researcher.

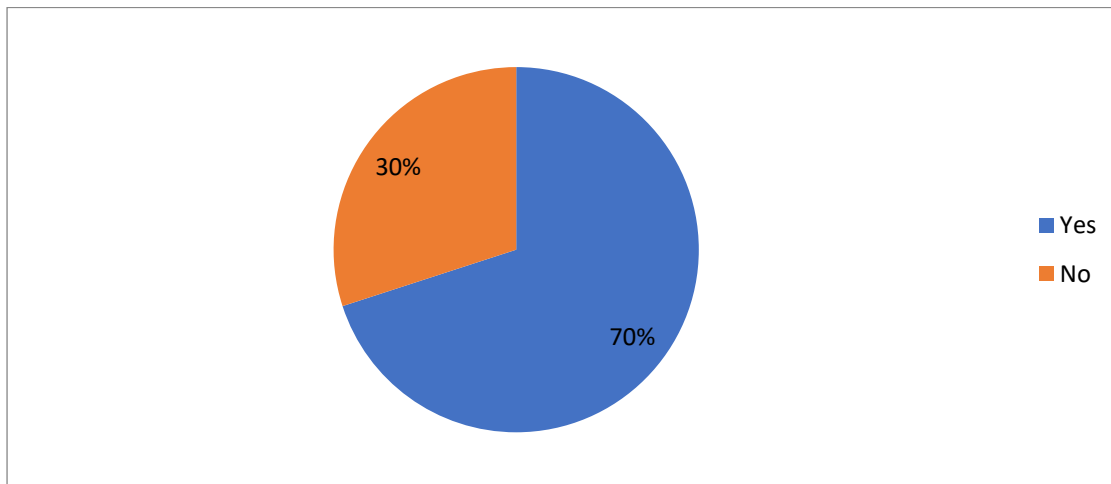
When they had disagreements with their spouses/wives, when they are sexually not satisfied by their wives/spouses and or, when they feel like exploring.

Figure 1: Respondents' causes of sex business on the streets.



Most of the respondents were found to be bar workers i.e. cleaners, waiters, waitresses, cashiers, and sex workers.

Figure 2: Response to the legalization of prostitution.



The result of respondents to legalize female youth prostitution showed that 30% of the respondents were in support while 70% were against it.

The Influence of Poverty on Female Youth Prostitution.

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This section concentrates on the underlying socioeconomic factors driving female youth into prostitution.

Table 5: Responses on the Influence of Poverty on Female Youth Prostitution

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Youth laziness	10	10
The belief that a woman might live a simple life or earn a lot of money as a prostitute	30	30
Method of survival because of unemployment	15	15
The desire to take care of their families	25	25
Parental neglect	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data 2023

According to the results presented in Table 5, 30% the highest numbers of the respondents mentioned the belief that a woman might live a simple life or earn a lot of money as a prostitute pushing female youth to prostitution whereas 10% the lowest number of respondents mentioned youth laziness and 15% mentioned that it is a method of survival because of unemployment. The other respondents included 25% who mentioned the desire to take care of their families while the remaining 20% of the respondents mentioned parental neglect and youth

laziness as the factors that push the female youth into prostitution. One of the key respondents said that unemployment influences female youth into prostitution due to a lack of money, and food.

The Experiences and Perspectives on the Female Youth Involved in Prostitution.

This section concentrates on the experiences and perspectives of the female youth involved in prostitution

Table 6: Responses on the Experiences and Perspectives of the Female Youth Involved in Prostitution.

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Affects the community's reputation, standard of living, and property value	30	30
It is a dishonorable profession	25	25
The tactic used by males to oppress and rule women	10	10
Lowers women's status and provoking negative societal reactions	20	20
It is considered and rejected as a taboo	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data 2023

Results presented in the table show that 30% the highest number of respondents mentioned prostitution affects a community's reputation, standard of living, and property value while 10% the least number mentioned it is a tactic used by males to oppress and rule women. Other respondents included 25% who mentioned it is a dishonourable profession, 20% mentioned lowering women's status and provoking negative societal reactions 15% considered and rejected prostitution as taboo as some of the experiences and perspectives on the female youth involved in prostitution. It was found out during the

interview that though the youth are involved in prostitution, they know that it's not good but just for survival.

The Responses on the Degree to Which Poverty Influences Prostitution among Female Youths.

This section concentrates on the degree to which poverty influences prostitution among female youths.

Table 7: Responses on the Degree to Which Poverty Influences Prostitution among the Female Youths

Cause	Frequency	Percentage
Peer pressure	20	20%
Being orphaned	05	05%
Poverty	45	45%
Drug influence	05	05%
Lack of guidance	03	03%
Negligence	07	07%
Rural-urban migration	15	15%
Total	100	100%

Source: Primary Data 2023

The results in the table make it evident that several other factors, in addition to poverty, are also playing a role in the development of prostitution-related activities. Peer pressure accounted for 20% of these factors, and orphans contributed 5% as well. The study found that a large percentage of girls who engage in prostitution do it primarily for monetary or other financial gain. Five percent (5%) of the orphaned as a factor was 15% less than peer pressure's influence on prostitution. Negligence was also among the factors that contributed to prostitution as mentioned by 7% of the respondents who participated in the study. Another driver that caused an increase in prostitution was the lack of guidance which accounted for 35%. Some prostitutes ended up in this industry due to drug abuse which accounted for 5%. At the same time, rural-urban migration was identified as another driver that accounted for 15% of young females., The highest driver of all the different causes of female youth prostitution in the Kigongi ward was poverty which accounted for 45%.

DISCUSSION.

Poverty and female youth prostitution.

It was further revealed by 10% of respondents that parental neglect is one of the reasons that drive young children into prostitution. This is in line with Eales et al. (2021) who noted that some parents have developed the dreadful habit of abruptly taking their children from their care owing to a variety of issues. This is uncomfortable and could force the child into prostitution or any other job. In addition, most parents give their kids too much time, allow them to hang out with the wrong group of people, and fail to give them guidance or counseling this may also lead the children to illegal and abnormal behavior like prostitution as explained by (Zakaria et al., 2022)

Lower household income was brought to light by 30% of respondents who said that another appealing aspect is the belief that a woman might live a simple life or earn a lot of money as a prostitute (Hugstad et al., 2022). He also added that being out of a job, falling into a prostitute

friend, or sensing pressure from another person to sell sex are examples of trigger events into prostitution by female youths. Youth laziness was among the drivers of female youth into prostitution. This is in line with Samuel (2023) who noted prostitution, which is perceived as an easy industry that earns quick money, might result from the disease of youth laziness, which has hit today's youth. Some young people view prostitution as a free business one can perform without employment and stress.

The experiences and perspectives of the female youth involved in prostitution.

On the experiences and perspectives of the female youth involved in prostitution, 30% acknowledged that it affects the community's reputation, standard of living, and property value. This is in line with Day, (2023) who said that some people contend that despite the negative effects prostitution has on the economy, it is still not a victimless crime because it can have negative effects on a community's reputation, standard of living, and property value. The study findings also agree with Stalker et al. (2020) who said that there is strong evidence that prostitution, drug use, drug sales, and involvement in non-drug crimes, particularly property crimes, all occur close to one another. Bhat (2022) also reported that prostitution is not a major contributor to state tax revenues because it is often illegal, and its employees are not routinely tested for sexually transmitted illnesses, which is harmful in cultures that value unprotected sex and raises health care expenditures.

It was found that prostitution lowers women's status and provokes negative societal reactions. Prostitution lowers women's status and provokes negative societal reactions, in addition to reducing the value of property (Anyamene, n.d.). Prostitution typically sparks debates in the culture where it occurs. Those with a religious inclination who view it as a threat to the moral standards contained in their scriptures may be morally outraged by its existence. Others, though, are either uninterested in it or perceive it as a necessary evil.

Many feminist and women's organizations are against prostitution because it is perceived as a tactic used by

males to oppress and rule women and because it is a result of the patriarchal societal structure currently in place (Akhtar & Abbas, n.d.). The major umbrella organization of women's associations in Uganda that strives to promote women's rights and equality has condemned prostitution as a despicable form of male maltreatment. According to Firouzjaeian et al. (2023), numerous ethnic groups in the world consider and reject prostitution as taboo. For instance, the Bakiga ethnic community has historically disapproved of prostitution. Women and young girls who were deemed promiscuous were typically rejected by their families and the larger community and because of the stigma, she could never hope to wed someone from her social circle and, if she didn't leave the area, she would remain an outcast.

The stigma associated with prostitution causes all members of society to react negatively to it; because prostitution is a dishonorable profession, and no one wants to be friends with or live next to one; abolitionist organizations aim to abolish the prostitution industry and think of a society without anyone who buys or sells sex for whatever purpose (Moufakkir, 2023). Ssekamatte et al. (2020) claimed that attitudes toward prostitution differ; some societies see it as a natural part of life and regulate it to prevent the spread of disease and violence against women. Other societies have made it illegal without actually enforcing the legislation and have chosen to ignore it. The Ugandan government has not created any legislation to regulate prostitution. Therefore, prostitution is not acceptable in Uganda, but it is only regulated in certain communities, such as Muslim societies, where it is illegal and subject to the death penalty.

The degree to which poverty influences prostitution among female youths.

The findings found out that not only did poverty influence female youth prostitution but also other factors like peer pressure accounted for 20% of these factors and orphanhood contributed 5% as well. This was further emphasized by Bhat, (2022) who noted young women are frequently compelled by poverty to turn to prostitution as a means of obtaining necessities like food, shelter, and clothing.

The study found that a large percentage of girls who engage in prostitution do it primarily for monetary or other financial gain as supported by Rana et al. (2020) who claimed poverty frequently leaves female youths with little economic opportunities and compels them into the sex trade as a way of survival. Negligence was also among the factors that contributed to prostitution as mentioned by 7% of the respondents who participated in the study apart from poverty others ended up in the prostitution industry due to substance abuse and this is emphasized by O'Brien et al. (2022) who noted substance abuse issues often co-occur with poverty, and some individuals may turn to prostitution to support their drug habits. Lastly, the highest driver of all the different causes of female youth prostitution in the Kigongi ward was

poverty which accounted for 45%. This is further supported by Varghese, (n.d.) who said Many young women from low-income backgrounds end up trapped in prostitution because they are dependent on prostitutes or drug dealers for their financial support.

CONCLUSIONS.

Based on the findings on the influence of poverty on female youth prostitution in the Kigongi ward, it was concluded that youth laziness, the belief that a woman might live a simple life or earn a lot of money as a prostitute, method of survival because of unemployment, the desire to take care of their families and parental neglect were among the factors that influenced female youths into prostitution. However, the study found that female youth involved in prostitution in Kigongi Ward use a range of coping mechanisms to deal with their financial difficulties. Thus, it was concluded that poverty leads to female youth prostitution in Kigongi ward Kabale district. In addition, the study discovered that it affects a community's reputation, the standard of living, and property value, a dishonorable profession, a tactic used by males to oppress and rule women, lowers women's status, and provokes negative societal reactions as well as being considered and rejected as taboo in most of the ethnic cultures.

Concerning the degree to which poverty influences prostitution among female youths it was found that peer pressure, being orphaned, poverty, drug influence, lack of guidance, negligence, and rural-urban migration were also the causes of prostitution. However, poverty remained the largest cause of prostitution among the female youth of Kigongi ward Kabale district.

GENERALIZABILITY.

Because the study focused on Kigongi Ward, Kabale Municipality, a particular geographic region, its generalizability may be limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

Based on the findings, no woman or girl would be lured into thinking prostitution is an attractive or acceptable job if no men were looking to buy sex acts, no brothels waiting for victims, no victims would be recruited, no states profiting from the sex trade, and no false messages about prostitution to trick women and girls into believing it is an attractive or acceptable job.

We believe that addressing the root causes of prostitution and trafficking, which are the factors that contribute to the demand, is the only way to stop the sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children through these practices.

All governments, NGOs, and faith-based organizations must be forced to focus on reducing the demand for prostitutes and sex trafficking victims. Males who pay for sex acts, exploiters, traffickers, and prostitutes who profit

from the sale of children and women for sex, as well as the culture that spreads misunderstandings about prostitution, all need to face consequences.

There is a need to create legal opportunities for the migration of people from poor countries, taking the economic interests of both immigrants and the receiving country into consideration.

Due to differences in cultural, economic, and social conditions, young women's experiences in different locations or countries may differ dramatically. Consequently, even though the study offers insightful information on the circumstances in Uganda, care should be used when extrapolating these conclusions to other settings.

LIMITATION OF STUDY.

The robustness of the study was impacted by the research design and technique. The study's trustworthiness was jeopardized by limited sample size or inadequately stringent data collection techniques. Furthermore, because prostitution and poverty are such sensitive subjects, there was a chance that replies were prejudiced or underreported, which could compromise the accuracy of the findings.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS.

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

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AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS.

Data generated and analyzed during the current study are included in the body of this paper.

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