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Child Witchcraft Accusations in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

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by

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MA, Oklahoma University, 2008

BA, University of Maryland College Park, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Child witchcraft accusations, which represent a comparatively new phenomenon in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, have caused tens of thousands of children aged 5-10 years to be abused, tortured, ostracized, stigmatized, and thrown out of family homes into the streets. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of staff of local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and other child advocacy groups who worked with young children accused of witchcraft concerning how their efforts and collaboration with the government influenced the problem. Critical theory and an attachment conceptual framework were used to analyze the effectiveness of existing government policies targeting these children, as well as to identify whether new policies are needed to address child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. Data were collected through semi structured interviews with a purposeful sample of 13 participants, public and operational documentation. These data were inductively coded, then subjected to a thematic analysis procedure. Findings suggested that existing public policies were deeply inefficient and did not indicate political willingness to protect the rights and safety of children. Implications for positive social change stem from recommendations to local governments to improve public policy implementation strategies; improve the economic conditions of local families through the creation of employment opportunities; foster collaboration among local NGOs, child advocacy groups, the government, and the church; provide educational training; and legally hold abusers accountable for their actions.

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Dedication

To my loving, caring, and beautiful wife, Janice, and to my amazing children, Brandon, Candice, and Edmond Jr., for their sacrifices, steadfastness, and unconditional support, and for being my bedrock and source of inspiration throughout this journey. Words cannot describe my sincere and deepest appreciation for you; I love you all dearly and I am forever grateful for allowing me to pursue this noble cause. You encouraged me all throughout and lifted me up during my lowest moment. I was able to achieve my goal because of you. You are my heroes and may the Lord Almighty bless you abundantly!

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This journey has been a delightful experience for me, and I thank you all for your support, belief in me, and mentorship. While the completion of this doctorate brings a sigh of relief and great sense of accomplishment, the true work for positive social change starts now.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables v

List of Figures vi

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study 1

Introduction 1

Background of the Study 5

Problem Statement 7

Purpose of the Study 9

Research Questions 11

Conceptual Framework 15

Nature of the Study 17

Operational Definitions 19

Assumptions of the Study 22

Limitations of the Study 22

Scope and Delimitations 24

Significance of the Study 24

Summary 26

Chapter 2: Literature Review 28

Introduction 28

Literature Search Strategy 29

Theoretical Foundations 34

Critical Theory 34

Attachment Conceptual Framework 37
Internal Armed Conflicts or Civil Wars 40
Family Breakdown 43
Anthropology of Witchcraft 46
Witchcraft in Sub-Saharan Africa 48
Historical and Cultural Significance of Belief in Witchcraft in the Democratic Republic of Congo 51
Child Witchcraft Accusations and Street Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo 54
Poverty and Other Economic Factors 58
Social Factors 61
Critical and Attachment Theories in Policy Formulation and Implementation 73
Summary 77
Chapter 3: Research Method 79
Introduction 79
Research Design 80
Role of the Researcher 83
Methodology 87
Selection of Participants 88
Data Collection and Research Instruments 93
Data Plan Analysis 97
Trustworthiness of the Study 101

Validation Procedures 101
Ethical Issues and Procedures 103
Summary and Transition 105
Chapter 4: Research Findings 108
Introduction 108
Pilot Study 109
Recruitment 109
Settings of the Study 112
Demographics 117
Data Collection 119
Evidence of Trustworthiness 124
Findings/Results 128
Witchcraft 132
Effects of Poverty 135
Church, Media, and Public Opinion 139
Hostile Family Environment 144
Sociopsychological and Mental Impacts of Accusations 148
Life in the Streets 152
Child Protection Code 155
Government Actions 159
Contributions of Nongovernmental Organizations 163
Summary and Transition 167

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations 169
Introduction 169
Interpretation of the Findings 170
Absence of Genuine Political Will 173
Nongovernmental Organizations Challenging Operational Environment 176
Relevance of Critical Theory and Attachment Conceptual Framework 178
Limitations of the Study 181
Recommendations 187
Public Policy Recommendations 187
Future Study Recommendations 192
Social Change Implications 196
Conclusion 198
References 204
Appendix A: Interview Protocol 229
Appendix B: Respondent Validation Form 233
Appendix C: Preliminary Coding Scheme 235
Appendix D: Map of the Democratic Republic of Congo 237
Appendix E: Map of Belgium 238

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participating NGOs 113

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Key Participants (N = 13) 115

Table 3. Background Descriptions of Participating NGOs 118

Table 4. Themes of Phone Interviews and Brief Code Explanations 130

Table 5. Themes and Descriptions of Public Documents and Memos 131

Table 6. Theme: Witchcraft 134

Table 7. Theme: Poverty 137

Table 8. Theme: Church, Media, Public Opinion 141

Table 9. Theme: Hostile Family Environment 146

Table 10. Theme: Sociopsychological and Mental Impacts of Accusations 150

Table 11. Theme: Life in the Streets 153

Table 12. Theme: Child Protection Code 157

Table 13. Theme: Government Actions 161

Table 14. Theme: Contributions of Nongovernmental Organizations 165

List of Figures

Figure 1. Formulation of the theme of witchcraft.....135

Figure 2. Formulation of the theme of poverty.....138

Figure 3. Formulation of the theme of church, media, public opinion.....143

Figure 4. Establishment of the theme of hostile family environment.....148

Figure 5. Formulation of the theme of sociopsychological and mental impacts of accusations.....151

Figure 6. Formulation of the theme of life in the streets.....154

Figure 7. Formulation of the theme of Child Protection Code.....159

Figure 8. Formulation of the theme of government actions.....162

Figure 9. Formulation of the theme of nongovernmental organizations' contributions.....166

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Child witchcraft accusations constitute a relatively new social phenomenon that has plagued Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other major cities in Africa since the mid-1990s (Cadogan-Poole, 2013; Gram, 2011). In Kinshasa, such accusations represent an emerging epidemic that appears to have little to do with the tradition or practices of witchcraft (Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013; Molina, 2003-2005). Young children seem to bear the brunt of such accusations and are often made scapegoats for their parents' misfortunes, difficult socioeconomic factors, and consequences of poverty (Cahn, 2006; World Vision, 2009). In sub-Sahara Africa and particularly in the DRC, witchcraft has traditionally been a widely pervasive cultural belief and practice among adult males and females (Bederka, 2014). Notably, since the 1990s, there has been a dramatic shift as witchcraft accusations have moved away from elderly targets and toward children (Bederka, 2014). Accusations of witchcraft have caused thousands of children to leave their family homes prematurely for the dangerous streets of Kinshasa.

In the last three decades, child witchcraft accusations have been blamed as the number-one reason for an increase in the number of children in the streets of Kinshasa (Cadogan-Poole, 2013). It may be impossible to know the exact number of street children—referred to as *bashege, shege, or shégués* in Lingala (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2006), a local dialect—who have been accused of witchcraft (a term used interchangeably with *sorcery*). However, each week in Kinshasa, literally hundreds of children are accused of witchcraft and endure abuses at the hands of their own families (HRW, 2006).

The growing presence of young children who have been accused of witchcraft on virtually every street corner of Kinshasa and other major cities across the DRC is clearly indicative of an ongoing problem within Congolese society. To contain the problem, child witchcraft accusations must be addressed through effective public-policy strategies and implementations by the government, as well as through the actions of local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating on the ground in Kinshasa and across the DRC.

A substantial body of research (e.g., Agence Française de Développement & Samusocial International, 2012; Cahn, 2006; Crawford, 2012; Gram, 2011; Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013; South African Pagan Rights Alliance, 2010; World Vision, 2012) has documented relationships between child witchcraft accusations and the growing phenomenon of street children in Kinshasa; missing, however, is a comprehensive study to establish whether robust public policies for reintegrating these young children accused of witchcraft into community life exist, and, if so, whether such policies take into adequate consideration the demographic, socioeconomic, religious, and cultural characteristics of these children. Such a policy analysis may provide a framework for positive social change in which the government, in collaboration with child welfare professionals, child advocate groups, civil society, local NGOs, and international organizations, can work to promote socioeconomic opportunities for parents and caretakers. Partnerships involving the government, child welfare professionals, child advocate groups, civil society, local NGOs, and international organizations may provide a safer environment for these young children to mature into socially responsible young citizens of Kinshasa.

The purpose of this study was to conduct a comprehensive review of the basis for accusations of witchcraft against young children, to explain how the theory and conceptual framework for this study predict patterns of social behaviors of young children 5-10 years of age who have been labeled as witches, and to establish whether the government's inability to assess child witchcraft accusations within the prism of critical theory and the attachment conceptual framework contributed to the increase or recrudescence of the phenomenon. I undertook a thorough review of existing government and public documents of the DRC on policies in support of child welfare strategies targeting young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years who have been accused of witchcraft, as well as the administration of such policies. I also collected narratives from the staff of local NGOs and other child advocacy groups on their experiences with young children who had been prematurely separated from their parents or caregivers' homes and forcibly made street children due to accusations of witchcraft, focusing specifically on whether they were responding positively to the administration of existing policies or whether new policies were needed.

In conducting policy evaluations for this study, I used critical theory to assess the sustainability, effectiveness, and success of identified public policies in order to ascertain the DRC government's commitment to combating the abuse of child witchcraft accusations. As critical theorists have often argued, policy examinations and implementations are helpful tools and procedures that often follow certain cultural norms in which they evolve and operate (Oldfield, 2010). As such, a policy evaluation can be a problem-solving mechanism. Given the fact that the problem of child witchcraft accusations continues to affect Kinshasa, it was imperative that all government programs,

plans, values, and assumptions targeting this issue be questioned, critiqued, analyzed, and challenged (Oldfield, 2010) in an attempt to seek viable, lasting solutions to child witchcraft accusations.

The conceptual framework of attachment theory was used within the policy evaluation process as a predictive model for understanding the developmental significance of an absence of close and continuing relationships or bonds in these stressed children's lives (Baugerud, Goodman, Melinder, & Ovenstad, 2013). If policy interventions are needed, attachment theory could provide a framework for appropriate policy interventions and programs, particularly for children 5 to 10 years of age, which could improve their developmental prospects as future citizens of Kinshasa and the DRC.

The simultaneous use of critical and attachment theories as theoretical and conceptual frameworks in this study was purposeful and fundamentally significant in understanding the direct correlation between strong public policies, implementation strategies, and their positive social effects on children's welfare, specifically in relation to those young ones who are accused of witchcraft and ostracized to the streets. Together, both critical and attachment theories served as the primary exploratory models for this study and helped to provide solid outcomes for this study.

In this chapter, I present the background for the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. I follow with a brief recapitulation of the alignment of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the research. Finally, an overview of the nature of the study, operational definitions, assumptions and limitations, scope and delimitations, the likely significance of the study, and a summary close out this first chapter.

Background of the Study

Before the 1990s, in sub-Sahara Africa, witchcraft accusations were primarily levied against elderly individuals, specifically elderly women (Bederka, 2014). However, since approximately the late 1990s, traditional cultural beliefs and practices leading to the targeting of elderly adults in witchcraft hunts declined as child witchcraft accusations escalated. Although not a new phenomenon, particularly in Kinshasa, child witchcraft accusations had never previously been a customary practice observed by any segment or community of the DRC's population. This modern practice and form of child abuse evolved as a result of a combination of socioeconomic and political factors that must be explored and understood within cultural, environmental, sociological, historical, religious, economic, and political contexts (Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013). In recent years, there has been an alarming upsurge in child witchcraft accusations in the DRC, mostly in Kinshasa, where it has been estimated that among all the children who live on the streets, approximately 70% of them were rendered homeless by witchcraft accusations (World Vision, 2012).

Molina (2003-2005) argued that the emerging trend and enduring problem of child witchcraft accusations has little direct correlation with so-called traditional perceptions and practices of witchcraft. In sub-Sahara Africa, the words *witchcraft* and *sorcery* are widely used interchangeably to refer to traditional religious practices; although practitioners may not consider themselves to be involved in witchcraft (South African Pagan Rights Alliance, 2010). In this study, I use the term *witchcraft* exclusively because in some cultures, the terms *witchcraft* and *sorcery* are very distinct. The continuing child witchcraft accusations that occur in many parts of Africa, including

Kinshasa, represent a modern phenomenon largely rooted in urban settings (Molina, pp. 2003-2005) in which perceptions of traditional cultural practices of witchcraft have been distorted, such that they have lost their primary significance of religious worship.

Although both uneducated individuals and intellectuals in Kinshasa are reputed to believe in the powers of witchcraft (South African Pagan Rights Alliance, 2010), there is no scientific proof that acts of witchcraft produce positive or negative outcomes for people. Witchcraft only exists in the psyche of those who believe that it symbolizes evil spirits responsible for mysterious disease, misfortune, disaster, and death (South African Pagan Rights Alliance, 2010).

In the African context and the DRC environment in particular, there exists a belief that certain children use supernatural spirits to bewilder their families and cast spells on them with negative economic and social consequences (South African Pagan Rights Alliance, 2010). Based on this belief, young children have become scapegoats for their families' suffering. In Kinshasa alone, 76% of residents have claimed to believe in witchcraft (Bederka, 2014). This statistic indicates that even so-called educated people, well-to-do families, and political elites hold untested beliefs that appear to be detrimental to the lives of thousands of young children, predominantly in Kinshasa but affecting Congolese society as a whole.

In the face of this emerging trend of young children being accused of witchcraft and mounting concerns over human rights violations throughout sub-Sahara Africa, Hanson and Ruggiero (2013) observed that the human rights of these young children had received little collective attention from the United Nations, scholarly researchers, or civil society. The extent of potential human rights violations against young children from the

ages of 5-10 years in Kinshasa who have been accused of witchcraft remains unknown and understudied. Also undetermined are the nature and extent of social and policy initiatives to address this issue within the government of the DRC, local and international NGOs, and other child welfare agencies and child advocacy groups. In other words, the gap in literature about child witchcraft accusations involving young children between 5-10 years of age indicates a need for comprehensive approaches grounded in strong public policy strategies and implementations that value the socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and environmental backgrounds of these children and their families in order to achieve meaningful social transformation in Kinshasa and the DRC in general. This study makes an important contribution to the existing literature by adding another perspective on the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations.

Problem Statement

Child witchcraft accusations constitute a pervasive modern practice in Kinshasa. Such accusations cause thousands of young children to run away from their family homes in an attempt to escape torture, abuse, and even death. While it remains a challenge to determine the exact number of children accused of witchcraft, World Vision (2012) reported that approximately 50,000 children live in the streets of major cities in the DRC. Nearly 20,000 of these children lived in the dangerous streets of Kinshasa, a metropolitan city with a population of more than 14 million (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). Another study suggested that of the estimated 100,000 children who lived in the streets of Kinshasa, approximately 50% had been accused of witchcraft (Cahn, 2006). Although figures on the number of young children accused of witchcraft who live in the streets of major cities in the DRC are impossible to determine, most estimates range between

17,000 and 50,000 for Kinshasa alone (Gram, 2011). These numbers suggest that thousands of young children suffer from unsubstantiated accusations of witchcraft and consequently take sanctuary in the streets of Kinshasa to escape family abuse and torture.

Articulating a holistic definition of the term *street children* is also a challenge. This term may be understood to encompass any number of factors and characteristics of young children living in or working on the streets of major cities in many parts of the world, who are often deprived of protection or adult supervision (Volpi, 2002). Children of all age groups living in the streets of major cities constitute a global phenomenon that is linked to poverty and other socioeconomic problems, political instability, internal conflicts, disease, family separation, and natural disasters (World Health Organization, 2000). In 2010, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that 70% percent of children on the streets of Kinshasa had been accused of witchcraft by their own families (World Vision, 2012).

Since approximately the year 2000, researchers (Berdeka, 2014; Bosmans, 2007; Geenen, 2009; Gram, 2011; Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013; HRW, 2006; Molina, pp. 2003-2005) have explored various reasons why child witchcraft accusations continue to be the primary cause for thousands of young children inundating the streets of Kinshasa, as well as how the problem is being addressed collaboratively by the national government and functional local NGOs within the DRC (Cahn, 2006; Gram, 2011; HRW, 2006). Although there are multiple studies focusing on child witchcraft accusations in the existing literature, I was unable to locate any recent or exclusively scholarly literature that specifically targeted witchcraft-accused young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years, nor any studies thoroughly examining and establishing strong, pragmatic public-

policy strategies for re-educating and reintegrating witchcraft-accused and abandoned young children into positive community life. Though such policies might exist, there was no indication that any policies took into consideration the demographic, socioeconomic, religious, and cultural characteristics of children and their families based on the fundamental principles of critical theory and the attachment conceptual framework.

Therefore, in light of the overwhelming number of young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa without any substantive evidence of guilt or wrongdoing, this study explored the plight of this vulnerable group of children and how lack of attachment to their parents or caretakers inadvertently affected their patterns of social behaviors. This study also examined how a lack of critical investigation of the existing DRC government's public policies designed to address social issues, including issues of child welfare (which encompass child witchcraft accusations), may have contributed to deepening the problem of child witchcraft accusations and may have increased the number of young children living in the streets of Kinshasa.

Purpose of the Study

Numerous factors account for the choice of young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years who have been accused of witchcraft to escape their family homes and seek what they believe will be safety and liberty in the dangerous streets of Kinshasa. In their final report, Azia, Guntzberger, & Kodila (2013) argued that some children chose to live in the streets of Kinshasa and other urban centers because of witchcraft accusations. The purpose of this phenomenological exploratory case study was to explore (a) the reasons why a large number of young children are accused of witchcraft; (b) how useful attachment theory is in predicting patterns of social behavior in young children aged 5-10

years who are accused of witchcraft by their parents or caretakers; and (c) whether a lack of critical theoretical evaluations of existing child welfare public policies and their implementation, enforcement, and accountability strategies contributes to child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. This inquiry was framed in terms of how lack of parental attachment equally predicts a certain pattern of social behaviors for this susceptible group of children who are prematurely expelled from their family homes based on accusations of witchcraft.

The study employed the core competencies of critical theory as a multidisciplinary approach to public policy and administration—an approach that involves questioning and challenging the rationale or ground underlying all government programs, plans, actions, and policies in addressing problems of sociopolitical, economic, and cultural magnitude (Jun, 2006; Oldfield, 2010). In this study, I used the main critical theory attributes to complement the core principles of Bowlby's attachment theory which were seen as the engine of a family life (Byng-Hall, 1991). I identified and evaluated prevailing social intervention programs within the DRC government, international organizations, and other local NGOs in Kinshasa that attempted to address the issues. Importantly, the study further explored the effectiveness of existing public policies designed to influence the trend of child witchcraft accusations. I sought to determine whether there is a need to develop new policies to change the lives of accused children through successful community reintegration initiatives.

The objective for this phenomenological exploratory case study was to understand the need for a substantial public policy formulation strategy and strict execution to enhance the lives of vulnerable young children accused of witchcraft, and how the lack

thereof has become detrimental to DRC society as a whole. In the end, the study provided a policy platform for positive social change for the thousands of young children aged 5-10 years who are accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa.

Research Questions

Given that most of the existing literature on child witchcraft accusations points to policy inadequacy and weak implementation, this study explored public policies and practices of the DRC government, contributions of local NGOs, and other child welfare organizations, child advocacy groups, civil society, and clergy in dealing with young children accused of witchcraft who, as a result, become street children in Kinshasa. I used interviews and data collected from key respondents in these organizations as well as secondary public sources. This process helped to guide adequate policy design, programs, and implementations in support of these children. This aspect of the study is elaborated in Chapter 5.

The central research questions guiding this study were as follows:

RQ1. What is the policy significance of critical theory in evaluating the DRC government's child welfare programs, actions, and public policies targeting young children aged 5 to 10 years who are accused of witchcraft and often cast out of their family homes into the streets of Kinshasa, DRC?

RQ2. How useful is attachment theory in predicting patterns of social behavior of young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years who are accused of witchcraft by their own parents or caretakers in Kinshasa, DRC?

To help answer the main and additional subsets of research questions, I relied primarily on information received directly from expert individuals from local NGOs and other international organizations, together with reviews of government public records (when available) and policies.

Interview sub questions helping to guide the study included the following:

1. What does witchcraft represent to you, and what comes to mind when we talk about witchcraft?
2. Why do families accuse children as young as 10 and below of witchcraft in DRC?
3. Why do children accused of witchcraft prefer to live in the dangerous streets of Kinshasa instead of their family homes?
4. In your opinion, what roles do the DRC government, NGOs, the clergy, and other international actors play, and how significant are these roles and responsibilities in the ongoing fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC?
5. In what ways do existing policies fail to effectively address the issue of young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa, DRC?
6. What opinions exist regarding the likelihood that any policy-mandated intervention programs for witchcraft-accused children aged 10 and younger can succeed, given the important role that witchcraft plays in sub-Saharan African cultures?
7. What is the potential significance of critical and attachment theories in the design and implementation of more robust public policies concerning the

economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of child witchcraft accusations and caregiving for street children accused of witchcraft?

8. In any given family, who accuses young children aged 10 and below of witchcraft in DRC? Are there particular reasons why do you believe that this happens?
9. Following witchcraft accusations, how do forced separations between children and parents affect the psychological and mental states of the accused children?
10. In your experience as a children's advocate, how would you generally characterize the impact of lack of parental attachment or affection on the psychological and physical development of accused children?
11. Why is poverty often seen as a major contributor to child witchcraft accusations?
12. What is the government of the DRC doing to pragmatically address this alarming issue?
13. What distinctive roles do the DRC government, NGOs, and international actors play, and how significant are these roles and responsibilities in the face of the ongoing problem of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and other parts of the DRC?
14. How do economic and cultural environments affect or shape child welfare policies of the DRC government?
15. How effective are the measures taken by the government in the fight against child witchcraft accusations?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underlying this study was critical theory. This theory originated within the Frankfurt School (also known as the Institute of Social Research), a sociopolitical and philosophical school of thought. Critical theory is distinct from other forms of social theory. Early in its development, critical theory was perceived as a revolutionary theory designed to counter the capitalism of monopolies (Wellner, 2014). The minds behind the original critical theory included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Eric Fromm, Friedrich Pollock, & Leo Lowenthal (Wellner, 2014), as well as Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, & Nikolas Kompridis (Sinnerbrink, 2012). Critical theory presents a multidimensional approach to public administration and provides considerable input to the analysis of public administration and to conventional or traditional public administration theory, methods, and practices (Jun, 2006).

From a theory whose proponents initially sought to understand and explain society, critical theory evolved into a descriptive and normative theory that provides constructive criticism and a positive-change outlook to society as a whole. Critical theory involves an effort to bring about liberty, freedom, and the ability to "respond to historical and social conditions of crisis and transformation" (Sinnerbrink, 2012, p. 370), including the possibility to petition against a government's actions. The essence of critical theory involves providing an avenue for the enlightenment or emancipation of humankind. Horkheimer (1972) argued that a theory is said to be critical if it seeks to "liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (p. 244).

Given the problematic nature of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, using critical theory as a theoretical framework broadened the inquiry into the policy aspects of the issue and offered a better understanding of the problem. Critical theory must be far reaching in terms of providing an in-depth analysis of the public policy and administration discourse of the DRC government, its policy design, and implementation strategies. It is an "emancipatory social theory with greater potential for political analysis" (Weber, 2005, p. 196) for both institutional and social changes. This theory is described in detail in Chapter 2.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I used for this qualitative study was attachment theory, initially conceptualized and developed by John Bowlby. Bowlby provided the initial blueprint of the theory before Ainsworth joined in, in the 1950s, with the development of her own perspective of attachment theory that focuses on secure family base (Bretherton, 1992). In her paper entitled "The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth," Bretherton (1992) highlighted the joint yet distinctive contributions of the two authors to attachment theory. She argued that while Bowlby formulated the basic principles of the theory on the notion of maternal deprivation, Ainsworth contributed the notion of a secure base of attachment, the lack of which inherently affects a child's developmental pattern. For Bowlby (1952), while deprivation of a mother–child relationship has more far-reaching impacts on mental health and character or personality development, parental separation and rejection can also disrupt the social development of a child.

Attachment theory is based on the nature of the early childhood relationship between caregiver and child, and how that relationship can ultimately determine the course of future development for the child. The early bond and “intimate” or close relationship between parent and child ultimately impact the child’s emotional, mental, psychological, and behavioral presence in society (Byng-Hall, 1995). In the case of young children in Kinshasa who are accused of witchcraft, abused, and rejected by their families, Bowlby and Ainsworth’s theory suggests that the lack of parental connection or other caregiving attachment figures in their lives is likely to translate into failure in adulthood if there are no early and pragmatic intervention programs and policy-implementation strategies put into place by the government, international organizations, and local NGOs.

Pittman (2012) described attachment theory as a theory of motivation that is helpful in comprehending the complex, analytical, dynamic, and intertwined systems of the world in which people live. Pittman argued that attachment figures are inherently fundamental in providing an early secure base or a strong foundational base from which young children may explore the world around them. Therefore, the motivational aspect of attachment does not necessarily revolve only around people’s sense of security, but is about the settings or environment of exploration and the determination of individuals to explore the world around them throughout life (p. 306).

Attachment figures play vital roles in the physical, emotional, and psychological shaping and development of children. Bowlby’s theory suggests that the period from 5-10 years of age represents the critical identity defining moment in a child’s early life. In other words, any child older than 10 is unlikely to reintegrate into a positive and

productive community because of years of self-sustaining life in the streets outside any controlled adult supervision. Consequently, in the DRC (mainly in Kinshasa), the increasing number of young children who are accused of witchcraft and live in the streets is alarming; it is clearly an indication of a lack of parental attachment or absence of relationships between parents and other family members and children that has contributed to this upsurge. Child witchcraft accusations have become a persistent social problem that poses a direct threat to the social order for future generations as well as for the DRC government as it struggled to contain it.

This study used attachment theory as conceptual framework to analyze the current DRC Constitution as well as information gathered from both international and local NGOs, children's advocacy groups, civil society, and the clergy, all of which worked within the policy frameworks devised by the DRC government in their attempt to help address the issue of young children accused of witchcraft. An expansion of this theory is provided in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a qualitative phenomenological exploratory case study based on firsthand experiences and policy critiques of local NGO workers, child advocates, and other field experts who worked daily in the streets of Kinshasa with young children accused of witchcraft. Phenomenology is used to explore the wholeness and meaning of lived personal experiences that reveal shared essences of these experiences (Creswell, 2007; Goes & Simon, 2011). In other words, I relied on experimental knowledge of key participants from local NGOs to gather data in support of this study.

Through this approach, I explored literature addressing the vast operational experiences of international organizations, mainly UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the Children, World Vision, Rejeer, and other children's advocacy groups. The perspectives of these groups helped to broaden the scope of understanding of how strong public policy implementation strategies could result in positive social changes on the ground and thereby affect the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. I documented these groups' perceptions and insights into the problem and how these assessments could influence the enactment of comprehensive public policies with potential implications for future social behaviors of these children. Concurrently, I assessed the political willingness of the DRC government to address the issue of child witchcraft accusations.

In addition to using existing literature, I used semi structured interviews to collect information prospective participants. As an American soldier–diplomat, I was fortunate to live and work in Kinshasa for few years, where I occasionally discussed child witchcraft accusations with DRC government officials and local civil society leaders. As I awaited approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I did not establish prior contacts with any potential key participants. However, based on my past employment at the U.S. Embassy and my cultural experiences in the DRC, I did not anticipate any problems identifying potential key participants when the time came to collect field data. It is also important to underline that interviews were conducted only with likely key participants. Given their vulnerability, no children were contacted or interviewed, and no interventions took place at any time in point during this study. Details of the methodology are presented in Chapter 3.

Operational Definitions

Throughout this study, several key terms are used in order to provide context and significance to the reader about child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. The following terms and terminology, while not totally exhaustive, are used in this study to provide deeper understanding:

Attachment theory: The development of this theory began in the 1930s with Bowlby's concept of parental deprivation of a child. In the 1950s, Ainsworth teamed up with Bowlby by contributing the secure-base aspect of the theory. Together, Bowlby and Ainsworth made parental deprivation of a child and the secure base for attachment the fundamental tenets of attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992). In other words, the essence of attachment theory concerns the quality and stability in the relationship between child and parent or caretaker. The theory fundamentally explains "the formation and quality of relationships between individuals, particularly during times of stress, uncertainty, and fear" (Hudson, 2013, p. 148). Strong relationships and bonds or the lack thereof can eventually determine a child's future developmental outlook.

Conceptual framework: A notional framework that provides different perspectives and depth of scope to a phenomenon being studied. A conceptual framework provides an analysis of assumptions, beliefs, ideas, and theories, which are often depicted in visual or written form or products in support of a phenomenon under study (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Marshall, 1996).

Critical theory: A philosophical theory developed by the Frankfurt School, a school of thought whose basic tenets involve understanding, explaining, critiquing, and generally changing society through the freedom and liberation of mankind (Marcuse,

1968). Kesson (2011) described critical theory as a "Western Marxist tradition which explores previously neglected aspects of Marxism in light of contemporary events" (p. 96). Weber (2005) corroborated this notion of critical theory as an emancipatory social theory that offers the potential for political opportunity, self-development, and greater economic and social prospects (Oldfield, 2010).

Culture: Hofstede (1984) defined culture as involving the collective mindsets of people, comprised of morals, ideals, principles, values, beliefs, and assumptions acquired in childhood, that distinguish among people or communities. Daniels (2010) stated that "in human rights discourses, culture describes *specific* practices, beliefs, and customs that have been marked for protection out of the universe of what an anthropologist might call culture" (p. 883).

Ethology: Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991) used the term "ethological approach in personality development" to refer to the study of human behavior.

Nongovernmental organization (NGO): NGOs are providers of basic services to people in need and public-policy advocacy groups that often campaign for social and political changes (Kanji & Lewis, 2009).

Shégués: Street and abandoned children in Kinshasa (HRW, 2006; Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 2005). The term is in Lingala, a local DRC dialect. Other derivatives of Shégués are *Bashege* or *Shege* (Geenen, 2009) who, as a result of family abuses, have often been forced to live in the streets and have become active elements of street life in Kinshasa.

Socioeconomic background: Refers to the level of income, education, social status, occupational status, property, and wealth of the parents of children accused of witchcraft (Auriat & Siniscalco, 2005).

*Sorcery: S*orcery involves the development or utilization of spiritual or mystical forces for harmful purposes (Koning, 2013). The terms *sorcery* and *witchcraft* are often used interchangeably in the DRC, but not always in other sub-Saharan nations.

Street children: A worldwide phenomenon involving children for whom the streets have become their temporary or permanent dwelling for the purpose of earning a livelihood (Volpi, 2002) or escaping violence and abuses from their family or caretakers (Kopoka, 2000).

Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA): The United Nations (2012) has divided Africa into five major subregions; sub-Sahara Africa is the subregion directly below the Northern Africa subregion.

Theoretical framework: A theoretical framework is a map or fundamental plan of a study. It is the theory that supports the knowledge base of the phenomenon under study (Sinclair, 2007).

Witchcraft: For purposes of this study, witchcraft is defined as "the practice of using supernatural power for evil, in order to harm others or to help oneself at the expense of others" (Tebbe, 2007, p. 160). Caplan (2004) viewed witchcraft as an anthropological event and argued that this phenomenon is practiced not only in Africa but also in other parts of the world, notably France and Great Britain. In India, however, witchcraft is also perceived as part of the religious belief system of tribal societies (Joshi, Kaushal, Katewa, & Devi, 2006).

Assumptions of the Study

I assumed that by using the chosen theoretical and conceptual frameworks, I would be able to provide a holistic approach to and understanding of the phenomenon under study. I further assumed that the use of phenomenology was most appropriate and suitable for this study. I assumed that using this approach was purely purposeful and by design so as to emphasize the importance of personal experiences, perspectives, interpretations, and environments of the persons interviewed and documents reviewed.

Finally, considering that witchcraft was part of the cultural fabric of the DRC, I assumed that an effective policy framework and the political will of the government could help curb the practice of child witchcraft accusations in a way that would ensure positive social change. I presumed that these public policies could ensure social equality through employment opportunities and mitigate accusations of witchcraft against children.

Limitations of the Study

Both critical and attachment theories are not without shortcomings and limitations. First, critics of Bowlby's theory have contended that attachment theory does not consider other important factors that shape and mold social behaviors of children accused of witchcraft. Washington (2008), a critic of Bowlby's theory, claimed that attachment theory was "culturally-biased" and did not take into consideration other social environment factors influencing the growth of children in general.

Second, critical theory is a relatively new and still-evolving social theory that professes a new ideological form of wisdom, thinking, and social learning. It is a value-critical philosophical theory whose main purpose is to guide human action by regulating

human interests and interactions as well as facilitating escape from ideological imprisonment (Froomkin, 2003). In discussing critical theory, Froomkin (2003) acknowledged that “there is a limit … to how much rational consensus can be reached regarding fundamental values” (p. 761). That is to say, the inherent value and essence of critical theory, however noble, does not reflect universal consensus among intellectuals.

While phenomenology represented the best methodology applicable to child witchcraft accusations, it has limitations. In phenomenology, the researcher not only considers participants in their natural settings, but also provides interpretations and perspectives on lived experiences of participants based on his or her outsider status or observations. In other words, the subjective nature of the researcher remains an unavoidable reality in phenomenological research. Because this study involved vulnerable young children who could not be interviewed directly, reliance on the vast field experiences of children’s experts or advocates from local NGOs, civil society, the clergy, and other relevant children’s advocacy groups operating in the DRC was of paramount importance in understanding the findings.

In dealing regularly with children accused of witchcraft, key participants in this study had developed emotional attachments to such children, which might have led to misplaced objectivity during interviews. That is, data gathered through interviews from key participants might not necessarily reflect the true meanings, nature, and experiences lived by the children. Distinguishing between objectivity and subjectivity of likely key participants was highly important in order to avoid collecting biased data.

Despite their shortcomings, critical theory and attachment theory represented the perspectives most applicable to exploring the significance of child witchcraft accusations

in Kinshasa, as well as to understanding policy intervention programs in order to fill the gap in the literature.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to an exploratory examination of child witchcraft accusations that affect thousands of young children in Kinshasa. Using the combination of critical theory and an attachment conceptual framework, together with a phenomenological approach, this study provided an indirect investigation of the lived experiences of such children between the ages of 5 and 10 years through the framework of field practicability and experiences of children's advocacy groups, international organizations, local NGOs, and the clergy. I did not interview vulnerable young children for this study.

Significance of the Study

Understanding child witchcraft accusations and how revised and robust policy enforcement and implementation strategies can have profound social change implications not only in Kinshasa, but also across the sub-Saharan African region was the core initiative of this study. Considering the severity of the problem, strong and effective policy intervention programs and the strict implementation of constitutional provisions for the welfare of children by the government, local NGOs, and other international organizations have the potential to effect positive social changes and enhance the lives of thousands of innocent young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa.

The enactment of strong public policies that effectively address the issue of child witchcraft accusations is inherently significant on many fronts. The administration of such policies needs to occur within the sociopolitical and economic contexts of the DRC

(Jun, 2006). It is one thing to enact policies against a given social problem; it was another thing to implement them. In Kinshasa, there are several obstacles standing in the way of successful implementation of policies aimed at ending child witchcraft accusations. First, the DRC government must have unequivocal evidence that accusations of witchcraft are a problem that involves violation of the human rights and safety of children. Across Kinshasa and throughout the DRC, local NGOs continue to lead the charge against child witchcraft accusations. The government had not yet shown sustained political willingness to combat the phenomenon. The findings of this study authenticated the nature and extent of efforts by the government, the clergy, civil society, community leaders, and mainly local NGOs to address this problem.

While most countries in sub-Sahara Africa and the DRC in particular are signatories of the United Nations' international laws protecting the rights of the child—notably the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 (which argued that all men and women from all nations owe nothing but the best for the child) and the 1959 United Nations General Assembly's declaration of the rights of the child (which called for, among other things, the safety, well-being, and protection of the child)—more still needs to be done.

In the DRC, the problem is not a lack of or of shortage of laws, regulations, and policies. Instead, the problem is whether or not these laws and policies are being adequately implemented and whether or not there is enough political will to support the strict implementation of these public policies in order to stop child witchcraft accusations. Without sincere political will that can translate into robust policy implementation, it appears that no meaningful progress can ever be made in addressing

child witchcraft accusations. It is true that every human society is culture based, exhibiting a range of unquestioned superstitions and beliefs. This reality should not, however, stand in the way of the rights of the child. Hanson an Ruggiero (2013) argued that “if child witchcraft is seen as a ‘traditional harmful practice,’ interventions might aim at educating local people who, by their behaviour and presumed ignorance of human rights standards are seen to be responsible for violating children's fundamental rights” (p. 13). In this regard, the DRC government must take an aggressive lead in educating its citizenry on the issue of child witchcraft accusations and their harmfulness not only to the accused children, but also to the communities that the children come from.

Children in Kinshasa deserve the greatest care and protection that the government, parents, caretakers, communities, NGOs, clergy, policymakers, and people in positions of authority can afford them to ensure their successful community upbringing and positive social integration and development.

Summary

The initial assessment of this study indicated that a gap in literature existed that would adequately establish a direct correlation between child witchcraft accusations (affecting those aged 5 to 10 years) and policy intervention programs in the DRC. In Chapter 1, I discussed the background of the study and the fundamental problem that drove this study. I elaborated on the purpose of the study, the research questions, the theoretical framework and the conceptual foundation guiding this research, the nature of study, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, and the overarching significance of the study toward a positive social outcome for Kinshasa and the DRC as a society.

Chapter 2 sets the stage for further investigation and discussion concerning the issues raised in Chapter 1, but more importantly, Chapter 2 addresses essential topics including the cultural significance of witchcraft in the DRC, child witchcraft accusations as a comparatively new phenomenon, the role of poverty and illiteracy, the role of local NGOs, the phenomenon of street children as a result of child witchcraft accusations, and policy intervention programs. Additionally, I present in-depth discussions of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The literature review in Chapter 2 establishes a gap in the literature concerning the issue of child witchcraft accusations and effective policy implementation strategies. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research design and methodology purposefully selected for this study. In the same chapter, I describe the sampling strategy, the population size under consideration, the interview techniques, and other information pertinent to the data collection strategy. Finally in Chapters 4 and 5, I discussed the research findings and recommendations respectively.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Since the emergence of child witchcraft accusations in the DRC nearly three decades ago (Gram, 2011), a number of social programs and policies have been designed by the government to address the problem, including the enactment of model legislation and effective policy stances on many child rights issues (World Vision, 2012). While these programs often lack execution and political will (World Vision, 2012), they have continued to be part of the government's policy formulations, plans, and engagement initiatives. These programs have also served as a platform for various local NGOs and international organizations that operate in different parts of major cities of the DRC as agents of positive social change in support of young children accused of witchcraft.

Although part of this qualitative phenomenological exploratory case study focused on and exposed abusive practices linked to child witchcraft accusations, it further assessed the effectiveness and the impacts of the government's child welfare policy programs in dealing with protection of the rights of young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa. A major hurdle to overcome in this attempt was identifying and describing in ample detail the significant gap in scholarly policy literature explicitly targeting child witchcraft accusations for young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years. In this chapter, I seek to accomplish this aim through a comprehensive description of the literature search strategy, followed by a step-by-step analysis of the various general themes that compose this chapter. These themes are critical theory (CT), attachment theory (AT), the anthropology of witchcraft, child witchcraft accusations and street children, the DRC constitutional policy framework for child welfare, policy

implementation and implications of attachment theory, the DRC Constitution and child witchcraft accusations, collaboration with NGOs, and an initial consideration of case study and ethnographic methodologies.

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing social and public policies, government documents, NGO reports, and governmental implementations and written reports in order to provide a deeper understanding of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. The following literature search strategy section provides an extensive description of the search for relevant literature for the study. It highlights the key search terms used, how these key terms were rearranged in order to discover more current literature in various databases, and the results of the search. The ultimate goal of the literature review was to obtain the maximum number of scholarly publications, with a focus on those published within the last 5 years (older documents were deemed appropriate for use if their contents were still relevant to the study), that clearly dealt with or failed to deal with child witchcraft accusations in the DRC.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search that I conducted for this chapter was structured in such a way that only the most appropriate and meaningfully logical topics were analyzed to effectively capture the essence of this study. Using the literature review, I expanded upon the conceptual relevance and significance of witchcraft, notably child witchcraft accusations. The literature review set the stage for the application of critical theory as a major intellectual approach used for constructively critiquing a government's public policy programs. In a similar vein, I used attachment theory as a leading behavioral system model in the analysis of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa.

To ensure that the focus of this study remained on the principal theme of young children and the phenomenon of witchcraft in such a way that the literature review might capture nearly every significant scholarly publication available on child witchcraft accusations, I searched for literature on the following topics: anthropology of witchcraft; history and culture of child witchcraft accusations; child witchcraft accusations and street children in the DRC; violence and abuse of children in relation to witchcraft accusations; critical and attachment theories in policy formulation and implementation in the DRC; critical theory and family breakdown; attachment theory and internal conflict; and the DRC constitutional framework for child welfare.

My strategy for finding applicable literature for this study was primarily predicated on the use of Thoreau Multi-Database Search. This search database offered a comprehensive repertoire of resources that provided contemporary peer-reviewed and scholarly journal articles from across a broad range of topics relevant to this study. It further helped in eliminating redundant articles that appeared in other search databases. Additionally, I explored scholarly reading materials from multidisciplinary databases such as Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, Taylor and Francis, Science Direct, and Google Scholar, which I selected for their uniqueness in containing peer-reviewed articles and publications, dissertations, and sometimes book chapters that deal with different programs of study and subject areas. I also looked at official publications of relevant organizations in support of this literature review. These sources included international organizations and NGOs such as the United Nations, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Mission de l'Organisation des Nations

Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo (MONUSCO; also known by the English name *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Cong*o), the World Health Organization (WHO), World Vision (WV), Save the Children, Réseau des Educateurs des Enfants et Jeunes de la Rue (REJEER; translated into English as *Network of Educators for Children and Youths of the Street*), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). I further referred a great deal to the Constitution of the DRC as a fundamental document that details the rights of children in the DRC, and the 2009 Child Protection Code. Finally, I looked at nontraditional sources such as video clips showing physical abuses and maltreatment being carried out against presumed witches, with the victims including young children as well as elderly people.

To expand the scope of this literature review, I searched for supplementary and pertinent journal articles in the specific context of Africa and the DRC by exploring basic search terms such as *witchcraft, Africa, child rights, human rights,* and *nongovernmental organizations*. I concentrated primarily on articles published within the last 5 to 6 years on child rights, human rights, and NGOs dealing with child witchcraft accusations in the DRC and elsewhere in sub-Sahara Africa. At times, due to lack of recently available sources, I used works more than a decade old whose contents were relevant to the study.

Overall, considering the scope of the main themes enumerated above, I grouped my search into eight major subsections within the general framework of child witchcraft accusations in order to discover more literature to support this study. It is worth noting that, with the exception of some reading materials emanating from applicable NGO publications, all of the sources that I used for this literature review were from scholarly

sources. In particular, I looked for peer-reviewed journal articles by exploring, modifying, and combining in distinctive order of necessity key terms that yielded positive and productive outcomes.

Despite the fact that these conceptual segments of keywords or sentences followed a clear, meaningful, and understandable syntax structure, for the purpose of this study, I deliberately juxtaposed them in such a way that any modification and combination of these search terms in the above search databases would derive the maximum extensively available sources. For example, the use of *or* between terms told the system that terms in the same box, line, and parentheses were interchangeable for the purposes of the search, and the use of an asterisk (*) indicated to the system to look for alternate endings to a root word. For example, during the search, I often used witch* to look for all words associated with witch, witches, witchcraft, witchery, and so forth. I applied the same search strategy for all of the keywords or sentence segments in all the search databases that I used.

Using various specific limiting and filtering parameters applicable to each topic area within Thoreau Advanced Search and the multidisciplinary search database composed of Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, and Science Direct, the search yielded a comprehensive total of 48 articles, of which two were book reviews by Angervil (2015) of Jun's 2006 publication entitled *The Social Construction of Public Administration* and Kabamba's 2013 publication *Business of Civil War: New Forms of Life in the Debris of the Democratic Republic of Congo*. None were dissertations or book chapters. All remaining 46 sources were peer-reviewed journal articles, with less than 20% of the articles perceived as not directly relevant to the topics. Almost all of the

remaining articles had some degree of correlation to the various major topics being discussed in this study. Unfortunately, not all of the articles directly addressed the critical issue of child witchcraft accusations for children aged 5-10 years. This fundamental lack of scholarly literature was an indication of the need for further research in this area, and the goal of this study was to fill this gap in the literature.

Although part of this literature review focuses on contemporary peer-reviewed, scholarly journal articles, a good number of additional supporting materials originated with nonconventional sources such as international organizations and local NGOs due to the fact that the issue of child witchcraft accusations is not a well-researched phenomenon within academia but more so not in Kinshasa and sub-Sahara Africa in general (Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013), especially in relation to children 5-10 years of age. Although researchers in sub-Sahara Africa and other parts of the world have documented various aspects of witchcraft, little is known about witchcraft accusations that involve children 5-10 years of age in Kinshasa. Given the paucity of peer-reviewed articles that address this particular group of children, I drew on publications by international and local NGOs present in Kinshasa to support this study.

Although the overarching purpose of the literature review is to present a critical analysis of literature on child witchcraft accusations, I accomplish this task in part by providing brief backgrounds of critical and attachment theories and how they are applicable to internal conflicts and family breakdowns, respectively, within the framework of this study and the main research topic of child witchcraft accusations. Additionally, I assess the spiritual aspects of family breakdown using Bowlby's

attachment theory in order to determine if there are similarities and differences in how spirituality affects family breakdown.

Theoretical Foundations

Theoretical foundations are core principles that guide any given scholarly and academic research. In other words, the core principles of a theory are the pillars that establish the foundation of a scholarly research. Theoretical foundations are not just abstract theories; they can be defined as philosophical concepts that are intrinsically linked to scholarly literature. That is, a theoretical foundation or framework is also essentially linked to the review of literature that establishes the scholarship of the research or validity of study. For this study, I used the combination of a theoretical framework of critical theory and a conceptual framework of attachment theory to support my research.

Critical Theory

Pioneered by scholars of the Frankfurt School such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas in the early part of the 20th century, critical theory was essentially a vein of Marxist ideology that critiqued Marx's prediction of industrial revolution in which workers were expected to revolt against social classes and unjust economics. Although the Marxist ideal of industrial revolution never materialized, the notion of critical theory evolved into a theoretical investigative concept that has been used to awaken sociopolitical self-consciousness in search of social, economic, and cultural self-identity or community emancipation and freedom (Jun, 2006). Critical theory is a social scientific concept that expounds on the framework of normative or

standard interests (Arnold, 2015), but it is equally perceived as a theory of social transformation, change, and adaptability.

As a multidisciplinary analytical and orientation theory, critical theory provides "a theoretical perspective that helps us examine not only political, economic, and institutional concerns but also the humanistic, cultural, and social dimensions of complex social phenomena" (Jun, 2006, p. 50). Wellner (2014) argued that it is a theory that is constantly reacting to adapt to changing social and political constellations. That is, critical theory evolved to play a major role in the analysis of "mainstream social theory." Critical theory promotes social change and advocates for the transformation of "today's institutions as well as promoting democratic actions grounded in a collective understanding between public administration employees and citizens" (Jun, 2006, p. 50). Critical theory goes beyond the philosophical theory of positivism, which involves the notion that what is obvious should be taken as such (Beauregard, 2012).

Instead, critical theory provides a socio-scientific research dimension that involves an effort to influence ethical behaviors, provide arguments against normative interests, and objectify social reality (Arnold, 2015; Jun, 2006). Through its theoretical optics, critical theory provides problem-solving alternatives that are adaptable to issues in an ever-changing world. In the context of this study, critical theory was inherently important on many fronts. First, critical theory enabled me to take on an in-depth literature review not only to identify the gap in the literature, but also to see where and how this theory had been applied to the study's specific topic in the past, and if it had not, how this study might help to fill the gap in the literature. Second, it is a relevant theory for use to address an ongoing social problem in Kinshasa. Third, critical theory is useful

in the formulation of public policies that may be used by the DRC government to address the root causes of child witchcraft accusations if effectively and adequately implemented.

In order for critical theory to be pertinent and critical, it must be applied in such a way that its interpretations and explanations have practical relevance to everyday social problems and phenomena. In other words, critical theory must be an empirically and pragmatically grounded theory that exposes real-life situations of "power and subordination" relations while taking into consideration key concepts such as race, gender, sexuality, and sociopolitical and economic backgrounds of people in society (Kompridis, 2014). In fact, critical theory must be reflective of the way that people behave, live, and think about social problems. Jun (2006) maintained that critical theory is of fundamental importance in policy formulation that addresses social problems because it involves citizens' participation in the process. Beauregard (2012) corroborated Jun's idea when he argued that critical theory is about the requirement for political activism.

Given the core principles of critical theory—investigation of social problems, understanding of people's real-life experiences, and critique of established normative and social conditions—it is conceivable that many social phenomena and problems may be analyzed productively through the prism of critical theory (Hollister & Schroeder, 2014, p. 92; Jun, 2006, pp. 51-52). Such use of critical theory provides a descriptive framework for the conceptual and scientific effort to develop understanding of and offer solutions to complex and challenging social phenomena and realities. The same logic could be applied to attachment theory, which was used to provide a different angle on this study.

Attachment Conceptual Framework

Attachment theory was originally pioneered by British psychiatrist John Bowlby in the 1940s, based in part on the notion of separation anxiety in a child in the absence of the mother. Bowlby (1951) argued that any lack of mother–child attachment, at least in the formative years, can create a *psychopathic character* in the personality development of the child. To this notion of parental deprivation, the absence or vacuum left by motherly affection can also create insecurity for the child to evolve adequately.

Although there was a distinctive but compatible developments and historical narratives to attachment theory, Aisworth and Bowlby (1991) claimed that attachment theory is fundamentally an ethological approach to personality development. In other words, attachment theory is an objective and scientific approach to the study of the behavior of children in their natural settings. Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991) jointly contended that mother–child separation or deprivation and a child's insecurity due to the absence of the mother could negatively affect the child's emotional growth and ultimately impact the child's personality development. Based on etiological significance, children's personality development and behaviors may be predicated on their attachments or bonds with their parents in the early stages of their lives.

The Centre for Parenting and Research (2006) maintained that attachment theory is primarily used to describe secure attachment in infancy, in that it focuses on protective, enduring, caring, and affectionate relationships between care figures and children at the early stage of infancy. Based on the fundamental tenets of attachment theory, it is understood that children who experience sensitive and responsive caregiving from their adult attachment figures are known to develop positive social skills, affection, and a

certain level of emotional intelligence or attachment (Center for Parenting & Research, 2006). They also learn how to positively socialize and make sense of their social interactions with others (Centre for Parenting & Research, 2006, p. 2). In many parts of the world, health and social work professionals have used attachment theory concepts to address social issues. Dale and Ludolph (2012) stated that "attachment theory appeals as an intuitive, almost romantic theory that has very much captured the imagination of a significant group of mental health professionals in the United States and many parts of the world" (p. 2). In this regard, Hudson (2013) put it best when he described attachment theory as biological yet practical and appropriate theory used by professional social scientists to study social behaviors of human beings.

Using the core principles of Bowlby's attachment theory (i.e affection, bond, secure base, care giving, and love) which form the *behavioral system*, Hudson (2013) argued that an individual can succeed or fail in life depending on the proximity to their attachment figure. Otherwise stated, proximity to attachment figure is fundamental in defining the future growth or development of a child. Any prolonged separation from the attachment individual (s), especially the mother figure can lead to an emotionless personality (Bowlby, 1951). Children's behaviors in society are in part predicated upon or greatly defined by their continuous relationships or bonds with their mothers or caretakers (Bretherton, 1992). Such preposition implied that attachment theory, whether it reflects positive or negative attachment is crucially important in molding and shaping the social behavior, moral, emotional or psychological backgrounds of a child within a given community. For Shonkoff (2010), positive attachment could be determined by early childhood policy and program development aiming at improving future lives and

behaviors for children. Attachment theory is a key contributor in predicting social behavioral patterns of children.

Attachment theory provides a framework from the standpoint of a purely parent or caretaker-child relationships and how the lack of such relationships can affect the child's personality development. Attachment theory is an important component of this research because it serves as the basic conceptual blueprint guiding this study. That is to say, it provides the basis for parent-child attachments which are biologically-based relationships that provide comfort, security, protection, care, and nurturance to the child (Hudson, 2013). This conceptual framework was substantially beneficial to the study of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC because it created an optimal environment for "affective relationship with a caretaker who offers attuned opportunities for emotional communication" (Messer & Zilberstein, 2010, p.88).

Messer and Zilberstein's (2010) argument suggested that children with secure base and safe attachments grow up mentally healthy and develop better social skills and behaviors than children with unsecure attachment and unstable homes. In other words, Messer and Zilberstein (2010) suggested that children who undergo turbulent childhood may also experience a certain degree of emotional grief or suffering while separated from their families for a long time. Ray (2017) corroborated Messer and Zilberstein's argument when he argued that not only do people experience grief differently within their cultural settings, but also the emotional expression of grief differed on the personal level. For Ray, grief is universal irrespective of cultures and personalities (p. 291).

Consistent with Ray's argument, grief, as experienced by street children in the Indian streets varied in degree, scope, context, and culture. The same line of reasoning

about grief could be said of street children chased out of the family homes due to accusations of witchcraft in Kinshasa, DRC. Once accused, the children underwent strenuous psychological instabilities and emotional abuses, which Stobart (2006) described as essential characteristics and components of life in the street of major cities. In Kinshasa, DRC, for example, other potential causes for such insecure and unstable attachments could be partly linked to internal armed conflicts and conflicts within families which unfortunately caused thousands of young children to be involuntarily separated from their families with many of them becoming street children (Azia et al., 2013; Cripe et al., 2002; & World Bank, 2016).

Internal Armed Conflicts or Civil Wars

Internal armed conflicts or civil wars (words used interchangeably) were endemic to the DRC and most sub-Sahara Africa. These conflicts were often fought along ethnic, tribal, and political lines. They constituted major multi-layered social problems which also created social tensions among various segments of the population (Secker, 2012). In the DRC, years of internal armed conflicts and instabilities, including the past two civil wars of 1996-1997 and 1998-2003 weakened the family system and as a result, these internal volatilities caused thousands of children to be scapegoated as witches vulnerable to frequent abuses (Cimpric, 2010; Secker, 2012).

Witchcraft accusations is a social phenomenon that has been largely documented in a number of countries around the world (Secker, 2012). Both internal armed conflicts and witchcraft accusations are interconnected in a way that many social problems such as poverty, scarcity of resources, and political turmoil can be explained by these two variables. More often than not, internal armed conflicts frequently result in significant

social instabilities, population displacements, social and institutional disruptions, sufferings, and massive losses of lives based of the magnitude of the conflicts.

In Kinshasa and the DRC, internal conflicts caused thousands of orphans, the majority of whom lived with their relatives. Unfortunately, giving the extreme poverty conditions that still exited in the DRC, these young children were consistently incriminated by their own families as witches (Cahn, 2006; Cimpric, 2010). These children all too often were perceived by their families as strains on the already insufficient family resources. As a result, families carried out accusations of witchcraft against their suspected young children, and such behaviors were direct reflections of families' inabilities to meet the basic subsistence needs of the children (Cimpric, 2010). Unable to defend themselves, young children accused of witchcraft had no other option than to choose to live on the dangerous streets of Kinshasa and other major cities around the country in order to avoid facing the horror of harsh rituals of exorcism (Bederka, 2014) and other forms of psychological and physical abuses and tortures at the hands of their own families.

In recent years, many publications addressed and documented some specific aspects of internal conflicts relatively to witchcraft accusations in the DRC, sub-Sahara Africa, and around the world at large. According to Hrubec and Solik (2015) and Kabamba (2013), the application of the lenses of critical theory helped expose and address global issues of conflicts, injustice, revolution and transformation, and poverty. Such theoretical explanations of social issues reflected the ability of critical theory to propose normative courses of action to lift up people from their miserable conditions. In other words, through the analytical perspective of critical theory, global issues of wars,

economics, and politics; social, religious, and cultural dimensions could be critiqued, addressed or mitigated significantly. Sinnerbrink (2012) echoed the same fundamental point of view about critical theory when he argued that critical theory helps evaluate the social phenomenon or reality of civil wars that unfortunately plague many areas of the DRC, especially the Eastern part of the country.

As a theory of human emancipation through social change and exposition of humanity for what it is (Kesson, 2011), applying critical theory in the context of this study was a process of calling for open discussions and to reveal the dangers of witchcraft accusations in part as a direct consequence of internal conflicts that often led to thousands of innocent young children ending up on the streets of Kinshasa. Although witchcraft accusations had been recorded across time and space in many places around the world, it had not been sufficiently and critically analyzed in terms of its correlative effects from internal conflicts, particularly in the instances where it involved young children aged between 5 and 10. That is, despite the fact that critical theory generally offers constructive criticism of ongoing sociopolitical and cultural issues facing society, there still is a gap in literature. No research exists that used the notion of critical theory to directly address child witchcraft accusations involving young children below the age of 10 as a direct consequence of internal armed conflicts in the DRC. Filling such a gap in literature is indeed what this study tried to contribute to the body of academic literature.

Thus, given the scarcity of literature from the analytical perspective of critical theory on the impacts of internal armed conflicts on child witchcraft accusations involving young children in Kinshasa and the DRC, it begged looking elsewhere at Bowlby's attachment theory to see if there was any available literature that captured the

essence of the correlation between attachment theory and family breakdown. Examining these two variables in detail helped identify and potentially established effective causative relationship between child witchcraft accusations and family breakdown in Kinshasa, DRC and in sub-Sahara Africa in general using attachment theory: in other words, how family breakdown resulted in child witchcraft accusations using the framework of attachment theory.

Family Breakdown

As noted previously, during internal armed conflicts, populations are forcibly displaced and families are separated and often broken down into several small units with sometimes no contacts to one another irrespective of whether or not children are involuntarily separated from their parents. According to Cripe, Curran, Lockett, and Verhey (2002), “the breakdown of the primary social unit, the extended family, is contributing to causes of child abandonment because of dislocation. Separation from extended family reduces the capacity of the mother to care for her children” (p. v). Cripe et al. further argued that though child abandonment was happening with impunity, it contributed to child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC.

Family breakdown is in part, if not in great deal, a major factor in the perceived lack of parental attachment to their progeny, especially in the DRC. Bowlby (1951) claimed that family provides continuity and stability for the development of the child. Unfortunately, internal armed conflicts routinely caused forced family separations between members of a family. During internal armed conflicts where the potential for family separation between parents and children is highly likely, either due to displacement or death of one or both parents, the lack of secure base and quality

attachment of the children to their parents, generally to their mothers as fundamentally described by Bowlby, can serve as the basis for future social problems for these children (Ludoph & Dale, 2012; Talley, 2012). With the indiscriminate nature of internal armed conflicts, there are unfortunately fatalities and parents are often victims, leaving behind children as orphans. In this regard, Talley (2012) posited that "parents are NOT interchangeable" (p.245) and as such the void created by parental separation is indicative of future problems associated with deviant behavior, depression, problems at school, and many more behavioral problems.

Concurrently, beside the ill effects of internal armed conflicts resulting in forced family breakdown that affected thousands of young children accused of witchcraft, particularly in Kinshasa, DRC, Roberson, Sabo, and Wickel (2011) equally argued that children who experienced conflicted or disengaged co-parenting as a result of parental divorces or tensions could also endure difficult, anxious-ambivalent and avoidant behaviors. The vacuum often created by the absence of a parent, mainly the mother, could have lasting impacts on the future social, emotional, and psychological behaviors of a child. To this end, family breakdown either by forced separations due to internal armed conflicts, divorces, or any other social factors create undue hardships on vulnerable children, especially the fragile group of young children within the age category of 5-10 in Kinshasa, DRC. According to Vicedo (2011), the mother's absence in a child's life could constitute devastating emotional and health consequences; by contrast, the existence of such attachment relationships represent the core of a child's developmental path in society throughout the world (McIntosh, 2011).

In instances or cases where family breakdowns occur or family structures collapse for one reason or the other, and where social institutions are weaker or do not even exist to support and protect children, the rights of children are routinely violated and abused as evidenced in accusations of witchcraft (Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013; World Vision, 2012). In Kinshasa, DRC, accusations of witchcraft were symptomatic of young children who lived in the streets of major cities as an outcome of family breakdown and escape from extended family members' abuses. While a child accused of witchcraft lacked family protection and might run away from family abuses, it was equally suggestive of the missing parent-child attachment or bond. Such missing link between the parent-child reflected the basis for insecure attachment or minimal spiritual connection to God, thus a potential contribution to the child's mental and psychological instability or the lack of adequate spiritual fortitude in adulthood.

Conversely, according to Hiebler-Ragger, Falthansl-Scheinecker, Birnhuber, Fink, and Unterrainer (2016) and Walborn (2014), Bowlby's principle of attachment theory was similar to spiritual attachment to God. That is, spiritual closeness to God represents secure attachment in times of need as is a child's quality of attachment to his or her parents; generally, secure attachment to the mother could potentially determine the child's personality development in the future (Brumariu & Kern, 2010).

Despite the availability of several scholarly research contributions and scholarships on witchcraft, there still were not publications that clearly established the link between child witchcraft accusations and family breakdown or that associated family breakdown to spirituality in a way that spirituality or the proximity to God influenced family breakdown. Instead, Hiebler-Ragger et al. (2016) and Walborn (2014) established

an effective correlation of close proximity to God and parent-child relationship as precursors to productive life in adulthood for a child. Walborn (2014) even referred to the secure base of parent-child relationship and closeness to God as *progressive attachment*, the lack of which he termed as *regressive attachment*. It was in light of the shortage of literature that precisely addressed child witchcraft accusations and family breakdown that this study served as a critical resource to help bridge the gap in literature. But first, it was important to understand the etymology and anthropology of witchcraft and its history of cultural accusations and influence in the DRC and sub-Sahara Africa.

Anthropology of Witchcraft

The definition of witchcraft has long been a subject of many controversial debates between scholars of several schools of thoughts since the ancient times. Who is a witch and how to identify a witch continues to be a contentious topic in many cultures, societies, and academic circles. Nevertheless, a number of researches (Bailey, 2003; Cohan, 2011; Levack, 2003) asserted that witchcraft embodied the characteristics of a person with supernatural powers of evil and alliance with the forces of darkness perpetually seeking to harm others through supernatural forces and mysterious powers. Witchcraft is a cultural and social phenomenon that had long existed in human history and in most human societies. Yet, witchcraft only came to prominence from the 15th to the 18th centuries when tens of thousands were accused, prosecuted, tortured, and many killed across Europe for possessing an evil and demoniac spirit of evil aiming to destroy the Christian faith (Essia, 2012; Levack 2003).

Although, European Christians in the early centuries believed in the existence of evil and demoniac spirits against the Christian faith, “historic western mission

Christianity has generally been perceived to be powerless when it comes to dealing with supernatural evil" (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015, p. 23)—thus the emergence of African-led charismatic and independent churches deemed contextually appropriate to deal with such malevolent spirits of witchcraft. Still, according to Bailey (2003), the anthropology of such witchcraft belief even went as far back as the Mesopotamian era. He argued that people in ancient Mesopotamia believed in demoniac spirits and supernatural forces of evil that targeted the destruction of humankind.

The anthropological understanding of such argument was also evidenced in the biblical book of Exodus 22:18 (King James Version) where it is stated that "Thou shall not suffer a witch to live." The mention of the word *witch* in the Bible was the early indication that a witch is an evil spirit manifested into human form with the ultimate intention to destroy mankind and Christianity. As such, witches must be purged or killed and witchcraft eradicated. In the bible, the book of Mark 1:21-28 as well as Wilkin (2018) also provided the same anthropological argument of witchcraft or evil spirits that possessed the human body for the purpose of engaging into supernatural individual or group anti-social activities against others.

The inception of witchcraft, particularly in the Middle Age and in the early European cultures highlighted the prominence for the existence of the phenomenon of witchcraft within that particular society. Right from the beginning, witchcraft was perceived as a crime in the Middle Age not necessarily by hard evidence but rather by accusatorial procedures because it was impossible to levy witchcraft charges against someone on the basis of hard evidence. For over 300 years, from the 15th to the 18th centuries, the phenomenon of witchcraft brought about a certain degree of social paranoia

which led to the persecution and death of thousands of people suspected of witchcraft (Bailey, 2003). While witchcraft in the Middle Age and early European societies was founded on social fears, beliefs and practices, in Africa, especially in sub-Sahara Africa, the belief in magic and supernatural power, including witchcraft had existed well before colonization and the introduction of Christianity to the continent by the West.

Witchcraft in Sub-Sahara Africa

In that aspect, to argue that in sub-Sahara Africa witchcraft is real and alive, is an understatement to say the least. According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2015), “in Africa, belief in the presence and work of evil powers, especially witches, is pervasive; most African traditions conceive of the universe as alive with spirit powers, a place in which evil is hyperactive” (p.23). As an age-old phenomenon, witchcraft with its supernatural forces of evil often captivates the minds of Africans and has become a prevalent force to reckon with in the spiritual world. Akin to most human civilizations, sub-Sahara Africa also had its own cultures and traditions prior to the colonial era.

In that regard, Gram (2011) argued that the study of witchcraft beliefs went as far back as in the documented narrative of the Azande tribe of Sudan by anthropologist Evans-Pritchard. Witchcraft was omnipresent in every activity of Azande life and they perceived it as the basis for all misfortune (Evans-Pritchard, 1937). Geschiere (2015) corroborated this notion of omnipresence and perverseness of witchcraft, when he argued that the continuous emphasis on and generalization of the concept of witchcraft also shored up its universality and installed a degree of fear in the popular mindsets of people.

As in Medieval European societies and other ancient worlds such as in Greece, in sub-Sahara Africa, witchcraft practice or belief had been a deeply-rooted cultural

phenomenon with a diverse historical development across many cultures and traditions (Cohan, 2011; Gersham, 2016; Secker, 2012). Comparatively, while Bailey (2003) suggested that the harmful nature and magical signs of witchcraft in major Western civilizations and African societies were similar in many ways, still they were significantly different in the forms of manifestations. In sub-Sahara Africa, one regular notion that underlined witchcraft was the belief that supernatural forces were used as a means to leverage or achieve a personal goal such as revenge, adversity, harm, illness, death, profit, and fertility (Agence Française de Développement & Samusocial International, 2012; Cimpric, 2010; Cahn, 2006; Diwan, 2004). In other words, in sub-Sahara Africa, the malevolent power of witchcraft or *maleficium* (harmful sorcery) was a means to an end in a witch's goal to inflict harm to others.

That is to say, over the course of the history of sub-Sahara Africa, nearly all communities experienced the supernatural and intangible power of witchcraft. In contemporary sub-Sahara Africa, any attempt to regulate witchcraft often created a conflict between state legal norms and cultural norms concerning the practice of and belief in witchcraft (Diwan, 2004). The frictions between emerging state legal norms and cultural and traditional norms of witchcraft were indicative of the difficulty surrounding the legal approach to the phenomenon of witchcraft in sub-Sahara Africa. To a larger extent, establishing legal normalcy of witchcraft had thus far proven a challenging task for sub-Saharan African governments and countries.

Yet, the enduring belief in the existence of witchcraft practice across regions and countries in sub-Sahara Africa became somewhat of an accepted cultural, historical, and religious norm (Gram, 2011). Despite the advent of Christianity in the 15th century, Gram

(2011) argued that the cultural and traditional realm of supernaturalism or cosmology mainly remained unchanged. This cultural and historical belief system in witchcraft often came in similar forms, shapes, and manifestations from one country to another and became a quintessential cultural element in sub-Sahara Africa, including the DRC.

Indeed, witchcraft practice in sub-Sahara Africa represented a cultural heritage characterized by the so-called “pseudo-religious” practices that predated back to the colonial rule. Given the invisible world in which witchcraft occurred, there were constant anxieties, fears, and mysticism surrounding witchcraft’s “deep-seated feature of Africa’s belief systems” (Cimpric 2010; Federici, 2008, p.22). Stated differently, in sub-Sahara Africa, the fear of being harmed by evil spirits or invisible characters which manifested themselves through the practice of witchcraft constantly haunted the minds of the people and represented a true danger for them in the form of illness, misfortune, death, poverty, and so forth (Cimpric, 2010;).

The characteristics of witchcraft practice are relatively similar across territorial borders in sub-Sahara Africa. UNICEF report of 2010 indicated that “belief in witchcraft is widespread across sub-Saharan African countries” (p.1). Simply put, belief in witchcraft holds a certain degree of cultural truth, significance, and “cross-cultural similarities” (Konig, 2013) in the sub-Saharan African society, including the DRC. While the *CIA 2020 Factbook* put the percentage of Christianity at 83.1%, Kimbanguist at 2.8%, Muslim at 1.3%, no religion at 1.3%, unspecified religious affiliation at 0.2, and other syncretic sects and indigenous religions at 1.2%, the latter still held a significant influence on the psyche of the population. In spite of the massive presence of Christianity in the country, belief in animist and indigenous religious practices, to include belief in

witchcraft practice still had enormous influences on the population of Kinshasa and the DRC.

Historical and Cultural Significance of Belief in Witchcraft in the Democratic Republic of Congo

No literature had established with certainty and empirical evidence the origin of witchcraft in the world, much less in sub-Sahara Africa and most notably in the DRC. Historically, older people were respected for being guardians of traditions and cultures and for possessing ancestral spirits to bless and protect against evil spirits (Ndamba-Bandzouzi et al., 2014). But with time, these cultural norms changed and elderly people became targets of witchcraft accusations. While no publication could assert to the fullest the historical origin of witchcraft, what occurred over time were attempted explanations by scholars of what *belief in witchcraft* is. According to Niehaus (2012), early anthropologists and to some extent, psychologists attributed the explanations of belief in witchcraft to negative social human fates and to negative social and economic developments often affecting people. This constituted a profound change in the historical Sub-Saharan belief that witchcraft was supposed to be used by older people to effect spiritual protection and blessings. Instead, belief in witchcraft was perceived negatively over time in many African societies.

Culturally, witchcraft accusations were initially perpetrated and directed against presumed offenders, generally elderly women often in villages and other rural areas. While this aspect of witchcraft practice still remained unchanged, the newly added layer of the problem, one that made more headlines in recent years, was the accusations of witchcraft against young children. As in many parts of the world where witchcraft played

an important yet understated role in both rural and urban settings, in Kinshasa, DRC, belief in and practice of witchcraft became an essential element within the cultural makeup of the country. Highlighting human rights violations associated with witchcraft stigmatization, Federici (2008) and Secker (2012) used the example of Ghana and Nigeria respectively to indicate that belief in witchcraft was an essential component in the cultures of these two Sub-Saharan countries. This was an indication of the fact that witchcraft was and still is central within both Ghanaian and Nigerian societies. A close look at the examples of the two countries reflected how the notion of witchcraft is a regional and a cross border issue; but more importantly, this also pointed out the centrality of the cultural reality and relevance that come with witchcraft in sub-Sahara Africa. Leistner (2014) also provided the same cultural dimension of witchcraft as an integral part of the community, religious, social, political, and legal lives of sub-Sahara Africa.

Witchcraft belief and practice has been in existence for a long period of time (Human Rights Watch, 2006; Miller, 2012) in Kinshasa and the DRC. Considering the significance of witchcraft in the history of the country, it is worth noting that the underlying assumption was essentially similar in many ways to the 15th and 18th century early European witch hunt. The similarity lied in the fact that witchcraft in the DRC also came to prominence with unjustified abuses, tortures, and in many cases, deaths of women and children accused of witchcraft. In short, the negativity surrounding witchcraft came to eminence with the declining social conditions in Kinshasa, DRC. While the exact numbers were unknown, Federici (2010) argued that one important characteristic of those targeted and accused of witchcraft was the fact that they were predominantly elderly

women who were murdered in the tens of thousands in Africa alone over the last three decades. According to Bulte, Grijspaarde, Richards, and Voors (2012), in colonial Africa, belief in witchcraft was a pervasive phenomenon. In fact, Cohan (2011) posited in support of this argument that witchcraft belief became a significant piece of the social identify, cultural traditions, norms, and customs of many African countries, including the DRC.

Although belief in witchcraft was not necessarily problematic in itself, what became a challenge and ongoing trend in many countries was when witchcraft accusations caused psychological, emotional, and physical abuses among the people being accused, notably elderly women (Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013). Though Bederka (2014) argued that 55% and 76% of sub-Sahara Africa and Kinshasa residents respectively believed in witchcraft, it was still unclear why in the last two decades or so young children turned out to be the new foci of accusations deeply rooted in falsehood and unsubstantiated pretention of witchcraft in Kinshasa, DRC and in sub-Sahara Africa at large. To this effect, Cimpric (2010) noted that although in the past, elderly people, mostly women, were the focus of such accusations, in contemporary Kinshasa and DRC, there had been an uptick in the number of young children accused of witchcraft (p. 2).

Molina (2006) offered the same observation when he maintained that though the cultural trend for the belief in witchcraft was widely spread across the DRC and elsewhere in Africa, there was also an increase in witchcraft accusations against young children whereby nearly 70% of children on the streets of major cities in the DRC were accused of witchcraft. Different statistics even put the number of street children accused of witchcraft between 20,000 and 50,000 in Kinshasa alone (Boeck, 2009). While no

facts-based evidence pointed to children as culprits of malevolence and absent any literature that clearly indicated otherwise, more research needs to be conducted to ascertain the shift in the trajectory of witchcraft accusations. That is, more studies need to be undertaken on the shift from the traditional notion of guardianship, protection, and blessing to this relatively new phenomenon that violates the rights of children through accusations of witchcraft. For Cadogan-Poole (2013), such practice deviated from the enduring meaning of witchcraft practice as it once existed in rural areas or communities.

Child Witchcraft Accusations and Street Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Witchcraft-related accusatorial public prosecutions and persecutions of young children is a relatively new approach to the original traditional framework of witchcraft accusations within Kinshasa, DRC. In contemporary DRC, children of all ages find shelters in the streets of major cities as an escape from the dangers of family violence directed against them on the premises of witchcraft accusations. While this new tendency of uncorroborated waves of accusations derived from all corners of the DRC's social makeup, it was equally important to note that the problem was also endemic across sub-Sahara Africa. A number of researches (Cimpric, 2010; Garcia, 2013; Gram, 2011; Snow, 2017) contended that thousands of young children had fallen victim to witchcraft accusations in many countries across sub-Sahara Africa, including the DRC.

In contemporary DRC, witchcraft accusations seemed to deviate from the traditionally accepted "norms" of elderly witchcraft accusations. Though, Cimpric et al. elaborated a great deal on the human rights violations of the children accused of witchcraft, their analysis was not particularly targeting the specific group of young

children between 5-10 years of age. With the exception of the notion of human rights violations, Cimpric and fellow authors touched on different aspects of child witchcraft accusations involving children of all age categories. It was in light of this academic paucity that this research complemented the already existing body of academic research on the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations; although, for the most part of human history, witchcraft accusations repeatedly targeted elderly women across many societies.

Based on previous researches conducted by (Ndamba-Bandzouzi et al.,2014; Chaudhuri, 2012; Foxcroft, 2014), the notion of elderly women representing the incarnation of evil spirits still made up a great proportion of the study about witchcraft accusations around the world. In the Kinshasa, DRC, far too many elderly women remained the scapegoats of witchcraft accusations. So, whereas the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations against elderly women remained prevalent in many sub-Saharan African cultures, similar accusations against young children was a relatively new phenomenon that was on the rise across many countries. Evidence showed that between 50,000-250,000 children lived on the streets of the major cities across the DRC because they were accused of witchcraft (Cardogan-Poole, 2013; Gram, 2011). In Kinshasa, many street children bore the physical and psychological hallmarks of witchcraft accusations abuses (World Vision, 2012; Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013).

In the last two decades, the concept of child witchcraft accusations played a key role as a major catalyst for the increase of children in the streets of Kinshasa. These children often came from poor families where the extent of extreme poverty triggered these families to blame the children for their misfortunes. Studies (Leistner, 2014; Cohan, 2011; Quarmyne, 2011; Lambert, 2012) suggested that some of the common and

recurring denominators or themes that led to child witchcraft accusations and eventually to children seeking refuge in the streets of Kinshasa was the continuous cultural belief in the notion of witchcraft as an integral part of sub-Saharan African cultures.

Leistner (2014) and Cadogan-Poole (2013) maintained that in certain countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Burundi, Benin, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and all across sub-Sahara Africa, young with physical abnormalities, illnesses, orphans, albinos, and many more such conditions were often labeled witches due to their social circumstances. The authors made the same observations on the abuses that young children with certain social conditions underwent in the United Kingdom. In these countries and almost across sub-Sahara Africa in general, it took very little in order to trigger accusations of witchcraft against young children. This continued belief in the power of witchcraft that permeated every level of society in sub-Sahara African, still remained a real obstacle that contributed to the influx of children to the streets of major cities in the region, notably Kinshasa, DRC (Molina, 2003-2005; Cimpric, 2010; Gram, 2011).

Though, child witchcraft accusations still remained a relatively new epidemic, many researchers believed that it was the number one cause of the phenomenon of street children in DRC. According to Cahn (2006), nearly 50% of the estimated 100,000 street children in Kinshasa were accused of witchcraft and as a result were separated from their families. In fact, Cadogan-Poole (2013), whose research reinforced Cahn's observation, also remarked that child abandonment was the principal reason for child homelessness in Kinshasa and other major cities in the DRC. As an integral part of sub-Saharan African cultures, witchcraft existed almost at every social, political, religious, cultural, economic

level, and accusations against young children not only violated their human rights but equally targeted children of all ages and sexes (Leistner, 2014; Quarmyne, 2011).

Yet, the notion of child witchcraft accusations did not take away from the fact that elderly women represented the most common and vulnerable targets of witchcraft accusations all throughout the DRC. The example of the DRC was a microcosm of a much bigger social problem in most of sub-Sahara Africa. According to Geschiere (2015), the "modernity of witchcraft" (p. 7) was comparable to the enduring social and economic inequalities that existed in Africa in general. In other words, accusations of witchcraft evolved historically over time and became adaptable to contemporary social contexts.

Garcia (2013) found that children between the ages of 8 and 14 were the most vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft regardless of their genders. Unfortunately, there were no adequate and effective policy strategies and measures in place in most sub-Saharan African countries to combat this phenomenon. More importantly, most studies surrounding child witchcraft accusations did not dedicated enough attention to the most vulnerable age category of children between 5-10 years old. The psychological torments and abuses that these young children underwent could be paralleled to the bad experiences and grief that street children in India also experienced on a daily basis. Using the example of India, Ray (2017) argued that Indian street children coped differently with grief yet their experiences "…could also fit within a global paradigm and offer insights of importance" (p. 292). The key point for Ray's assessment was that though coping mechanisms differed across time and space, the substantive nature of grief, following a traumatic event, did not change. Understandably, the age range of 5-10 represented the

formative age bracket where if a child was accused of witchcraft and cast out to the street, he or she could have little chance or likelihood of being re-educated and re-integrated into society. That was one aspect of why this study is important to the existing body of literature; it analyzed the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations by focusing on this specific age group. Certainly, there were many factors that accounted for child witchcraft accusations, however, existing and pervasive difficult socioeconomic factors in terms of poverty, globalization, urbanization, and many more in sub-Sahara Africa often became some of potential reasons why young children were scapegoated and chased out of their family homes as witches.

Poverty and Other Economic Factors

Poverty is widely believed to be the main cause of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. This observation has not changed over the years. Cripe et al. (2002) emphasized that the disheartening and crushing poverty levels were undeniably associated with young children accused of witchcraft and abandoned by their families only to find themselves in the streets of Kinshasa. Just as poverty played a leading role in the demise of young children, (Cadogan-Poole, 2013); Cimpric, 2010; Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013) contended that other economic factors such as structural adjustment, urbanization, individualism—just to mention a few—were all significant aspects that contributed to child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC.

Often times, witchcraft-accused children came from poor families and represented all age categories. They lived on the frequently crowded and dangerous streets of Kinshasa and became active players in the daily lives of the city. While there was no consistency in specific age groups for accusations leveled against children, Adinkrah

(2011) and Tedam (2014) substantiated the argument that children labeled as witches usually came from poverty-stricken families with rural backgrounds and were generally between the ages of 1 month and 17 years old; and the phenomenon was a widespread across many countries in Africa and in the world.

As one of the poorest countries on earth, poverty in the DRC is "arguably an important contributor to the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations, underpinning many of the other causal factors" (Cadogan-Poole, 2013, p. 5). The DRC is a country of more than 101 million people (CIA World Factbook, 2020), ravaged by two civil wars in the 1990s. The eastern part of the country is still being ravaged by ongoing internal armed conflicts. These conflicts caused thousands of children to become primarily orphans but also burdens for their extended families. Thus, considering the abject poverty (Gram, 2011) and shortage of subsistence resources already stretched too thin, along with the continued impoverishment of several family units, families developed a mechanism aimed at getting rid of the so-called "surplus mouths" to feed. Though the notion of family disruptions was partly responsible for child witchcraft accusations, Cahn (2006) said that anthropological studies showed that extreme poverty often remained the main cause for active child witchcraft accusations across Sub-Sahara Africa. Unfortunately, the notion of poverty was often worsened by other economic factors such as structural adjustment, individualism, increased urbanization, lacking agricultural opportunities, just to mention a few.

In the 1980s, most of sub-Sahara Africa underwent an economic re-organization called *structural adjustment* aimed at reforming the failing economies of countries in sub-Sahara Africa. Using the structural adjustment mechanism, the International Monetary

Fund (IMF) caused more economic hardships on governments already struggling to meet the economic needs of their populations and as such, the IMF inadvertently put the populations of these countries under increased poverty constraint through currency devaluations and massive loans. While the DRC experienced the new and harsh IMF economic reforms from 1982-1987 (Herdt, Titeca, & Wagemaker, 2010), the same economic measures also created unintended consequences of increased urbanization and individualism over collectivism throughout sub-Sahara Africa. With the structural adjustment deepening the level of poverty across the continent, there ensued mass migration of people from rural areas to urban areas or major cities in search of better life opportunities.

As such, from 1990s onwards, the DRC witnessed a surge in unemployment caused by mass migrations of young and elderly people from the rural areas to the major cities, mainly Kinshasa, in the pursuit of better employment opportunities (Cadogan-Poole, 2013). These migration waves exacerbated the already existing poverty conditions of city dwellers, consequently exposing young children as the scapegoats of their parents' economic hardships in the form of repeated accusations of witchcraft. For Hanson Ruggiero (2013), though accusations of witchcraft occurred more in the context of migration and displacement, organized belief systems were also essential elements in the spreading of witchcraft accusations.

In other words, the prevalence of witchcraft accusations is as well-pronounced when poverty is deeply pervasive in any given context or community. Simply put, witchcraft accusation is salient when poverty endures for a long time within any given society (Miguel, 2005). This was the case in Kinshasa, DRC where this pervasiveness of

the system of belief in (witchcraft) against young children continued to be perceived as the main source of their parents' economic woes. Unfortunately, poverty is often used to "justify" witchcraft accusations against these young children who repeatedly find themselves out of favor with their families and cast into the streets of Kinshasa (Cahn, 2006; Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013).

With an increasing poverty level and general impoverishment of the populations across sub-Sahara Africa, notably in Kinshasa, DRC, the notion of individualism became much more noticeable and pronounced in family units. Certainly, individuals are part of family units and communities, in other words, they are part of a collective whole. Nevertheless, Bellamy & Larry (2004) and Cimpric (2010) believed that witchcraft accusations, in an environment of increased socio-economic changes and challenges contributed to the detriment and deterioration of community relationships, family bonds or solidarities; and threaten the very integrity and advancement of communities. Cimpric (2010) noted that "the last decades of the twentieth century were particularly hard for the majority of sub-Saharan African countries, which have suffered an acute and multiform crisis (social, economic, political and cultural)" (p.20). DRC is an example of sub-Saharan African countries where persistent poverty often created profound social changes in family structures.

Social Factors

Child witchcraft accusations are a multi-crisis phenomenon that involves complex socioeconomic, religious, cultural, and political factors and interplays within the contexts of sub-Sahara Africa and the DRC (Cimpric, 2010; Phiri, 2009). In fact, a combination of academics, anthropologists, NGOs, politicians, religious leaders, and other field workers

operating all throughout sub-Sahara Africa and in Kinshasa, DRC, believed that many social factors also contributed to the phenomenon. Issues such as illiteracy, educational awareness, role of the church, role of witchdoctors or traditional healers, fear, and the media were just few of the many social factors that compound to the rising crisis of witchcraft accusations against young children in Kinshasa, DRC. For the purpose of this study, I limited my analysis of literature to the following six important factors.

The role of illiteracy. Article 44 of the DRC's constitution stipulated that "eradication of illiteracy is a national duty [for] the realization of which the government must elaborate a specific program" (Constituteproject.org, 2011). Yet, illiteracy remained an important contributor to the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. Illiteracy in itself could not be seen as the sole factor that exacerbated witchcraft accusations, but it was plausible that illiteracy played a major role in the prevalence of witchcraft and therefore of witchcraft accusations (Joshi, Kaushal, Katewa, & Devi, 2006). Illiteracy among the majority of the rural populace was one of the most relevant social factors that negatively impacted and shaped the outlook of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC and across sub-Sahara Africa. Joshi et al. (2006) and Meel (2009) argued that while beliefs and practices in witchcraft were widely rampant and still strong among rural communities, witchcraft accusations were accentuated by the existence of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy among the people. Meel (2009) used the unjustified deaths of three elderly women by illiterate individuals in the Transkei province in South Africa after being accused of witchcraft as a quintessential example of an evil practice that occur across sub-Sahara Africa but often go unreported.

To demonstrate the extent to which witchcraft played on the minds of people, Meel (2009) explained that people of different social backgrounds still believed in witchcraft particularly if they could not make rational explanations of the occurrences of certain events or "fail to establish causes of complex issues e.g. regular misfortunes, failure to succeed in life etc." (p. 63). Meel's argument showed that people often tended to blame others for complex events or misfortune that could not be logically explained, especially in rural communities across sub-Sahara Africa and other parts of the world. In the case of Kinshasa, DRC, the use of witchcraft to accuse others, particularly young children often involved people from every social echelons of the DRC society without distinction.

Indeed, considered as a combination of the lack of formal education and social awareness, illiteracy is pervasive in most sub-Saharan African cultures and local customs. Illiteracy permeated all layers of social fabric and served as a powerful and deceitful tool used by religious leaders, particularly evangelical church leaders to wrongfully conduct exorcism against young children or persons accused of witchcraft. For example, Mohyuddin and Rehman (2015) asserted that in Islam, the lack of awareness and illiteracy of *black magic*, also referred to as witchcraft penetrated Islam at its core. That is, witchcraft was used to influence the minds of the worshippers to the extent that it was virtually impossible to get them out of that state of mindset and beliefs. In a way, witchcraft was perceived as dogma for those who believed in it and it also existed in others religions such as Islam but with different interpretations of its application and reference as black magic.

The concept of illiteracy was true for a section of the populations in South Indian villages where poverty and lack of education often caused belief in anything of magical, inexplicable, and *religious* magnitude as evidenced by the magical practices of the Shaman, people considered as having supernatural powers for divination of fate (Bourdier,1995). In Kinshasa, DRC and many parts of the world, illiteracy-related witchcraft accusations (may be referred to a magic in other parts of the world) targeted children indiscriminately of genders and age groups. To this effect, part of the main goal for this portion of the study still remained to emphasize the important role that illiteracy plays in reinforcing and propagating witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC, particularly the accusations targeting defenseless young children between the ages of 5-10. Though, illiteracy is a key component in child witchcraft accusations, the church is heavily involved in witchcraft allegations against young children in Kinshasa, DRC.

The role of the church in witchcraft accusations. From the 15th to the 18th centuries, the church played a crucial role in the prosecution of thousands of witches across Europe. Yet, in contemporary sub-Sahara Africa, with the flourishing and ever expansion of Christianity, the church is still seen as a major contributor to the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations; especially those directed against innocent young children (Cadogan-Poole, 2013; Cahn, 2006). With the exception of religious leaders or pastors committed to conventional or *orthodox ministry* (Phiri, 2009), for the past three decades or so, the rise of indigenous, spiritual, charismatic, Pentecostal, or evangelical churches (names used interchangeably) in sub-Sahara Africa has been characterized by the failure and weakness of Christianity to deal effectively with the evil nature and supernatural power of witchcraft.

To this end, a number of researchers (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Cadogan-Poole, 2013; Cimpric, 2010; Cohan, 2011; Secker, 2012) argued that these churches are partly to be blamed for the increase in attacks and accusations of witchcraft against young children. In their separate but common assertion, the aforementioned authors claimed that self-interest seeking pastors or so-called prophets of revivalist or charismatic churches in Kinshasa, DRC often legitimized and perpetuated witchcraft accusations against young children through the practices of exorcism. This paradigm shift was not just simply a matter of coincidence. Instead, these prosecutorial and dangerous practices became lucrative businesses that brought wealth and prosperity to these pastors or prophets. In most cases, these church leaders dehumanized the accused children while also taking financial advantage of the members of their congregations. Though researchers did not mention any age-related exorcism against the children brought to these churches for "cleansing", research from literature and interviews indicated that exorcism based on accusations of witchcraft was indiscriminate against the aged of the children. It affected all age categories, including children aged 5-10, the very subject of this study. The assessment of the researchers mentioned above about religious exorcism in general terms clearly fell short of identifying whom the practices were directed against. Nonetheless, it still remained a good starting point for further studies. Yet, given the fact that the literature used in this section overlooked this important aspect of child witchcraft accusations, this study expanded the research on the relevant impacts of the role of the church on the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations. The following section discussed the undeniable and vital role of traditional healers (best known as witchdoctors) who often exacerbated witchcraft accusations through their mischievous practices.

The contribution of witchdoctors/traditional healers and fear. With the increasing promotion of "fatalism rather than action" (Cimpric 2010, p. 36) and the growing role of "Christian clergymen (pastors, apostles, or prophets) affiliated with spiritual, fundamentalist churches" (Adinkrah, 2011, p. 744), witchdoctors (traditional healers, term used interchangeably) also established themselves as promoters of witchcraft accusations. Through their ritualistic performance in open public sphere, witchdoctors condoned and corroborated accusations levied against presumed witches by families and local communities (Chapman, 2013). According to Federici (2010), "witch-doctors play a key part in the fueling of fears and abuses, but they can do so only because they enjoy total impunity. This also holds true for Christian pastors operating all throughout sub-Sahara Africa, who are rarely held accountable for the inflammatory rhetoric with which they instigate witch-hunts" (p.22). Federici's argument clearly suggested that while clergymen and witchdoctors operated without impunity, they were regularly not held accountable for their heinous actions. In other words, their provocative rhetoric in their practices often went unpunished or sanctioned by the government of the DRC, somewhat indicating the complicity of the government.

In fact, witchdoctors in Kinshasa, DRC gained in notoriety due to their purported claim to possess powers to catch witches. Witchdoctors often used their shrines for consultations, *treatment*, divination or fortune telling in the hope of catching perceived witches (Adinkrah, 2011). While these unsanctioned practices frequently attracted massive numbers of people, they also involved torture, intimidation, and abuses against the accused witches (Adinkrah, 2011). These witchcraft accusations routinely violated human rights of the accused. The constant belief in witchcraft and the fear of

bewitchment were concepts deeply rooted in the minds of both urban and rural inhabitants in Kinshasa, DRC and across other countries in sub-Sahara Africa (Secker, 2012). Such a belief system created an environment of fear that permeated deeply into many sub-Saharan African cultures where people blamed their misfortune or failures onto others. Thus, whereas in the past, traditional practice of witchcraft accusations were directed against elderly people as shown in many societies, Medieval Europe, Ghana, and India, (Secker, 2012), there had been a gradual paradigm shift to involve young children as the foci for witchcraft accusations, especially in Kinshasa, DRC (Fanning, 2008; Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013).

Fear was part and parcel of witchcraft accusations against young children in Kinshasa, DRC. The fear of bewitchment often caused people, including parents to take drastic measures against their perceived evildoers. In sub-Sahara Africa, a witch was perceived as a person possessing malevolent and supernatural powers that could be used to harm others. Cimpric (2010) argued that witches symbolized both the good and evil given their abilities to connect with the invisible world. Their special powers often created fear among the people. In Kinshasa, DRC, the fear that a child was possessed with witchcraft frightened and caused people to take “precautionary” measures while anticipating violent courses of actions against the accused children. By way of illustration, Adinkrah (2011) also argued that fear instilled a sense of insecurity and the thought of bewitchment fomented an ideal climate that created witch hunts.

Koning (2013) also believed that the lack of developments and economic opportunities caused envy that led to unnecessary jealousy and to potential fear of bewitchment and witch paranoia. Federici (2008) equally noted that in the 1980s and

1990s, given the heightened period of currency devaluation, structural adjustment, and economic uncertainties, people in communities and even within the same families became suspicious, fearful, and sometimes levied accusations against one another for suspicion of witchcraft. The fear of bewitchment seemed to be a real source of friction within families. Although the literature clearly supported the interconnectedness between witchcraft, witchdoctors, and fear, it did not touch on or specifically single out children between the ages of 5-10 as the incarnation or embodiment of witchcraft. With the exception of Cimpric (2010) who categorized the age interval of children accused of witchcraft as between three and eighteen years old, the remainder of literature used in this research failed to specifically address children in this age group as being accused of witchcraft by witchdoctors. Part of this conundrum could be attributed to the lack of educational awareness among local communities.

The role of the lack of educational awareness. The lack of educational awareness or efforts within the population in Kinshasa, DRC and across sub-Sahara Africa continues to subjugate young children to repeated accusations of witchcraft and abuses although these accusations cannot be empirically substantiated. The use of educational awareness as a tool can help cast light and attempt to dissipate misconceptions about witchcraft and all forms of witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, primarily child witchcraft accusations. Through campaigns of educational awareness, populations and communities get educated about the vile and dangers of witchcraft accusations. While educational campaign efforts were part of the measures needed to mitigate the problem, they alone could not solve the growing tendency of witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. Goloobi-Mutebi (2005), assessed that “formal education

and labour migration may also actually contribute to the growth of witchcraft accusations, by exposing people to new ways of thinking and conduct" (p. 940). In the same vein, educational efforts are a double-edged sword in addressing the issue of witchcraft accusations. While educational awareness can have negative implications in the context of witchcraft, collective cultural beliefs of families and communities can also incite accusers to witch-killings based on *perceived* dangers that witches pose to the community well-being.

Conversely, (Berdeka, 2014; Cimpric, 2010; Cohan, 2011; Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013) argued that educational awareness was useful in the long run as a medium to help reduce and potentially eliminate suspicions about witchcraft and child witchcraft accusations. In recent years and decades, child witchcraft accusations took on a trajectory of social norm (Molina 2003-2005; Patel & Pauletto, 2010) mainly because a large majority of the population in Kinshasa, DRC seemed to show a deep-seated lack of concern for the young children being accused of witchcraft for the reasons mentioned above.

Child witchcraft accusations as an accepted social norm. Considering child witchcraft accusations as a social norm clearly demonstrated the social apathy or community disinterest in the face of such a glaring social issue that affected Kinshasa and the DRC as a society. While there was no extensive literature on the issue of community attitude, disinterest, and lack of genuine concern for children accused of witchcraft, the few that were available were very telling indeed. To this respect, Kopoka (2000) argued that "today's children are the responsibility of individual parents and are ignored by the rest of the community. While the number of street children grows by the day, the

community remains silent with the exception of a few individuals and organizations. There is no community outrage to the problem" (pp. 13-14). Kopoka's general assessment of child abandonment by the community was equally applicable to witchcraft-accused children made street children by social, political, and economic circumstances. Another dark glimpse of community indifference was noted by Davey, Nolan, and Ray (2011) when they assessed that in Kinshasa, DRC, a combination of socio-economic disparities, HIV pandemic that caused several thousands of orphans, and internal wars increased witchcraft accusations. As a result, children who have been forced to live on the streets also experienced a high level of stigma and discrimination at the hands of the community with the government remaining largely absent in addressing the problem.

The general community unresponsiveness or lack of sympathy was not an isolated problem only for the DRC. Certainly in the DRC, "children accused of witchcraft is a particularly worrisome phenomenon because it accents the degree to which current circumstances are pressing on families and their communities to lead them to turn against their children" (Cripe, Curran, Lockett & Verhey, 2002, p. v). This literature, while it went back nearly two decades still illustrated the relevance of the beliefs in and existence of the notion of witchcraft which caused many communities to develop fierce animosity and violence toward presumptive and presumed witches. According to the South African Pagan Rights Alliance (2010), in many sub-Saharan African countries, Ghana, Cameroon, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Mozambique, just to name a few, violence perpetrated against alleged witches or sorcerers, by their own the communities was widespread and was on the rise. Such community involvement in the demise of their own people based on suspicions, false accusations or coerced confessions of witchcraft

were just the tip of the iceberg. Many communities across sub-Sahara Africa were involved in the mistreatment and abandonment of young children to the streets due to witchcraft accusations. Admittedly, the literature mentioned above provided succinct overviews of the contributions of the community to the mistreatment of its own people; however, it also lacked in specifics and failed to target the most vulnerable population of young children between 5-10 years of age. Unfortunately, in Kinshasa, DRC and most sub-Sahara Africa, the fate of young children accused of witchcraft was often compounded by the role of the media.

The role of the media. The media represents a powerful tool and can make or break the future discourse of the fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. While the media can be used as a platform and a viable outreach instrument to expose and fight against child witchcraft accusations, it can also be used to spread incendiary accusations against individuals suspected of witchcraft. In either case, the media can be used as a double-edge sword to achieve incompatible goals. Adinkrah (2011), Cimpric (2010), and Tedam (2014) contended that the media, as an outreach apparatus could play a key role in addressing the issue of ignorance or naivety surrounding witchcraft belief. The media is a useful platform to draw more attention to the problem and educate people through all kinds of available media sources, televisions, radios, newspapers, movies, etc…but also with the help of local NGOs operating in Kinshasa, DRC. Regarding the vital role that the media plays in disseminating positive information, Sebsibe (2010) stated that “media programming such as TVs, radios, newspapers, fliers, high profile seminars, pamphlets, etc., must be utilized in collaboration with local advocacy groups and relevant organizations” (p. 273). Sebsibe

(2010) implies that the media could have a broader outreach and in the case of child witchcraft accusations, having such a wider outreach to both rural and urban areas could have positive and mitigating impacts.

By contrast, a number of researchers (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Gram, 2011; Federici, 2008) perceived the media as a weapon that reinforces rumors and stories of witchcraft, perceptions, and accusations of witchcraft. The media's promotion of witch hunt in the minds of people, not only ignites the imaginative accusations of witchcraft but it is also an indication of the constant fear, anxiety, and the cultural beliefs in the evil of witchcraft that people often exhibit. To these two positions about the media, Coyne and Leeson (2009) also acknowledged the duality of the role of the media as a catalyst that informs and influences the knowledge and opinions of the information possessed by the consumers. In this capacity, "the media produces common knowledge" (Coyne & Leeson, 2009, p. 35). While this literature examined two opposing aspects of the media, it did not analyze with a specific focus, the role of the media in promoting preventive measures in the fight involving witchcraft accusations against young children within the age group of 5-10. Though these authors had merits in their arguments for or against the role of the media in witchcraft accusations, the literature used in this section still fell short of any scientific dimension about the role of the media.

Even as their studies analyzed the role of the media either as a publicity tool for positive social change or negative reaction against accused witches, the authors did not hone in extensively on the issue of witchcraft accusations involving young children from age 5-10 in Kinshasa, DRC. This is an extremely important gap in literature that must be filled by this study through the combination of pragmatic public policy approaches and

implementations strategies by the DRC government, local NGOs, and other international organizations operating in the field in Kinshasa and other parts of the DRC. The following section reviewed literature that assessed and discussed the link between critical and attachment theories and policy formulations and implementations in Kinshasa and the DRC in the context of child witchcraft accusations.

Critical and Attachment Theories in Policy Formulation and Implementation

In the context of the DRC and to a larger extent in most sub-Sahara Africa, there is little, if any, literature that directly correlates the formulations and implementations of public and social policies using the frameworks of critical and attachment theories. In other words, literature reviewed to this effect had been sparsely available but when available, it did not establish any clear relationships as to how policymakers, local NGOs, and key international organizations devise and implement policies in the framework of attachment and critical theories when dealing with child witchcraft accusations. Although no information was found on the direct association between critical and attachment theories and policy formulations and implementations with respect to child witchcraft accusations, Cripe et al. (2002) argued that there is a "general lack of policy and program leadership on issues of child protection in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (p. 23). HRW (2006) and World Vision (2012) also made the similar observations with respect to policies that existed in support of other children's rights issues. Unfortunately, such policies existed merely in label and not in implementations due sometimes to a lack of political resolve.

Given her pertinently decades old publication, Bretherton (1992) also corroborated the policy-related arguments above when she argued that "valuing of

attachment relations thus has public policy and moral implications for society, not just psychological implications for attachment dyads" (p. 791). Dale (2012) essentially made the same remarks about the importance of the value of public policy in the general scheme of attachment and care of children considerations. Looking at the arguments provided by the various authors in this section, the lack of direct link between critical and attachment theories and public policy formulations and enforcements with respect to child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC, it is imperative that this present study help fill the gap in literature. This analysis added to the body of literature and explained that when public and social policies are critically well-thought or devised, participative in nature, and citizens are actively involved in them (Jun, 2006), their implementations are often effective, efficient, and ensure the common good. In the following segment, I provided a short consideration of why I chose phenomenology as methodology as opposed to case study or ethnographic case study.

Initial Consideration of Case Study and Ethnographic Case Study

At the onset of this study, I contemplated using either a case study or an ethnographic case study. While both approaches were highly valued methodologies, they did not engage more robustly on lived experiences of a phenomenon as did a phenomenological approach. Howell (2013) pointed out that the qualitative phenomenological approach is a philosophical approach that carefully correlates consciousness, subjects, and objects; in other words, phenomenology involves the analyses of phenomena from a descriptive vantage point and *experiential essence* or consciousness of the subject. Eberle (2014) supported the idea that phenomenology is a

'science' of phenomena which examines things or experiences themselves in order to answer the '*what'* and '*how'* questions and generate descriptive meaning.

Contrary to phenomenology, O'reilly (2009) simply defined case study as a methodology that examines different situations or cases in depth whereas ethnographic study explains themes or cases in order to draw analytical conclusions. Concurrently, Creswell (2013) posited that case study involves the study of an issue that is explored through one or more cases within a bounded system whereas ethnographic study concentrates more on an entire cultural group's interactions over time and involves typically larger groups.

In essence, case study targets deliberate choice of the case or topic to be studied and ethnography usually involves a methodology. Case study is a research methodology that develops in-depth and elaborate descriptions and analysis of a case or multiple cases. Ethnographic case study on the other hand, seeks to describe and interpret individuals' stories within their culture-sharing group or context (Creswell, 2007).

Hird (2003) also noted that a key difference between the two methodologies is "that ethnography is defined by its methodology, whereas a case study can be highly quantitative or statistical and use no ethnographic methods at all" (p. 2). In case study, the researcher tries to understand and provide perspective on the case under study. In other words, the key objective of case study is to examine a given case in relevance to "its historical, economic, technological, social, and cultural context" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 2). Case study uses real life situations and is not necessarily defined by a methodology. It is a methodology that emphasizes a true representation of a case or the

natural occurrence of a case (O'Reilly, 2009). In short, there is a fundamental difference between case study and ethnographic case study.

Ethnography case study is a research methodology that centers on cultural diversity and natural settings of humans, generally revolving around an "initial plan or proposal of research, sometimes based on preliminary knowledge of the fieldwork site(s)" (Gellner & Hirsch, 2001, p. 7). In the same vein, other researchers (Crabtree, Rodden, Tolmie, & Button, 2009) also argued that ethnography fundamentally deals with observational data collected on what people do within their natural settings. Though the ultimate goal for case study and ethnography is to provide understanding and meaning to event (s) under study, they are limited in providing comprehensive analysis—in this case, of child witchcraft accusations from the perspective of children's advocacy groups operating in Kinshasa.

Given the limitations of case study and ethnography in addressing the idea of lived experiences of a phenomenon, I purposefully selected by design phenomenology. Phenomenology emphasizes on the importance of personal experiences, perspectives, interpretations, and environments of the persons or potential key participants who I interviewed during the course of my field work in Kinshasa, in addition to documents that I reviewed for content significance.

As such, phenomenology is the best methodology needed to investigate the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. Moustakas (1994) argued that phenomenological research is predicated on "first-person reports of life experiences" (p. 2). Adams and Van Manen (2008) corroborated Moustakas' argument by describing phenomenology as the experimental or lived experience with meaning shaped by

"consciousness, language, our cognitive and non-cognitive sensibilities, and by our pre-understandings and presuppositions" (p.2). As with any other research methodology, phenomenology has its limitations and challenges with regard to the subjective nature of the researcher which remains an unavoidable reality. Yet, it provides the firsthand accounts and lived experiences of participants who were involved in this study during the interview process.

Summary

This chapter provided a historical perspective of witchcraft in sub-Sahara Africa and an in-depth literature review of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. While this extensive literature review demonstrated that witchcraft accusations, especially against elderly people, mainly women was antecedent to post-independent DRC, it was a phenomenon that was widespread almost everywhere in the world but often received little attention. However, what is still understudied is the relatively newness of the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations of the last two to three decades in Kinshasa, the DRC. Based on the literature review, it was also clear that many studies have been conducted that involve children's rights issues, in particular child witchcraft accusations; however, the research gap is literature that exclusively addressed accusations, violence, abuse, and exploitations of all kind directed against young children within the age group of 5-10.

In Chapter 3, I discussed phenomenological exploratory case study, a methodology carefully selected and best suited for this research into child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. I also discussed the following key subjects: the research design, role of the researcher, participants selection, sample strategy, sample size under

consideration, logic for data collection and instrumentation, and analysis; interview techniques, and any other information pertinent to the data collection strategy.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological exploratory case study was to explore the basis for accusations of witchcraft against young children, to explain how the theory and conceptual framework for this study predicted patterns of social behaviors for young children 5-10 years of age who were labeled as witches, and to establish whether the government's inability to assess child witchcraft accusations within the prism of critical theory and an attachment conceptual framework contributed to the recrudescence of the phenomenon. Additionally, I sought to undertake a thorough review of existing government and public documents of the DRC on policies and the administration of such policies in support of child welfare strategies targeting young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years who had been accused of witchcraft, as well as to collect narratives from mainly local NGOs and other child advocacy groups on firsthand experiences with young children prematurely separated from their parents' or caregivers' homes and forcibly made street children due to accusations of witchcraft, specifically concerning whether they were responding positively to the administration of existing policies or whether new policies were needed.

This chapter presents specifics of the qualitative research methodology that I used, phenomenology as the chosen research design or approach, my role as the researcher, data collection mechanism, and issues of trustworthiness and ethics in this research. Finally, I explained the basic design and method of analysis for this study. Through the research method, this research ultimately attempted to explain the basic design and method of analysis of this study.

Research Design

The central research questions guiding this study were as follows:

RQ1. What is the policy significance of critical theory in evaluating the DRC government's child welfare programs, actions, and public policies targeting young children aged 5 to 10 years who are accused of witchcraft and often cast out of their family homes into the streets of Kinshasa, DRC?

RQ2. How useful is attachment theory in predicting patterns of social behavior of young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years who are accused of witchcraft by their own parents or caretakers in Kinshasa, DRC?

In this qualitative research, phenomenological exploratory case study was the primary methodology that I used to answer these open-ended questions and guide this study. Historically, qualitative research as a method of inquiry has been used in the fields of social sciences, health sciences, and humanities to identify, analyze, understand, and provide meanings to prototypes or patterned behaviors, events, phenomena, and social processes that affect the lives of individuals (Lockyer, 2012). Sandelowski (2004) reiterated this point when she argued that qualitative research provides meaningful interpretations and understanding of specific events, phenomena, or cases that directly shape the lives of individuals.

Creswell and Maietta (2011) echoed the argument that qualitative research provides a platform that enables the researcher to obtain detailed, precise, and specific knowledge about a given phenomenon involving individuals in their natural settings. In the present study, phenomenological exploratory case study was used to collect analytical

data from the experiences of those who had observed children's situations through their own interactions with them and with the government. This research methodology was helpful in answering the leading research question on the DRC government's public policies on child witchcraft accusations. On the one hand, the qualitative research method of inquiry is multidisciplinary and broad in scope (Delamont & Atkinson, 2012); on the other hand, phenomenology is a research methodology that is often used to provide a narrow focus on a specific social issue.

Originally founded by Husserl, a German philosopher of the 19th century, phenomenology became a new and powerful qualitative research methodology free of prior assumptions and preconceived ideas about phenomena or events (Brewer & Miller, 2003). This is what Husserl called *epoche*, the freedom from any suppositions or presumptions (Moustakas, 1994) in the quest for true subjective lived experiences. By definition, the basic tenets of phenomenology revolve around careful and conscious description and understanding of everyday life experiences of things as people experience them directly (Schwandt, 2015). For Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research is predicated on first-person accounts of life experiences. In other words, phenomenology provides firsthand, direct, original, and unfiltered experiences of phenomena by individuals in their natural settings. Although case study and ethnographic study were considered as viable approaches to this study, phenomenology was the most appropriate for this study because it offered unique insight into the lived experiences of young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa from the perspectives of children's advocates who worked with them on a daily basis. Mertens and McLaughlin (1995) asserted that phenomenology asks the "what" question from the vantage point of the participant in

order to describe and understand the participant's own experiences and perceptions as they relate to a specific phenomenon. For Mertens et al. (2011), phenomenology prioritizes the subjective experience and makes it the core of the inquiry.

While case study is a research methodology that develops an in-depth and elaborate description and analysis of a case or multiple cases, ethnographic study focuses on the description and interpretation of individuals' stories within their culture-sharing group or context (Creswell, 2007). The ultimate goal of these two research methodologies is to provide understanding and meaning to an event or events under study. Thus, they were not necessarily suitable for the purpose of this study because they were not designed to provide focus and insights specifically on lived experiences related to the problem of young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa, DRC, a purpose for which phenomenology was a better fit. Phenomenology provides a holistic approach to describing and understanding the essence of lived experiences or people's unchanged perceptions related to a specific phenomenon (Laureate Education, Inc., 2013), which in this case was child witchcraft accusations. In other words, the basic characteristics of phenomenology are inherently fundamental and suitable to this study because they primarily focus on lived experiences.

Child witchcraft accusations constituted the central phenomenon under study. This problem affects most sub-Saharan countries, along with other countries around the world (Hanson & Rugiero, 2013). Child witchcraft accusations have caused and continue to cause hundreds of thousands of young children to be extricated from their family homes and to seek refuge in the streets of major cities around the DRC, notably in Kinshasa. Some studies have been conducted in this area, but they have not specifically

targeted children 5-10 years of age. Remarkably, no existing child welfare policies of the DRC government have served to considerably reduce the problem, even with the enactment of the 2009 Child Protection Code. As such, it is important that more research be conducted to assess the effectiveness of such policies and to ascertain whether they need to be revised in order to ensure robust implementation strategies that can eventually lead to mitigating and eradicating the problem of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is an integral part of a study. In a phenomenological study, the ultimate goal of the researcher is to assemble, arrange or organize, and evaluate with meaning the lived experiences of participants who experience certain phenomena. As such, the integrity and trustworthiness of the researcher must be at the forefront during interviews and the collection of data in support of the phenomenon being studied. Given that the researcher cannot be placed outside the study (Bergum, 1991) in qualitative phenomenological exploratory research, the researcher becomes the primary source of concern throughout the research process. Because of the researcher's role as the leading or primary research instrument for data collection, he or she must use, among other techniques, triangulation or peer review to validate the outcome of a study. These procedures ensure validity and confidence in a study and mitigate personal bias. For example, Mathison (2005) argued that the triangulation strategy helps to eliminate errors and bias while validating nothing but the truth. In qualitative research, "member checking, triangulation, thick description, peer reviews, and external audits" (Creswell &

Miller, 2000, p. 124) are all common techniques that researchers use to authenticate the validity of their research.

While conducting qualitative research, a scholar or researcher performs a multiplicity of roles and responsibilities simultaneously (Leckie, 2008). As a researcher, one of my fundamental roles was to adhere to the basic protocol of objectiveness, purpose, and ethical standards. Leckie (2008) considered the researcher as an expert who must proceed according to certain accepted research standards and procedures. According to Bastos, Bonamigo, Duquia, González-Chica, & Mesa (2014), "The selection of instruments that will be used to collect data is a crucial step in the research process" (p. 918). In other words, the researcher is the most valuable tool or key instrument of research who must ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected in support of the study. In support of these arguments, Flick (2009) postulated that reflexivity or "self-awareness" is imperative in qualitative studies, in which researchers often reflect on their actions, impressions, feelings, emotions, and irritations during field observations. For this study, my role as the researcher during interviews and data collection involved gathering and examining documents and interviewing participants using open-ended questions that allowed participants to express themselves freely without being influenced or pressured by me.

As a *United States U.S.* military officer who spent 2 years in a professional capacity in Kinshasa, I first became keenly aware of the existence of the problem of child witchcraft accusations as a transnational phenomenon, at least in the sub-Saharan African context. My time in Kinshasa also afforded me the opportunity to see firsthand the extent to which witchcraft accusations as a social phenomenon continued to dominate the lives

of citizens at all social and political echelons in the country. I also interacted with local and international NGO field workers and some religious leaders who had firsthand experiences with children accused of witchcraft. In fact, these occasional discussions about children's issues in Kinshasa were so insightful that they triggered my curiosity and passion to conduct more formal and scholarly research into the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations. These children's advocates with whom I had conversations were simple acquaintances with knowledge about the issue. When I reconnected with them to gather data after I left Kinshasa, I was in no position of authority to influence them during the interviews.

In qualitative research, researcher bias and subjectivity are inevitable and are important factors to take into consideration (Mehra, 2002). As someone who worked in Kinshasa and had the ability to speak the language and understand the cultural beliefs and nuances of the DRC, it was inevitable that, as the researcher and primary research instrument, I could not be not remain indifferent to the sufferings and plight of these children accused of witchcraft and as a parent, I naturally developed sympathy and empathy for them. As a result, I wanted to know more about the problem. . In fact, on a few occasions, I personally interacted with some of these children in the streets of Kinshasa and was horrified by some of their stories. Although, at that time, I was not planning on conducting this research, such emotional affections and concerns may be problematic for a researcher who seeks to remain impartial and objective. My interest in this study came to me years after I departed Kinshasa. While this research was about young children, as extremely vulnerable individuals, they could not be directly targeted as potential interview participants or prospects. To avoid any undue influence, I only

interacted with potential key participants and expert individuals from mainly local NGOs who routinely observed and worked with such children. LeCompte (2000) referred to the selectivity that researchers exercise in choosing certain participants or things to study as a useful, careful, and credible selection process of participants in qualitative research. In other words, the deliberate selection process often ensured that the outcome of interviews and data collection remained objective, purposeful, untainted, and unbiased from careful selection of participants.

There are a number of ways for a researcher to mitigate and avoid bias. Laureate Education, Inc. (2013) identified the following steps that researchers must follow to avoid research bias:

- The researcher must not lead the participants to give answers that one wants to hear through gestures, facial expressions, or lending words.
- The researcher must not coerce participants to answer questions even as they have openly expressed the desire not to continue answering.
- The researcher need not share his or her own story or experience with participants.
- The researcher must record interviews for later review.
- The researcher must maintain interview journals in order to analyze possible connections between the data collected and the participants.
- The researcher must continuously review participants' responses in order to arrive at credible conclusions.
- The researcher must apply bracketing during the interview process.

Consistent with the steps outlined by Laureate Education, Inc. (2013), Podsakoff, Podsakoff, and Mackenzie (2012) identified three key factors that can cause participants to give biased answers: (a) the ability of participants, (b) the motivation of participants, and (c) the level of difficulty for participants to answer questions. In other words, participants require a certain level of basic knowledge and understanding about the phenomenon in order to provide accurate answers. Similarly, participants must be motivated during interviews and have minimal to no difficulties in answering interview questions. According to Podsakoff et al. (2012), by respecting these basic qualitative research principles, it may be possible to avoid research biases.

Methodology

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used for this study. This philosophical approach involves careful correlation of consciousness, subjects, and objects; in other words, phenomenology involves analyses of phenomena from a descriptive vantage point and focuses on the *experiential essence* or consciousness of the subject (Howell, 2013). Eberle (2014) argued that phenomenology is a "science" of phenomena that involves examining things or experiences themselves in order to answer *what* and *how* questions and generate descriptive meaning.

Though the literature used in this methodology section of the study may seem outdated, the fundamental importance and argument about phenomenology as applied to the current study remain valid. To this effect, Di Pofi (2002) reasoned that phenomenology is a methodology suitable for broad and open-ended questions in studies in which participants or respondents determine their own frame of answers, as opposed to quantitative methods of inquiry, which use mathematical and computational techniques to

derive answers to closed-ended questions (Strauch, 1976). That is, while the naturalistic approach of qualitative research relies on observations and interpretations of realities so as to provide meanings to phenomena, the quantitative approach involves testing hypotheses in order to confirm or refute existing theory (Newman, 1998).

Marshall (1996) reinforced the difference between the two research methodologies by arguing that qualitative research answers *why* and *how* questions on complex social issues, whereas quantitative research focuses more on "numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect" (Sukamolson, 2007, p. 2).

In the following subsections, the selection of participants, data collection, instrumentation, and data analysis are discussed and analyzed in detail.

Selection of Participants

The main purpose of this study was to look at existing child welfare public policies and assess whether lack of political will, implementation strategies, and accountability were factors that contributed to child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. In an extensive and comprehensive literature review, I found many studies on witchcraft accusations involving children and elderly women (Cahn, 2006; Hanson & Rugiero, 2013), yet I found no studies specifically focusing on young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years who had been accused of witchcraft. To better understand why young children became targets of witchcraft accusations and how the ramifications of existing child welfare policies in the DRC affected them, I selected key participants from local NGOs as well as a few individuals from the clergy and civil society who were knowledgeable about the issue to participate in the study.

As mentioned earlier, the target population for this study included individuals from local NGOs and international organizations, personnel from civil society, clergy or church leaders, legal counsel, and a Belgian anthropologist (specializing in the DRC). This controlled, purposeful selection of likely key participants was primarily based on their knowledge and understanding of the issue and the culture of the DRC, as well as their extensive and continuous involvement with young children accused of witchcraft in their natural settings. I avoided any direct contact with children because, as members of a vulnerable population, they might be easily influenced and intimidated to provide biased answers to interview questions. Although the criteria for participant selection were mainly based on interactive field experiences, expertise, and knowledge of the issue, participants were expected to be familiar with the policy frameworks of the DRC Constitution, 2009 Child Protection Code, UN Charter on Child Protection, UNICEF, and DRC government on child welfare and the implementation strategies so as to provide valuable descriptive and contextual information for this study during the interview process. Knowledge and understanding of the constitution of the DRC were equally important in the daily operational environment of the key participants.

The sample strategy that I used for this qualitative study was purposeful sample. It is the most commonly use sample technique because it enables the researcher to intentionally select participants who are likely to answer to the fullest the research questions (Marshall, 1996). Purposeful sample strategy also ensures research validity because it provides a research platform where an optimum number or exhaustive number of participants can be selected based on the considerations of the phenomenon being studied (Marshall, 1996). Echoing the same view, Creswell (2013) argued that purposeful

sample strategy is suitable for a qualitative phenomenological study because the researcher selects participants who have experience with the phenomenon being studied at a given setting.

Sample size is a relative term that applies to all five research designs described by Creswell (2013). There are no specific methods or formulas to establish sample size in qualitative research. However, depending on the research design, a sample size can vary considerably from one extreme to another until the researcher hits data saturation whereby no new information emerges from the interviews Creswell (2013). Dworkin (2012) defined saturation as the point at which data collection mechanism provides no new and pertinent information during the interview process. Data saturation can encompass any number of factors used to guide the interview process.

For this study, the main criteria for the selection of participants were based on the knowledge of the issue, impacts of the phenomenon on the children, how and why children 5-10 were targeted as witches, field experiences working directly with young children accused of witchcraft, access to resources, understanding of the government public policy framework, and cultural beliefs. In addition, the educational level of the potential participants, their genders, their ages, professions, marital statuses, and how their feelings and emotional attachments to the children must all be taken into considerations due to the fact that these critical factors could inadvertently shape the outcomes of the interviews. While these attributes of the would-be key participants and children were not definitive or static, they were initial first steps necessary to derive the required relevant information or data about the phenomenon under study. As someone was previously assigned to Kinshasa and who understands the culture of the DRC and

speaks and reads French, I was able to see the site of sample selection (Kinshasa) firsthand during my two years assignment there. Beside the above mentioned selection criteria, I believed being able to identify culturally with the potential key participants was also an important factor that I took into consideration in my sample selection.

The relationship between data saturation and sample size emerges when no further significant data from the participants creates any additional conceptual category. For this purpose, I planned on limiting the total number of participants to 13. The selection was limited to the demographic participants of local NGO field workers, a legal counsel, a Belgian anthropologist with extensive field work involving children in the DRC, and other selected members of the civil society personnel and the clergy. It also comprised of adult male and female participants with significant experience working with the children, all from the capital city of Kinshasa. Although there was the possibility of number of participants to increase as the study progressed or until saturation was reached, the choice of a minimum sample size of 13 was deemed purposeful, deliberate, and appropriate based on the fact that for this type of phenomenological exploratory case study, it should ensure complete data saturation at the end of the interview process (Creswell, 2013). I also believed that this sample size population of experienced local NGO field workers and experts provided substantive and sufficient descriptions about the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations as lived daily by young children in the DRC. Their continuous contacts with the children, understanding of the phenomenon, familiarity with the settings and child welfare policies were all key selection factors that helped gather extensive and exhaustive data collection from the participants or respondents for this study. Marshall (1996) argued that saturation will become evident as no new themes,

categories or explanations emerge from the number of participants or subjects selected for this study.

Through a friend who worked in child protection division of the local UNICEF office in Kinshasa, I established the first contacts via email with some of the potential key participants for this study. I briefly explained the general purpose of my study and why their participations were important to this study. These potential key participants were people who were very familiar with the topic of child witchcraft accusations. Once contacts were established, I ensured these potential key participants have all clearly expressed their interests in participating in the study. Again, the likely key participants were mainly from a pool of local NGO officials and representatives from civil society, specialized in the domain of assistance to young children accused of witchcraft and who lived in the street of Kinshasa, DRC, and a Belgian anthropologist.

It is important to note that no contacts with key participants were established and communications or interactions were not initiated until IRB approval was received to conduct data collection. So, based on my prior stay in the DRC, cultural background, and knowledge of the environment, I did not anticipate any issue when the time came for me to contact the potential key participants. I also advised the potential key participants that they were under no obligation to participate in this study. That is, their participation was voluntary and could withdraw from the study at any time. To ensure compliance with Walden dissertation policies, *participant informed consent form* was given to each key participant prior to conducting any interviews in order to secure their formal agreement to take part in the study.

Data Collection and Research Instruments

The primary data collection strategy that I used in this study is semi-structured interview technique. However, given the fact that the DRC's official language is French, most of the interviews, if not all, were conducted in French and shortly after translated into English by me. This was to make sure that the participants understood the concept of the study, the interview questionnaires, and could provide detailed descriptions about the phenomenon from their experiences and perspectives. Child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC is a complex phenomenon that requires purposive approach to enhance understanding and provide meaning of the lived experience (s) of children accused of witchcraft (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Semi-structured interviews were used as the main data collection instrument because of the open-endedness nature of the research questions.

Devers and Frankel (2000) further argued that using semi-structured interviews as instrumentation is appropriate for open-ended questions because they provide detailed attempts to discover or refine theories and concepts. So, while this study was not designed to answer a quantitative pre-determined hypothesis, it instead attempted to provide understanding of the lived experienced of young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa, DRC through the prism of expert key participants who worked daily with the children in field. The researcher believed that semi-structured interviews gave a certain degree of freedom or liberty to the key participants to be forthcoming and not be limited in their responses to interview questions as would close ended questions. Jarrat (1996) also argued that in-depth semi-structured interviews are more probing and less structured as a data collection instrument often used in qualitative research. The initial

interview questions for this study (Appendix A), served as the interview protocol or guide. Working from a common protocol of general questions, I "probed" with specific follow-up questions appropriate to the interviewees and I audio-recorded each interview for later reviews and transcriptions. The researcher also included in this study, *respondent validation* form (Appendix B) for the review and authentications of transcripts by the participants.

Other data collection methods that I used involved a combination of participant documents or artifacts reviews, interviews note taking, and reviews of memoranda from the local NGOs. Because the interviews were conducted telephonically, I was not able to observe body language of the key participants during the interviews. I had no contact with the children. I paid close attention to key words and descriptive sentences used by interviewees during the interviews. I only took notes pertaining to the interviews and field settings of the key participants. Golafshani (2003) contended that observation, together with other data collection instruments such as interviews and recordings lead to a more valid and reliable qualitative research outcome. Although in face-to-face interviews observations could be used as a complementary data collection instrument to catch and describe different features of the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations but also served as data collection instrument generally perceived as more objective than self-reports of behavioral patterns (Sandelowski, 2004), I did not use observation because the interviews were conducted telephonically. The use of interviews, document reviews, and note taking served as the main information gathering techniques that generated data transformed into texts from recording and transcription (Flick, 2009). However, absent direct observations from the researcher, observations through the lenses of key

participants about young children accused of witchcraft also provided important data, but also data received from key participants concerning the environment in which the children lived was provided and documented. Such was the point made by Mulhall (2003) when she stated that observations are often recorded about peoples' behaviors but data about their natural settings are rarely collected.

For the purpose of this study, I took notes during the interviews and audio-record it as well. I reviewed the notes and the audio recording in private shortly after the interview sessions were complete to ensure that information details were not forgotten (Mulhall, 2003). The researcher backed up this process with the purchase of an audio tape-recorder which was ready for use during the interview process. The instrument was properly inspected, tested, and calibrated by the researcher to ensure that it was in a good operating mode in order to avoid any unexpected malfunctions during the interview recording process. All recorded interview data were replayed several times by the researcher, transcribed, and reviewed for further data cross-analyses after all interviews were concluded. All additional and pertinent historical documents or artifacts received from the key participants were evaluated by the researcher for content relevance, reliability, and validity to the study via triangulation. Extensive literature review in Chapter 2 provided enough coverage on available peer-reviewed articles, academic journals, and books that could all be used as documents for information on data collection and analysis. To ensure that data collected were valid, they had to be triangulated or tested through multiple sources. I used at least three data sources: interviews, document reviews, and note taken.

Through the triangulation of these different data collection instruments, the researcher ensures that the evidence collected was valid and supported the themes that emerged in the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). For Jarrat (1996), triangulation captures the holistic essence of a phenomenon under study from different perspectives. In this study, I used triangulation of multiple instruments to test the validity and reliability (Golafshani, 2003) of data collected on the phenomenon under study, child witchcraft accusations. Although the term originated from the field of geography, it was a metaphorical concept used to independently test the internal validity and reliability or verify the findings of a qualitative research (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2002). Mertens & McLaughlin (1995) and Maxwell (2008) also corroborated the importance of triangulation in qualitative research when they suggested that triangulation involves the checking or evaluation of collected information from various sources or methods, individuals, and settings for consistency or reliability across sources of data.

All pre-dispositions and necessary steps were taken to ensure that the key participants provided detailed information based on their convictions, firsthand experiences, beliefs, and the cultural beliefs of the children involved in the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations. Using primarily semi-structured interview techniques or instruments, the key participants were afforded the latitude not only to answer the interview questions to the fullest but also they were invited to ask questions about the study. The first few interviews determined whether or not if I needed to adjust the interview questions to best fit the study. In other words, the researcher needed to be flexible when conducting an in-depth qualitative phenomenological case study involving open-ended questions.

Yin (2010) referred to data collection procedures as *case study protocol* where the researcher or investigator outlines with ample details, the complete protocol on the procedures to: (a) contact key participants; (b) enforce privacy rules; (c) detail interview questions; and share study outcomes with key participants. While the investigative and exploratory protocol must cover the phenomenon in its entirety (the case, the subjects being studied, data to be collected, and the context), Yin (2010) further argued that the use of a "protocol is broader than a data collection instrument, which may be limited to the line of questions (as in a survey instrument) or to measures (as in an experiment)" (p. 2). In qualitative study, researchers must have an investigative mindset similar to a detective. In other words, the *mental framework* of researchers in an exploratory case study such as this must consist of the *'what'* and *'why'* of the phenomenon being studied, and what the researcher wants to gain from the exploration (Yin, 2010).

Data Plan Analysis

In contemporary usage, the notion of qualitative data indicated the collection of information or the gathering of accounts or narratives on a given phenomenon by the researcher (Polkinghorne, 2005). Qualitative data analysis consists primarily of a sampling strategy, data collection strategy, and data analyzing strategy (Bernard, 2006). In this study, data collection came from the exploration of key participants' experiences with young children accused of witchcraft. Using pre-determined selection criteria, data gathered from key participants was sorted or 'triaged' based on emerging themes. Based on the notion of data classification, labeling, and grouping, Stake (2004) stated that "coding is a technical name for sorting or grading data to be aggregated or filed" (p. 9). To this end, Saldaña (2009) also asserted that coding in qualitative research captures the

salient, essence, and the evocative aspects of the language and/or visual data of participants. The intent of the coding was to make sense of the data collected from "interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents, literature, artifacts, photographs, video, websites, e-mail correspondence, and so on" (Saldaña 2009, p. 3).

Thus, once the data was collected, I organized that information into relevant themes or topics. The data was then coded or structured into a certain pattern and assigned significance and interpretative meanings. This whole process was referred to as 'data analysis plan'. Data analysis involves organizing, reducing, and describing the data in a meaningful way (Smit, 2002). While data collection in qualitative research comes mostly from interviews, observations, and documents (Polkinghorne, 2005), I also ensured that all field notes taken as part of the data collection process was rigorous, logical, extensively descriptive, explorative, and meaningful.

The research question for this research, supplemented by the sampling group of key participants guided the overall data collection strategy and coding for this study. The collected data was categorized into themes and then analyzed inductively. Manual basic or simplified groups or units of coding were utilized according to emerging themes from the collected data through interviews and key participants' observations. To provide more understanding about coding, Anselm and Corbin (1998) suggested that the notion of coding refers to the conceptualization, reducing, elaborating, and the establishment of relationships among collected data so as to make sense of the data through inductive perspective. In other words, coding was in part, the result of the relationships among different variables, grouped into corresponding categories or themes. Hsieh and Shannon

(2005) further attested that the trustworthiness or validity of a research rests also on the application of the analytic procedures or coding scheme. Thus, to respect the coding principle and ensure the validity of the research, I created different folders for different interview sessions, together with notes from documents or artifacts. Doing so guaranteed a strict organization mechanism of data, patterns, and coding or grouping of data thematically. Within these folders, emerging themes or data was grouped into patterned codes for further analyses, interpretations, and meanings.

Basit (2003) referred to coding or categories as tags or labels in the allocations of meaningful units that describe or infer information gathered during a study. There were many software packages that were devised to analyze qualitative data. Pope, Ziebland, and Mays (2000) posited that qualitative data analysis software can provide from basic code and data retrieval to much more complex and sophisticated analyses of code using algorithms to identify patterns and occurring themes. While I created preliminary manual coded themes, I subsequently entered the information or data into the latest version of the *ATLAS.ti* software to further conduct advanced concept identifications and theme authentications. In other words, the use of *ATLAS.ti* served as the coding software for the labeling or assigning of names during the categorization of data or information collected on the key participants. *ATLAS.ti* is a computer software program that provides interpretations and meanings to the different coded data. Cognizant of the challenges and time consuming factor of the manual data analysis, Smit (2002) also argued that an earlier version of *ATLAS.ti* computer software program could be extremely helpful to effectively code and arrange data for analysis. For Smit (2002), data analysis means break down data into bits and pieces or completely break down the data into themes for

interpretations and meanings. Since the intent in this section was not to test an existing theory or proposition with the data analysis (in which case deductive or generalized conclusion were invoked), coded data were analyzed in a way that conclusions were drawn inductively based on patterns that emerged from units of analysis.

For this study, the following categories served as the possible preliminary codes or topics that I anticipated could arise during the interviews: knowledge of the issue, experiences, financial resources, location, policies, beliefs, education, gender, marriage, emotions and attachment, religion, government, community, poverty, reintegration, witchcraft, conflicts, and solutions. Other topics that were also considered included the genders of the accused children, ages, backgrounds, danger, family composition, education, (if any), identity (ethnicity), separation, aspirations, street dangers, survival, success, and recidivism. While not in any specific order of importance, these codes and many more emerged as the interviews progressed. In the interim though, these codes served as the preliminary codes within which the interviews were conducted.

Throughout the interviews and data analysis, discrepant information were identified and rigorously examined as potential impediments that could affect the credibility and validity of the research outcome. Maxwell (2008) argued that discrepant data emerge when interpretations or explanations of information or instances reveal crucial defects in the accounts or narratives. As such, during the data analysis and management process, the researcher identified and analyzed all discrepant information or data as part of the logic of validity in this qualitative study (Maxwell, 2008). Subsequent details about the data analysis and management results were further discussed in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The notions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are paramount components of any qualitative research. Researchers using both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies use these concepts to ensure rigor and quality in their studies. By trustworthiness, researchers establish the validity, credibility, and believability of their studies as assessed or evaluated by academics, other researchers, and the communities of those researched (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2008). Trustworthiness is established when findings reflect the closeness of the significances of participants' accounts or narratives of a phenomenon (Langer, Lietz & Furman, 2006). For the purpose of this phenomenological exploratory case study involving the issue of child witchcraft accusations, I ensured credibility by applying triangulation, prolonged contact, member checks, saturation, reflexivity, and peer-review, all of which were essential elements or instruments that were required for checking the trustworthiness of the study.

Validation Procedures

Shenton (2004) argued that credibility is the demonstration of the true picture of a phenomenon under study. Credibility, also known as the internal validity, ensures the rigor and consistency of the study. In this study, I maintained credibility through a methodical assessment or triangulation of various strategies until saturation of information or data recorded was achieved. These strategies included but not limited to careful transcriptions of the accounts of the key participants, sustained contacts with the key participants during the study, the use of peer-reviewed documents to corroborate the information received from the key participants; key participant checks or validation to

ensure that recorded information reflected true accounts of the phenomenon, ability to identify discrepant information during interviews, and awareness of reflexivity of the researcher that could induce biases (Morrow, 2005).

As part of the validation procedures, I also established transferability (external validity) of the study in order to provide some insights that were likely to apply to other situations in which little is known. Transferability referred to people's ability to identify with the findings of a research and the ability to apply some scope or aspects of the findings of study to other contexts or situations (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). While this study was by no means all-encompassing of the topic of witchcraft, it was comprehensive and holistic enough for its transferability value to other contexts and researches in the future.

To the extent possible, establishing dependability is another layer of available qualitative research strategies that researchers must use to solidify and strengthen the quality, rigor, reliability, and the validity of their researches. For Golafshani (2003), while dependability is a concept that refers to the consistency of the research, it is also fundamentality important because it strengthens the trustworthiness in a qualitative paradigm. It was therefore imperative that this study represented and served as a platform or *'prototype model'* for other researchers desiring to conduct similar studies in the domain of witchcraft in the future. To this end, Shenton (2004) argued that dependability of a study is attained through detailed report of how the study was conducted so as to validate that future researchers could replicate the work with the hope of obtaining additional results and findings for a phenomenon for which little is known.

In the same vein, confirmability is another evaluation mechanism used by researchers to provide trustworthiness in qualitative researches. Together with credibility, transferability, and dependability, confirmability was used so that the reader has enough details in order to make informed decisions about the validity and reliability of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In my study, I used confirmability to maintain objectivity in addressing the core research issue of child witchcraft accusations. As a researcher, I accurately accounted for the information and data about the phenomenon under study and managed my reflexive or any potential subjective biases. Taking such measures was key to the integrity of the study and ultimately strengthened its trustworthiness. For Morrow (2005), confirmability in qualitative research is based on the fact that the integrity "lies in the data and that the researcher must adequately tie together the data, analytic processes, and findings in such a way that the reader is able to confirm the adequacy of the findings" (p.252). While credibility, transferability, and dependability, confirmability were all essential components of trustworthiness of a study, ethical issues and procedures were also important factors that researchers must address during their researches.

Ethical Issues and Procedures

Researchers must take important steps to enhance the ethical reliability and principles of their studies. In other words, researchers must take all necessary steps to avoid that no harm is done to the potential participants in their study. Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001) argued that the protection of human subjects or participants is paramount in qualitative study. In my study, I solicited participants for their participation in the study at free will without any physical, psychological, and moral constraints obligations. No coercion or deceitfulness was used to enlist the key participants. Once

they accepted to participate in the study, I treated them with the utmost human dignity and integrity. Their rights and confidentiality were protected through research procedures outlined in an Informed Consent Form approved Walden University's IRB [05-23-18-0225682]. I did not start any data collection involving potential participants until I received IRB approval.

Prior to enrolling participants, the full scope or purpose of the study were fully explained and disclosed to them with no hidden intentions or agenda. For the sake of clarity and understanding, I also explained the content and the intent of the consent form during the introductory phone contact. While the consent form was not a legally binding document, it helped formalize the consent to participate in the study. To that effect, I explained my expectations to the key participants and what they could also expect of me throughout the interview process. The researcher made every effort to address any concerns that the key participants raised or had prior to the start of the interviews. I offered to share a summary of the study's findings with each of key participant. This transparency in the process not only helped established an initial rapport between me and the key participants but also it represented the starting point to build a certain degree of trust between myself and the participants.

In this study, I used pseudonyms to refer to and identify key participants. I did not refer to participants by their real names in the study. It was imperative that the confidentiality, anonymity, and protection of key participants be maintained at all times during and after this study so as to avoid revealing the identity of the participants. While Orb et al. (2001) maintained that ethical problems coming from interviews are difficult to predict, the researcher must also be mindful of other issues that are sensitive and that

could potentially cause conflicts of interest. As such, the researcher must be prepared to address them accordingly.

Data collection was an important component of this study. As the main instrument for data collection, I made certain that all data collected from key participants were password-protected and stored in a secure place. In fact, I stored all collected unprocessed raw data to both my personal stand-alone computer (not connected to internet) and to an external storage unit such as a thumb drive. Using a standalone personal computer was a safer means to protect data and avoid compromising the data through hacking from internet connectivity. For the integrity of the study, the data collected during the interviews was in my possession at all times and was not accessible by or shared with anyone. Once the study was completed and dissertation completely approved, all supporting data collected in the context of this study was kept for five years, after which point, they were deleted and destroyed.

Summary and Transition

As the researcher conducting this research, I used a qualitative research paradigm for the study of the ongoing social phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. Although witchcraft accusations are not a new phenomenon, child witchcraft accusations remain a relatively novel phenomenon in sub-Sahara Africa, notably in Kinshasa, DRC (Cimpric, 2010). Over the years, child witchcraft accusations caused hundreds of thousands of young children to seek refuge in the dangerous streets of Kinshasa and other major cities across the DRC. In Chapter 2, an extensive and comprehensive literature review was conducted to see if existing child welfare policies put in place by the government of the DRC within the framework of the country's

constitution and the 2009 Child Protection Code effectively addressed the problem of child witchcraft accusations. The literature review revealed no literature that provided any relevant information on any such public policies formulated to specifically address child witchcraft accusations targeting young children between the ages of 5-10 in Kinshasa, DRC.

Given the uniqueness of the problem under study, a phenomenological research methodology was deemed appropriate for use to explore the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. Ndubisi (2001) characterized phenomenology as rationalistic but more importantly as the "exploration and description of a realm of being previously unsuspected, which is the absolute foundation of the experienced world, a realm of being moreover, which is not accessible to empirical observation but only to phenomenological description and to something Husserl called *eidectic intention*" (p. 285). Bergum (1991) attested to the same notion when he claimed that phenomenological research is a human science that attempts to explain, describe, and understand lived experiences and the hermeneutics of these experiences that come from a social phenomenon.

Kelly (2002) argued that phenomenological research captures with details and vividness, the mental image (s) of phenomena as recounted by concerned individuals. Fundamentally, phenomenology describes with accuracy and completeness the essential features of our daily lived experience. In order to better understand and provide meaningful explanations of the lived experiences of the young children implicated in this study, thorough interviews were conducted with selected knowledgeable individuals from various groups and local NGOs within Kinshasa, DRC. While the interviews provided

firsthand information of the world as experienced by the children, they also served as the primary medium of human encounter for data collection (Dumay & Qu, 2011) through the lenses of children's advocates and local NGOs. The interviews did not directly involve these vulnerable young children.

I recruited a purposeful sample of a minimum of 13 key participants not to exceed a maximum of 25 individuals with whom I conducted the interviews. Creswell (2013) argued that a purposeful sample gives ample latitude to the researcher to enlist participants knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study. Although there were no clearly set limits to determining sample size in qualitative research, I believed that a maximum sample size of 13 provided sufficient information until saturation of data was reached Dworkin (2012). While remaining objective throughout the process of data collection, I also employed bracketing and endeavored to minimize and avoid personal biases that could affect the integrity or trustworthiness of the study. I conducted data collection essentially through in-depth participant interviews (Goes & Simon, 2011).

Though I did not directly observe key participants' verbal and non-verbal language, I was still able to review documents and memos, artifacts, take notes during the interviews, and with participants' permission, I audio- recorded all interviews. At the completion of each interview, I carefully reviewed and transcribed the interviews as a measure of providing in-depth reevaluation of the participants' narratives. All data collected were kept confidentially by the researcher. Moreover, I implemented Walden University's Institutional Review Board research policies discussed throughout this chapter in order to protect the identities and information of key participants in this study.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological exploratory case study was to explore the effectiveness of existing DRC government social and public policies targeting young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years who are accused of witchcraft, from the perspectives of local NGOs and select international organizations that work closely and directly with those children in the streets of Kinshasa. The study further examined the significance of critical and attachment theories in the evaluation of the government's social programs, actions, and formulation of new public policies targeting young children aged 5 to 10 years accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa. Data were collected through semi structured interviews with experts from local NGOs and other child welfare organizations, clergy, and civil society professionals who worked in the field with young children accused of witchcraft. Based on the questions posed, all of the participants gave elaborate accounts of their various field experiences and encounters with the subject under study without any constraints. The participants also provided supporting documents to substantiate their accounts.

This study used critical theory to assess the existing child welfare policies of the DRC government. I also used attachment theory to underscore the importance of parental attachments or bonds to psychological and physical development during a child's early years. Almost all data of the collected through various interviews indicated that strong political will, robust public policy implementation, sustained campaigns of educational awareness, the establishment of active follow-up programs, and active community involvement were all important and meaningful steps for the DRC government to take in

addressing the issue of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, and by extension in the DRC. This chapter covers the pilot study, research settings, demographics of the participants, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and research findings.

Pilot Study

I carefully implemented the research design described in Chapter 3. Using the main interview questions in Appendix A, a pilot test involving two highly qualified participants was completed to ascertain that no changes were needed for the overall interview protocol. Feedback from the pilot test indicated that no changes were required to the proposed research instrument, interview questions and protocol, and data analysis approach. Based on the result of the pilot interview tests, an hour was deemed sufficient to conduct each interview, including follow-up questions. Other probing questions that followed the main interview questions urged participants to describe in extensive detail their various field experiences working in particular with young children accused of witchcraft and their collaboration with families and clergy; further exploratory questions focused on the participants' knowledge of the issue under study, understanding of the DRC government's child welfare policy framework under the constitution and the 2009 Child Protection Code; re-education programs, and challenges faced by local NGOs in reintegrating children into their respective families and communities.

Recruitment

Given the prevailing sociopolitical instability surrounding the presidential and parliamentary elections that were slated for December 2018 in the DRC, and to ensure my own safety as a researcher, I used phone interviews to conduct data for this study. Using a combination of publicly available contact information and help from a reliable

source from Kinshasa, I reached out to a pool of potential participants that included individuals associated with different local NGOs, the clergy, civil society, and the University of Leuven, Belgium, to ask for their participation in the study. Interviews were conducted independently and took place from November 2018 to June 2019 but unfortunately some of the key participants were unavailable to participate in the interviews during that timeframe due to prior personal and professional commitments. Because I had enough participants in the pool, I was able to select other participants who were on standby and I did not need to extend the interview timeframe. In total, 10 out of 13 participants chose to be interviewed from their offices on weekends, while the remaining three participants preferred to be interviewed from their homes on weekdays. They all wanted to ensure that they were readily available, prepared for the interviews, and free from daily tasks and responsibilities. They also wanted to ensure that there would be no interference or interruptions during the interview proceedings.

In all data-collection and participant-recruitment efforts, I followed the strict procedures of Walden's IRB. Before enlisting any participants, I emailed the informed consent form to all participants, followed by a phone call to each of the participants in which I deliberately explained the full scope and purpose of the study to ensure their understanding. During the preliminary phone calls, I also reiterated key aspects of the interview protocol as summarized on the informed consent form. I described the voluntary nature of participation in the study; addressed the initial concerns of participants; explained the nonbinding nature of the informed consent form; expressed my commitment to treat participants with dignity, honor, and integrity; acknowledged participants' rights to full confidentiality; stated the transparency of the interview

process; advised participants of the use of audio-recordings of the interviews; and offered to share the outcome of the study with participants. After securing participants' agreement to take part in the study and obtaining signed copies of the informed consent forms for my record, I once again called the participants to schedule dates, times, and convenient locations for the interviews.

In the DRC, access to the internet is a daily challenge for most people. Making phone calls from the DRC to outside the country is an expensive activity that most, if not all, of the participants could not afford. To avoid putting any undue financial burden or hardship on the participants, I initiated all phone calls to the participants for the interviews.

In keeping with the research procedures outlined in the informed consent form and in adherence with IRB guidelines, all individuals who took part in the study did so at their own free will, without pressure. I advised participants that they could decline to take part in or withdraw from the study should they anticipate any concerns prior to the start of the interviews. Additionally, I explained to all participants that the informed consent form contained my contact information if they wanted to reach me. I further emphasized to the participants that there were minimal to no risks involved in their participation in the study. Similarly, I underscored the fact that there would be no compensation of any kind for agreeing to participate in the research.

After I had elaborated all of the parameters of the interview protocol, 13 participants, representing a combination of local NGO workers and other individuals, agreed to take part in the study and share their various experiences working with young children accused of witchcraft. I did not include the two pilot test participants in the key

participants for this study. Interviews conducted with the two pilot test participants indicated that no changes or modifications were required for the data collection mechanism or instrument. Though data saturation was achieved with the originally projected 13 participants, two additional participants availed themselves for interviews, but the outcomes of their interviews were not included in the overall interview results with the original 13 participants. The two additional participants who were interviewed provided a measure of consistency in the result of the data saturation. For this study, the participants were mainly selected from various local NGOs, but I also included individual participants from different backgrounds who had deep knowledge of the issue under study.

Settings of the Study

Data in support of this study came mainly from local NGO workers and other individual key participants (as shown in Tables 1 and 2) with firsthand experiences working with young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa. Table 1 presents a general overview and descriptions of participating NGOs in the study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participating NGOs

Local NGOs	Total	Boys	Girls	Average age	# accused	% accused	Location
AED	50	0	50	06-10	25	50.0	Kinshasa
ANES	37	29	8	08-10	16	43.2	Kinshasa
PECS	32	32	0	05-10	10	31.2	Kinshasa
BRADL	32	19	13	0-10	12	37.5	Kinshasa
CESKA	60	50	10	05-10	20	33.3	Kinshasa
REMAF	21	16	05	05-10	05	23.8	Kinshasa
Ma Famille	35	19	16	01-12	06	23.8	Kinshasa
Ndako Ya Biso	55	40	15	08-15	17	30.9	Kinshasa

Shortly after the interviews were completed, I received supplementary documentation from several key participants to support the information provided during the interviews. In Table 1, all participating NGOs for this study were from the city of Kinshasa, the site of the study. I only collected data from NGOs that worked directly with

children accused of witchcraft. During the interviews, two lead NGO representatives from Ma Famille and Ndako Ya Biso argued that although the age group of interest for my study had been established as 5-10 years, they recommended that I expand the upper end of this range to 15 years of age because their NGOs also served vulnerable children within the age category of 5-15 years by providing them with temporary shelters and other subsistence services in support of these children. The same participants from Ma Famille and Ndako Ya Biso local NGOs further indicated that they often followed up with these children in their designated natural habitats in the streets of Kinshasa to ensure their quasi wellbeing. Though the children came from different family backgrounds, the key participants explained that the common thread linking the children was accusations of witchcraft, which often derived from family misfortunes or tragedies.

Table 2 presents demographic information on the male and female key participants of the study. All but one of the key participants were college educated. Most worked primarily as social workers; other occupations included sociologist, legal counsel, university professor, and Catholic priest. All key participants were from Kinshasa, except a Belgian university professor and anthropologist whom I interviewed from his office at the University of Leuven in Belgium. Like other key individual participants from local NGOs in Kinshasa, the anthropologist was included in the study because of his vast knowledge and extensive fieldwork involving children accused of witchcraft. He had also published multiple scholarly articles on the subject under study.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Key Participants (N = 13)

Participant	Gender	Age	Experience	Education	Profession
EL	Male	66	38	BA	Social worker
SK	Male	69	40	BA	Social worker
AA	Male	50	18	BA	Social worker
GL	Male	56	14	BA	Social worker
AN	Male	52	19	BA	Social worker
DN	Male	54	16	BA	Director of local NGO
FN	Male	53	22	BA	Social worker
OM	Male	60	10	High school diploma	Social coordinator
PdB	Male	57	30	PhD	University professor
MK	Male	49	22	BA	Catholic priest
AM	Female	74	10	BA	Philosopher/theologist
BB	Female	30	06	BA	Legal counsel
AM	Male	49	15	MA	Social worker

During the recorded interviews, key participants identified themselves with their real names; however, for anonymity, in Table 2, I refer to each key participant using initials so as to prevent accidental disclosure of participants' true identities and to maintain total confidentiality. Similarly, to protect privacy and have positive control of each interview venue, I recommended that all interviews be conducted behind closed

doors at each individual participant's office. I also recommended that participants place a sign reading "Do Not Disturb, Interview in Progress" (or, in French, "Ne Pas Déranger, Entretien en Cours") in front of their respective office doors during the interviews. All interviews were conducted in French by telephone at the offices of the participants. I explained to the participants that these measures or interview protocols were necessary in order to ascertain that participants could be fully attentive to the interviews without any distractions or outside interference. Each participant concurred with my recommendations and implemented the measures without any challenge during the interviews.

However, given the recurrent paucity of electricity in Kinshasa, I often called participants 24 hours before the scheduled interview times to remind them to take all necessary steps to ensure that their phones were fully charged and ready for the interviews. These prior notifications enabled the participants to anticipate any electricity outage in their area and to find alternative locations to charge their phones in anticipation of the interviews. In each interview, I initiated the phone call to the participant. All of the interviews went well as planned. Before each interview ended, I respectfully requested that the participant provided me with any existing reports or any official documents on the subject under study via email to support the interview account or narrative. Within the same week of the interviews, I received relevant documents from the participants, who provided me with more information for content analyses on child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa.

Demographics

During the interviews, I collected multiple types of demographic data and background information from both local NGO representatives and key individual participants. The demographic data in Tables 1 and 2 include, among other things, size, gender, average age of accused children, number of accused children in each participating NGO, locations of the NGOs, educational backgrounds, and professions of key participants. With the exception of the data gathered from the two pilot test participants, all data collected were from actual key participants who took part in the study.

While Table 1 provides demographic descriptions of local NGOs and data about young children accused of witchcraft, Table 2 shows data from male and female key participants with varying educational and professional pedigrees, including their ages and length of experience working with witchcraft-accused children, ranging from 6-40 years. The participants, whether representing local NGOs or serving in the capacity of individual key participants for this study, explained that they regularly had encounters with children in the streets of Kinshasa in order to identify them, speak with them, and encourage young children accused of witchcraft to seek protection in shelter homes provided by local NGOs, whose works are often sponsored by international organizations such as UNICEF, War Child, and Save the Children. Overall, I interviewed key participants from eight local NGOs (see Table 1) and five key individual participants with past experiences dealing with child witchcraft accusations for this study.

In Table 3, I provide summary descriptions of the backgrounds of the local NGOs that participated in the study.

Table 3

Background Descriptions of Participating NGOs

Participating NGO	Background description
AED	Aide à l'Enfance Défavorisée, meaning "Help to Disenfranchised Childhood," is a local NGO located in Kinshasa. It was created in July 1966 by a retired Belgian lawyer, and its core mission is to facilitate the social reintegration of less fortunate children and young people with social problems. This NGO facilitates the protection and assistance of street children by raising awareness among children themselves, the community, the police, and neighborhood leaders, as well as on the streets; as part of their approach strategies to the problem, this NGO routinely approaches the children in order to provide them temporary help away from the streets of Kinshasa. They went on to argue that once the children arrive at activity centers, children are welcomed and taken care of transiently while awaiting family reunification. The AED believes that family reunification is a preferred solution because the family is the ideal environment to promote the harmonious development of the child.
ANES	Association Nationale des Educateurs Sociaux (National Association of Social Educators) is a derivative local-based NGO of the International Catholic Bureau of Childhood, located in the city of Kinshasa, that works primarily to contribute to the growth, well-being, and especially the protection of the fundamental rights of children in difficulty and their families through socioeducational actions and/or capacity building for targeted actors. The ANES was created in 2012 by ministerial decree of the DRC government.
BRADL	Bureau de Recherche-Action pour le Developpement Local (BRADL; Research Bureau—Action for Local Development) is a local NGO with a focus on Congolese law, created in 2012 by social workers from the Higher Institute of Social Workers. Its main objective is the promotion of local social development by strengthening self-help skills in the solidarity and community dimension. BRADL also works with children accused of witchcraft in social re-education and reintegration.
CESKA	Centre de Sauvetage de Kinshasa (Kinshasa Rescue Center) is a local NGO established in 1996 that serves as an alternative shelter to prison for children who are in conflict with the law and to those accused of witchcraft. The principal mission of this NGO is to protect the rights of children and to educate parents about their responsibilities to provide safe and secure environments for children. This NGO also provides education, training, and reintegration for children accused of witchcraft.
PECS	Pont d'Entraide pour la Chaîne de Solidarité (PECS; Mutual Aid Bridge for the Chain of Solidarity) is a local NGO based in the town of Ngaliema, Kinshasa. This NGO has dealt with the care of children in difficult situations and family breakdown since its creation in 2005. Children who find themselves in the streets of Kinshasa in inhumane situations are often the subjects of various family abuses, including accusations of witchcraft.
Ma Famille	This local orphanage NGO was created in 1989 and located in Kinshasa. It mainly shelters young boys and girls who have been abused, abandoned, and accused of witchcraft by their own families. The goal is to protect the rights of these children, educate them, and reintegrate them into their respective families while also sensitizing families.
Ndako Ya Biso	This local NGO, whose name means "Our House," is a Belgian initiative that was established in 2003 in Kinshasa. Its principal mission is social reinsertion, reintegration, and family reunification for young children and youth in precarious situations.
REMAF	Rehabilitation des Marginaux en Famille is a local NGO that was created in 2006 to rehabilitate children marginalized and ostracized by their own families due to various social handicaps through social and educational programs. REMAF also works to protect and reinsert abused children and restore their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Each of these local NGOs is actively involved in the protection and defense of children's rights and the re-education and reintegration of children into positive communities, including young children accused of witchcraft.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study originated mainly from in-depth semi-structured phone interviews, publicly available historical document reviews and other documents received from the participants, and personal notes taken during the interviews. There were a total of 13 key interview participants with varying degrees of knowledge and experiences involving child witchcraft accusations.

Overall, the interviews occurred from November 2018 to June 2019. During this timeframe, several interviews were conducted with key participants based on either current or previous experiences working with children accused of witchcraft. Beside the two main leading research questions, the researcher used 15 additional exploratory follow up questions to guide the interviews as shown in Appendix A of the interview protocol. All key participants agreed that I audio-recorded the interviews in order to enable the researcher to properly review data accuracy. Each interview lasted no more than 60 minutes, including follow on questions to ensure that the participants could elaborate in great details on other aspects of the topic under study. Since the interviews were conducted telephonically, there was no need for observation of participants' behaviors during the interview sessions. However, I took good notes of the enthusiasm in the voices of the participants, their depth of knowledge, and experiences when answering questions. Once I completed all the recorded interviews, I transcribed the audio-recordings, almost immediately one to two days after the interviews were completed and shared the

transcripts with the participants for their reviews within the same week. In all the cases, the participants had no objections to the transcripts and agreed with the contents.

For this research, I initially anticipated that the baseline of 13 interviews with key participants would be sufficient in order to achieve adequate data saturation level, even though the concept of data saturation did not predict with accuracy the sample size often needed to achieve thematic exhaustion in qualitative study. Nonetheless, in qualitative research, researchers often relied "on a more general notion of data saturation and operationalize the concept as the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change to the codebook" (Guest et al., 2006). In other words, there is no one particular suitable or "one-size- fits –all" approach to achieve data saturation due to the lack of universality in qualitative research designs (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Thus, using the principle of saturation or recurring thematic notions, data saturation for this study was achieved after eleventh interviews. But, given the initial threshold of 13 key participants and the interests expressed by other qualified individuals who learned of my research through their respective colleagues, the interviews were further extended to encompass two additional participants. These participants agreed and complied with interview protocols in order to objectively answer questions based on their first hand experiences with the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations. Since full and complete saturation was attained with the intended 13 key respondents, I did not include the two pilot test participants in the final tally of key participants.

Interviews were conducted through telephone with the exception of the first interview which was conducted in face to face at the University of Leuven in Belgium. No observation approach was used during the interviews. I did not interrupt participants

during the interviews and all 13 participants answered the main and follow on interview questions to the fullest extent possible without reservations or undue pressure from me. Conducting telephonic interviews did not influence the outcomes of the data collection or change the data collection approach for this study. All participants received beforehand, interview questionnaires, to which they provided written answers prior to the actual telephonic interviews. I used the interviews as a platform for participants to further elaborate their written answers that they submitted to me. Though public documents and official reports that participants provided generally described the main causes of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, the DRC, I also I took notes to supplement the verbatim transcription of the interviews.

As a researcher, I further used my field notes to establish the correlation between my original understanding of the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations and the actual data collected during the interviews. In my field notes, generally used as memos, I briefly reviewed and assessed the narratives of each participant's experiences with the phenomenon under study. I also formulated my own views during the different interview sessions based on the data collected. In phenomenological qualitative studies, researchers must recognize the context in which events occurred in order to formulate deeper understanding and better interpretations of phenomena being studied. In that vein, I used my memos to help capture the ideas and adequately contextualize child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. As a technique that researchers used to record data, *memoing* enabled researchers to delve deep into data collection. Birks, Chapman, and Francis (2008) contended that memos enabled the clarification of thoughts on a given research topic, served as a mechanism to articulate assumptions and perspectives on the

topic, and facilitated the development of the study (p. 69). In this study, I used my memos to further my analytical comprehension and captured the raw data and perceptions surrounding child witchcraft accusations in the DRC.

Data Analysis

Data collected during interviews were textually and contextually coded and analyzed within the frameworks of critical and attachment constructs and were combined to generate important themes for further analyses. The various codes were obtained from my interviews with participants, mainly from note taking during interviews, and access and reviews of public documents, including video clips and photos of children accused of witchcraft from two participants. For the sake of clarity, my various codes were tagged as follows, **I** for interviews, **N** for notes taken during interviews, and **D** for review of documents received from participants. I used these three sources of data to serve as the basis to determine the significance of themes to the study. Thus, to ensure the relevance of themes for the study, I verified that the same themes emerged or appeared from all three sources. From figures 1 to 9 below, I established and illustrated the correlation between the codes and themes used in this study.

During data collection, semi-structured interview approach was used to enable participants to provide in-depth responses or narratives to the opened-ended questions. There were no restrictions as how participants needed to respond interview questions but instead, I urged and encouraged all participants to provide ample and relevant details responses on their experiences with child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and elsewhere in the DRC. Based on the similarities in the responses and experiences of

participants on different aspects of the phenomenon, reviews of notes, and documents, I derived more codes that were also combined into themes for more analysis.

Given the subjective nature of the participants and the constantly evolving settings in which they operated, I noted all inconsistencies in the answers to the questions posed to the participants. In other words, during the interviews and the ensuing data analyses, I was able to distinguish between objective and overinflated or discrepant narratives using the contexts of occurrences and the descriptions of the events. All data collected for this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews format. To ensure an expedient, relevant, and judicious data analysis, contextual phrases or pertinent codes and themes were entered into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative software application that qualitative researchers use for data analysis. In this study, ATLAS.ti was utilized to help provide thick descriptions of child witchcraft accusations from the perspective of key participants and the contexts in which they often occurred in Kinshasa, the DRC. The use of textual coding approach or analytical process with ATLAS.ti following various interviews helped explain the perspectives or thinking of participants on child welfare policies in the DRC within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories.

Based on the detailed accounts or the descriptions of rich field experiences of participants, a combination of codes and themes emerged in ways that correlated ideas, contents, and settings. In this study, the links between the contexts, contents, and the themes were the direct results of the narratives, experiences, and perceptions of participants about child witchcraft accusations. In other words, the contextual relationship between themes derived from different codes based on the experiences of the participants. These codes showed not only the deep and well-informed perceptions that

participants had on child witchcraft accusations but also their commitment in educating parents and families who accused young children of witchcraft. Using the data collected from the interviews and public document reviews, more codes and themes were created that also indicated the weakness in existing child welfare policies and the often lack of political will of the government in addressing the root causes of the phenomenon within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories or through contemplative approaches.

Saldaña (2013) argued that in qualitative research, codes and themes were researcher-generated ideas or conceptual elements that represented the interpretations and meanings of each individual piece of information or datum. Often times, researchers used constructs (codes and themes in this case) to determine, explain, and provide meanings to patterns, categorization or groupings, theory building, and other analytic processes that are all relevant to a given study (p. 4). In this study, I used various codes to identify key themes and clear patterns in order to have a better grasp and a deeper understanding of the fundamental causes of child witchcraft accusations from the perspectives of local NGO professionals and children advocacy groups who worked with these children in the streets of Kinshasa, DRC. In the Findings section of this chapter, I further discussed the main themes indicated or identified in this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Chapter 3 established the protocol for internal and external validity of this study. While credibility and dependability related to internal validity, transferability and confirmability related to the external validity of the study. To ensure credibility of the study, I sent copies of the transcripts to each participant, followed by phone calls during which together we reviewed the transcripts to validate the accuracy of the narratives or

descriptions of the field experiences of the participants. In this phenomenological exploratory case study research, the review of transcripts with participants was an important step because it was a reliable way to ensure credibility of the data collected. Mero-Jaffe (2011) argued that involving participants in the validation of transcripts enabled the researcher and participants to clarify unclear issues and avoid significant errors that may influence the quality of the transcript and the research in general (p. 234). For the purpose of this study, each transcript review lasted about 45 minutes and this process was separate from the completed interview sessions. When asked if they wished to add or modify any particular portion of their answers, all of the participants expressed satisfaction with their respective transcript and requested no changes. The transcript reviews were necessary steps for me to finalize the data collection. Though, the review of transcripts was one of the checks and balances approaches used to attest the trustworthiness of the study, consistency or dependability was another method that, as a data collection instrument, I used to establish internal validity for this qualitative research.

The consistency or dependability of a research was a way to verify that all the necessary ethical and proper steps were taken to validate or authenticate the trustworthiness of this study. Stated differently, in qualitative research, consistency or dependability closely related to the reliability or credibility of the study and helped ensure the *inquiry audit* or verification of the authenticity of data collected from participants (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). In this respect, before conducting the formal interviews, I piloted a test with two individuals not included in the study to see if the interview questions were appropriate for the participants. The outcome of the pilot test

showed that the planned interview protocol and questions were adequately suitable for the participants and posed no problems with the data collection for the study. Thus, to further solidify the consistency or dependability of this study, I noted with sufficient details the major elements that impacted the way this research was undertaken. Among other things, I considered the caliber of participants, the environmental settings, social, religious, cultural, economic, and political conditions, all of which deeply influenced how this research was conducted.

As stated in Chapter 3, I followed strictly the Walden's IRB guidelines in order to preserve the integrity and ethical rigorousness of the data collection from participants. I took necessary measures to avoid harming the participants involved in this study. Orb et al. (2001) asserted that in qualitative research, the protection of human subjects or participants is paramount to the validity and positive outcome of the study. To this end, I personally transcribed and reviewed several times all audio recordings of interviews. Similarly, I also reviewed all codes and themes multiple times to ensure correctness, consistency, and proper correspondence in the labeling of texts, phrases, sections, or paragraphs during the data analysis. Throughout the study, I protected the confidentiality of participants and safeguarded my personal field notes that I took during the interviews by following all the steps identified in Chapter 3. In this qualitative research, transferability or replicability was equally paramount for the external validity of the study.

In order to ensure that substantial, yet extensive demographic background information were collected from the participants, I asked participants during the interviews to provide me with elaborate demographic backgrounds in order to help me

delineate the contours of the study. These preliminary demographic background questions set the stage for more follow up questions that often urged the participants to share with me their commitments and passion for the profession of social workers or child welfare advocates in a challenging environment such as Kinshasa, DRC. In other words, by encouraging participants to provide thick and rich demographic information or comprehensive descriptions of themselves and experiences, I intended to see if the outcomes of the interviews could be replicated, transferred, or generalized to other settings, situations, or even groups using the same characteristics, protocols, and norms of this study. More specifically, in this qualitative research, it was imperative that the different contextual characteristics and information were relevant and transferable to future studies (Gheondea-Eladi, 2014, p. 116). Williamson (2009) corroborated Gheondea-Eladi's idea when she argued that transferability or replicability ensures that the findings of the study are meaningful and usable in similar future studies (p. 206).

The participants for this study came from different backgrounds and possessed different characteristics. The study included a combination of male and female participants whose ages varied from 30-74 years old and possessed educational backgrounds that ranged from PhD to High School diplomas. Similarly, the participants also contributed significant experiences that extended from 6-40 years dealing with all kinds of social issues involving children as the targets or culprits. To preserve the trustworthiness and credibility of this study, I avoided using a single data collection method that could expose the study to errors and render its outcome and integrity questionable. Instead, I used triangulation, which is the cross-data examination and validity checks from different sources to ensure that the data collected and analyses

produced useful material for the research body (Patton, 1999). Hence, all data collected came from a multiplicity of sources provided by the participants. In other words, I used different multiples approaches to collect data from the participants. Particularly, the mitigation of the researcher's subjectivity or biases, validation of transcripts with participants, the preliminary testing of interview questions to ensure the appropriateness of the questions, interviews with different participants, and document analysis were all different methods used to maintain the trustworthiness of this study. I also stayed in prolonged contact with the participants to address their concerns and questions throughout the study. As a researcher, I was mindful of the threats to the trustworthiness of this study; consequently, to mitigate these threats, I ensured that the transcripts reflected as closely as possible the meanings or significance of the narratives or accounts of the participants (Lietz et al. 2006).

Findings/Results

This section described in details the outcomes of the study. The study used a phenomenological research approach to explore the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. The investigation was conducted within the existing child welfare social policies and the perspectives of local NGOs working in the field to advocate for the well-being, protection, and reintegration of the children into productive society. Overall, several important themes and codes emerged from the study based on a combination of semi-structured phone interviews, personal notes taking, reviews of public documents, and video segments received from one participant. As a result, based on the main research question that explored the effectiveness of the government's social policies and programs targeting children between the ages of 5 and 10 accused of

witchcraft and using the frameworks of critical and attachment theories, I generated themes and codes that supported this study as demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4 captures short descriptions of the codes and identified the themes of the phone interviews conducted with the participants. The phone interviews focused the data collection on a series of probing questions generally developed within the frameworks of attachment and critical theories. The field experiences of the participants were instrumental in helping in the development of accurate themes and codes that sustained this study.

The themes and codes generated during data collection were also applied to public document reviews, personal notes, analysis of photos of accused children, and video clips about child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. Table 5 depicts the descriptive relationships established between the themes and codes.

Table 4

Themes of Phone Interviews and Brief Code Explanations

Theme	Brief code explanations
Witchcraft	• Participants generally perceived as supernatural and mystical power of evil used for self-protection or harm others • They believed that the concept of witchcraft is a cross-border cultural phenomenon • Interviewees argued that witchcraft is a fabricated, mythical, no real phenomenon that only exists in the minds of those who believe in it
Effects of poverty	• Participants cited enduring poverty as the main cause of increased witchcraft accusations in the DRC due to the lack of basic resources and job opportunities • They also believed that children are often unreasonably scapegoated for sufferings and family misfortune
Church, media, public opinion	• Interview respondents stated that most evangelical churches use exorcism to maintain the wickedness surrounding witchcraft, instill fear, and conduct extortion of ignorant congregants • Participants also asserted that negative valorization of witchcraft by the media through the diffusion of witchcraft movies perpetuated accusations levied against children • Public condemnation and lack of sympathy for children perceived as witches
Family environment	• Hostile or broken-down family environments led to children being blamed and subjected to abuses, mistreatment, and accusations of witchcraft • Family rejection of accused children
Socio-psychological and mental impacts	• Accused children develop sociopsychological and mental instabilities and behavioral problems • Children developed a spirit of resilience in street • They lack self-esteem and self-confidence
Life in the streets	• Development of spirit of resentment and vengeance toward society • Children create survival mechanism • Community saw children as danger to society • Children lacked moral values and standards
Child Protection Code	• Government must institute routine inspections and verification mechanisms within families, shelter homes, churches, and other child welfare institutions • Fundamentally guaranteed the bond between children and family and the protection of the natural rights of children
Government actions	• Social policies must target the protection of all children without exception • The creation of employment to alleviate socioeconomic suffering of families • The promotion of participative expert and grassroots social work at all community echelons • Government must enforce punitive actions against violators of the Code
Contributions of NGOs	• Make resources available to enable local NGOs and others to educate and help families, children, and communities ensure the protection of children's rights • Serving as mediators between families and disenfranchised children • Rescuers, Educators, and Trainers

Table 5

Themes and Descriptions of Public Documents and Memos

Theme	Descriptions of codes from public documents
Witchcraft	• Children seen as incarnation of demoniac powers and source of evil • Cultural phenomenon with no empirical evidence of its existence • Used for good or bad end and has no ethnic boundary
Effects of poverty	• Reviews of documents showed increased poverty due to the collapse of political and macroeconomic frameworks • Documents cite lack of employment opportunities • Scarcity of resources for the population
Church, media, public opinion	• Deliverance rituals performed by churches undermined children's rights • Negative perception of children by society perpetuated by media • No public sympathy for accused children seen as the villains of society • Media reinforcement of the concept of witchcraft through movies
Family environment	• Children often scapegoated as witch due to family misfortune • Children viewed as victims of sociocultural beliefs
Socio-psychological and mental impacts	• Represented danger for DRC society • Continuous abuses affected mental and physical development of children • Children subjected to forced admission of witchcraft practices
Life in the streets	• Children often exposed to social vices in streets • Children adopted survival strategies in streets • Community avoided the children due to the safety risks they might pose
Child Protection Code	• Provided written protection from abuses and maltreatment under the DRC's family and penal codes and international laws • The law inherently ensured parental attachment to their children by providing a safe environment for them to grow in
Government actions	• No genuine political willingness on the part of the government • Need for subject matter experts in the defense of children's rights • Teach parents about the educational and protective roles of their children • Put measures in place to track children in troubled households and in churches
Contributions of NGOs	• Provide life skills coaching strategies • Facilitated family mediation, rehabilitation, reunification, and reintegration • Promoted well-being of children

The outcomes of the phone interviews, public document reviews, and personal field notes were identified as **I, D, N** respectively in the figures regarding how the data were obtained. In the various tables below, the researcher listed each major theme developed during this research and presented the corresponding comments of the participants. Though the verbatim descriptions of codes differed from one participant to another, the substances remained the same and pointed to similar key themes as displayed in tables in this section. All the phone interviews were conducted independently of one another, yet they provided codes that were strikingly similar in topics or themes to the codes that were derived from the document reviews. In the following sections of the Findings, each theme was analyzed in details in relation to the NGOs and individual participant's narratives of their field experiences. In addition to the tables containing the themes, various figures were also created to elucidate the roadmap of ideas and phrases or bullet sentences that helped in the creations of the themes.

Witchcraft

Participants of this study, either from local NGOs or individuals with experiences dealing with the topic under study argued along related lines that the notion of witchcraft was a culturally malevolent phenomenon that affected the DRC society as whole. Based on interview narratives collected from the participants, witchcraft was a widespread phenomenon in the DRC and far much more in sub-Sahara Africa. Adinkrah (2011) maintained that children labeled as witches were from poor backgrounds but more poignantly, family members in coordination with clergymen and fetish priests often lodged these accusations (p. 741). In the DRC, given the magnitude and significance of child witchcraft accusations, nearly every participant was enthusiastic to talk about the

theme or notion of witchcraft by providing detailed descriptions of how the phenomenon continued to captivate the minds of the people negatively. In the assessment of Bederka (2014), 76% of residents in Kinshasa alone still believed in witchcraft even as it was uncertain the specific reasons why children had become the targets of witchcraft accusations since the early 1990s.

Table 6 recorded participants' own individual accounts on the theme of witchcraft and Figure 1 provided key sentence indicators that helped develop the theme or topic of witchcraft in this section. Figure 1 also indicated how the sources of data collection from the interviews with participants were tagged.

Table 6

Theme: Witchcraft

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	"For me, I describe witchcraft as a magic practice, an invocation to malefic spirits."
SK	"Witchcraft is an acquired power of doing extraordinary things that ordinary people cannot do in the world of evil."
AN	"In my head, witchcraft represents a power that can positively or negatively influence a person's life. This representation is the one that is received in our living environments. For example, clan leaders in traditional circles had protective power (positive sorcery), while some old people were suspected of having the power to negatively influence the lives of other family members when it comes to failures in school, in the practical life of young people, and even in a childless marriage."
DN	"it is a state of mind, a caste of initiated individuals, a malefic power, a mystical power embodied by a senior, in general for his/her personal protection, that of his/her family, his/her lineage, or his/her clan. It is also a power to harm others."
GL	"It's a cultural phenomenon of society with different tendencies from one society to another."
OM	"For me, witchcraft is an art of producing supernatural work through mysterious processes often associated with spiritualism and occult powers."
AM	"Witchcraft is the incarnation of evil. For me, it represents the world of darkness, bad will, a person who brings bad luck, a nuisance."
FN	"Witchcraft represents for me a cultural reality that is caused by the harsh economic realities that families experience daily. The DRC government cannot event prove it. Witchcraft is purely a mental and cultural state of thing. So whenever there is a problem in the family that cannot be explained empirically, people resort to cultural and mental explanations."
PdB	"Witchcraft is a question about trying to cope with misfortune, death, and so on. People always look for reasons to explain misfortune or death that occurs them or within the family. It's an etiological search for the what, why, and the who in a situation. It's a causal notion whereby regardless of the age, people always look for the causes of a misfortune."
AM	"For me, witchcraft only exists in the minds of those who believe in it."
MK	"Witchcraft does not exist in reality. It only exists in the minds of those who believe that it exists."
AA	"Witchcraft represents for me a mystical power to harm, difficult to apprehend with the 5 senses. But the original idea when I hear about witchcraft is poverty, the hardships of life that are hard to cope with. Everything is thus brought back according to a metaphysical explanation. Of course, witchcraft exists because the concept itself exists, but the way it is approached nowadays is nonsense."
BB	"For me, in the past, accusations of witchcraft represented a traditional phenomenon based on the beliefs of each person. But today, we are witnessing another downturn in the phenomenon that is why children are accused of witchcraft. For example, the economy is so bad that why children are accused of witchcraft by their family hardships. Also, blended or reconstituted families following divorces or the death of one of the parents is another reason children are often accused of witchcraft by their own families that refuse to live under the same roof as them.

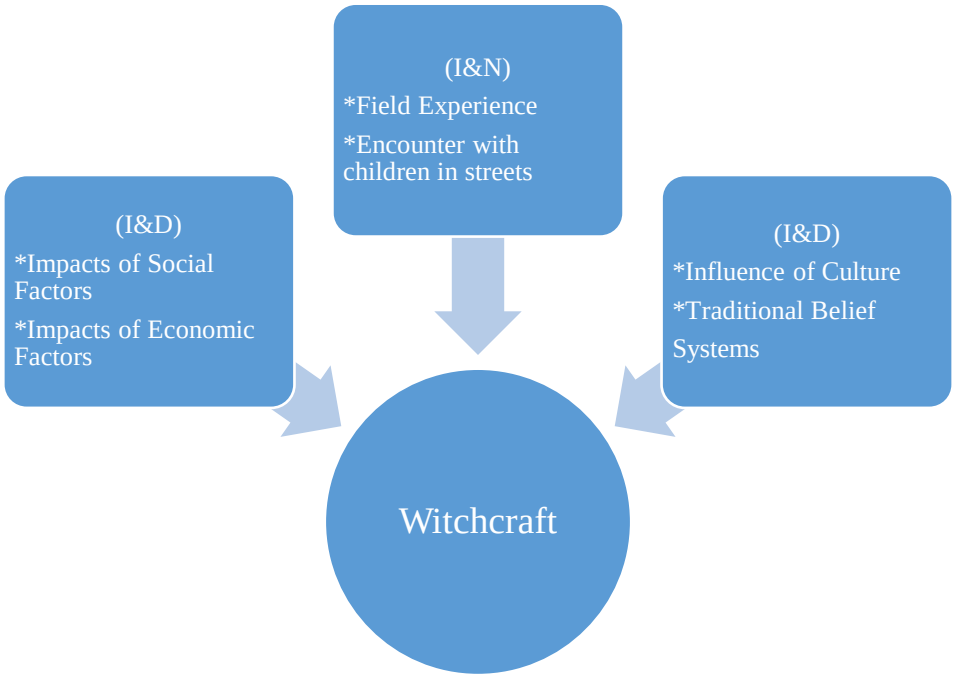

Figure 1. Formulation of the theme of witchcraft.

Effects of Poverty

Poverty was a major contributing factor in child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. Children consistently became the scapegoats of their families due to unexplainable and inconceivable events or misfortune that occurred to them. Given the unsettling economic, political, and social environments, families often targeted children as the sources to blame. Thus, in the face of difficult and repeated crises that the country encountered since its independence and unfortunately continued to face, internal wars, high unemployment, high inflation, economic and political crises, and social problems (Voix d'Afrique No. 93), young children became the center of negative attention for accusations of witchcraft. Although most participants in this study indicated that poverty and unemployment were unavoidable realities and constituted the main causes of child witchcraft accusations, few others believed that accusations could also occur even within

rich families. In other words, in some corners, poverty did not always explain in great part witchcraft accusations levied against children. But in general, nearly all participants asserted that poverty and the lack of sustainable employment served as the fundamental basis for child witchcraft accusations in the DRC.

The reviews of documents received from interviewees further pointed to economic hardships, unemployment, and families' inabilities to care and provide for their children as the number one or the principal reason for the plight of children labeled as witches. Table 7 indicated the statements of the participants regarding their sentiments and views about the impacts of poverty being the leading source of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. In figure 2, summarized texts of participants' narratives that helped generate the theme of poverty were also presented for support.

Table 7

Theme: Poverty

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	"Poverty changes the state of a person psychologically, so a child who steals into a wealthy family is not perceived the same way as one who steals in a poor family. In a poor family, the child is thought of as if the child wants to bring misfortune to the whole family. The child cannot make mistakes when in fact he or she has the right to mistake if we take into account his/her age. If we lack caution, we can still deprive the child from eating and in doing so, he/she is hungry and he/she steals food late at night and the family will see that as the confirmation of the child as possessing witchcraft."
SK	"It's the truth. Poverty weakens people and predisposes them to explain everything through witchcraft. It is often in poor families that children are accused of witchcraft. It is also often when a severe crisis is occurs that certain children are accused of witchcraft. For example, unemployment, lack of resources and access to health care, incurable illness, etc… are all cases that are easily attributed to witchcraft."
AN	"It is in the situation of poverty or crisis that some families are destabilized, fail to meet the basic needs of children, and give the chance to explain certain difficulties by witchcraft."
DN	"Because it is an abnormal situation in the family life or of any human being, the impatience to improve the conditions of life pushes for the immediate or fast answers to this situation of poverty. Children are unfortunately the first victims and the sources of family misfortune and also women. In reality, it is a way to plan forward children's exit from the family, a way to reduce the number of mouths to feed in the family or take charge of, it is a veiled refusal to take responsibilities in hand as heads of family, providers or guardian of these children."
GL	"Because when there is poverty in the family, parents are unable to meet the primary needs of their children (schooling, food, clothing, health care, etc ...). This is why some turn to spiritualism to find answers to their difficulties or problems."
OM	"The African in general and in particular Congolese likes to live in material comfort and contentment. That is why when this comfort deserts, the family seeks to find the causes of this desertion and often the causes are explained metaphysically. In the fight against poverty, parents and other family members often solicit the input of religious leaders for explanations. It is only then and at that moment that children under 10 are exposed and accused of being at the base of witchcraft."
AM	"Poverty is a major contributor to accusations of witchcraft against children because children become the scapegoats for lack of social opportunities at all levels."
FN	"In a country like ours, which has suffered several plights, unemployment, repeated wars, the population remains poor. Parents who find children cumbersome, overburdening or useless and who cannot feed them, result to accuse them of witchcraft."
PdB	"Witchcraft is not really about poverty but overall popularization of the country: overly rich elite and petty bourgeoisie. Poverty is generalized for everyone. Accusing your child of witchcraft is one less mouth to feed. It takes the pressure off the family. Poverty does not always explain witchcraft accusations because I have come across children abandoned in churches whose parents are well to do politicians who live either in Kinshasa or in Europe. Witchcraft accusations occurs in Paris, London, etc…where parents have rather good incomes, social security, health care, yet that does not make that belief go away. So I think poverty is not an absolute explanatory factor for child witchcraft accusations in a very strong way. There is something else."
AM	"Poverty is a source of misbehavior that can cause some people to be social thieves and pose inhumane acts."

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
	(*table continues*)
MK	"Poverty is often considered a major contributor to accusations of witchcraft against children because the general state of witches is a state that reflects increased misery, total poverty and most often very poor people, sometimes very dirty."
AA	"Because the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations grew when the country's economic situation deteriorated. Some people think that before 1990, when the situation did not deteriorate completely, there was less talk about children labeled as witches. After the 1990s, many companies closed after the looting in the country. This economic crisis has led to the impoverishment of families and created social outcasts: beggars, street children, and many others .... When a society is affected by poverty and under-development, it risks collapsing quickly. In addition to this, there is the added proliferation of revivalist churches. All this needed a spiritual explanation to understand the problems occurring to families."
BB	"First, the accusations of witchcraft against children is due primarily due to extreme poverty of families. In Kinshasa and all over the DRC, nearly 95% of families live in extreme poverty and can't provide for their children. The situation of accusations against children is intensified especially when something bad happens within the family."

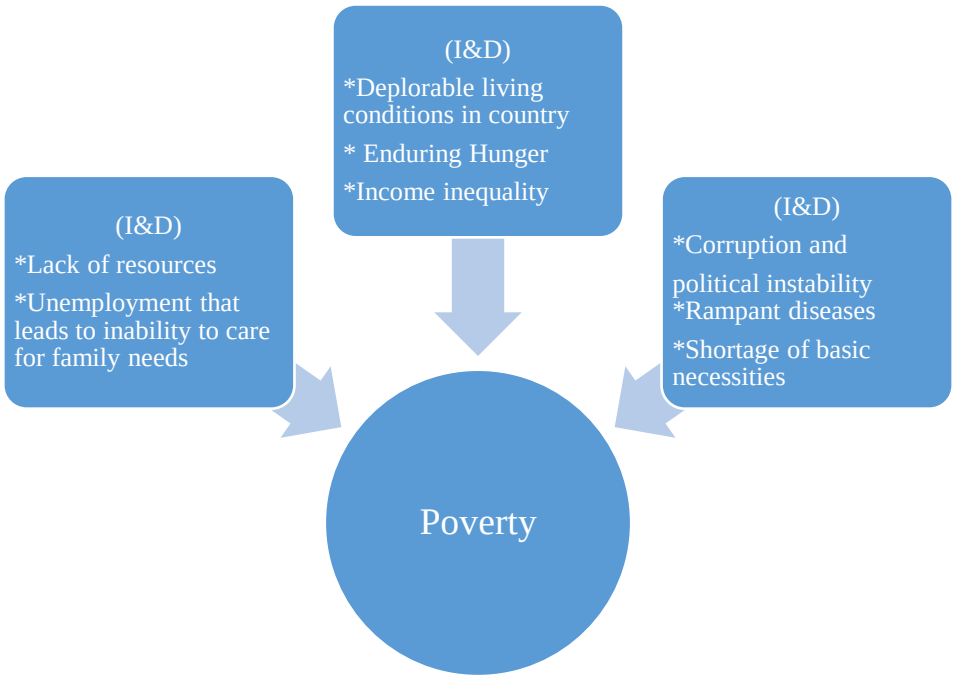

Figure 2. Formulation of the theme of poverty.

Church, Media, and Public Opinion

The influence of the church, media, and public opinion played significant roles in the perpetuation of witchcraft accusations against young in Kinshasa, DRC. All the participants denounced the negative roles that these three entities played in the continuation of the phenomenon. In their pursuit for answers to unexplained occurrences of misfortune, families often turned desperately to churches for solutions. While a number of evangelical church leaders indoctrinated families to believe that their innocent children remained the sources of hardships or troubles within the family, Raines (2002) corroborated that the church became “the opium of the people” (p. 171). In other words, in the case of Kinshasa, DRC, families tried to find temporary psychological solace in the church through the so-called witchcraft deliverance of the accused children. The false narrative enshrined in these endemic accusations in Kinshasa were just the reflections of accusations often levied by evangelical churches against young children in Central and equatorial African countries as well as in the greater sub-Sahara Africa. In its edition number 93, the Voix d’Afrique (Voice of Africa) also pointed out these independent revivalist churches as niches that fed witchcraft accusation conspiracies against young children. SCWA (2017) further argued that in fact 70% of recently surveyed pastors recognized that their sermons centered on child witches as possessing demoniac powers to do evil deeds but they also recognized that some of the accused children were five or under the age five, yet these pastors believed that these young children possessed supernatural powers to bewitch others (p. 4). In the environmental context of the DRC and primarily Kinshasa, the threesome entities, the church, media, and public opinion, in

addition to witchdoctors had become the vectors of dissemination of the falsehood in the beliefs that young children were the sources of misfortune within their families.

Document reviews illustrated that while a small number of evangelical churches, media, and public opinion displayed some concern about children accused of witchcraft, in majority of the cases, they contributed negatively to the spread of the phenomenon by their adverse actions or the lack thereof; in other words these entities contributed to the spread of child witchcraft accusations by their failures to act against or denunciate the accusations. Instead, these evangelical or charismatic churches used their platforms as exploitation channels for financial gains through the reinforcement of beliefs in witchcraft to the general detriment of families, particularly innocent young children who mostly suffer the brunt of these accusations. In short, the reviews of documents explained that church exorcism had become a lucrative business at the expense of the suffering young children accused of witchcraft. Participants' comments and the generation of the themes of the church, media, and public opinion were presented in table 8 and figure 3 respectively.

Table 8

Theme: Church, Media, Public Opinion

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	"The problem of child witchcraft accusation is amplified or worsened by revival churches that encourage this practice. The government is weak in the face of the problem and has no resources to intervene in the problems effectively. As a result, tackling the problem is mostly is done by local NGOs. The government is limited in its resources and often has no political will to address it. The role of the media is terrible. We have many private channels and the regulatory structure is difficult to implement with respect to cases like child witchcraft accusations. Censorship laws exist but are not enforced and as I said earlier, everything revolves around the difficult economic situation of the country. Public opinion does not support child witchcraft accusations however, it is influenced by the persisting economic hardship that families endure. So, given such bad economic problems, families are often vulnerable to accepting any explanations of their difficult situations, including blaming children as the sources. In short, the public is hostile to children accused of witchcraft but become accomplice to the perpetuation of the problem due the difficult economic situation in the country."
SK	"The church plays an ambiguous role. Many families and NGOs blame the church to perpetuate the problem or blame the church for labeling children as witches. In fact, families themselves bring children to church for exorcism. The church practices give weight to the accusations. Yet, the church serves as a place that families continue to bring children tagged witches for deliverance. I have always argued that the church has fallen into the traps of families because not only it accepts children accused by their own families but also the church confirms that the children are indeed witches. So, the longer it takes the church to deliver the children, the more certain families become of their accusations leveled against children. So for me, the church's role is at two levels, first to confirm the accusations against children, and second, serves as a platform for deliverance. The media lacks resources and makes no efforts to help sensitize the population against accusing children of witchcraft. Many revival churches have their own through which the witchcraft movies are shown throughout the day. In general, the population stigmatizes children once accused of witchcraft and wants nothing to do with them."
AN	"Revival churches reinforces child witchcraft accusations through their preaching and prophesies. They often lead followers and families to believe that there is a supernatural cause for their misfortune in the demon or a witch that is causing the misfortune. In most cases, children are singled out as the culprits of their families suffering. The population generally rejects children accused of witchcraft. The media tries to collaborate by broadcasting the evil of these accusations but they lack resources and their job often has no positive impacts. At the same time, revival churches intensify their diffusion of Nigerian movies on witchcraft and that instills a sense of fear in the people."
DN	"Revival churches play an important role in spreading this notion of accusations of witchcraft against children. These so called-revival churches are full of charlatans, fake prophets, adventurers who are all out there to extort parents by professing falsehood against innocent children. For me, both the media and the community do not help in the solution because they vilify innocent children as sources of evil incarnation of sufferings. And since the parents are ignorant, they fall in the traps."
GL	"The churches, especially spiritual churches, the media, and the population are all elements that influence negatively child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and the DRC in general. There is a multiplicity of revival churches that condemn children as witches and the media also play inadequate role by not having appropriate programs that educate the people on the dangers of accusing children as witches. The population in general show no real sympathy for the children because they also believe in witchcraft and fear to be bewitched by trying to intervene. But there exits some community initiatives to address the issue."

Interviewee	Participant's remarks

(*table continues*)

OM	"For me revival churches, the media, and people bear equal blame for denigrating children by accusing them as sorcerers. In our society of before, children were considered as riches and blessing but today because of poverty, families are exposed to extortion by churches that claim to have power to deliver children as so-called witches. These revival churches are destroying our precious gifts and families fall easily in their games. Unfortunately, the media seems to be an accomplice in the demise of these children who also have no sympathy from the population."
AM	"The church environment prompts fears among the people and families because of their dubious religious practices against children brought by families for deliverance. People fear these children and have no compassion for them. I am not sure how much impact traditional media can exert in this context given the meager resources they have but more so they are outnumbered by the medias of these spiritual churches which have more control on the populations."
FN	"Witchcraft accusation is a general problem that all families encounter. Anytime an aspiration of a family is not met, they blame it on witchcraft. Unfortunately, the multiplication of revival churches in almost every corner of Kinshasa that accuse children of witches makes the problem even difficult to address. The problem of churches is also cultural. The government certainly grants permission to churches to operate but they do not follow up to ensure that these churches preach the true gospel. The government shows not interests in the activities of churches so these churches do whatever they want, including abusing children and extorting families. People usually run away from children accused of witchcraft due to fear. In terms of the media, the proliferation of Nigerian movies in the Congolese context makes matters worse. Even though the government prohibited these movies but there are no follow ups for implementations. Private channels continue to show them because it captivates the minds of the population. The media lacks interest in programs that address witchcraft accusations."
PdB	"In the DRC, one cannot legislate witchcraft because it's impossible to tangibly prove witchcraft accusations that's why it's not part of the legal system. Right as that might be, it causes a lots of problems because people can't go to the court system or the traditional diviner. All they have is to turn to the church which often renders judgment against children accused of witchcraft in a very uncontrollable with no accountability. Trying to understand the rationale behind how parents and people accuse children as young as five of witches still remains a puzzle for me. There is something missing here. How can children be accused of such cruelty by parents and with no help from the community?"
AM	"In terms of public opinion, people always antagonize and stigmatize these children. The public in general believe in child witchcraft so there is more work to do. African governments manipulate the church because they know that people always follow the church doctrine. African governments create favorable environments for these churches to operate. The church creates a psychosis in the mind of people. It's because of the rampant poverty that these churches multiply, attract followers, and often accuse children of witches. On the aspect of the media, there are two things to note: first, local Nigerian movies played by local media emphasize the evils of witchcraft and tend to always scapegoat children are witches and causes of their parents' misfortune. Second, while on the one hand some few channels work to change public opinion on the problem (marginal impact indeed), on the other hand, most media continue to intoxicate public opinion with respect to child witchcraft accusations."
MK	"The churches, mostly the so-called revival churches are a reality to reckon with. They multiply in different places around the city. Most pastors of these churches are in for money. As a result, they perpetuate the accusations of witchcraft levied against children. Instead of defending the children and condemning the phenomenon, the pastors often extort ignorant parents by disseminating the notion that indeed the children are witches. Unfortunately, parents are naïve and the churches pray on their fear to enrich themselves. Also, the government does not censure the churches; instead they give them authorizations to establish the churches. For the media, they possess a huge power over the people. The media is often not censured. There are no ethical norms in the discharging of the role of the media. There is also the silencing of governmental media in the face of child witchcraft

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
	accusations. There are far few outstanding media that tries to fight against the problem but they are often outnumbered by the bad church media. We are Africans so people are often empathetic to the sufferings of the children."
	(*table continues*)
AA	"When a society is based on poverty and under-development, it risks crumbling and people seek spiritual explanations of sufferings elsewhere. That is how revival churches are often solicited by parents who accuse children of witchcraft to confirm the suspicion of witchcraft. Also, public opinion is often influenced negatively by the media about child witchcraft accusation. The media usually stigmatizes and often single out children accused of witchcraft. The media does not help. African movies about witchcraft also reinforce the negative views and psychological hammering against children. For me, these movies must be censured. I do not even allow my children to watch these types of movies. Revival churches create spiritual resilience for their followers. Some of these churches receive support from the government as a way of helping turn people's attentions away from their daily sufferings. As a result, the church preaches spiritual prosperity and blames family suffering on witchcraft and often children are the targets."
BB	"When the child is already said to be a sorcerer, he or she is very frowned upon by society and therefore public opinion turns against him or her in our society we live in. These children are frowned upon and stigmatized. In terms of the church, some of them build their reputation when they recruit the so-called witch children for treatment. Unfortunately, the government does not regularize these churches because in most cases some of these churches pay state taxes so the government leaves them alone and does not check what happens in the churches. The government is not interested. Concerning the media, most of them do not play their roles. For example, we created a network of child-friendly outreach journalists group with whom we were supposed to have continuous interviews and discussions on the problem of so-called child witches who patrol the streets of Kinshasa. But each time we try to approach the media to discuss and talk about the topic, the media is never available. Clearly, that was a signal to us that the media is not interested in the theme of child witchcraft accusations."

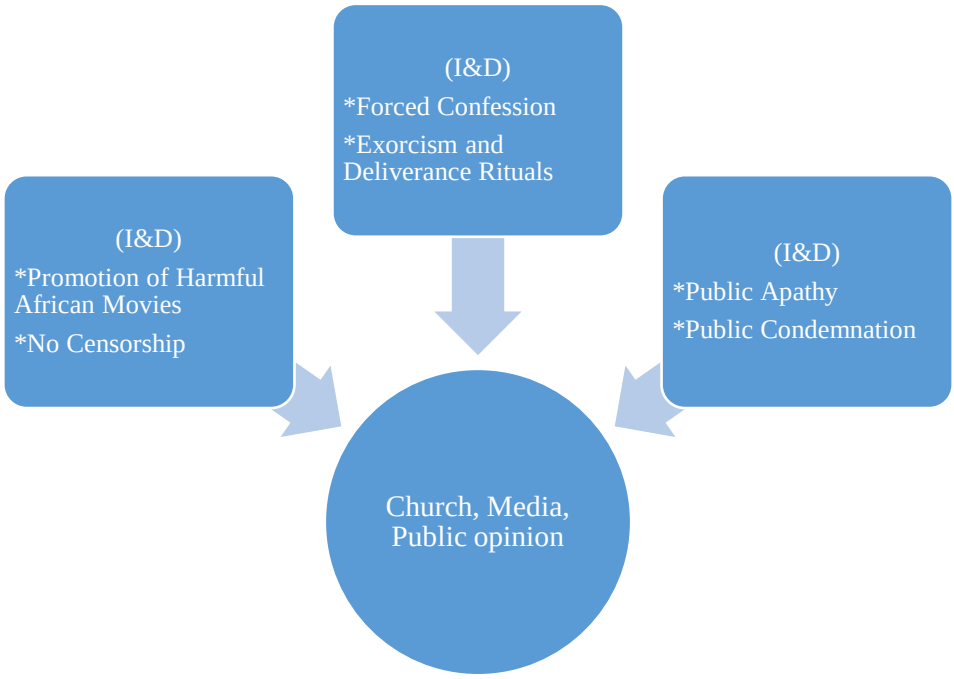

Figure 3. Formulation of the theme of church, media, public opinion.

Hostile Family Environment

The family context played an important role in child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. Children needed good family homes to grow and develop all their social, intellectual, and physical faculties. Participants involved in this study maintained that inadequate family environments such as lingering economic hardships faced by families, and other inexplicable misfortune that occurred within families often set up hostile family environments that in turn triggered witchcraft accusations against children. Nearly every interviewee argued that a family home plagued by poverty, diseases, illnesses, deaths, was often likely to cause parents to seek for answers elsewhere, generally by accusing children of witches and sources of the family's problems. All study participants without exception suggested that a less than an ideal family home was tantamount to witchcraft accusations against children because children were easy targets. However, they all expressed hope that with continued efforts from all stakeholders and improvements in the economic standings of families, child witchcraft accusations could be mitigated tremendously overtime.

This notion of hostile family environment being a contributor to child witchcraft accusation was further exacerbated by the reviews of documents used for this study. The document reviews pointed out that in reconstituted families, children derived from prior marriages or relationships were made to pay the price for any unfortunate situations that happened to the family by accusing them of witchcraft. These children were easily suspected to be the causes of problems within the families. The document reviews also noted that same accusations of witchcraft were levied against orphans, children with

abnormalities, or even children who displayed certain unconventional behaviors due to instabilities to live with relatives. Comments from participants on the topic of hostile family environment were documented in table 9 and figure 4 established the major lines that led to the derivation of the theme of family environment.

Table 9

Theme: Hostile Family Environment

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	"Today, in the urban centers and in families, precarious socioeconomic conditions and parents' inabilities to care for their multiple children have placed children into targets of witchcraft accusations. The family environment is the basis for the well-being of children. Unfortunately due to poverty and extreme difficult situations, there is a negligence on the part of the family. Parents often resort mythical explanations of their difficult living conditions by accusing their children of witchcraft. Simply put, hostile and precarious conditions that exist within families often serve as the basis for these accusations."
SK	"In families, it is often adults who are struck by painful, traumatic situations that they cannot explain who tend to blame it on weak targets, children. It is the inexplicable sufferings that cause these adults or parents to accuse some children of witchcraft. Therefore, difficult situations, lack of explanations of misfortune, uncertainties to make sense unpleasant occurrences are all family conditions that motivate some parents and families to accuse their children of witchcraft. In most cases, the parents and families believe that children have parts to plays the families' socioeconomic difficulties."
AN	"Child witchcraft accusation is new phenomenon to me because I did not hear about it in a traditional environment when I was there. Perhaps now the urban environment is influencing the traditional environment that the latter adopts certain behaviors from the cities. In Kinshasa for example, a high rate of children labeled with witchcraft is found in re-constituted families (i.e: divorce, remarriage, orphan of one or both parents). But, it is especially the stepmothers who play a big role in this area of witchcraft against young children. These stepmothers refuse to consider the children of the first relationships of the husbands or the women who preceded them in the man's relationships. So, they look for all kinds of reasons to accuse children of witchcraft."
DN	"Misery in the families, low educational level of the families, and ignorance of children's rights often lead to the mistreatment and accusations of witchcraft against children. Put differently, the reasons that children are accused of witchcraft by their own families are primarily socio-economic and cultural in nature."
GL	"If children are in the streets, it is implied that there is a breakdown in the family. In the past, the child was a subject of happiness, a subject of joy, and a treasure for the parents. But now, considering the family environments where there is deprivation of morals and where the state has renegaded on its duties, children have now become the subjects of misfortunes due to poverty. Children have become scapegoats of their parents' difficult and hopeless situations. As a result, when there is a problem in the family, children are singled out as the culprits, witches, and sources of the problems."
OM	"In a family environment where divorced parents re-marry, if the economic and financial situations do not meet the expectations of the new couple, they often look for scapegoats. Unfortunately, children from prior marriages are commonly singled out as witches and the sources of the family problems."
AM	"In the DRC, stepmothers are often the ones who accuse young children of witchcraft. The other members of the family do it too but to a lesser extent. Stepmothers do not like the children they find in marriage, especially if they come with their own children. Poverty and precariousness can explain this attitude of rejection in the unconscious concern of having to share what is already insufficient. Other family members, the father, may accuse the children of prolonged unemployment, job loss from the main provider or sudden and incurable serious illness."
FN	"In Africa, and in particular the DRC, any difficult or difficult situation is considered a witch anomaly. When there is a problem in a family that cannot be explained, children are accused as sorcerers. These accusations are found in all families without distinction."

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
	(*table continues*)
PdB	"Talking about family, cultural, and economic environments is somewhat too broad. For the example the UN charter looked at family environment from the Western perspective without taking into account different cultures and practices. The economic reality on the ground in the DRC is so harsh and hard to survive so much so that families struggle to live together given the scarcity of resources. There is not enough food, money, and resources, and everybody is fighting everybody, including children representing too many mouths to feed. As a result, they are often accused of witchcraft just as a way to get rid of them. But once these children go to the streets, they become dangers for the community."
AM	"It's rare to see biological parents accusing their own children of witchcraft. It exists but not too common. Usually, it is step-parents and/or extended family members that accuse the children. For me, witchcraft is manufactured to get rid of and demonize children."
MK	"In a family, generally, it is social misery that is at the basis of all these accusations. When the parents are unable to take care of the children, they renounce their parental responsibility by accusing their children of witches. I also think that the state does not provide the necessary resources to families so that parents can take care of their children."
AA	"The profiles of families or the parents who accuse children of witchcraft is dislocated families, divorced or separated families. So, the basis for these accusations lies in the weakening of the family system. So, when these children stay with the other extended family members, given the lack of resources, often these children are accused of witchcraft so they can get rid of them."
BB	"When a child enjoys parental affections, he develops all his moral, mental, and physical faculties. But the moment his family environment takes a hostile and negative turn where he or she becomes the subject of accusations of witchcraft because of misfortune in the family whereby his or her own parents reject them from the family home to streets, at that moment the child loses all his or her previous family values and adapts now to bad habits. So, a hostile family environment where children are accused of witchcraft can definitely cause children to pick up bad habits from the streets where they live and be detrimental."

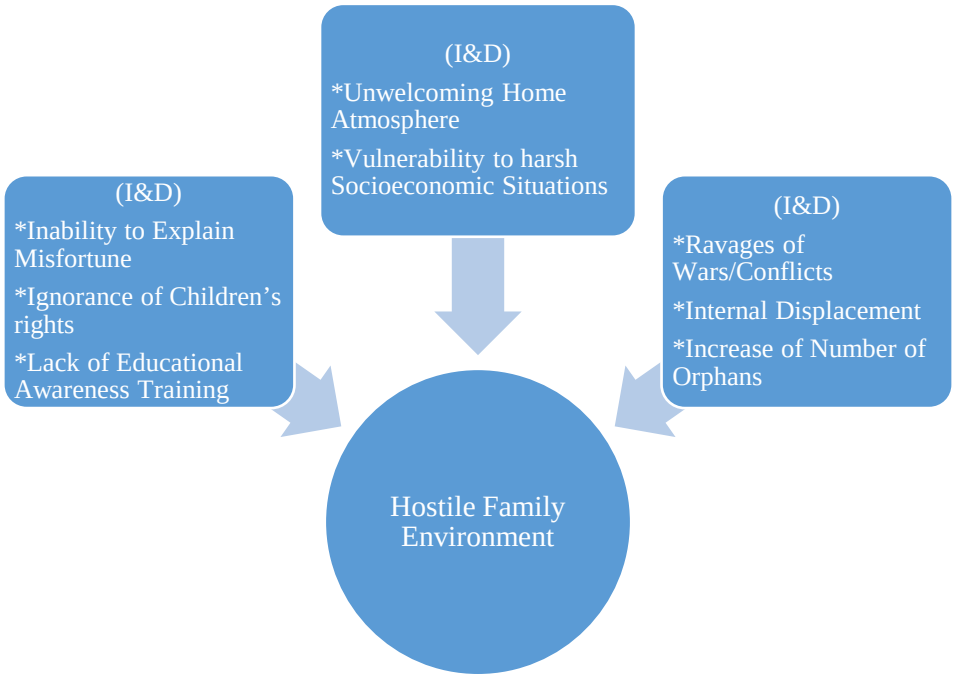

Figure 4. Establishment of the theme of hostile family environment.

Sociopsychological and Mental Impacts of Accusations

Participants stated that children accused of witchcraft suffered tremendous psychological and mental instabilities, especially when chased out of their family homes to live in the dangerous streets of Kinshasa at a tender ages. They also argued that because some of the children underwent traumatic experiences during exorcism or church deliverances, most of them exhibited bitterness, resilience, self-reliance, and dangerous behaviors, even at times becoming nuisance and threats to social order. Some participants even referred to these children as 'delayed bombs' waiting to explode. During the interviews, all the participants mentioned that the government failed to address the dire economic needs of families. As a result, young children continued to fall prey to witchcraft accusations.

Extensive reviews of documents equally revealed similar observations when dealing with the socio-psychological and mental states of children when accused and labeled as witches by their own families. In other words, the review of documents corroborated the arguments sustained by interviewees about the troubled psychological and mental conditions of the children following accusations of witchcraft. Statements received from participants on the theme of socio-psychological and mental impacts of witchcraft accusations were listed in table 10 and the main ideas that led to the formulation of the theme of socio-psychological and mental impacts of accusations in figure 5.

Table 10

Theme: Sociopsychological and Mental Impacts of Accusations

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	"Children who lack parental attachment have or often exhibit psychological scars and display violent behaviors toward others and have no ethical or moral backgrounds. They lack self-esteem and see themselves useless to society. These children are mentally alienated and always demonstrate lack of interpersonal and social skills."
SK	"Isolation and non-acceptance are traumatic experiences for children to the extent that their needs for belonging is unmet. There is a risk for these children to develop hatred and aggression towards humanity."
AN	"From a psychological point of view, a child is still a growing being from conception to 18 years old. During this time, the child needs parental affection and good family education to acquire the physical, moral, and intellectual abilities that will help him become a responsible adult in his life. But when the child is prematurely separated from his parents and experiences unnecessary duress, it causes a lot of psychological, intellectual, and mental disorders to the child who grows up without any fundamental reference to the values that society accepts. This causes the child to be unappreciative of others and develops instead hatred against other members of the community."
DN	"Some become aggressive, others retreat to themselves. Certain of these children sometimes experience failures in school, mental alteration, low self-esteem, revolt and rejection of others, and even the disgust of life, etc."
GL	Children accused of witchcraft are strongly affected psychologically because the ideal living environment for any child is the family, for their protection and development. Parents are the first educators of the child and actors of his full development. Children in this category show behaviors of emotional deprivation, despair for the future, lack of self-esteem, complex of inferiority, introversion or withdrawal, crisis of trust and relationships, etc ..."
OM	"Normally, every child needs love and affection from his parents. Every child wants to feel confident while the accusation of witchcraft breaks this trust and creates a lack of love and affection, the assets that the child needs for his development and growth."
AM	"The forced separations between parents and children as a result of accusations of witchcraft affect the mental and psychological states of the latter. Children are self-taught, do not understand what happens to them, they develop emotional deprivation, become violent to defend themselves, take drugs to forget and give themselves the courage to face certain situations. They learn to steal and attack citizens to find something to survive, etc. They are often victims of sexual violence especially for girls and often become premature parents."
FN	"Today with this break in our unity norms, we have lost our African solidarity that was once the foundation of the African society. On the cultural and socioeconomic levels, it is a dangerous problem because when we take the case of society, these children have no family vision. Psychologically and mentally, children ostracized from their families due to witchcraft accusations have no feelings. In fact, they represent a public danger because they can easily attack you without any remorse or sensitivity."
PdB	"I am not a psychologist by trade to provide a valid aspect on and deliberate answer to this issue. However, from my experience, children themselves claim to be witches as a good way to escape or be thrown out of family homes. For a city of 10-12 million inhabitants where the majority of the population is 25 or younger in Kinshasa, children seem to represent about 75% of the population and far outnumber their parents and the elderly who are now in the minority. Claiming to be witch is an empowering psychological and mental tool for the children to free themselves from abusive homes and seek freedom in the street."

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
	(*table continues*)
AM	"Following accusations of witchcraft, children suffer from attachment disorders, trauma related to painful lived experience, and other pathologies linked to the premature breaking of ties with their families."
MK	"According to my experiences, the forced separations between parents and their children following accusations of witchcraft affect the psychological and mental states of these children because of the total lack of parental affection and the love of the family."
AA	"Children accused of witchcraft and involuntarily separated from their parents are psychologically and mentally affected because they develop low self-esteem, frustration, and lack of trust in people. This causes for the children mental health problems, personality disorders, the desire for revenge and at times self-destructive behaviors."
BB	"It is absolutely clear that a child who enjoys adequate growth in a good family environment will develop adequate physical and psychological life skills. And it is difficult for such a child to end up in the street for reasons of accusations of witchcraft. Parental affection in this case is everything to that child regardless of the age."

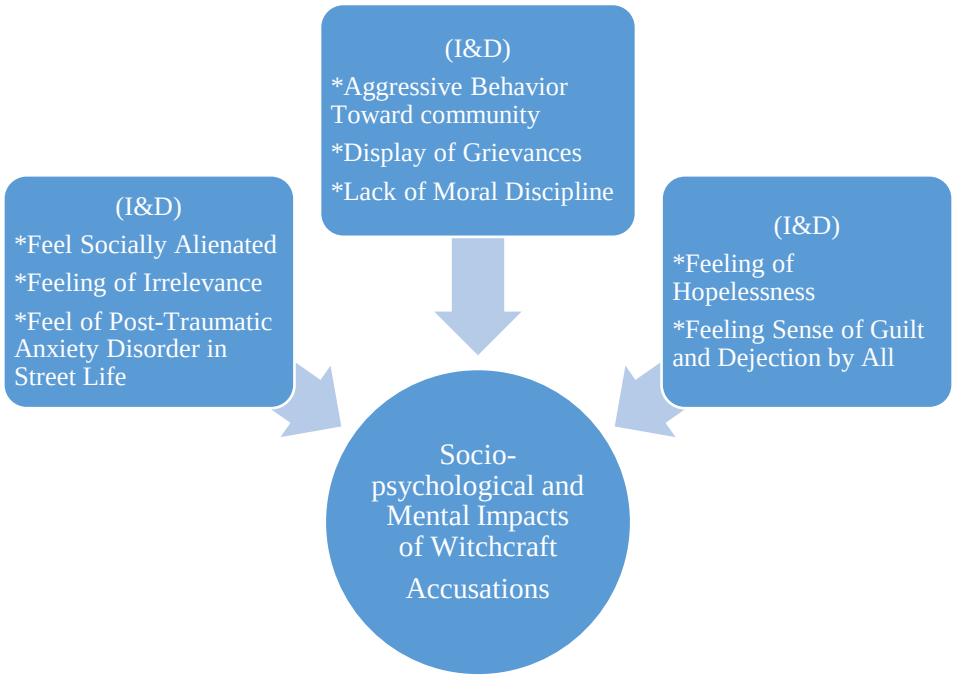

Figure 5. Formulation of the theme of sociopsychological and mental impacts of accusations.

Life in the Streets

Interviewees maintained that the majority of children accused of witchcraft often found refuge in the streets of Kinshasa and other major cities once they escaped family abuses. Participants also stated that though the streets were not the ideal places, the children still found some sense of liberty and autonomy despite the dangers they faced. According the participants, in the streets, children were exposed to all kinds of vices, maltreatment from people, physical assaults or beatings, sexual abuses, and many more. In short, the children accused of witchcraft suffered another layer of abuses in the streets due to the fact that they were subjected to psychological abuses but also physical and sexual violence and exploitations. Participants also added that ignorance and sensitivity to superstition further caused the majority of the population of Kinshasa to largely ignore the plight of these children.

Document reviews noted that while in the streets, the children adopted a survival mode to overcome their difficult situations. While other cities around the country had several thousands of children accused of witchcraft who lived in the streets, the document reviews indicated that Kinshasa had the largest concentration of children accused of witchcraft in the streets (Cimpric, 2010). Table 11 and Figure 6 captured participants' comments and the ideas that drove the theme of life in the streets.

Table 11

Theme: Life in the Streets

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	"Children accused of witchcraft live in the streets despite the dangers that they face but it is their last resort after family rejection. Even if they go to shelter home, they do not adapt to the structured life style and living conditions there because they are used to their own freedom in the street. For us social workers, a challenge that we often face when dealing with this category of children is the problem of mobility. The children are in constant mobility to seek for solutions but what often happens is that the children cannot follow the rules of shelter homes due to their premature independence. As a result, they leave and go back to the street regardless of the dangers they may face."
SK	"The accusation is often accompanied by the abuse and isolation that these children suffer. Escape and take refuge in the street is a way for them to evade this abuse and find a safe environment with new friends. The latter replaces those who are hostile to them, such as the family."
AN	"These children do not prefer to live in the streets with all the risks. Child witchcraft in Kinshasa has consequences that include all kinds of child abuse, including deprivation of meals, no schooling, hard work and strength, lack of affection. The child said sorcerer is deprived of all physiological needs in his family. The street offers him a framework where he finds freedom and develops survival strategies, even if others are not accepted by society, we can mention theft, banditry, begging, shoe polishing, washing vehicles, dishes in small restaurants in the market, etc .... These activities make it autonomous and free."
DN	"It is despite them that children live in the streets of Kinshasa, but if the family mediation is well conducted, all the actors involved in child protection, all the guarantees to live in peace and security are united, there will be no need or reason for these children continue to live on the street."
GL	"Family environment is the ideal setting for the development and education of children. Unfortunately, because of abuses in their families, children run to the street to find refuge. However while in the street, the children learn bad comportments and adopt anti-social values that go against the norms of society."
OM	"Children prefer to go to the streets despite the dangers there. From the point of view of social worker and children's rights defender, we find that these children are on the street because they suffer physical and moral abuse in their own families."
AM	"Children labelled with witchcraft prefer to live in the street rather than in their family Home because in the street, they feel free and safe from insults and other disparagements. In the street, they are not prey to daily chores ordered with contempt and arrogance by the stepmother, her children, and other members of the family united against them."
FN	"Nowadays with urbanism, we have begun to copy blindly Occidentalism and renegade our tradition of cohesion and harmony. This contributes to accusations of witchcraft when there are problems in the family and the children seen as targets find themselves in the streets either through forceful rejection or voluntary escape from torture and abuses. But what I know is that the street does not give birth to children and the street has no family. These children come from families and families must take care of their children and not chase them out to the streets because of unsubstantiated accusations of witchcraft."
PdB	"In the DRC, sometimes families literally dump children who are accused of witchcraft in churches for deliverance and they never return to pick up the children. In most cases, sometimes the churches can't cope with the increasing number children at their care. As a result, they let go some of the children to then streets to fend for themselves and to face the dangers that are out there. One cannot only blame the church but also the irresponsible parents."

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
	(*table continues*)
AM	"Stepmothers and other members of the family often demonize the children by accusing them of witchcraft and these accusations cause the children to seek new dwellings in the streets."
MK	"Children accused of witchcraft prefer to live in the dangerous streets of Kinshasa rather than in their family home because they seek their refuge mostly by shame and for reasons of total independence."
AA	"No child prefers to live on the street. It is the attitudes and behaviors of others that drive them from the house to the street. We can note the rejection, humiliation, stigmatization, etc ... among other reasons that push children on the street, there is the search for survival when there is nothing to eat in the family, conflicts within families, the influence of other children. In other words, children are victims of dysfunction at the family level."
BB	"A child who has been thrown out of the family home due to witchcraft accusations becomes a lost asset and becomes a burden and danger to society if they are not salvaged in a timely manner. Because left alone to fend for themselves, the child picks up the bad habits of the streets and becomes exposed to all the vices. The streets become their new found home and the streets do not teach them any moral values or principles useful for the child and society."

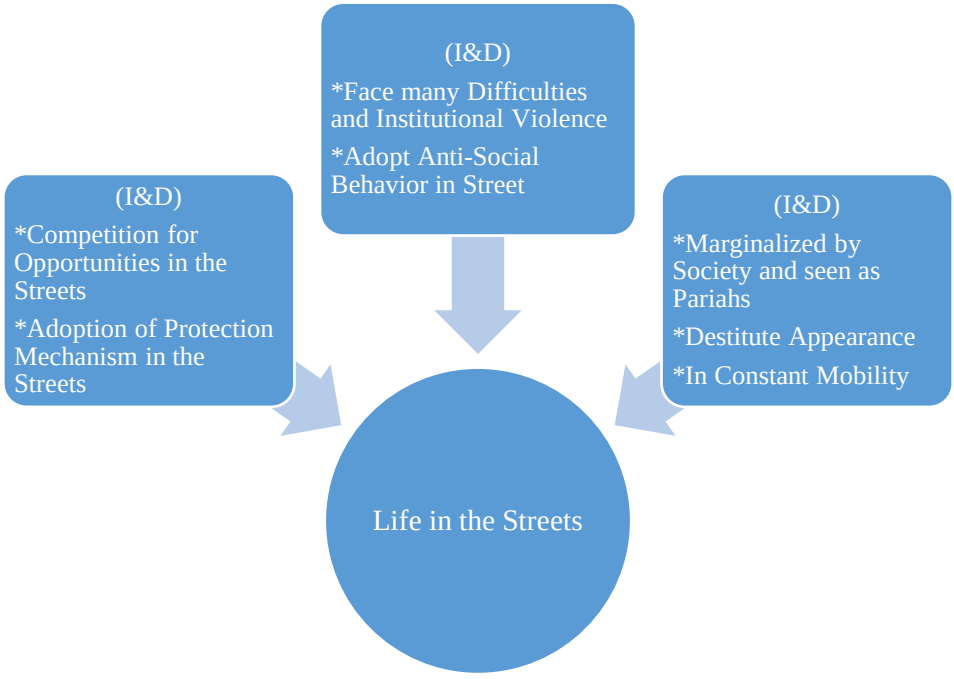

Figure 6. Formulation of the theme of life in the streets.

Child Protection Code

Interviewees asserted that the adoption of the 2009 child protection code was designed to provide protection of the rights and welfare for children of all categories, including children accused of witchcraft. Though, the law provided a robust legal background for the protection of rights of the children, the implementation of the code remained a concern for child welfare professionals and many others children advocate groups in Kinshasa and the DRC society. While participants acknowledged the significance of the code, they also lamented the ineffectiveness in the application process of the code by the government. They sustained that the government had no realistic plan in place for educating the population. In short, participants commented on the government's approach to the application of the code as a *'laissez faire'* attitude with no follow up strategy in place to ensure strict compliance with the law. As a result of the lack of proper implementation strategies of the child protection code, participants further mentioned that children, and particularly those accused of witchcraft continued to suffer unnecessary abuses and cruelty at the hands of their own families without any accountability and repercussions. Participants believed that since the enactment of the child protection code, it had not attain its intended objective and as such, the government needed to take more pragmatic approach to achieve concrete action.

Document reviews corroborated the narratives collected form interview participants. In fact, according to Human Rights Watch (2012), the provisions of the child protection code provided prohibitions and punishments against all forms of child abuses and exploitations against children from all walks of the DRC. Yet, most children, predominantly accused of witchcraft and who lived in the streets of Kinshasa did not

receive adequate protection and basic services under the code. Bailey, Pereznieto, Jones, Mupenda, Pacillo, and Tromme (2011) argued that multiple strategies existed in the forms of policies and laws that dealt with the social protection of children but the government needed to put in place a central social protection strategy that translated into action for the well-being of children, particularly those young ones accused of witchcraft. The comments of the participants were listed in Table 12 and Figure 7 captured the main ideas that drove the theme of child protection code.

Table 12

Theme: Child Protection Code

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	The law must be enforced with realistic actions on the ground. The government must be involved in the enforcement. But unfortunately, the government is virtually absent; there is virtually negligence on the part of the government. Instead, it is NGOs that are heavily involved in the implementation of the law to address the problem of children in precarious situations, including those accused of witchcraft.
SK	"The government in law No. 09/001 of January 10, 2009, protecting the child, has condemned all forms of accusations of witchcraft against children. However, this seems insufficient. We believe that it is necessary to help families to improve their living conditions, and to facilitate their access to adapted answers in case of needs."
AN	"To address this issue in a pragmatic way, the DRC government for the first time recognized and banned the accusations of witchcraft in the 2006 constitution and also introduced a law No. 09/001 of 10 January 2009 on the protection of the child that protects all children against all forms of abuses including children accused of witchcraft. In addition, there are specialized services of the government as the Special Direction of Protection of the Child, in acronym DISPE which collaborates also in the protection of this category of child. And even today, the government of the DRC has created the Social Workers Corps, CASo in acronym, a national technical body to improve social interventions for the benefit of vulnerable groups, including the protection of children accused of witchcraft."
DN	"The parliament of the DRC had passed Law No. 09/001 of 10 January 2009 on the protection of the child and promulgated the government Article 160 which states that 'in case of accusations of witchcraft against a child, the author is punishable by one to three years of penal servitude and a fine of two hundred thousand to one million Congolese francs.'"
GL	"The effectiveness and efficiency of the law resides in the follow ups and implementation and strong application of the different judicial instruments voted by and published by the government of the DRC. Because beside the Child Protection Law, we also have the Family Code. At the International level, we also have the International Convention on children's rights as well as the chart of the Welfare of the African child. Unfortunately, in the DRC, implementing and follow up of the Child Protection Code seems very challenging. For example, the ministry of social affairs rarely sends its workers to the field to ensure that the law is being implemented by the population. In other words, impunities and social injustice in families often go unpunished. We have the laws and judicial instruments but the main problem that we are confronted with is the implementation of the law."
OM	"The great contribution of Congolese government is in the elaboration of the national laws and also in the ratification of the international instruments relating to the rights of the child and besides the contribution of the government is the agreement of the associations and private centers which take charge of children accused of witchcraft. The major contribution is the establishment since 2010 of the children's courts in the current configuration that seek to ensure the protection of the rights of all children, including those accused of witchcraft."
AM	"Apart from the laws to protect children in general, the government seems inundated and overwhelmed with the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations which is growing in proportion within the DRC. Particularly, the burden falls on the NGOs but they still do not benefit from the necessary support of the government, which is primarily responsible for protecting children who run all kinds of dangers on the streets."

(*table continues*)

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
FN	"Legally, there are no laws that recognize witchcraft as an infraction. Similarly, another important thing is that African solidarity toward children or people has been lost. There is no longer true love in our African society like before. People and parents privilege materialism more than children. In other words, children have been relegated to the second tier of importance due to the impoverishment of the people. The Child Protection law No. 09/001 of 2009 exists in name only but there is no real applicability to ensure or guarantee the rights of children, including those accused of witchcraft. The government lacks true political will."
PdB	"I have not been following this Law closely but a number of years ago, the government of the DRC voted into law the Child Protection Code in 2009. For example, in the same context, in South Africa, the government voted into law the Witchcraft Suppression Act that made illegal for people to accuse someone else of witchcraft. The same principle applies for the DRC. On paper, the legal system is in place in the DRC but in practice accusations go unpunished or unsanctioned."
AM	"It's a good law but it never attained the expected goals. The application and implementation of the law suffer enormously and terribly with the population. The government did not take into account the socioeconomic aspects of the law which are the real reasons that often push families to accuse children of witchcraft."
MK	"We draft laws but there is no implementation policy. The follow up or practical application of the law is problematic. The political will is almost non-existent and unsatisfactory in enforcing the Child Protection Code No. 09/001 of 10 January 2009. The DRC government has nothing pragmatic in its general social policy."
AA	"The government of the DRC has taken several measures: the accusation of witchcraft was erected into the violation of the Child Protection Law of January 10, 2009. Several shelter homes that abused children for witchcraft were closed. Perpetrators of child abuses or offenders were arrested and punished."
BB	"The child protection law of 2009 is only effective if it is followed by concrete actions on the terrain. Already the law on the protection of children is a guarantee and a base to help fight against this phenomenon. But as of today, there is negligence on the part of state authorities and institutions, which makes that certain provisions of the law and their application is a little ambiguous, slow or difficult to implement because the implementing measures have not been taken. This is why child witchcraft accusations is a social phenomenon with the root causes remaining with families who quick children to the streets and churches which take advantage of the precarious situation of families. Both families and churches that engage in these accusations must be held accountable for their actions."

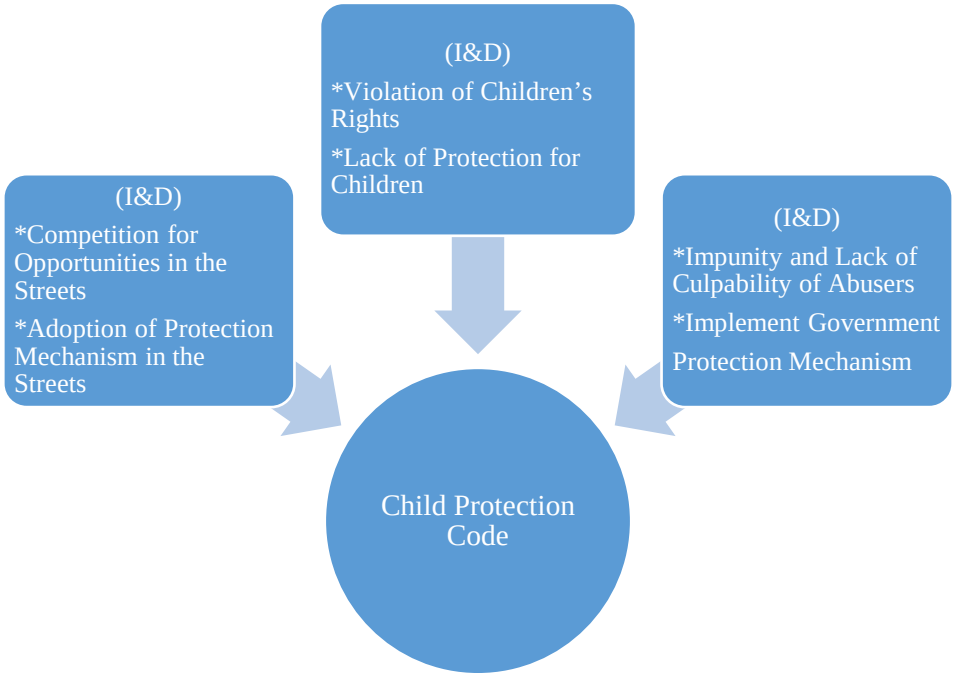

Figure 7. Formulation of the theme of Child Protection Code.

Government Actions

All interview participants indicated that the DRC government had the ultimate responsibility to ensure the safety, protection, and overall well-being of its citizens, especially the most vulnerable, children and women. They all noted that besides the enactment of laws for the protection of the rights and welfare of children, the government needed to enforce punitive measures against perpetrators of child witchcraft accusations, the lack thereof interviewees noted, meant that the code on books were useless. Interviewees further argued that the government ought to improve the living conditions of the people by creating more employment because they saw the accusations of witchcraft against children as a phenomenon that was directly linked to poverty and lack of employment opportunities for families. While they recognized that the creation of employment will not completely bring an end to the phenomenon, they believed that

employment opportunities were key to help mitigate and reduce the problem significantly. Some participants stated that unfortunately, the government was remarkably absent in this all important social problem that affected the DRC.

Similarly, document reviews suggested that the involvement and actions of the DRC government were insufficient given the magnitude of the problem. In other words, strategies put forward on poverty reduction by the government were weak or almost non-existent in addressing the issue of child witchcraft accusations. Also complementing the document reviews was the notion that few governments or agencies, including the DRC central government did not fully engage in the fight against child witchcraft accusations with any great commitment or effectiveness (SCWA, 2017, p. 4). The comments of the participants were recorded in Table 13 and Figure 8 represented the key ideas that led to the derivation of the theme of government actions.

Table 13

Theme: Government Actions

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	"In the fight against children accused of witchcraft and other children's issue, the DRC government makes limited effort but their interventions to address the problem are very weak and very minimal at best. The DRC government alone is very weak on this issue and at time almost non-existent. The government only conducts sporadic actions from time to time with no sustained and meaningful end in the field. However, local NGOs often team up with the government to carry out small actions and interventions. Since we get our operation permits from the government, we work in synergy with the government, families, churches, and other entities, all of which are in the protective community. For example, there are youth clubs that are set up in different neighborhoods to allow the government to get involved in everything."
SK	"The government should improve the living conditions of the population through the creation of jobs, the granting of decent wages, the payment of family allowances and the support of vulnerable families."
AN	"As I said above, the government has put in place some laws such as the Child Protection Code No. 09/001 of January 10, 2009 that protects the rights of vulnerable children."
DN	"The government protects the children accused of witchcraft by means of laws and sanctions."
GL	"The state guarantees and monitors the social protection policy of children in general and of children known as witches in particular. By implementing various child protection bodies such as children's courts, the body of social workers, the special police brigade of child protection."
OM	"The government has a leading role to play in this phenomenon. In addition to the development of laws, the government must discourage this practice by sincerely punishing the culprits, ensuring peace and stability of families, combating poverty and setting up recovery centers for children accused of witchcraft. In short, the government must act upstream and downstream of accusations of witchcraft."
AM	"The government legislates and must sanction or punish those who accuse children of witchcraft."
FN	"In the 1950s, the government had specialized centers where they housed all children found in the streets of Kinshasa for one reason or the other. In those days, no minor could be seen in the streets of Kinshasa past 1800. If past that time, children were seen in the streets, the government patrols picked them up and send them to specialized centers for education and training. But, over time most of these government structures designed to support vulnerable children crumbled and no longer exist. They just exist in name only. So, from a practical standpoint, the government has lost control of the situation street children, including children accused of witchcraft."
PdB	"The lack of strong government involvement is a problem that affects pretty much all of sub-Sahara Africa. The government has relegated the task of dealing with children accused of witchcraft to international organizations, local NGOs, churches, and the civil society, all of which have different take on the issue of child witchcraft accusations."
AM	"The government must ensure the application of the various measures to protect children in difficult and vulnerable situations. It must also support local organizations working to protect children in difficult and vulnerable situations."
MK	"In the face this phenomenon, the role of the government of the DRC would be to consider a general policy of child protection at all levels that will ensure the protection of vulnerable children such as those accused of witchcraft."

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
	(*table continues*)
AA	"The role of the government is to enact laws that protect children, improve the living conditions of the population, set up a mechanism for controlling the spiritual churches and shelter homes or accommodation centers for the children accused of witchcraft."
BB	"Government action must be seen in terms of awareness raising, investigations to know where the problem lies in order to consider the types of real solutions to put in place to fight against this phenomenon. To the best of my knowledge, the government does not have solid plans or social programs for children accused of witchcraft. It is mainly non-governmental organizations which try as far as possible to help these children. To be candidly honest, the government has resigned in this context. Even though the government sometimes can intervene on an ad hoc basis, but speaking in terms of real impact of the government's adhoc intervention in relation to the question concerning these children, nothing significant."

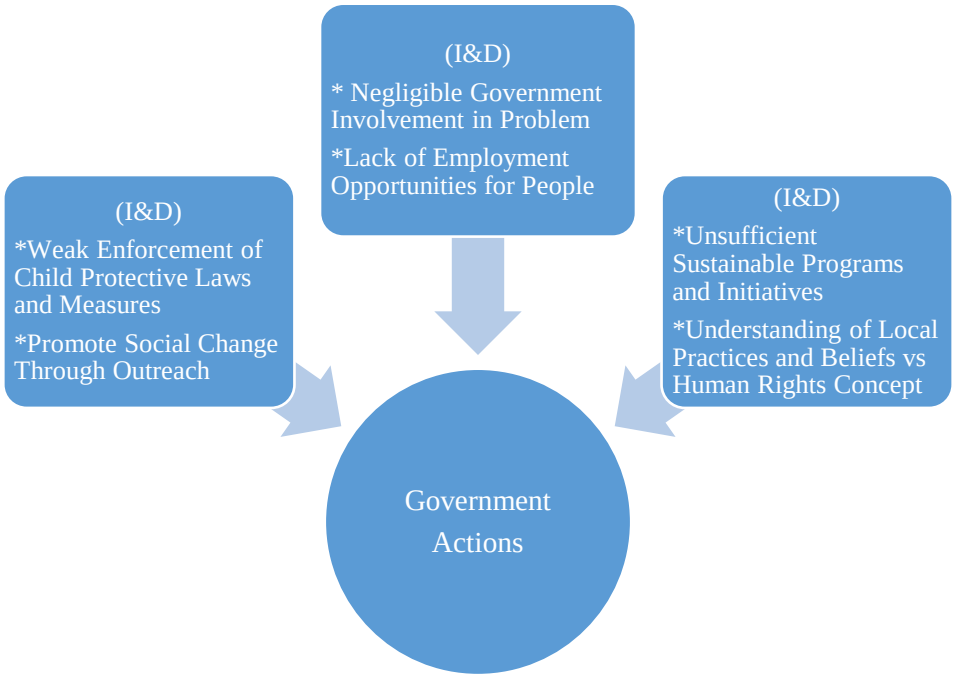

Figure 8. Formulation of the theme of government actions.

Contributions of Nongovernmental Organizations

According to the participants, though the government of the DRC had somewhat deserted its responsibility of providing basic protection and services for children accused of witchcraft, it allowed NGOs and other international organizations to fill the vacuum. One participant went as far as saying that with the government, local NGOs received administrative support in the form of official permit to operate but not financial support. But with international donors, local NGOs received technical and financial support. Participants asserted that in the DRC, most social support and protective services for children accused of witchcraft were mainly performed by international organizations such as UNICEF, MONUSCO, Save the Children, some Catholic faith –based organizations, and other community–based organizations. Although not in the leading role, in some instances, the government collaborated administratively with local NGOs and community based-organizations to identify, assess, educate, coordinate, and reintegrate the children into their families. Unfortunately, the mere collaborations were not enough as these local NGOs which functioned as child welfare professionals often operated with meager resources in their efforts to advocate for the return of the children accused of witchcraft to their families.

The same observations were made during the document reviews. According the SCWA (2017), “small organizations in affected communities, such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are struggling to meet the complex needs of the large numbers of children subjected to these accusations” (p.4). In other words, despite their limited resources, local NGOs continued to lead in the fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC. They often devised aid programs targeting the protection,

education, and the preservation of the human rights of the children. Table 14 and Figure 9 displayed the comments of the participants and the derivation of the theme of NGOs contributions respectively.

Table 14

Theme: Contributions of Nongovernmental Organizations

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
EL	"Given the DRC government's lack of total commitment most social problems, the majority of local NGOs do not depend on the government for financial support for their operations. While it is true that in some cases the government only pays meager salaries to social workers of local NGOs, in most cases, local NGOs receive operational funding from other international organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children. We cannot count on the government's assistance to do our job. There will be no accomplishments or progress if we were to wait on the government's assistance."
SK	"NGOs should accompany vulnerable families in their struggles against poverty and help these families make sense of their problems."
AN	"Local and international NGOs contribute to the researches and advocacy that help the government put laws in place that protect vulnerable children. So NGOs have collaborated effectively in the promotion or propagation of these laws and in raising awareness of the entire Congolese community concerned with this problem by involving all community leaders: churches, youth groups, neighborhood leaders, etc…"
DN	"NGOs, for their part, denounce, advocate, and sensitize or educate families, secular or Christian communities on the danger of accusing children of witchcraft and the risks involved. They are also promoting the child protection law."
GL	"Both local and international NGOs work with the government to defend and protect the rights of children in general, especially children accused of witchcraft."
OM	"NGOs have to work side by side with the government in raising awareness among the population and to integrate the concept of children's rights into the national education program. Other national and international actors must also support the government's efforts to combat this phenomenon."
AM	"NGOs ensure the protection of the child, the implementation of the law on the protection of the child in its article 160, prohibiting the accusation of witchcraft of the children."
FN	"NGOs partner with the government, it is through the NGOs that the government often discharges its limited responsibilities when attempting to address the problem of child witchcraft accusations in the DRC. In terms of addressing the problem directly, the government has no structure in place to deal with the situation. For example, the government routinely send children to Makala prison but for us NGOs, prison is not the appropriate location educate and ensure the rights of children. NGOs, churches, other community-based organizations are doing their best to help these children but unfortunately, the resources are insufficient and they are severely insubstantial. For us who work as social workers, we simply do so because of the passion that we have for children's well-being."
PdB	"In terms of the contributions of NGOs and other human rights organizations, they see child witchcraft accusations as a humanitarian crisis and I believe that their nuanced stance is not helpful because it doesn't take away or influence any of the causes that create the problem in the first place. I think you have to delve deep into the cultural roots of the problem in order to be able to address it effectively. There are laws but they are not implemented. So, I think NGOs and others have to adjust their scope or approach to the specific social and cultural world in which they intervene in order to remain effective and meaningful in their contributions."
AM	"International organizations and local NGOs in the field of children's welfare assist the government in its mission of protecting the children accused of witchcraft and promoting their rights. They sensitize, raise awareness in the population, and provide care for these children through reunification, reinsertion, and social reintegration."

Interviewee	Participant's remarks
	(*table continues*)
MK	"Local NGOs and international or other local actors should also contribute to this government policy through the continuation of regular assistance to these children socially, psychologically, and materially."
AA	"The role of the NGOs is to sensitize the community to demystify the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations, to set up projects that can help the children get out of this situation, to support families for the development of activities that generate income, to set up an observatory of vigilance to denounce cases of abuse. Similarly, international actors must technically and financially support the government's efforts."
BB	"Absent the government's involvement, local NGOs are the ones filling the void and doing their best to help the children. In our case, the main mission of our NGO is the protection of children, including the children accused of witchcraft even though the government is most time 8 out of 10 negligent of the issue of child witchcraft accusations. Nevertheless, I believe that the government can support NGOs by sponsoring projects for these children or the government can use the ministry of social affairs or the ministry of children and families because their mandates are to ensure the wellbeing and protection of children."

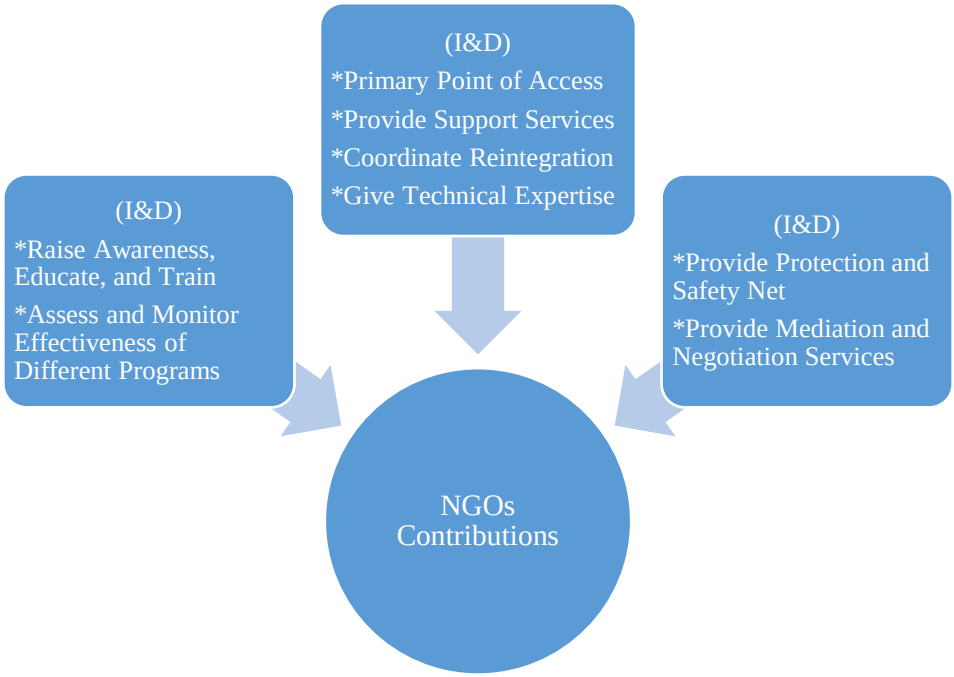

Figure 9. Formulation of the theme of nongovernmental organizations' contributions.

Summary and Transition

The research findings presented in Chapter 4 covered the outcome and the evaluation of the data collected through semi-structured phone interviews with 13 participants. Chapter 4 also used documents reviews and personal interview notes as part of reliable and triangulation approaches to collect data for this study. While no prearranged codes and themes were established prior to beginning of the data collection, the results of the data analysis generated nine main themes or topics from three main sources, all with common trends, related characteristics, and inherent significance to the study.

Though, the data collected from participants indicated general congruence in the themes and coding, the outcome of the interview data collection also incorporated data discrepancy or discrepant data. The discrepant data mainly involved the assessments of multiple other factors surrounding the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations by the participants. While on one hand, two participants explained that the DRC government was marginally involved in the fight against child witchcraft accusations, on the other hand, the remaining eleven participants remarked that the government was far-removed from the reality of the phenomenon and lacked substantive political will to genuinely tackle child witchcraft accusations in the country.

Based on the data analysis from interview participants, there was a general indication of the government's lack of critical perspective and analysis of the problem. Thus, considering the 2009 Child Protection Code and Articles 41 of the 2011 revised Constitution, participants in the study agreed that existing DRC government social policies did not engage sufficiently in critical examination of the phenomenon in ways

that could provide lasting solutions. Accordingly, using the frameworks of critical and attachment theories to analyze the experiential perspectives of participants from local NGOs and the reviews of documents, the study revealed that current social policies did not target young children aged 5-10 accused of witchcraft and these policies remained factually ineffective and profoundly weak in the implementation strategies of the rights and protection of children labeled as witches. To this end, Jun (2006) argued that to improve current practices of policy enforcement by the people at the top, the DRC government required a deep critical and self-reflective approach of its social policies aimed at children accused of witchcraft (p. 2).

In Chapter 5, I briefly recapitulated the purpose of the study and provided interpretations on the outcomes of the study of child witchcraft accusations using existing DRC government's social policies within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories. I also discussed the positive social change effects of the study, recommendations of the findings of the study, and lastly, the implications of this study for future researches.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological exploratory case study was to provide, first, a comprehensive review of existing DRC government public policies in support of child welfare programs targeting young children between the ages of 5 and 10 years accused of witchcraft, and second, to collect analytical evidences from local NGOs, international organizations, and other child welfare advocates on their firsthand experiences dealing with young children prematurely excluded from their family homes and forcibly made street children due to accusations of witchcraft. Specifically, I sought to determine whether these young children were responding positively to the administration of existing policies or whether new policies were needed. Using the frameworks of critical and attachment theories, I collected multiple forms of data to answer two main research questions including 15 interview questions. I conducted semi structured telephone interviews, took interview notes, and performed review of documents obtained from key participants in Kinshasa, DRC, and Brussels, Belgium.

The results of the study suggested that existing public policies of the DRC government were inherently weak and ineffective in implementation. The findings further indicated that the government's follow-up mechanism in place lacked accountability, was profoundly flawed, and failed to comprehensively address the human rights and child protection dimensions of the experience of young children labeled as witches in Kinshasa and throughout other parts of the DRC. The extensive literature used in this study revealed that there were no shortage of laws and policies on the books; however, young children in the age group of 5-10 years continued to fall prey to uncorroborated

accusations that were fundamentally rooted in cultural and religious belief systems of the people. Of the nine major themes that emerged from the interviews with key participants in Chapter 4, poverty remained the single most widespread force perpetuating child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. With the inability of the DRC government to provide for basic necessities and employment, many families, particularly in poverty-stricken communities, have resulted to draconian measures of scapegoating their own children for any misfortune that occurs.

Interpretation of the Findings

In Chapter 4, the nine key themes that emerged all pointed to poverty and lack of employment opportunities as key contributors to this relatively new phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. Almost all of the key respondents who took part in this study acknowledged that witchcraft was a supernatural phenomenon that could not be scientifically proven. According to the key participants, although it was virtually impossible to erase such belief systems from the minds of the people, it was possible to positively influence the behaviors of families, church leaders, and other key players through sustained educational campaigns aimed at changing their attitudes toward the accused children.

Analyses of data from interviews reported in Chapter 4 also suggested that besides the extremely poor economic environment of the DRC, other social and political factors continued to contribute to the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations, with dire consequences for family structures. Cimpric (2010) claimed that child witchcraft accusations were predominantly an urban phenomenon resulting from multiple family crises that had profoundly transformed family structures (p. 2). Unfortunately, in

Kinshasa and in most urban and rural areas, the poorest families, and even sometimes affluent families, use witchcraft to provide explanations for misfortune or occurrences that have no logical explanations. The themes that emerged during the interviews clearly indicated the lack of results-driven public policies by the government of the DRC that effectively addressed the root causes of child witchcraft accusations in a country endowed with vast and rich resources. To that end and absent pragmatic evidence of such guilt, young children between the ages of 5-10 years remained the targets of their families' inexplicable predicaments. While no studies have been conducted to date on witchcraft accusations involving young children specifically between the ages of 5-10 years in Kinshasa, the ongoing situation of these children accused of witchcraft points to the failure of existing child welfare and social policies to protect an important and vulnerable segment of the DRC population.

Detailed analyses of collected interview data also showed that these policies remained somewhat inadequate and ineffective due to the lack of strong implementation strategies by the government and its seeming lack of political will. All key participants asserted that the majority of people ignored even the existence of the Child Protection Code enacted in 2009 and did not understand the legal value that it carried. Thus, despite the formulation of the 2009 Child Protection Code between the government, local and international NGOs, international organizations, the DRC judiciary, the clergy, and civil society, deep challenges persisted in such a way that they impeded significant progress in the fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa.

The challenges of child witchcraft accusations faced by the DRC are deep seated not only in extreme poverty and lack of employment opportunities, but also in cultural

and religious beliefs (Gram, 2011, p. 4) that are emblematic of Kinshasa in particular and the DRC in general. Child witchcraft accusations represent a relatively recent social phenomenon, having emerged in the early 1990s, at least in Kinshasa, and going beyond the borders of the DRC and into other sub-Saharan African countries, as well as other countries around the world (Hanson & Ruggiero, 2013, p. 5). A typical example in central Africa is Angola, where parents often link extreme poverty to child witchcraft accusations as a way to reduce economic burdens on the family (Glenn & Mgbako, 2012).

Certainly, few studies exist on witchcraft accusations in the DRC, and no previous studies have been conducted using existing child welfare public policies and articles of the constitution to successfully target young children aged 5-10 years accused of witchcraft. In the face of what could be seen as total resignation of the DRC government, all interviews and document review conducted during this study appeared to indicate that local NGOs and other international organizations contributed the majority of research on child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, even though they did not target the specific age group of this study (Gram, 2011, p. 5). Hanson and Ruggiero (2013) substantiated Gram's assertion when they ascertained that "the most active entities that have raised concern about and looked into child witchcraft accusations and related human rights issues, in particular in Africa, were NGOs and, within the UN system, the Committee on the Rights of the Child" (p. 5). Despite the noble efforts of these local NGOs and international organizations in effecting positive social and environmental impacts on the problem, hundreds of young children accused of witchcraft continue to fill the backstreets

of Kinshasa. The phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations remains an uphill battle on all fronts within Kinshasa and the DRC, a homogenous society.

Absence of Genuine Political Will

In this study, the themes that emerged from all of the interviews in Chapter 4 were inherently interrelated and mutually inclusive. Considering these themes as social factors that greatly exacerbated the phenomenon, the study explored child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa within the public policy construct and existing framework of the country's constitution and the 2009 Child Protection Code. However, the lack of robust policy implementation strategies and the government's inability to hold accountable perpetrators of child witchcraft accusations represent significant obstacles to the effectiveness of existing public policies. For Snow (2017), "accusations of witchcraft against African children are prevalent where state authority is fragmented and open to pressure at the local level, in those areas with intense witch beliefs and sense of crisis stoked by zealous clergy acting as witchbusters" (p. 1). Snow's statement validated interview data collected from key participants who lamented the government's laissez-faire approach in the face of glaring accusations of witchcraft against young and innocent children.

Undoubtedly, the pervasiveness of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa is an indication of the government's lack of assertiveness over the phenomenon. In other terms, based on data collected from interviewees, there is a clear lack of government interest in fighting child witchcraft accusations, despite the existence of the 2009 Child Protection Code and the constitution, which criminalize and punish all forms of maltreatment and abuse against children, particularly the most vulnerable ones between the ages of 5 and 10 years. Despite the codification and criminalization of child

witchcraft accusations, it seemed to emerge from the data analysis that the DRC government's genuine involvement in the fight against child witchcraft accusations was severely hampered by political unwillingness and marginal show of interest in the problem at best. Indeed, child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and in the entirety of the DRC appeared to be the least concern of the government in the face of multiple other social, economic, and political issues and crises that the government had to deal with on a routine basis.

The government's disinterest in and disengagement from comprehensively educating the population and firmly enforcing policies and laws was not unique to the DRC. For example, Nigerian police and prosecutors came under intense scrutiny for blatant disregard of the 2008 children's protection law after continued abuses of witchcraft accusations against children were reported by CNN in 2010 (Snow 2017, p. 10). Snow (2017) further argued that it was common practice in several sub-Saharan African countries to accuse defenseless small children of witchcraft or demoniacs, and often times subjecting these children to agonizing exorcism and expulsion from their family homes, or even to being killed. Absent any real involvement by the government, local NGOs with their meager means and resources tried to step in and fill the void left by the government and provide support for young children accused of witchcraft.

The findings of this study were consistent with those of Gram (2011), Cimpric (2010), Cohan (2011), Hanson and Ruggiero (2013), all of whom fundamentally argued that poverty and its associated consequences played key roles in the rise of witchcraft accusations against children, even if they were not the only contributing factors. In other words, the effects of economic insecurity, extreme poverty, the role of churches, the

precarious sociopolitical environment, and the lack of political will were all factors that were not necessarily mutually exclusive in contributing to witchcraft accusations often levied against young children; instead, the results of this study suggest that accusations of witchcraft against children in the DRC and sub-Sahara Africa will likely continue to rise unless there are improvements in the living conditions of the people (Miguel, 2005). Key participants' comments sounded the alarm regarding child witchcraft accusations which were clearly indicative of the negative impacts of poverty, lack of political will, and other social factors on children within DRC society.

Indeed, this study corroborates the outcome of the few existing previous studies in which child witchcraft accusations constituted a multifactor social phenomenon that affected the DRC specifically and sub-Sahara Africa generally. Using critical and attachment theories as guiding principles, the present study suggests that it will take collaborative efforts between the government, NGOs, and other international organizations to fight the root causes of poverty and associated consequences in order to provide realistic implementation goals that are essential to mitigate and reduce child witchcraft accusations in the DRC. Realistic and empirical findings of this study also give understanding and insights into some of the specific challenges that child welfare professionals face in benefiting from existing social policies and strategies enacted by the government to protect the rights of vulnerable populations such as young children accused of witchcraft. Undeniably, while this study was by no means exhaustive, it was comprehensive enough to serve as a model for future studies that explore the challenges posed by other social problems within the scope of witchcraft accusations in general. This study, when used properly, may provide background or contextual information that can

be used to fight child witchcraft accusations effectively through the eradication of poverty and associated consequences in the DRC and sub-Sahara Africa.

Nongovernmental Organizations Challenging Operational Environment

Considering the multiple interviews conducted with key respondents, it also appeared that local NGOs had become the true façades of the fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, despite facing multiple resource challenges. Though there was strong willingness on the part of the NGOs, there were recurrent shortages of financial support from international donors and organizations, which often constituted obstacles to their sustained successes in addressing the problem. The shortage of funds caused local NGOs' inability to implement operational strategies to provide and care for young children under their supervision. Unfortunately, interview data also indicated that despite their drive, goals, willingness, and motivation to make a difference in the lives of the children, local NGOs were frequently faced with challenges to meeting and sustaining the basic needs of the children, and such adversities sometimes caused these children to leave local NGOs' shelter homes and return to the streets to fend for themselves and enjoy their own freedom away from any structured supervision of local NGO professionals.

Though the government enabled a favorable operational environment, in Kinshasa, local and other international NGOs remained the de facto caretakers of vulnerable populations, including in their works with young children accused of witchcraft. Absent the government's command presence, involvement, and determination to combat the problem, these NGOs represented the faces of the fight against child witchcraft accusations. For local NGOs, the lack of basic logistical support and

operational funds for their missions often translated into minimal significant results on the ground. Key participants from these local NGOs further argued that in some cases, these challenges represented the basis to lay off workers due to the NGOs' inability to pay salaries and wages to the workers. With the lack of qualified personnel and resources, local NGOs seemed to be severely limited in effecting positive changes to address the issue of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa.

According to the respondents from local NGOs who participated in the study, the occasional lack of financial commitment of international donors and organizations to provide direct sponsorship was due to the volatility of the DRC's sociopolitical environment, where corruption and instability often reigned supreme, and where funds purportedly intended for social programs were routinely embezzled for individual political agendas and personal needs. In other words, based on the data collected from key participants, corruption mainly within the government was an impediment that particularly affected local NGOs in the form of lack of operational funds and other resources that could enable them to effectively provide significant support for children accused of witchcraft. Clearly, the government's continuous interference in the management of funds occasionally received from international donors to address social issues within the DRC affected the operational capabilities of local NGOs. Because the lack of sufficient funds adversely affected the efforts of these local NGOs, their actions did not always translate into substantial results in the field that benefited children.

While local NGOs operated with deep cultural understanding of the issue of child witchcraft accusations, OFPRA (2015) stated that most international organizations, notably international NGOs, intervened on this issue in relation to the problem of street

children, often ignoring the cultural dimensions and implications of the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations that caused these children to run from their family homes to the streets. In other words, the staff of these international organizations and NGOs did not necessarily realize that a significant number of young children were on the streets of Kinshasa because they had been accused of witchcraft by their own families. This myopic perception of the problem added another layer of complexity, due to the lack of deeper understanding of the problem by some international organizations operating in the DRC. Thus, an understanding of the cultural ramifications of witchcraft accusations, specifically child witchcraft accusations, is fundamental to the efforts of NGOs, both local and international, in the reintegration of these young children into their families and into meaningful society.

Relevance of Critical Theory and Attachment Conceptual Framework

The overarching exploration of child witchcraft accusations was conducted using critical theory and an attachment conceptual framework. The combination of these philosophical principles not only enabled objective and holistic analyses of existing public policies targeting young children aged 5-10 years accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa, but also provided analytical perspectives on the phenomenon outside the DRC's borders. Generally, in Kinshasa and in other major cities of the DRC, the notion of witchcraft often triggers fears that provoke both psychological and physical instability within families. This modern phenomenon has caused a great deal of harm to innocent young children labeled as witches by their own families, who have desperately looked elsewhere for answers to issues that cannot be naturally and rationally explained.

With the rampant and abject poverty that affected the overwhelming majority of the population, attempts to mystically, religiously, or even malevolently explain misfortune that befell families had unfortunately become common practices within the DRC society. Regrettably, young children had become the foci of such malpractices through unsubstantiated witchcraft accusations. Using critical and attachment theories to provide a comprehensive assessment of all collected data, it became evident that the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations still exists in Kinshasa because of several factors, namely cultural, sociopolitical, environmental, and religious just to name a few. Indeed, child witchcraft accusations was not unique to the DRC alone. In Kinshasa, child witchcraft accusations represented a deviation from the core traditional focus of witchcraft accusations against elderly men and women, some of whom were often seen as using witchcraft to protect their families. This unprecedented paradigm shift was not exclusive to the DRC.

In fact, in sub-Sahara Africa, child witchcraft accusations had become a contemporary phenomenon whose trajectory had exclusively targeted thousands of innocent young children through dubious means of accusations often perpetrated by the joint collaboration of families and mostly evangelical churches but also by the absolute negligence and inability of state apparatus and the government to deal with the problem. The premise that young children were the causes of their families' sufferings in Kinshasa was also shared in other countries in sub-Sahara Africa. The evolution of the DRC society into a modern society where market economy, urbanism, and individualism dominated every aspect of the social order had all put the country into a collision course against its original cultural standards of community life and appreciation for cultural

norms and values. Such social transformations had inadvertently also put deep strains on the family structures.

Data analysis showed that the modern trajectory of the country had left millions of the population behind in abject poverty, resulting in the dysfunctioning of families in their relationships with their offspring who unfortunately were often perceived as sources of problems that occurred within families. For De Boeck and Jacquemin (2000), a complex underlying factor of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa was what they referred to as *"multicrises"* (p.33). In fact, *"multicrises"* as coined by De Boeck and Jacquemin denoted the antagonistic nature of the visible and invisible world which remained a key source of the social crisis that continued to plague the DRC. In such a notion, the modern phenomenon of witchcraft accusations is the result of multiple crises that the DRC has faced since the early 1990s. That is, attempts to explain misfortune through mystical way had been on the rise and seemed to have supplanted any pragmatic explanations of family problems. It seemed as though all misfortune had explanations in the invisible world in the DRC and elsewhere is sub-Sahara Africa.

An in-depth analysis of interview data and the various themes that emerged from this study demonstrably indicated that critical theory and attachment concept were lacking and clearly not being used by the government as analytical framework or tools to assess the many social problems affecting the DRC, including child witchcraft accusations. Such ineffectiveness in tackling the problem prevented the government from enacting strong public policies that enabled an environment of constructive and positive social changes implementations strategies as related to child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and other parts of the DRC. Certainly legal instruments exist such as the

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 41of the DRC constitution, and the 2009 Child Protect Code, all of which criminalize and punish all forms of maltreatment, negligence, and abuses against children; but all these legal steps, texts, and instruments were far from the reality on the ground.

In essence, these legal tools often did not translate into concrete and pragmatic solutions in dealing with the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations. They seemed to be just written documents with no real implementation protocols to adequately address the issue of child witchcraft accusations in the DRC. Indications from the data analysis and interviews from the key participants mostly pointed to local NGOs and to some extent, other international organizations as entities that assessed child witchcraft accusations within the lenses of critical and attachment theories in their approaches to devise practical and implementable strategies and actions to help young children accused of witchcraft albeit sometimes the challenges that they faced on the ground with scarcity of resources, notably local NGOs.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted using key participants recruited from the city of Kinshasa, DRC and a participant from the University of Leuven, Belgium (see maps in Appendix D). While the majority of key participants who took part in this study originated from Kinshasa and affiliated with local NGOs, they could also be describes as a community of social workers, academics, clergy, and legal counsel, all with vast experiences with vulnerable populations such as young children accused of witchcraft. During the study, the geographical factors and the awareness of the operational

environment of the key respondents did not influence the outcome of this study. To ensure reliability in the outcome of the study, I used three data triangulation approaches, including interviews, interview notes, and document reviews in order to validate and substantiate the results and findings of the interviews.

Out the 13 key participants, 11 were male (84.6%) and only two were female (15.3%). The disproportion of male and female respondents was not purposeful but at the time of recruitment, these participants were the only ones available and willing to participate in the study. In this qualitative study, the sample size was limited because according to Lillis (2002), the research design required semi-structured interviews and a structured interview questionnaire to be administered by a single researcher (p. 85). Yet, the disparity in gender participation seemed to indicate that male local NGO or social workers dominated female workers in the same field of social or local NGO work who dealt specifically with child witchcraft accusations. While these numbers were revealing and astounding, they could also be misleading in a number of ways. In fact, the gap between male and female participation constituted a limitation to the study because the pool of participants though was expansive but unfortunately there were not enough female key participants available to be recruited for the study. The recruitment and participation of more female key participants could have revealed to the general community other important themes not discussed in this study. These topics could have served as the basis for future study about the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in the DRC. Therefore, the lack of more women participation was definitely a limitation to this study given the benefits that the study could have derived from more female participation.

While I included eight local NGOs in this study, not all of them provided public documents for review in support of their accounts about child witchcraft accusations during data collection interviews that were conducted within critical and attachment theories frameworks. Arguably, instead of receiving from some local NGOs graphic video segments that portrayed some aspects of child exorcism during witchcraft accusations, obtaining more public documents from all local NGOs that participated in this study could have helped exposed written supplementary deficiencies in existing DRC government social and public policies targeting young children accused of witchcraft. Thus, the absence of more relevant public documents constituted a limitation to the study.

Another limitation of this study was my inability to involve and engage directly with the category of children being studied for fear of influencing the children to provide accounts that could be false narratives. In order to avoid the direct inclusion of children who were seen as vulnerable population, it was imperative that I relied on the expertise of key participants from local NGOs who worked in the field with these children. Though, using the key participants and their years of experiences, it was virtually impossible for me to capture the authenticity of the true and genuine sentiments and emotions of the children accused of witchcraft. In other words, using critical and attachment principles to guide this research, I relied in part on the narratives of key participants but also available public documents to corroborate the validity of findings of this study.

As the researcher, I was careful not to allow my personal bias impact the outcome of the study. A researcher's personal bias can negatively become a limitation to a study if not addressed effectively from the start. Mehra (2002) argued that in qualitative research, the researcher's subjectivity is inevitable and it is an important factor to take

into consideration. To ensure that my personal bias did not affect the study, I used the triangulation of documents reviews, interview notes, and interviews of key participants to ascertain the authenticity of the data collected. I also mitigated my subjectivity by carefully analyzing, comparing and contrasting all themes and codes generated from the three main data sources used for this study, namely documents reviews, interview notes, and interviews. Since this research was a phenomenological exploratory case study, I also developed objective research questions that provided comprehensive, holistic, and thick and rich descriptions of the real lives of children accused of witchcraft from the perspectives of the key participants.

At the time of the study, the DRC was getting ready for presidential and parliamentary elections. There were increasing tensions and insecurity throughout the country. Due to the political instability and prevailing social tensions in the months leading to the elections, I was unable to travel and conduct face-to-face interviews with participants. I was advised by my committee member to put my safety first and find and alternative way to collect my data. Alternatively, I collected most of data through extensive phone interviews with the exception of one participant from the University of Leuven, Belgium with whom I conducted a face-to-face interview because I was stationed in Brussels, Belgium at the time of the interview.

I also attempted to enlist some DRC government officials from the ministry of social work to participate in the study in order to get their perspectives but all initiatives failed. I was not able to include in this study, the perspectives of the DRC government officials about their child welfare programs and public policy implementation strategies concerning child witchcraft accusations. Further limitations to this study remained with

the fact that as a researcher, I could not predict with certainty that the outcome of the study could positively influence the overarching beliefs of the population about witchcraft accusations. However, going forward one could argue that the results of this study will serve as a model and a reference material for future studies within the same context. Considering the magnitude of the phenomenon, no participant or public document used in this research was able to determine with accuracy the exact number of young children accused of witchcraft.

Although critical and attachment theories are highly suitable for qualitative researches, they have shortcomings and limitations. While Bowlby recognized that attachment theory is limited in its scope of factors that shape and mold the social behaviors of children, including young children accused of witchcraft; similarly, Washington (2008), a critic of Bowlby's theory claimed that attachment theory was "culturally-biased" and did not take into consideration other social environment factors influencing the growth of children in general.

Unlike attachment theory, critical theory is a relatively new social theory that is applicable to every aspects of life. As an analytical-based philosophical theory, critical theory guides human action by regulating correct human interests and interactions as well as facilitating escaping from ideological imprisonment (Froomkin, 2003). Froomkin (2003) further argued that "there is a limit, however, to how much rational consensus can be reached regarding fundamental values" (p. 761). That was to say that, the inherent value and essence of critical theory, however noble and enlightening had its challenges and controversies among the scholars of this school of thought.

For opponents, critical theory was not a unifying philosophy as demonstrated in the debate between Habermas and Gadamas, two of the pioneers of critical theory school of thought. For proponents, critical theory brings about enlightenment and emancipation of mankind. In other words, critical theory is a contemplative theory for self-evaluation. To that end, Mickûnas, (2015) argued that critical theory is the "demonstration of reflective reason that offers additional level of discursive practice, capable of adjudicating the issues in terms of primacy of experience – in a broadest sense of the term" (p.5). Irrespective of the arguments, no one theory was holistic and comprehensive enough to account for all the factors that contributed to the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations. Despite the limitations of both theories, critical and attachment theories certainly seemed to be the most appropriate philosophical theories for this study.

Considering the large number of local NGOs and international organizations workers that operated in the DRC, the sample size of 13 key participants for the interviews was relatively small or underrepresented in comparison to the overall population of these social workers. However, limiting the interview sample size to 13 key participants enabled me to objectively and realistically conduct the interviews within a reasonable timeframe while also affording ample opportunities to the participants to provide specific and accurate details accounts about their field experiences with young children accused of witchcraft. Given the rigorous, and methodical steps and measures that I put in place for this study, I am confident that the outcomes of this study are reliable and trustworthy to serve as the basis for future studies.

Recommendations

Examination of data collected for this study indicated that abject poverty alleviation through the availability of employment opportunities, resources, educational training, and other important social development and awareness programs are critical to tackling child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, the DRC, and sub-Sahara Africa in general. Though other sociopolitical factors accounted for in part for child witchcraft accusations, Cimpric (2010) argued that abject poverty and the lack of real economic opportunities have become part and parcel of the significant reasons used in witchcraft accusations against young children in the DRC and sub-Sahara Africa where such practices have become social norms and often misunderstood by western analysts with their limited understanding of the phenomenon. This phenomenological case study explored the effectiveness and efficiency of existing social and public policies targeting the welfare of these children from the perspectives of local NGOs and international organizations workers within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories. The outcomes of interviews, public document reviews, and interview notes collected from key participants helped in the formulation of several valid recommendations in support of this study.

Public Policy Recommendations

Results of this study suggested that existing DRC social and public policies have failed to address successfully the issue of child witchcraft accusations, especially with focus on young children within the age group of 5-10. Absent any comprehensive policy review within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories by the DRC government, local NGOs and international organizations operating primarily in Kinshasa

have stepped in to fill the void left by the government albeit their meager resources, particularly the likes of local NGOs. Considering the level of complexity of the problem and ineffectiveness of existing policies, but also the seemingly lack of real concern shown by the government, it still would be in the best interest of the government to start showing genuine political willingness in devising new policy approaches that are robust enough to deal with the issue of child witchcraft accusations. True policy intervention, assessment, and application are required to successfully address the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in the Kinshasa.

Data for this study suggested clear indications of inadequacy in policy implementations and the relinquishment of governmental responsibilities vis-à-vis the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. Short of such initiatives, local NGOs and other international organizations have become the circumstantial active actors in promoting the protection and rights of these young children often accused of witchcraft. Hanson & Ruggiero (2013) contended that child witchcraft accusations constituted human rights violations and as such more attention needed to be accorded to the problem (p.1).

World Vision (2012) denoted that despite the government's adoption of robust policy stance and best operational practices on a number of children's issues, including child witchcraft accusations, the implementation process was deeply flawed and there was a complete lack of political commitment on the part of the government. In this vein, to ensure that the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations is addressed properly, the government must assume a front role seat and responsibility in the battle against the root causes of the problem. The government needs to overhaul existing public policies to

make sure that their implementations are successful in order to effect positive change of mindsets within the DRC society. These government initiatives and actions must be aligned with the actions of local NGOs and international organizations that are active actors in the field. It is paramount that local NGOs remain vigorously involved to mitigate negative government influences and eliminate weak operational outputs goals or low operational expectations bars that the government often offered other public sector actors to meet the needs of children accused of witchcraft.

The government of the DRC must take serious and concrete measures to prevent the creation of pseudo local NGOs that do not really serve the best interests of young children accused of witchcraft even though as they receive funds from international donors in support of the fight against child witchcraft accusations and other children issues. In other words, there should be no place for corruption in the creation of credible and legitimate local NGOs that work and serve these disenfranchised children due to accusations of witchcraft. The government must put in place a system of checks and balance that will ensure transparency in the creation of local NGOs that advocate for the welfare and the protection of the rights of children accused of witchcraft.

The fight against child witchcraft accusations requires the involvement of everyone at different echelons of the government of the DRC and other children's advocate groups. In fact, given the magnitude of the problem, it will take sincere collaborative efforts to obtain significant results that will bring about meaningful change in the DRC context and sub-Sahara Africa in general. Since the government of the DRC cannot do it all alone, they must put in place effective multi-prone approaches and strategies involving the participations of various segments of the DRC society. Local

NGOs, international organizations, private sector, civil society, the church, communities, and families must all work together in harmony with the government and speak with one voice to address the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in the DRC, particularly in Kinshasa. These measures must start at the community grassroots levels and must largely involve family participations in enforcing newly revised policies that the government will implement to tackle the problem.

Since the main role of local NGOs is twofold, namely mediators and educators on the ground, it also is essential that the government provides favorable operational environments that are suitable to work jointly. Public places such as churches, as funeral places, market places, schools, and any other suitable public gathering places could serve as adequate settings for local NGOs to use as public educational platform to educate the people about the ill effects of the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations. The government must facilitate the use of all forms of media airways by local NGOs as a systemic platform for education to reach a wider audience in the fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC.

While local NGOs supported by international organizations continue to represent the main face for the fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, much of their work consist of reintegration of the accused children back into their respective families. As such, the government must endeavor to support them with resources and assistance with decent salaries in order to achieve realistic changes on the ground through the education of families and the populations in general. In this battle against the phenomenon, it is necessary that the government hold accountable perpetrators of such accusations but more importantly, it must follow up on policy implementations and

compliance by families, churches, and any other groups of perpetrators through the coordination and supervision of professional local NGOs and law enforcement professionals.

Consistent with data collected for this study, poverty seemed by far the principal reason that underlined the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa but also in most sub-Saharan African countries. The majority of the population lacked employment and incomes to take care of their families. Even for the few government employees and to some extent the few fortunate private sector workers, their financial situations were exacerbated by the meager salaries which were often not paid. Accordingly, given the current climate that lacked any culture of effective social policies, the government of the DRC must imperatively address the growing issue of unemployment and abject poverty if there are any hopes of reducing child witchcraft accusations. Applying critical and attachment theories as fundamental frameworks in the exploration of child witchcraft accusations, local NGOs continued to play key roles in their daily performances in the fight against the phenomenon. To this end, it is important that the government steps forward with a political willingness commensurate with the proportion and magnitude of the problem. In other words, by creating employment, devising and robustly implementing social policies, the government can improve the economic status of families and therefore reduce poverty and ultimately mitigate the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. However, if the government fails to address child witchcraft accusations through the creation of employment opportunities for families and poverty reduction, there is no guarantee that local NGOs

alone can confront the problem in a way that will result in meaningful and substantive decline of accusations that will lead to positive impacts within the DRC society.

Future Study Recommendations

Given the fact that the present study involved most key participants from local NGOs in Kinshasa, the number of female participants was relatively marginal in comparison to the number of male participants recruited for this study. As a result of the lack of equal or higher representation of female participants, this study did not properly capture and describe the comprehensive perceptions of more female participants during data collection. While more female participants were not available during data collection, capturing the perceptions of additional female respondents could have provided more depth and breadth to this study. Obtaining inputs from more female participants could have contributed unique insights to the study. Additionally, if government officials who handled children's welfare issues were available during data collection, their inputs could have profited this study. Their perspectives might have provided different views from those of key local NGO professionals who participated in this study. Going forward, including the perspectives of these key interest groups of important players in this study from the city of Kinshasa is recommended to ensure the holistic approach in data collection for this study. The considerations and explorations of this population groups and their assessments of the phenomenon within the frameworks of attachment and critical theories could help devise more robust public policies and implementation approaches, coupled with realistic social programs to help address child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and the DRC as a whole.

Although this study primarily explored child witchcraft accusations within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories by recommending among other things the active involvement of the government alongside local NGOs in the fight against the phenomenon, it is also essential that the general population shows restraint, compassion, and understanding in the face of the plight of the children. While the actions of the public need not be interpreted strictly through the lenses of critical and attachment theories, they can supplement the actions of local NGOs and the government in addressing child witchcraft accusations. The general population does not need formal educational training to understand the evils of and the harm caused by accusing children of witchcraft. The public should recognize and understand child witchcraft accusations as a relatively new phenomenon directly linked to poverty and lack of employment opportunities. Unfortunately, in the context of the Kinshasa, the problem is mainly exacerbated by spiritual or evangelical churches that often try to provide explanations to misfortune in the spiritual realm. That being said, it will take strong policy enforcement, collaborative efforts, and continued educational awareness programs from all walks of communities in the DRC to fight child witchcraft accusations and attain meaningful results on the ground as a way to save the next generations of leaders of the country.

During data collection for this study, most key participants argued that the laws and policies must be enforced rigorously by the government but also the creations of economic opportunities that serve all families and peoples were primordial in order to change the perceptions about child witchcraft accusations. For example, a key participant (AN) recommended,

> To address this issue in a pragmatic way, the DRC government for the first time recognized and banned the accusations of witchcraft in the 2006 constitution and also introduced a law No. 09/001 of 10 January 2009 on the protection of the child that protects all children against all forms of abuses including children accused of witchcraft. In addition, there are specialized services of the government as the Special Direction of Protection of the Child, in acronym DISPE which collaborates also in the protection of this category of child. And even today, the government of the DRC has created the Social Workers Corps, CASo in acronym, a national technical body to improve social interventions for the benefit of vulnerable groups, including the protection of children accused of witchcraft.

Another key participant (SK) also stated that, economically, "The government should improve the living conditions of the population through the creation of jobs, the granting of decent wages, the payment of family allocations, and the support of vulnerable families."

Implementing these measures are some of the ways to achieve realistic results and reduce the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and the DRC. However, the government cannot do it all alone because the growing phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations requires the involvement of every segment of the DRC society to tackle the problem.

Communities do not need to wait on the government to address the issue of child witchcraft accusations. Local community leaders must spearhead grassroots support activities to supplement the ongoing actions of local NGOs by seeking for example small

business loans from the government and international donors to help poor families sustain themselves. Upon receiving the funds, families can invest their small business loans into activities such as subsistence farming and in other crop growing activities which they can sell to earn monies to take care of their respective families. Furthermore, both local NGOs and community grassroots activists must team up together to conduct routine training sessions and educational awareness programs to inform the populations and families on the negative impacts of accusing children of witchcraft purely based on non-evidentiary sources.

Although child witchcraft accusations is a comparatively new phenomenon that has afflicted the DRC since the early 1990s, this study found that, like in many Central African countries, the phenomenon is ever present in all social spectrums of the DRC, including areas such as schools, churches, hospitals, funeral places, market places, family homes, etc…(Cimpric, 2010). Arguably, the findings of the study can be generalized and replicated across sub-Sahara Africa where the phenomenon is omnipresent in the daily social and cultural lives of the populations. The repeat of the present study in other sub-Saharan African countries is useful and indicative of the vast similarities that exist among the perspectives from key participants from the DRC and the same views shared by professionals from Sub-Saharan countries over the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations despite the difference in sociocultural and environmental settings. Besides, the similarities that emerged in describing the phenomenon in the DRC and other sub-Saharan African countries also revealed the need to address the inadequacies or weaknesses in policies and implementations strategies faced by most sub-Saharan African countries within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories.

Nevertheless, if the findings of this study in the DRC cannot be replicated to other sub-Saharan African countries based on the same conditions as in the DRC, namely economic, cultural, sociopolitical, religious, and environmental factors, then one can argue that these dynamics or factors hold different degrees of significance to substantially influence the results of similar study across sub-Sahara Africa. To this end, Cimpric (2010) argued that the characteristics of "belief in witchcraft is widespread across sub-Saharan African countries" (p. 1) and seemed to be the same. Put differently, if the results of the study of the same phenomenon in the DRC and sub-Sahara Africa are generally not the same, such disparities in the findings only reinforce differences in the notion of social policy implementation strategies between the DRC and remaining sub-Saharan African countries in addressing child witchcraft accusations. Certainly there can be differences in policy enactment and implementation strategies based on the different social and cultural contexts, yet the end goal of mitigating and bring an end to child witchcraft accusations should be the same, whether in the DRC or sub-Saharan African countries, especially considering multiple child protection and children's rights initiatives and policies undertaken by various governments, local NGOs, and the support of international organizations.

Social Change Implications

The findings of this study serve as an evidentiary platform for pragmatic or realistic policies implementations approaches targeting the economic welfare of families and the expansion of young children's rights and protection against accusations witchcraft in Kinshasa, DRC. To date, existing government's social and public policies and strategies have largely proven ineffective and generally weak in addressing the

phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations. Despite the government's strong policy positions on numerous child rights issues (World Vision, 2012), thousands of children continue to be scapegoated for the misfortune of their families, often attributing it to witchcraft accusations. Despite the prescriptive features of government policies, there still exist a void in the execution of operational plan to address the issue of child witchcraft accusations, to which end, international organizations and mainly local NGOs have stepped in to provide needed social services for young children accused of witchcraft by their own families.

The results of this study also indicated the absence of significant collaboration among state actors responsible for children's welfare and local NGOs in policies implementations within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories. Because of the lack of collaboration between the government and local NGOs which largely represented the face of the fight against child witchcraft accusations, this study further suggests a great deal of political willingness for policymakers to formulate new policies and strategies to address child witchcraft accusations through the creation of employment opportunities aimed at reducing poverty among the people. It is imperative for the government to improve the economic conditions of families if there is any hope of significantly reducing the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations so as to bring about positive social change within the DRC society.

In Kinshasa and all across the DRC, several international organizations in the likes of Save the Children, World Vision, MONUSCO, the UN, Catholic faith-based organizations, local NGOs, and other research entities continue to explore different avenues and strategies to help decrease poverty through the creation of remunerable

employment and effective cross-organizational collaboration. All these organizations must capitalize on the outcomes of this study as a useful tool to encourage the government to create better paying jobs that will help families take care of themselves and avoid making unnecessary accusations of witchcraft against innocent young children within the age category of 5-10 in the DRC.

During the interview process, all key participants expressed disappointments in the government's lack of responsibilities, compassion, and commitment in viewing and addressing the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations as a major problem that has troubled the DRC society for some time now. As demonstrated in the various narratives, most key participants from local NGOs and other individual main participants described the government's inaction vis-à-vis the problem as irresponsible and utter renunciation of its natural obligation. For the participants, the government did not show genuine interest in the phenomenon as a crucial problem that required its unconditional attention even though as it affected hundreds of thousands of young children. Based on my extensive interactions with the key participants, they indicated that not only the government lacked political commitment to operationally enforce child welfare policy initiatives but they also noted that the government's inabilities to assess child witchcraft accusations through the prism of critical and attachment theories. These steps are fundamental for the government to address the problem in a profound way.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 highlighted the ongoing challenges and struggles of witchcraft accusations that young children within the age group of 5-10 faced on a daily basis in Kinshasa, DRC. To put it candidly, while child witchcraft accusations is still a prevalent

cultural phenomenon in Kinshasa, all data collected during the interviews indicated that the accusations were based purely on anecdotal evidence short of any scientific verification. Based on the extensive literature review and the multiple interviews conducted in support of this study, I realized that the outcome of this study represented a small yet but an important contribution to the body of researches on child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC and elsewhere in sub-Sahara Africa and around the world. Specifically, this study focused on the most vulnerable populations within the DRC society who were often described as defenseless, innocent, and naïve due to their ages. Although more literature existed on witchcraft accusations, none focused specifically on the vulnerable age category of 5-10. As a result, this study helped filled this gap in literature using the benefits of both critical and attachment theories as frameworks that guided this study.

Despite efforts by mainly local NGOs and international organizations that operated within the margins of existing codified laws, social, and public policies, the lack of economic opportunities for most families served primarily to perpetuate witchcraft accusations against these young children. However, if the government of the DRC is to have any successes at mitigating child witchcraft accusations, it must genuinely demonstrate political willingness, create economic opportunities for families, institute social programs targeting these children, and enforce strong social and public policies implementations strategies that will protect the rights and safety of the children and hold accountable perpetrators who abuse the rights of the children. Using firsthand interviews from key participants and corroborating document and literature reviews, there were strong correlations between the lack of employment opportunities, abject poverty, and

witchcraft accusations levied against young children often by their own families. Priest, Ngolo, and Stabell (2020) substantiated this claim when they argued that thousands of children were labeled witches in Kinshasa because they caused misfortune such as unemployment, poverty, illness, infertility, and death in their families (p. 5).

Certainly, local NGOs and international organizations made considerable efforts in advocating for the rights and protection for young children accused of witchcraft, their progress is far from reaching the desired results. According to Priest et al., (2020), seen as the prime suspects for misfortune, witchcraft accusations against young children are still flourishing and proliferating not only in Kinshasa but also in other urban regions in the DRC. The purpose of this phenomenological exploratory case study was to explore the government public policies and strategies within the frameworks of critical and attachment theories that targeted the wellbeing of children aged of 5 and 10 accused of witchcraft. The study further explored the sustainability of other child welfare policy programs to determine if young children were responding positively to the administration of existing public policies or whether new policies were needed.

As a result, while World Vision (2012) report stated that the DRC government "has been successful in enacting best practice legislation and taken strong policy positions on numerous child rights issue" (p.1), however, findings of this study suggested that the implementations of the current public policies were deeply inefficient and lacked any political commitments of the government in ensuring that the policies were enforced effectively. Thus, absent the government's true political willingness to collaborate with other local governments, local NGOs, international organizations, the judiciary, the clergy, the civil society, and other stakeholders in the enactment and implementations of

strong policies, deep challenges will still persist in a way that will prevent significant progresses in the fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa. Certainly, all these factors constitute complex and intricate policy initiatives, especially given the existing cultural context and economic hardships often marred by deep corruptions and lack of transparency that the country faces.

In order to ensure positive social change within Kinshasa and the entire country, the reduction of poverty through the creation of decent employment opportunities for the people is paramount and the most pragmatically effective and efficient way to address the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations. The government must demonstrate a true spirit of collaboration with actives entities or actors and work together to ensure the rights and protections of the children while holding culprits accountable, including in most cases some families and evangelical church leaders. As the guardian of the DRC constitution and the prescriptions therein, the government has the obligation to demonstrate political genuineness that translates into concrete actions and robust implementation initiatives of public policies that realistically address the social issues facing vulnerable populations, including young children accused of witchcraft.

Still, from the positive social change perspective, there must be joint efforts involving local NGOs, the government, international organizations, faith-based organizations, and other children advocacy groups to unite their forces to fight the phenomenon. Though the church must be active participant in the fight against child witchcraft accusations, it must also include in its theological doctrine teachings about child witchcraft accusations. According to SCWA (2017), to effect further positive social change, child advocate groups must raise awareness of the proportion of the problem,

propose training programs for families customized to local contexts and translated into local languages, and recommend training that target specific segments of the DRC society, including police, teachers, parents and community leaders (pp. 5-6). Certainly, these initiatives can result in significant positive social change, yet the continuous promotion and implementations of strong legal and judicial systems whereby offenders and abusers of the rights and protection of these children are punished, are equally important measures that can contribute to positive social change. While this study underscores challenges that confront the government, the results of this study also suggest that there is still a need for further studies on the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations not only in the DRC but also in sub-Sahara Africa.

Although critical and attachment theories were used as the overarching analytical frameworks that undergirded this research, to date, available researches on child witchcraft accusations have generally focused on all children alike rather than providing descriptive approach that considers young children between 5-10 supported by rational evidence of their plight within their communities and environmental contexts. The findings of this study should also inform any future policy enactment initiatives that address the reduction of poverty through responsible fiscal policies that emphasize the creation of adequate employments and ultimate eradication of the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and the DRC in general.

To this end, Hanson and Ruggiero (2013) argued that to fight against witchcraft accusations, the organization of *Africans Unite against Child Abuse (AFRUCA)* established a four-pronged policy approaches and strategies that included “working with parents; working with faith organizations; influencing policy and practice on

safeguarding African children; and engaging policy makers and influencing practice" (p. 12). While failure is not an option in the fight against the phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations, it is however a fight to redeem future generations of DRC leaders at every societal echelon. The phenomenon of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC is more than a single country issue however, despite the enormity of the phenomenon, change is still possible. It is a moral imperative that requires concerted and coordinated efforts coupled with responsible actions at all levels to ensure successful policy implementations and positive results that could affect the lives of families and thousands of young children accused of witchcraft.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewee Name:
Gender:
Age:
Years of Experience:
Ethnicity:
Occupation:
Educational Level:

Leading and Follow up Interview Questions

(1) What is the policy significance of critical theory in evaluating the DRC government's programs, actions, and public policies targeting young children aged 5 to 10 accused of witchcraft?
(2) How useful is attachment theory in predicting patterns of social behavior of young children ages, 5 - 10 accused of witchcraft by their parents or caretakers in Kinshasa, DRC?

(a) What does witchcraft represent to you and what comes to mind when we talk about witchcraft?
(b) Why do families accuse children as young as 10 and below of witchcraft in DRC?
(c) Why do children accused of witchcraft prefer to live in the dangerous streets of Kinshasa instead of their family homes?
(d) In your opinion, what roles do the DRC government, NGOs, the clergy, and other international actors play and how significant are these roles and responsibilities in the ongoing fight against child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa, DRC?
(e) In what ways do existing policies fail to effectively address the issue of young children accused of witchcraft in Kinshasa, DRC?
(f) What opinions exist regarding the likelihood that any policy-mandated intervention programs for witchcraft-accused children aged 10 and younger can succeed, given the important role that witchcraft plays in sub-Saharan African cultures?
(g) What is the potential significance of critical and attachment theories in the design and implementations of more robust public policies to the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of child witchcraft accusations and caregiving to street children accused of witchcraft?
(h) In any given family, who accuses young children aged 10 and below of witchcraft in DRC? Are there particular reasons why do you believe this is happens?

(i) Following witchcraft accusations how do the forced separations between the children and parents affect the psychological and mental states of the accused children?
(j) In your experience as children's advocate, how would you generally characterize the lack of parental attachment or affection on the psychological and physical developments of the accused children?
(k) Why is poverty often seen as a major contributor to child witchcraft accusations?
(l) What is the government of the DRC doing to pragmatically address this alarming issue?
(m) What distinctive roles do the DRC government, NGOs, and international actors play and how significant are these roles and responsibilities in the face of the ongoing problem of child witchcraft accusations in Kinshasa and other parts of the DRC?
(n) How do economic and cultural environments affect or shape child welfare policies of the DRC government?
(o) How effective are the measures taken by the government in the fight against child witchcraft accusations?

Protocole d'Entrevue

L'Heure de l'Entrevue:
Date:
Lieu:
Nom de l'interviewé(e):
Homme ou Femme:
Âge:
Années d'Expérience:
Ethnicité :
Occupation:
Niveau d'Éducation:

Questions principales et Questions de suivi

(1) Quelle est l'importance politique de la théorie critique dans l'évaluation des programmes, actions et politiques publiques du gouvernement de la RDC ciblant les jeunes enfants de 5 à 10 ans accusés de sorcellerie?
(2) Quelle est l'utilité de la théorie de l'attachement pour prédire les modèles de comportementS sociaux des jeunes enfants âgés de 5 à 10 ans accusés de sorcellerie par leurs parents ou tuteurs légaux à Kinshasa, RDC?

(a) Que représente pour vous la sorcellerie et qu'est-ce qui vous vient à l'esprit lorsque nous parlons de sorcellerie?
(b) Pourquoi les familles accusent-elles les enfants de 10 ans et moins de sorcellerie en RDC?
(c) Pourquoi les enfants accusés de sorcellerie préfèrent-ils vivre dans les rues dangereuses de Kinshasa plutôt que dans les maisons familiales?
(d) Selon vous, quels rôles jouent le gouvernement de la RDC, les ONG, le clergé et d'autres acteurs internationaux et quelle est l'importance de ces rôles et responsabilités dans la lutte en cours contre les accusations de sorcellerie d'enfants à Kinshasa, en RDC?
(e) De quelles manières les politiques existantes ne parviennent-elles pas à résoudre efficacement le problème des jeunes enfants accusés de sorcellerie à Kinshasa, en RDC?
(f) Quelles opinions existe-t-il quant à la probabilité que tout programme d'intervention obligatoire pour les enfants de 10 ans et moins accusés de sorcellerie puisse réussir, étant donné le rôle important que la sorcellerie joue dans les cultures de l'Afrique subsaharienne?
(g) Quelle est la signification potentielle des théories critiques et de l'attachement dans la conception et la mise en œuvre de politiques publiques plus robustes aux dimensions économiques, sociales, politiques et culturelles des accusations de sorcellerie d'enfants et des soins aux enfants des rues accusés de sorcellerie?
(h) Dans une famille donnée, qui accuse les jeunes enfants de 10 ans et moins de sorcellerie en RDC? Y a-t-il des raisons particulières pour lesquelles vous pensez que cela se produit?

(i) À la suite d'accusations de sorcellerie, comment les séparations forcées entre les enfants et les parents affectent-elles l'état psychologique et mental des enfants accusés?
(j) D'après votre expérience en tant que défenseur des enfants ou travailleurs sociaux, comment caractériseriez-vous généralement le manque d'attachement ou d'affection des parents sur l'évolution psychologique et physique des enfants accusés?
(k) Pourquoi la pauvreté est-elle souvent considérée comme un contributeur majeur aux accusations de sorcellerie d'enfants?
(l) Que fait le gouvernement de la RDC pour résoudre de manière pragmatique ce problème ou phénomène alarmant?
(m) Quels rôles distinctifs le gouvernement de la RDC, les ONG et les acteurs internationaux jouent-ils et quelle est l'importance de ces rôles et responsabilités face au problème actuel des accusations de sorcellerie d'enfants à Kinshasa et dans d'autres parties de la RDC?
(n) Comment les environnements économiques et culturels affectent-ils ou façonnent-ils les politiques de protection de l'enfance du gouvernement de la RDC?
(o) Quelle est l'efficacité des mesures prises par le gouvernement dans la lutte contre les accusations de sorcellerie d'enfants?

Appendix B: Respondent Validation Form

Date: {insert current date and year}

Dear {insert name of applicant}

I want to seize this opportunity to once again express my sincere appreciation for your participation in my interview. Your in-depth knowledge of the topic provided valuable information for my research project. One month after returning to Belgium, I will send you a copy of the transcript for your review. Please carefully review the content of the transcript to ensure that it captures your answers to the questions accurately. I will reach back to you in about a week's time or at a time convenient for you to talk about the transcript. Please feel free to discuss any concern you may have about the transcript at that time. Finally, I will send you a copy of the research findings for your records. Please, I can be reached at [redacted] or telephone: [redacted].
Thank you kindly for your participation and I appreciate your time and efforts dedicated to this study.

Best regards,
Edmond Kesseh

Formulaire de Validation du Répondant

Date: {insérer la date et l'année en cours}

Cher/Chère {insérer le nom du/de la candidat/e}

Je saisis cette occasion pour exprimer encore une fois ma sincère reconnaissance pour votre participation à mon entrevue. Votre connaissance approfondie du sujet a fourni des informations précieuses pour mon projet de recherche. Un mois après mon retour en Belgique, je vous enverrai une copie de la transcription pour votre revue. Veuillez examiner attentivement le contenu de la transcription pour vous assurer que vos réponses aux questions ont étés correctement saisies. Dans une semaine à peu près ou à au moment qui vous convient, je vous contacterai afin qu'on puisse discuter de la transcription. Pendant nos discussions en ce moment-là, n'hésitez pas à me faire savoir si vous avez des préoccupations à propos de la transcription. Enfin, je vous enverrai également une copie des résultats de la recherche pour votre documentation. Pour votre information, je peux être joint à mon adresse mail suivant : [redacted] ou par téléphone: [redacted]. Je vous remercie de votre participation, et j'apprécie votre temps et vos efforts consacrés à cette étude.

Cordialement,
Edmond Kesseh

Appendix C: Preliminary Coding Scheme

Date: {insert current date and year}

The following themes will serve as the preliminary coding structure for discussions during the interview sessions with potential key participants. While these themes are by no mean comprehensive and not in any particular order of preference, they will help generate further relevant questions about the child witchcraft accusations and help broaden the discussions about phenomenon in Kinshasa, DRC:

- Witchcraft
- Culture
- Beliefs
- Poverty
- Resources
- Financial
- Policy
- Environment
- Abuses
- Scapegoats
- Attachment
- Separations
- Challenges
- Demographics
- Welfare
- Rights
- Awareness
- Education
- Emotions
- Communities
- NGOs
- Government
- Religion
- Reintegration
- Conflicts
- Dangers

Structure du Codage Préliminaire

Date: {insérer la date et l'année en cours}

Les thèmes suivants serviront de structure de codage préliminaire pour les discussions au cours des entretiens avec les potentiels participants clés. Bien que ces thèmes ne soient en aucun cas exhaustifs et n'incluent aucun ordre de préférence particulier, ils contribueront à générer d'autres questions pertinentes sur la question des accusations de sorcellerie contre les enfants et aideront à élargir les discussions sur le phénomène à Kinshasa, en RDC:

- Sorcellerie
- Culture
- Croyances
- Pauvreté
- Ressources
- Finances
- Politique
- Environnement
- Abus
- Boucs Émissaires
- Affection
- Séparations
- Défis
- Données Démographiques
- Bien-être
- Droits
- Reconnaissance du Problème
- Éducation
- Émotions
- Communautés
- ONG (Organisation Non-Gouvernementale)
- Gouvernement
- Religion
- Réintégration
- Conflits
- Déplacement interne
- Dangers

Appendix D: Map of the Democratic Republic of Congo

Retrieved from https://geology.com/world/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-satellite-image.shtml

Appendix E: Map of Belgium

Free Vector map – Kingdom of Belgium. Retrieved from https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/map-kingdom-of-belgium-vector-1105513