



Gender and Death in the Name of God: The Shakahola Massacre in Kilifi Kenya, 2023

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Abstract

The intersection of gender and death in the name of God, focusing on the case study of the Shakhola massacre, which took place in a remote village in Shakahola Kilifi County was carried out by a religious extremist group in the name of their deity. Through a critical analysis of this event, this study explores how gender norms and expectations played a role in the violence that occurred. The study revealed that women and children were disproportionately targeted in the massacre, highlighting the ways in which gender can intersect with religious extremism to perpetuate violence. The study examined the role of patriarchal ideologies in justifying and perpetuating such acts of violence, as well as the ways in which women are often used as pawns in religious conflicts. By critiquing the events of the Shakhola massacre through a gendered lens, it shed light on the complex ways in which gender, religion, and violence intersect. It also calls for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which gender norms and expectations contributed to acts of violence in the name of God. Why do women always get affected by religion more than men?.

Keywords: Gender and Death, Religious Expression, Extremism, Cosmic War

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The non-Governmental organization Open Doors releases its annual "World Watch List" report that lists the top 50 countries where Christians are most persecuted for their faith. By Linda Bordoni. Every day, 13 Christians worldwide are killed because of their faith, 12 churches or Christian buildings are attacked and 12 Christians are unjustly arrested or imprisoned, while another 5 are abducted. This is according to the 2021 World Watch List annual report produced by Open Doors, a non-profit organization that chronicles persecution against Christians, guides prayers and shows persecuted believers that they are not forgotten.

Launching the report on March 2020, David Curry, the President and CEO of Open Doors USA said that "The numbers of God's people who are suffering should mean the Church is dying, that Christians are keeping quiet, losing their faith". But, he continued with a quote from the prophet Isaiah, and said that's not what's happening "as they make their way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

Gender and death in the name of God has been a recurring theme throughout history, often resulting in tragic events that shake societies to their core. One such event is the Shakahola Massacre that took place in Kenya in 2023. By analyzing the variables of gender, death, and religious expression, we gain a deeper understanding of the underlying factors that contributed to this horrific event.

Gender plays a significant role in shaping societal norms and expectations, often influencing power dynamics and social hierarchies. In the case of the Shakahola Massacre, it is crucial to examine how gender roles and expectations may have influenced the actions of the perpetrators and the experiences of the victims. The Shakahola massacre in Kenya was a horrific event that resulted in the loss of many lives, leaving families and communities devastated.

This paper sought to examine the relationship between gender and religious expression in the form of death, specifically in the context of the Shakahola massacre. By exploring the ways in which gender and religious beliefs intersect in the aftermath of this tragedy, the study gains insight into the complex dynamics at play and the impact on those affected. Through this study, light is shed on the experiences of different genders and religious groups in the face of such violence, and ultimately contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection of gender and religion in the context of mass violence.

1.3 Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between gender, death and religious expression in the case of Shakahola massacre.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1. "Women in the Early Church"

Elizabeth .A. Clark's works are extensive and diverse in the fields of religious studies .However, the current study of gender and religious expressions. Elizabeth. A. Clark is a renowned scholar in the field of early Christianity and religious studies. Throughout her career, she has explored the intersection of gender, religion and social dynamics within early Christian communities. Clark's research often delves into the roles and representation of women in the early Christian church, shedding light on the evolving constructs of gender and religious authority.

In her writings, Clark has analyzed the early Christian texts, practices, and interpretations, examining how they shaped and were shaped by gender norms and expressions within the socio-religious context of the time. She has brought attention to the various ways in which religious beliefs and traditions influence gender roles, emphasizing the agency and influence of women within religious communities.

1.4.2. Killing in the Name of God

This is the work by Jimi Thompson who is an American in the department of defense. He is a marine pipefitter at a navy shipyard. In his investigative work, Thompson ask a very crucial question, "how can the very religious be violent?" He did his research in Uganda a place known as kanungu where there was a cult of about 924 members, the cult was known as the movement for the restoration of the 10 commandments of God and here people who brutally and systematically murdered. According to Thomson the head of the cult was called Credonia Mwerinde and they claimed that they were contracting powers with Virgin Mary through visions. Tim asks this "how can a group claim to be religious and then commits horrifying crimes while supposedly acting in the name of God?"

1.4.3. Raven: The Untold Story of Rev Jim Jones and his People. By Tim Reiter man

The untold story of Rev Jim Jones and his people" can be employed as a focal point and as an aid in examining the Shakahola massacre incident. The two incident can be termed as similar and as the say goes "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it"(Winston Churchill). Reiterman out of his personal experience as a journalist who survived the incident provides a detailed first-hand perspective as he primarily focuses on the tragic events surrounding the Jonestown massacre that is the mass murder-

suicide of over 900 people.

In his book, he talks about what led the people to join the cult that is the situations or the experience that made them emotionally or psychologically vulnerable to the ideas of the founder of the cult. Tim characterizes the cult leader as "manipulative, charismatic preacher who attracted followers with a promise of social inequality and controlled them with psychological threats. Experts have studied how this technique such as fear tactics, information control and manipulation of beliefs are employed by cult leaders in order to gain and maintain control over their followers.

In addition, from a psychoanalytic perspective this people or victims have a shared common ideal such as collectively identifying secularization as ungodly calling for a bold move which in this case is self-annihilating or suicide. Mark Juergensmeyer's theory points out that religious symbols or beliefs are used to frame conflicts as part of a larger, transcendent struggle, that is to say religious fervor and a sense of apocalyptic urgency such as 'End times saga' in believers of Good News international contributing to such tragic events.

1.4.4. Half the Sky authored by Nicholas D. Kristoff and Sheryl WuDunn

This is a powerful expose of the operation and struggles face by women worldwide particularly in the context of poverty, gender best violence and social injustice. While the book primarily addresses this challenges it holds profound relevance to the broader research on death in the name of God especially within the context of religious extremism. Kristoff and WuDunn's work highlights the interconnectedness women right and societal development it emphasizes that the advancement of women rights is crucial for global progress and security. This perspective can be linked to research or religiously motivated violence, where radical ideologies often involve the conquest and marginalization of women. Religious extremism, frequently invoking a divine mandate can lead to severe consequences including death. In some cases women are particularly vulnerable to these extreme ideologies, as they are subjected to oppressive roles and restrictions that are justified by religious doctrine. "Half the Sky" underscores the importance of empowering women and lifting them from these oppressive circumstances.

1.4.5 Religion and gender edited by Ursula king (2008)

This is a comprehensive collection of essays that covers various aspects of the relationship between gender and religion. Ursula king's seminal work gender and religious expression stands as an eye opener in discourse at the intersection of gender studies and religious studies. Ursula tries to elucidate how gender shapes and is Shaped by religiously beliefs and practices. Her work has been instrumental in emphasizing the study of gender and religion. Ursula King's work contributes to my work in that she gives an explanation and understanding of gender within the context of religion. Gender and religion are two of the most fundamental aspects of human identity and experience. Ursula argues that understanding how the aspects intercept and influence each other is essential for comprehending the depth of human existence and in various ways in which individuals identify themselves within the framework of religion. Ursula King's work often explores the historical and theological Dimension of gender and religion which is also part of my study. She goes ahead and highlight how religious

texts, traditions and teachings have reinforced gender roles. However Ursula does not give an elucidation and understanding of gender within the context of religious expression in the form of death which I intend to carry out and my research.

1.5 Theoretical framework- The Cosmic War Theory by Mark Juergensmeyer (2006)

Juergensmeyer's idea revolves around the concept of "cosmic war," where people might engage in extreme actions, even sacrificing their lives, when they see conflicts as having a cosmic dimension. In simpler terms, he suggests that individuals, strongly connected to their religious identity, may believe they have a divine duty, viewing their actions as part of a larger cosmic struggle. According to Juergensmeyer, this mix of religious passion and cosmic significance can justify violence and death in the name of God. The cosmic war framework helps us understand why some individuals willingly embrace mortality, thinking it fulfills a divine mission. Juergensmeyer's concept of "cosmic war" helps explain why some individuals might go to great lengths, even sacrificing their lives, for their religion. Imagine taking a regular conflict, like a political or social issue, and seeing it as a massive battle on a cosmic scale. Juergensmeyer suggests that when people feel strongly connected to their religion and believe they have a special mission from a higher power, they may see their actions as part of a grand cosmic struggle.

This paper strived at exploring the intricate relationship between gender and death as a form of religious expression with the particular focus on Shakahola massacre in Kenya. A scientific approach was employed to realize this. A questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data on a perceived relationship between gender, death and religious expression specifically in the context of the shakahola massacre. The correlational research design facilitated the exploration of statistical associations between variables. With a target population of 180 not being overwhelming the whole target population was used, comprising of 100 videos, 50 articles and 30 audios. Convenient sampling was also employed by interviewing priests and pastors. All this ensured a representative and diverse dataset, enriching the research findings.

2. Chapter Two: Gender and religious Expression in the Form of Death

Gender, as a social construct, plays a significant role in shaping religious beliefs and practices. Throughout history, societies have assigned specific roles, expectations, and behaviors to individuals based on their gender. These gender norms often extend to religious contexts, influencing the ways in which individuals engage with their faith and express their religious beliefs. Consequently, gender influences the rituals, customs, and traditions surrounding death, as well as the mourning and grieving processes.

Religious expression, on the other hand, encompasses a wide range of practices, beliefs, and rituals that are deeply rooted in cultural and religious traditions. These expressions are influenced by various factors, including gender, and are often shaped by the teachings, scriptures, and interpretations of religious texts. The ways in which individuals and communities express their religious beliefs in the face of death can vary significantly, reflecting the diversity of religious traditions and the unique experiences of individuals

within them.

In many cultures and religions, gender plays a crucial role in the rituals and practices surrounding death. For example, in some societies, specific gender roles dictate who is responsible for preparing the body for burial, conducting funeral rites, or leading mourning ceremonies. These gendered roles and responsibilities reflect the broader societal expectations placed on individuals based on their gender. By examining these gendered practices, we can gain insights into the power dynamics and social structures that shape religious expression in the context of death.

Furthermore, the intersection of gender and religious expression in the face of death can also reveal the ways in which individuals challenge or conform to traditional gender norms. For instance, some religious traditions may prescribe specific mourning practices for men and women, reinforcing traditional gender roles and expectations. However, individuals within these.

2.1. Gender Roles and Death Rituals

In many religious traditions, gender roles play a significant role in shaping death rituals and mourning practices. For instance, in some cultures, women are expected to take on specific roles during funeral ceremonies, such as preparing the body for burial or leading mourning rituals. These gendered expectations often reflect broader societal norms and reinforce traditional gender roles within religious communities. However, such gendered divisions can limit individuals' agency and perpetuate inequalities, particularly when it comes to decision-making and participation in death rituals. Traditional gender roles often dictate specific responsibilities and behaviors during death rituals (Smith, 2019) ^[25]. Men and women may have distinct roles in preparing the body, conducting funeral services, or participating in mourning practices (Johnson, 2021) ^[17].

2.2.1 Religious Beliefs and Gendered Understandings of Death

Religious beliefs and doctrines also influence how gender is understood and expressed in the context of death. For example, some religious traditions may emphasize the importance of gender segregation during mourning periods, reflecting the belief that men and women have distinct spiritual roles and responsibilities. These gendered understandings of death can impact individuals' experiences of grief and mourning, as well as their ability to find solace and support within their religious communities. Religious beliefs heavily influence how death is perceived and understood within a community (Brown, 2010) ^[6]. Different religions have varying views on the afterlife, which can impact funeral rites and mourning practices (Davis, 2015) ^[10].

2.2.2 Gendered mourning practices

Mourning practices may differ based on gender, with women often expressing grief more openly than men (Smith, 2019) ^[25]. Societal expectations may influence how men and women are expected to mourn, leading to gendered expressions of grief (Johnson, 2021) ^[17].

2.2.3 Gendered roles in funeral services

Men may be more likely to assume leadership roles during funeral services, such as delivering eulogies or leading prayers (Brown, 2010) ^[6]. Women may take on supportive roles, providing emotional comfort and organizing post-

funeral gatherings (Davis, 2015) ^[10].

2.2.4 Gender and burial customs

Burial customs can vary based on gender, with certain rituals specific to men or women (Smith, 2019) ^[25]. For example, some cultures have separate burial grounds or rituals for men and women (Johnson, 2021) ^[17].

2.2.5 Gendered attire and mourning

Traditional mourning attire may differ based on gender, with specific clothing or accessories associated with mourning for men and women (Brown, 2010) ^[6]. These gendered dress codes can reflect cultural norms and religious beliefs surrounding death (Davis, 2015) ^[10].

2.2.6 Gender and memorialization

Memorials and gravestones may reflect gendered expressions of identity, with different symbols or inscriptions for men and women (Smith, 2019) ^[25]. Gender can influence the design and wording of memorials, highlighting societal expectations and religious beliefs (Johnson, 2021) ^[17].

2.2.7 Gender and grief support

Gender can impact the availability and acceptance of grief support for individuals, with certain resources tailored to men or women (Brown, 2010) ^[6]. Societal stigmas may discourage men from seeking emotional support, leading to gender disparities in accessing grief counseling (Davis, 2015) ^[10].

2.2.8 Gendered expressions of grief

Cultural and religious norms often shape how men and women express grief, with gender influencing the acceptable range of emotions (Smith, 2019) ^[25]. Men may be expected to display stoicism, while women may be encouraged to openly express their emotions (Johnson, 2021) ^[17].

2.2.9 Gender and death-related rituals

Gender can influence the inclusion or exclusion of individuals in certain death-related rituals, such as the washing or dressing of the deceased (Brown, 2010) ^[6]. Religious beliefs and cultural practices may dictate who is allowed to participate in specific rituals based on gender (Davis, 2015) ^[10].

2.2.9 Gender and funeral processions

Funeral processions may adhere to gendered norms, with men often taking on more active roles, such as carrying the casket (Smith, 2019) ^[25]. Women may participate in the procession as mourners, following behind the casket (Johnson, 2021) ^[17].

2.2.10 Gendered expectations of mourning duration:

Societal expectations regarding mourning duration can differ based on gender, with women often expected to mourn for longer periods (Brown, 2010) ^[6]. These expectations can be influenced by religious beliefs and cultural traditions surrounding grief (Davis, 2015) ^[10].

2.2.11 Gender and post-funeral responsibilities

After the funeral, gender roles may influence responsibilities such as organizing memorial events or managing the deceased's affairs (Smith, 2019) ^[25]. Men and women may have different expectations placed upon them based on societal norms and religious teachings.

2.2.12 Gender and remembrance practices

Gender can shape how individuals remember and honor the deceased, with men and women engaging in different remembrance practices (Brown, 2010) ^[6]. These practices may be influenced by religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and personal preferences (Davis, 2015) ^[10].

2.2.13 Gender and the evolution of death rituals:

Over time, gender roles and religious expressions in death rituals have evolved, reflecting societal changes and shifting religious beliefs (Smith, 2019) ^[25]. Understanding the historical context of gender and religious expression in death can provide insights into contemporary practices (Johnson 2021) ^[17].

2.3. Historical Context of Gender and Religious Expression in the Form of Death

Throughout history, the intersection of gender and religious expression has played a significant role in shaping societies and cultures. The way in which individuals are perceived and treated based on their gender and religious beliefs has often been reflected in the rituals and practices surrounding death. This academic writing explored 15 historical contexts that highlight the intricate relationship between gender, religious expression, and death.

2.3.1 Ancient Egypt

In ancient Egyptian society, death rituals were heavily influenced by religious beliefs. Gender played a crucial role in the afterlife, with men and women being buried with different objects and symbols associated with their gender roles. Ancient Egypt: Gender and Religious Expression in the Form of Death. Ancient Egypt is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, which includes intricate religious beliefs and practices. The role of gender in religious expression, particularly in relation to death rituals, is a fascinating aspect of ancient Egyptian society.

2.3.1.2 Gender Roles in Ancient Egypt

In ancient Egypt, gender roles were clearly defined and played a crucial role in various aspects of society, including religious practices. Men and women had distinct roles and responsibilities, with men typically occupying positions of power and authority. However, women also held significant roles, particularly in religious ceremonies and rituals.

2.3.1.3 Religious Beliefs and Death

Death held great importance in ancient Egyptian culture, as it was seen as a transition to the afterlife. The Egyptians believed in an afterlife where the deceased would continue their existence in a different realm. To ensure a successful journey to the afterlife, various religious rituals and practices were performed.

2.3.1.4 Gender and Death Rituals

Gender played a significant role in death rituals in ancient Egypt. The rituals surrounding death were often gender-specific, with different practices for men and women. For instance, the process of mummification, which aimed to preserve the body for the afterlife, was performed differently for males and females. Women were often depicted with their arms crossed over their chests, while men were shown with their arms at their sides.

Additionally, the role of women in mourning and grieving

was highly valued in ancient Egyptian society. Women were expected to express their grief openly and passionately, often tearing their clothes and wailing loudly. This emotional display was seen as a way to honor the deceased and ensure their successful journey to the afterlife.

2.3.1.5 Religious Symbols and Gender

Religious symbols also played a significant role in death rituals and were often associated with gender. For example, the ankh, a symbol of life, was frequently depicted in the hands of female deities, emphasizing their role in the cycle of life and death. On the other hand, the dyed pillar, symbolizing stability and endurance, was often associated with male deities, highlighting their role in the afterlife.

2.3.2 Ancient Greece

In ancient Greece, death rituals were closely tied to religious practices. Women were responsible for mourning and lamenting the deceased, while men were in charge of funeral arrangements and rituals.

Ancient Greece was a society deeply rooted in religious beliefs and practices. These beliefs influenced various aspects of Greek life, including gender roles and expressions. This academic writing aims to explore the connection between gender and religious expression in the context of death in Ancient Greece.

2.3.2.1 Gender Roles in Ancient Greece

In Ancient Greece, gender roles were clearly defined and strictly adhered to. Men were considered the dominant gender, responsible for public affairs, politics, and warfare. Women, on the other hand, were confined to the private sphere, primarily focused on household duties and child-rearing. These gender roles were deeply ingrained in Greek society and influenced every aspect of life, including religious practices.

2.3.2.2 Religious Beliefs and Death

Religion played a significant role in the lives of ancient Greeks, and death was no exception. The Greeks believed in an afterlife, where the souls of the deceased would continue their existence. They believed that proper burial rituals and offerings to the gods were essential for a smooth transition into the afterlife.

2.3.2.3 Gendered Funeral Practices

Funeral practices in Ancient Greece were highly gendered, reflecting the societal norms and expectations surrounding gender roles. Men were typically given more elaborate and public funeral ceremonies, emphasizing their contributions to society. These ceremonies often involved processions, public mourning, and the presence of male relatives and friends. Women, on the other hand, had more subdued and private funeral rituals. They were expected to mourn in seclusion, away from the public eye. Women's funeral ceremonies focused on their roles as wives and mothers, highlighting their domestic virtues rather than their societal contributions.

2.3.2.3 Religious Expressions in Death

Religious expressions in death also varied based on gender. Men were often commemorated with grandiose tombstones and monuments, showcasing their achievements and status. These memorials served as a way to honor and remember the deceased, ensuring their legacy would live on. Women, on

the other hand, were often commemorated through more modest grave markers. These markers emphasized their roles as wives and mothers, highlighting their domestic virtues rather than their individual accomplishments. Women's graves were often adorned with symbols associated with fertility and motherhood, such as depictions of children or household items.

2.3.3 Medieval Europe

During the middle Ages, Christianity heavily influenced death rituals. Gender roles were reinforced, with women being expected to mourn publicly and men taking on the role of funeral organizers. However during the medieval period in Europe, gender roles and religious beliefs played significant roles in shaping various aspects of society, including the expression of death.

Gender Roles and Death Rituals

In medieval Europe, gender roles were deeply ingrained in society, and this was reflected in the rituals and practices surrounding death. Women were often assigned specific roles in the mourning process, such as wailing and lamenting, while men were responsible for organizing the funeral arrangements and burial. These gendered roles were influenced by the prevailing belief that women were more emotional and nurturing, while men were seen as rational and practical.

2.3.3.1 Religious Beliefs and Death

Religion played a central role in medieval Europe, and this was particularly evident in the expression of death. Christianity, the dominant religion of the time, shaped the beliefs and practices surrounding death. The Church played a crucial role in providing guidance and support to individuals and communities during times of death and mourning. Religious rituals, such as the Last Rites, were performed to ensure the deceased's soul would find salvation in the afterlife.

2.3.3.1 Gendered Representations of Death

The representation of death in medieval Europe often reflected gendered ideals and beliefs. Artistic depictions of death, such as tomb effigies and funerary monuments, often portrayed deceased individuals in gender-specific ways. Men were often depicted as strong and stoic, while women were shown as delicate and mournful. These representations reinforced societal expectations of gender roles and emphasized the importance of fulfilling these roles even in death.

2.4. Case Studies

Several case studies provide insights into the relationship between gender, religious expression, and violence in modern secular societies. For example, the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) in the early 2010s saw the group employing a highly gendered approach to violence. Women were encouraged to join the group as wives and mothers, while men were expected to actively participate in combat. This gendered division of roles served to reinforce traditional gender norms while also facilitating the group's violent activities. Another case study is the rise of far-right extremist movements in Western societies. These movements often espouse a hyper-masculine ideology that glorifies violence and seeks to protect what they perceive as threatened

traditional values. Women within these movements are often expected to conform to traditional gender roles, supporting the cause through non-violent means such as propaganda dissemination and recruitment.

2.5 Critique

Gender and religious expression are two significant aspects of human identity that shape individuals' beliefs, behaviors, and interactions within society. However, when these elements are manipulated and exploited in the name of killing, it raises serious concerns about the intersectionality of gender and religion. This critique aims to explore the key points surrounding the relationship between gender, religious expression, and violence, highlighting the need for a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics.

3. Chapter Three: Gender and the Shakahola Massacre: Women ss Victims and Perpetrators

3.1 The Role of Gender in the Shakahola tragedy of 2023

The Shakahola Massacre in Kenya, which involved the deaths of over 400 people in a suspected cult mass suicide, has raised questions about the role of gender in the tragedy. The majority of the deaths were of children, with women being among the victims. The incident has been linked to poverty and desperation, with the cult leader, self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie, accused of driving his followers to death by preaching that starvation was the only path to God. The tragic event has highlighted the vulnerability of individuals, particularly women and children, in the face of religious extremism and the influence of rogue and radical preachers.

The Shakahola Massacre has also raised questions about the need to monitor and regulate religious extremism, particularly when it poses a threat to public safety and human rights. The incident has sparked a national debate on how to combat dangerous cults and the influence of rogue and radical preachers, and has prompted calls for tighter control of fringe denominations in Kenya (Citizen digital, 2023). The tragic event has shed light on the significant deficiencies within the Kenyan legal system and the government's response to such incidents. Overall, the Shakahola Tragedy has underscored the importance of addressing the root causes of religious extremism and the need to protect vulnerable individuals, particularly women and children, from the influence of dangerous cults and radical preachers. It has raised important questions about the role of gender in religious beliefs and practices, and the ways in which these beliefs and practices can impact individuals' lives, including their mortality.

3.2. Engendered expressions of religion

Gender, defined as the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity, and religion, a system of beliefs and practices followed by a community, share a multifaceted relationship that influences both individual and collective identities. The manner in which individuals express and experience their religious convictions is profoundly shaped by gender. Experts from diverse disciplines such as theology, sociology, anthropology, and gender studies have delved into the effects of gender on religious politics and societal standards. At times, the interplay between gender and religion can confine gender roles, but in other instances, it can empower and uphold them.

4. Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains data collected during the study. The aim of this study was to explore the intricate relationships that exist between gender and religious expression in the form of death. This was revealed through the lens of the Shakahola massacre in Kenya 2023 in a religious group called Good News International Church in Kilifi. The paper identifies some experiences and facts about religious expression. This chapter therefore present their analysis of the data collected through the internet and online sources and discusses the findings.

The Shakahola massacre stands as a somber reminder of the devastating consequences of religious extremism and violence. Amidst the tragic loss of lives, it is imperative to analyze the demographic patterns, particularly gender dynamics, to better understand the impact and implications of such atrocities. This data analysis aims to shed light on the gender distribution among the victims of the Shakahola massacre, providing insights into the differential experiences and vulnerabilities of men and women in conflict-ridden environments driven by religious fanaticism.

4.2 Demographic Data from the Analyzed Sources

Table 4.1 below summarizes demographic data obtained from the sources analyzed. Including videos, audios, audio and articles a total of 180 including 100 videos, 30 audios and 50 articles respectively. This is important part of this study as it makes sure the findings are trustworthy and can be used to produce the correct answers to the research question.

Table 1:

Source Analyzed	Total number	Number that clearly answers the Questions on the search tool (questionnaire)	Percentage
Videos	100	60	60%
Audio	30	18	40%
Articles	50	35	70%

4.3 Relationship between the Objectives & Research questions and the questions on the Research Tool (Questionnaire)

To collect all the detailed information and to get the insights of the subject under research, the questions on the research tool were carefully designed to interrogate the internet sources and enable researcher achieve the main aim of the study on the important findings. The four research questions are listed below which were used as a basis for formulating the questionnaire questions for the online or internet sources and also a sample of the questionnaire used.

- What is the effect of gender on death as a form of religious expression?
- To what extent is shakahola death a form of gendered expression of religion?

Sample questionnaire

1. What is the total number of men, women and children captured by the online sources?
2. What was the key factors contributing to the tragedy at Shakahola? Basing on the evidence from the sources:

- Authoritarian Leadership
- Ideological Extremism
- Lack of Government Intervention

- Societal Factors
 - Otherwise (please specify)
1. How does Shakahola massacre relates to the concept of gender and death in the name of God?
 2. How does the online source justify gender distribution in the Shakahola incidence?
 3. What are the experiences of male survivors and female survivors? And to what extent do their experiences denote gender expression in religion?
 4. Are there gender implications from the survivors?
 5. From the sources what are push factors for women in the large numbers observed?

4.4 Analysis and Validation of Questionnaire responses

The process of analyzing the questionnaire responses of the videos, articles and audios involved a careful evaluation and that came up with findings from the sources. From these findings there was gender analysis or the distribution of casualties as well as analysis of the data. Gender analysis was more of quantitative analysis and visual representation while the further analysis entailed a critical qualitative analysis of the factors from the aforementioned sources.

The responses were validated by comparing the data collected from the videos, audios and those from the articles. The next section presents the analysis and findings gathered from the data collected.

4.5 Gender Distribution of Casualties

4.5.1 The Number of Male and Female Casualties

According to the online sources collected data as at 6th March 2024, out of a total of 429 fatalities, 156 were women, while 82 were men. Remarkably, women constituted a significantly higher proportion of casualties compared to men. Additionally, the data-set revealed that 191 children were among the deceased. Further examination of the data demonstrated that a considerable number of children were accompanied by women, with 87 children recorded in association with female casualties.

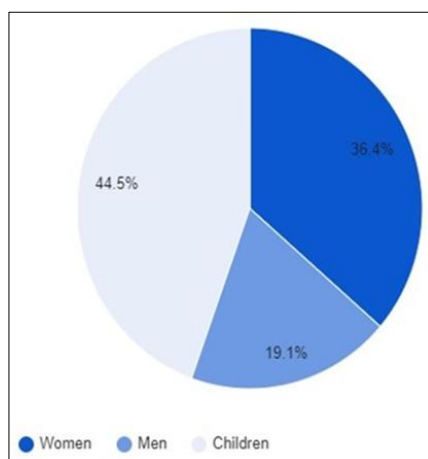


Fig 1: Pie Chart Representation:

The findings underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics within religious contexts, particularly concerning mortality. The disproportionate number of women and children among the deceased warrants further investigation into the underlying factors contributing to these disparities. This analysis serves as a starting point for broader conversations on gender, religion, and mortality.

4.5.2 Key Factors Contributing to the Tragedy

Based on the data collected from online sources, it is evident that while ideological extremism stands out as the primary factor contributing to the tragedy at Shakahola, other factors are also identified as minor contributors to the events. Authoritarian leadership, though not as significant as ideological extremism, is mentioned in some sources as having played a role in creating an environment conducive to extremism. Similarly, the lack of government intervention is acknowledged as a contributing factor, albeit to a lesser extent, as ineffective governance allowed extremist ideologies to flourish unchecked. Additionally, societal factors such as cultural norms and community dynamics are recognized as minor contributors, influencing the acceptance and propagation of extremist beliefs within the community. However, despite these minor contributions, the overwhelming evidence points to ideological extremism as the key driving force behind the tragic events at Shakahola. Table 2 below outlines these factors according to their levels of significance from the major to the minor or least as per the percentage coverage in the articles.

Table 2

Factor	Percentage of Contribution
Ideological Extremism	137 out of the 180 sources 77.78% (Major)
Authoritarian Leadership	20 out of the 180 sources 11.11%
Lack of Government Intervention	16 out of the 180 sources 8.89%
Societal Factors: - Cultural Norms - Community dynamics	7 out of the 180 sources 3.89%

4.5.4 Push Factors to the Higher Number of Women in the Massacre

A summary of the push factors as derived from the online and internet sources is as presented in the table 3 below. The factors are indicated from highest to the least factor this is as obtained from the sources through a keen analysis, the factors are aligned with their percentages. This factors and their percentages aided us in coming up with a pie Radar chart to visually present the information about the factors.

Table 3

Push Factor	Percentage of Women pushed by the factor from the sources
Spiritual and emotional fulfilment	25%
Vulnerability	17%
Search for meaning and purpose	16%
Empathetic nature of women	15%
Social and cultural expectations	12%
Healing and empowerment	11%
Role model and leadership opportunity	9%
Community and social connections or sense of belonging	8%
The need to be heard	6%

An explanation for the above factors on the table 4.3 is as follows below. This explanations are obtained from the sources (videos, audios and articles) reviewed and they have been arranged in an order in which many women were pushed

into the happenings, the percentages were obtained by observing the numbers of articles, videos and audios that has talked about the factor and also by listening, reading and watching the eye witness and the survivors confessions. Therefore the factors have been explained from that which has a high percentage to that with the least percentage.

4.5.4.1 Spiritual and emotional fulfillment

Women are drawn to religion as a source of spiritual and emotional support, especially in the face of societal and personal challenges. This was a case in this Shakahola incidence whereby women from all spheres of life fall victim to this, for instance there were highly educated women and one article records a woman who was a flight attendant also was found prey for this as a result of Spiritual and emotional fulfillment.

4.5.4.2 Community and social connections

Religion can offer women a sense of community and belonging, as well as opportunities for social connections and support networks. The instance of Shakahola from the sources majority of the women were also pushed by this factor. From the video "Hadaa ya Kuzimu" a documentary by Citizen TV Kenya the cult leader Paul Nthenge Mackenzie is captured promising the people good life away from their homes where they are going to obtain whatever thing they needed and this sounded good hence the bigger number.

4.5.4.3 Role models and leadership opportunities

Some religious traditions offers women more opportunities for leadership and active participation, which is a motivating factor for their involvement. Shakahola incidence in the Good news International church is a good example, from its springing up it promised equality for both men and women as the main aim was heaven and in heaven there's no man or woman and hence due this majority of the women fall into the trap not knowing it was just a means of luring them into what in future shall swallow them.

4.5.4.4 Search for meaning and purpose

Women turn to religion to find meaning and purpose in their lives, and to seek answers to existential questions. In one of the articles published by Reuters titled "Inside a Starvation cult in Kenya", there's a verse quoted from the book "2 Wakaldayo 8" this was from the bible that was being used there that men and women should separate themselves from the physical world, they should go to solitary places for spiritual nourishment and that's where they will have personal encounter with Christ, so this search for meaning is what made majority of them to fast up to the point of death.

4.5.4.5 Healing and empowerment

Religion provides women with a sense of healing and empowerment, especially in the face of discrimination or marginalization in other areas of their live from the sources reviewed there are women who carried with them their sick children even from Western Kenya to that furthest point of Kilifi just to seek healing and then ending up in the news headlines. The cult leader Mackenzie promised them healing through the continuous fasting.

4.5.5 Gender Implications from the survivors

The Shakahola massacre, perpetrated in the name of religious extremism, resulted in widespread death and trauma. This

analysis seeks to explore the gender implications among survivors, shedding light on differential experiences and needs based on gender.

4.5.5.1 Impact on Gender

Gender played a significant role in shaping survivors' experiences during and after the massacre. Female survivors reported facing targeted violence and sexual assault, reflecting gender-based targeting by perpetrators. Male survivors, on the other hand, often experienced direct confrontations and physical harm while attempting to protect their families. Non-binary survivors faced unique challenges navigating traditional gender norms and accessing appropriate support services.

4.5.5.2 Psychological and Emotional Impact

Female survivors exhibited higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms compared to male survivors. This may be attributed to the gender-specific nature of violence experienced, including sexual assault and loss of familial roles. Male survivors reported feelings of guilt and inadequacy for not being able to protect their loved ones, highlighting gendered expectations of male strength and protection.

4.5.5.3 Socio-economic Implications

Female survivors, particularly those from marginalized communities, faced greater challenges in accessing post-massacre resources such as healthcare and psychosocial support. Economic empowerment programs targeted at female survivors proved crucial in rebuilding livelihoods and fostering resilience. Male survivors, although facing similar socio-economic disruptions, often benefited from existing support networks and employment opportunities.

4.5.5.4 Intersectionality

Intersectional analysis revealed compounded vulnerabilities among female survivors from minority ethnic and religious groups, who faced intersecting forms of discrimination and violence. Non-binary survivors faced marginalization within both mainstream and support communities, emphasizing the need for inclusive and gender-affirming approaches.

4.5.5.5 Resilience and Coping Strategies

Despite gender-specific challenges, survivors demonstrated remarkable resilience through community solidarity, religious/spiritual coping mechanisms, and peer support networks. Gender-sensitive trauma counseling proved effective in addressing survivors' unique needs and promoting healing.

4.5.6 The experiences of male survivors and female survivors and the extent to which their experiences denote gender expression in religion

4.5.6.1 Experiences of male survivors

Male survivors of the Shakahola massacre in Kenya, specifically 41 individuals, are facing serious legal challenges as they are now considered suspects rather than victims. These survivors, who were either parents or grandparents of missing children believed to be dead, are being investigated for murder, manslaughter, attempted suicide, cruelty and neglect toward children, among other charges (African news,2023). The survivors are members of the Good News International Church led by Pastor Paul

Makenzie and are currently detained pending further legal proceedings [African news, 2023]. The court has ordered their separation and detention at Shimo la Tewa prison due to the change in their status from victims to suspects [African news, 2023]. This shift in their legal standing has significantly impacted their reintegration into society and highlights the complex aftermath of the tragic events at Shakahola [Citizen Digital and African news, 2023].

4.5.6.2 Experiences of female survivors

Female survivors of the Shakahola massacre in Kenya, like Ms. Salama Masha, are facing social isolation and stigma as they try to reintegrate into their communities. Ms. Masha, who lost her husband in the forest where he went to fast, has been secluded by villagers and even her own family members [CBS News]. Despite escaping the forest with her children, she struggles to fit back into society and feels unwanted due to the events that transpired during the cult experience [CBS News]. The survivors, predominantly women and children, have endured significant emotional trauma and economic challenges following the tragic events at Shakahola [CBS News]. The aftermath of the massacre has left a lasting impact on these female survivors, highlighting the complexities of their reintegration and the deep scars left by their involvement with the cult led by Pastor Paul Makenzi [CBS News].

4.5.6.3 Experiences of children survivors

Children survivors of the Shakahola massacre in Kenya have faced harrowing experiences, with many being subjected to extreme conditions and tragic losses. One notable case involves an eight-year-old child, the first survivor rescued from the Shakahola forest, who was returned to his family after months of psychological anguish and separation [CNN]. This child's family had suffered significant losses during the tragedy, with his two younger siblings dying of starvation in the forest where they had moved with their parents (CNN, 2023). The child's grandfather expressed relief at having him back but continues to search for his missing daughter and son-in-law, who are believed to have perished in the forest [CNN]. The Shakahola massacre, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds and left many missing, has deeply impacted children survivors who endured starvation, suffocation, and trauma within the cult led by Pastor Paul Makenzi [Al Jazeera, Reuters, France 24, Voice of America, Daily Mail, 2024].

4.5.6.4 The extent to which the survivors' experiences denote gender expression in religion

The experiences of men, women, and children from the Shakahola event in Kenya reflect significant gender expressions and vulnerabilities. Women and children, who were the majority of victims in the Shakahola massacre, faced manipulation and harm due to poverty and religious doctrines. The National Gender and Equality Commission highlighted the increased vulnerability of women and children to manipulation, emphasizing the need for protection against harmful religious practices that can lead to tragic events like the Shakahola massacre. Female survivors like Ms. Salama Masha have endured social isolation and stigma, struggling to reintegrate into society after losing family members and facing rejection from their communities. Children survivors, such as an eight-year-old rescued from the forest, suffered traumatic losses of family members due to starvation and

suffocation during their time in the cult led by Pastor Paul Makenzi. The experiences of male survivors, who are now facing legal charges related to the deaths of children during the massacre, highlight a shift from victims to suspects, further complicating their reintegration into society. These diverse experiences underscore the complex interplay of gender dynamics, vulnerability, and trauma resulting from the tragic events at Shakahola.

The experiences of men, women, and children from the Shakahola event in Kenya denote significant gender expressions within the realm of religion. Gender is a central aspect of most religious orders, influencing gendered relations and impacting individuals' identities within religious contexts. Women's participation in nonliteral religious movements often involves navigating patriarchal structures that dictate submission and agency within religious spaces. Additionally, various cultures recognize no binary gender roles, granting individuals occupying transgendered or nonbinary roles special spiritual status. The intersection of religion, gender, and sexuality reveals complex power dynamics and social norms that shape individuals' identities and behaviors within religious communities. Scholars emphasize the need to critically analyze how gender intersects with religion and sexuality, highlighting the diverse social variables that influence power dynamics and expressions of control within religious communities. The experiences of survivors from the Shakahola massacre underscore the intricate relationship between gender, vulnerability, and religious beliefs, showcasing how these factors intertwine to shape individuals' experiences within religious settings.

5. Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this study was to investigate the relationship between gender and religious expression in the form of death in the context of shakahola. The aim was to develop and identify the intricate relationship between gender and religious expression. This study is designed to be used for future intentions by any other scholar who can do further research on the same field, it also seeks to understand the Shakahola massacre in depth. The findings in this study revealed gendered aspects in the Massacre highlighted the causes of the Massacre and distribution of gender. The sections below discuss the summary of the findings, the conclusions and the recommendations made.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The data collected has shown that gender and religious expression intersect in a great deal basing on the references from the Shakahola Massacre in Kenya. This inter section of gender and religious expression in the form of death is presented in the graphical representations in terms of comparing the numbers of the male gender verses the female gender and their experiences as well as the bush factors for them.

Most of the online sources reviewed, as this study mainly and primarily dependent on the online and internet sources there are indications that a majority of the affected gender was the females followed by the children and this high number of children can still be attributed to the female adherents as they are the nurtures of the children. From the death of the high numbers of females such findings indicate that there is a

strong intersection or relationship between gender and religious expression and more so women are most likely to express their religious affiliations more than men.

The conceptual framework for this study sees death as a symbolic meaning of religious expression. The pie chart, radar chart and tabular representations effectively presents the perspective of gender and religious expression in the form of death. This study has revealed some key factors leading to the shakahola Massacre, discussed religious expression in depth, push factors to the High numbers of women and in addition whether death is an indication to the love of God. All these allowed for obtaining valuable insights and great knowledge and understanding these phenomena of gender and how they express religious affiliations.

The study has revealed some aspects such as religious extremism, lack of government intervention, authoritarian leadership as factors that greatly contributed to differences in religious expression amongst the two genders groups.

In summary therefore the findings obtained from the sources and the study included the following:

- Gender distribution of Casualties in terms of men and women
- Factors that contributed to the massacre as:
 - Religious extremism
 - Lack of Government Intervention
 - Authoritarian Leadership
 - Societal Factors
- The push factors to the higher numbers of women included,
 - Spiritual and emotional fulfillment
 - Vulnerability
 - Search for meaning and purpose
 - Empathetic nature of women
 - Social and cultural expectation
 - Healing and empowerment
 - Role model and leadership opportunity
 - Community and social connections
 - Need to be heard

5.3 Significance of the Findings

This study extracted valuable information from the online sources that is, videos, and audios and published articles on the shakahola incidence and Religious expression and gender in general. It has further discovered why there are more women in religion more than their male counterparts. The findings of these study are beneficial in that they lay a foundation to further and future researches on the shakahola massacre based on the perspective of gender. The findings also helped us to fully utilize the different social technological platforms therefore the findings makes it possible to conclude that there is a paradigm shift to online research which can be equated to the primary and the secondary research.

5.4 Limitations of the Findings

This study majorly focused on investigating gender and death as a form of religious expression in the context of the Shakahola massacre in Kilifi Coastal Kenya hence this is limited and cannot be applied to other geographical areas. The findings reported in this research are obtained from the online sources and shakahola massacre being a recent occurrence the information or data provided there in the online sources are limited and this made sample size to be

small of only 180 sources including videos, audios and articles. In addition also the cost and distance to travel to the actual site of the incidence was overwhelming and this was a constraint towards venturing into primary research as we did not visit the actual sites. The study was confined to the findings from the shakahola incident (Good News International Church), this, the results may not be applicable to other denominations as this data has its own limitations.

6. Recommendations

As this study had its own limitations due to the small sample size and the method used in collecting data that is the online method researchers should be trained more on online research skills so as to be fully equipped in these approaches.

It is recommended that future researches should use this method of online research so as to make it a widely used method, recognized method and as a commendable method of research.

It is also recommended that from the high number of females being subjects and victims to this menace of extremists expression of religion there is need for public awareness and education on religious and spiritual matters

Establish Independent Investigation: An independent investigation is crucial to uncover the truth behind the Shakahola massacre without bias or interference. It should involve experts in human rights, forensics, and conflict resolution to ensure a thorough examination of the incident.

Legal Reforms and Accountability: Legal reforms are necessary to hold accountable those responsible for the massacre. This includes updating laws to address human rights violations and ensuring that perpetrators face justice through fair and transparent legal proceedings.

Victim Support and Compensation: Providing comprehensive support to victims and their families is essential for their recovery. This support should include medical care, mental health services, financial compensation, and assistance in rebuilding their lives after the traumatic event.

Introduction of Community Reconciliation Programs: Community reconciliation programs aim to heal divisions and promote understanding among affected communities. These initiatives facilitate dialogue, address grievances, and foster reconciliation to prevent future conflicts and promote peace.

Intelligence Sharing and Collaboration: Enhancing intelligence sharing and collaboration among security agencies is vital for early detection and prevention of extremist activities. Improved coordination and information sharing can help identify threats before they escalate.

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