

4-2023

Female Perpetrators of Ritually Motivated Pedicide and Mutilation of Children

Chima Agazue
Arden University, UK, chima.agazue@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity>



Part of the [Child Psychology Commons](#), [Community-Based Research Commons](#), [Community Psychology Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#), [Multicultural Psychology Commons](#), [Other Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#), [Social Control, Law, Crime, and Deviance Commons](#), [Social Justice Commons](#), [Sociology of Culture Commons](#), and the [Sociology of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Agazue, Chima (2023) "Female Perpetrators of Ritually Motivated Pedicide and Mutilation of Children," *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*: Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2023.08.01.06>

This Research and Scholarly Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons-group@uri.edu.

Female Perpetrators of Ritually Motivated Pesticide and Mutilation of Children

Abstract

Ritually motivated pesticide is among contemporary Africa's most severe crimes against children. Most of these crimes involve brutal acts of violence or mutilation of the victim. While men are most often the perpetrators of violent crimes, ritually motivated pesticide and mutilation equally attract women. The role of women in these crimes is not restricted to the less violent aspects of the crimes; instead, they also extend to the most brutal elements, often involving mutilation, decapitation or outright murder of the victim. This article explored the involvement of women in these crimes that target children for mutilation and pesticide. The article draws on case examples of incidents involving brutality and murder of children by women selected from academic reports and reports by media and non-governmental organisations to demonstrate the nature of involvement in these crimes. The article demonstrates that women also engage in the most serious roles with or without the company of men in ritually motivated pesticide and mutilation. These include mutilation and violent murder of children who are used for rituals. The author argues that the high degree of violence in ritually motivated mutilation and pesticide means that these crimes against children deviate from the established female patterns of aggression that are typically less violent.

Keywords

Africa, ritual, pesticide, murder, mutilation, violence, crime, females, children

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).


Acknowledgements

Dignity thanks Wiebe de Jong, Lecturer, Department Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands, for his time and expertise to review this article.

FEMALE PERPETRATORS OF RITUALLY MOTIVATED PEDICIDE AND MUTILATION OF CHILDREN

Chima Agazue

Arden University, UK

 [0000-0002-2995-0179](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2995-0179)

ABSTRACT

Ritually motivated pedicide is among contemporary Africa's most severe crimes against children. Most of these crimes involve brutal acts of violence or mutilation of the victim. While men are most often the perpetrators of violent crimes, ritually motivated pedicide and mutilation equally attract women. The role of women in these crimes is not restricted to the less violent aspects of the crimes; instead, they also extend to the most brutal elements, often involving mutilation, decapitation or outright murder of the victim. This article explored the involvement of women in these crimes that target children for mutilation and pedicide. The article draws on case examples of incidents involving brutality and murder of children by women selected from academic reports and reports by media and non-governmental organisations to demonstrate the nature of involvement in these crimes. The article demonstrates that women also engage in the most serious roles with or without the company of men in ritually motivated pedicide and mutilation. These include mutilation and violent murder of children who are used for rituals. The author argues that the high degree of violence in ritually motivated mutilation and pedicide means that these crimes against children deviate from the established female patterns of aggression that are typically less violent.

KEYWORDS

Africa, ritual, pedicide, murder, mutilation, violence, crime, females, children

RITUALLY MOTIVATED PEDICIDE refers to the murder of a child for a religious ritual believed to enable the beneficiary to solve a problem magically. Owusu (2022, p.1) defines "ritual paedicide" or "juju-driven paedicide" "killing children for ritual or occult purposes." Statistical data on ritual pedicide in contemporary Africa is non-existent (Owusu, 2022). Thus, estimating the number of children victimised by this type of crime is difficult. The motives behind ritually motivated pedicide align with those of other ritually motivated crimes (Agazue, 2021a). These crimes involve the murder of a person, violence against a person, theft of or extraction of any bodily fluids, including through sexual intercourse (Agazue, 2021a).

While the incidence of ritually motivated crimes is not as high as other serious crimes in contemporary Africa, when they occur, they cause public panic due to the brutality against the victims (Agazue, 2021a). The rituals and the crimes associated with them are not evenly spread in the continent because there are different cultural

practices among the hundreds of tribes found in Africa. Further, some societies might witness some kinds of ritually motivated crimes that hardly exist in other societies. For example, while “sperm bandits” (women targeting men who they often rape at gunpoint to be able to collect their semen for ritual purposes) have made news headlines in Zimbabwe in recent years, these criminals are hardly found in Nigeria and many other countries. Child sacrifice, the removal of a “child’s body parts, blood or tissue while the child is alive” (Fellows, 2013, p.8), is a practice trending in Uganda and South Africa in recent decades. Still, it is non-existent in many parts of the continent, even where these religious rituals occur. Ritually motivated crimes, in general, more commonly occur in West, East, and Southern Africa. Victims may be hacked to death, suffocated, decapitated, beheaded, buried alive, or have body parts ripped off while the person is alive (see Agazue, 2021a; Bukuluki & Mpyangu, 2014; Fellows, 2013). These crimes lead to a loss of life (Bukuluki & Mpyangu, 2014) at the hands of people driven by selfishness (Agazue, 2021a). Children are not spared from these extreme forms of brutality. The prevailing superstitious belief in the continent “has created an enabling environment for ritual murders involving children to thrive” (Bukuluki & Mpyangu, 2014, p.16).

Ritual pedicide includes murder and the mutilation of children for a ritual that violates the laws against grievous bodily harm and violence against a person. According to the United Nations General Assembly in its Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), children have the right to protection, among other rights. These same rights are also emphasised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990).

While both men and women commit these grave crimes, Agazue (2021a) observed that scholars have ignored women’s involvement in these crimes at a time when their involvement in other violent crimes, such as robbery, suicide bombing, multiple murders and more, have increasingly attracted academic attention. While Agazue (2021a) shows that women also engage in ritually motivated crimes in almost all the capacities men engage in them, there is no evidence suggesting that women commit these crimes as often as men. These ritually motivated crimes are mostly committed by young men (Owusu, 2022). This article focuses on how the nature of pedicide itself goes against the usual patterns of female aggression that are typically less brutal.

The current article aims to create awareness of the nature of women’s involvement in these crimes in which children are the targeted victims. The motivations of the women perpetrators have remained unclear. The article aims to describe the nature of women’s involvement to stimulate further research that can unravel their motivations. Understanding the patterns of such violations will enable ways to protect vulnerable children. The article will enlighten law enforcement agencies on detecting and investigating such crimes against children. The article will draw on multiple sources of secondary data to illustrate the nature of women’s involvement in ritually motivated pedicide and mutilation of children. The sources will include media, academics, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) reports.

RITUALLY MOTIVATED CRIMES: MOTIVATIONS AND PATTERNS

Patterns

Ritually motivated crimes exist because of magical professionals whom I refer to as “witchdoctors.” People see these professionals as having the authority to invoke the spiritual powers believed to make the rituals potent. People often associate

witchdoctors with harmful magical practices, such as bewitching innocent persons or enabling their clients to bewitch, harm or kill their enemies. Other names linked to these practitioners are occult priests, occult masters, juju priests, and fetish priests. People use different names to refer to these professionals in their respective languages. Similarly, the media also use different names to describe the activities of witchdoctors, including herbalists, traditional priests, diviners, traditional healers, soothsayers, and medicine men.

Some people erroneously use the term “witchdoctor” to refer to legitimate traditional priests, medicine men/women, and herbalists. A “legitimate” traditional priest does not engage in these rituals that require violence against the person or homicide. Traditional priests lead religions just like the priests of other religions lead their religious followers. Legitimate herbalists and medicine men/women are known for life-saving practices that do not necessarily involve fetish acts or activities requiring the shedding of human blood or harm to a person. Chukuezi and Chukuezi (2010) observed that “there are some honest, devoted and conscientious practitioners who have been properly trained the traditional way” to help members of their communities. Medicine men and herbalists fit within the above description. These traditionally trained practitioners are usually not associated with harmful rituals or spiritual practices; instead, they simply use herbs, animal products, and other traditionally prepared medicines to treat their patients (Agazue, 2015).

These practitioners are located mainly in rural villages where clinics, hospitals, and pharmacies are limited or non-existent. Indeed, genuine professionals oppose ritual murders and violence to the extent that some alert the authorities about those seeking out ritual murders and violence. For example, a Ghanaian herbalist called the police to arrest a 42-year-old man who took his daughter to a herbalist to have her killed for a money ritual (BBC News Pidgin, 2022). In Nigeria, as the tension caused by ritually motivated murders and violence increased, the Ogun Alternate Medicine Board promised to set up a task force to expose practitioners conducting rituals for criminals (Punch, 2022).

Some ritually motivated crimes involve people playing different roles in ways similar to organised crime. For example, a kidnapper may deliver a victim or decapitate the victim and send the body parts or fluids to a witchdoctor. A family member may arrange to kidnap or decapitate someone in the family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and neighbours. The beneficiary of this ritual may pay a witchdoctor to use the person or the person’s parts or fluid for the ritual. Different peoples’ involvement reflects the various categories of people often arrested when the police arrest the first suspect following an incident. For example, the arrest of a body hunter could lead to the arrest of a witchdoctor conducting the ritual, the beneficiary of the ritual and sometimes, an instigator or arranger. However, not all kidnappers and body hunters for rituals are affiliated with witchdoctors or beneficiaries. Some may harvest body parts in high demand in their areas and then look for people to buy them for ritual purposes.

Ritually motivated crimes do not always involve the murder of the victim; instead, they may require that the particular body part (e.g., arm) of the victim needed for the religious ritual be cut off without necessarily killing the victim (Agazue, 2021a; Schühle, 2013). In one case, boys were found alive after their penises were cut off for ritual purposes. This was also the case with albinos, who survived after their hands were cut off. Ritually motivated criminals have plucked out their victims’ eyes but did not kill the victim.

The criminals do not always kill their victims, so I call this practice “ritually motivated crimes” compared to the popular term “ritual murder,” which commonly appears in the media. Some crimes do not involve violence but contact with vaginal discharges through sexual intercourse, use of semen, menstrual blood or vaginal discharges extracted from underwear, menstrual pad or condom. The ritualists need contact with these fluids, whether wet or dried.

Certain groups or individuals may be targeted depending on the type of ritual. Certain sacrifices are believed to be potent when a very close family member or an intimate partner is used. Agazue (2015) has detailed numerous cases of individuals who killed their parents, parents who killed their children, husbands who killed their wives, and people who killed their siblings for this purpose. Witchdoctors determine who should be killed for the ritual or sacrifice. A family member, for example, may be demanded when the witchdoctor believes that the ritual or sacrifice could only be potent with a genetically related person. An intimate partner may be requested when a witchdoctor comes up with a theory connected to sexual intimacy as a potency source. There is also a demand for sexual intercourse with women who are severely mentally ill and who often live on the streets or in bushes. In different parts of Africa, witchdoctors’ clients rape these women for ritual purposes.

Several characteristics are considered in these rituals, such as age, gender, virginity status, pregnancy, albinism, baldness, or kyphosis, commonly called “hunchback.” The hunt for virgins by ritually motivated criminals is connected to the idea of “purity” in these rituals. There is a belief that certain rituals can only be potent when conducted with persons who have not committed certain “sins” (e.g., sexual immorality). This makes children more vulnerable since the chances of finding sexually pure people are higher in children than adults. Victimisation of virgin females for ritually motivated murder in contemporary Africa has received much media attention, but that of virgin boys is hardly reported. However, it is worth acknowledging that boys are also targeted for their suspected virginity status. The brutal murder of an eleven-year-old boy in Kasoa, Ghana, in April 2021 is an example. Two Ghanaian teenagers, aged 16 and 18, murdered the boy after a witchdoctor they consulted asked them to bring her the body of a virgin and cash so she could conduct rituals to make them rich.

Ritually motivated criminals widely target albinos in Tanzania, Burundi, Malawi, Swaziland, and Mali. Their victimisation results from witchdoctors’ claim that magic potions made with the bones of people with albinism are potent in creating wealth (see Schühle, 2013). Thus, their body parts are often trafficked across borders as they fetch vast sums of money (Berry, 2019). These criminals sometimes target hunchbacked people in Nigeria due to the belief that the “hunched back contains what in the spiritual realm should be as valuable as gold in the physical world” (Agazue, 2015, p.28). A witchdoctor may use a male child to conduct a ritual for a client seeking to conceive or protect a male child. Fellows (2013) documented a male child’s sacrifice for a woman desiring a male child in Uganda.

Perpetrators can demand persons or bodies of certain kinds of persons or reject certain types of persons or bodies believed to be unsuitable for the ritual. These include people believed to have shed blood, those whose bodies have been pierced in certain places (e.g., ears) or circumcised persons (Bukuluki, 2014; Bukuluki et al., 2017; Fellows, 2013). Perpetrators can reject potential victims if a ritual forbids piercing or circumcision (Agazue, 2021a). Sometimes, perpetrators demand that the victim used for a ritual be brought to them alive. Rather than killing the person somewhere and having body parts collected and sent to the perpetrator, the person is abducted and presented to the witchdoctor (Agazue, 2021a). This is because some rituals

require that the person dies in the ritual process, such as burying the victim alive. In some cases, the victim must be presented alive to enable the witchdoctor to examine the body to determine whether the person meets some specific criteria for the ritual.

While some rituals require killing a person for the body part or fluid, others may require the body part of a dead person. This has recently led to removing body parts from corpses (Masoga & Rugwiji, 2018). However, rituals with the body parts of a dead person are not the norm. There is something about “shedding blood” in these rituals that make them potent based on theories. It ceases to be a sacrifice when there is no life in the victim (see Fellows, 2013 for an explanation).

Whether the person is presented to the witchdoctor or the body part or fluid is removed and delivered to the witchdoctor, it is expected that the person should be alive when the body part or fluid is being removed. Some would say that cries and breath are required by the spirits accepting the rituals. The confessions of a Nigerian serial ritual killer, based on his conversations with the witchdoctor he worked for, confirmed this: “Baba [witchdoctor] said the spirits of the victims would come to him after I had killed them” (Punch, 2020). Spirit is believed to leave the body after the last breath. This could mean a dead person could not produce the breath and spirit needed for rituals. This is another reason ritualists avoid using deceased persons. However, the victims do not always cry because, in some cases, unconsciousness is deliberately induced in the victims by their killers. For example, Fellows (2013) documented the case of a Ugandan serial ritual killer who always used chloroform. Police also discovered that perpetrators used chloroform to sedate their victims following the investigations of more than thirty ritual murders in Central Uganda (The Africa Report, 2012). Cases involving the use of chloroform to make the victim unconscious have been reported by some ritual killers caught in Nigeria.

The backgrounds and characteristics of ritually motivated criminals are not well studied. A recent study by Owusu (2022) has bridged this gap. He found that 94 percent of the perpetrators of ritually motivated pedicide were men, with women constituting only six percent. Regarding the socioeconomic background, the majority (50%) were unemployed, followed by those employed or self-employed (33%) but on a low income. Regarding age, the majority (53%) were between 20 and 39 years, followed by those aged 40 to 59 (28%). The majority (50%) of the perpetrators were uneducated. Most (67%) of them were motivated by quick wealth. The quest for quick wealth discovered by Owusu (2022) in his research is an empirical validation of the common belief that these crimes are motivated by the desperation to “get rich quick,” as reflected in the most popular name of these rituals as “money ritual” in many parts of Africa.

Owusu’s (2022) findings above are interesting. However, his data are based on a sample of 36 participants only. Further, the study was based on incidents in Ghana, and the perpetrators targeted children only. Thus, before one can conclude the characteristics of ritually motivated criminals, more samples from other parts of Africa are needed. In addition, evidence suggests cross-cultural variations. An example is the involvement or exclusive involvement of women as “sperm bandits” (the practice of raping men to extract their semen for ritual purposes) in Zimbabwe (Agazue, 2021a). Nevertheless, Owusu’s (2022) findings are consistent with sociological and criminological literature suggesting that perpetrators of violent crimes around the world are mostly uneducated (Ades & Mishra, 2021; Gleditsch et al., 2022; Lochner & Moretti, 2004), unemployed and underemployed youths (Ajaegbu, 2012; Azeng & Yogo, 2013; Cramer, 2011; Idris, 2016; Rege et al., 2019).

Ritually motivated crimes are often coordinated, like organised crimes, so the relationship between the witchdoctors and their clients should be considered. Sometimes, family members of the victim and other persons related to or acquainted with the victim are complicit in these crimes (Agazue, 2015; Fellows, 2013; Owusu, 2022). Owusu (2022) found that the ritual killers of Ghanaian children were related or acquainted with the victims in 44% of the cases, which differed very little from the 42% of the cases whereby the perpetrators and the victims did not know each other. More studies are needed to establish the patterns among adult victims too. Owusu (2022) focused on ritual murderers. However, relatives and acquaintances could offend in other ways, such as instigating or arranging the kidnap of the victim or facilitating transportation to the ritual killer or witchdoctor. Such patterns are not well studied. When one considers the involvement of relatives, acquaintances, and other persons in ritually motivated crimes as well-coordinated crimes, then the age and gender of the perpetrators may cease to be as they appear in Owusu's (2022) findings. For example, witchdoctors in many parts of Africa are old men and women. When it comes to their clients, both old and young, men and women patronise them alike. Unfortunately, the statistics to demonstrate the ratio of old clients to young ones and the ratio of men to women could not be found.

Motivations

Ritually motivated crimes are motivated by the belief that rituals done with a human being or body part/fluid will enable the beneficiary of the ritual to achieve their goals for requesting the rituals (Agazue, 2020a; Fellows, 2013; Owusu, 2022). Popular examples include receiving protection, healing or achieving success in their endeavours. In addition, people believe that these rituals can bring sexual conquest to those who request it (Berry, 2019). Internet fraudsters are known to engage in these rituals by adding spiritual elements to internet surfing, believing that this practice would "boost cybercrime success rates" (Tade, 2013, p.689). The pastors of syncretic and neo-Pentecostal churches have recently been increasingly linked to these rituals. They commit these rituals believing that the rituals can help them attract more members to their churches and gain more money, fame, and power.

People can conduct the ritual with the hope of solving problems of which a witchdoctor or shrine priest believes that human blood must be shed, a human being must be killed, or human parts/fluid must be used to achieve success (Agazue, 2021a). The ritual is done to solve problems "magically." For example, the beneficiaries of these rituals may expect wealth without working to earn money. This is what people mean when they say that someone has become wealthy through a "money ritual." Often, people use this term to describe ritually motivated crimes even when the perpetrators' intentions were not about money. In addition, people believe that with these rituals, they can conceive a child with a ruptured womb, in menopause, or with other biological conditions that would make conception impossible.

People believe they can win a political election without engaging in sufficient campaigns or meeting other conditions for victory. This has contributed to politicians patronising witchdoctors. This has meant that political campaigns and election periods are peak seasons for ritually motivated crimes (Agazue, 2021a). Media reports in many parts of Africa are inundated with these crimes during political campaigns and elections in different parts of Africa. For example, in Tanzania, where people target albinos for these rituals, a retired judge and a human rights activist in the country, Amir Manento, linked ritually motivated crimes against albinos and other vulnerable persons to elections: "Every election period brings with it a new cycle of killings. In

between, we have other smaller elections translating to more abductions, more killings” (The Standard, 2015). Academic reports also support this link and the involvement of politicians in these crimes (see Ellis, 1999; Israel, 2009; Max-Wirth, 2016; Salisbury, 2012).

These rituals (often human sacrifice) connected to appeasing or pacifying the gods or ancestors (see Agazue, 2015; Essien, 2010; Fatokun, 2016; Udoye, 2011) were practised by several African tribes in the past. For example, this was a reality in Nigeria in Igbo (Agazue, 2015; Udoye, 2011), Yoruba (Fatokun, 2016), and other tribes. Several African tribes engaged in human sacrifice intending to achieve victory in wars, prevent or stop famine, drought, epidemics, and other crises and calamities facing the communities or presumed to be imminent (Owusu, 2022). They also conducted sacrifices for the empowerment of shrines, oracles, and charms (Udoye, 2011). However, killings for such purposes are no longer commonplace due to changing attitudes and widespread Christianity and Islam forbidding such practices.

While human sacrifice is no longer socially acceptable and practised widely in African communities in present times, it has not stopped entirely. Some deviant groups still conduct these rituals secretly. For instance, a relatively recent incident occurred in Enugu (Nigeria), where people discovered old and fresh human skulls sacrificed to idols (Essien, 2010). Similarly, in the Volta Region of Ghana, a twelve-year-old boy was ritualistically killed in a forest by some young men with the instruction of a fetish-traditional priest who needed human body parts to fortify a new shrine named Agbavor (Graphic Online, 2021). Such barbarity could be secretly perpetrated by the minority determined to keep their religious tradition alive. In parts of Africa where Christianity and Islam have become professed by most residents, it is difficult to find shrines or totems that are still maintained. Where this practice still occurs, shrine priests have become flexible by using animals in their sacrifices. Although human sacrifice for the appeasement of gods or deities was common in Africa in the past, it cannot be concluded that this practice was universal in the continent, considering the different cultures among dozens of countries and hundreds of tribes in the continent. For example, in interviews with traditional healers in Uganda, they described the prevalent child sacrifices in Uganda in present times and human sacrifices in general as culturally prohibited, suggesting that child sacrifice in the country is a new practice (Bukuluki & Mpyangu, 2014). Although child sacrifice is only one part of human sacrifice, certain cultures may have endorsed it.

RITUALLY MOTIVATED PEDICIDE AND MUTILATION BY WOMEN: CASE EXAMPLES

The case examples of ritually motivated pedicides committed by women are presented to illustrate the nature of such pedicides and the status of the perpetrators. The media report incidents of female perpetrators, but they may exaggerate female offences and misrepresent the offenders. Consequently, the author used reports by academics and NGOs to collaborate the media reports.

This paper is a descriptive report. Thus, the aim is not to present an exhaustive account of the ritually motivated crimes against children by women in Africa; instead, the objective is to draw on a limited number of incidents from a few countries to illustrate the different roles played by women in the murder and mutilation of children for ritual purposes. A dozen recent incidents (within the past 10 years) were selected from Nigeria, Uganda, and Ghana.

Women played various roles in the incidents – from serving as accomplices to men to serving as witchdoctors sacrificing the victims on their own. Their roles sometimes extend to the most brutal aspects involving mutilation, live burial and violent murder. The activities of some of the women in these incidents were brutal. A report by *The Guardian* (“Octogenarian arrested,” 2021) involved an incident in Nigeria where the Anambra State Police Command raided an apartment in Onitsha and arrested two women, aged 80 and 39. The police rescued three children who the women severely mutilated. The public relations officer of the Anambra State Police Command released an official statement and description of the incident:

The victims, who were severely battered with lacerations all over their body, were found in the pool of their blood, rescued and rushed to the hospital for medical attention. Exhibits recovered at the scene included some fetish substances, blood stained canes, concoctions and other incriminating items (“Octogenarian arrested,” 2021).

The officer also confirmed that the children were unconscious when the police rescued them. The media published gory photos of the three children. Previously, in a neighbouring state to Anambra called Delta State, a woman was caught in 2004 decapitating a boy whose body parts she intended to use for a ritual (Igwe, 2004). A Ugandan female witchdoctor was fond of using people's children for sacrifices, including her granddaughter (Fellows, 2013). This witchdoctor acted alone and murdered the girl as a sacrifice (Fellows, 2013). A Ghanaian prophetess and two others, including the parents of the child, engaged in the ritual murder of a one-and-half-year-old boy in Brakwa Awoyom, Ghana, by burying him alive (Modern Ghana, 2021). The prophetess planned the murder and carried out its execution. This case, however, seems exceptional as the boy's parents were afflicted due to the boy's disability. Nevertheless, the incident still qualifies as a ritual murder because the ritual aimed to prevent spiritual possession and consequent disabilities of future children in the family. The ritual was informed by the belief that children are spiritual comrades to mischievous spirits that could punish the child or the child's family with a disability, disease, or psychological disorder (Agazue, 2021b).

There was an incident involving a female witchdoctor who attempted to slaughter two schoolchildren for a ritual before rejecting them as inappropriate (Vanguard, 2014). A commercial vehicle driver abducted the pupils for the witchdoctor when the children boarded his vehicle on their way home from school. The abductors presented the children to the female witchdoctor in a forest where according to the child (boy), aged 13, she rejected them for not meeting the ritual requirements. The witchdoctor then commanded her servants to take the children away and kill them; however, the children escaped when the witchdoctor's servants engaged in a heated argument that diverted their attention away from the children. It is common for witchdoctors who reject victims to demand the killing of the victims regardless. This is done to avoid the victims from revealing their experiences to members of the public.

Some of the women who did not directly involve themselves in the murders or violence knew that their services would involve the mutilation of children. One account details numerous involvements of women as clients of witchdoctors engaging in child sacrifice (Fellows, 2013). A number of women were known to consume children's body parts. Women who consumed boys' genitalia provided by their witchdoctors must have known that the boys had been killed or sustained brutal acts of violence. The female client of a ritual killer who had murdered twenty-three children did not engage in the murder herself; she was aware that the services she demanded

would involve the murder of a child (Fellows, 2013). The same applies to other women described in the report who did not engage directly in the murders or attacks but were aware of what their services would entail.

According to Fellows' (2013) findings, a witchdoctor who used children's body parts in his services explained that his clients were mainly women who were barren or in politics, for example. He said these clients referred other women to him. He used human genitalia and other body parts for the services. Fellows also found that some women acknowledged that they had consumed children's body parts as prescribed by witchdoctors, and even stated that they would use them again if they had to revisit the witchdoctors. A report on human rights practices submitted to the United States Senate and House of Representatives by the United States Department of State (2011) details several people arrested by the Ugandan police in connection with child sacrifice in different capacities, including women. A Kenyan politician and human rights activist, Isaac Mwaura, made the following statements about mothers' involvement in the ritual murders and violence against albinos in Kenya and the rest of East Africa: "Mothers are conspiring to traffic their own flesh and blood to senseless deaths" ("Albinism," 2015).

Although the women who co-offended with men are described as "male accomplices," it is not often clear who was the prime perpetrator of those crimes. It has become the norm to portray women as accomplices to men when they commit violent crimes with men due to the common belief that women can hardly engage in violence by themselves. This may obscure that some women might be the main perpetrators of such crimes. Female witchdoctors are bosses to other people participating in the rituals because they are the chief priests giving orders and providing instructions on what others should do. They also kill the victim themselves during some of the rituals.

DISCUSSION

The cases presented show that women engage in ritually motivated crimes against children in various ways. Women killing children, particularly those under their care, is not new. Literature on filicide suggests that more mothers commit filicide against younger children than fathers (Mariano et al., 2014; West, 2007). Cases involving mothers are often compared to those involving fathers (Pitt and Bale, 1995). Filicide refers to "any murder of a child up to the age of 18 years committed by his or her parent(s) or parental figure(s), including guardians and stepparents" (West, 2007, p.50). The incidents discussed in this article contain both filicidal and non-filicidal cases. Thus, the adoption of a more appropriate term, "pedicide."

As previously demonstrated, the female perpetrators of pesticide and mutilation used violent methods, such as decapitation, live burial and excising organs (e.g., heart) from a live person (see Agazue, 2021a; Bukuluki & Mpyangu, 2014; Fellows, 2013). The brutal nature of ritually motivated pesticide that most often involves a knife or sharp object means that it does not follow the usual pattern of pesticide women commit. Although Adelson (1991) describes pesticide as "a reliable indicator of interpersonal violence and severe child abuse" (Adelson, 1991), the nature of violence in typical pesticide differs from what is observable in ritually motivated pesticide. In the former, throwing (Eke et al., 2015; Krischer et al., 2007), shaking (Marks & Kumar, 1996a), hitting, suffocating (Krischer et al., 2007; Marks & Kumar, 1996b), choking (Eke et al., 2015), and kicking (Marks & Kumar, 1996b) are most common methods of killing. In typical pesticide cases, violence is often a result of anger (Adelson, 1991; Resnick, 1969, 2016) or rage (Marks & Kumar, 1996b) by child abusers. Stabbing

(Krischer et al., 2007) and shooting (Adelson, 1991; Eke et al., 2015; Krischer et al., 2007) are occasionally used in pedicide.

However, in all these pedicides, ritually motivated pedicide is exceptional for involving mutilation, decapitation, or live burial. Mutilation is necessary to enable the ritualists to extract body parts for the rituals. This extreme form of violence or torture requires the perpetrator to inflict the victim with a slow and painful death. Although not all rituals involve the extraction of body parts, they mainly involve slow and painful death, such as in the case of live burial. While other types of pedicide may involve firearms, which can be argued to be a violent method, it is a very quick method of killing a child. Further, the perpetrator does not need physical contact with the victim but a trigger from a distance.

Another distinctive pattern in ritually motivated pedicide is connected to the fact that in typical pedicide cases, the victims are more likely to be killed by relatives compared to adult homicide victims (Adelson, 1991). The killers are most often the parents of the child. They could be biological parents (Flynn et al., 2013; Harris et al., 2007; McKee, 2006; Yarwood, 2004) or stepparents (Gavin & Porter, 2015; Weekes-Shackelford & Shackelford, 2004). Thus, filicide (killing a child by a biological parent or stepparent) is the most common type of pedicide in academic literature. This is also why motives and patterns of filicide have been well-researched compared to homicide against a child by a stranger. This also stands as the major limitation of using existing literature to compare the patterns of ritually motivated pedicide with other types of pedicides because the theories and findings on pedicides proposed by many scholars on this (see Adelson, 1991; Friedman & Resnick, 2007; Harris et al., 2007; Weekes-Shackelford & Shackelford, 2004; Koenen & Thompson, 2008; McKee and Egan, 2013; Pitt and Bale, 1995; Resnick, 1969, 2016; West, 2007) mostly come from studies on filicide.

Ritually motivated pedicide is committed by strangers as much as by family members (Owusu, 2022). Therefore, it is expected that patterns of this particular type of pedicide would differ from pedicide committed by parents or relatives. For example, filicide often results from prolonged child abuse (Resnick, 1969, 2016) because the child lives with the parent or a regular carer. Thus, the child might have provoked the parent or carer, or these adults no longer want the child. On the contrary, the victims of ritually motivated pedicide are not always connected to the perpetrators biologically. The prophetesses described in this article were strangers to the children they mutilated or attempted to murder. The children did not provoke them to commit the crime against them.

It is commonly reported in sociological and criminological literature that female perpetrators of violent crimes are often accomplices to male criminals (Gelsthorpe & Sharpe, 2006; Gurian, 2011; Hickey, 2013; Messerschmidt, 1993; Messing & Heeren, 2004; Miller, 2010; Perrini, 2013; Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2008; Smart, 1977; Steffensmeier & Alan, 1996), mentally ill (Arora et al., 2017; Bloom & Covington, 2008; Eriksson et al., 2014; Harris et al., 2007; Koenen & Thompson, 2008; Mariano et al., 2014; Taylor & Bragado-Jimenez, 2009; Treplin et al., 1996; West, 2007) or intoxicated (Bloom & Covington, 2008; Crimmins et al., 1997). The rest could be acting in self-defence (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2013; Hamberger & Potente, 1994; Serran and Firestone, 2004; Steffensmeier & Alan, 1996), particularly against intimate partners (Flowers, 1995). Female accomplices are often presumed innocent but under pressure by men to commit violent crimes.

While serving as male accomplices cannot be ruled out in ritually motivated pesticide and mutilation, women can commit these crimes alone or with their fellow women. For example, the eighty-year-old woman mutilated the three children previously described with her thirty-nine-year-old daughter. The three children were “bought” from a female social worker, who was later declared wanted by the police after she escaped on hearing about the arrests of the other two women (Channels, TV, 2021). The female suspect, who sold these children was a staff of Social Welfare Department, Ihiala, Anambra State (Nigeria), whom the public relations police officer described as “a notorious child trafficking kingpin who has been on the police’s wanted list for child trafficking, child stealing and forgery” (Channels, TV, 2021).

Although some of the ritually motivated crimes in the African continent involve men and women as collaborators, some of the women can be rightly described as the leaders who hire men due to the latter possessing “stronger muscles” and “better skills” for crimes of this nature (see Agazue, 2021a). For example, the Nigerian female witchdoctor who rejected the two high school pupils as appropriate victims previously described used men as abductors and servants. This was also the case with the Ugandan female witchdoctor who used her granddaughter for child sacrifice. She had men as her servants, including her son, who later changed his mind after his mother used his daughter (the victim’s grandmother) for a sacrifice. The so-called “sperm bandits” in Zimbabwe had all-female and male-female gangs (Agazue, 2021a). This group, however, is beyond the scope of this article because their victims are almost always adult males.

The ritualistic live burial of a victim in Ghana was planned and executed by a woman who used her authority as a prophetess to convince an afflicted couple to bring their child to her for the live burial after meting out violence on the child. Although a man (the victim’s father) was involved in this serious act, this was one of the severe crimes involving men and women whereby the man could be said to be the accomplice to the woman. In this murder, the victim’s father and mother were under the authority of the prophetess whose words the former obeyed due to her status as a prophetess. The prophetess was like the female witchdoctors described above who worked with men but were the main persons planning the murders and giving orders to be obeyed by the men working with them.

While mental illness and intoxication are equally used as explanations for criminal violence and murder by women, the female perpetrators of pesticide and mutilation discussed in this article were not psychotic or intoxicated. They knew what they wanted and requested the victims be in their right minds, including advising their clients correctly and in compliance with the demands of the magical industry (Agazue, 2021a). Psychosis and intoxication seem irrelevant as these are well-calculated criminal acts well-coordinated over time and with several collaborators, such as body hunters and clients. (Agazue, 2021a). Further, self-defence can never be considered a plausible explanation for these crimes, considering that the victims were mostly little children without the strength and skills to physically harm others. The children never posed any physical threats that could prompt self-defence from anyone; instead, they were simply picked upon and mutilated or murdered.

The premeditation in this act and the brutal ways the women treat or murder these children disrepute everything the public expects from mothers. Right from birth, babies become familiar with their mothers’ faces. This could make children trust mothers more than they trust other people. To be brutalised and violently murdered by their mothers goes against the expectations children have from their

mothers. For the survivors, the victimisation could be a source of confusion that their mothers could also attempt to kill them violently.

Further, the involvement of women in these crimes and the use of children as their victims can make detection difficult. For instance, certain kinds of children's movements with men (e.g., during abduction) are suspected more easily by members of the public. Still, such movements of children with women are hardly suspected because women are seen as the carers and protectors of children. The female perpetrators are most often mothers who know a lot about handling children and keeping them under control in situations likely to arouse suspicion.

CONCLUSION

This article has explored women's perpetration of ritually motivated pedicide and mutilation of children in contemporary Africa. The report has shown that women are active in these violent crimes like men. The women participate in these crimes in different ways – from abducting victims to demanding magical services offered with children's body parts and serving as witchdoctors who send others to kill or kill the victims by themselves for the rituals. The mutilation and murder of children by these women go against the expectation that women are the primary protectors of children. It is a great concern that mothers could lead their children, or the children of others could engage in the brutal murder of children for financial gains or other ulterior motives. It would be a source of trauma for the survivors of this violent crime when they continue to remember that the perpetrator was someone (mother) or similar to the person.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dignity thanks Wiebe de Jong, Lecturer, Department Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands, for his time and expertise to review this article.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Chima Agazue (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2995-0179>) is a UK-based British-Nigerian scholar with teaching and research interests in psychology, criminology, and criminal justice. He teaches psychology at Arden University, United Kingdom. He has also taught psychology at Bath Spa University and criminology and criminal justice at the Blackpool University Centre. His research interests include sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable women and children; child cruelty and homicide by mothers and female caregivers; witchcraft-motivated violence and homicide; ritually motivated crimes; the perception of children as spiritual entities or possessed by mischievous spirits; bystander intervention in violent emergencies; the changing patterns of female criminality, particularly criminal violence, and homicide; and the Nigerian notion of "one-chance" robbery.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Agazue, Chima. (2023). Female perpetrators of ritually motivated pedicide and mutilation of children. *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*. Vol. 8, Issue 1, Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2023.08.01.06>

REFERENCES

- Adelson, L. (1991). Pedicide revisited: The slaughter continues. *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*, 12(1), 16-26. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00000433-199103000-00003>
- Ades, J., & Mishra, J. (2021). Education and crime across America: Inequity's cost. *Social Sciences*, 10(8), 283.
- Agazue, C. (2015). *The role of a culture of superstition in the proliferation of religio-commercial pastors in Nigeria*. AuthorHouse.
- Agazue, C. (2021a). "My daughter was sacrificed by my mother": Women's involvement in ritually motivated violence and murder in contemporary Africa. *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*, 6(5). <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2021.06.05.05>
- Agazue, C. (2021b). Children as mischievous spirits: Legitimising child cruelty and filicide in contemporary Africa. *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2021.06.03.03>
- Ajaegbu, O. O. (2012). Rising youth unemployment and violent crime in Nigeria. *American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities*, 2(5), 315-321.
- Albinism: When mothers traffic their own flesh and blood for ritual killings. (2015). *The Standard*. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/kenya/article/2000160860/albinism-when-mothers-traffic-their-own-flesh-and-blood-for-ritual-killings>
- Arora, A., Yadav, J., Yadav, S. K., & Singh, H. R. (2017). Infanticide: A concept. *Journal of Forensic Science and Medicine*, 3, 42-46. https://doi.org/10.4103/jfsm.jfsm_51_15
- Azeng, T. F., & Yogo, T. U. (2013). Youth unemployment and political instability in selected developing countries. African Development Bank.
- BBC News Pidgin (2021). Ghana Police arrest Okada rider who allegedly behead 13 yr old for ritual in Volta Region. <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-58387342>
- BBC News Pidgin (2022). How Ghana herbalist call police to arrest man wey allegedly bring 11 year-old daughter as sacrifice for money ritual. <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/articles/c6p9y91wxj2o>
- Berry, P. S. (2019). *Resisting against the failed state: Build resilience to overcome unfulfilled circumstances*. Lulu Publishing Services.
- Bloom, B. E., & Covington, S. S. (2008). Addressing the mental health needs of women offenders. <http://stephaniecovington.com/assets/files/FinalAddressingtheMentalHealthNeeds.pdf>
- Bukuluki, P. (2014). Child sacrifice: Myth or reality? *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 41, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.18052/www.scipress.com/ilshs.41.1>
- Bukuluki, P., Fellows, S., & Luwangula, R. (2017). Dilemmas of child "sacrifice and mutilation" in Uganda: Meanings, causes, and explanations. In: Kaawa-Mafigiri, D. and Walakira, E.J. (eds) *Child abuse and neglect in Uganda* (pp. 145-178). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-48535-5_9
- Bukuluki, P., & Mpyangu, C. M. (2014). The African conception of sacrifice and its relationship with child sacrifice. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 41, 12-24. <https://doi.org/10.18052/www.scipress.com/ilshs.41.12>
- Channels TV (2021). Self-acclaimed pastor accused of torturing children in Anambra. <https://www.channelstv.com/2021/03/15/self-acclaimed-pastor-accused-of-torturing-toddlers-in-anambra/>

- Chukuezi, C., & Chukuezi, A. (2010). Myths and beliefs in etiology and treatment of ear, nose and throat diseases amongst the Igbo of Nigeria. *The Internet Journal of Otorhinolaryngology*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.5580/26fc>
- CNN (2019). 10 kidnapped children found dead in Tanzania with missing body parts, ministry says. <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/01/28/africa/tanzania-kids-mutilated-intl/index.html>
- Cramer, C. (2011). Unemployment and participation in violence. *The World Bank*. <https://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01306/web/unemployment.html>
- Crimmins, S., Langley, S., Brownstein, H. H., & Spunt, B. J. (1997). Convicted women who have killed children: A self-psychology perspective. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 12(1), 49-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088626097012001004>
- Eke, S. M., Başoğlu, S., Taktak, Ş., & Gökhan, O. R. A. L. (2015). Analysis of the maternal filicide in terms of forensic medicine in Turkey: A clinical research. *Nöro Psikiyatri Arşivi*, 52(1), 78-82. <https://doi.org/10.5152/npa.2015.7075>
- Ellis, S. (1999). *The mask of anarchy: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war*. Hurst & Company.
- Eriksson, L., & Mazerolle, P. (2013). A general strain theory of intimate partner homicide. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 18(5), 462-470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2013.07.002>
- Eriksson, L., Mazerolle, P., Wortley, R., & Johnson, H. (2014). Maternal and paternal filicide: Case studies from the Australian Homicide Project. *Child Abuse Review*, 25, 17-30. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2358>
- Essien, A. M. (2010). Proliferation of churches: A leeway to commercialisation of religion. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 45(4), 649-657.
- Fatokun, S. A. (2016). The concept of expiatory sacrifice in the early church and in African indigenous religious traditions. Second Edition. In, Adogame, A., Chitando, E., & Bateye, B. (Eds.), *African traditions in the study of religion, diaspora and gendered societies* (pp. 71-81). Routledge.
- Fellows, S. (2013). Child sacrifice and the mutilation of children in Uganda. *Humane Africa*. <http://www.whrin.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Child-Sacrifice-and-the-mutilation-of-children-in-Uganda.pdf>
- Flowers, R. B. (1995). *Female crime, criminals and cellmates: An exploration of female criminality and delinquency*. McFarland and Company, Inc.
- Flynn, S. M., Shaw, J. J., & Abel, K. M. (2013). Filicide: Mental illness in those who kill their children. *PLOS ONE*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0058981>
- Friedman, S. H., & Resnick, P. J. (2007). Child murder by mothers: Patterns and prevention. *World Psychiatry*, 6, 137-141.
- Gavin, H., & Porter, T. (2015). *Female aggression*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gelsthorpe, L., & Sharpe, G. (2006). Gender, youth crime and justice. In Goldson, B., & Muncie, J. (Eds.) *Youth crime and justice: Critical issues* (pp. 47-61). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446263808>
- Gleditsch, K. S., Rivera, M., & Zárate-Tenorio, B. (2022). Can education reduce violent crime? Evidence from Mexico before and after the drug war onset. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 58(2), 292-309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2021.1971649>
- Graphic Online (2016). Three arrested for alleged ritual murder. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/three-arrested-for-alleged-ritual-murder.html>

- Graphic Online (2021). Seven arrested over murder of 12-year-old boy. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/seven-arrested-over-murder-of-12-year-old-boy.html>
- Gurian, E. A. (2011). Female serial murders: Directions for future research on a hidden population. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 55(1), 27-42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624x09352451>
- Hamberger, L. K., & Potente, T. (1994). Counselling heterosexual women arrested for domestic violence: Implications for theory and practice. *Violence and Victims*, 9(2), 25-137.
- Harris, G. T., Hilton, Z., Rice, M. E., & Eke, A. W. (2007). Children killed by genetic parents versus stepparents. *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, 28, 85-95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2006.08.001>
- Hickey, E. (2013). *Encyclopedia of murder & violent crime*. Sage Publications.
- Idris, I. (2016). Youth unemployment and violence: Rapid literature review. GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
- Igwe, L. (2004). Ritual killing and pseudoscience in Nigeria. *Sceptical Inquirer*. http://www.csicop.org/sb/show/ritual_killing_and_pseudoscience_in_Nigeria
- Israel, P. (2009). The war of lions: Witch-hunts, occult idioms and post-socialism in northern Mozambique. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 155-174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070802685627>
- Koenen, M. A., & Thompson, J. W. (2008). Filicide: Historical review and prevention of child death by parent. *Forensic Issues in Mental Health*, 29, 61-75. <https://doi.org/10.1002/imhj.20166>
- Krischer, M. K., Stone, M. H., Sevecke, K., & Steinmeyer, E. M. (2007). Motives for maternal filicide: Results from a study with female forensic patients. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 30(3), 191-200. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlp.2007.03.003>
- Lochner, L., & Moretti, E. (2004). The effect of education on crime: Evidence from prison inmates, arrests, and self-reports. *American Economic Review*, 94(1), 155-189.
- Mariano, T. Y., Chan, H. C., & Myers, W. C. (2014). Toward a more holistic understanding of filicide: A multidisciplinary analysis of 32 years of US arrest data. *Forensic Science International*, 236, 46-53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2013.12.019>
- Marks, M. N., & Kumar, R. (1993a). Infanticide in England and Wales. *Medicine, Science and the Law*, 33(4), 329-339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002580249303300411>
- Marks, M. N., & Kumar, R. (1996b). Infanticide in Scotland. *Medicine, Science and the Law*, 36(4), 299-305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002580249603600405>
- Masoga, M. A., & Rugwiji, T. (2018). A reflection on ritual murders in the biblical text from an African perspective. *Scriptura*, 117(1), 1-13.
- Max-Wirth, C. (2016). Juju and statecraft: Occult rumours and politics in Ghana. PhD thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington. <https://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10063/5438/thesis.pdf?sequence=1>
- McKee, G. R. (2006). *Why mothers kill: A forensic psychologist's casebook*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780195182736.001.0001>
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (1993). *Maculinites and crime: Critique and reconceptualisation of theory*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Messing, J. T., & Heeren, J. W. (2004). Another side of multiple murder: Women killers in domestic context. *Homicide Studies*, 8(2), 123-158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767903262446>

- Miller, J. (2010). Gendered criminal opportunity. In Cullen, F. T., & Wilcox, P. (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of criminological theory. Volume Two*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412959193>
- Modern Ghana (2021). Man grabbed for buying one and half year old son alive. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1084786/man-grabbed-for-burying-one-and-half-year-old.html>
- Pitt, S. E., & Bale, E. M. (1995). Neonaticide, infanticide, and filicide: A review of the literature. *The Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 23(3), 375-386.
- Octogenarian arrested for alleged child trafficking in Anambra. (2021). *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/news/octogenarian-arrested-for-alleged-child-trafficking-in-anambra/>
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2019). Understanding the role of gender in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism. OSCE.
- Owusu, E. S. (2022). The superstition that dismembers the African child: An exploration of the scale and features of juju-driven paedicide in Ghana. *International Annals of Criminology*, 1-42. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2022.2>
- Pitt, S. E., & Bale, E. M. (1995). Neonaticide, infanticide, and filicide: A review of the literature. *The Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 23(3), 375-386.
- Pulse (2014). Lagos pastor caught over rituals. <https://www.pulse.ng/gist/end-times-lagos-pastor-caught-over-rituals/5tdwm6d>
- Punch (2020). Reign of ritual killers: Police caught napping as Ibadan community's hope stands on hunters, OPC. <https://punchng.com/reign-of-ritual-killers-police-caught-napping-as-ibadan-communitys-hope-stands-on-hunters-opc/>
- Punch (2022). Ritual killings: We'll fish out quacks: Ogun alternate medicine practitioners say. https://punchng.com/ritual-killings-well-fish-out-quacks-ogun-alternate-medicine-practitioners-say/?utm_source=auto-read-also&utm_medium=web
- Rege, M., Skardhamar, T., Telle, K., & Votruba, M. (2019). Job displacement and crime: Evidence from Norwegian register data. *Labour Economics*, 61, 101761.
- Resnick, P. J. (1969). Child murder by parents: A psychiatric review of filicide. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 126(3), 325-334. <https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.126.3.325>
- Resnick, P. J. (2016). Filicide in the United States. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 58, S203-S209. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.196845>
- Salisbury, S. (2012). The practice of ritual killings and human sacrifice in Africa. *Human Rights Brief*. <http://hrbrief.org/2012/09/the-practice-of-ritual-killings-and-human-sacrifice-in-africa/>
- Schühle, J. (2013). Medicine murder of people with albinism in Tanzania: How casino capitalism creates rumorscapes and occult economies. Freie Universität Centre for Area Studies.
- Schwartz, J., & Steffensmeier, D. (2008). The nature of female offending: Patterns and explanation. In: Zaplin, R. T. (Ed.) *Female offenders: Critical perspectives and effective interventions* (pp. 43-75). Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- Serran, G., & Firestone, P. (2004). Intimate partner homicide: A review of the male proprietariness and the self-defense theories. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 9, 1-15. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789\(02\)00107-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789(02)00107-6)
- Smart, C. (1977). *Women, crime and criminology: A feminist critique*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203079676>
- Steffensmeier, D., & Alan, E. (1996). Gender and crime: Toward a gendered theory of female offending. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 459-487. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.459>

- Tade, O. (2013). A spiritual dimension to cybercrime in Nigeria: The “yahoo plus” phenomenon. *Human Affairs*, 23, 689-705. <https://doi.org/10.2478/s13374-013-0158-9>
- Taylor, P. J., & Bragado-Jimenez, M. D. (2009). Women, psychosis and violence. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 32(1), 56-64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlp.2008.11.001>
- The Africa Report (2012). Ritual murders stalk Central Uganda. <https://www.theafricareport.com/6529/ritual-murders-stalk-central-uganda/>
- Treplin, L. A., Abram, K. M., & McClelland, G. M. (1996). Prevalence of psychiatric disorders among incarcerated women. I: Pretrial jail detainees. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 53(8), 668. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.1996.01830060047007>
- Udoye, E. A. (2011). Resolving the prevailing conflicts between Christianity and African (Igbo) traditional religion through inculturation. Lit Verlag Dr W Hopf.
- Vanguard (2014). Escape from ritual killers: The story of two students. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/08/escape-ritual-killers-story-two-students/>
- West, S. G. (2007). An overview of filicide. *Psychiatry*, 48-57.
- Yarwood, D. J. (2004). Child homicide: Review of statistics and studies. Dewar Research.