

**REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN NGUGI WA
THIONG'O'S *THE RIVER BETWEEN*, HENRY OLE KULET'S *BLOSSOMS
OF THE SAVANNAH* AND MARY KAROORO OKURUT'S *THE SWITCH***

BY

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
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DECLARATION

I, **Akambangira Grace**, declare that this dissertation is a product of my original work and has never been submitted for an award in any other University or Institution of higher learning. Any information quoted has been lawfully acknowledged.

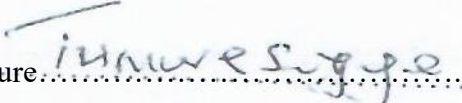

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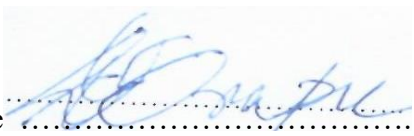

APPROVAL

This dissertation has been produced under my supervision and has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University supervisor.

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Supervisor

DEDICATION

I dedicate my research to my friend, mentor and beloved husband Mr. Besigye Henry Davis and to my beloved father, the late Mr. Keijarubi Ted Kakooko (RIP). Thank you for giving me life, believing in me and sacrificing all you could for the sake of my bright future.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the representations of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karooro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016). In these three novels I explored the ways in which the authors variously represent different shades of the practice that has come to be known as FGM. I investigated why the fictional communities depicted in the selected novels engage in FGM practice and established how FGM affects characters individually and collectively. I also examined the narrative techniques the authors use to represent the practice and effects of FGM in the selected novels. The key method I used to obtain data is a close reading of the primary texts which included Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karooro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016). The secondary texts were also consulted both print and electronic from relevant works written by other scholars. I collected data with the guidance of the research objectives. The study involved the examination of documents guided by a textual checklist as the major research instrument. This study adopted the cultural feminist theory. In the study, I discover that different communities engage in FGM as a way to regulate their women's sexual behaviour and as a norm to transform them from childhood to adulthood. Different individuals and communities are affected in different ways, some individuals have lost their lives while others though they may heal from physical wounds still undergo psychological trauma. The practice has also created space for diseases like cancer and fistula. Victims of such diseases usually have pus coming from their private parts especially in the advanced stage of infection acquired as a result of FGM. They die painful deaths due to mutilation of their female genitals. The authors have tactfully used techniques like diction, setting and description among others to clearly bring out their different messages. I recommend the human rights advocates to sensitize the communities on how best they can ably control

female genital mutilation within families and NCDC (National Curriculum development Centre) should make the literary texts under study set books in order to sensitize the students on Female Genital Mutilation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the representations of Female Genital Mutilation (hereafter FGM) in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karoro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016). In these three novels I explored the ways in which the different authors represent different shades of the practice that has come to be known as FGM. In my exploration, I located the three novels within the broader field of East African literature. I focused on the uniqueness of FGM as a central theme in the novels which prompted me to carry out this study. I investigated why the fictional communities depicted in the selected novels engage in FGM practice and established how FGM affects characters individually and collectively. I also examined the narrative techniques the authors use such as setting, diction and rhetorical questions to represent the practice and the effects of FGM on the characters individually and collectively in the selected novels. By so doing, I hope to add my voice to the criticism and fight against FGM through literary praxis.

1.2.1 Background to the Study

This is a brief summary of each novel as well as their respective authors. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the author of *The River Between* (1965) was born in 1938 in Limuru, Kenya. He was educated at Alliance High School, Kikuyu, at Makerere University, Uganda and at the University of Leeds. His first novel, *Weep Not, Child*, was published in 1964 and this was followed by *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1980), *Matigari ma Njiruungi* (1986), *Wizard of the Crow*, (2004), *The Perfect Nine: The Epic of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi* (2020). Some of his plays are; *The Black Hermit* (1963), *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *Ngaahika Ndeenda: Ithaako ria ngerekano (I Will Marry When I Want)* (1977, 1982) (with Ngugi wa Mirii).

In 1967, Ngũgĩ became a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Nairobi. He taught there until 1977. He served as Fellow in Creative writing at Makerere University (1969-1970), and as Visiting Associate Professor of English and African Studies at North-western University (1970-1971) in United States of America. During his tenure at Nairobi, Ngũgĩ was at the centre of the politics of English departments in Africa, championing the change of name from English to simply Literature to reflect world literature with African and third world literatures at the centre. He has also continued to speak around the world at numerous universities and as a

distinguished speaker. These appearances include: the 1984 Robb Lectures at Auckland University in New Zealand; the 1996 Clarendon Lectures in English at Oxford University; the 1999 Ashby Lecture at Cambridge; and the 2006 MacMillan Stewart Lectures at Harvard. He is a recipient of many honors, including the 2001 Nonino International Prize for Literature and eleven honorary doctorates. The World-renowned Kenyan writer and academic Professor Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters at the University of Edinburgh Graduation on 8th July 2019.

On the other hand, Henry Ole Kulet was born in 1946 and raised in Enkare-Ngusur in Narok, Kenya. He studied farm management at Egerton College. In 1987, he retired from his career in agriculture. During his retirement, he wrote nine books including; *Is it possible* (1971), *To Become A man* (1972), *The Hunter* (1985), *Daughter of Maa* (1987), *Moran No More* (1990), *Bandits of Kibi* (1999), *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008), *Vanishing Herds* (2011) and *The Elephant Dance* (2016). In 2009 his novel *Blossoms of the Savannah* was awarded the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature and in 2013, *Vanishing Herds* also won him the same award. In 2018, *Blossoms of the Savannah* was selected to become a mandatory part of the English secondary school curriculum for Kenyan schools. He is currently enjoying his retirement as Kenya's two times Jomo Kenyatta Prize for literature award winner.

Mary Busingye Karooro Okurut, more commonly known as Mary Karooro Okurut, is a Ugandan educator, author and politician. She is the current Cabinet Minister in Charge of General Duties in the Office of the Prime Minister, in the Ugandan Cabinet. She was appointed to that position on 6th June 2016 (Daily Monitor 2016). She was born on December 8th 1954 (age 66 years), from Bushenyi district and was educated from Bweranyangi Girls' Senior Secondary School, Trinity College Nabbingo and Makerere University. She is the founder of Femrite (Uganda Women Writers' Association). Her literary works include; *The Curse of the Sacred Cow* (1994), *The Adventurous Sisters* (1994), *Child of a Delegate* (1997), *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), *The Official Wife* (2003), *The Switch* (2016) and a collection of short stories entitled *Milking a Lioness and Other Stories*.

FGM is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO 2016) as ‘all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice is internationally regarded as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, constituting an extreme form of discrimination against women.

FGM practice still possess a debate on both national and internationally communities especially in the communities and individuals that either support or opposite it. Disagreements in ideologies exist between researchers and activists (Johnsdotter 2012).

Locally, the names given to FGM disguise the terrible dangers associated to the practice and tend to reduce the stigmatisation of victims in the community. This makes them to uphold and cling to the traditional practice. Employing terms like cut as away to motivate the traditional groups implementing the practice. The use of terms like circumcision makes the implementers of FGM to feel free to familiarise their practice to that of men and in this, they would help to remove the fear and tension that comes along the FGM practice. This is done to motivate all the implementers and participants of the practice to feel that it's a normal act. Such a disguise makes them to ignore the negative concerns that come along with the practice. (Kan, 2015)

There are many literary scholars who have tackled female genital mutilation and some of these include; Nawal El Saadawi's work entitled, *Women and Sex* (1972). In their works, they reveal the divisions that exist within the African literary critiques and feminists in regard to how they describe and portray Female genital mutilation. Stephen Bishop (1992) also handled FGM in his article "Oppositional Approaches to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in African Literature". Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez (2000)'s *Mother as a Verb: The Erotic, Audre Lorde and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)*, dwells on the injurious practice through theorizations of female sexuality and eroticism. In her work, she majorly concentrated on how females are sexually exploited and exposed to all sorts of sexual torture including FGM, which leaves them in a sorry state.

Additionally, Asma El Dareer (1998) in his work *Female Genital Mutilation in Modern African novels* points out that most novels, criticize female genital mutilation practice in all the possible ways. These studies reflect FGM practices which reconnect to my study area but their discussion on the issue is brief and they thus leave out very important aspects of the practice. This study therefore intends to analyse the FGM practice in depth by exploring critical issues like reasons why the fictional communities engage in FGM practice; ways in which FGM affects characters and the narrative techniques each author uses to depict the practice.

Additionally, Nawal El Saadawi uses her work, *Women and Sex* (1972) to criticize female genital practice; Saadawi included a section entitled, *The Circumcision of Girls*, in her book *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (1980), this gives a detailed insight on what she passed through as she was being exposed to FGM in her society at her tender age. This study intends to identify the age in which the girls are usually exposed to FGM and further identify the community response towards the individuals who advocate for the abolition of FGM practice. El Saadawi's works expose how FGM is practiced in Egypt an Arab community and although the study helps to bring out the dangers of FGM in the Arab communities, it leaves out other parts of African continent which are also affected by FGM.

It is therefore, against this background, that the researcher has been inspired to explore the representations of Female Genital Mutilation (hereafter FGM) in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karoro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016) by investigating why communities in the selected novels engage in FGM practice, establishing how FGM affects characters and their traits in the selected literary texts and exploring the narrative techniques the author's use to represent FGM practice in the selected works.

1.2.2 Definition of Key Terms

In this research the key terms hereunder have the meanings herewith attached to them:

- FGM (Female genital mutilation) also known as female genital cutting and female circumcision, is the ritual cutting or removal of some or all parts of the external female genitalia.
- Clitoridectomy: is the surgical removal, reduction, or partial removal of the clitoris. It is rarely used as a therapeutic medical procedure, such as when cancer has developed in or spread to the clitoris. It is often performed on intersex new-borns. Commonly, non-medical removal of the clitoris is performed during female genital mutilation (FGM)

- Circumcision: is a removal of the foreskin from the human penis. In the most common procedure the foreskin is extended with forceps (in pre-pubescent children its adhesion to the glans must also be broken with a probe), then a circumcision device may be placed, after which the foreskin is excised.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Female Genital Mutilation is arguably, by far the most insensitive and worst form of injustice and a human rights violation that women and girls can ever experience, not only in live practice but also in fictional works (Abdel Halim, A, 2016). The continuous practice of female genital mutilation has attracted different scholars both scientific and literary. Some of them include Nawal El-Saadawi (1972) with *Women and sex*, Fran Hosken (1979)'s *Genital and sexual mutilation of females*, Waris Dirie (1997)'s *Desert flower* and Germaine Greer (1898) *The Rejuvenation of Miss Semaphore*. Nawal El-Saadawi (1972), for instance, identifies issues such as inferiority complex and death among women within the community as a result of FGM. Notably, these scholars do not address the theme of FGM from a literary critical standpoint. Though some scholars like Wanyonyi, K (2013) in his article "Understanding Female Genital Mutilation in a literary context", Mengo (2010)'s work entitled *Female Genital Mutilation; a threat in East African selected novels*, Timi Odueso (2019) in his article "Cutting Culture Off: A Review of Mary Karooro Okurut's *The Switch*" and Nnaemeka, O. (2016) in an article entitled

“Female Circumcision and the Politics of Knowledge: African women in Imperialist Discourses” have analysed the novels under study based on their agenda, though some of them just identify FGM as just a theme not a centre for their research. Scholars like Nnaemeka, O. (2016) and Timi Odueso (2019) who try to concentrate on FGM only handle it basing on their own objectives and theoretical framework which is extremely different from the ones of my study. This leaves out a gap that this study aims to address by exploring the representations of FGM in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet’s *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karoro Okurut’s *The Switch* (2016), through which it will add to the existing knowledge by analysing why the fictional communities in the selected novels engage in the practice of FGM; the effects of FGM on characters and explore the narrative techniques each of the authors use to depict the practice of FGM.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the representations of FGM in the selected novels in order to investigate why the fictional communities in the selected texts engage in FGM practice; establish how FGM affects characters both individually and collectively. I also explore the narrative techniques that the authors use to variously represent FGM, with a view to demonstrate that techniques are the vehicles that each author uses to transport readers into and out of the fictional world of fictional work in question.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate why the fictional communities in the selected novels engage in the practice of FGM.
2. To establish how FGM affects characters individually and collectively in the selected novels.
3. To explore the narrative techniques each of the authors use to depict the practice of FGM in the selected novels.

1.6 Research Questions

The following questions will guide my exploration:

1. Why do the fictional communities in the selected novels engage in the practice of FGM?
2. In what ways does FGM affect characters individually and collectively in the selected novels?
3. Which narrative techniques does each of the authors use to depict FGM practice in each of the selected novels?

1.7 Scope of the Study

My exploration focused on *The River Between* (1965), *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and *The Switch* (2016) as the primary sources. The rationale for selecting these novels is that each of

them has FGM as a central thematic concern. Secondly, *The River Between*, *Blossoms of the Savannah* and *The Switch* are some of East Africa's most recognized and studied novels. I argue that the themes and fictional communities represented in these novels sufficiently reflect the real-world situation (familiar occasions) of not only East Africa but Africa in general.

1.8 Justification of the Study

Scholars like Germaine Greer (1898), Nawal El Saadawi (1972) and critics of FGM from as early as the 1980's examined various subjects like the dangers of FGM in the Arab community and how FGM has led to death of women. This study explores the representations of FGM in the novels by investigating why the fictional communities in the selected novels engage in the practice of FGM; establishing how FGM affects characters individually and collectively in the selected novels and exploring the narrative techniques each of the authors use to depict the practice of FGM. This is in relation to the cultural feminist theory. The concept of FGM is a central one in the selected works and therefore requires a unique analysis which I have done to bring out its relevance and significance in contemporary contexts.

1.9 Significance of the Study

I am hopeful that the study will enrich the criticism of Female genital mutilation and enhance a fight against FGM. My research findings will hopefully be used by literary critics and other

scholars in their effort to investigate and understand the trauma evidenced by females especially in my selected literary texts and this will enhance their fight against FGM in their communities.

I also hope that it would serve as a reference for further research to be conducted by other scholars in this area.

This study findings will hopefully guide the policy makers and non-governmental organizations in designing and setting up new regulations focused at promoting women rights by addressing Female Genital Mutilation as a major issue in women rights violation.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the feminist theory. Feminist theory employs unique techniques and feminist related language to elaborate and illustrate key information that is related to gender especially women. This applies to different spheres of life which could be in social life, economical and academic which includes literature as a principle subject.

Scholars like Gloria S (2013) believe that men are equally oppressed like women. They are both subjected to oppression and therefore believe that feminism benefits both male and females. She believes that feminism gives a chance to all sexes to experiment equality. As she states;

Men are outraged, turned off, and wigged out, by threats that women might withdraw consent to oppression, because they—men—

subconsciously (and often consciously) know that they—men—are
oppressed

All people are exposed different forms of gender oppression whether male or female. Feministic scholars advocate for equality for all. This is important to my study because this would give this research a chance to discover how male characters are affected by female genital mutilation as a form of gender violence.

Mary D (2015) reveals that feminist theory considers men to be oppressors of women. She acknowledges that women need to accept that men are the originators, planners, controllers, and legitimators of patriarchy society. She believes that men are agents of suffering that women are exposed to. As she states;

All men receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from male
supremacy. All men have oppressed women. Older men generally are
being in charge of younger men and all females

Mary believes that men play a great role in influencing all the evil activities that take place on women. Female genital mutilation being a example of the evil practices women are exposed to, this makes such a study a great source to my research with an intention to discover how FGM in the selected works is as a result of male patriarchy.

Contemporary critiques like Sara Mills (2007) in her article “Post-colonial Feminist Theory” and Penelope Harvey (1987) in her work *Feminism and Anthropology* outlines the difficulties and much critique, feminist theory has been subjected to. These works have made a difference to the practice of anthropology hence making a contribution to feminist thinking. These works helped me to analyse and interpret most assumptions relate to gender and equality. Feminist theory will help me internalise patriarchy circumstances in my selected works under study.

Feminist theory addresses many issues like sexual oppression, sexism, harassment, beautification and objectification among others. For example, in theorizing sexual harassment, Katherine Franke [1997:693] conceptualizes the phenomenon as a technology of sexism. She asserts that it is a disciplinary practice that inscribes, enforces, and guides the identities of both the harasser and victim according to a system of gender norms that envisions women as feminine, hetero sexual objects, and men as masculine, and hetero sexual subjects. Feminist theory is concerned more with the intersection of race and other feminist concerns. For example, new feminist critics like Brunell (2019) revealed that feminists respect individual informed choices and believe there shouldn't be a double standard in judging a person.

More so, Elinor (2018) adds that everyone has the right to sexual autonomy and the ability to make decisions about when, how and with whom to conduct their sexual life. Therefore, this theory has been significant in this study since it has acted as a guide as I further explored the representations of female genital mutilation in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of The Savannah* and Mary Karooro Okurut's *The Switch*.

1.11 Conclusion

A research problem that triggered off this study was the absence of any studies that adequately explored the representations of Female Genital Mutilation in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karooro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016)

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this section, I review different forms of related knowledge, literature, remarks and comments available about FGM in general and FGM in relation to literary texts and particularly to the novels under study; *The River Between* (1965) by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) by Henry Ole Kulet and *The Switch* (2016) by Mary Karoro Okurut.) with an aim to establish the gap that this study intends to fill.

2.2 Why the fictional communities engage in the practice of FGM

In areas where this practice is done, it is justified as being a result of mothers' love and care, as a way of looking out for their daughters' future.

In addition, Adams's (2009) "The Anti-female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Novel in Public Education: An Example from Ghana" focuses on Annor Nimako's *Mutilated* to argue for effective social change through literary texts in education. Tobe Levin's "What's Wrong with Mariam? Gloria Naylor's Infibulated Jew" offers a pungent critique of Naylor's *Bailey's Café*, especially her characterization of Mariam and the rationale behind having made the genitally mutilated character a Jew. Marianne Sarkis's "Somali Womanhood: A Re-visionary" contains a

lament for the under-examined life-writings of Somali women and the ways in which their life narrations have been left to the inventiveness of androcentric anthropologists and historians who tacitly approve of the practice of FGM as an aspect of traditional codes of honour. My study like Anne V. Adams's seeks to identify the contribution of tradition towards the FGM practice in the works under study.

Khaemba Wanyonyi (2013) reveals that FGM causes a lot of tension, uncertainties and conflicts among the women that take part in the practice. He closely looks at perception, beliefs and cultural values towards FGM by different characters that have received formal education and those at the back drop of Maasai cultural practices in the literary world. Wanyonyi (2013) argues that the introduction of Western literature precipitated change in the status of female genital mutilation on the Maasai women. Such an influence on their FGM transformation has led to creation of tension and conflict. Wanyonyi's argument is useful to my study since the issue of western literature influence is highly reflected in the novels under study. I thus want to discover if it has any contribution to the acts of FGM in the given societies under study.

Additionally, Fauziya Kasindja (2019) reveals that different communities in the African based literary works portray FGM positively. He reveals that most Gikuyu writers portray FGM and other forms of circumcision as ways of adherence to Gikuyu traditions and cultural identity. In

his work he confirms that every Gikuyu man and woman is circumcised, a rite of passage that ushers them into adulthood and affirms them as a true member of the tribe. His assertion corresponds to Nnaemeka, O. (2016) also reveals that circumcision also represents the difficulty some characters have in embracing both the white missionaries' Christianity and their own Gikuyu traditions. African writers create characters that are in support of FGM while others advocate for its abolishment. This depends on the writer's interest. Though this is a general comment in regard to FGM, it still gives me a general overview of the situation despite the fact that I want to concentrate on FGM only in the given work

Mengo (2010) portrays the way Maasai women are culturally mistreated by being exposed to FGM within their community. Her work provides an insight of the patriarchy society takes advantage of their position to mistreat the women by exposing them to FGM. Their acts are always supported by the traditional Maasai culture. Such practice of FGM leaves women in an inferior position within the traditional setting. This study confirms that men are the greatest advocates of FGM since they selfishly benefit from its results. It's the reason they always advocate for FGM practice no matter the cost.

2.3 The narrative techniques each of the authors use to depict the practice of FGM

According to Stephen Bishop (1992) in his article "Oppositional Approaches to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in African Literature", literature is an ideal vehicle for discussing a wide range of issues, including feminism, human rights, and religious and political fundamentalism. My

study in a way embraces the above assertion not only by using feminism theory to discover how relevant such a theory is in relation to FGM practice, but also by exposing the contribution of feminists in a fight against FGM basing on the selected texts under study.

In Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez (2000)'s "Mother as a Verb: The Erotic, Audre Lorde and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)," which dwells on the injurious practice through theorizations of female sexuality and eroticism, the second section of the book, "Enraged," centres on writers who display much stronger anger against FGM, my study intends to unveil how the authors like Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet in *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karooro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016) depict FGM basing on how they portray it in their texts under study.

Augustine H. Asaah (2006)'s "Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Ambivalence, Indictment and Commitment in Sub-Saharan African Fiction" investigates the treatment of FGM in selected African narratives. To him, FGM requires sustained scrutiny and debate until it is abolished because it is a sensitive, emotional issue. Similarly, to this, my study seeks to identify the perception and angle in which these authors depict FGM in their works.

Asma El Dareer (1996) also points out that, most novels both, African and African American, depict FGM in a negative way. This idea is supported by many activists. It is interesting to note that while the African feminist activists and the scholars in literary sphere are divided in their perception of FGM, their disapproval of African American in regard to this topic is nonetheless unanimous. The analysis of the differences is based on twelve novels, which, apart from the ones mentioned in this study, also includes four African novels: Waris Dirie: *Desert Flower*, Mende Nazer: *Slave*, Fauziya Kasindja: *Do They Hear You When You Cry?* and Jacyee Aniagolu-Johnson: *Mikela. Memoirs of a Maasai Woman* and two African American novels: Rita Williams-Garcia: *No Laughter Here* and Tracy Price-Thompson: *A Woman's Worth*. This provoked me to probe about the perception of East African writers as far as FGM is concerned so as to relate this study to other parts of the world and gauge the similarities and differences.

Gloria Naylor (1982) reveals that FGM is seen as casual and touches the subject merely as a part of the girl's wedding preparations. This study intends to discover why FGM is practiced in other societies under study. Additionally, Nawal El Saadawi's descriptions of this practice avoid explicit terms, such as clitoris, vagina, infibulation, using instead innocent child vocabulary, that is: *bud, new born bird*, which agrees with the blurred retrospective narration of an innocent girl, with which circumcision is described. The practice itself is given the name "*purification*", offering an indirect comment of the author's view of FGM in a sarcastic and subtle way:

The razor-blade moved over her head; her soft, thick hair fell into the pail. The razor dropped to her body, and passed over her skin, uprooting the hair. When it reached the pit of her lower stomach, moving through the patch of black hair it stumbled upon the tiny white bud that looked like a new born bird. It plucked the bud from its roots, leaving in its place a deep wound in the flesh, like the scabbed-over cleft. (In those times, this surgical operation was called 'purification'; its goal was to 'purify' the human being by removing sexual organs.) (El Saadawi, 67).

This study unlike El Saadawi's seeks to understand why the fictional communities under study practice FGM. In El Saadawi's novel, *Women and Sex* (1972), at the beginning of circumcision, the author distances herself from the girl and her pain, which is demonstrated by her use of a third-person narrator in the FGM description in the following paragraph:

Hamida did not feel the pain. Her eyes remained dry, and she abandoned herself to the dirt floor, lying there passively, while from beneath her thighs came a long ribbon of blood, its dark red hue glistening in the sunshine, she raised the gallabiyya from her legs. The familiar appendage was not there; in its place she found a small cleft, which looked just like that old, closed-up wound. (El Sadaawi, 47 -48)

Compared to the tone of El Saadawi's metaphorical description of circumcision, where the critique is expressed in a very subtle way, the above quotation clearly shows the different effect of Naylor's narration; although the writer avoids a direct expression of opinion of FGM, the comparison still produces dramatic effects, which cannot be described as neutral. This study has prompted me to identify the literary techniques the authors use to depict the FGM message to the readers.

Abdulrehman, S. (2023) also identifies mixed reactions on FGM among the African writers. Some are positive while the majority are negative. A small fraction of these authors avoid showing their personal opinion on FGM practice in their works. The reasons for this kind of writing originate in the cultures that practice FGM, where this custom is considered a taboo. It is a forbidden topic, not to be spoken of by its members. The African authors included in this study have broken this cultural taboo thus defiance of this tradition. They have furthermore had at least some contact with the Western culture and its view of women's role in society, which undoubtedly caused them to compare and question the African tradition. I identified the extent to which tradition contributes to the FGM practice and established the standpoint of the selected authors towards FGM. Abdulrehman, S. (2023)'s study made me to relate their perception to the community in which they originate. The above-mentioned study helped me to establish why communities engage in FGM thus contributing to my study findings.

According to Dawthorne (1975) African writers take part in the polemics related to FGM. Such scholars employ literature to expose the dangers of FGM based on different cultural settings. For example Alice Walker's *The Secret of Joy* further critiques FGM and depicts African cultures and customs negatively. Similarly, her work *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women*, describes her and the co-author Pratibha Parmar's visit to an African village, presenting FGM through direct descriptions and interviews.

Their purpose, though, is not to depict this practice and its reasons from the point of view of the tribal culture, but rather to present the villagers' ignorance of the dangers of circumcision, and the details of the process itself. (Dawthorne, 1975)

The researcher is prompted to carry out this study, in order to discover the perspective of the authors towards the FGM practice in question.

Mizrach, S (2003) in his work entitled "Female genital modification in African literature" dictates the complexity of the ambivalent approach of the majority of African writers' vs a partial, one-sided approach of the majority of African American writers. The latter is best explained by their second-hand acquaintance with this topic, along with the influence of their own cultural values and education, as well as a different understanding of the women's social role. It is interesting to observe that, compared to the African American fairly unified one-

dimensional view of FGM, the perception of this practice is divided; the African approach to this topic is usually ambivalent, intertwining indirect, blurry descriptions with a direct portrayal of consequences, and apologetic passages, explaining the reasons behind the practice, with statistic quotations of FGM's wide presence in the world. This study is carried out as a strategy to show and describe the complexity of FGM issue, and at the same time reveal the author's dilemma as they try to either justify or refute FGM as a traditional African custom and this acted as a basis for my study.

Flora Nwapa's (1999) choice of names for this practice involves more subtle expressions, like *to have a bath*, sometimes also *circumcision*, but never *mutilation*, which is on the other hand common for African writers. This neutral tone is even more obvious in the description of circumcision as offered by Flora Nwapa; instead of Efuru's pain, the narration is focused on the reactions of the villagers, who sympathize with the girl, but do not condone the practice, as can be seen in the next quotation:

The woman went to the back of the house and there it was done. Efuru screamed and screamed. It was so painful. Her mother-in-law consoled her. It will soon be over, my daughter don't cry. (Nwapa, 13-14)

Althaus, F. A. (1997) reveals that the same time, this quotation expresses the culprit of FGM, as pointed out in several places of the novel;

That is the ignorant African culture, holding on to tradition at any cost, and its men who, as the superior gender of this culture, suppress the powerless women. It is expressed indirectly through the writer stressing the importance of circumcision as a prerequisite for marriage, as the single goal of a girl's life. At the same time, assigning guilt is connected to the reasons for circumcision, offered in the novels.

This study intends to independently discover the techniques the authors use portray the message about FGM practice. This would help to enhance proper comparison of the devices used in relation to other works.

The diction used by different authors reveals their negative views on FGM, taking advantage of shocking, dramatic terminology, comparisons, metaphorical language and whole stories, a very self-righteous tone or even the choice of narrator, which results in their sometimes overly exaggerated and one-dimensional FGM descriptions. This single-perspective approach can be noted also in the description of the consequences of FGM. It remains to be seen how Karooro, Kulet and Ngugi also apply the use words to depict their message to the reader. This study

intends to discover whether such techniques are still used in these selected texts and thus reveal their effectiveness in depicting the FGM message.

Autobiographical writer Waris Dirie (1997), finds it necessary to take into account the actual circumstances surrounding their stories as well as the time when the novel was written. For example, during the time of writing her novel, Waris Dirie was a US ambassador for anti-FGM affairs, and so, it is under great influence from the Western activists' mentality. This is reflected in her occasional use of western FGM related terminology and her choice of reasons for FGM, which are common with western FGM abolitionists. On the other hand, her strong critique of FGM notwithstanding, she fails to accuse her parents for her circumcision and is even unable to talk to them about it. An additional important element in her story is the fact that Waris was circumcised at the age of five, but decided to leave Africa years later, after being threatened by a marriage to an older man she did not love. In the following quotation, Dirie herself stresses that it was her father (who wanted to marry her off) and not her mother (who circumcised her) she ran away from home with the help of her mother.

This horrible journey began when I ran away from my father. I lived in a nomadic tribe in Somali desert, and when I was thirteen years old, my

father announced I was to be married to an older man. Since I knew I had to react fast. I told my mother I would run away. (Dirie, 14)

All these factors influence Dirie's attitude towards circumcision and the consequent inconsistencies in her criticism of this practice. It's from this point that the researcher is motivated to identify the reasons as to why different individuals and communities engage in FGM practice.

Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi (2010) argues that campaigns to eradicate FGM are largely located in the Western world and tend to homogenize all varieties of the practice, bundling together different cultures and traditions and labelling them as 'other' to Western society in a way that resonates without dated colonial ideologies. Referring to Fauziya Kasinga's well-documented plea for asylum in the United States, based on her need to escape FGM,

Media representations of Kasinga's story perpetuated troubling colonialist assumptions in the dichotomy of an enlightened West as refuge from the 'backward' and 'barbaric' traditions of Africa" (283); she suggests that the anti- FGM campaign is "a civilizing mission if ever there was one (284).

Darja Marinšek (2006) argues that African authors writing on FGM have also been influenced by western ideologies. They still offer a very different depiction of the practice than their European counterparts. Marinšek compares descriptions of the act of circumcision and observes that the African writers use metaphors to describe the cutting process: “to have a bath”, or “to remove the bud”. These accounts emphasize the good food and nursing that the women/girls receive afterwards, as well as their increased status in society. Significantly, the African-authored narratives avoid terms such as mutilation, clitoris or vagina (132-9). By contrast, other (None African) writers take a more negative view.

Marinšek (2006) concludes that the African writers are ambivalent about FGM because they are immersed and influenced by their culture and traditions. Whereas, the other authors from other parts of the world are condemnatory because they have “distance and (mis)understanding of this practice” (144) and are equally immersed in their own culture and influenced by its traditions. This quotation encourages the researcher to carry out this study in order to discover the contribution to relate the western ideologies with those of African and thus be able to make a proper conclusion on which ideology is more genuine than the other.

According to Amadiume (2013) in his work “Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society” he reveals that female authors are always sensitive as they unveil sensitive issues like Female Genital Mutilation and other forms of female mistreatment. He

accepts the fact that sometimes female authors are mistaken to be biased as they reveal facts about what intemently concerns them. Amadiume believes that female genital mutilation plays a great role in bringing down the reputation of female status. As he states;

Women once given a chance to write on patent issues like female genital circumcision, they whole heartedly reveal what they think about different issues. This is usually done with the usage of different techniques possible.

Such quotation is important because it gives the researcher an insight of what inspires different scholars like Marry Karoro to write on sensitive issues like Female genital mutilation. It is at this point that the researcher intends to discover the narrative techniques each of the authors use to depict the practice of FGM in the selected novels.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident from the above scholars, that FGM has been highly tackled by different scholars on scientific, political and literary perspectives. Despite, all this FGM has not been fully exhausted most especially on the literary perspective, there are very few literary scholars who have bothered to handle the issue. This has prompted me to fill this gap by investigating why communities in the selected texts engage in FGM practice, establish how FGM affects characters and their traits in the selected literary Texts and explore the narrative

techniques the author's use to represent FGM practice in the selected works. All these were handled in *The River Between* (1965) by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) by Henry Ole Kulet and *The Switch* (2016) by Mary Karoro Okurut.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the various aspects of my research process: from the research design, data collection, preparing the collected data and doing data analysis. It further identifies the research instruments appropriate for use, procedures for data collection, data processing, data analysis and interpretation, up to compiling and documenting of the research report.

3.2 Research Approach

In this study, I used a qualitative approach. The study is descriptive in nature in order to help me get detailed information and help me analyse the data obtained intensively in relation to the study objectives.

3.3 Research Design

This study is a documentary type of research. The study was largely enhanced by textual data and electronic sources to trace and establish materials that were related to FGM generally and specifically in the selected novels. I established why fictional communities in the selected novels engage in the practice of FGM; how FGM affects characters individually and collectively in the

selected novels and the narrative techniques each of the author's use to represent the practice of FGM. This kind of description helped me to vividly describe the data that I collected.

3.4 Procedure for Data Collection

I identified the research topic and it was approved, the identified literary texts were bought. I immediately started reading and analyzing the selected texts and other relevant works such as newspapers, articles, magazines, journals, research reports. I would take note of the key events and ideas in each text with the guidance of the research objectives and research questions so as to discover what takes place in the selected texts regarding issues to do with FGM

3.5 Sources of Data

The main sources of data that I used include; *The River Between* (1965), *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and *The Switch* (2016). Journals, relevant texts and research reports were sought from Bishop Stuart University library, Uganda Christian University library, Makerere University library and other universities libraries that I accessed. Some other information was attained from the internet.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The key method I used to obtain data is a close reading of the texts. The researcher read novels under study and related works on a daily basis. These texts included the primary texts (Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karooro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016) and the secondary texts (other relevant works from other scholars). The data was collected guided by the research objectives and research questions.

The study involved the examination of relevant documents like magazines and newspaper articles guided by a textual checklist as major research instrument. The checklist comprised of aspects that helped me to internalize the key variable which is female genital mutilation.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments.

Notes were written in the researchers note book provided they corresponded to the study objectives. Such information was then broken down into the structured printed textual check list to make it easy for the researcher to understand and attain the set objectives.

The recording method that I used is note-taking. The researcher summarized the content from both the primary and secondary texts. Paraphrasing was then done; the researcher would restate the collected material as a way of attaining detailed notes on specific passages which would not

need the exact wording. Some information was quoted and transcribed accurately using quotation marks and accurate page numbers. This was done with the help of note cards that I created. This entailed both the ideas that support my argument and those that are against it.

Finally, personal notes were made. I wrote notes on the note cards during the research process and these were important in supporting my arguments at the stage of data presentation, analysis and discussion.

3.8 Data Processing

I obtained data through thorough reading and exploring of the available relevant sources guided by a textual checklist. The data was recorded and edited on a daily basis. After all the required data had been attained, checking and editing of the entire lot took place. The raw data was then checked for completeness, accuracy and uniformity, to eliminate obvious discrepancies and other mistakes in the recording. The large amounts of data were reduced to manageable proportions. All this was done with the guide of the textual checklist and the objectives of the study.

3.9 Data Analysis

I used textual analysis technique to interpret and categorize the collected data during both the analytical and discussion stages. The study particularly considered the quantitative elements of

recurrence and frequency with regard to the identified variables initially indicated in the textual checklist.

Data was categorized into themes and sub-themes derived from objectives of the study. The data analysed was categorized and edited to suit the set objectives with the help of the textual checklist aspects. The information attained was then coded and grouped; this helped me to give an overall view of the given data that entailed the textual checklist aspects with their frequency within different set objectives of the study. Such information was then interpreted and discussed. After doing this, a conclusion whether this study had achieved the set objectives or not was made.

3.10 Report Writing and Documentation

The structure of this research report follows the format prescribed by Bishop Stuart University Graduate School, and the style of documenting my sources as well as that of arranging the entries in my bibliography is MLA style.

3.11 Summary

I have systematically given more details on how data was processed, analysed, interpreted, and discussed until report writing and documentation. This methodology is meant to help me as the

researcher to achieve the set objectives of the study and fill the existing gaps identified in other studies.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I presented and discussed the study findings that I attained from the texts under study in order to achieve the study objectives and answer the research questions.

4.2 Why the fictional communities in the selected novels engage in the practice of FGM

The Maa culture in *Blossoms of the Savannah* practices female genital mutilation because it is considered to be an honoured rite of passage that has long existed. It is also believed that this practice makes the women to be managed and easily controlled under one homestead as revealed by Ole Supeyo (A Maa elder);

.... female circumcision was not only an honoured rite of passage that had been in existence from time immemorial, but an important practice that tamed otherwise wild gender. Like cattle that required to be dehorned, to reduce accidental injuries to each other, a certain measure of docility was also necessary to keep more than one wife in one homestead... (Kulet, 2008, p.22)

This quote clarifies why FGM practice is really valued and why characters think they can't live without it in *Blossoms of the Savannah*. It's their belief that the practice paves way of nurturing girls to become future good and fruitful wives, as well as keeping them together in one family. This is further echoed by Mama Milanoi (a wife to Ole Kaelo and a mother to Taiyo and Resian) in whose thought it is revealed that;

..... when she was a girl, girls' circumcision was relevant and cherished. It was a rite of passage before marriage. At the same time no girl got married before circumcision. (Kulet, 2008, p.63)

The Maa culture appreciates the FGM practice and it's believed that it is the only way through which young girls can be transformed into mature and respected women suitable for marriage and adulthood. It is evident that Fauziya Kasindja (2019) assertion that FGM is a rite of passage that affirms them as true members of the tribe, does not only apply in the novel *The River Between*, but also applies in *Blossoms of The Savannah*.

In Nasila, a fictional community within *Blossoms of the Savannah*, FGM is used as tool to put women below the men. This is used as a way to intimidate women and make them feel inferior. This is revealed in a conversation between Resian and Taiyo, in which the former reveals her inner emotions about the vice;

...and I told her not only what I knew about FGM, but I added that It was certainly a tool of oppression used by men to put women down.....

(Kulet, 2008, p. 103)

From the above quotation it is clear that FGM is being used as a tool to help the men to sexually exploit the women as rightly interpreted by the two girls as they tried to brainstorm on the ways on which they would avoid being victims of the same practice. This correlates to feministic theory that portrays the narrative of male domination and still confirms that women are subjected to different forms of sexual injustices as a way to make them submissive and inferior to the men. This adds to Mary D (2015) who believes that men oppress women. Like in the novel *Blossoms of the Savannah*, men are portrayed as the originators, planners, controllers of how women live. She believes that men are agents of suffering that women are exposed to. No wonder, men take lead in the female genital mutilation practice as shown in *Blossoms of the Savannah*. The above remark is a signal that Henry Ole Kulet's attitude in *Blossoms of the Savannah* does not differ from the one of the other scholars under study.

Additionally, the rich old men like Oloisudori and Olarinkoi in *Blossoms of the Savannah* are in support of FGM in order to enslave the girls/women and destroy their self-esteem. This idea was a great thought in the mind of Minik as she unveiled that;

What chance did the young helpless girls , like that one who had just been brought in by her rescue team, traumatised and her future destroyed, have when pitted against those giant predators who dangled their riches to lure them when they failed, abducted them and had them circumcised in order to enslave them and destroy their self-esteem? She thought there was need to plan new strategies to battle the new monster that was rearing its ugly head. (Kulet, 2008, p. 269)

In regard to the above quotation, the rich old men have many wives both young and old since the Maa culture permits every man to have at least three women as a sign of superiority. Thus, such men usually support the FGM practice so that they can position women/girls in a state that enables men to control them easily within their means. This contradicts with Elinor (2018) a feminist who believes that everyone has the right to sexual autonomy and the ability to make decisions about when, how and with whom to conduct their sexual life. In such a circumstance, the rich old men like Oloisudori and Olarinkoi do not give a chance to girls to decide for themselves, no wonder, they strongly support FGM practice.

Furthermore, communities in *The Switch* take part in the FGM practice in order to uphold their cultural values and help to control women from engaging in prostitution acts that make them to be unfaithful to their husbands and families. This is revealed by Adeni (A kidnapper of Daisy, minister Chelimo's daughter);

.....We shall not allow you to kill our values, to turn our women into prostitutes and unfaithful wives. To help you out of the way, we have, as I speak now, your daughter Daisy, in our hands and we are going to do to her exactly what you are saying should no longer be done to our women.

(Okurut, 2016, p.40)

From the above quotation, according to Adeni FGM is used as a strategy to control and regulate the behaviour of women and make them more manageable as per the Sabinu tradition. This is why traditionalists like Adeni and his colleagues believe that they have to uphold this cultural practice if they are to have well-disciplined generations and a proper marriage material according to their culture. Thus, they have to capture Daisy, a daughter to minister Chelimo in order to stop her from proceeding with her campaign of fighting against FGM, the practice they cherish most. It's through the disguise to protect their traditions that FGM has been practiced in different communities within *The Switch* as Kaplan, Hechavarria and Puppo (2015) acknowledge that it is

perpetuated in a bid to promote ethnic and gender identity to the girls. This is why feminists like Layli (2015) call for total liberation of African women without neglecting the male who are significant part in that change. Male characters like Adeni need to be brought on board because they are important players in FGM practice.

In addition, F.G.M helps to control the libido of women and girls. The circumcised women have limited sexual desires and they are thus settled to make families and be faithful to their partners as it is revealed;

...they think that FGM ensures premarital virginity and inhibits extra-marital sex, because it reduces a woman's libido. But the truth is that it's too harsh, not only to the woman but even to those around her. (Okurut, 2016, p.172)

It is therefore used as a strategy to uphold families together and maintain their culture norms alongside their stable families. They believed this could only be achieved through FGM practice.

In some other context, FGM was a sign to show brevity that women had. Though it was considered compulsory to the entire society, few of the girls would pass through this process successfully without causing mistakes that would prove them to be cowards or sometimes lose

their lives. The survivors would thus be considered brave and fit to be called complete women.

As stated by Chelimo's mother, in *The Switch*;

..... in life, some things are like that. But it is also our pride because we are not cowards. Some tribes have cowardly women, we are not cowards.

(Okurut, 2016, p.67)

The mother encourages the daughter that all would be well, and even promises to be by her side to give her courage to go through it proudly. The quotation above reveals that circumcision was a great sign that women are brave thus able to handle different tasks ahead of them as wives and mothers. They therefore took part in circumcision as way to prove their worth.

The Gikuyu community in *The River Between* considers Female Genital Mutilation as a unifying factor to the entire ridges. It is a cultural practice that is deeply rooted and since it cuts across the two ridges of Makuyu and Kameno. They appreciate and put it in practice in order to be unified as it is revealed by Waiyaki (a teacher and a son to Chege);

...Circumcision was an important ritual to the tribe. It kept people together, bound the tribe. It was at the core of the social structure, and something that gave meaning to a man's life. (Thiong'o, 1965, p.97)

The above quotation explains why they had to fight to protect circumcision practices like female circumcision because the end of this custom and the spiritual basis of the tribe's cohesion and integration would be no more.

Additionally, in *The River Between*, Muthoni goes against the orders of his father Joshua (a strong Christian who is against female circumcision) and decides to be circumcised because she wants to become a real and complete woman in relation to the hills. This is revealed when she tells her sister Nyambura that;

.....Look, please, I – I want to be a woman. I want to be a real girl, a real woman, knowing all the ways of the hills and ridges.... (Thiong'o, 1965, p.25)

In saying this, Muthoni is determined to meet the knife at whatever cost, because she wants to become a true woman of the culture. Despite all the odds, she feels that the only way for her to become a complete woman is through being circumcised. Such a perception is not only within the minds of Muthoni but it is the perception of the entire community. Her actions accords to Ayo Kehinde (1998) who believes that FGM at cultural level holds divergent opinions from different members of the community. Since Muthoni's father is not in support to the practice, we

would expect her to utilise it as an advantage but she instead moves on to take part, an act that annoys the father and leaves the reader in a dire state of mind.

4.3 How FGM affects characters individually and collectively in the selected novels.

The parents of uncircumcised girls live in fear for the lives of their children. In the novel *Blossoms of Savannah*, Mama Milanoi (a wife to Parsimei Ole) is worried on what will happen on her uncircumcised daughters, Resian and Taiyo who have gone to tour around Nasila, a community that loves and cherishes girl-child circumcision.

.... their mother watched them as they walked leisurely down the path out of their uncle's homestead. For reasons she did not understand, a pang of a strange premonition twisted her nerves unpleasantly. A creepy feeling kept on gnawing at her conscience regarding her daughters' status of being intoiye nemengalana, in the midst of a community that cherishes girl-child circumcision. She however, dismissed the feeling and relegated it to the back of her mind. (Kulet, 2008, p.17)

This statement indicates that the mother is already haunted by the fact that the daughters are not circumcised. The great threat that circumcision imposes on the young uncircumcised girls and

their entire family is then exposed in this same quotation. They are always uncertain, and they do not know what will happen to their daughters. Life is made difficult for them and they keep under pressure. After all they have no choice but to accept. This contradicts Elinor (2018) a feminist who believes that everyone has the right to sexual autonomy and the ability to make decisions about when, how and with whom to conduct their sexual life. In maa community such rights do not exist at all.

Additionally, in *Blossoms of the Savannah*, Ole Musanka (an elder) encourages Taiyo and Resian to accept the ritual of circumcision. This is done with furry and harshness. He curses all crusaders of an alien culture led by *Emakererei* (Minikene Nkuitoi who is said to have obtained her degree of veterinary science from Makerere University) as revealed;

..... do not listen to crusaders of an alien culture that is being perpetrated by a certain Entangoroi called Emakererei. The wasp advocates that we maintain *intoiye* nemengalana amongst our daughters. Taba! May she go down with the setting sun! (Kulet, 2008, p.52)

From the quotation, we get to know that Taiyo and Resian are covered with great fear and tension for being forcefully circumcised as witnessed by the author, thus;

...the pain in her heart was like the bruising after math of a blow. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, then she exhaled slowly, forcing herself the face shattering situation that threatened to destroy the world she had known until then. The threat of circumcision was becoming real... When she thought of the barbaric operation, she felt scared and inched closer to Taiyo who lay there beside her. (Kulet, 2008, pp.57-58)

Just at the thought of being circumcised, Resian feels scared and uncertain on what will happen to her. This phrase indicates how the girls are not really themselves, they live under fear as they are continuously reminded that they are *intoiye nemengalana*, not pure in the Nasila culture. Because of this, they are harassed, mistreated and talked to harshly, this makes them uncomfortable in the community.

Such a situation is still evidenced in the novel *The Switch*, where the girls like Chelimo at her thirteen and all other girls who had been uncircumcised would tremble and would feel scared at a fact that they were going to be circumcised.

.....Chelimo had heard all there was to hear about circumcision. The rituals before the cutting, the terrible pain during the cutting and the

aftermath which was nothing to write home about. She lived in fear and trepidation of the upcoming knife and she was not the only one. (Okurut, 2016, p.66)

These girls would whisper their fear of FGM to each other when they thought no one was hearing. Sometimes they would talk about it openly but this would always be dismissed by the elderly women as rumours. This unveils that they expected a lot of negativity from the vice, but they had no option. They forced themselves to be ready to face it, because it was a requirement of the community.

The Maa community in *Blossoms of the Savannah* regards all activists that try to fight against female circumcision as the devil incarnate. They are always hated and isolated members of the society who did not support the practice. That's why Minik ene Nkoitoi is strongly honoured and respected outside Nasila, but in this community, she is looked at as a threat, because she fights the evil practice of FGM.

In Nasila, however, she was regarded as the devil incarnate. She was hated and reviled for criticising and campaigning vigorously against the traditions that she said abused the rights of the girl child namely girls'

circumcision and early marriages.... and that had put her in direct collision with the people of Nasila. (Kulet, 2008, p.62)

The members of the society who do not embrace FGM as a tradition are isolated and mistreated by the communities in which they live. This is revealed by Ole Kaelo' as he addresses his daughters and wife amidst the other visitors like Joseph Parmuat when he states that;

.... He warned the girls that they might find a few demands obnoxious but they would have to be stoic and accept them with the understanding that it was not too pleasant traditions that natured and bound heir people together.... (Kulet, 2008, p.71)

This is why FGM as a traditional culture practice is always treasured and practiced within Nasila people. He further emphasizes that individuals and families that reject these practices are discriminated and isolated by the entire society. This shows the kind of fear and tension that exists within the hearts of Nasila people especially if they try to resist the traditional practices required from them by the tradition.

Furthermore, FGM is a traumatizing experience and very painful to the culprits. This act deprives the given individuals their rights as revealed in *Blossoms of the Savannah*;

.....But above all she promised to protect her from any one threatening her within the pain of FGM she said it was her right to remain among intoiye nemengalana. (Kulet, 2008, p. 220)

This act of FGM proves to be a threat to the lives of the girls/women. They have no refuge and they live in fear of being hurt and manipulated by the FGM implementers. Indeed, it proves to be a big threat to Resian and Taiyo, especially when the former is taken away by Olarinkoi, who later struggles and tries to rape her, and all that she goes through with that old man. It shows how unsafe the characters in *Blossoms of the Savannah* are, as they live on tension.

FGM act is a practice that makes one to be considered a complete woman. According to Maa culture in *Blossoms of the Savannah* a woman is only complete when she has undergone the circumcision ritual as revealed by *Kaaji enkabaani* whom Resian thought to be a nurse and yet she was a mother to Olarinkoi (who kidnapped Resian and wanted her circumcised). Thus, she states;

What were you guarding so tenaciously and valiantly when I am told you are not yet a woman? Are you not shamed to be among *intoiye nemengalana* at your age? Ptui! (Kulet, 2008, p.228)

This makes Resian to be considered incomplete and unworthy, because she did not undergo what it requires to be called a complete woman as per the Maa culture and the Nasila tradition. This makes her unfit to be married and recognized as a woman.

Additionally, in *Blossoms of the Savannah* the act of FGM in Maa culture makes women to earn respect. *Kaaja Enkabani* reveals that the removal of the genital organ from Resian would make her to earn maximum respect and her home would be protected;

As soon as we clip that erogenous salacity from you that destroys home,
you will become a respected woman worthy to be called..... (Kulet,
2008, p.229)

The speaker had not finished the statement when Resian stopped him. From the above assertion, it is only through FGM that woman earn respect in the Maa community. Parents who refuse their children from engaging into FGM practice are judged harshly by the entire community. This is revealed by Kaaja Ekabani;

...It is a pity that we now have to do what Ole Kaelo ought to have done
long time ago. Anyway, Maa culture will soon judge him harshly. Now go
in, for its becoming chilly. (Kulet, 2008, 229)

Such families are isolated and treated with contempt since they are considered to be against the expected cultural norm. It hence portrays the real hardships that the girls and women pass through in this text, hence a great impact on the characters.

This act of female genital mutilation shapes characters and their traits. It creates determination, a spirit of resilience and physiology defiance within the characters that are yet to be exposed to such an act for example, Resian in *Blossoms of the Savannah* is determined not to accept the practice even though she risks being physically circumcised;

.... Olarinko's may physically take her as his wife, they may even physically circumcise her, but mentally she was going to refuse to be subdued. Where she could, she was going to physically resist. She resolved to remain focused and she prayed for strength and endurance to be able to bear all those misfortune.... (Kulet, 2008, p.230)

Such individual determination develops as a result of fear of being exposed to FGM, a situation she is not ready to accept at all costs regardless of what lay ahead of her, her resistance spirit is still high. To the contrary, the women and girls who have undergone circumcision are proud of being considered complete women. Such a thought run through Resian's mind;

.....even running to the nearby homestead was of no use, she would appear to be ridiculously stupid to want to run away from what other girls were proud to have undergone. (Kulet, 2008, p.242)

This act shows that the community and mostly girls' appreciate the act of FGM in which they participate. They feel proud to be considered complete women full of dignity and respect as per their traditional culture. The women and girls who have not undertaken the FGM practice are considered inferior and, on most occasions, they are harassed and mistreated by the vagabonds as illustrated by Russian to Minik (Makerenien)

.....She spoke of the constant harassment by vagabonds, all trying to discredit them for not having undergone the cultural rite of circumcision. (Kulet, 2008, p.261)

Resian and Nabaru gave such a narrative to express how FGM has negatively affected their lives, reputation and life style for all of them provided they have not been circumcised. Furthermore, Nabaru in *Blossoms of the Savannah* who has on several occasions taken part in the circumcision (FGM) rituals revealed that such practice was hazardous and traumatizing to the young girls and thus it was un healthy for them as she revealed to both Minik and Ressian. "FGM did not add

any value to the lives of its young victims. Instead, she agreed, it traumatized them and it was hazardous to their health” (Kulet, 2008, p.264)

She testified to its devastation, having witnessed the way young lives were ruined by the practice and thus revealing the dangers it has on the victims, families and the entire community in which they are. Some of the people (volunteers) who assist the FGM victims to escape are murdered in cold blood by the angry guards. For example, Joseph Parmuat in *Blossoms of the Savannah* who helped Taiyo to escape by luring the guards into drinking beer as Minik rescue team entered the hut and helped her (Taiyo) to escape was later speared to death after the guards realized that he had tricked them into drinking alcohol in order to help the girl to be rescued as narrated by Minik;

..... Regrettably, they learnt later that the man who assisted them so much and enabled them to rescue the girl was speared to death by those thugs who accused him tricking them so the girl could be stolen.....

(Kulet, 2008, p.271)

This killing is also as a result of FGM practice. Innocent people who try to stop or in any other way create ways to rescue the victims end up being killed or sometimes destruction is done on their families and their entire property.

Additionally, in *The Switch*, circumcision was as sign to show the bravery that women had. It is through their bravery to face the knife that such a woman would be considered more brave and complete compared to other cowards as stated by the mother of Chelimo;

..... in life, some things are like that. But it is also our pride because we are not cowards. Some tribes have cowardly women, we are not cowards

(Okurut, 2016, p.67)

The above expression explains the value of FGM practice in the Sabiny society, which the community is proud of. It shows that circumcision was a great sign that women are brave and it was their fate to prove their worth.

Additionally, F.G.M affects the individuals psychologically, for example in *The Switch* though Chelimo's wounds healed after 3 weeks, her mind (psychological) did not heal at all as it is illustrated;

.... Chelimo took three weeks to heal if she did ever heal. Although the physical wounds made steady progress, those on her mind were still fresh..... (Okurut, 2016, p.85)

This leaves a psychological mark / effect on the mind of the victims which does not heal. In *The Switch*, women like Esther (a social worker who hailed from Benet sub county) who were married and yet they were uncircumcised were harshly treated.

...life had been difficult for her as an uncircumcised woman. She had enjoyed no respect from her husband and had been the subject of sheer contempt from her in-laws who Esther said that they never wanted their son to marry a coward. (Okurut, 2016, p.88)

The society imposes heavy sanctions on the uncircumcised women which is too much to bear. Such culprits are not allowed to get water until those who have been bitten by the leopard (final ritual of circumcision) were done.

... She was not allowed to talk in public place whether to address a gathering or make a contribution. She had not been able to enjoy a drink with grown- ups or join any progressive group. (Okurut, 2016, p.89)

This limited the opportunities of such individuals like Esther who had intentions to contest for political office. They would not succeed in such adventure because nobody would listen to a woman who did not know the secrets of the river thus not circumcised.

In a school setting within *The Switch*, the uncircumcised teachers like Cheptoyek were highly disregarded and were always disrespected by both the teachers and the students. In some instances, the students refused to enter class and were instructed not to interact with Cheptoyek just because she was considered a coward.

... Her pupils refused to enter class: they stayed under the mango tree on the far side of the school compound... All the children started avoiding her.... (Okurut, 2016, p.93)

The uncircumcised women were not allowed to prepare food. They could not climb into the granary because according to the tradition it was believed that if they did, they would bring bad luck to the family, possibly spoiling the next harvest (p.94). Such a statement clearly reveals why feminists like Brunell (2019) condemn the disciplinary practice that is focuses at disciplining culprits who have proved disobedient to the cultural norms especially in Female genital mutilation practice, instead she advocates for individual respect in making informed choices and having beliefs which shouldn't involve double standard in judging a person.

In addition to the above, in the meetings of women, the uncircumcised were not allowed to give opinions neither were they allowed to step into the kraal even if it was to get cow dung to use in smearing the house. It was said that the cows would die or fail to produce milk or to bear more off springs. When an uncircumcised woman died, their bodies could not be passed through the main entrance of the house instead, the family would dig an exit in the behind wall specifically for that purpose.

.... life was tough when you were uncircumcised and death was tough
when you died uncircumcised (Okurut, 2016, p.94)

Such practices and beliefs were passed from one generation to another and the mistreatment would be put to effect at all costs. Such mistreatment and segregation increased the inferiority complex of the given individual. This is shown through Cheptoyek (the uncircumcised school teacher after having been discovered);

.....Cheptoyek always walked home head low, heart heavy and dreary.
Some said that even though people did not become left-handed in old age,
the beautiful teacher had almost developed a hunchback. (Okurut, 2016,
p.95)

What happens to this school teacher later on is the most a shaming act that one can ever experience. She is taken to the town square where four poles have been erected, tied her limbs on the poles and did the practice to her, when everyone is cheering. In so doing, they say they are circumcising the coward so as to cleanse the land. However, these culprits would not only be segregated but also face the most torture and humiliation that would leave unhealed wounds in both their hearts and minds.

...On her way home from school one evening, Miss Cheptoyek was grabbed by a gang of strong young men and delivered to a group of elderly women who were waiting at the town square as everyone joined in a rather gay chant- a well- known Cheptoyek, but this time sang in a rather militant manner; clearly an angry army going to war... (Okurut, 2016, p.95)

Cheptoyek who was bright, elegant, inspirational teacher turned into a gloomy, dull and withdrawn woman. Thus, after losing her self-esteem that she once had as young educated teacher the only option left for her was to disappear from such a community as Chelimo elaborates;

It was clear warning that defaulters would by no means escape. For Cheptoyek, the humiliation was more than she could bear. She simply disappeared. (Okurut, 2016, p.96)

This sounded as a warning signal to all the other uncircumcised women. This proved that they had no option against the rotwet (circumcision). This explains why they hastened to enlist for initiation the following season.

Some victims have lost their lives during and after female genital mutilation process. For example, in novel *The Switch*, Chemtai like most of the other victims of circumcision lost her dear life. When she failed to recover from the circumcision injuries, she was later on rushed to Kapchorwa hospital but unfortunately, she could not survive.

He had demanded to know why the girl had not been brought in earlier, but got no response. Within seconds he had apparently already determined that nothing could be done to save the poor girl. He had then pulled the old woman a side and told her the truth, only adding that he would however try and help her die with dignity... (Okurut, 2016, p.100)

This expresses the great impact that FGM has left on different characters in the three texts under study. In the above quote, Chemtai, just like other untold girls and women of the Sabinu community loses her life as a result of the deadly practice.

In the *River Between*, Muthoni (A daughter to Joshua a new Christian convert who does not believe in women circumcision ritual) also dies a painful death after being circumcised. The greatest difference between Muthoni in *The River Between* and Chemtai in *The Switch* and other culprits in *Blossoms of the Savannah* is that for Muthoni's case, she is the one who willingly offers herself for circumcision however much it is against her father's will.

.....Muthoni remained calm and her eyes had intense glow that been with her all along the difficult journey. She had not been able to walk but the young men had made a stretcher and carried her on it...she did not last many hours after they arrived in Siriana (Thiong'o, 1965, p.51)

Such misery and painful death are as a result of Muthoni's voluntary participation in FGM practice. It should however, be noticed that it was not only Muthoni who died as a result of circumcision, there are more victims as revealed by Waiyaki; *Girls had been initiated before. But even the one or two who had died never aroused such ill-will between the people...* (Thiong'o, 1965, p.57)

This means that FGM has claimed many other lives of young and innocent girls, whose future is cut short as they try to fulfil their cultural obligation.

The individuals especially those from other cultures fell astonished and are in entire shock at the discovery that their fiancées are circumcised. This is portrayed when Chelimo tells Dane about her circumcision status;

“Dane, I am circumcised.”

The world seemed to stand still.

“You are what?” Dane blurted out, mouth open.

He moved his hand to place the glass of brandy onto the table but missed the table. The glass collided with the hard floor, shattering into hundreds of pieces.

“I am sorry

What?”

Dane was in utter shock. (Okurut, 2016, p.152)

Such is the reaction from individuals who do not practice circumcision every time they come across F.G.M victims. This fear is still evidenced at Chelimo’s wedding to Dane. Chelimo is not sure if she would fulfil her marital obligation as expected by the culture and her new spouse;

On her part, Chelimo was simply afraid, not sure of what would happen. It was after supper of the second night that they both agreed they'd give it a try. (Okurut, 2016, p.152)

She was scared and uncertain on what would happen while having sex with her lover Dane. In spite the fact that Dane understood her trauma and handled her with gentility by talking to her softly, caressing her wet brow and telling her to relax and just let herself go with him, Chelimo remained stiff with fright.

...she had expected Dane's love to melt away her fear. And what was more, she had thought her own strong love and desire would relax her. But in spite of his understanding and gentility, she kind of floated above her body and only felt sharp pain at the beginning as she gritted her teeth, trying to be brave about it... (Okurut, 2016, p.152)

It shows the psychological torture and trauma that FGM victims undergo as they try to fulfil their sexual obligations in their marriages. It is such a difficult and painful experience. Chelimo and Dane in *The Switch* kept on trying to have it but it never got better, every time they tried, it proved a night mare for Chelimo.

..... she began to go to bed late praying and hoping that she would find Dane asleep. She loved him with all her heart, but everything seemed to be spiralling out of control. (Okurut, 2016, p.154)

Much as Dane became patient believing that his wife was still traumatized by the knife she had faced as a child. He later on, agrees to have sex but every time they had it, it was equally unbearable for both.

... Chelimo complained it was painful all through, while Dane complained that he felt he was not getting the fullest benefit of his wife, beautiful though she was... (Okurut, 2016, p.154)

From Dane and Chelimo's experience we learn that circumcision poses a strong challenge to married couples especially the women. Dr. Medard elaborates on this thus;

Women may experience chronic pain, chronic pelvic infections, development of cysts, abscesses and genital ulcers, excessive scar tissue formation, infection of the reproductive system, decreased sexual enjoyment and psychological consequences, such as post- traumatic stress

disorder. Even more surprising is that the male partner can also experience pain and related complications (Okurut, 2016, p.161)

Such circumstances cause both physical and psychological stress. Women become tense and experience muscle contraction around the vagina and results in painful sexual intercourse. Thus the feeling of pain by a woman, long before she is touched (Okurut, 2016, p.161)

Dr. Medard revealed that circumcised women usually suffer from cervical cancer. It is this cancer that killed Chelimo's mother.

...it was cervical cancer already in its advanced stages. Chelimo's mother then revealed that sometimes she would have pus coming from her private parts but she just kept it to herself... She died a painful death. (Okurut, 2016, p.167)

It was further revealed that circumcised women have no elasticity, which heightens the possibility for Fistulas as Dr. Medard explains to Dane and Chelimo;

I am sorry but the difficult labour has done more harm to you than we had thought. It has left you with what we call vesicovaginal fistula. Your system is damaged (Okurut, 2016, p.169)

This happens after Chelimo has become a victim of fistula and is passing urine uncontrollably. This is as a result of overstaying in labour because F.G.M has affected her delivery process. In conclusion, F.G.M has affected characters negatively. They have been hurt psychologically and physically. This has left them with the painful damages that are hard for them to recover and forget. The damages caused affect the lives of characters permanently.

4.4 The narrative techniques each of the authors uses to represent the practice of FGM in the selected novels.

At the introduction of Female Genital Mutilation within Kaelo family in the novel *Blossoms of The Savannah*, the author Ole Kulet, uses a rural setting to tactfully introduce the theme of FGM. This is after Parsimei Ole Kaelo (a husband to Mama Milanoi and a father to Taiyo and Resian) has arrived from Nakulu town to Nasila. This is in the evening hours, the environment is noisy, full of laughter, singing and dancing as they welcome Kaelo's family back home. It is in such an environment that a thought of F.G.M comes in the mind of Simiren (a younger brother to Kaelo and acting ahead of the Kaelo family who has ably represented the family in the Ilmolelian clan

to which they belong). The author ensures that he uses the traditional setting to introduce his message of FGM and female initiation to the reader. Such a traditional setting is further characterized by a homestead and roasted meat as shown by;

...there was so much noise, laughter, singing and the girl who least expected such a reception, were confused. Soon, they were all seated around a bright fire lit in the middle of the homestead, enjoying pieces of roasted meat... (Kulet, 2008, p.11)

Such a setting is effective in making the reader associate the FGM practice to the rural setting. This is emphasised by the fact that when Ole Kulet's family was still in Nakuru they did not have any thought of FGM until now that they have shifted to Nasila.

During the escape trial of Resian from FGM threat, the author uses the time setting of the night to signify the terror that is involved in the FGM practice. FGM is always done in the wee hours of the night. This does not stop Kulet (author) from using the rain as sign of final hope as Resian is running away from FGM disaster.

.....For the first time since Resian came to that desolate village it rained; a heavy down pour that came suddenly and drenched them as they ran down

the path towards the road were Naburu told her a vehicle to transport them waited.... (Kulet, 2008, p.248)

Such rain is used as a symbol of hope to Resian as she tries to escape from wrath of FGM and its advocators like Oralinkoi and his family. Indeed, its rain that helps the victim to escape the danger as it obstructed Oralinkoi and his team as Resian rushed to the lorry that waited a head of them to help them escape.

Additionally, such a technique of setting that involves rain is still evidenced in *The Switch* as Chelimo and the entire team is trying to rescue Daisy from being circumcised by the kidnappers. It is such a heavy rainfall that delays Adeni and his group from implementing the ritual until Chelimo and her team arrive and rescue the young girl. Rain is thus used as a symbol of hope to the victims.

In all these novels, the FGM practices are associated with rivers. The authors use the setting of rivers and hills to signify the rich and strong rooted FGM practice within the hearts and lives of different communities. For example, in both the *Blossoms of the Savannah* and *The Switch* a river is reflected as a place used as a cleansing site while in *The River Between (RB)*, river Honia acts as a place suitable for FGM ritual.

There is selective use of diction, the author of *Blossoms of the Savannah* uses the local direct by referring the term female genital mutilation as *intoiye nemengalana* at different intervals like an incident when the mother is scared of her daughters since they are un circumcised as it is stated;

...a creepy feeling kept on gnawing at her conscience regarding her daughters' status of being *intoiye nemengalana* in the midst of a community that cherished girl-child circumcision (Kulet, 2008, p.17)

Such term and local /native language also unveiled by a tall heaviest young man with a thick dark beard who attacks Resian and Taiyo (who were walking back to the homestead) and blamed them for being un circumcised and thus he states;

.... are you not the *intoiye nemengalana* from Nakuru town? ... I want to have good look at you and know what kind of stuff you are made of! Soon, you will be able to differentiate decent women from *intoiye nemengalana*... (Kulet, 2008, p.19)

Such a term of *intoiye nemengalana* is further clarified in the novel *Blossoms of the Savannah's* glossary as the author unveils its meaning as a derogatory description of girls who were not

circumcised.... (Kulet, 2008, p.288) This technique is effective in emphasizing how deeply rooted the FGM practice is within the community.

There is a use of rhetorical questions in *Blossoms of the Savannah*. As Mama Milanoi introduces the topic of FGM to Resian while they are in the kitchen preparing lunch, she (Mama Milanoi) introduces the topic by first asking a rhetoric question to Resian.

.....My daughter, “she called un expectedly, while stirring her pot of Ugali. “Have you ever heard of something called FGM?”

“Female Genital Mutilation? Why, yes, not only have I heard of it, Resian replied her eye open with surprise. “I know about it. Why do you ask?”

(Kulet, 2008, p.89)

This technique provokes Resian and the reader to think critically about the subject of FGM and it further raises the expectations of both Mama Milanoi and Resian because they don't have the same opinion on FGM.

Additionally, in *The River Between*, Waiyaki wonders how possible it is for a woman who is not circumcised to get married, and have her bride price paid and be accepted in the community.

.... circumcision was the central rite in the Gikuyu way of life. Who had ever heard of a girl that was un circumcised? Who would ever pay cows and goats for such a girl? (Thiong'o, 1965, p.36)

Such rhetorical questions provoke the reader to reason the magnitude in which circumcision is treasured within the land of the Gikuyu.

Additionally, in the novel *The Switch*, the author uses irony. The community of Sabinu is expectant and waiting for the minister of culture Tezira Chelimo to address the Kapchorwa community that had waited for her on the Boma Grounds (Kapachorwa Primary School Grounds). They expect her to tackle issues like roads, and bridges, jobs and schools (36) but to the contrary, she tackles a sensitive issue of FGM. Which she is against, contrary to what is expected of her;

My people of Kapchorwa, today I come with one message: that we must protect our girls and our women from cruelty of the knife that deprives them of their true women hood under the pretence of making them women. (Okurut, 2016, p.36)

The people who had been waiting for the ministers' message with a lot of enthusiasm are disappointed and entire mood becomes sad and sombre centrally to what they expected.

.....The silence was more deafening than the applause had been. The thunderbolt that people expected to come from gathering clouds above had come from right next to them.....This is not what most of them had hoped for. (Okurut, 2016, p.36)

It is then ironical that what she is expected to talk about is left aside and she tackles what she is less expected of. The people of Kapchorwa don't expect her to be talking ill bout FGM, yet it a practice that has been there for years. And so, they are disappointed by her speech.

The author uses situational irony to unveil the negative attitude that the minister and the young girls, women and men had towards female circumcision contrary to what the elders had in mind.

Elders had strong support for the FGM. Such an attitude by elders is portrayed by;

...the storm to flee was not the one coming from right here, whispered some of the old men and women.... (Okurut, 2016, p.36)

Such an attitude is over shadowed by the young girls and boys;

.....Timid murmurs began to emerge from among the young women in the crowd; but soon it gave way to a thunderous uproar. Some young men joined the young women... (Okurut, 2016, p.37)

This situational irony unveils how tired these two categories are towards the FGM practice prompting them to be jubilant towards the minister's ideology of stopping the vice.

Mary Karoro in the novel *The Switch* tactically uses a sad mood to unveil the bitter taste of FGM. When Chelimo finds out that her daughter has been kidnapped and is to be exposed to FGM she is left in state of confusion and despair.

Within a few minutes, Chelimo had found her resolve. She quickly jumped into her car brushing aside her bodyguard who wanted to carry out the usual rituals of opening and closing the door and saluting. The driver was already igniting the engine.

Where to madam?

Drive as fast as you can even if it means flying the car, she screamed

To where madam? the driver asked, perplexed.

Anywhere! she shouted.... (Okurut, 2016, pp.42-43)

This shows the fear, tension and worry that Chelimo is exposed to as a result of having been told that her daughter had been kidnapped and would soon be exposed to FGM. This raises great tension and fear within her heart. It makes her to end in confusion and worry to the extent that she does not even know where she is going next. Chelimo sat back in the car, fear, worry, anxiety and anger were written all over her face. She was on the journey back to her homeland surrounded by policemen and security operatives of all types on a mission to make sure her daughter Daisy did not undergo circumcision. As she was being driven on this journey to rescue her daughter, she makes a flash back on what happened many years back, when she went through what her daughter must never go through.

In the novel *The Switch*, there is use of flash back to portray the effects of F.G.M on individuals. This technique happens as Chelimo is trying to figure out the way she can have sex with Dane her husband in the process, she is taken back to the previous memories;

.... you faced the knife; you can face anything else in life. The words of the old woman on circumcision night rang deep in her ear. Chelimo tried to relax and be brave but her bravery lasted only fleeting seconds, because as Dane ‘descended’ upon her, the image of the circumcision surgeon descending upon her with knife, ready to scoop out her switch and all that

related to it, came flooding back into her memory and into her entire body.(Okurut, 2016, p.152)

Through flashback, Chelimo is able to intertwine the image of the surgeon and her husband above her, this enhanced confusion and panic in her mind. Thus, when Dane made contact, she had to scream loudly like the day she was circumcised making them to recoil thus being frustrated, shocked and frightened.

Additionally, Mary Karooro uses vivid description technique to clearly identify the different ways of practicing FGM to the young girls who were being prepared for the forthcoming practice as demonstrated by Yapsiwa in her lecturer;

She explained that the first type, only the prepuce the fold of skin that covers the top of the clitoris is cut in a curve -like shape around the clitoral hood. The clitoris is exposed but not touched. The labia is not touched. “A cowardly form of circumcision,” she said dismissively, with a wave of hand in disgust. “it is too mild; just slight pain and a bit of bleeding. Some of our relatives like it too, but I think out of ignorance, because it actually makes a woman unfaithful instead. (Okurut, 2016, p.159)

During the description of the first form of FGM, the audience is made to understand that FGM is not done uniformly. In fact according to Yapsiwa some communities though they believe in FGM, their way of doing it does not fit the standards. Her expressions reveal the highest level of un satisfaction towards how other communities implement the FGM practice. Yapsiwa makes the first form of FGM practice to seem lightly and less significant, thus a disgrace to their culture. This explains why she appreciates and recommends the second type of FGM. She further explained that;

The second type, she explained, involved cutting the prepuce, clitoris and labia completely, while the third featured excision of all external genitalia plus stitching to narrow the vagina entrance, leaving only a small opening for urine and menstrual blood. The narrow entrance is broken into at the time of marriage.....it is the second one instead that we have found more suitable, one that has served the Sabiny marriages to their best. (Okurut, 2016, p.159)

Through this description by Yapsiwa, the reader is made to clearly understand how FGM is done in Sabiny community compared to other societies which have other forms of FGM. It is further confirmed that despite the form being used, it still stays as a hurtful and painful experience provided it is FGM.

Symbolism in *Blossoms of the Savannah* is used to symbolize the emptiness and the insignificance of the FGM practice within some members of Maa culture. When Resian is emotionally taken up she imagines what would happen during the FGM practice and among those she thought;

.... the three- evil women nodded their heads vigorously in tune with the rhythmic sound of the hyenas, and cicadas. (Kulet, 2008, p.244)

The author's use of animals like a hyena, wild dogs illustrates the evil and dangers that is enclosed within the FGM practice and still uncovers the risks involved to both individuals and the entire community.

Additionally, Ole Kulet further uses musicality to interest the reader and keep his message as he further unveils the dangers of FGM to the community. For example, during the fare well party of

Resian and Taiyo, organized by Minik, the girls from the Intapuka-e Maa School sang a song that revealed how victorious they had come towards winning the battle against FGM practice.

..... we are proud to be Intoiye nemengalana,

We are proud to be the blossoms of the savannah,

When you come to look for us, we shall not be there

We shall not be found in the dingy, dirty huts. (Song on; Kulet, 2008, p.281)

This song is a sign of victory that the Maa community has attained over the FGM tradition. It illustrates hope for the young girls who are determined not to involve themselves in FGM practice.

In both *Blossoms of the Savannah* and *The River Between* there is use of songs as a technique to reveal their negative perception and determination to fight against FGM. For example, in BS it is school choir that sings and criticizes FGM during the farewell party of Resian and Taiyo. In *The River Between*, Joshua sings a song that also criticizes FGM as shown below;

O, God, look at their preparations,

O, God, why don't you descend on this wicked generation and finish their evil way?

Circumcision is coming.

Fight by me, Oh Lord.

This emotional statement reveals the hatred and disgust that Joshua has towards Muthoni if she could go ahead and practice circumcision rituals which Joshua is against because of his Christianity status.

There is a remarkable act of dancing, singing, home visits eating and drinking during circumcision period in all the texts under study. For example, in *River Between* it is shown by;

...the sacrifices went hand in hand with preparations for the coming circumcision. Everywhere candidates for the initiation were gathering.

They went from house to house, singing, dancing the ritual songs, the same that had been sung from the old times... (Thiong'o, 1965, p.38)

Such events of joy and fun during circumcision period are reflected in all the novels under study for example in the *Blossoms of the Savannah* on page 42 and in *The Switch* on page 73 this is effective in showing how strong this F.G.M practice is deep rooted in the community.

Furthermore, all the novels under study reflect a sad and melancholic mood. This mood and tone are encompassed with suspense and tension. For example in *The River Between*, as Muthoni unveils her plan of being circumcised, the author creates a tense mood. Tension and suspicion are raised in the conversation between Muthoni and Nyambura as they both wonder what would happen next after their plan has been implemented.

.....Nyambura, I want to be circumcised. For a second Nyambura sat as if her thoughts, her feelings her very being had been paralyzed. She could not speak. The announcement was too sudden and too stupefying. How could she believe what she had heard come from Muthoni's mouth...

(Thiong'o, 1965, p.24)

This mood reveals the tension and bitterness that is always accompanied by the introduction of FGM in the given community and different individuals. This is in connection to Timi Odueso (2019) appreciates the proper employment of suspense and tension in the East African works thus including the ones under study.

Furthermore, there is use of character and characterization. In *The River Between*, Joshua is given traits of a strong Christian convert. He is against the practice of FGM and he considered it as unforgivable sin. He is against initiation rites, most especially female circumcision to an extent of devoting a prayer asking God to forgive him for marrying a woman who had been circumcised;

.... God, you know it was not my fault. God, I could not otherwise, and she did this while she was in Egypt. Sometimes, when alone with Miriamu, his wife, he would look at her and sadly remark, I wish you had not gone through this rite (Thiong'o, 1965, p.30)

Joshua is branded to be a strong, determined and rigid Christian who does not only threaten but also implements his decision of disowning his daughter Muthoni because she has involved herself in circumcision, a ritual that Joshua strongly opposes as he declared;

.... go to that woman you call aunt. Tell Muthoni to come back. If she agrees we shall forget everything. If she does not then tell her that she ceases to be my daughter (Thiong'o, 1965, p.35)

This technique is important in keeping the reader's attention high. It further emphasizes the message of circumcision onto the reader, as it reveals the negative perception of different groups on the same subject of FGM. Joshua as a strong Christian has developed a different perception towards FGM and he believes that it is totally sinful to have any connection with such a practice. This does not only make him stand against his entire tribe and community but also against his family. He indeed goes ahead to disown his daughter Muthoni despite the plea from his friends and family members. Joshua's attitude towards FGM gives the reader a chance to discover how determined some individuals are in their pursuit to defend their culture and beliefs. Some characters are ready to defend their beliefs at all costs.

4.5 Conclusion

Generally, different communities like Maa culture in *Blossoms of the Savannah* strongly uphold FGM as a passage rite. In order to cherish the cultural values and control women libido, this explains why women in *The Switch* are forced to practice FGM. The effect of FGM is felt by all characters in the novels under study, though the magnitude of the effect differs. Parents live in fear for being discriminated and their families since they do not support FGM while others like Joshua in *The River Between* strongly oppose the act. Most characters like Chelimo in *The Switch* have lost their marriages, whereas characters like Muthoni in *The River Between* lost their

lives. All the authors portray FGM negatively. They employ techniques like time setting (Most FGM activities take place at night) to show how disgusting the practice is.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The study was set to explore the representations of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karoro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016). It investigated why the fictional communities in the selected novels engage in the practice of FGM; established how FGM affects characters individually and collectively in the selected novels and explored the narrative techniques each of the author uses to represent the practice of FGM in the selected novels. The study exploited the feminist theory to assist in the analysis of literary devices employed to make female genital mutilation meaningful and realistic and to contextualize female genital mutilation in the society where it existed. This chapter therefore presents a summary of the main issues that arise in the previous chapters, the conclusion and presents the recommendations that would contribute to further research.

5.2. Summary of Findings

According to this study, different families and characters encourage their girls to take part in FGM because they have strong love for their children and would love to see them being

considered full women. This explains why Mama Milanoi in *Blossoms of the Savannah* has to encourage Resian and Taiyo in order to secure their future. Sabiny community in *The Switch* encourages their children to undertake FGM practice as a way to transform girls into mature and recognized women. This is in relation to Kaplan, H (2015) in his article “Life history theory and evolutionary psychology” in which he reveals that the FGM practice is internationally recognized as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, constituting an extreme form of discrimination against women, however, it is out of mothers’ love and care for the future of their daughters that the practice is perpetuated, bringing ethnic and gender identity to the girls.

In regard to how FGM affects characters individually and collectively, this study discovered that FGM is a strong challenge to the married couples most especially women since they are unable to fully enjoy their marital obligations. FGM causes both physical and psychological damage even when the physical wounds recover the damage put in their hearts and spirit can never recover. They are permanently destroyed beyond repair. This relates to Abusharaf, R. M. (2006) who reveals that there is always psychological pain, suffered by circumcised women.

Most girls have lost their lives in the process of FGM. Characters like Chemtai in *The Switch* and Muthoni in *BS* are unfortunate that they end up succumbing to death due to the injuries of FGM.

It is out of this that the uncircumcised girls live in fear all the time for they are not sure what will happen to them.

Uncircumcised girls like Cheptoyek in *The Switch* and Taiyo in BS are forcefully circumcised. This makes them to lose their pride as young girls and they end up living a life of disillusionment which makes them to escape from the communities in which they have lived for quite a long time. They surely pay a heavy price of humiliation and torture.

This study discovered that different authors depending on the communities their work is set, tend to use the diction that helps them to identify women/girls who have not undergone female genital mutilation practice with different names in their local dialects. For example, in BS they term them as *intoiye nemengalana* whereas in *The Switch*, FGM practice is referred to as *rotwet such terminologies relate to* Althaus, F. A. (1997) who reveals that the choice of words the authors use to state their negative views of FGM, taking advantage of shocking, dramatic terminology, comparisons, metaphorical language and whole stories, a very self-righteous tone or even the choice of narrator, which results in their sometimes overly exaggerated and one-dimensional FGM descriptions. This single-perspective approach can be noted also in the description of the consequences of FGM as evidenced in the way Karooro, Kulet and Ngugi apply the use words to depict their message to the reader.

It is in *Blossoms of the Savannah* and *The Switch* where the authors directly refer to female circumcision as “Female Genital Mutilation” thus contradicting Flora Nwapa's (1999) assertion which reveals that the choice of names for FGM involves more indirect expressions, like *to have a bath*, sometimes also *circumcision*, but never *mutilation*. However, it is only in the novel *The River Between* where Ngugi wa Thiong'o uses expressions like *bath* and *circumcision* thus confirming Flora's assertion.

According to this study, the authors use male characters to be at the forefront for supporting FGM practice. For example, in BS male characters like Ole Musanka an elder, Oloisudori are the leading advocates while in *The Switch* male characters like Adeni and Arthur are the schemers to ensure that Daisy (Chelimo's daughter is circumcised) and also characters like Kabonyi in *The River Between* are still the greatest advocates of FGM. This approves Althaus, F. A. (1997) who reveals that the culprits and implementers of FGM are ready to protect their tradition at any cost. Men utilise their cultural superiority to suppress the powerless women. It is expressed indirectly when the writer stresses the importance of circumcision as a prerequisite for marriage and a main target for girls. At the same time, assigning guilt is connected to the reasons for circumcision, offered in the novels. This relates to Sara Mills (1998) in her work *Feminism and Anthropology* as she outlines the difficulties and much critique, feminist theory has been subjected to. These works have made a difference to the practice of anthropology hence making a contribution to

feminist thinking. This theory exposed patriarchal underlying tensions within the selected novels and interrogate the ways in which basic literary assumptions about such novels are contingent on female subordination. These works helped me to understand the intersecting points of femininity and guided me in interpreting most assumptions on gender politics by accessing different categories of identity that involves race, class, sexual orientation.

The authors use vivid description to illustrate how FGM is practiced. Yapsiwa in TS describes different forms of FGM. She however supports the second form of FGM. She explained that it involved cutting the prepuce, clitoris and labia completely. Such description that the author uses is significant in that it helps the reader to clearly understand how FGM is done in Sabiny community compared to other societies which have other forms of FGM. This relates to World Health Organization (WHO 2016) which defines FGM as ‘all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It still approves the feminist theory which asserts that; Feminist theory has many aspects like; sexual oppression, sexism, harassment, beautification, among others. Katherine Franke (1997:693).

5.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is apparent that, female genital mutilation is vivid in all the selected novels, different communities engage in FGM as a way to regulate their women's sexual behaviour and as a norm to transform them from being children to adulthood. Different individuals and communities are affected in different ways, some individuals have lost their lives while others though they may heal from physical wounds they have stayed damaged psychologically while such a practice has created space for diseases like cancer and fistula to destroy the FGM victims. The authors have tactfully used techniques like diction, setting and description among others to clearly reveal the message.

The researcher observed that all the novels under study depict FGM with a negative perspective and hence forth try to advocate for its abolition. This corresponds with El Dareer (1998) in his work *Female Genital Mutilation in Modern African novels* points out that, most novels both, African and African American, depict FGM in a negative way. It's therefore from this conclusion that the researcher believes that her study objectives have been fully exploited.

5.4. Recommendations

The study explored the representations of FGM in the selected novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary Karoro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016). This was done in order to investigate why the fictional communities in the selected texts engage in FGM practice, establish how FGM affects characters both individually and collectively. This study explored the narrative techniques the authors use to variously represent FGM, with a view to demonstrate that the techniques are the very vehicles that each author uses to transport readers into and out of the fictional world of the novel in question. However, the researcher recommends that;

- NCDC (National Curriculum development Centre) should make the texts under investigation set books in order to sensitize the students on Female Genital Mutilation.
- The human rights advocates should use the study findings of my research as a basis to sensitize the communities on how best they can ably control female genital mutilation within families and different cultures.

5.5. Area for Further Study

The study explored the representations of F G M in the selected novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965), Henry Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008) and Mary

Karooro Okurut's *The Switch* (2016). However, this is not all, more study can be done in areas like;

- The Depiction of Female Genital Mutilation in selected East African plays like *The Bride* by Austine Bukenya.
- Examine Female Genital Mutilation in other fictional works like Rita Williams-Garcia's *No Laughter Here* and Tracy Price-Thompson's *A Woman's Worth*.

This would be important in ascertaining the degree to which female genital mutilation is reflected in East African works.

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Appendix 1

TEXTUAL CHECKLIST

ASPECT	Ngugi wa Thiong'o	Henry Ole Kulet	Mary Karooro Okurut
	<i>The River Between</i> (1965)	<i>Blossoms of the Savannah</i> (2008)	<i>The Switch</i> (2016)
Why the fictional communities in the selected novels engage in the practice of FGM	Scene	Scene	Scene
How FGM affects characters individually and collectively in the selected novels.			
The narrative			

techniques each of the authors use to represent the practice of FGM			
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